

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL VIOLENCE: A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL PRESSURES FROM TEACHERS AND PEERS

JUN-KI CHUNG

Institute for Pietatis Theologia, Kwangshin University  
61027, 36 Yangsantaekjiso-ro, Gwangju, South Korea

E-mail address: chungj92@aol.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2243-4849>

## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** The relevance of the study is conditioned upon the fact that in modern society violence against children is a social problem that is associated with human rights violations and has devastating consequences for the psyche and future life of the child. In this regard, the purpose of this study is an in-depth analysis of the problem of physical and psychological violence at school and to address the issue of student protection.

**Methods.** The leading methods of investigating this problem are analysis, classification, induction, deduction, generalisation, and comparison of psychological and pedagogical methods and approaches aimed at protecting a child from school violence.

**Results.** The study covers the specific features of the influence of the school environment and the pedagogical process on the mental and physical health of students. The specific features of categories of student behaviour are examined. Individual problems and disorders of the psyche and emotional state that are a consequence of violence are shown. The benefits of healthy family support and comfortable society for emotional independence and achievement of goals are characterised. The results of violence in the school environment are diagnosed and presented. A correctional and developmental programme, coaching psychology and preventive activities are proposed.

**Conclusion.** The study materials are of practical and theoretical value for young teachers, psychologists, students, teachers, sociologists, educational figures, and politicians who will be able to understand and solve the problem of violence, preventing its occurrence in educational institutions.

**Keywords:** School violence, child's psyche, coaching psychology, psychoemotional state of children, bullying, pedagogical violence



## INTRODUCTION

One of the core problems of modern society is violence in schools, which interferes with the holistic personal and professional development of subjects of school education. School violence is a type of aggression that implies the use of force between children or students and teachers. There is also a frequent aggressive attitude of children towards teachers, which has become an important problem relatively recently. In modern schools, such forms of violence as bullying, individual and group aggression, mobbing, extortion, blackmail, threats, etc. can be distinguished. The behavioural reactions of the victim can vary from retaliatory cruelty to suicidal attempts. Such children feel loneliness, resentment, and helplessness. These actions lead to mental disorders and affect all levels of human functioning, causing emotional stress for the whole organism (Mitin, 2016; Mozolev et al., 2021).

Violence against children is an important social health and human rights issue. Statistics indicate a high level of aggression against children worldwide (up to 1 billion children from 2 to 17 years old have been subjected to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect) (Ferrara et al., 2019). Commonly, they suffer not only at school but also at home from parents or guardians, peers, or strangers. This broad definition of violence includes a variety of pressure, insults, neglect, and violent acts.

It is worth noting that this problem did not appear suddenly, and the first works devoted to this issue were written at the beginning of the 20th century. Today, the issue of violence is being investigated all around the world. Psychologists, educators, and researchers pay special attention to school violence, which is a type of influence (physical or mental) to achieve any goals (Potapova, 2016).

Coaching psychology is a discipline that helps people or groups of people achieve results and fulfil desires in a healthy way. Coaching psychologists can act as mentors or advisers for children suffering from violence at school. They can find ways to solve problems based on gradual conclusions. The subject of mentoring with a coach-psychologist is especially relevant for Japan and South Korea (Seok & Chung, 2022). Coaching is a special kind of creativity that affects the fulfilment of a person's personal and professional potential (Terletska, 2022). It helps students to discover their abilities and determine their individual trajectory of development. School psychologists can help children find ways to solve problem situations and develop competencies in activities. Pedagogical coaching is a special kind of synergetic interaction between a teacher and a student (Barda, 2020; Komilova et al., 2023).

The purpose of the study is to comprehensively investigate the problem of physical and psychological violence at school and offer possible solutions regarding the protection of students. The researchers demonstrate such issues as the specific features of the influence of the school environ-

ment on the mental health of students, the specific features of the categories of the behaviour of schoolchildren, the reasons for becoming victims, and ways to fight this phenomenon based on coaching.

