STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL:
GLOBAL ISSUES
AND INTERVENTIONS

Edited by Toshio Ohsako

UNESCO

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION
Everyone is aware that today, following the end of the ‘Cold War’, there has been an outburst of violent phenomena in the world linked to cultural, political and religious issues and to xenophobia. We are also witnessing the spread of violence within nations arising from social exclusion, and the breakdown of society as a result of unemployment, poverty and drug addiction. In the past, the school was a ‘haven’, exempted from the consequences of social strife. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case and the school has become the daily scenario of violent incidents involving children and young people, and even the teachers.

It is evident from the case studies presented here that, for a long time, these issues did not receive enough attention. The time has now come for governments and other agencies to seriously consider school policies and intervention programmes to cope with the situations now facing schools. Such school policies require co-operation among the school personnel, the family, the media and the community, including the national employment agencies and the business community. The cause of violence is now known to be associated with a series of factors internal and external to education: learning failure; the breakdown of child-rearing practices and the disintegration of the family unit; the images of violence transmitted by the media; conflict in the community; and poverty resulting from a high rate of unemployment.

At the time that this project was conceived, there were two schools of thought about violence in developing countries: the first considered violence in schools to be a problem for industrialized countries alone; and the second maintained that the issue of violence existed as well (and some thought even more intensively) in developing countries, but there was not sufficient research information available on this subject. As a result of its experience in the international sphere, the International Bureau of Education believed the second position to be more valid, and this is exactly the motive
that led to the launching of the project that has resulted in the studies presented here.

This book forms part of the continuing interest in this subject by the IBE. Under the editorship of Toshio Ohsako, six case studies on violence in the school were published in 1996 in *Prospects*, the quarterly review of comparative education (vol. XXVI, no. 2, June 1996). For the preparation of the present series of case studies, we were very fortunate in identifying and securing the participation of eight national experts, among whom were three women. We express our gratitude to: Zougan Obeidat from the Jordanian Ministry of Education; Dereje Terefe and Derese Mengistu of the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research, Ministry of Education, who were commissioned to write this article by Ethio-Education Consultants, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Rahimah Haji Ahmad and Norani Mohd Salleh from the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia; Yaacov Iram, Professor of Education at Bar Ilan University, Israel, and also President of the World Association for Educational Research (WAER); Silvia Matišová, who was, at the time of writing, Head of the National Institute for Education, Bratislava, Slovakia; and Liliana Mayorga Salas, a staff member of the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación, Santiago de Chile.
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Tackling school violence worldwide: a comparative perspective of basic issues and challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Violence is a sensitive issue that provokes anxiety. And because it arouses emotions and has negative images, it requires courage to face it squarely. It is a natural human reaction to avoid unpleasant and painful experiences, but the reality is that both in society and schools, violence is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide, with a devastating impact on all sectors of society. Therefore, it is time for us to confront the violence issue. Violence cannot be overcome by avoiding it, or simply condemning it as immoral: it can only be coped with by managing the problem.

To admit to the existence of violence in schools, traditionally a place of learning and growth, is particularly painful. As a consequence, violence often slips out of the official agenda of public debates on education. This book informs the readers of the reality of violence and its educational impacts in different countries of the world, and invites them to debate together ways in which education can cope with, prevent, reduce or divert the negative effects of violence on learning, instruction and the social lives of young people.

Violence at school is costly not only in financial terms, but also in terms of the long-term damage it inflicts on the individual’s healthy personality growth and development, the loss of his and her quality of life, its interference with the individual’s learning of pro-social behaviours, and, above all, its impact on the vital task of developing human resources for national development.

Some people believe that aggression is a natural and transitory phenomenon of child and adolescent development, which most children and youngsters must go through; and, moreover, that many acts of violence by children and adolescents are of a ‘playful’ nature, and will eventually disappear as the young people grow older and wiser. Studies in several industrialized countries challenge this philosophy by pointing to the
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long-term effects and persistent nature of violence and bullying. According to these studies, aggressive attitudes and behaviour learned early on tend to persist, and be maintained. Moreover, these studies generally show that violent children are an at-risk group that has a much higher probability than less violent children of growing up to become juvenile delinquents and adult criminals. This fact presents a serious social and political agenda for politicians, educators and the community at large. Although there are few studies in developing countries, there is every reason to suppose that there too, there is a dangerous relationship between young-age aggressiveness and criminality at a later age. Thus, early prevention of violence both in the developing and the developed countries is strongly recommended.

The fact that research into violence and its prevention in the developing countries is scarce is precisely why the IBE undertook the present studies in selected countries. Although Israel and Slovakia are not developing countries, their studies are included in this publication because, firstly, studies on violence in those two countries are rare, and, secondly, both countries face rapid social and political transformation, and the issues of school violence are receiving more and more attention.

Overall, the studies clearly reveal that violence is occurring at a high rate in developing countries and its impact on schooling, learning and living is certainly serious, which refutes the commonly-held view that violence is primarily an issue for industrialized countries. Furthermore, the findings show that the problem of violence seems to multiply the existing problems of national development in these countries. Although the economic loss caused by violence in the school is equally great in the industrialized and the developing countries, it is assumed that the impact on society, including on education, is more intensively and painfully felt in the latter, due to the problems that already exist with the development of economic, educational and human resources.

Despite the importance attached to the issue of violence, placing a high priority on violence management in the developing countries is a difficult educational policy option—due mainly to the fact that other education priorities, such as literacy and basic education, occupy much of their efforts. Nonetheless, it is also clear from the results of the present studies that the issue of violence is also their major enemy, affecting the qualitative improvement of their schools, and it is a task that has to be tackled. The lessons of international development work generally caution us that social and educational development without peace in the minds of individuals is a fragile entity, which cannot be sustained. How the developing countries can control and manage violence without creating heavy burdens on their national human developmental work, and budget, is a fundamental issue for
debate. The national experiences of violence management that appear in the present studies suggest some ways to approach this issue.

SYNTHESIS OF NATIONAL STUDIES

The studies contain contributions from the following specialists in ten countries:

*Ethiopia:* Dereje Terefe (Director) and Derese Mengistu, (Senior expert for evaluating academic curricula), Institute for Curriculum Development and Research, Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;

*Israel:* Yaacov Iram, President of the World Association for Educational Research, School of Education, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel;

*Jordan:* Zougan Obiedat, Ministry of Education, Amman, Jordan;

*Latin America* (Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru): Liliana Mayoga Salas, Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE), Santiago, Chile;

*Malaysia:* Rahimah Haji Ahmed, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Norani Mohd Salleh;

*Slovakia:* Silvia Matušová, Head, National Institute for Education, Bratislava, Slovakia.

**Methodology**

The studies were conducted in 1996-97. The authors in the above-mentioned ten countries were given common terms of reference prepared by the International Bureau of Education (IBE), to ensure the cross-national comparability of data. The guidelines provided to all the authors had a flexible framework to accommodate national and cultural differences in the countries investigated, and included the following sections:

- basic demographic facts about the country, including ethnic minorities and religions;
- facts on the frequency and types of violence in the socio-cultural context of a given country;
- impacts and consequences of violence on schooling;
- initiatives and measures taken concerning school regulations, laws, policies, curricula, etc.;
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- research initiatives and findings on violence;
- recommendations for future anti-violence measures.

Youth population

In these countries where the young population is numerous, it is crucial to focus on and manage the issues of violence involving young people—future builders of a nation.

The number of young people under 15 in Ethiopia constitutes 48% of the entire population, 47.5% in Malaysia, and 42.5% in Jordan.

Urban/rural setting

The recent studies in developing countries challenge the traditional idea that violence is basically an urban phenomenon.

Ethiopia has a population of 52 million and 85% of its people live in rural areas. Jordan, on the contrary, has a population of 4.3 million and 70% of its people live in urban areas. The Jewish population in Israel is predominately urban, while the Arab minority is rural. The Jordanian study shows that school violence is not only an urban phenomenon but also exists in rural schools. This is consistent with the findings of a study by Kingery et al (1996), which shows evidence of growing violence problems in rural areas. Colombia offers evidence that the increased urban population (70%) is at least partially due to the need of that country’s inhabitants to escape from rural areas where they are more subject to internal strife.

