



Violence in the school environment: causes, consequences and preventive measures.

MEHDAOUI Samia

Université Abderrahmane Mira - Bejaia
(Algérie)

samia.mehdaoui@univ-bejaia.dz

Abstract :

This article aims to study the phenomenon of violence in the school environment, which has become a worrying phenomenon and is increasing within educational institutions. Therefore, we tried to interpret it by explaining the concept of violence in its general context, and in the school context. Then, explore the causes of this phenomenon by examining several aspects such as personal, family, social etc. We also discuss forms of violence in school, such as verbal violence, physical, material etc. Additionally, this article deals with the negative effects of this phenomenon on the learner, the teacher and the school and which can extend outside. Finally, a range of preventive measures have been proposed to reduce the occurrence of school violence.

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- ✓ Preventive measures.

Introduction:

Violence is considered as an ancient phenomenon, which is inherent to humanity, this phenomenon developed with the emergence and evolution of various human civilizations. This phenomenon is not limited to one specific group or others, but extends to various groups at different levels. It also takes different forms depending on the environment in which it is practiced, and in this context school violence is one of the main subjects of research. From this perspective, many studies have been conducted on violence in school environments, and they concluded that this phenomenon is present and can be expressed in various forms and its consequences are harmful on many levels (psychological, physical, social...).

School is an integral part of children's lives from a young age, through the different learning it promotes. It is thus one of the first socialization structures after the family. The school environment plays an important role in their development on several aspects: psychological, cognitive, social, emotional and other. However, some problems experienced in school can affect the students' academic progress. Among its problems, school violence which refers to aggressive behavior that is perpetrated at the school level, according to the study of Lester, Lawrence and Ward (2017) violence in school environments threatens the general well-being of students., whether they are perceived as victims or aggressors, but also their entourage, such as the school, school staff and family (pouliot & Bérubé, 2020), the prevention and fight against this phenomenon requires an intervention of the various parties responsible for education, in order to improve the school environment and reduce the spread of this phenomenon and find effective solutions that ensure the

well-being in schools. This article discusses school violence by answering the following questions:

- What is school violence?
- What are the forms of violence in school?
- What causes school violence?
- What are the impacts of school violence?
- What are the possible preventive measures to reduce the phenomenon of violence in schools?

1. *The objectives of research:*

This current research aims to:

- ✓ Understand the phenomenon of school violence and the key concepts associated with it.
- ✓ Explain the different forms of violence in school.
- ✓ Understand the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.
- ✓ Propose some preventive solutions to prevent school violence.

2. *The importance of research:*

The importance of this research is that:

- ✓ To enrich the field of scientific research on the issue of school violence.
- ✓ Understand the epistemic roots of violence and act on this scourge.
- ✓ Help the different actors in the school, especially (parents, learners, teachers...etc) to understand the factors that lead to violence in the school environment, and the possibilities that allow them to avoid it.

3. Definition of violence:

The concept of violence derives from the Latin word “vis” which refers to force, and “violentia” which refers to the abuse of force. This is in line with the definition adopted by the WHO (World Health Organization), according to which violence is defined as: The deliberate use of physical force, or power against oneself, another person or a group or community that is at risk or has a high risk of causing trauma, death, moral injury, developmental misfortune or disability. (Clément, 2011: p. 122-123).

Violence may also be understood as: "any manifestation of force, whether verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual, which is intentionally used against a person and which results in feelings of distress, injury, to hurt or oppress by attacking his integrity, psychological or physical well-being, rights or property." (Beaument, 2023: p. 10)

Through the previous definitions, violence in its entirety can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Violence is the use of force against one or more persons.
- ✓ Violence takes many forms (verbal, physical, psychological etc.)
- ✓ The consequences and effects of violence differ according to the type of violence.

4. Definition of school violence :

Many concepts are integrated into the definition of violence in school, such as aggressive behavior, anti-social behavior, the victimization etc. these concepts have led to give different definitions for violence in school environment:

According to the definition of the National Institute of Public Health of Quebec in (2018), violence at school is: “any type of unwanted behavior, perceived as hostile and harmful, that affects the physical or mental integrity of

a person, his rights or dignity, violence may be experienced and committed by students or school staff.” (Alice, 2020: p. 7)

Hurrelmann (1998) argues that violence “covers the entire spectrum of activities and actions that cause physical or mental suffering or harm to persons who are active in or around the school, or who aim to damage objects at the school” (Elhaddadi, 2019: p. 67)

For Marmoz, school violence is “a social construct that corresponds to a function and utility that is considered and analysed.” (Badolo, 2018: p. 19)

So, school violence can be translated as:

- ✓ All undesirable behavior in the school environment towards students, teachers, school staff and materiel.
- ✓ Violent behavior at school can be verbal, physical, psychological, material and other.
- ✓ The forms of violence in school are expressed according to the causes that impact them.
- ✓ School violence is a result of several factors including personal and social factors.

