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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### GIRLS SAFETY IN SCHOOL: EXPLORING SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES FOR GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF DELHI

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#### Abstract

Schools are the places where students spend most of their time learning and socializing after their home, so it is most important to ensure that they are safe and secure after knowing the daily news showing how students are facing violence's in schools and their way to school to home. To handle this security issue, the attentiveness of the school and community members is needed. This research was done to determine the security issues, safety risks developed at school premises, and how much teachers and school authorities are prepared to deal with it. 20 school teachers from different schools of Delhi region were selected as the number of safety troubles in Delhi schools keeps on increasing. These teachers were asked to fill open-ended questionnaires and school premises were observed to check whether they are following the guidelines issued by supreme court and high authorities. This Research supports the approach that disciplined Schools, families, and communities must partner together to create safe, supportive schools for Students especially Girls who face more negative consequences because of such incidents. Collaboration is critical to maintaining school safety. Establishing ongoing, trusting relationships reduces gaps in services; limits confusion and wasted resources; improves emergency planning, preparedness, and response; supports family engagement; and improves student outcomes will help Girls Persistence in School Education.

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#### Introduction:-

In the past few years, the country has witnessed incidents of violence and several incidents of sexual assaults within the premises of private schools as well as government schools. It is saddening to hear when there are media reports about several incidents of violence, bullying, child sexual abuse, and other mishappenings in schools due to the alleged negligence of the school authorities. These recent news not only showcase the horrible situation of children within

School premises but has also put a big question mark on safety of students in schools. School has traditionally been seen as a safe and secure environment, but it has recently come under fire from the public for the lack of security witnessed in recent occurrences.

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Ensuring safe situation throughout the school building and ground is a responsibility of teachers, administrators and parents.) Girls spend most of their time at school in their developing years. so child needs a safe, comfortable and secure environment in schools to help them learn and grow. A safe and secure learning environment is a basic necessity for all children irrespective of their ages. They can focus on learning the skills needed for a successful education in a safe setting. School safety is a major concern for the government. Providing a secure environment for pupils from their homes to their schools and return is what school safety entails. It covers everything from abuse to violence to psychosocial disorders to natural calamities (natural and man-made). With a rise in the number of pupils in schools, there is a risk that student safety may be jeopardised and safety of girls after few incidents of sexual harassment is a question.

In India there is a debate on safety in schools and how to make school a safer and better place for children especially girls who face major consequences because of safety issues.. Figures on the number of children who have lost their lives or have been seriously impacted by a recent disaster, provide a weighty argument for insisting not only on the need to advance towards the construction of territories that offer integrated and true safety and security to their occupants, but also to alert administrators on the serious implications of not doing so in a timely and appropriate manner. Schools and their inhabitants also figure amongst those who pay the price for wrongful decisions on how development should be conceived and executed.

(Safe schools in safe territories documented by UNICEF). School is a danger free, harmless place where students, teachers and non-teachers can learn, teach and work together and there is no fear of harassment, violence or humiliation (Squelch 2001). Safety is freedom from any kind of harm or fear and prevention is the only solution to safety issues. It is the duty of all persons who are related to the education or school system to know how to act safely and responsibly in unsafe conditions. (Quarterly bulletin of CBSE, 2009). Safe and supportive schools are those which Provide an environment that protects the emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing of students. It is the responsibility of school, teachers and parents to have a comprehensive perspective towards creating a safe environment for students.

### **Concept Of Safe School**

School safety is best expressed by what a safe school is. A safe school is a school that