Ethnic/religious groups

The majority of countries that participated in the present study are multi-cultural, and their educational authorities are paying due attention to this by taking into account the lessons of history showing us that ethnicity and religion can invite both negative (i.e. inter-group conflicts) and positive (tolerance for multiculturalism) consequences, which have a critical effect on the degree of violence at the societal level.

The population of Jordan is 92% Moslem and 8% Christian. Malaysia is also a multi-ethnic nation consisting of Malay, Chinese, Indian and several indigenous groups. South Africa has a predominantly black population, with white and other ethnic groups, whose religions consist of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Israel’s population consists of 82% Jews and 18% non-Jews. According to the 1994 estimate by the Central Bureau of Statistics, 14.2% of the non-Jewish population are Moslems, 2.3% Christians, 1.7% Druze and others (Circassians and Ahmads). The 5.3 million
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inhabitants in Slovakia fall into three ethnic groups: Slovaks (85.6%); Hungarians (10.8%); Romany people (3.6% Gypsies, Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Germans).

Facts about school violence

Frequency of violence: The present inquiry reveals that there has been a sharp rise in violence in schools in recent years in the developing countries.

The Ethiopian study (1996), which employed a sample of three junior secondary (7-8) and five senior secondary schools (9-12) in the innermost cities around Addis Abeba, reported 240 violent incidents (on average, thirty cases per school).

In Jordan, according to a study (1996) conducted by the social union centres involving a sample of 740 students from urban Amman schools, 97.7% of students reported the presence of violence in their schools.

The Malaysian record of criminal offences (1993) indicates 5,290 cases of violence in primary and 8,658 cases in secondary schools.

Some words of caution are necessary on the frequency of violence and bullying. First, one may note that the actual occurrence of such behaviour could be much higher; there may have been many more unreported cases of violence, and therefore these figures should always be regarded as a conservative estimate of violence. Secondly, as the Slovakian study indicates, the issue of violence has been relatively ignored by educators, which probably means the issue has been under-reported or remains unnoticed, particularly by researchers.

Forms of violence: The Ethiopian 1996 study covering eight schools around Addis Ababa indicated that intimidation (verbal, physical and psychological threats) and snatching (property, money and other materials) accounted for nearly 60% of 240 incidents of violence, followed by physical violence (23%) and rape attempts (20%). This study also indicated a relatively much higher rate of victimization on the part of girls. Attempted rape is serious violence and its high occurrence in schools is alarming.

The Jordanian study, based on the 1995-96 records of the school boards, revealed a total of 1,309 violent incidents in schools during this period. Approximately 83% of these incidents were inflicted by boys. The top four violent behaviours were: rioting (29%); bullying (24%); swearing at classmates (15%); swearing at teachers (11%).

The Malaysian study indicated that fighting with teachers and prefects, extortion, bullying, sexual harassment and threatening students were the most frequent forms of violent behaviour.
The most common forms of school violence in Israel were: quarrelling among students, theft, breaking into school premises, vandalism and aggression towards schoolmates. Violent behaviour towards teachers by pupils and violence against teachers by parents were rare, but did exist. It appears that the three most commonly classified types of violence/bullying—physical (kicking, hitting), verbal (name calling, insulting), psychological (isolation, ignoring)—exist in all the countries investigated in the current study.

The impact of violence on schooling

The Ethiopian study revealed that 60% of pupils experienced a high-to-medium level of negative impact by violence on the teaching/learning process and their emotions. More than 40% of the students in this study also reported that they had either repeated classes or dropped out of school due to violence. The Jordanian study reported the negative effects of violence on teaching time, disruption of classroom activities, weakening of school discipline and learning, and also the time and energy expended by the school personnel in order to consult with the police authorities. The Israeli study examined the impact of violence on schooling at three different levels: the general impact of societal violence on schools; the impact of negative school experiences; and specific violent incidents (situational). It focused on the effect of quarrelling, and indicated that this is strongly correlated, negatively, with social image—the more students quarrel, the less they are liked by their peers. The Latin American studies addressed a comprehensive list of negative impacts on schools, including innocent children joining gang groups, disrupted family relations for schoolchildren, increased corporal punishment by parents and teachers as a means of suppressing violence on the part of the children and adolescents, sexual abuse of children, and drug abuse. Altogether, the following consequences of school violence have been reported in the present series of studies:

- innocent children joining gangs;
- increased corporal punishment by parents and teachers;
- disrupted family relationships;
- development of fear and insecurity in children;
- development of the false idea that violence is a viable means to solve conflicts;
• weakening of school discipline and breakdown of school rules and regulations;
• changing schools by pupils, dropping out of school and absenteeism;
• moving away from the home;
• extended violence to teachers and headmasters;
• vandalism in schools, causing enormous financial loss;
• disruption of the teaching/learning process;
• jeopardizing school management;
• creating negative pupil/pupil and teacher/pupil relationships and interactions;
• creating group conflicts;
• transferring acts of violence to local communities and families;
• facilitating punitive disciplinary measures;
• wasting the normal working hours of teachers, principals and other school personnel;
• predisposing young people to grow into adolescent juvenile delinquents and adult criminals;
• physical injury and death, and detrimental psychological damage to pupils;
• girls tend to be the main victims of all types of violence, including rape, at school;
• violence is a contributor to premature death, disability and injury.

The Slovakia study concluded that the impact of anti-social behaviour, such as violence, bullying, drug abuse by children and youth, is more visible now than at the time of the former Communist regime, and the speed at which these problems are increasing far outruns educational and social measures to cope with and prevent them.

Why do pupils become violent?

The dominant causes of violence delineated by the comparative studies refer to the following economic, familial, school and societal factors.

(a) Economic factors address economic and social exclusion, poverty, inequitable educational and job opportunities; jobless youths; insufficient educational expenditure; under-equipped and overcrowded classrooms; shortage of school counsellors; lack of means to transport
students to school on time (causing trouble between students and gatekeepers); poor living conditions (insufficient food and/or clothing, and lower quality of life);

(b) Family related factors, such as: lack of adequate parental supervision and child-rearing practices; punitive parents with unclear disciplinary orientation; break up of the family; lack of family values with good moral and religious guidelines;

(c) School factors point to poor school performance, existing violent incidents and aggressive behaviour models in schools; aggressive and destructive peer relations, unmanageable class-sizes; predetermined and inflexible curricula irrelevant to the interests and needs of pupils; poor pupil/teacher relationships; teacher's punitive attitudes, e.g. banishing students from the classroom, the public humiliation of repeaters and dropouts, etc.;

(d) Societal and political factors refer to political violence associated with wars and armed conflicts, the media's indiscriminate violent and anti-social programmes; street gangs who disturb schools, and steal and damage school property; alcohol and drug abuse.

(e) Individual factors: Slovakia, which reported individual personality factors, such as motives for power, cruelty and curiosity, as causes of violence, is an exception. It is interesting to note that such individual factors as personality problems, aggressive attitudes, poor human communication skills, etc., which are often cited as the causal factors of violence by studies in the developed countries, do not yet seem to draw the full attention of researchers in the developed countries. This is probably a future topic for research on school violence there.

It is equally interesting to note that family, school and the media are often cited as major causal factors of violence in the studies on school violence carried out in industrialized countries. The economic factors in developing countries, as highlighted by Latin American studies, tend to be treated as a major problematic issue for the entire pupil population; whereas, industrialized countries usually treat the poverty issue as mainly relevant to their economically deprived sub-populations (ethnic minorities, the unemployed, etc.). Violence caused by quarrels between pupils arriving late in school and gatekeepers (Ethiopia) is due to the overcrowded and irregular transportation system there, which is considered a unique phenomenon of violence in developing countries.

One may argue that a specific causal factor of violence does not bear a linear relationship to its manifested violent behaviour: nor is such a
relationship uni-dimensional. For example, the frustration and alienation often experienced by young people who come from economically deprived areas or families with a low socio-economic status cannot alone count as the sole cause of the violence by this group. The Israeli study indicated that school violence can be a result of direct exposure to community violence, and to existing violence in schools. Existing violence, both in and out of school, can interact with economic factors to produce violent youth and children. The cause of violence is often a result of the interaction of multiple factors. We can hypothesize, for example, a strong case of violence—where the child who has developed an aggressive personality and attitudes, is frequently exposed to a violence-dominated school atmosphere and to community/neighbourhood violence, and also that such a child has unemployed, frustrated and quarrelsome parents.

