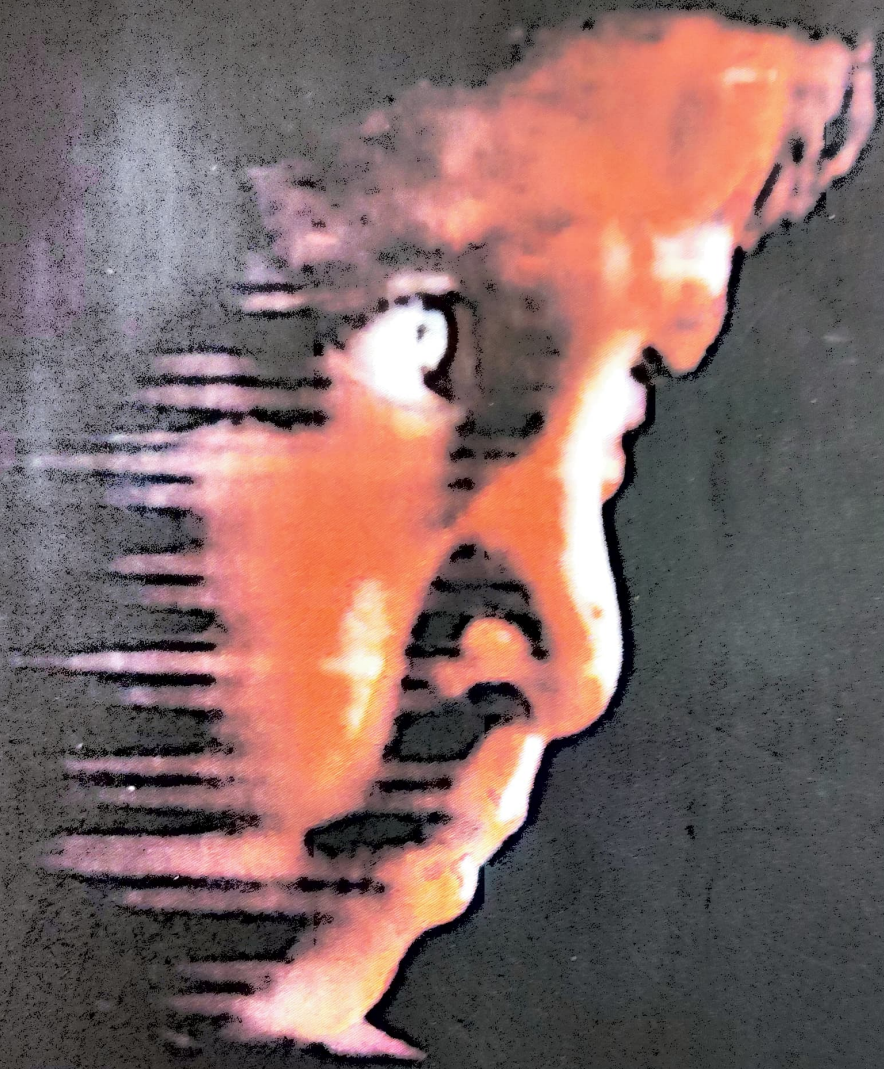


# Child Abuse



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# **Role of Teachers in Mitigating Emotional Abuse among School Students**

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## **Introduction**

Emotional abuse, one of the hardest forms of abuse to recognize is a pattern of behaviour that damages a child's sense of self-worth and negatively impacts their emotional development. The person emotionally abusing the child may reject, criticize, threaten, demean, berate and humiliate the child. A child's behaviour can indicate that he/she might be experiencing emotional abuse. Being harmed by parents, caregivers or peers, a child may experience cognitive, emotional, psychological or social problems. The children who are emotional abused by parents' stress, poor parenting skills, social isolation and



lack of resources need to be protected, safeguarded and avenged because the effects of abuse can be long lasting and devastating.

