

Representation of Incivility in School-Attending Adolescents

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Abstract:

Incivility has become a social problem of growing importance. From violence between students and aggression against teachers to the degradation of school property, the phenomenon continues to escalate, sounding the alarm. This scourge, which affects all social categories, spreads like a contagious epidemic.

During adolescence, often referred to as a period of crisis, several factors are at the root of these behaviors among our young adolescents who reject all forms of authority.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to evaluate the phenomenon of the representations of incivility in schools among young adolescents in the wilaya of Constantine. Through our questionnaires distributed across 18 establishments (rural, semi-urban, and urban), we were able to establish a profile with a set of criteria that underlie the emergence of these disruptive behaviors.

Keywords: Representation; Incivil Behaviors; violence; adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Jean-Paul Sartre unequivocally stated, “Hell is other people.” While this short affirmation can be debated at length, it remains supported by certain inappropriate, disturbing, or misplaced behaviors encountered daily in the public sphere. Forms of deviance that were not formally prohibited by law until recently are now grouped under the term “incivility.”

To speak of incivility today is akin to discussing the weather—more precisely, these are normalized or trivialized actions. So, who should be blamed? Should we blame the young when even the adults, who are supposed to be role models, exhibit such behaviors?

Algerian society is incivil and does not hide it: spitting, public blasphemy, broken windows, graffiti and insults on the walls of cities or schools, disrespecting a queue, and potentially dangerous youth gatherings in stairwells or at the foot of buildings have become commonplace phenomena.

"Normal"—that's the anthem of a society lacking values and politeness, a society where the young respect neither adults nor laws, where the citizen rebels against public law and its institutions.

In recent decades, we have seen a rise in urban insecurity, a deterioration of the living environment, and also the proliferation of acts described as “incivilities” or “transgression of social codes.” Whether simple rudeness or outright aggression, incivil acts are spreading everywhere like a contagious epidemic—in the street, at school, or even within the family. They constitute infringements upon the rights of others, the respect for one's person, and civil tranquility. They can start with insults and may even lead to physical aggression.

Attempting to draw up a complete list of all existing incivilities is impossible; the Algerian citizen continues to innovate in this domain: shoving, insults, degradation of public or state property, neighborhood disturbance, etc. The list is long and endless. These seemingly minor acts, as they are not legally defined and classified as criminal offenses, nevertheless trail in their wake acts of violence, insecurity, and the alteration of the social bond because they undermine societal values and norms and compromise the authority of the family, the justice system, the police, and the elders, among others.

According to Sébastien Roché (1996), these are “*threats hanging over the social rituals through which each person evaluates the harmlessness of their relationship with others.*”

Moreover, addressing the difficulty of defining incivility, Mucchielli. L (2002) states that this term covers “both infractions and offenses—for example, setting fire to a garbage can or demolishing a mailbox—and infringements of what could be called the code of politeness, such as speaking rudely, looking at someone askance, spitting, urinating in public places, making untimely noise, or verbally defying or provoking others to show one's dominance. All these acts converge to constitute breaches of order in everyday life, according to the expression of Sébastien Roché (1996).”

Roché (1996) defines incivility as follows: “*It is a set of extraordinarily varied social nuisances that do not physically injure people but disrupt the elementary rules of social life that enable trust.*”

Incivility is also a social pathology that is spreading in the school environment, gaining ground in recent years. Indeed, the adolescent, in a period of crisis, questions the conformity of the behaviors that are proposed or imposed upon them by society and in whose elaboration they did not participate. They are evolving in a psychosocial field that is itself in crisis and witnessing a upheaval that overturns their former rhythm, creating psychological fragility and amplifying the feeling of rebellion, which is fundamentally a quest for originality during the construction of identity in adolescence.

Suffering from identity fragmentation, an absence of integration prospects, and steeped in a harmful climate, these disoriented and deeply frustrated young people live in a cultural vacuum, adopting attitudes of defiance toward institutions, hence the emergence of incivil behaviors.