Anti-violence measures

The school authorities, as well as pupils surveyed in this comparative study, believe that school violence can be reduced through appropriate anti-violence school policies, measures, educational programmes and interventions.

Although they consider that schools and their personnel can do a great deal in this area, this mission also requires concerted efforts, co-operation and partnerships involving out-of-school agents. The wisdom of this approach is evident when we take into consideration that: violence can be increased among pupils through watching violent acts on television and movies; pupil violence is supported and influenced by out-of-school gangs, juvenile delinquents, street drug-dealers and drug addicts; parents' punitive and inconsistent discipline and child-rearing practices; poverty and sanitary conditions; crimes at the society level; and the fact that violence often takes place on the way to and from school.

The studies in ten countries, the majority of which are developing nations, put forward the following recommendations for measures to reduce school violence:

The establishment of anti-violence policies in schools: These should encompass a wide range of measures and strategies: anti-violence guidelines by the Ministry of Education; the establishment of disciplinary regulations and rules by schools; mechanisms to observe and monitor violent incidents committed by students; prevention and intervention strategies and plans to set out the roles and responsibilities of different school personnel for a school-based violence management programme; anti-violence campaigns, communication and dissemination of the agreed
prevention and intervention measures to everyone concerned; the linkages and partnerships with out-of-school agents including the media; and assessment of the effects of intervention programmes. Jordan's suggestion for a school year free of violence and holding a school conference on violence are interesting innovations.

These policies must also consider better mobilization of limited school and community resources, especially to deal with the difficult learning conditions in the developing countries: the integration of violence prevention and intervention into existing school activities and the curricula, while avoiding additional burdens on the school personnel, and the integration of the elements of violence management skills into the training of teachers (both pre-service and in-service) and other school personnel.

Pupil/school personnel interaction and co-operation: School personnel involved in violence management usually include: teachers, the school administrators (principals and other non-teaching personnel) and counsellors.

The teachers' role—to create a caring culture (Ethiopia) towards their pupils as a preventive measure against violence, and to teach peaceful conflict-resolution strategies and skills, pro-social behaviour, and communication skills—is considered crucial. The teachers must also be a role model for students in developing their non-violent behaviour and attitudes: their skills in managing violence with non-punitive and constructive means are equally important. The Ethiopian study indicated that simply applying punitive measures, such as expelling aggressors from the school, does not create a final solution to the problem; rather, it multiplies the problem. The Jordanian study suggested concrete anti-violence measures: increasing the number of school counsellors and counselling services; holding educational conferences on violence; reinforcing school regulations and discipline policies; the formation of students' boards and committees; the creation of a school year free of violence; the reinforcement of research-based information and violence-management in universities, and international co-operation projects, such as 'Education and tolerance' with UNESCO and 'Planning for a peer-mediation programme' with Washington's Bureau of Peace Initiative and 'Violence-free problem-solving', and 'Global education' programmes.

Tackling violence through the school curriculum: The curriculum should be broadly defined to include the syllabus, the curriculum contents, teaching and instructional methods. An important consideration here is that efforts should be made to infuse the concepts of peaceful conflict resolution, social responsibility, and constructive communicative and interactive approaches, rather than to create additional subject matters, learning materials and
learning experiences. The management of violence in the developing countries can be explicitly built into their efforts, with programmes to mobilize the efficient deployment of limited material and human resources there. According to the Ethiopian study, ‘flexible’ and ‘accommodating’ instructional processes need to be practised, where teachers need to ‘know, listen and attend to their students’ needs.’ Slovakia suggested flexible methods of education within the standard curricula, increased differentiation of methods suited to different learners’ needs, and broadening the educational profile of teaching and learning experiences, including the inclusion into the curricula of work and life skills. That country also emphasized teaching of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the light of the social reality of Slovakia. Equally, Latin American studies emphasized socially-responsive and accommodating curricula which meet the needs of individual pupils and their diverse backgrounds.

School-community co-operation: The majority of countries that participated in this comparative study stressed the quality of teacher/parent communication as a very crucial factor in violence management. Can teachers and parents freely discuss, communicate with each other and exchange information and opinions on violent incidents involving their pupils and children? The joint meetings between teachers and parents with the participation of a specialist on specific examples of the incidences of violence are helpful, so that both groups learn the skills and the supplementary role of violence management. The Malaysian study indicated that the society there strongly believes in close family ties and sound religious teachings, and the care and love of parents as crucial factors in curbing violence problems of young people. The Israeli study provided alarming research evidence that more than half the students whose parents are in conflict have problems in adjusting to the school environment. Effective home/school interaction therefore plays an important role in regulating students’ behaviour problems.

It is clear from Latin American studies that school programmes dealing with violence must be linked to the community programmes dealing with the same problem because there is a strong interplay in this region between violence at the school and its societal causal factors. Non-formal and informal community learning centres, churches, mosques, youth clubs and professional associations can provide opportunities for parents to learn child-rearing and parenting skills, how to provide their children with necessary care, affection and love, and constructive ways to discipline their children without employing punitive measures. The Ethiopian study recommended that such child-rearing practices should start in the early stages of child development. The community must also inform the school of potential
negative impacts of violent acts committed outside the school and on the streets, so that the school can prepare preventive measures against them. The schools can also offer their programmes, buildings and facilities to parents in order for them to have an opportunity for violence management courses and seminars.

CONCLUSIONS

The lack of information and research on the facts of school violence in the developing countries is one of the main reasons which mislead people into believing that violence is not an important issue there. It is clear from the present series of studies that school violence is not only a serious problem for developed countries, but is also permeating the schools of developing nations. While the reality of violence may be hard and painful, its prevention must become a more explicit and integral part of the educational public policy agenda in both developed and developing countries. School violence has a negative impact on learning and instruction in both developing and industrialized countries. The developing countries, in an attempt to cope with school violence, are obviously caught in a cross-fire of poverty, poor living and sanitary conditions, AIDS, political violence and the lack of material and human resources.

Violence is neither ordained, nor is a necessary evil in our society. It is not caused directly by poverty or economic hardship, but is mediated by people living in poor economic conditions, living environments, and conflict-ridden schools. Violence begins 'in the minds of men'. It is argued that sustainable national development and the quality of life in the developing countries cannot be fully achieved without peace-loving, culturally tolerant and motivated populations: in other words, without those individuals who can construct the 'defences of peace' in their minds.

How can developing countries successfully frame the issue of violence, build it into their overall social and economic developmental policies and plans, and formulate specific strategies and programmes of violence management both at social and educational levels? This is a question crucial to their future development. The mobilization of resources to solve these problems will require international co-operation, and exchange of information on violence management and prevention between developed and developing countries, and also among the developing countries themselves.
REFERENCES

Bullying and violence in the Jordanian school

Zougan Obeidat

THE DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF JORDANIAN SOCIETY

The population of Jordan has accelerated rapidly from 225,000 in 1922, to 2 million in 1979 and 4.3 million today. Some of this growth is due to the ‘export’ of people following the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1948 and 1967, as well as the 1990 Gulf War; but natural growth has never been less than 3.3 per thousand, a ratio that ranks amongst the highest in the world.

The majority of the population (41%) lives in the capital, Amman; 87% live in the central and northern areas, while the remaining 13% lives in the southern districts.

The population is divided between 51% males and 49% females; 42.5% is aged 15 and under, and 4.2% aged 60 and over. This demonstrates the burdens facing Jordanian society in the fields of education, health and related services. The mortality rate has fallen to six persons per thousand, a fact that reflects development in health standards, further reinforced by the low mortality ratio among children—thirty-four per thousand—and the high average life span, 68 years.

SOME PRINCIPAL FACTS

Jordanian society comprises a number of diversified religious and ethnic groups, although Moslems represent 92% of the population and Christians 8%. Women’s participation in the labour market does not exceed 13%; however, unemployment is 34% among females and 14% among males.

The average family size is 6.9 individuals per house.

Some 98% of the population receives potable water, health services and has access to electricity, but only 55% has access to sewage facilities.

The government spends 10% of its budget on education, 5% on health and 11.7% on housing and social security.

