

School Violence as a Reflection of Social Marginalization: A Sociological Reading of the Drivers of Aggressive Behavior in the Educational Environment

العنف المدرسي انعكاس للتمييز الاجتماعي : قراءة سوسيولوجية في
دوافع السلوك العدواني داخل الفضاء التربوي.

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الملخص:

كل بلدان العالم بما فيها الدولة الجزائرية تدعو في كل نظمها الى العدل والمساواة الاجتماعيين، الا أن الواقع عكس ذلك.

فالللمساواة تعني التمييز والحرمان وفي بعض الأحيان الاقصاء، وقد أضحت ظاهرة التمييز الاجتماعي من الظواهر التي وجب على الباحثين في مختلف المجالات الاجتماعية الاهتمام بها، كونها تعد سببا مباشرا في تقسيم المجتمعات، وظهور بؤر التوتر والانقسام فيها.

فالتهميش الاجتماعي هو عكس عملية الاندماج الاجتماعي الذي تسعى اليه المجتمعات، وقد تعددت مظاهر التهميش واختلفت، ومن مظاهره نجد ظاهرة العنف المدرسي، هذا الاخير الذي أصبح يهدد المنظومة التربوية بأكملها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهميش الاجتماعي، العنف المدرسي، السلوك العدواني، التنشئة الاجتماعية، العلاقات الاجتماعية.

Abstract:

All countries around the world, including Algeria, advocate for justice and social equality in their systems. However, the reality often contradicts these ideals. Inequality results in marginalization, deprivation, and, at times, exclusion. Social marginalization has become a phenomenon that demands attention from researchers across various social disciplines, as it is a direct cause of societal fragmentation and the emergence of zones of tension and division.

Social marginalization stands in contrast to the process of social integration that societies aim to achieve. It manifests in multiple forms, one of which is school violence an issue that has become a serious threat to the entire educational system.

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Keywords:

Social marginalization, school violence, aggressive behavior, socialization, social relations.

Introduction

Although the school is considered a fundamental space for socialization and the instillation of values such as citizenship and discipline, recent years have witnessed a significant increase in violent behaviors within its premises. This violence cannot be understood solely from an individual or behavioral perspective; rather, it appears to be linked to a broader system of structural factors chief among them, social marginalization that affects a wide segment of students.

Based on this, the central research problem can be stated as follows:

To what extent can school violence be considered a manifestation of social marginalization?

And can students' aggressive behavior be understood as a result of disrupted social structures that reproduce exclusion within the educational environment?

From this main issue, the following research questions emerge:

1. What is the relationship between a student's socio-economic status and their tendency toward aggression?
2. How does social marginalization and exclusion contribute to shaping patterns of school violence?
3. What role does the school play in either reinforcing or limiting violence that results from social marginalization?

To answer these questions, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1:* The more a student's family experiences social marginalization, the greater the likelihood of aggressive behavior appearing in the school environment.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Aggressive behavior in school cannot be understood in isolation from structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social discrimination.
- *Hypothesis 3:* The recurrence of school violence is a result of the failure of socialization institutions particularly the family and the school to integrate individuals effectively.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to enrich the sociological discussion on the phenomenon of violence within educational institutions by connecting it to the concept of social marginalization. It also seeks to provide practical foundations for addressing the root causes of school violence, thereby supporting more effective interventions from educational stakeholders.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the relationship between social marginalization and aggressive behavior in schools.
- To classify different forms of school violence and link them to the social context of families and communities.
- To uncover the mechanisms through which violence is reproduced in the educational setting.
- To offer educational and sociological recommendations to reduce violence related to social exclusion.

Research Methodology

Given the nature of the topic, which involves understanding social phenomena within the educational sphere, this study adopts a **descriptive-analytical approach**. It focuses on analyzing the social, cultural, and economic factors that lead to the emergence of violence in schools.