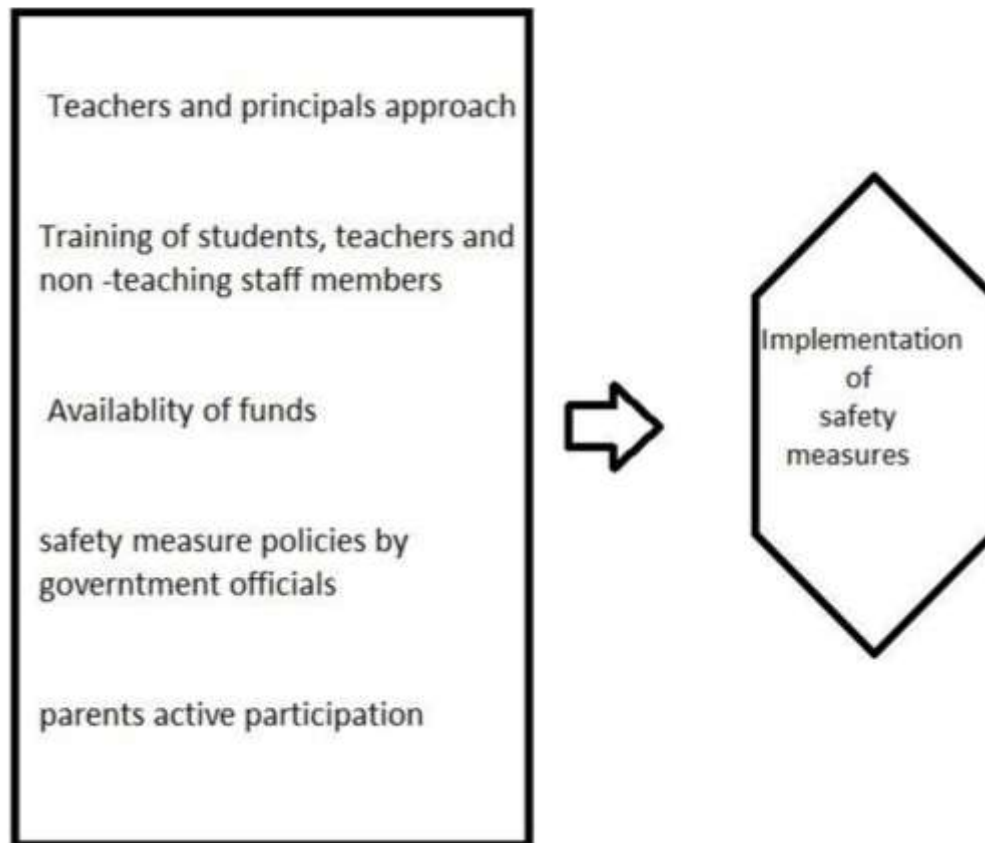
That ensures physical and psychosocial safety of its habitants. The security and maintenance of school buildings and grounds are the most obvious features of the school's physical environment.

This includes a clean and safe learning environment, property security, well-maintained facilities, furniture, and equipment, clean toilets, water, and a green environment, as well as the lack of harassment. ( Squelch,2001).

The main intention for implementing safety measures is to reduce incidents of violence and improve accountability for youth who per-pet rate crimes at school, thereby improving the sense that school is a safe place to be.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The goal of this research is to figure out what factors influence how safety measures are implemented in secondary schools. Teachers' and school staff attitudes toward the execution of safety measures, teacher and staff training, funding availability, government regulations on safety and security measures, and parents' attitudes and active participation are the independent variables. The effects of those independent variables on the dependent variable, which is the implementation of school safety measures, will be investigated in this study.



### **Teachers And School Principals Approach Towards Implementation**

School teachers are an important link in implementing safety standards in schools. To underestimate the importance of teaching the community in successful implementation of safety standards can be fatal for school education. Success and failure of safety standards implementation in school system depends on the perspectives and co-operation of the teaching

Community. Teacher's community is the fundamental key whose active participation in this program will prove to be an important link to success. Teachers have an important role in fostering safety in school, they play the primary role in guiding and imparting social, cultural and life skill values and students rely on them for authentic knowledge.

Role of teachers is important and more than any other as the teachers are not only responsible for creating a safe environment for students in the classroom but also take care of students

Outside the classroom. Handing over students to the parents or school bus guard is also the responsibility of teachers (Supreme Court guidelines).

### **Role Of Teachers And Principal In Implementation Of Safety Measures**

The primary assumption was that the participants of the study were well aware about safety policies and security measures given by the government and Supreme Court and it was also assumed that the participants would give their honest responses to the questions.