The relevance of the study is reflected in the fact that over the past 40 years, the problem of school violence has received a lot of attention around the world. Although this process is common, the problem is not completely solved. Accordingly, children cannot feel protected in an educational institution. The problem of bullying and school violence needs to be addressed and given due attention because the results of these actions disrupt social development and decelerate adaptation (Sarsekeyeva et al., 2019; Zaochinsky, 2021). The study also traces the complex elements of coaching in schools, in the relationship between teachers and students and shows the abundance of this interdisciplinary academic discipline, which is closely related to history, law, literature, and psychology.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following methods were used in the study: theoretical methods (analysis of the problem of school violence and its features; analysis of psychological (humanistic psychology, behaviourism, and psychoanalysis) and socio-pedagogical literature; deduction and induction in comparing various approaches and ways of introducing methods of protecting children from physical and psychological violence; classification of types of violence; generalisation of the psychology principles of coaching to improve communication between a teacher and a student; a method of comparing approaches to the theoretical understanding of the issue of violence and bullying at school and its consideration in the aspect of education in general education institutions.

The study was conducted in three stages:

- Stage one: In the first stage, works devoted to the problem of school aggression and its manifestations in modern society were examined; the relevance of the problem of violence throughout the world was shown; the principles of coaching psychology and its importance in improving the well-being of victims of violence were described; the results of studies in which theoretical interest and various interpretations of these socio-psychological problems were examined; forms of violence in modern schools that negatively affect the future of the individual and its psychological stability were demonstrated; logical conclusions were drawn based on the studies of researchers; the problem, purpose, and methods of studying this problem were highlighted, a plan for conducting a diagnostic study was created.
- Stage two: In the second stage, the analysis and designing of the research tools on protecting students from psychological and physical pressure from unscrupulous teachers and classmates were conducted;

the features of school violence as an act of aggression and manifestations of criminal actions were investigated; the consequences of child abuse were explained; the process and importance of preventing violence at school and correcting the behaviour of persons showing aggression were substantiated; the role of coaching psychologists as motivators and people who increase the self-esteem of schoolchildren was established; the main categories of violence at school were presented; possible correctional and psychological areas of work for overcoming violence at school were covered; recommendations for protecting children from aggression from teachers and other children were presented; the conclusions obtained during the research were systematised.

- Stage three: In the third stage, the systematisation and classification of the material obtained during the analysis and investigation of scientific, pedagogical, psychological, and theoretical works of researchers were conducted; theoretical and practical conclusions and research results were substantiated; a comparative analysis of information and approaches that cover this problem was presented; the main experiments of researchers who were engaged in the consideration of factors of school violence and possible methods of preventing this problem were systematised; the basic principles of creating a favourable psychological environment at school were analysed; the results of the analysis and diagnosis of this study were summarised and logically presented; the data obtained were classified and presented.

## RESULTS

### *The Phenomenon of Violence in Educational Institutions*

Violence at school often consists of physical, verbal, relational, and object bullying. These forms often occur together and complement each other. In school violence, there is a victim and a criminal who commits an act of aggression. It is possible to consider groups of children who are subjected to different types of violence. In the context of the ecological system approach, individual and relational factors can be distinguished. An important reason for the violence is the low level of self-esteem and self-control of schoolchildren, which leads to a weakening of social ties. A negative attitude towards oneself also plays a particular role. Aggressors are characterised by a low level of self-control because they cannot resist the temptation to resort to violence. Such students often join risky groups and neglect safety (Kim & Lee, 2021).

The victims of violence are often children with low self-esteem, as they become sources of conflict in the group. This provokes an unfriendly attitude from the outside and contempt. In addition, violence on the part of teachers can be caused by the instability of the psyche of the teacher or the

bad behaviour of schoolchildren. Victims of violence are often intimidated, teased, have their property damaged, etc.

In science, it is customary to distinguish the immediate (injuries, vomiting, headaches, loss of consciousness, excitement, indifference, lethargy, or increased adrenaline) and the long-term consequences of abuse (personality disorders, mental and somatic diseases). At an older age, depression may occur based on a sense of inferiority (Mitin, 2016). Students who have been exposed to bullying and physical pressure receive deep psychological trauma, which is expressed in headaches, suicidal thoughts, apathy, etc.

School violence is a multifaceted construct that includes a variety of criminal acts. It includes aggression in schools, which negatively affects the development and education of the child and harms the school climate. Researchers also note that violence is based on antisocial behaviour and intimidation, including theft, assault, and even murder. Places of such events can be school classrooms, corridors, school yards, or buses. Very often there are acts of aggression on the school playground. Aggressive behaviour may not always lead to bodily injury, but there are often risks of injury, intimidation, threats, etc. There are three main categories of violence at school:

- Physical coercion and bodily injury, as a result of a conflict between two or more persons. This is the moment when intentional harm or intimidation occurs.
- Verbal aggression and psychological cruelty include the marginalisation or humiliation of a person (insults, humiliation, or emotional blackmail).
- Intimidation is a type of violence, implying both physical and psychological violence, and a weaker person being constantly under pressure and subjected to ridicule. Bullying takes different forms: physical and verbal (De Wet, 2007).