The annual income in 1996 was US$1,100 per person.
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education in Jordan is governed by an Education Act,\(^1\) which stipulates that basic education lasts for ten years, is free and compulsory. Secondary education is limited to two years and is provided on comprehensive lines, with scientific, literary and vocational branches, and applied technical education. Every child can go to school from the age of 6.

There are 1.3 million students, equivalent to a third of the population, and the enrolment ratio in the basic education system is 95%.

The average number of students per classroom is thirty, and student/teacher ratio is 22:1. The illiteracy rate is 11%, and is higher in the rural areas and among females.

Teachers are trained in universities, and a first-class degree is the minimum requirement for entering the teaching profession. There are 59,000 teachers in the country, 65% of whom are women.

A comprehensive plan for educational development was launched in Jordan in 1987, and to date has achieved the following accomplishments:

- Developing and modernizing the curricula and preparing textbooks for all students.
- Developing teachers’ certification and training.
- Developing school buildings and facilities, and abolishing rented buildings and the double-shift system.

There are 4,000 schools located throughout the kingdom, in line with the government’s commitment to ensure that there is a school wherever ten children are available. The private sector supervises 30% of the schools, accommodating 15% of all students.

Co-education is allowed in the first three basic grades in the government schools, whereas it is dominant in all grades in private schools.

Jordan’s education recognizes the kindergarten cycle (pre-school) as an independent educational cycle. It can last for two years for the 4-6 age group.

All children study five days a week, but the number of hours varies according to their place in the educational cycle.
The Ministry of Education considers violence as an advanced act of aggression, regardless of its nature: physical (bullying), oral (swearing) or symbolic (humiliation and sarcasm).

The ministry has always been anxious to preserve the individual’s dignity and freedom, and keen on the need to guide a person and to develop their sense of responsibility. Therefore, it has focused on introducing legislation to organize school disciplinary proceedings, and has issued them in a 1988 guide entitled *The guide to school discipline regulations.*

The most significant regulations, as stated in this guide, are:

1. School discipline is the student’s commitment to school regulations and rules, and is the expression of cordiality between the student’s needs and these regulations.

2. The ‘guide’ defines two types of discipline: (a) intrinsic—maintaining discipline and a studious atmosphere inside the classroom, tolerating colleagues and willingly complying with school laws and regulations, and (b) extrinsic—the students abide by the regulations in order to avoid punishments or to gain rewards.

3. Every secondary and higher basic school establishes a ‘discipline council’ composed of the principal, four elected teachers, a parents’ representative and the teacher in charge of the class of the student involved in incidents. The council’s task is to take decisions against wrong-doers.

4. The regulations focus on preventive measures to maintain a positive atmosphere in schools. Accordingly, they reaffirm the necessity to: (a) enhance co-operation among students; (b) avoid bias towards or against any student or faction; (c) understand each student’s problems and motives; (d) respect each student’s personality, ideology and thoughts; (e) inform students of the discipline regulations, school by-laws and punishments; (f) develop the students’ taste for arts and sports.

5. The remedial, i.e. punishment, methods are determined as follows: (a) minor punishments such as warnings, oral, written or separately; (b) firm punishments on a progressive scale, e.g. first warning; second warning; dismissal from school for three days; or transfer to another school, either within or outside a limited geographical area.

6. The authorities are prohibited from taking the following actions against violent students: (a) inflicting physical punishment; (b) interfering in
students’ assessment marks; (c) banning students from having their meals at set times; (d) verbally abusing students; (e) group (collective) punishments.

7. Patterns of violence and negative practices are defined in the regulations as: (a) using language contrary to accepted standards of behaviour; (b) disrupting classroom equipment; (c) inflicting physical harm on colleagues (bullying); (d) smoking inside schools.

These regulations were subject to severe criticism from inside and outside the ministry. Some conservatives argued for simple punishments to put an end to school violence, particularly in cases where students used sharp weapons or were engaged in bullying that resulted in fatal injury. Others called them non-educational, saying that schools should have delegated powers to solve their problems, opposed transferring or dismissing pupils, and also saying that students should be represented in the disciplinary councils. The ministry is currently reviewing the regulations.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES, SCHOOL CURRICULA
AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE

This part of the study is a review and an analysis of the educational policies and the school curricula in terms of how they address the issue of and concerns about violent school students.

The Jordanian Education Act

The Education Act defines the philosophy and objectives of education in Jordan and the principles of the Jordanian educational policy.

1. The Act does not directly refer to or mention the term ‘students’ or ‘school violence’. It seems that these issues shall be defined by educational legislators at a lower level.

2. It addresses basic areas, such as the educational objectives and their relevance to students’ personalities, and the basic standards for sound growth, without any linkage to issues of violence.

3. The Act does address the objectives of education, according to key principles, viz., understanding the Islamic religion and adhering to its values; developing a taste for aestheticism, and adhering to rights and relevant responsibilities; helping the basic cycle student to develop
self-respect and tolerate others and their feelings; enhancing a child’s adherence to society’s positive traditions and values; enhancing students’ self-confidence, appreciation for the humanity of man and respect for others’ dignity and freedom.

In short, it focuses on developing a child’s personality in accordance with social and religious standards that foster respect for others and their feelings, irrespective of their relevance to acquiring skills (The Education Act, 1994).

The guide to school discipline regulations

This has been previously discussed in terms of both preventive and orientation measures (e.g. creating a positive school atmosphere) and remedial actions (e.g. punishments inflicted on violent students).

The outlines of the basic education curricula (1990)

The outlines define the curriculum fundamentals and objectives, and have focused on basic skills in communication, social interaction, and emotional and aesthetic growth (The outlines of curricula).³

In terms of communication, the curricula have focused on listening skills, whereas in the emotional and aesthetic spheres, the emphasis has been on self-confidence, appreciation and respect for others, tolerance towards opposite opinions, recognition of wrong conduct, and spending free time on profitable activities.

In the field of social growth, the curricula have concentrated on developing the following skills: (a) co-operating with others in a spirit of teamwork; (b) expressing feelings in a sentimentally balanced way; (c) respecting other peoples’ opinions, freedom and privacy; (d) exemplifying good manners through tolerance, listening attentively and speaking correctly; (e) tolerating criticism; (f) respecting the humanity of man; (g) respecting discipline, and showing a positive attitude towards it; (h) developing a sense of responsibility towards oneself and others.⁴

These skills have been translated into applied situations in the school textbooks; the social studies’ textbooks include lessons on fanaticism, conflict-solving, tolerance and co-operation; and the Arabic language and Islamic education textbooks focus on developing positive trends towards the same issues. Any success with the students’ compliance with these practices depends on teachers applying them in relevant situations.
The outlines of the secondary education curricula (1992)

The secondary education curricula are an extension of the basic education curricula, developed in a way that enables students to either go on to complete their education, or to join the labour market. These outlines have asserted the importance of:

1. Developing students’ skills in communication, observation, listening, understanding and dialogue.
2. Enhancing students’ self-respect, appreciation of the humanity of man and respect for the dignity of others.
3. Developing the students’ ability to control their feelings in various situations.
4. Enhancing students’ objectivity, love for others and tolerance of criticism, and avoidance of all patterns of fanaticism.
5. Helping students to understand various religions, and their values and beliefs.
6. Helping students to reject all types of regional and ethnic fanaticism.

These objectives have been translated into cognitive materials and activities included in the textbooks for civic and social education, the Arabic language, scientific education and Islamic culture.

PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE IN THE JORDANIAN SCHOOL

Violence and school violence have been the subject of several studies during the last few years, which have addressed issues such as child abuse, patterns of violence in schools and the impact of counselling programmes on easing students’ aggressive behaviour.

The main results of these studies are:

1. A study on ‘Punishment in the Jordanian schools’, conducted in March 1992 by Ubeidat and others, analyzed students’ violations of the rules and the punishments inflicted on them. The main violations were:
   (a) recurrent absence from school; (b) bullying; (c) swearing at colleagues; (d) rioting; (e) violating school discipline regulations; (f) swearing at and assaulting teachers. The discipline councils inflicted specific punishments against guilty students. The study has recommended the prohibition of physical punishments, and the setting up of a committee responsible for preparing plans to create tension-free schools.

