

SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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India's treasure lies in its youth population. About 44.4% of India's population belongs to the 6-18 years age group, out of 1.31 billion. This vast human resource could be a great asset for the country's prosperity and development, if their basic fundamental rights are ensured, that is, right to life, nutrition, education, medical care and safety as well as love and affection. Sadly, a large number of children in India are deprived of primary education and nutrition. Cultural beliefs and practices, lack of educational facilities, poor sanitation facilities and poor economic condition of the rural people are contributory factors for poor education among rural children. Safety of students in the school and in the community is another major concern for the parents. Latest evidence highlights that corporal punishment is highly practiced despite legislative measures. So far as the student's mental health is concerned, academic stress, mostly caused by parental expectations, trouble a large number of students and sometimes, it leads to tremendous anxiety and even suicidal ideation. As per the crime in India Report 2015, every day 24 students commit suicide in India because of academic failure. In addition, a large number of students suffer from examination anxiety, depression and childhood disorders, especially learning disability. Absence of mental health support services in the educational institutions poses serious threat to the potentials of the students. Several socio-legal measures taken by the Government of India did not yield expected results. There is a need to review and closely monitor the implementation of the policies and programs for the welfare of the students to find the gaps in policy and practice and to take corrective measures. However, political will and further allocation of funds are prerequisite to bringing the structural change in the present schooling system of India.

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