### *Aspects of the Process of Protecting Children from School Violence Based on Prevention and Coaching Methods*

Violence against children is a global problem that harms their health and future. That is why it is important to consider preventive measures and methods of protecting students from psychological and physical pressure from unscrupulous teachers and classmates. Notably, getting rid of child abuse and exploitation should be crucial in organising a safe educational environment for educational institutions. A psychologically safe environment is characterised by: a pleasant socio-psychological climate in the classroom; involvement of children in the educational process and the development of their social skills; increased interest from parents and the public; support for students during problematic situations, etc. The purpose of these principles and efforts is to preserve and ensure the psychological safety of schoolchildren, which should also be followed by them. Thus, it is necessary to create a psychologically safe educational environment that is built on comfort for students, maintaining their mental health and mini-

mising manifestations of violence in an educational institution (Gorlenko & Sosnovenko, 2021: 77-78).

Coaching psychology is professional, theoretical psychology that helps a person achieve a certain goal. Thus, working with a psychologist would help victims of violence find their positive sides and achieve goals, despite mental problems and lack of confidence. Such students need support, comfort, and courage, especially in a difficult period. This gives them hope, thereby offering a kind of mental healing through the role of a mentor. In this case, it is the teacher or psychologist who would be able to unite children, rally and remove the aggression that provokes hatred. Mentoring generates a spirit of cohesion, and humans are social beings, so it is impossible to allow children in the classroom to be lonely and detached. Teachers and students should work to create a deep and strong bond. Coaching psychology focuses on overcoming difficulties rather than demonstrating human weakness (Seok & Chung, 2021).

It is necessary to create special conditions in which children would feel needed and fulfilled to prevent school violence. It is necessary for relatives and teachers to pay enough attention and care. The main thing is to create a sense of security and support for children so that they are not afraid to seek help and advice from adults. Often, a feeling of understanding from the outside and sympathy can be represented by a psychologist-coach, with whom children can talk frankly and get a dose of motivation and self-belief. This work should be conducted in stages and target students who have become victims of bullying. These methods are based on working with children and with the families of schoolchildren (investigating the type of family and the conditions of raising children, problems in maternal-child relations). In addition, it is important to monitor the conditions for the development of personality and the characteristics of students' behaviour in society. This can be in such forms as parent meetings, class hours, and other events. It is worth working towards creating conditions in which there can be no violence and bullying to overcome violence at school: stopping communication between victims and abusers; strengthening students' internal resources based on coaching. It is also necessary to conduct classes and training with children, which would increase the stress resistance and independence of students. Students would be ready to protect their space, develop communication skills, and lead a healthy lifestyle. It is also worth noting the impact on unscrupulous teachers and children who show aggression and violence. Methods of correcting their behaviour and creating a psychologically safe educational environment should be proposed (Kirilova, 2021).

Coach-psychologist helps children to: clarify their goals, which are based on deeper needs, values, and meaning of life, increasing motivation; find a variety of solutions to problems, indicating the variability of strategies and actions; take specific steps and set deadlines for their implementation; think through possible problematic situations.

Coaching psychology is an approach based on the ideas, models, and research of positive psychology, within which it becomes important to develop positive character traits of a child who would be able to protect themselves from pressure and violence from students or teachers. The feature of this approach is that it is focused not only on achieving goals but also on helping schoolchildren in: increasing their subjective well-being in the future; improving mood and developing optimism (positive emotions and attitude to events); discovering their own talents and potential. It can be stated that the professional mission of a coaching psychologist is not only to help a person become more effective but also to live a meaningful life and not succumb to negative influences (Ulanovsky, 2012).

Possible methods of protecting children from school violence are: thematic class hours, with the purpose of preventing these antisocial manifestations and presenting possible ways of protection against aggression; school mediations; conducting lessons in legal disciplines. In addition, the active interaction of teachers and students with various social tutors and psychologists would give positive results (Kirilova, 2021).