2. In a 1995 study on ‘Patterns of violent behaviour of students in Jordanian schools’, the researchers observed that students’ aggressive
behaviour, such as rioting, assaulting teachers, bullying and using sharp weapons had increased during the previous five years. The study aimed to acquaint educators with the most common patterns of violence, qualitatively and quantitatively, and it also confirmed that there was a problem. It defined the reasons behind students' resorting to violence as social, familial and scholastic, and recommended holding further seminars to address this critical issue.

3. In 1996, Jaradat conducted a study on ‘The impact of a counselling programme on minimizing the level of aggressive behaviour among basic education students in Jordan’. The results proved the effectiveness of a counselling programme, based on training students in problem-solving, negotiation and good listening, and minimizing aggressive behaviour. The study recommended more such programmes.

4. The 1996 study by Balbisi, ‘Child abuse in Jordanian society’ had the objective of describing the size of this problem and its patterns. The study limited child abuse to sexual harassment, car accidents, violence both in school and in the family, killing, and serious and minor injuries. It revealed a tangible increase in child abuse, and recommended further studies to protect children.

5. Obeidat prepared a training programme on peer mediation to empower a number of counsellors with the skills of good listening, mediation, dialogue and conflict-solving to be able to train students in the same skills. The participants expressed satisfaction with the programme, and were keen to train students' groups to implement the peer mediation approach in their schools.

6. At the opening session of a ‘Seminar on school violence’, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan explained that violence inside the schools reflects teachers' poor understanding of the methods needed to handle students' affairs and maintain discipline in classrooms. His Highness called for a reconsideration of all relevant regulations and by-laws to activate the role of the educational counsellors. The Director of the Public Security also reported that cases of school violence registered in the Security Department records during the period January to August, 1996 were: accidental killing, 2; minor damage, 150; shooting, 12; serious damage, 94; anti-ethical crimes, 71.

7. A study on ‘Violence in schools’, by Mrs. Firyal Saleh, Director of the Social Union Centres, involved a sample of 740 students from Amman schools, 97.7% of whom agreed that violence was present in their schools. The students put forward various proposals to address the
problem, including: (a) introducing out-of-school activities' programmes; (b) training teachers in handling students' affairs; (c) providing security departments and police stations with social workers.

8. A study by ZGHUL on 'School violence', which examined 44,000 cases of violence, reported that: (a) the prevalence of violence is a major problem for both urban and rural schools; (b) cases of violence in higher basic grades exceed those in the secondary grades; (c) the main kinds of violence are: swearing, insulting, bullying, rioting, intimidating colleagues and disrupting classroom activities.

ASPECTS OF STUDENTS' VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

This part of the study analyzes the problems resulting from students' violent practices, as documented in school records, and reviews the most common aspects of violence in the Jordanian schools from the viewpoint of school principals, supervisors and teachers.

Violent behaviour and punishments inflicted on perpetrators

An examination of the documents and the minutes of the meetings of school discipline boards during a 1995-96 school semester disclosed patterns of violence shown in Table 1. This table shows that bullying colleagues ranks first, followed by rioting, swearing at teachers and colleagues, using improper words, circulating improper photos, assaulting teachers and resorting to sharp weapons. The table also shows a new pattern of violence exemplified in using sharp weapons, such as metal belts and knives, a situation which demands more attention from school principals.

School violence is higher among males, but both male and female students practice similar violent behaviour.
TABLE 1. Patterns of violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violent behaviour</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assaulting teachers</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swearing at teachers</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying colleagues</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swearing at colleagues</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using sharp weapons</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using improper language</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioting</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulating obscene photos</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroying property</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punishments inflicted on violent students

An analysis of the decisions by the disciplinary boards shows that students were exposed to various levels of punishments (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Punishments inflicted on violent students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual warning</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>2,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written warning</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First warning</td>
<td>1,316</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second warning</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third warning</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-day dismissal from school</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal transfer</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External transfer</td>
<td>1/</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate transfer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table demonstrates the following:

1. Students were subjected to the various types of punishments set out in the disciplinary guide. Males and females faced similar punishments, but they differed in quantity.

2. Almost all the punishments were minor.

3. Progressive punishment proved effective: 1,095 students received a first warning, 218 a second and 39 a third—which shows that the vast majority of students stopped behaving violently after the first warning.
Bullying and violence in the Jordanian school

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS AND COUNSELLORS

An objective discussion of this issue raises the following questions:
— What are the aspects and patterns of violence in the Jordanian school?
— How frequently are these patterns encountered from the viewpoint of school principals, teachers and counsellors?
— How dominant are these patterns in the various geographical and educational districts? To answer these questions, the directorate for counselling and special education in the ministry prepared and distributed a questionnaire to a sample of 780 teachers, counsellors and principals from different geographical districts.

The results show that the most dominant pattern of violence is rioting, screaming, destruction, bullying and harming others. Table 3 shows the ratio of prevalence of each pattern of violence:

TABLE 3. Ratio of prevalence of patterns of violence from the viewpoint of teachers, principals and counsellors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern of violence</th>
<th>Ratio (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rioting and screaming</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swearing and threatening behaviour</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using sharp objects</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging regulations</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-inflicted harm</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (assaulting teachers, theft,</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spreading rumours, circulating obscene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These patterns were common in all geographical districts as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Prevalence of patterns of violence by districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Ratio (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zarqa</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafraq</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafila</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irbid</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balqa</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajloun</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maadaba</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerash</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aqaba</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data given in the table show the following:

1. School violence is common and persistent.
2. The prevalence of violence is unrelated to the number of students. Amman has the largest number of students, but does not rank first in school violence.
3. The prevalence of school violence is very high in rural areas.

FACTORS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Educators in the Jordanian schools, as well as those sampled in this study, believe that violence is a consequence of factors related to the social environment, the family, the students' personality and the school:

- the mass media's incitement to violence, together with poverty, unemployment and overcrowded accommodation, family disintegration and child abuse by parents;
- frustrated, poorly motivated students' with a low level of accomplishment and an unwillingness to complete their education;
- weak school administration, under-qualified teachers, under-equipped schools, overcrowded classes and a shortage of school counsellors.

Consequences of school violence

The Ministry of Education has no specific studies on the consequences of school violence. Therefore, this researcher resorted to two sources to elaborate on this issue—school principals and the author's personal experience. A brainstorming session was held for ten male and female teachers from the Zerqa and the Mafraq districts, which rank first among districts affected by school violence.

The participants cited these consequences:

1. School administrations are forced to devote a disproportionate amount of time on dealing with the issue—20% of the principals' time.
2. Groups of students are led by the most violent ones.
3. Acts of violence are transferred to local communities and families, and consequently to society as a whole.
4. Subjecting students to severe punishment inside and outside schools could seriously affect their future, especially if they are referred to the police.
5. The school atmosphere is damaged by violence, and the teachers’ time is wasted by having to observe students in the playground to monitor their intentions and behaviour.

6. Students may be weakened to the point that the authorities lose control over the students’ behaviour, which may encourage them to violate regulations even more.

CURRENT PROCEDURES
TO MINIMIZE VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

The ministry wants to minimize violence in schools as far as possible by applying the following procedures:

— Increasing the number of educational counsellors in schools. The ministry plans to place a counsellor in every school with 200 students or more.

— Establishing a new division of psychological counselling in every educational and general directorate to enhance the counselling services.

— Holding training courses for teachers on classroom management, and on teaching students the skills of good listening and dialogue.

— Establishing students’ boards and committees to encourage co-operative teamwork and a positive attitude.

— Strengthening confidence in school administrations and delegating further authority to principals in terms of school activities, proceedings and decision-making.

— Strengthening schools’ relationship with their communities by setting up teachers’ and parents’ boards, and creating closer co-operation with parents to better understand students’ behaviour.

— Designating a team of university researchers to implement a comprehensive study on violence in Jordanian schools.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The ministry also intends to adopt a comprehensive approach to tackling school violence, by:  

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1. Expanding programmes such as ‘Education and tolerance’, which is currently under implementation in co-operation with the International Bureau of Education in Geneva.


3. Focusing on global education, which reaffirms the necessity to respect others, work with them, tolerate and understand their motives, acquire the skills of negotiation, dialogue, listening and problem-solving through applying the ‘win-win’ method.

