



Violence Directed  
Towards  
Teachers

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# School Violence Defined

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as:  
"the intentional use of physical force or power,  
threatened or actual,  
against oneself, another person, or against a group or community,  
that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in  
injury,  
death,  
psychological harm,  
maldevelopment or deprivation

(WHO, 2014)



“any behaviour that violates:

a school’s educational mission or climate of respect and jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against:

- persons or property
- drugs
- weapons
- disruptions
- disorder

(The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002).



School violence is a subset of youth violence, a broader public health problem.

Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, against:

- another person
- group
- community... with the behavior likely to cause physical or psychological harm.

Youth Violence typically includes persons between the ages of **10 and 24**, although pathways to youth violence can begin in early childhood

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S.A. Government.)

# Examples of Violent Behaviour

- Disrespectful behaviour (i.e., bullying, intimidation, verbal threats or gestures)
- Fighting (e.g., punching, slapping, kicking)
- Weapon use
- Electronic aggression
- Gang violence
- Property damage
- Malicious insults

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.A. Government.)

# Examples of Violent Behaviour

School Violence refers to student perpetration intending to:

- harm other students and teachers
- cause damage to belongings or school property
- physical and verbal violence
- psychological harm
- threatening behavior

(Chen & Astor, 2012)

# Examples of School Violence

- Acts of racism
- Bias-based hate crimes
- Racial profiling
- Racketeering (i.e., extortion, bribery),
- Assault
- Physical force
- Physical or psychological abuse or torture
- Hitting or injury

(Espelage & Horne, 2008; Volokh & Snell, 1998; Ozdemir, 2012; Köknel, 1996; American Psychological Association, Center for Psychology in Schools and Education, n.d.; The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002).

My research aim is to investigate the impact of covert and overt violence in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) schools.

**Covert Violence** is defined as:

- disrespectful behaviour like; name-calling, verbal threats or gestures
- intimidation
- damage to one's reputation.

**Overt Violence** is defined as:

- personal property damage
- assault
- threats with a weapon

anything that result in victimization

(Espelage et al, 2013; Wilson et al, 2011).

# The Problem

School violence is a serious growing concern in many countries (Ozdemir, 2012; Galand et al., 2007).

Contributing to:

- emotional,
- psychological,
- and physical effects on those affected and negatively influencing the teaching and learning processes.

(Espelage et al., 2013; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Wilson et al., 2011).

## Teacher victimization has led to teachers:

- avoiding students
- becoming disengaged with the student learning process, and their teaching profession
- Leaving the profession prematurely

(Espelage et al., 2013; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Wilson et al., 2011).

## The system-level impacts can mean:

- worker's compensation,
- sick leave,
- and substitute pay (Espelage et al., 2013)



**There has been little research examining the impact of violence directed towards teachers and school educators (Espelage et al, 2013).**

# Literature Review

Research has demonstrated that teacher victimization is a prevalent problem and that many educators are concerned for their safety in schools (Dinkes et al, 2009; Pietrzak et al, 1998).

Of the 14 published global studies, most victimized teachers reported violent incidents by:

- students
- parents
- colleagues

suggesting that teacher-directed violence crosses multispectrums (Espelage et al, 2013).

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- **7% of the teaching force of 253,100 teachers indicated they were threatened and/or assaulted by students** (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs; Dinkes et al, 2007).
  - **Spread somewhat evenly from K-12** (Dinkes et al, 2007).

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- Data collected from 731 teachers majority of respondents (80.0%) had experienced school-related violence—broadly defined—at one point in their careers.
  - Serious violence (actual, attempted, or threatened physical violence) was less common, but still common enough to be of concern (27.6%)

(British Columbia, Canada), (Wilson et al, 2011).

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- approximately 11% of school principals reported that students were verbally abusive to their middle and high school teachers

(Espelage et al. 2013).

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- 80% of teachers reported at least **one** victimization experience in the **current or past year**, and of those who experienced an offense, 94% reported being victimized by students.
  - 72.5% of teachers experienced harassment at least **once**
  - 50% experienced property offenses (e.g., theft of or damage to property),
  - 44% reported physical attacks

(The American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence Directed Against Teachers, 2011)

# Local Level NL

- Younghusband (2009) suggests the abuse and violence is becoming a major concern for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador schools.
- Focus group of 8 teachers
- Face-to-face interviews with 23 teachers across the island
- 300 teachers who answered a lengthy questionnaire mailed out to 1000 teachers from K-12



Younghusband (2009) defines violence as  
“any threatened, attempted, or actual harm  
to person or persons (p.48).”

- Induced fear
- Verbal insults
- Foul language
- Language which implies attack
- Harassments
- Physical violence both at school and home
- Intimidation
- Threats



Most of these incidents occurred in classrooms, however:

- school corridors
- school grounds
- abusive phone calls at home. Some teachers indicated damage to their home and property.

(Younghusband, 2009)

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- A common thread was the *veil of silence* with regards to teacher safety in NL schools.
  - Teachers have claimed physical and emotional affects (stress) because they did not feel safe.

# Examples from the local context

- “You try to stop me (from leaving the room) and I will punch you out.”
- Another teacher was warned, “If you stand in my way I’ll knock you down like I did Miss —.
- Sexually ...inappropriate remarks made to female teachers by male students.
- “We’ll be waiting for you at the bottom of the hill with a baseball bat buddy.”
- A student threatened to kill my dog and my family.
- He stopped two feet from my desk and said “I’m going to f\*\*king kill you.”

# What we know about the local context Cont.

Participants in Younghusband's study exhibited:

- fear
- feelings of vulnerability
- high levels of stress.
  
- Parents have intimidated teachers verbally and physically.
  
- She argues that the evidence demonstrates that female teachers are twice as likely to experience abuse and harassment by students than their male counterparts.
  
- 25% of those surveyed had taken time off work due to injuries sustained from incidents of violence (Younghusband, 2009).

# Impact of abuse/violence on teachers' physical well-being include:

- Sleep disturbances
- Head/back-aches
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Uncontrollable crying
- Teeth grinding

(Younghusband, 2009)

## Emotional Impact include:

- Frustration
- Increased stress
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Irritability

(Younghusband, 2009)

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- Disgust
  - Helplessness
  - Sadness
  - Depression
  - Fear of re-victimization
  - Guilt
  - Mistrust of others
  - Low self-esteem

(Younghusband, 2009)



# Latest News From Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association The Bulletin Jan/Feb 2014

## “Teacher Safety and Violence at School”

Stated that “aggressive and sometimes violent student behaviour is an unfortunate reality that teachers sometimes face in their professional lives”

- Demonstrates the need for further inquiry...and how best to support teachers who may experience violence.

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- In a threatened and unsafe environment teachers cannot assist their students in reaching better academic achievement.
  - “Unsafe teachers cannot protect students and care for their safety, (p.173).”  
(Khoury-Kassabri et al. 2009)

# Possible Reasons for Violence:

- disorganized school structures
- negative school climates
- lack of administrative and collegial social supports

(Espelage et al, 2013)

# Lower rates of Violence

- balanced school organizational structures and support systems
- clear school disciplinary policies/rules
- positive school relationships

(Espelage et al, 2013)

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- I hope to engage participants in a dialogue that might assist me in shaping my research relating to this important issue.

# Proposal

- My research will explore how teachers' experience of violence in the school setting and the implications on their teaching practices.

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