The zero-tolerance policy that is applied in South Korea and solves the problem of school violence is noteworthy. Some aspects of this problem have changed drastically since 2012. Firstly, the level of violence in schools began to decline rapidly, because this policy raises awareness and deters criminals. Secondly, these principles of the education system have reduced visible violence, but hidden forms have increased. This indicates that perpetrators of school violence choose an invisible form of violence. It can be concluded that such a system does not represent an ideal solution because the conventional form of violence is being replaced by a more hidden and less noticeable form of aggressive behaviour (Kim & Oh, 2017).

## DISCUSSION

Protecting children from cruelty and preventing crimes against them is an extremely important social problem, for the solution of which law enforcement officials, guardianship authorities, representatives of the socio-pedagogical community, and medical and psychological aid workers should work cohesively. However, today there is no effective system for the prevention and cessation of violence against children due to the limitations and disunity of workers in different fields, subjectivism, and the lack of unified methodological approaches in the organisation of psychological work and special legislative provisions (Rogulina, 2021). The importance of working with the family is also often ignored, and the employees themselves are incompetent in communicating with the victim, who is quite closed and uninterested in the conversation. It is possible to solve the problem of aggression against minors by combining pedagogical activity and communication with parents (Baikulova et al., 2017; Dragos & Przybytnowski, 2022).

The study has shown the phenomenon of physical and psychological pressure and violent actions at school as an important social problem in the modern world. The studied data have an important role in the protection of children and the development of special correctional programmes for psychological work with victims. It was indicated that to prevent school violence, it is important to create special favourable conditions in which children would feel needed and fulfilled. The study also covered the relevance of the anti-bullying fight based on the psychology of coaching, the purpose of which is to increase the motivation and self-esteem of schoolchildren. The study analysed the main categories of violence and the problems that victims have. Furthermore, the policy of absolute intolerance, created to solve this problem in educational institutions, was disclosed in detail. The idea of positive coaching psychology is newly presented, which sufficiently increases the prospects for investigation. In addition, the study showed possible methods of protecting children from school violence.

Moreover, a comparison of bullying and aggression in schools in different countries is an important addition to the study. School violence is of serious public concern and is the focus of educational reforms in the United States and South Korea. For that reason, different other studies examined the levels of psychological and physical pressure and related causes. Researchers analysed nationally representative data from 150 schools (eighth grades, their teachers and principals) in South Korea and 216 schools in the United States. The authors established that: the level of school violence in the United States is sufficiently higher than in South Korea; South Korean schools based on academic tracking and schools with low academic achievement in the United States have a higher level of school violence (Motoko & Seunghee, 2007).

In South Korea, there is an extremely high level of mental disorders conditioned upon physical violence against children. Until recently, this problem was not relevant at all and only limited attention was paid to it by the public and specialists. Many researchers considered aspects of pressure and child abuse in South Korea and discussed socio-cultural factors that influenced the lack of clear decisions in the adoption of laws on child protection and the low awareness of the population about the problem of child abuse. This study showed methodological issues related to school aggression and bullying. In addition, the role of the Korean women's movement in the reform of family law has attracted interest. The researchers presented the principles of the development of areas in the process of solving the problem of child abuse in South Korea (Hahm & Guterman, 2001).

Moreover, an indirect investigation is the study of professional deformations of a teacher as the main factor in violence. Analysis of diagnostic data indicates that only 21% of teachers base their work on constructive development and self-development in the profession, achieving professional mastery. In addition, such teachers develop themselves as individuals and create a favourable psychological environment for students (Kalimova et al.,

2022). The overwhelming number of teachers (79%) have individual manifestations of professional personality deformations that are associated with an adaptive way of behaviour. Their professional activities are simplified, and the essential characteristics are not particularly noticeable. Psychological features of professional deformations of teachers include (Mitin, 2016).

Regarding possible solutions to the problem of violence, a policy of tolerance was disclosed. Many researchers consider it a “necessary evil”, as it affects the guidelines for the suppression of school violence but has its own possible side effects. The level of bullying and aggression in schools has decreased since its use in 2012, but manifestations of cyberbullying and violence outside of school have been identified. This phenomenon occurs when the guilty are punished, rather than retrained in alternative ways. Accordingly, they are looking for ways to express their aggressive behaviour and want to avoid punishment (Kim & Oh, 2017).