4. Reconsidering school discipline regulations and developing them so that students can participate in both solving their problems, and in disciplinary school boards.

5. Holding an educational conference on school violence to study its factors and develop strategies to face them.

**FUTURE PROPOSALS**

A solution to the problem of school violence requires first a thorough study of the social, familial and school-related factors that create and encourage it. Within this framework, the following proposals deserve consideration:

1. Launching a multi-methodological and procedural campaign to discuss school violence issues involving: parents; students and teachers; the mass media; and social organizations.

2. Declaring a ‘school year free of school violence’, and implementing student awareness and counselling programmes.

3. Widely applying the ‘Education and tolerance’ programmes to involve the pre-school education cycle students.

4. Ensuring that the curricula and teaching methods focus on the following skills: conflict-solving without resorting to violence; dialogue and good listening; conflict-solving through applying ‘win-win’ strategies.

5. Developing a comprehensive strategy to apply the Peer-Mediation programme as an alternative for the conventional methods for solving students’ problems.
NOTES

4. Ibid., p. 9-10.
9. 'Seminar on school violence', Amman, 8-9 September 1996.
Violence in Ethiopian schools: a study of some schools in Addis Ababa

Dereje Terefe and Derese Mengistu

INTRODUCTION

Basic facts about Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the third most populous country in Africa, after Nigeria and Egypt. According to the official census taken in 1994 (and published in August 1995), the population was more than 49 million. However, this figure does not include information on the Afar and Somali regions. Taking the 1984 national census as a basis for calculating the population of these two regions, the number of people living there can be estimated at more than 2 million, thus making the total population of the whole country in the region of 52 million.

It is a young population, with 48% under 15 years of age. The fertility rate is eight children per woman, one of the highest in the world. Most of the people live in the rural areas: the National Office for Population (NOP) reported in 1993 that the urban population constituted only 15% of the total population.

The education profile of the country is a matter of concern. A large proportion of the school-age population has not had the opportunity to go to school. The 1994-95 educational statistics show that the gross enrolment rate was 29% for primary school (classes one to six), 26% for junior secondary (classes seven and eight) and 7% for the senior secondary grades (classes nine to twelve).

However, it must be noted that this enrolment ratio varies from region to region. For example, it is 87% for Addis, the capital, 53% for Tigray, and 9% for Afar. Female enrolment is very low. The 1994-95 educational statistics show that 37% are enrolled in primary schools, while 44% and 45% respectively are enrolled in junior and senior secondary schools. Very weak representation—13% of the total—is observed among females in higher educational institutions, confirming a clear gender gap.
Some Addis Ababa schools

This extends to the ratio of female teachers at various educational levels: ranging from 21% in primary schools to 9% in senior secondary schools and 7% in higher learning institutions. The teacher/student ratio stands at 1:33 from primary through senior secondary levels.

Educational wastage (inefficiency) is a problem. Dropout rates are one area of educational wastage: according to many educators, as many as 50% of enrolled students have dropped out by the end of grade eight.

Classroom repetitions are another issue: it has been reported frequently that many students repeat classes. In general, the percentage of repeaters has been found higher in secondary grades than in primary. However, a serious finding was that the percentage of repeating girls was higher than that of boys in each grade—primary, junior and senior secondary (Ethiopia. Ministry of Education, 1994/95, p. 5). The percentage of girl repeaters is always higher in secondary grades than in primary grades.

Some issues on school violence

Basically, school violence is the state in which the teaching/learning process is put in jeopardy for school students because they are not only emotionally suppressed, but psychologically traumatized as children living in war zones. As a result, children are forced to avoid playgrounds, neighbourhood streets, and even their own front gardens and homes (Sautter, 1995, p. 386).

According to Sautter, the post-traumatic stress includes intrusive images, emotional constriction or avoidance, years of recurrence, sleeping difficulties, disinterest in learning and lack of attention. Since the symptoms are wholly frustrating to the victim and long lasting, the likelihood of dropping out from schools, or becoming engaged in similar violent activities is greater.

Schools are essential social institutions for acquiring knowledge, abilities, attitudes and skills: ideal centres for the socialization of children, and for inculcating required standards of behaviour. The young people there are expected to acquire the essential life skills they need to cope with today’s demanding requirements.

It is on this assumption that governments, supported by the public, invest considerable financial resources to achieve educational goals and objectives. However, the challenge of educating the young is also socio-cultural—and today, a major challenge for the teaching/learning process in schools is the violence committed by those involved.

In the developed world, youth violence in and around schools has recently become a social plague depriving many young people of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—threatening tens of thousands of
children and teenagers with bodily and psychological harm (Sautter, 1995, p. 385).

In Ethiopia, the potential for school violence seems to have come to the fore in the country’s major cities and towns. It has now become routine to hear news of incidents of violence taking place in school, and affecting both boys and girls.

The open snatching of students’ books, ornaments and cash are being reported as commonplace activities in and around schools. There are also acts of rape, stabbings and intentional killings of helpless school boys and girls. Girl students are dropping out because of excessive bullying and terrorizing—and rape. The death of two students at the entrance to Kobebe Tsibaha, one of the well-known senior secondary schools in the capital, attracted considerable attention and public concern. And the public understands that the current levels of school violence have hampered the teaching/learning process, and contributed considerably to the class repetitions and eventual dropout for many students.

Objectives of the study

Recent events in and around schools reveal that they are in the midst of an epidemic of violence. Neither students nor teachers are free of the threat, and while the degree may vary, violence takes place at all levels of learning. As a result, no school seems immune.

The objectives of this study, therefore, are to:

1. Make a baseline survey on the causes and dimensions of school violence.
2. Inform and sensitize the public about the effect of school violence, and possible remedies.
3. Suggest likely solutions and recommend further studies to identify more valid research findings to help towards solving the problem.

Limitation of the study

The study is limited in its scope since it has not been conducted at a macro level. In addition, the inability to obtain a rich domestic research base on the subject affects the validity of the results.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive approach whose targets were students, teachers and headmasters. Three junior secondary schools (grades seven to
Some Addis Ababa schools (grades eight) and five senior secondary schools (grades nine to twelve) were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The schools were chosen because they were identified frequently as experiencing incidents of violence.

Furthermore, most of them are located in the inner areas of the city where the student population is relatively numerous. On the other hand, both students and teachers/headmasters were selected by judgmental random sampling.

Three types of data gathering instruments were used: a questionnaire, focus group discussion (FGD) and observation checklists. Data obtained through the three instruments were tabulated, interpreted and discussed. Finally, a summary and recommendations were provided for possible remedies and further studies.

**REVIEW OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

*Causes of school violence*

A 1994 national survey in suburban, urban and rural schools in the United States of America found that two major factors were held responsible for school violence: (a) disintegration of the family; and (b) increased depiction of violence in the media and popular music. Other factors included alcohol and drug abuse, and easy access to weapons, such as guns. Poverty and inequitable educational opportunities also predispose school youths to violence.

In particular, the modern way of life has abandoned children to a constant barrage of televised mayhem, causing ever-escalating youth violence and other anti-social behaviour. Lack of parental supervision is one of the strongest predictors of the development of problems of misconduct and delinquency.

The American Psychological Association (APA) found that the causes of youth violence range from child-rearing conditions, ineffective parenting, gender differences, economic inequality, relations to peers and media influences, among others.

Negative school factors, such as poor school performance, destructive peer relationships, unmanageable class sizes, imposition of rote learning and predetermined curricula, etc., cause feelings of anger, resentment and rejection—conducive entry points to aggressive violence in schools. Teachers' use of fixed and predetermined curricula is a particular source of classroom violence.
Moreover, a competitive approach that pits students against one another forces them into destructive forms of social comparison (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995, p. 681). According to the authors, inflicting incompatible disciplinary patterns on students to stop bad behaviour without assisting their academic or social development are likely to lead to a violent reaction.

Many educational professionals also believe that the nature of the relationship between teachers and students inhibits the former from forging the bonds which would enable them to take corrective measures to minimize violence in the classroom. Appropriate caring fosters teacher/student connections, and also encourages possibilities for learning that may not otherwise occur (p. 683).