This form of criminality is found within educational establishments themselves. For Sébastien Roché (1996), students who

display incivility do not become disruptive overnight. It is a gradual process. It begins with challenges to punctuality or wearing the school uniform and ends with questioning the established authority and order within the institution, sometimes resulting in violent acts. This self-assertion on the part of school-attending adolescents aims to impose their own rules and to blur the boundaries between what is permissible and what is not.

These incivilities are therefore the result of numerous misunderstandings for these young people who are already in a sensitive period. To address this, we will attempt through this research to determine the representations of these anti-social behaviors among our young adolescents in the wilaya of Constantine. Thus, we will attempt to answer the following question:

What are the representations of incivility among school-attending young adolescents?

2. Incivility, Identity, and Representations

In modern societies, any behavior aimed at disrupting social order is referred to as urban violence or incivility. Indeed, violence is gaining ground within our society and manifests in various forms: theft, aggression, damage to public property, etc. These acts originate from young people who feel devalued, humiliated, distrustful, and insecure regarding the institutions that govern them.

Algerian society rests on two fundamental pillars: Islam and a socio-family organization. The latter is a basic social unit, an unwavering community bond based on centuries-old rules of discipline, hierarchy, and total adherence to traditional values. The sense of belonging is the keystone of identity, which is its essential foundation, the centerpiece.

Here, the individual is identified primarily and above all by a dual belonging: belonging to the biological father and group belonging (which models the collective self and ensures the individual

exists only by and for the group). In other words, isn't the individual, a prisoner of their belonging, facing a situation that shackles their own identity? Erikson stated: "While retaining its individuality, the functioning ego is far from isolated, as a kind of community links all egos in a reciprocal activity." (Mérdji, 2007, pp. 250-261).

The family dynamic is also affected: the all-powerful image of the father gradually diminishes, and the bond of filiation, previously so important, loosens, weakens, and shows distortions or even ruptures. The authority deficit syndrome described by Sutter then takes on full meaning.

Young adolescents, spectators of Western life and chained to ancient values, will experience an identity discomfort and amplify the individual's psychological fragility. It is especially among the youth and adolescents of the Algerian population that acculturation conflicts, exacerbated in recent years by a severe economic recession, take on particular acuity and express themselves forcefully. The adolescent, by definition in a period of crisis, will evolve in a psychosocial field that is itself in an identity crisis. The cultural vacuum and the absence of a clearly defined project prevent adolescents from establishing structuring identifications: this results in situational identity.

D. Bibony states: "The disease of identity is the inability to cope well with identity ruptures, to the point of wanting an identity that is linked only to itself, without foreign trace, without the dangers of alterity." Indeed, it is identity that characterizes the continuity and permanence of the human person and gives them a profound sense of unity. On the other hand, to identify with a person, a culture, a country—it turns out that the notion of identity is inseparable from that of capital and connection. Aggressive and violence-generating cultures rely on an archaic feeling of hatred and aggression deeply buried in the unconscious. (Mérdji, 2007, pp. 250-261).

Identity is a system of representations, feelings, and strategies, organized for the conservative defense of its object (the "being

oneself”), but also for its control, its projective mobilization, and its idealizing mobility (the “becoming oneself”). Identity is a structured, differentiated system, anchored simultaneously in past temporality (roots, permanence), in a coordination of current behaviors, and in a legitimized perspective (projects, ideals, values, and styles). It coordinates multiple identities associated with the person (bodily identity, character identity, personal specificities...) or with the group (roles, statuses...) **(Cahn, 1988, p. 169).**

Social representations are modes of practical thinking oriented toward the communication, comprehension, and mastery of the social, material, and ideal environment. **(Jodelet, 1997, p. 365).**

To better visualize the fundamental characteristics and main functions that establish social representation as a social behavior, we propose this schema.

Mental representation, on the other hand, signifies an intellectual construction that allows for the deciphering and giving meaning to encountered situations based on a repertoire of stored knowledge and information. This aligns with J.F. Richard’s definition when he says that “the objective of a mental representation is the attribution of an overall meaning to the elements resulting from perceptive analysis.” **(Richard, 1990, p. 9).**

As for the cognitive dimension, representation takes on several meanings, hence the need for a brief retrospective.

M. Postic and J.M. Deketel **(1988, p. 13)** describe representation as a cognitive schema that selects, structures information, and guides behavior.