1. Definition of School Violence(Zidan, 1987, p. 93)

Various definitions of school violence have been proposed. Some define it as a sequence beginning with a weakening of modesty and self-respect, resulting in destructive behavior or threats that may escalate to acts such as homicide, reflecting the deterioration of the educational environment.

Another definition describes it as a set of behaviors and actions by a student intended to serve personal interests or harm classmates, teachers, the school environment, or school property.

Forms of school violence include:

- **A. Physical violence:** such as hitting, fighting, vandalizing school property, theft, physical assault, carrying weapons, and in extreme cases, homicide or suicide.
- **B. Verbal violence:** including insults, swearing, and verbal harassment.
- **C. Psychological violence:** including mockery, ridicule, classroom disruption, clowning, lack of discipline, and interrupting the teacher during lessons essentially, all forms of disorder within the school environment.

4. Violence from a Sociological Perspective(Hilmi, 1999, p. 83)

Initially, violence was associated with mental illness, but it quickly drew the attention of sociologists who faced the challenge of defining it. Sociologically, violence is an act intentional or not that causes physical pain or harm to another person.

Violence is understood as a behavioral phenomenon resulting from interactions between individuals. It is considered an act that deviates from social norms and traditions within a given society. Violence is often viewed as a primitive, uncivilized

behavior that constitutes a punishable crime. Like other forms of crime, it undermines social cohesion and threatens the unity and stability of society. (El-Issawi, 2000, p. 152)

Social Marginalization(Bibimon & Berkou, 2021, p. 1340)

The concept of *social marginalization* refers to a set of structural processes that produce disparities in the distribution of opportunities and resources, thereby hindering individuals' fair and effective participation in urban life. At its most severe, it manifests as *social exclusion*. Social marginalization fundamentally contradicts the principle of social justice, as it raises critical concerns about the unequal distribution of opportunities among individuals.

Forms of Social Marginalization:

1. Involuntary Self-Marginalization:

In this form, marginalization manifests as an individual's voluntary withdrawal from society due to a perceived sense of social rejection. This is common among minority groups who, after facing exclusion and discrimination, consciously choose isolation.

2. Automatic or Forced Marginalization:

Here, marginalization takes on an automatic character that becomes compulsory due to social circumstances. Individuals or groups may refrain from participating in public life not by choice, but because their social position within the context prevents them from doing so, even if they are willing.

3. Voluntary Self-Marginalization:

In this case, individuals choose to isolate themselves from society despite possessing all the means necessary to engage fully in daily social life. The withdrawal stems from a personal decision rather than external constraints.

The Social Perspective on Marginalization(Bibimon & Berkou, 2021, p. 1340)

Marginalization is shaped by structures and processes that exclude certain groups from meaningful and equal participation in society. It may occur based on race, religion, gender, social class, disability, or other characteristics. Marginalized individuals face numerous barriers that prevent them from enjoying their fundamental rights.

The Psychological Perspective on Marginalization

Marginalization significantly impacts an individual's mental health and overall well-being. Marginalized people often experience isolation, a lack of belonging, and diminished self-esteem and confidence. They may suffer from depression, anxiety,

and other mental health issues due to discrimination and systemic injustice factors usually beyond their control.

In general, social and psychological marginalization stifles human potential, depriving individuals of the opportunity to actively participate in society. This, in turn, hampers societal development as a whole.

We must ask: How can people burdened by frustration, resentment, and hopelessness be expected to contribute positively to our society and nation?

The Broader Impact of Marginalization

Addressing this issue is crucial due to the widespread harm marginalization causes not only to affected individuals but to society at large. It contributes to the spread of poverty, crime, and violence, and undermines both economic growth and social progress.

Understanding the various dimensions of exclusion or marginalization is essential to dismantling the social, economic, political, and cultural barriers that prevent individuals or groups from living prosperous and productive lives. One of the key goals set by the United Nations in its 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is the **elimination of all forms of discrimination** a process by which certain groups are ignored or excluded based on characteristics such as race, gender, or origin.

Marginalizing any segment of society poses a serious threat to both the community and the state as a whole.