Teachers who play a prominent role next to parents, guardians or close relatives should possess a beneficial relationship with each one of the students in the classroom. A teacher should be aware of what is going on in students' lives and should have a social responsibility to detect and report suspected abuse of a child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Child abuse has been defined by the International Child Abuse Network as "the bad treatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children" (International Child Abuse Network, 2012). There are four types of child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect (Brooks, 2011).

Emotional abuse is defined as "persistent and extreme thwarting of a child's basic emotional needs" (Brooks, 2011). Emotional abuse could include verbal



attack, confinement and inadequate nurture – it can be done with words or in action by the abuser (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Emotional abuse includes name calling, insulting, threatening and violence, allowing children to witness emotional abuse of another and withholding love, support and guidance. There are many types of emotional abuse and however a single incident can cause serious harm as well. A student who is experiencing emotional abuse may show possible signs like running away from home, delay in development or decline in school work, often anxious, distressed or afraid of doing something wrong, extremes of behaviour, trying too hard or please or failure to connect with parents, feels worthless, unloved and unwanted, lying stealing or lack of trust in adults, self-harming or suicidal thoughts, drug and alcohol use (Royse, 2016).

Abuse appears to be most common in most families that are having financial difficulties, dealing with single parenthood, experiencing a divorce and struggling with substance abuse issues (Carry and Legg, 2018). A child may show certain signs of emotional abuse when a parent or caregiver show little or no regard for the child,



talking badly about the child, not touching and holding the child affectionately, not tending to child's medical needs, change in behaviour such as doing poor in school and emotionally immature when compared to peers. Victims of child abuse may also experience cognitive difficulties like low grades and poor classroom functioning (Springer et al., 2007). The abused child could also have issues with memory and learning (Brooks, 2011). The action of emotional deprivation results in a student's mind when a parent or caregiver does not show love or make them feel wanted, secure and worthy.

### **Teachers' Role in Mitigating Emotional Abuse**

A student has moved into an educational system that leads them to spend more time with teachers and school administration than parent from the day they arrive in kindergarten. In order to keep the students safe in their classroom, a teacher should observe the student and it is the teachers' social responsibility to protect a student from emotional abuse. A teacher needs to be well-educated on all different aspects of maltreatment and knowledgeable on the various types of abuse and signs that indicate a child's abuse. They can also aid in the



recovery process of a student by supporting and encouraging in any struggles they come across. A teacher should also observe and aware of students' physical signs of abuse, psychological effect of abuse, sexually suggestive behaviour and abusive signs.

By paying attention and caring about students' personal life, a teacher should fulfil their social and legal responsibilities. A teacher should be a part of two important protective processes of abuse like detection and report. The role of teachers is to provide a safe and secure environment in the recovery of a student with emotional abuse.

## **Implications**

As a protective effort, teachers should spend time with abused students by encouraging them and by reminding them of their value and worth by setting goals for their future. By recognizing the signs of possible child maltreatment, a teacher can detect and prevent a child's abuse. If a student is suspected to fallen into emotional abuse, the teacher should maintain students' privacy, listen carefully and by following school's procedures the



teacher should take immediate action by reporting it to Child Protective Services and Police.

Teachers should provide emotional support and should also seek consultation and counseling services. If a child needs some extra support to cope up with emotional abuse, teachers can encourage the child to contact Kid's helpline. National resources like The National Domestic Violence Hotline, Child Welfare Information Centre, Healthfinder.gov and National Child Abuse Hotline can help a child to recover when a child is emotionally abused. Learning new strategies for coping with will foster positive behaviour and also help the student's confidence.

## **Conclusion**

Emotional abuse encompasses all forms of non-physical violence and distress caused through non-verbal and verbal actions. It destructs a student's confidence and self-worth. A student who is emotionally abuse are aggressive, frequently, miss school, have poor academic performance, experience difficulty in making friends, have impaired ability to feel and express emotional and experiences mental health problems. As students spend



most of their time with teachers, it is the role and social responsibility of a teacher to observe, detect, protect, report and save students who are with emotional abuse.

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