In the same vein, Denis defines representation as: a cognitive entity, permanent in some respects, capable of transient actualizations and more or less durable rearrangements, and whose general property is to be the functional basis of behaviors. **(Denis, 1989, p. 33).**

However, these young people in question only have a negative representation of their environment and see themselves as victims of a society that is gradually constricting their identity. Is this a triggering factor for violence, hatred, and aggression?

This study aims to shed light on the mechanisms that convey violence within Algerian schools, more precisely in the wilaya of Constantine. For this purpose, we targeted several high schools and middle schools.

3. Method and Tools

3-1: Research Limitations

Our study attempts to define the dimensions of the representation of incivility among adolescents within school establishments. This study cannot, however, be generalized to the entire Algerian territory, and obtaining results for the overall population of undisciplined students would require broader studies and competencies than ours.

These findings, therefore, exclusively concern the targeted research population, specifically school-attending adolescents in the wilaya of Constantine.

3-2: Research Approach and Method

The research method is the set of operations through which a discipline seeks to achieve the truths it pursues, demonstrate them, and verify them. It dictates, in a concrete way, how research should be conducted, though this may be more or less imperative, precise, complete, and systematized (M, 1964, p. 344).

In our work, we used the descriptive method to analyze the data collected from our questionnaire.

According to N'da Paul: *“We can indicate that the descriptive method consists of describing, naming, or characterizing a phenomenon, a situation or an event so that it appears familiar”* (2002, p. 19).

This method aids us in describing the field of work and our survey unit to better understand the various realities present within it.

3-3: Study Sample

Sampling is the stage preceding the survey phase. The researcher relies on hypotheses that allow them to specify their line of questioning. A pre-survey may prove useful for refining hypotheses and enriching the resulting questions, and more broadly, for developing the scale before the survey is conducted.

For our survey, we visited high schools and middle schools in the city of Constantine, specifically those named “Yougourta,” “Ahmed Abbas,” “Kateb Yacine,” “Bounouioua Fatima,” “Ahmed Hmimid,” and “Belkarfa Amar.” We received testimony from the staff of these establishments, who designated a significant percentage of students as being undisciplined, violent, disrespectful, provocative, or even impolite, according to their teachers.

The custodians and supervisors describe a “generation unlike any before,” citing incidents of brawls involving bladed weapons between students, insults and intimidation, and even threats against teachers and supervisors, as well as the degradation of school property. Others write insults about their teachers and some of their classmates on classroom or school walls.

Therefore, we became interested in this phenomenon to characterize it and understand the causes that provoke it.

3-4: Questionnaire Technique

The questionnaire is a series of standardized questions intended to normalize and facilitate the collection of testimonies. It is a suitable tool for gathering precise information from a large number of participants. The data collected are easily quantifiable (except in the case of open-ended questions).

Classically, one speaks of a questionnaire when the participant answers the posed questions alone. Some refer to a questionnaire or "spoken questionnaire" when conducting a directive-type interview. Whether written or oral, each individual answers the same questions, but in the order they wish. Some of these questionnaires are called personality or interest inventories (**Albou, 1973**).

According to Madeline Grawitz: "The content of a questionnaire is determined by the objective of the research" (M, 1964).

Compared to an interview-based survey, the use of a questionnaire allows for:

- Working on a larger scale. The number of participants is not limited by time (the questionnaire is quick to distribute, the participant answers at their own pace outside the presence of the researchers) or by costs (travel, telephone expenses).

- Limiting the interviewer effect related to the personality of the interviewers.

- Adapting to the participant's rhythm and schedule.

Conversely, the questionnaire does not allow for:

- Probing and restating questions to help the participant express their point of view.

- Ensuring that questions will be answered correctly and without omissions (when a question is judged inappropriate, tedious, or requires too much effort, people may decide to stop the questionnaire or move on to easier items).

- Knowing who is truly responding.

- Deepening and complementing the information beyond the posed questions.

- Ensuring a high response rate.

Questions can relate to personal facts, facts concerning other people, facts concerning things or organizations, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or knowledge.