**Dimensions and impacts of school violence**

School violence is not only limited to urban centres: it is now becoming much more pervasive, despite the popular perception that it is primarily an urban phenomenon. The United States Justice Department in a 1991 report found that both urban and suburban students are equally victimized, and concluded that 2% of students from both settings and 1% of rural students were victims of crime such as assault, robbery and rape. Furthermore, the report confirmed that 13% of high-school seniors had been threatened with weapons, such as guns, knives and clubs. According to research by the University of Michigan, such weapons are even found to have been carried by eighth-graders (p. 387).

Victims of school violence are affected by such acts as punching, hitting, or slapping; for girls, sexual abuse is more frequent.

School violence committed on an individual victim leaves a far-reaching emotional scar that cannot be easily cured as it endures deep in the psyches of children long after their victimization. Moreover, besides interfering with normal development and learning in school, school violence also contributes to public agony and paranoia.

The 1994 American National School Safety Centre found that guns and similar weapons packed along with students’ school lunches led to thirty-five deaths and ninety-two injuries in schools. National estimates show that 200,000 students use weapons to destabilize classes, terrorize teachers and other students every day. As a result, the National Education Association calculates that on any given day, about 160,000 students stay at home because of the fear of violence in, or on the way to school (ibid.) This epidemic of school violence is not only targeted to students—teachers suffer too. For example, Lantieri (1995, p. 36) observed that every hour, approxi-
Some Addis Ababa schools are threatened, and nearly forty are physically attacked.

**Some measures to combat school violence**

The social violence being witnessed today is a learned behaviour: and if violence is a learned behaviour, it goes without saying it can also be unlearned.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), early intervention is critical to preventing future violence. This means that children who show signs of anti-social behaviour must be targeted very early for school and family intervention to ensure that their aggressive tendencies do not affect their educational achievement, and cause learning problems later on.

Furthermore, parents should avoid harsh and continual physical punishment in order not to contribute to the development of aggressive behaviour patterns. Positive interactions between parents, adults and schools can lessen the risk of developing violent behaviour in schools. Teaching social and mediation skills to help young people think critically before doing anything, and to encourage them to live in harmony is another alternative remedy to gradually eliminating the problem.

**DATA INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS**

In this section, data gathered through a questionnaire given to senior secondary school teachers and their headmasters will be presented and discussed. The main objective of the questionnaire was to obtain general information from them on violent incidents taking place in and around their schools.

*Views and opinions on the prevalence, forms, and victims of school violence.*

Teachers and headmasters were asked whether there was significant violence in and around their schools. While 84% confirmed there was, most violence was found in the senior secondary schools: 91% of the senior secondary school-teachers and headmasters reported that it was a problem.

Violence was common in the junior schools, but the magnitude was lower (71%). The underlying reasons could be attributed to the age level of the students and their future prospects. In other words, most students in the senior secondary schools are at the critical age where they will engage in various adventures, regardless of the consequences. Moreover, these stu-
Dereje Terefe and Derese Mengistu

dents are analysing and comparing their present situation to their future prospects, which may lead to a sense of hopelessness and compel them to resort to violent acts.

Students in the senior grades are more assertive and seek more autonomy than those in the junior grades. However, the likely conflict between these characteristics and the prevailing school norms will cause a conflict which will be manifested in the form of intimidation, bullying and other forms of violence.

As regards the forms of violence, the respondents cited the following as the most prevalent acts of misbehaviour: snatching books, bags, etc.; gang robbery; intimidation/bullying; using bodily force; damaging the school fence; quarrelling with each other, school guards, teachers, etc.; attempted rape; owning and disowning girlfriends; forcibly extracting money; stealing school equipment; stabbing and killing each other.

This violent misbehaviour could be associated with many factors. However, when related to the present school situation, the most plausible reason may be the number of students in the classroom who do not receive enough attention and the necessary academic follow-up from their teachers: that is, crowded schools are not in a good position to identify students who are misbehaving and committing violence in and outside schools. As a result, schools as well as teachers fail to control violent acts taking place on the school premises.

Teachers and headmasters also witnessed acts of violence performed by school dropouts, underachieving or lazy students, street children and gangs. Acts of violence committed by students in school are usually associated with academic inferiority and 'unhealthy' school regulations: violence by individuals outside the school is mainly caused by a failure to satisfy daily needs and concern over poor future prospects.

Violence committed in and around schools is generally targeted at girls and smaller children: 72% of the respondents agreed that girls were the main victims. The probable cause is that women and girls are considered to be unable to resist men and boys in physical confrontations. The smaller schoolchildren are usually punished by older students for failing to obey and conform to the latter's demands.

There is a variety of violent acts committed on smaller children and girls. The major ones are indicated in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, violent acts range from attempted rape to intimidation and snatching of minor property. The majority of the respondents indicated that acts of intimidation and snatching were more prevalent, while nearly 23% reported frequent acts of physical violence and 20% indicated that attempted rape was common.
TABLE 1. Violence committed on girls/smaller children by school levels: number of incidents and percentage of total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of violence</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

The responses from senior schools vary considerably from those of the junior schools: intimidation was more common among senior school students, while snatching property was more frequent among junior school students. Attempted rape was more pronounced among senior school students.

In the junior schools, the main acts of violence involved physical confrontation. This could be attributed to the fact that students at this level have relatively lower verbal negotiating skills, which encourages them to resort more to physical violence than other acts, such as attempted rape.

Table 2 shows that the impact of violence has affected both the teaching/learning process and students' psychological make-up. As a result, a sizeable majority of the responses (60%) confirmed its far-reaching effects. Whenever there are minor violent acts in and around schools, the whole mood of teachers, as well as that of students, will be considerably affected. In particular, if the violence is committed on young children, the

TABLE 2. Level of the impact of violence on the teaching learning process and students' emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of violence</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.
memories will always haunt the victims, and may lead to a total loss of attention and distraction in the individual's learning process.

Additional responses showed that, because of such painful experiences, many bright students stopped schooling. Respondents also made it clear that the pain is felt more by girls, and this results in their dropping out. The violence also opens the door to learning and adapting to new and socially undesirable behavioural patterns outside school: this intensifies the proliferation of juvenile delinquents which, in turn, jeopardizes the operation of schools.

**TABLE 3. Students repeating classes or dropping out of schools due to violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

The majority of the responses showed that repeating classes or dropping out as a result of school violence was low. This was confirmed by almost 44% of the respondents. Although the responses from both junior and senior levels were similar (low), this does not rule out the implicit and explicit occurrence of violent acts in and around schools causing classroom repetition or dropping out from schools. Moreover, a considerable number of respondents at both levels experienced a significant degree of violence (29%) which affected their schooling. On the other hand, while the dimension of violence was more widespread in the senior schools than in the junior, the fact that there is such an adverse factor jeopardizing the teaching/learning atmosphere is a serious challenge to the schools, as well as the community.

Respondents also explained that, due to serious bullying and acts of robbery, students had been forced to change schools, and move away from their homes, while some were forced to live on the streets.

Respondents were asked whether violent acts, such as intimidation or other kinds of bullying, were levelled against teachers and their headmasters. In general, 62% of both groups confirmed this had happened—al-
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though 71% of the total violence that had occurred was witnessed by senior secondary school respondents.

Respondents who witnessed violent acts on teachers/headmasters identified the probable root causes as failure to observe school regulations and general learning disciplines (66%), arguments related to examination issues (29%) and other personal reasons (5%). Other causes were related to the regular checking and correcting of assignments, and students being told to return school property or they would not be admitted to classes.

TABLE 4. Mechanisms schools used to solve violent problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures taken</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate punishment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expulsion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising/counselling</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with pertinent bodies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

Table 4 shows some of the measures schools take to solve the problem of violence in and around schools. Most responses revealed that consultations with pertinent bodies (31%) and use of advice/counselling (nearly 27%) were used as remedial actions. An alternative approach was punishment, although the degree and type was not clear. Another measure taken by schools was the expulsion of students cited by 21% of respondents as the correct approach. However, while the degree of violence committed by a student might justify his or her withdrawal from school, expulsion may not be a lasting solution because it reinforces the incidence of violence outside the school—and sometimes creates a hostile environment between outsiders and the school community, the teachers in particular.

The consultation approach to solving school violence was more emphasized in the junior schools (45%). It is one of the solutions particularly recommended for these relatively young students because advice, guidance and counselling are likely to be more successful than punitive measures.

