The Trauma of Mass Violence and School Shootings on Youth and Community Responsibility and Response

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Natasha N. Johnson
Georgia State University
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The trauma of mass violence and school shootings on youth and community responsibility and response

Natasha N Johnson, EdD
Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies
Georgia State University
Overview

• The trauma of mass violence and school shootings on our youth

• The aftermath of school shootings

• School involvement and response

• Family/community involvement and response

• The broader impacts of mass violence and our roles as stakeholders
The trauma of mass violence on our youth

- Each day, 12 children die from gun violence in America.
- Another 32 are shot and injured.
- Guns are the leading cause of death among American children and teens.
- In fact, firearm deaths occur at a rate more than 5 times higher than drownings.

New England Journal of Medicine
U.S. Centers for Disease Control
The trauma of mass violence and school shootings on our youth

Noteworthy Information:

- Since Columbine in 1999, more than 338,000 students in the U.S. have experienced gun violence at school.

- In 2022, 34 students and adults died while more than 43,000 children were exposed to gunfire at school.

- There were more school shootings in 2022 – 46 – than in any year since Columbine. This mirrored America’s broader rise in gun violence as it emerged from the pandemic.

Washington Post
U.S. Department of Education and Secret Service
The Aftermath

The trauma associated with mass violence and school shootings on our youth is a significant and primary concern.

The aftermath often leaves children and communities struggling to heal as there are far-reaching psychological, emotional, and social impacts on victims.

The traumatic experience can lead to a range of reactions and challenges for youth including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, fear, and grief.

These incidences erode the sense of well-being, safety, and efficacy essential for healthy development, particularly among children and teenagers.
Involvement and Response Writ Large

- In 4 out of 5 school shootings, at least one other person had knowledge of the attacker’s plan but failed to report it.

- In a comprehensive school shooting study, the Secret Service and Department of Education found that 93% of school shooters planned the attack in advance.

- Almost all mass school shooters shared threatening or concerning messages or images.

- More than 75% raised concern from others prior to the attacks.

- Bystanders saw warning signs in most documented active shooter cases.

In almost every documented case of active shooters,.warning signs were shown.

93% of school shooters planned the attack in advance.

U.S. Department of Education and Secret Service
U.S. Secret Service
School Involvement and Response

- The school, undoubtedly, has a primary responsibility to respond to traumatic events of this nature.

- This involves providing support, resources, and interventions to help children, families, educators, and communities cope with the aftermath of mass violence.

- Immediate crisis management is crucial, and it is essential to understand the culture and specific needs of each school and community.

- Establishing routines and normalcy as soon as possible is vital for recovery and minimizing the ongoing burden of the traumatic experience.
Family/Community Involvement and Response

Community support, naturally, plays a crucial role in helping individuals dealing with the trauma associated with school/mass shootings.

The community as (primary/secondary) resource involves the following outlets/supports/services:

- Supporting extant mental health resource providers, such as counseling service providers, helplines, and trauma-informed care staff, is essential.

- In addition to the role of the school as responder, community members can serve as intermediaries, given their ability to tap into the culture and specific needs of their respective communities.

- All community members play a vital role in supporting children and their families through visibility, intentional support, and facilitating open conversations about violence the impacts of violence and how to move beyond.

- MTV = Money, Time, and Voice
The broader impacts of mass violence (and our roles as stakeholders)

Re: the broader community response, it is important to avoid actions that may inadvertently perpetuate the trauma, such as excessive focus on the event, prolonged memorials, or continuously reminding victims of the tragedy.

Instead, efforts should be focused on providing effective support, implementing evidence-based interventions, promoting resilience, and restoring a sense of safety, normalcy, and community well-being.
Moreover...

It is crucial to address the broader impact of mass violence on children who were not physically harmed but were present or in close proximity to the traumatic incident.

These individuals, in particular, may experience psychological distress, anxiety, and other trauma-related symptoms that also require support and intervention.
Additional notes worthy of our consideration:

- Research suggests that while most young people exposed to school shootings demonstrate resilience, a minority may experience severe and chronic symptoms.
- The likelihood of experiencing such symptoms can be influenced by various risk and protective factors.
- Therefore, it is crucial to provide ongoing support and resources to those affected, as the emotional recovery from such traumatic events can take weeks, months, and even years.
In sum, the trauma of mass violence and school shootings on youth requires a comprehensive and coordinated community response.

This includes providing immediate crisis management, mental health support, resources, and interventions tailored to the needs of affected individuals.

By addressing the root of trauma and offering support, communities can aid in the healing and recovery process of those impacted by tragic events of this nature.