Depending on what one wishes to collect and the intended data processing, a specific wording can be adopted. We distinguish between two forms of questions: open-ended and closed-ended. Closed-ended questions include several subcategories: lists, ranking, scales, etc.

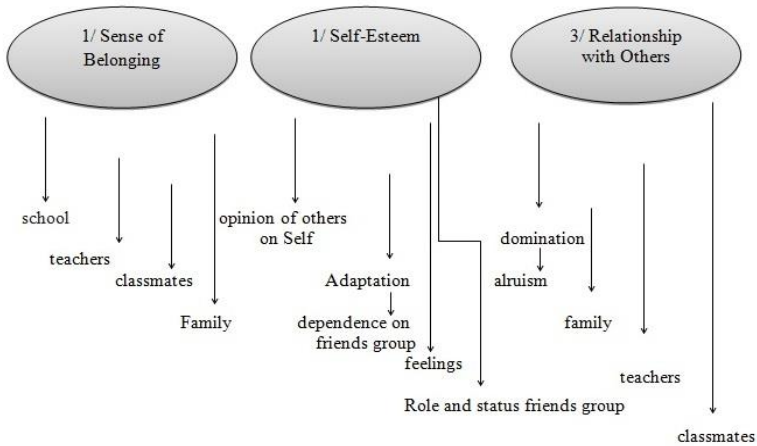
For our research, we will use an interrogative method, which is the questionnaire, and more precisely, the Likert-type questionnaire.

The Likert technique involves the prior collection of a certain number of statements (items) directly related to the research objective. The subjects to whom they are submitted are asked to indicate the direction and intensity of the reaction each item provokes in them: their responses are situated on a continuum divided into five categories: very favorable (strongly agree), favorable (agree), indifferent (or undecided), unfavorable (disagree), or very unfavorable (strongly disagree).

In this type of questionnaire, each item is preceded by a series of symbols (either alphabetic: SA, A,?, D, SD; or arithmetic: ++, +, 0, -, - -; or numerical: from 0 to 4 or from +2 to -2). The researcher must decide, when constructing the scale, the score attributed to each possible response (**Albou, 1973, pp. 184-186**).

3-5: Questionnaire Construction

To construct our questionnaire, we drew upon our pre-survey and existing literature. Consequently, we retained three dimensions, which are habitually used when studying the representations of identity. These dimensions are:



Methodology and Data Processing

Our questionnaire comprises 47 questions categorized internally by dimensions.

The questions are designed using the Likert model with five response modalities. Each item is preceded by a series of symbols: (5) for the "very favorable" response, (4) for "favorable," (3) for "indifferent (or undecided)," (2) for "unfavorable," and (1) for "very unfavorable."

4. Data Processing

4-1 / Univariate Analysis (Flat Tables)

Univariate analysis (or flat tables) consists of showing the distribution of the different modalities of a single variable, which allows us to answer "how many" type questions without resorting to relationships between variables, thus providing no explanatory elements. This analysis must be performed for all variables at the beginning of the data tabulation to compare the profiles of variables existing in the studied population. This ensures the representativeness of the sample and effectively identifies the characteristics of this population.

We calculated the distribution of frequencies (or counts) as well as the percentages of response modalities for each question. We presented them in the form of tables and graphs.

4-2 / Bivariate Analysis (Cross-Tabulations)

This approach involves correlating one set of characteristics with another set.

Cross-tabulations allow us to demonstrate or verify the existing relationships between two variables by providing simple results that are very close to the base data.

