School Shootings in the U.S.

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**Abstract**

School Shootings in the United States are, for many, beginning to feel like they are occurring more frequently than in years past. There are many reasons for why these incidents occur and also many things that could be improved to prevent school shootings in the United States. While there might not be much that we can do to get at the root of the problem, I believe there are many things that could be done to lessen the impact of these events and even discourage future events from occurring.

**Background**

School shootings in the United States are not a new issue to society whatsoever. School shootings in this country date back all the way to 1840 (PARADICE, 2017). We can conclude from this that the situation with which we are dealing with has been around a very long period of time and is not a new and recent phenomenon. School shootings are a particularly hot topic as of late mostly in part by the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting that took place on February 18, 2018 in Parkland, Florida. School shootings have become more common over the past five years (PARADICE, 2017).

The severity of these incidents is also another variable to take into account. The worst from of shootings that occurs is mass shootings. Mass shootings are where the shooter is simply trying to cause as much harm to as many individuals as they possibly can. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting was a mass shooting where the shooter killed seventeen people including students and school staff members and also injured seventeen more people Because of the shooter’s goal, these events are especially bad because of the amount people it can affect. This is why mass shootings are a larger problem than others.

**Issue Analysis**

To find potential solution to the issue of school shootings in the United States, we first need to identify all the factors involved in these incidents and how they effect the problem. There are a number of factors to take into account.

The first of these factors is the security of schools in the United States. When a school shooting does occur schools need to have things in place to protect children from the shooter. This could involve options such as school resource officers, arming teachers and plans for school lockdown or escape.

Another factor at play here is mental health. The mental health of children is a large part of why these incidents happen. Children with poor mental health need to be assisted with their ailments. These issues need to be noticed early and addressed to help the children lead healthy and productive lives. Mental health is an integral piece to making sure children are healthy and don’t commit terrible actions like mass shootings.

The last factor that is involved in school shootings is media coverage. Just about every time a new mass shooting occurs the media is on the scene and has plastered the name and face of the shooter everywhere for the entire world to see through television, social media and all over the internet. These actions are quite bad as it glorifies the shooter and it allows them to be infamous. This type of media coverage just allows the shooters to achieve their goal of being known, even if it is for the terrible actions that they commit.

**Possible Solutions**

There are many things that could be done lessen the impact of mass school shootings. The major concerns are safety, security, mental health and the media. Finding better solutions to these issues will effectively reduce the impact and maybe reduce the number of shootings in the future.

The first solutions to address are the ones concerning security and safety of schools. The first of these is school resource officers. Studies suggest school resource officers can be very effective for security in schools. (Crawford & Burns, 2015) Instead of having to contact first responders which could take minutes to get to the school in the case of a shooting, school resource officers would be at schools during school hours. Larger school may even have more officers if they are large enough to warrant it. The advantage of having school resource officers at schools is that there will always be a law enforcement officer on campus to deal with threats posed to students or school staff. The second of the possible solutions for safety and security would be to arm teachers with firearms. The idea of arming teachers with firearms is a very controversial one. If we were to implement this solution every teacher that wishes to carry a firearm on school grounds would need proper training and education on all laws on firearms. This would also require more legislation to be passed to set rules and boundaries for teachers carrying firearms. Another solution would be to install metal detectors in schools. This would make it so students wouldn’t be able to bring items like firearms and other weapons into the school without being detected.

As for mental health there are a couple options that we could implement. The first option would be to hire clinical psychologists for schools. These clinical psychologists would be able to help children that are having issues with mental health and assist them in combatting their issues. Another option to help mental health would be to encourage students to report children that appear to be troubled. Using this option any troubled children could be found and helped so that they don’t become a shooter.

Finally, there is the issue of how the media conducts their business with school shootings. Passing regulations that put boundaries on how the news and other media regarding school shootings would be a great way to lessen the impact of this issue. This would keep shooters from seeking fame from their actions as their face and name would be unknown to the public. This solution would just be another way to deter potential school shooters from committing these horrible acts.

**The Most Optimal Solution**

The best solution to the issue of school shooting in the United States improves on safety, security, mental health and the media. In this solution school should have school resource officer on campus during school hours to defend against any possible threats to students or school faculty members. As for the option of allowing teachers to carry firearms, is not a great option. Only about 25 percent of executives in law enforcement agree that teachers should be allowed to carry firearms. (Chrusciel, Wolfe, Hansen, Rojek, Kaminski, 2015) This would require a lot of legislation and training for all people involved. Additionally, not all people can be trusted with firearms around children. Some teachers could be some of those people as well. It is better for school resource officers to handle the defending. The option of metal detectors in schools is a decent option though it may be expensive. Implementing metal detectors in schools should be geared more towards schools that have had issues with weapons being brought to school before because they have a higher risk of having weapons.

Regarding mental health, having clinical psychologists in schools would help children greatly. If teachers, parents or even the children themselves don’t feel well mentally they can go to the clinical psychologists in the school and receive help. Having others notice certain behaviors in troubled children and having them talk to the clinical psychologist can prevent them from becoming a shooter.

Lastly, media and news outlets should be discouraged from showing the name and/or face of any shooters. If all news outlets didn’t show any personal information about the shooter it would discourage shooters because they would not receive any fame from people knowing who they are.

I believe implementing these plans would effectively reduce the amount of school shootings and also reduce the severity of shootings that do occur. It is my hope that these solutions will be used someday to prevent school shootings in the United States.

References

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