5. Causes of violence in school:

The literature reports that the causes of violence in school are based on four main sources:

5.1. Personal causes:

It is found that the characteristics of the student himself may have an influence on his behavior, whether he’s a victim or aggressor (Débarbieux, 2011: p. 17). According to the biological model, temperament can play an important role in the development of aggressive behavior, for example: children with more intense emotions and little self-control, as in the case of children with a difficult

temperament, they will more easily express their anger through aggression. (Idir & Negaz, 2020: p. 814)

Other factors of violence in school are the responsibility of the student, low intellectual quotient (IQ) and poor academic performance, according to research these factors are responsible for the occurrence of conduct disorder and delinquency, in this context the study carried out by MOFFIT (1993) shows that deficits in cognitive abilities can interact with other dimensions of behavior and environment, resulting in a stabilization of anti-social and aggressive behaviors (EZZAIDI, 2019: p.135), Also, physical factors are related to the risk of violence in association with other cultural and psychological factors. In this context, studies show that the smallest, weakest, timid and insecure children are more often to be the victims, whereas the aggressors are often larger and physically stronger (Débarbieux, 2011: p. 17).

Dupaquier explains that the responsibility for violence in schools falls on the learners. Thus, undesirable behavior disrupts the learning process, this includes the moral sense of learners, their lack of benchmarks, norms and values, intolerance and prejudice. (Badolo, 2018: p. 21).

5.2. Family causes :

Generally, the child's relationship with his family influences his social behavior. Scientific research addresses the issue of the influence of the family on the appearance of antisocial behaviors according to: (EZZAIDI, 2019: p. 135-136)

✓ Child education: This implies that the way parents educate their children has a significant impact on their personality. The child's behavior is the result of a whole process of education since childhood. The study carried out by

(ROTHBAUM and WEISZ) in 1994 shows that: family support, parental punishment and parental reactivity... etc. are related to the antisocial behavior of children, which means that unconsidered education will necessarily produce a young offender.

✓ Parental conflicts: all family disruptions such as parent conflicts and separations have a negative impact on social behaviors, which in turn can become anti-social behaviors. Many studies have shown that family problems cause violence among adolescents, such as the PITTSBURGH study which shows that violent youth have an unhappy parental relationship.

5.3. The socio-economic causes:

There are several social factors that are responsible for violence in school, such as: the economic crisis, unemployment, the trivialization of violence through television, cinema, literature, some games, disadvantaged areas and lack of verbal communication (Bouchamaa & Daniel & Moisset, 2004: p. 91), For the socio-economic factors of violence in school, studies report that low social economic level is strongly associated with antisocial behavior. Low-income parents do not automatically produce children with antisocial behaviors, but poverty is at the heart of a range of factors that influence the emergence of such behaviors. These families are more likely to send their children to a school located in a disadvantaged environment where the social and academic context is less conducive to educational success than those in middle or high socio-economic backgrounds. (Débarbieux, 2011: p. 18)