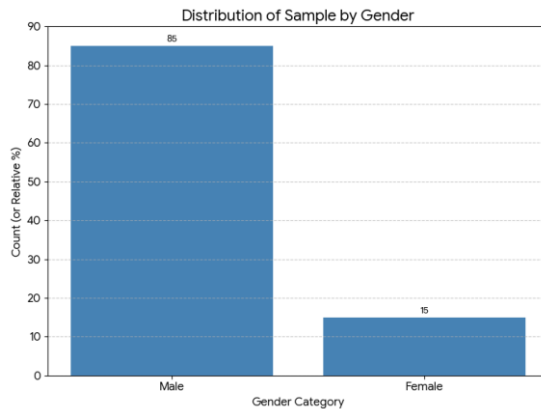
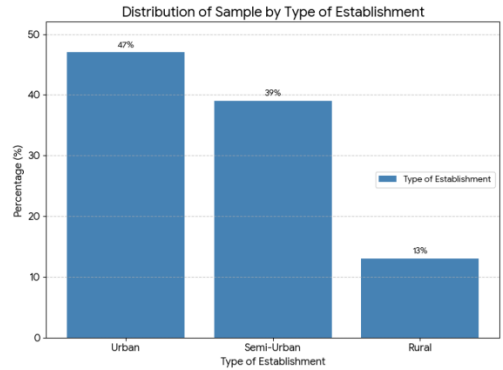
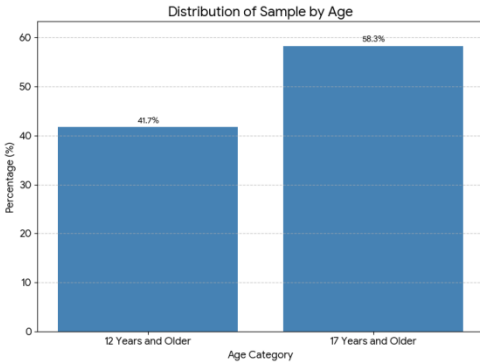
To access this level of analysis, we used the Chi-squared (χ^2) statistical test. the Chi-squared (χ^2) test is a non-parametric statistical test applicable only to the nominal scale. Its value lies, as defined by N. Berthier, in evaluating whether a discrepancy between independent variables should be considered significant or, conversely, highly likely to be fortuitous (**Berthier, 1998, p. 193**).

One of the essential conditions for applying this test is the formulation of a "null hypothesis" or "no difference" hypothesis, which is formulated as follows: "There is no statistically significant difference between the variable '...' and the variable '...' at the probability threshold of $\alpha = .05$.

The probability threshold or risk level must be set from the outset. If the calculated probability threshold is less than or equal to .05, we reject the null hypothesis to accept that the two distributions differ significantly. This implies that the two variables are linked. If it exceeds this threshold (e.g., $\alpha = .06$ or $\alpha = .1$), we did not take these cross-tabulations into consideration in the interpretation and analysis of our results.

5. Presentation of Univariate Analysis (Flat Tables)

Here is the distribution of our study sample according to several parameters (age, gender, and type of establishment):



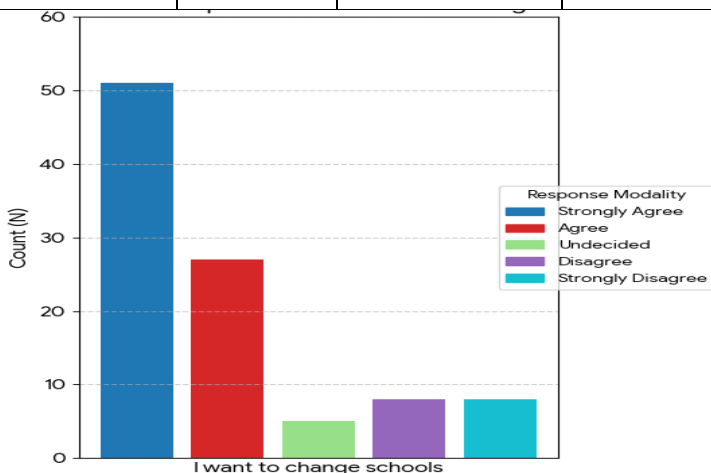
6 Presentation of Bivariate Analysis (Cross-Tabulations)

Our study includes several tables and figures resulting from the cross-tabulation of variables (Age, gender, Type of Establishment) and the questions in our questionnaire. Consequently, we will propose specific examples to ensure the understanding of our data processing method.