Marginalization is not limited to the groups mentioned above. It may also take the form of **discrimination based on belief systems, sectarian or tribal affiliations, or cultural and political references** patterns unfortunately widespread in local discourse, on social media, and in some media platforms. These are often exploited by certain groups that thrive on societal fragmentation.

Such exclusionary practices contribute to growing social inequalities and political instability, ultimately obstructing development and progress.

This is deeply concerning, as social marginalization is not merely an issue affecting certain individuals. It is a **systemic problem** that weakens the entire social fabric. Addressing it is not only a matter of justice and equality it is a **prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, peace, and stability**.

Therefore, a radical shift is needed in how both executive and legislative authorities approach issues of marginalization and social exclusion. These are not isolated individual problems, but societal issues requiring **collaborative efforts** to ensure social inclusion and equality for all.

We must recognize that social marginalization is a **complex and deep-rooted problem**. Effective solutions require serious engagement with its root causes through

evidence-based policies. This includes reforms in laws and cultural frameworks, the dismantling of intellectual taboos, and the reinforcement of **social justice and equal opportunities**. Superficial solutions, empty promises, and manipulative political tactics only lead to further division, stagnation, and decline. (Jawhar Hayat, 2024)

3. Causes of School Violence

There are multiple factors that contribute to the emergence of school violence. Among the most prominent are:

1. Family-related Causes:

The family is the foundational unit of society and plays a significant role in the development of school violence. Key contributing factors include:

- Lack of emotional security due to the absence of one parent or parental separation.
- Low economic status, unemployment, and the inability to meet material needs.

Family Instability

- A lack of emotional security due to ongoing family conflicts
- The use of physical punishment and violence as a parenting tool
- Unequal treatment among siblings
- Poor housing conditions and overcrowded living environments
- The child's personality traits and the family's parenting style

Social Factors

The broader community represents the environment surrounding the educational institution, and students are affected by the social context to which they belong. Some of the key societal influences include:

- A sense of insecurity, injustice, and inequality, which leads to feelings of oppression and alienation especially in cultures where violence is normalized or even celebrated
- Marginalization, particularly in underprivileged areas, where individuals may be more prone to violent behavior due to a lack of recognition of their rights and needs
- Poverty, which often fosters frustration and a sense of injustice, potentially triggering aggressive responses

Psychological Factors

Several psychological variables may contribute to the development of violent behavior in children, including:

- Excessive free time and a lack of constructive outlets for energy

- Defensive reactions to threats or provocations
- Exposure to psychological trauma
- Adolescence as a period marked by a strong desire for self-assertion, particularly in environments where violence is seen as a sign of masculinity
- Frustration arising from obstacles that prevent the achievement of personal goals, leading to aggressive responses
- Direct exposure to violence, which may foster imitation and reciprocal aggression(Kamel Mohamed, 2011, p. 134)

Media Influence

Many researchers agree that the media plays a significant role in shaping violent behavior among students, especially through continuous exposure to violence in films, television shows, and video games. These forms of media often portray violence as an effective method of resolving conflict, encouraging children to emulate fictional "heroes" and thereby internalize violent behavior as acceptable in real-life situations.

Consequences of School Violence

Violent behavior within schools has multiple consequences at various levels, which can be summarized as follows:

a. Psychological and Behavioral Level:

- Recurring violence as a response to previous aggression, whether directed at oneself, others, or school property
- Lying as a defense mechanism to escape punishment
- Fear of teachers, the school environment, or the development of nighttime anxieties
- Increased nervousness and emotional tension due to a lack of psychological security
- Difficulty concentrating and focusing, often accompanied by the use of fabricated illnesses to avoid attending school
- Development of negative self-image or negative perceptions of others, which may lead to withdrawal, depression, and even speech disorders such as stuttering

b. Educational Level:

- Decline in academic performance
- Frequent absenteeism
- Delays or complete withdrawal from school
- Hatred toward the educational institution and all its components
- Lack of psychological safety, which suppresses students' creativity and critical thinking(Mezgart, 2013, p. 35)

3. Social Marginalization and Manifestations of Violence(Barakat, n.d., p. 27)

School violence takes many forms, many of which can be linked to social marginalization within the educational institution and its broader environment.