Concerns about school safety are addressed by the principal and the school management team

Keeping records of incidents relating to school safety

Ensuring that school safety measures agreed upon are implemented in the school properly or not. Role of principal is to establish comprehensive safety and security measures policies according to the needs of the safety of students of that particular school. Make committee headed

By having teachers, students, parents and school counselors as its members to inspect the school regularly and improve the situation in case of any harmful situation. Principal of a school has the main role of monitoring and channelizing the whole process of implementation and providing solutions to the problems occurring. Allocate different roles to different and do safety audits to assess safety measures in schools. Organize awareness and training of all students about –

- a. Disasters,
- b- Fire safety,
- c- First aid training
- d- how to deal with sexual harrasment incidents

### **Initiatives Taken By Government**

1. Steps taken by educational boards, state and central government
2. Follow supreme courts guidelines
3. Issued several guidelines to ensure the safety of students in schools
4. Safety audits were also mandatory for schools across the country
5. Regular inspection by committee members for successful execution of safety norms in schools

### **Statement Of The Problem**

Several incidents of violence in the past questions the safety of students and demands urgent answers if they want to avoid such incidents in future. This study aims to investigate the factors that affect the implementation of safety measures in secondary schools. Children of our country have constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights to live with dignity and to have access to education in an environment that is safe, protective and conducive to growth and development. The safety of school depends upon measures taken to organize and manage safety and security measures. Government, boards, school management committee, principal, teachers, Students and parents are facilitators in enhancing safety in schools.

### **TITLE:**

“Girls safety in school:exploring safety and security measures for girls in secondary schools of Delhi”.

### **Purpose And Significance Of The Study**

The purpose of the study was to establish the importance of enhancing security measures to ensure the safety of Girls in secondary schools in Delhi. This constructs a safe environment for curriculum execution.

It is anticipated that this study would be a great help for teachers and parents. They will

Get to assess whether they are prepared for any kind of disaster, have they fully implemented safety measures or there are some loopholes. It will also develop a sense of safe atmosphere for Girls where they can live, study and socialize without any worries. They would get to know about their area of weakness and what precautions they can take. Parents and teachers can use this study to check on the issues. This will help girls to persist and to complete their education without dropping out.

### **Objectives Of The Study:-**

1. To understand the perception of secondary school teachers towards safety measures in schools.
- 2.To determine the nature and extent of violence in schools within secondary schools in Delhi.
3. To identify and examine the safety measures implemented in these schools.
4. To understand the views of Parents on the safety of girls in their schools.
5. To identify the barriers in implementation of safety norms in schools.

### **Research Questions**

Security and a safe environment in school is a necessity that can be achieved with the assistance of security measures. The cases of violence and other kinds of disasters increasing yearly in schools, following were some of the questions asked:

1. What type of safety measures are in place at schools in Delhi and how effective are they in case of a safety crisis?
2. How safe do Girl students feel at school?
3. What type of school violence are most prevalent and what kind of training them Get to deal with such situations?
4. What understanding parents have about the safety measures and obstacles in implementation of safety measures in schools?
5. What type of coordination teachers and parents have in establishment of safe Environment for children?
6. What are the responsibilities and roles of teachers, other school staff and parents?

### **Methodology:-**

A qualitative method was employed to provide a more full view of the school, and data was collected using a questionnaire containing open ended questions and semi-structured interviews of parents. The questionnaire had two sections: one for demographic information and the other for items related to school safety and security, such as management aspects, surveillance of and access control to the school environment, relationship with the community, service systems and practises, counselling of Girl Students about their personal safety and school psychosocial environments as dimensions. To ensure that the content and constructs used in relation to school safety and security were appropriate and that the questionnaire items measured what they were supposed to measure, the research question and categories of school safety and security derived from the literature review were used as starting points to ensure that the content and constructs used in relation to school safety and security were appropriate and that the questionnaire items measured what they were supposed to measure (Struwig & Stead, 2007, p. 139).

20 teachers and 5 parents were selected for the study. All the participants were the teachers of class VI to class XII and parents of students from these classes. The teachers were from various educational backgrounds. All the participants have experience of more than 5 years in teaching. Delhi government teachers were intentionally selected to participate in the study since many incidents of school violence happened in government schools and the government of Delhi is actively working to ensure a safer environment for students in school premises.

### **Limitations Of The Study**

- The main problem the researcher faced was that participants of the study are hesitant to reveal the details of their schools. This problem can be solved by giving assurance to the participants that the research is only for academic process and they are free to fill in the personal details they want to give and not required to fill options in which they are not comfortable.
- Most of the respondents were busy in their academic work and took time to respond to a researcher. So researchers would need to give extra time to the participants.
- It is a qualitative study with 20 teachers and 5 parents only.
- It is limited to 4 Schools in Delhi.

### **Assumptions Of The Study**

The primary assumption was that the participants of the study were well aware about safety policies and security measures given by the government and Supreme Court and it was also assumed that the participants would give their honest responses to the questions.

