

The Impact of School Shootings on Development

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School shootings are something that has heavily been filling the news recently in the United States. These traumatic events that have plagued our schools cannot go without somehow impacting the development of students all around the country. Erik Erikson proposed eight stages of psychosocial development. These eight stages are: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair.

One article from Time discusses the effects of school shootings on children within the United States. The author suggests that children in America, even those not involved in school shootings directly have shown signs of anxiety and depression. It was also stated that it is believed that elementary aged children will struggle more with these symptoms of school shootings compared to adolescent aged children or older. They believe this is due to young children have not developed defenses against within their brains to process situations such as school shootings or other mass traumatic events.

Such mental illnesses as anxiety or depression can easily alter the usual path of development in young children. It can impact how children view themselves, others, and the world around them. Traumatic events can also cause children to progress developmentally faster than they are intended to. Children can often skip developmental stages when they have experienced certain situations.

One of Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages is Industry vs. Inferiority. This stage occurs when the child is between the ages of five and twelve years old. During this stage, children establish social groups and start to develop a sense of self-worth or self-esteem. The

ultimate ending to this stage is that the child develop competence. Children are also beginning to make goals and should be encouraged to achieve their desired goals. If children cannot develop skills that they believe are expected by society, they may begin to feel inferior to their peers.

School shootings around the country could greatly impact this specific stage of development. Children may feel fearful that this dreadful situation may happen to them or to their social groups. Children's self-esteem can greatly be impacted and damaged due to these thoughts and they may feel inferior to people of other ages that this event does not happen to.

Overall, children can be greatly affected by school shootings; so much that their development can be altered or disrupted. It is important for us as future school counselors to be aware of how our students are feeling and learn how we can support them in the best and most beneficial ways possible.

References

Chung, M. (2022, May 27). *School shootings are causing anxiety and panic in children*. Time.

<https://time.com/6182235/mass-shootings-children-mental-health-anxiety-depression/>