1. The Family

The family is the first social unit responsible for socialization and behavioral regulation. It plays a crucial role in either fostering or undermining a child's psychological and emotional balance. Key factors include:

1.1. Emotional Deprivation:

The absence of affection and emotional support particularly from the mother leads to feelings of anxiety and tension from early childhood. Early weaning and a lack of emotional fulfillment create a sense of deprivation and injustice. Research shows that a strained mother-child relationship can provoke early signs of anger and aggression, expressed through biting, shouting, rebellion, or destructive tendencies.

This emotional deprivation is often linked to family breakdowns, especially the absence of one of the parents, which deprives the child of an essential source of support. Studies reveal that the majority of delinquents and homeless youth have suffered from some form of emotional neglect.

1.2. Material Deprivation:

This refers to the family's inability to provide for basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Such conditions put the family in a state of functional failure and foster a sense of exclusion and injustice in the child, increasing the likelihood of aggressive behavior as a form of expression. (Jaafar, 1996, p. 53)

1.3. Moral Breakdown:

This relates to the absence of moral values and discipline within the family, alongside the lack of a positive role model.

When a child is raised in an environment where the father engages in violence against the mother or others, these behaviors are often internalized and reproduced by the child.

Poor parental competence and inconsistent parenting methods whether through excessive harshness or overindulgence lead to emotional and behavioral instability, often resulting in violence.

Repeated punishment tends to backfire, producing the opposite effect of what is intended. Children may respond with defiance, withdrawal, or aggression as coping mechanisms.

1.4.Group Authority

Group authority is often embodied in a leader who takes initiative and assumes control, usually due to personal traits that set them apart. Children, especially those lacking positive role models at home or school, may look up to this leader as a figure of guidance.

Within such groups, where violence is a dominant logic, numerous instances of coercion and blackmail occur. Individuals with weak personalities often fall under the control of the group leader, which generates feelings of hatred and frustration. As a result, they may seek revenge either by harming others who are weaker or by inflicting harm upon themselves.

Moreover, the group leader—once accustomed to exercising power through force—often becomes convinced that violence is the only valid form of communication. (Bekir bin Hammouda, 2001, p. 40)

Conclusion

In conclusion, **social marginalization** represents one of the most dangerous social phenomena threatening societal stability and cohesion. Therefore, it is crucial to diagnose its underlying causes and motivations in order to understand and address it effectively.

Recommendations

1. Strict Regulations in Educational Institutions:

Implement and enforce strict rules capable of regulating the behavior of both students and teachers. Examples include banning physical punishment, installing surveillance cameras to reduce aggressive acts, inspecting students who exhibit aggressive behavior to check for weapons, punishing students who assault peers, and banning the use of mobile phones in schools.

2. Provision of Professional Support Services:

Employ specialized professionals such as psychologists and social workers to assist students facing psychological issues like isolation, anger, or aggressive behavior. These professionals should also offer awareness sessions on the psychological and academic impact of school violence.

3. Raising Awareness of the Effects of Violence:

It is essential to raise awareness among students about the importance of reporting any form of violence, whether witnessed or experienced. Students should feel that the school is a safe space that can protect and support them against attacks whether from peers or even teachers.

4. Engaging Families:

Engaging with parents is a critical step in curbing school violence. Deviant behavior especially in childhood often reflects family problems. Parents should be attentive to their child's psychological state, monitor their behavior, and adopt a supportive communication style to better understand any violent tendencies or experiences they face at school. Cooperation with school administration is essential to finding appropriate solutions.

5. Informing Families of Student Behavior at School:

Schools should report any unusual behavior exhibited by students to their parents particularly if it involves aggression, withdrawal, or a lack of participation in school activities. This is especially vital if the student displays signs of anger, hits classmates, or acts violently toward teachers.

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