Representation of Incivility in School-Attending Adolescents

Example 1: Distribution of the Population According to Their Responses to the Question: "I want to change schools"

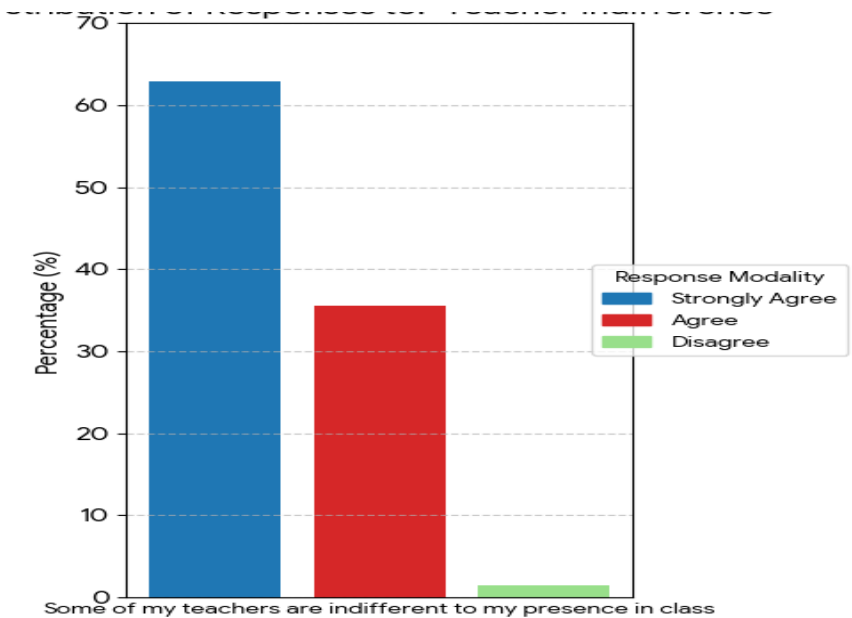
Response Modality	Count (N)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Strongly Disagree	11	8.3	8.3
Strongly Agree	67	50.8	59.1
Disagree	11	8.3	67.4
Agree	36	27.3	94.7
Undecided	7	5.3	100.0
TOTAL	132	100.0	



Observation: Regarding this question, it appears clearly that a rate of 50.8\% of the surveyed students strongly agree with the idea of wanting to change establishments, followed by 27.3\% who agree. In contrast, a percentage of 8.3\% disagree and 8.3\% strongly disagree. The last category, those who remained undecided (gave no response),

Example 2: Distribution of Responses to the Question: "Some of my teachers are indifferent to my presence in class"

Response Modality	Effectifs (N)	Pourcentage (%)	Cumul (Cumulative %)
Strongly Agree	83	62.9	62.9
Agree	47	35.6	98.5
Disagree	2	1.5	100.0
TOTAL	132	100.0	

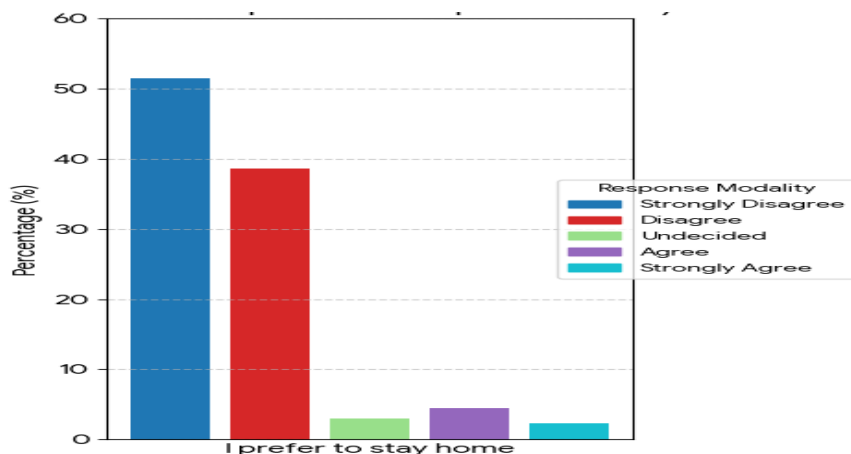


Observation: Here it appears, at a high rate of 62.9%, that our students strongly affirm the fact that some of their teachers are indifferent and do not notice their presence in class. 35.6% agree with this, and only 1.5% disagree.