Among the theoretical models that explain the sociological factors of

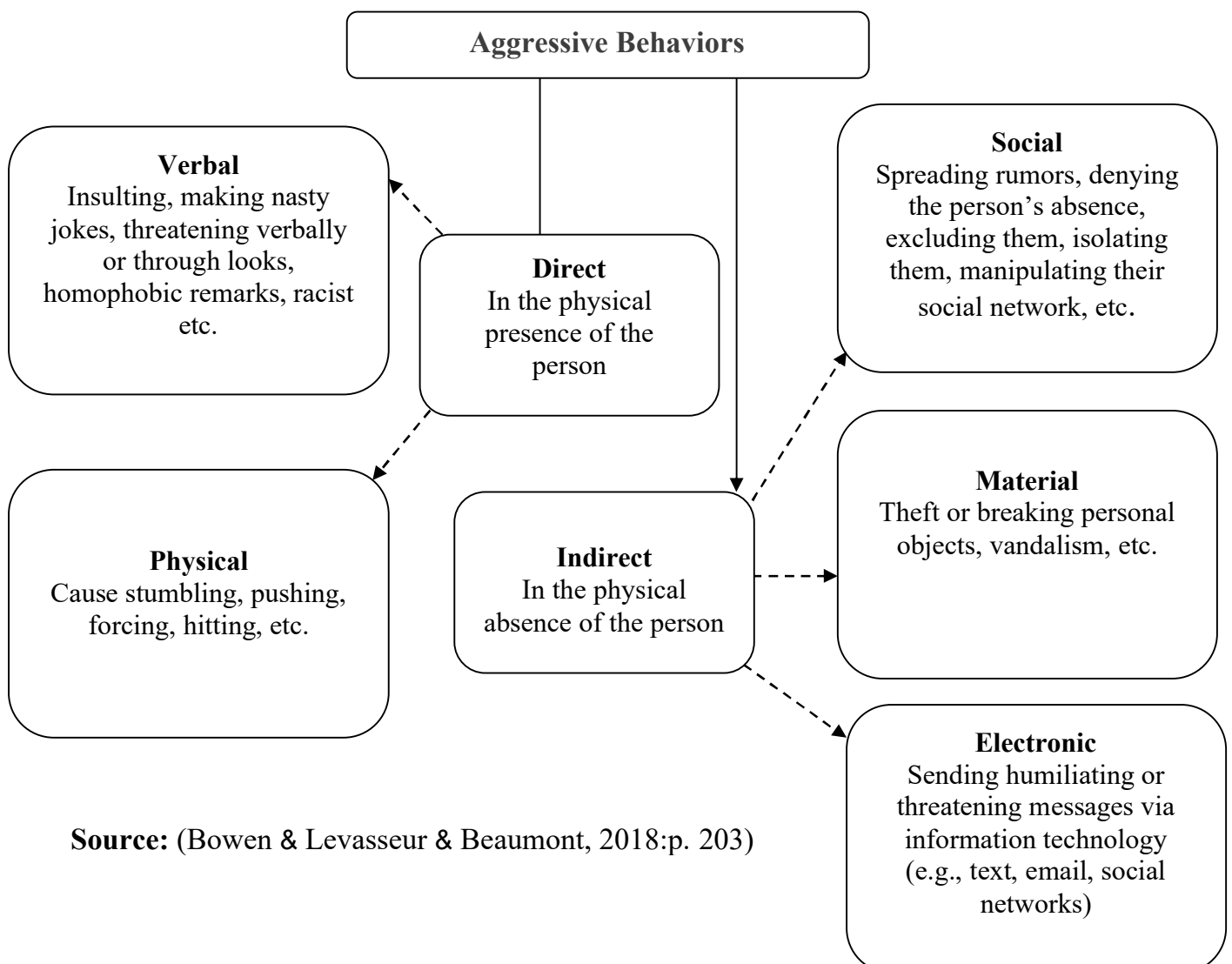
distress often greater than physical aggression. Sometimes victims of this violence become more vulnerable to other forms of aggression.

- ✓ **Material violence:** it describes the act of attacking a person's property, such as (breakage, theft, vandalism, etc.), these attacks affect the moral integrity of the victim as (worry and financial involvement).
- ✓ **Electronic violence:** this type is characterized by the use of electronic means to reach its target as: (text

insults, propagating images that are compromising), this violence implies the fact that a single assault can be perpetuated by the transfer of information on the web and quickly cause serious consequences for the targeted person.

These forms of violence are categorized within a taxonomy that encompasses two primary categories of aggression, namely direct and indirect, as the schema below shows:

Figure n°01: the forms of violence according to the model of Beaumont and collaborators.



Source: (Bowen & Levasseur & Beaumont, 2018:p. 203)

According to (Soisson, 2015), there are five forms of violence in school, these forms are classified as follows: (Elhaddadi, 2019)

- ✓ **Violence against objects:** vandalism is the most common form of this type of violence, in the school environment vandalism takes the form of graffiti on the premises of the institution, acts of deterioration such as breaking of school equipment, Broken windows, damage to school transport etc., all these acts of vandalism affect the school climate and deteriorate the feeling of well-being.
- ✓ **Violence between students:** this violence can take many forms, it can be physical or verbal, psychological, sexual, symbolic, and online, and it can happen between students within or outside of school.
- ✓ **Violence against teachers:** this form of violence refers to violent behaviors by students towards teachers, including verbal aggression which is the most common and physical aggression which is the most severe. This violence affects and disrupts the relationship between the student and the teacher and causes him many difficulties in his profession.
- ✓ **Violence against students:** this violence in schools refers to violent behavior towards students by either teachers or educational staff for various reasons, this violence is reflected in degrading and cruel forms of psychological and physical punishment.
- ✓ **Institutional violence:** this violence is part of the school system, and it affects students in a number of ways, such as school exclusion, inequality of access to different school cycles especially for

students with disabilities, and any act that hurts the student physically or mentally.

7. The consequences of school violence:

Violence in general has serious consequences, both in the short and the long term, for people and all the spheres that support them in terms of physical and mental health. The intensity, duration and severity of these consequences vary according to the nature of the acts and the socio-relational context in which they occur, and the quality of social support and personal characteristics of those who suffer from the violent act. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 stated that the consequences, apart from trauma or death, can also lead to physical, psychological and social problems. (Alice, 2020: p. 8)

School violence has a range of negative consequences for all members of the school community, and specifically for students. The negative effects of school violence on students, whether they are victims, perpetrators or witnesses, include: (Beaumont & Lépine, 2010)

- ✓ Students who are victims of violence may have negative opinions about the school environment and use avoidance strategies such as school absenteeism.
- ✓ Decreased cognitive functions such as memory, concentration and abstraction.
- ✓ The occurrence of various academic and psychological difficulties (increased levels of anxiety, failure and school drop-out) due to repeated exposure to violence in schools.
- ✓ The risk of developing internalized behavior problems such as (depression, social withdrawal etc.), affecting the quality of school and social adaptation.