### **Results:-**

The findings shows how attitude of teachers, parents, school authorities, government safety measure policies, availability of funds, training of teachers and staff and community members (parents) affects the implementation of safety measures in schools

1. The extent to which teachers' attitudes influence the execution of safety measures

In this study the attitude of teachers was positive towards safety measures implementation. The teachers were well aware about their roles and duties towards students. Teachers do their part by taking part in safety management meetings, training to deal with safety emergencies. Teachers' impact on students' understanding is more so they facilitate students, tries to solve their discrepancies regarding safety measures to be taken. Teachers are not only helping students in classrooms but after school they ensure that students take their transport in a disciplined manner, and hand over students to their parents after school.

## 2. Impact of training on implementation of safety measures

It is evident that teachers had regular training and they are advanced in their approach. Teachers who had training found the training very helpful which directly shows the importance of training on the capabilities of teachers to deal with disasters. The training enabled the teachers to safeguard the physical, psychosocial and emotional safety of the students which is the requisite for overall development of students. The teachers know how to deal with an earthquake, fire situations from time to time. They know all the evacuation plans, first aid and can provide emotional support to all students after successful training sessions. Regular training makes them aware of the recent threats to their safety and how to deal with them. Training of parents to deal with change behavior, bullying and emotional disturbances should be ensured by schools but teachers are not given any kind of disaster dealing training except creating awareness about threats to students in parent teacher meetings.

## 3. The extent to which financial constraints influence the application of safety measures

The lack of funding and capacity, as reported by both instructors and parents, is preventing the full implementation of safety measures. Inadequate finance is the primary cause of fewer safety equipment, buses, and guards. Schools are unable to maintain school buildings and other infrastructure such as CCTV, guards, and alarm systems due to a lack of funding. When a school is completely reliant on the government for funding and the government fails to meet the standards, the school's situation deteriorates.

## 4. Effect of safety measure policies

The study shows that all the teachers were well aware about the safety policies given by the Supreme Court, government and educational authorities and their school's own policies. Most of them agreed that their school follows the safety policies. Main objective of these safety policies is to ensure that all the collaborators (teachers, school staff, parents, students) are aware of their responsibilities and they must ensure that safety measures are implemented properly. Safety measures have actually enhanced the level of safety measures implementation. Safety policies created a disciplined environment by showing students the relevance of following rules and the importance of taking care and avoiding risks. Parents who were interviewed were not aware about the safety policies. They only know about the CCTV installation in every school and guards facilities. They were not aware about the safety conditions inside the schools and what the school is lacking and what are the improvements. The parents are not sensitized by the teachers about the policies enforced by the government and where they are lacking.

## 5. Barriers that exists in the implementation of safety measures in schools

- Proper implementation of safety measures is a regular action. it requires regular efforts by government and school to make utmost use of it. There is always a scope of improvement and there is a need to work according to the needs and aspirations of children.
- Limited funding- lack of funds is always a major barrier. There are always concerns related to inadequate budgets to cover personal capacity building costs.
- Competing priorities - lack of time makes safety concerns last in the priority list of teachers. Restrictions by authorities, required curriculum and emphasis on academic achievements comes first in their priorities.
- Support of non-teaching staff- there is a need to educate and earn trust and support of non-teaching staff (i.e. other than teachers, students, parents, community members). there is lack of coordination and supervision by higher authorities.
- Need for providing training and technical assistance - training of teachers and non-teaching staff to deal with emergency conditions is necessary.
- Uncertainty and vagueness in the writings of norms, policies and guidelines is also creating hindrance in execution of the safety policies in the school.

Girls do feel safe at school but it does not mean that they are not aware of any kind of sudden mishappening. It also came out in this study that if schools are lacking somewhere the major reason behind this was lack of funding. Out of all the barriers funding was the most significant and the rest of it directly or indirectly depends upon availability of funds. Since most of the safety measures given by the government include expensive equipment which was difficult in the case the school totally depended on the government for funding. Parents are aware about the situation of schools but also feel that participation of parents in school activities should be more. Parents' participation plays an important role in creating a safe environment on school campuses. The most functional way that parents can help to secure their Girls in schools, just by their presence. More parent's involvement in school will reduce the chances of safety and security negligence and increase the chances of being caught. The role of parents has become more important as some schools due to the funds crisis have not appointed required numbers of police and security staff.