Representation of Incivility in School-Attending Adolescents

Example 3: Distribution of Responses to the Question: "I prefer to stay home"

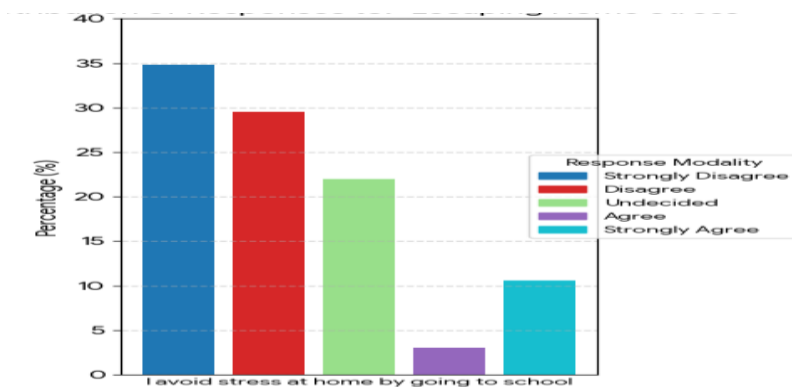
Response Modality	Effectifs (N)	Pourcentage (%)	Cumul (Cumulative %)
Strongly Disagree	68	51.5	51.5
Disagree	51	38.6	92,4
Agree	6	4.5	97
Strongly Agree	3	2.3	53,8
Undecided	4	3.0	100.0
TOTAL	132	100.0	



Observation: Regarding this posed question, we note that 51.5% strongly disagree with the idea of wanting to stay home, 38.6% disagree, compared to 2.3% and 4.5% who agree or strongly agree, respectively. Finally, 3% offered no opinion (undecided).

Example 4: Distribution of Responses to the Question: "I avoid stress at home by going to school"

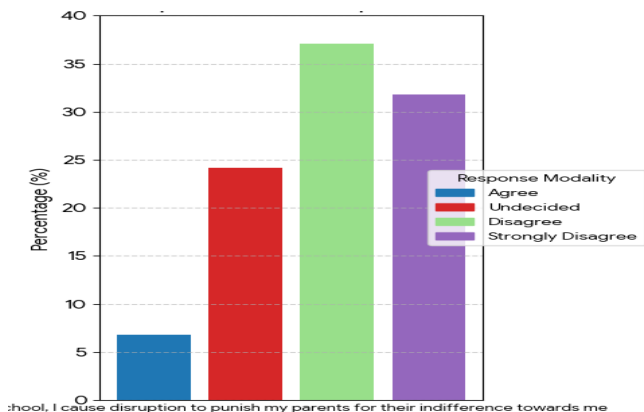
Response Modality	Effectifs (N)	Pourcentage (%)	Cumul (Cumulative %)
Strongly Disagree	46	34.8	34.8
Disagree	39	29.5	75
Undecided	29	22.0	100
Strongly Agree	14	10.6	45,5
Agree	4	3.0	78
TOTAL	132	100.0	



Observation: Regarding this question, we note that the majority of the surveyed students strongly disagree with the idea of escaping stress at home by going to school, with a rate of 34.8%. Those who disagree account for 29.5%. As for the remaining responses, 10.6% strongly agree, 22% are undecided, while only 3% agree.

Example 5: Distribution of Responses to the Question: "At school, I cause disruption to punish my parents for their indifference towards me"

Response Modality	Effectifs (N)	Pourcentage (%)
Disagree	49	37.1%
Strongly Disagree	42	31.8%
Undecided	32	24.2%
Agree	9	6.8%
TOTAL	132	100.0%



Observation: Here we note that the percentage of those who disagree is 37.1%. For those who strongly disagree, their rate is 31.8%. The students who offered no opinion (undecided) account for 24.2%. Finally, those who agree stand at 6.8%.

7. Results and Discussion

To facilitate the interpretation of the results and ensure they are concrete and functional, we chose to present the univariate analysis (flat tables). The objective is to provide the initial indications concerning the study population in order to effectively elucidate its characteristics in terms of identifying variables and grasp the major response trends.

Through this approach, we were able to clearly extract the characteristics of the young adolescent population concerning their viewpoints and the components of several items that affect this population and generate incivil attitudes within school establishments.