- ✓ The occurrence of learning difficulties and school delays among students who present aggressive behavior.
- ✓ Exposure to school violence can affect students' sense of security at school.

Violence in schools makes teaching and administrative staff spend a lot of time and energy resolving problems instead of improving the school climate and quality of life. It often prevents the missions from being completed in good conditions. Sometimes it is seen as the cause of a school's failure, because it has direct effects on the teaching/learning process. It can destabilize the organization that reigns in schools and turn them into easy prey for anarchy. This phenomenon affects not only students and schools but also actors of the system. School violence results in a loss of material resources for society. Indeed, the budgets set aside for prevention and combating this phenomenon are increasing exponentially. These resources, which may be considered as wasted resources, could be used to develop the school system. (Elhaddadi, 2029: p. 73-74)

School violence affects both social (relational, security, belonging) and educational climates, several authors mention that living violence can lead to significant adverse consequences for students or members of the education team, too often, the severity of micro-violence in institutions is underestimated. Humbeeck and Hadry confirm that the consequences of school violence are irreversible on the student's educational path and personal history (Alice, 2020: p. 8-9), these findings indicate that this phenomenon significantly marks the educational progress of students, the implementation of effective actions to prevent it is important; in this context the following question is asked: How can school violence be prevented?

Among the preventive measures that can reduce the phenomenon of violence in school, we can mention those concerning the student himself, and others concerning the family and the school. These measures are actions that touch on these three elements or concerted actions between these three poles: (Bouchamaa & Daniel & Moisset, 2004: p. 92)

- ✓ **Preventive measures for students:** these measures revolve around the promotion of high values among young people, the availability of moral education to violent youth, the awareness of students about the consequences of violence and their involvement in ways to combat violence.
- ✓ **Preventive measures for the family:** these measures focus on identifying and supporting problem families and raising awareness of the consequences of violence.
- ✓ **Preventive measures for schools:** the fight against violence in school begins with respect for the law, safety of people and property. Thus the good functioning of the school institution will be related to the success of the students, these specific measures to strengthen safety in the school environment will be realized through an internal regulation (Genç, 2008: p. 165). In addition to these measures, after-school activities should be organized involving students, teachers and school heads in order to improve the climate, as well as an adequate training of teachers and the formulation of clear expectations towards them, there should be also a reduction of the number of students per class and the

employment of school psychologists within schools. (Bouchamaa & Daniel & Moisset, 2004: p. 92)

According to (WHO, 2019: p. 2) school plays an important role in the fight against violence, to reduce this phenomenon it can offer organized activities for the benefit of students with the aim of contributing to prevent violence, children who benefit from such activities are less likely to exhibit aggressive and violent behavior in school, adding that schools can also combat school violence, by training qualified teachers who can implement violence prevention programs and serve as models outside of the students' family and community, Schools may also hold parent awareness campaigns to improve parenting practices that can be detrimental to children's health and education. So school is an ideal environment to challenge some of the harmful social and cultural norms that tolerate violence towards others, such as gender-based violence.

Conclusion:

Violence in general is the main subject of many researches conducted by researchers in different fields including psychology and educational sciences. School violence as a type remains an active phenomenon in schools, which requires immediate intervention by education actors to reduce its spread. This violence is influenced by several factors related to the student himself, his family and social environment. In fact, the acts of school violence have a negative impact on many actors in the school environment such as students, teachers, and the teaching staff etc. At the end we can say that only a continued fight against this violence will be able to reduce its spread and negative consequences in school.

Recommendations:

Finally, a set of recommendations could be proposed to reduce the phenomenon of violence in schools, including:

1. Organizing awareness campaigns on the subject of violence in schools and its negative repercussions for the benefit of students, teachers and parents.
2. Importing strict laws into schools that are able to control violent behavior.
3. Strengthening the work of listening cells within schools to help students develop their positive aspects.
4. Creating positive links between the school and the student's family environment, in order to prosecute students with family or school problems that generate violent behavior.
5. Work to help students most affected by violence, and educate them about the negative effects of violence on achieving their life goals.
6. Give importance to school guidance, as it plays an essential role in accompanying students in various psychological, behavioral and academic aspects.
7. Assist students in finding solutions to their problems through psychological and educational counseling.
8. Provide training to those working in schools so that they have the tools to prevent and respond to violence in school.
9. Provide after-school activities with an anti-violence theme and promote good behavior.

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