

International Conference on

# Pediatrics and Neonatal Healthcare

August 31, 2021 | Webinar

## Feeling Unsafe at School and Associated Mental Health Difficulties among Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review

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This study systematically reviewed the literature on perceived school safety. We investigated the prevalence, factors and associated mental health difficulties, as well as cross-cultural findings. Five databases were searched up to 9 February 2021 for peer-reviewed papers published in English. We included quantitative studies that explored the perception of school safety among children and adolescents. The reference lists of the selected papers were also searched. We conducted a narrative synthesis of the included studies. The review included 43 papers. The mean prevalence of the students who felt unsafe at school was 19.4% and ranged from 6.1% to 69.1%. Their perceived safety was associated with a wide range of personal, school, and social factors. Not feeling safe at school was related to being victimized and mental health difficulties, including depressive symptoms and suicidal behavior. Higher perceived school safety was associated

with measures such as the presence of a security officer and fair school rule enforcement. The results showed the lack of cross-cultural studies on perceived school safety. Empirical studies are needed that examine the mechanisms of school safety, using valid measures. A clear definition of school safety should be considered a key aspect of future studies.

### Biography

Yuko Mori is a doctoral candidate at the Research Center for Child Psychiatry, University of Turku. Mori has a background in early childhood education and educational research. Her research particularly focuses on psychological safety at school, as well as the predictors and outcomes of unsafe educational environments among children and adolescents. She has also conducted cross-cultural research on school safety. She works in collaboration with an international network of scholars from Finland and Japan.

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