It is worth mentioning the study on the psychology of coaching, in which the influence of such classes on the improvement of personality and its struggle with external problems were analysed. It was also empirically proven that coaching and positive psychology programmes improve aspects of personal well-being. A study was conducted involving 393 students who attended 13 weeks of lectures with accompanying practical exercises on positive psychology, coaching psychology, or organisational behaviour. The participants gained experience and psychological improvements. Moreover, students who took a course in positive psychology and coaching psychology received additional benefits: they learned how to achieve goals, get to know themselves, achieved psychological well-being, and developed problem-oriented thinking. Notably, the participants gained freedom of action through purposeful self-regulation, which makes this concept the basis for future positive psychology programmes (Grant & Atad, 2021).

The study on children’s attitudes to violence at school is quite interesting. Researchers identified several blocks of common attitudes in the school environment, where pressure and bullying are a way to improve well-being, increase self-esteem, or simply get distracted. Furthermore, for the children themselves, psychological and physical aggression are ways of resolving conflicts, socialisation, or attracting attention (Varii et al., 2020). All these blocks interact closely with each other and create models of behaviour in the school environment. Interviewed students use violence to demonstrate high self-worth and make others appreciate them more. Teachers often want to intimidate children in this way and show their authority, pointing only to the inability to handle difficult schoolchildren. Basically, the traits of abusers are a struggle for rightness, a demonstration that they are better than others, a sense of superiority, or a desire to win at any cost (Lakomý & Alvarez-Galvez, 2022). Previous studies only deepened the link between school aggression and self-esteem but have not made definitive conclusions about the area of school pressure. Children often use bullying to compensate for affective deficiencies associated with a lack of competence in life

situations. It is also worth considering the fact that some children resort to violence when they are upset or have problems at school or at home (López et al., 2021). This indicates their need to control emotional and family difficulties through aggression towards the weak. The role of low self-esteem has been investigated in other works and longitudinal studies (Shabanova et al., 2019; Tsaousis, 2016). In the given study, the mechanisms of fighting low self-esteem by methods of coaching psychology were proposed.

Since the authors have proposed methods of protecting children from violence at school, it is possible to disclose other studies which covered a similar issue. Today, various forms of violence prevention are being introduced in schools: social education lessons and psychological training on conflictology, debates, discussions, round tables, business, role-playing and interactive games, fairy-tale therapy, and coaching training (Berdibayeva et al., 2021). Their purpose is to establish communication between children and create opportunities for schoolchildren to vent all negative emotions through socially approved activities (games, sports, hobbies). In such activities, specialists are involved to work with crisis situations and measures to prevent cruelty can be implemented. It is important to establish trusting (friendly) relations between children and teachers, which contributes to the rehabilitation and adaptation of children who become victims of violence or do not have friends. In such situations, children are treated based on psychological methods and techniques, such as sandplay therapy and art therapy. Collective creative activity is also often used (Kozlova & Pryakhina, 2002; Zakusylo, 2014).

Regarding the analytical and prognostic area, it is important to introduce the principles of risk analysis of violence occurrence among children and create a work plan to solve the problem. Moreover, it is important to constantly improve the qualifications of school psychologists and social workers in this area, as they are the first-priority professionals in the chain of preventive actions. It is also necessary to actively involve parents in preventive work with children as they are the primary source of information for children. School mediation can serve as an effective form of work and a way to resolve conflict situations by finding a compromise.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study indicates that the school and the family should pay attention not only to schoolwork but also to creating favourable and safe conditions for the development of children. Violence must be neutralised and eliminated in the modern world, while human values and the protection of freedoms play a primary role. Therefore, educational work is an urgent area of violence prevention. **The study presented various forms and methods of working with child victims and described the mechanisms of using coaching psychology in a modern school.** Considering the above, only

comprehensive and systematic preventive and correctional work of the entire teaching staff, psychological organisations, and parents can solve the problem of bullying and aggression at school. Modern sociologists should develop and search for innovative forms and methods of work that reduce the manifestations of aggressive and violent behaviour among students.

The study materials are of practical and theoretical value for young teachers, psychologists, sociologists, teachers, education figures, and politicians who can make changes in understanding the importance of protecting children from violence in educational institutions. The information is valuable for parents of schoolchildren who can help the children believe in themselves, become more emotionally stable, and stop being the objects of ridicule among classmates. It is worth continuing the research and deepening it, prolonging the investigation of the issue of protecting the child from psychological and physical pressure from unscrupulous teachers and classmates. The conducted study does not exhaust all aspects of this social and psychological problem and the following issues require further consideration: the use of a coaching approach in the organisation of the educational process; analysis of other practices and methods of working with victims of violence; diagnostics of the causes of aggression among teachers.

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