This study shows that implementation of safety measures in the schools enhanced the safety situations in schools. It creates a positive impact on students and showed the importance of taking care and avoiding risks

**Conclusion:-**

The findings clearly highlighted the extent of security measures that were implemented in the schools. It is clear that if the safety measures directed by the officials properly then the incidents of violence in schools will decrease. The greater the understanding of safety measures in a school, the safer the Girls felt at school and it will increase their chances to persist in their educational journey.

Majority of school teachers and parents indicated that the schools had some forms of security measures. The study shows that teachers have an impression towards the implementation of safety measures in school.

Security plans, emergency plans and policies and procedures at a school form a vital part of the security measures as a whole. All the teachers were well aware about the safety guidelines and policies given by the authorities. They also took part in training provided to them from time to time to increase their awareness about increasing disasters and what are the ways to deal with them. Teachers found the measures implemented by school according to government policies helpful and adequate to make school a safer place. They found that even after implementation of all security measures there is always a scope for improvement. Teachers thoroughly take part in training for evacuation and mock drills for fire and earthquake arranged by police, fire and natural disaster authorities. The safety measures adopted to ensure the safety of the student and overall safety of the school.

Teachers agreed with the fact that there is an urgent need to teach safety as part of the curriculum and disaster management, counselling, first aid and emotional safety should be the integral part of the curriculum. Teachers also felt that there is a need for a session and special counselling session for parents to deal with problematic behavior of students. Even every teacher said that they have PTM every alternate month to inform parents about the problems their child is facing and also discuss how together they can improve the condition. Teachers also agree that somehow parents and teachers both are responsible for lack of communication and participation as some parents aren't even ready to attend any special meeting for the welfare of their own child. Teachers also agrees that there is lack of counselling session for girls about their personal safety from sexual harrasment. Parents also wanted to be aware about the safety conditions in the schools and they also think that if they also get some training to deal with children changing behavior they can also help in providing protective and safe environment for their children.

**Recommendations:-**

All the school staff members especially teachers and principals should focus on the following points:-

**Establish clear school policies and reinforce goals**

It is the duty of the school to make sure that the policies enforced in schools are current, reflect state and Supreme Court guidelines. Publicize policies and guidelines in multiple ways. Make use of technologies to incorporate parents and community members in schools reinforce goals

**Assess your school, classroom and self**

There is an urgent need for school authorities to assess their own school premises and relate with the incidents and try to find loopholes in their preparedness to deal with encouraging individual staff to do their own self-assessments of their approach.

**Be public and purposeful about being inclusive –**

Find ways to let everyone in the school community know that school is a safe place, all are welcome and that violent actions are unacceptable. Be loud to send a strong message to the community that safety is your first priority. Some examples include: a clear sign/statement at the entrance to the building, a public letter to the school community, social media posts, and announcements on the public address system. Involve the school community in coming up with these ideas and think about ways to do different activities throughout the year to create a protective environment for students especially Girls.

**Encourage reporting and be more approachable-**

Many teasing and bullying incidents go unreported. In fact, as children get older, they are less likely to report to adults in their lives—parents, teachers, family and friends. So it is the duty of schools to establish a secure atmosphere. Make sure students are aware of these procedures and to encourage students to report threatening or harassing behavior. School authorities should be more approachable. Teachers also agree that there is a need of counselling of girls about their personal safety from sexual harassment.

**Involve parents, family and community members**

If everyone conveys the same message about how to be safe and protected from school violence cases then there will be a positive impact on students. School's PA/PTA should host a parent education workshop. Get everyone on the same page about school policies, difficulties and requirements of students. Committee should be set-up where some members are parents and some teachers so that they both can find the solution of problems together and make the school a better experience.

**Provide training to the teachers, students, non-teaching staff and parents-**

Only teaching students about disaster management is not sufficient to create a safe environment in schools. Practical implications of all the disaster management strategies should be taught to everyone, including teachers, students, non-teaching staff and parents. Students not only spend their time with teachers in schools but they also interact with the non-teaching staff like, guard, peon, bus driver etc... So for proper implementation of safety and security measures in schools disaster management training should be given to parents and non-teaching staff also.

The recent scenario has made it a mandate for all parents to teach their children to be attentive and cautious in order to be safe and protected against bullying and other exploitation. It has become very important for parents to be aware of their child's regular interests and day-to-day activities.

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