Our survey population is composed of two categories: girls and boys. The initial observations indicate that the number of boys is greater than that of girls. Regarding age groups, more than half of the population falls into the 17 years and older category, accounting for 58.3%, while the remainder, 41.7%, belongs to the 12 years and older category.

Concerning the type of establishment, our research population includes urban establishments at a rate of 47\%, followed by the semi-urban type, and finally, with a very low rate, the rural type at only 13.6%.

For the questions in our questionnaire, we made the following observation:

1. First Category (Sense of Belonging)

a) **Belonging to the School:** Our students assert that they do not like their establishments, and even struggle to accept the latter's regulations. The idea of changing schools is more than clear in the third question. The prospect of being suspended or expelled from school does not seem to worry our adolescents.

b) **Relationship with Teachers:** Students have a poor image of their teachers and feel that they do not perform their work as they should.

c) **Belonging to the Family:** The idea of staying at home is not to the liking of our young adolescents. That said, the home does not seem to represent a place of stress or conflict, as they affirm they have their place within their families.

d) **Belonging to the Peer Group:** It appears clear here that regarding friends, our adolescents are quite certain they have their place within the group.

2. Second Category (Self-Esteem)

a) **Opinion of Others on Self:** Our adolescents have a poor self-image; their self-perception is negative, and they affirm that others (parents and teachers) see them as incompetent people. Conversely, regarding friends, our adolescents believe that their friends see good in them.

b) **Feelings:** The majority of our population reveals boredom in class. This boredom, in turn, generates uncertainty regarding the importance of studies. In class, they affirm experiencing a lot of

frustration, which isolates them from others. They affirm not feeling loved by anyone. The feeling of guilt for engaging in behaviors against the rules does not exist.

c) **Adaptation – Dependence on the Peer Group:** In class, there appears to be no problem with their integration with other students. More than half of our population states they are at school out of obligation rather than desire.

Regarding the question, "**I don't hate studying, but I don't like my teachers**": it seems evident that our adolescents **place the blame for their failure on their teachers**, not even giving them the right to respond. These students accuse their teachers of assigning them grades that are not theirs. The feeling of injustice is undeniable among them. They believe they have ambitions but feel that no one is supporting them. They express a desire for teachers to pay attention to them.

3. Third Category (Relationship with Others)

a) **Relationships with Others:** Our adolescents affirm that they do not like certain individuals within the establishment.

b) **Dominance:** Our adolescents do not like being assigned the role of group leader or even being the ones who cause trouble at home.

c) **Relationships with Teachers:** Here, we noted that a genuinely good student-teacher relationship does not exist for our population. Students believe their teachers favor certain individuals over the rest of the class.

d) **Relationships with Classmates:** It appears that for our population, the relationship with their classmates stops when classes finish, no more, no less, and they affirm they are not interested in others.

e) **Relationships with School Personnel:** Here too, there is not truly a good relationship (personnel-students).

Regarding the questions related to the true motivations driving disruptive behaviors: they report that the purpose is not to attract

attention to themselves, nor to punish their parents. However, they indicate that the objective is to punish the school officials for their lack of interest. Nevertheless, we note a slight hesitation on the question that links disruptive behaviors to the act of asserting one's presence.

Finally, concerning the future, our adolescents are not totally disinterested.

8. Conclusion

Violence in the school environment is not a recent phenomenon. However, it has become a social problem of increasing importance. With violence between students, aggression against teachers, and vandalism or degradation of school property, the phenomenon continues to escalate, sounding the alarm. This scourge, which affects all social categories, spreads like a contagious epidemic.

Adolescence as a period of crisis, parental neglect (or "démision"), and a lack of communication between teachers and students are at the root of these behaviors among our young adolescents who reject all forms of authority.

Consequently, the objective of this study was to evaluate the phenomenon of the representations of incivility in schools among young adolescents in the wilaya of Constantine. Through our questionnaires distributed across 18 establishments (rural, semi-urban, and urban), we were able to establish a profile with a set of criteria that underlie the emergence of these disruptive behaviors.

Boredom, frustration, isolation, poor relationships with teachers and school personnel, marginalization, and finally, injustice in grading are, according to them, legitimate arguments that absolve their guilt for their behaviors, driving them to abandon studies and act as vigilantes.

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