From Table 5, it can be seen that familial and economic factors were found to be responsible for most of the school violence. The familial cause may be due to the break-up of the family and related matters, while the economic factor covers the inability to obtain sufficient food, clothing and
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TABLE 5. Causes of school violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of media</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

money. Since both factors more or less relate, their impacts are also similar. The impact of the modern media also plays a role because children are indiscriminately exposed to undesirable acts and behaviour. Furthermore, a living environment where violent activities are always experienced is also fertile ground for nurturing students to create violent incidents at school.

TABLE 6. Violence repercussions/consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical injury</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

Violent repercussions or consequences are diverse and far-reaching. Responses from both junior and senior secondary schools revealed that attempted rape (45%) was the most frequent phenomenon affecting school-girls.

Physical injury (34%) may range from slight wounding to loss of some faculties. Accidental deaths (20%) are difficult to account for, but the few deaths that do occur in schools have a far-reaching impact, particularly on the students—who will endure the memory for a considerable time afterwards. Some of them withdraw from school because of this.
TABLE 7. Objects/instruments used for violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects/instruments</th>
<th>Junior schools</th>
<th>Senior schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp implements</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitation objects</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequency or number of incidents.

Table 7 shows that the most frequently used objects or instruments are sharp implements (53%). They include stones, clubs and sticks. Considerable physical force is also used for intimidation, bullying and acts of robbery.

Many of the most dangerous objects used cannot be detected easily. Some, such as razor blades and scissors, are brought to school as learning instruments for various study areas.

While verbal abuse does not cause real physical harm, it is psychologically harassing—in particular, for smaller children and for girls, when the effect is tantamount to physical mistreatment.

REMEDIES FOR SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Respondents were asked to propose some of the remedies that could be used to counter school violence.

Measures that could be taken by schools included: the provision of civic education, guidance and counselling services; issuing students’ identification cards; establishing a close parent/school relationship, and making clear the functional school regulations which students are obliged to observe.

Parents were urged to follow up and control their children’s learning progress, as well as fulfilling school requirements (school uniforms, learning materials, school fees, etc.)—these are important for avoiding any disagreements. In general, a close collaboration between parents, teachers and headmasters was seen as important.

Respondents felt that the community as a whole also has a major role to play—not least in identifying the causes of school violence and seeking appropriate solutions, including working with ‘pertinent legal institutions’ to discourage potential acts of violence. In addition, the community could organize recreational activities for young people after school and during the
weekends. Organizing guidance and counselling services, including sex education, would inculcate in the minds of schoolchildren that socially desirable behaviour and activities are the basis for the development of a nation and its citizens.

The government was urged to:

— use the mass media to educate young people so that they become the force that builds the nation;
— initiate policies and enforce laws on how students should behave in and outside schools, to ensure that the school environment is not a breeding ground for violence, and to protect the teaching/learning process;
— provide basic school (educational) facilities;
— create employment opportunities for young people;
— rehabilitate street children and assist jobless but educated youths.

Data on focus group discussion (FGD)

This instrument was designed to obtain a relatively authentic response from those more familiar with, and in some cases exposed to, violent incidents in and around schools. Some 50 students from two senior secondary schools (higher seven and twelve) were randomly selected from grades nine to twelve. Their ages ranged from 15 to 25, and they included both sexes.

To ensure confidence and maximize active participation in the discussion, they were divided into boys’ and girls’ groups. While the themes for each group were the same, grouping on the basis of sex helped the girls to interact and discuss the issues freely.

The interviewers who led the discussions made clear the objectives of the focus groups, so that participants were comfortable about sharing views. They were also assured that their responses would be kept confidential. This preliminary confidence-building exercise paved the way for open discussion, even when the facilitators probed more and more on certain critical issues.

The discussion themes focused mainly on the following:

— incidents or situations that attracted students’ attention, positively and negatively, in and around schools;
— the relationship between members of the school community and the students;
— situations that lead to violent acts;
— the main victims of and underlying reasons for school violence;
— methods used for bullying, stealing property, etc.;
— the repercussions of school violence; and
— suggested corrective measures.

DISCUSSION

Regarding incidences or situations which drew their attention in a positive way, the students cited the efforts of some diligent teachers, and the activities of some school clubs, which were both entertaining and educational. They were also impressed by guidance and counselling services, and sports and music events taking place in their schools.

On the other hand, students of both schools had encountered situations which had had a negative impact, both psychological and physical. An important one was the behaviour of some late-arriving students, and the reactions to this from school guards and the teachers. The students observed that late arrival at school was one of the factors affecting school discipline and regulations. The latecomers arrive in an aggressive frame of mind, while gatekeepers and teachers are not prepared to accept their reasons for being late. The students attributed the problem to lack of transport: most students travel some distance to school from distant homes, and are forced to use city buses which do not keep to their scheduled time.

The students in the discussion groups accused schools of failing to identify pupils who have transport problems and to make allowance for the time when they arrive at school. As a result, the regular confrontations taking place at school gates were the major causes for the misbehaviour and violence observed in and around schools.

Participants also pointed out that the schools were not well equipped to provide adequate education: they were concerned that they may not benefit from their schooling, and were worried about their future employment opportunities. For example, there were no practical activities in some subjects, such as home economics and other science areas. Both schools were reported to have problems with basic equipment for vocational training.

The students also complained about the misbehaviour of some teachers: accusing them of always discouraging and annoying students, and blaming them for causing school violence. For instance, they identified teachers who, as soon as they entered the classroom, said: ‘Those who don’t like to attend my class may go out!’ This, they said, led to classroom confrontations between the teacher and students, and also to low morale among
students. Pupils were also discouraged by teachers who identified them as ‘repeaters’ in class.

The students believed that sending students out of the classroom because of their failure to do assignments, or because they were late did not solve anything, but rather gave students more opportunity to misbehave and to become involved in further incidents.

The students further complained that some teachers did not take the time or effort to address problems caused by their (the students’) academic failures. Because the teachers were not sympathetic towards helping them, many students lost interest in the subjects, and eventually were forced to drop out of school.

However, it was observed that the attitude of teachers had improved to some extent since the Education Bureau of Region Fourteen had introduced a new system whereby teachers were evaluated by their own students.

Students’ relationships with members of the school community were generally considered to be healthy. However, some teachers as well as school librarians did not like to spend their weekends helping students to study or find books. The discussion participants were concerned that, by not being available in this way, teachers were losing an opportunity to provide further support and counselling, which might identify some causes of violence and even offer solutions.

The discussions in both groups showed that the situations that lead to school violence are diverse, and composed of external and internal causes: but, the internal factors (student/teacher and other school personnel relationships) were the likeliest main causes for the violence by students in and outside the schools.

Students’ misbehaviour was manifested in the form of disturbing others while they studied in the classroom. Verbal attacks were common on smaller students and girls. Furthermore, girls were intimidated and harassed not only by school students, but also by youths outside school. Hurtful remarks frustrated the girls and caused them to lose concentration and confidence in their learning abilities.

As explained above, the major victims of violence were girls. It was claimed that this was due to the way they dressed, and their general behaviour. The girls themselves accepted that some of them dressed in a peculiar manner (Qit Yata Alebabes), which predisposed them to mockery (Lakafa) and eventual violence. The girls’ dress code was also another cause of bullying, and the snatching of ornaments and other property.

Even so, while the above reasons given by the participants can be true to an extent, the underlying causes may also be culturally underpinned: the girls’ way of dressing and their general behaviour may be only marginal
symptoms of the overall problem of violence, deserving further in-depth studies.

There also seems to be a need to introduce sex education—since according to the students, this would help minimize rape attempts and other misbehaviour related to sex.

Objects or instruments used for bullying and performing violent acts were found to be razor blades, stones, knives, clubs and related objects. However, both groups of participants suggested that physical force was not used frequently on girls, except for a slight slapping on the cheek and intimidation with razor blades and other objects. In particular, the girls are much more afraid of the razor blades because 'they will destroy their natural beauty, particularly when the attack is on the face.'

Both groups confirmed that, as a result of such violent actions, there were students who had lost their sight, had been stabbed and even some who had died. The students also cited a case where a school-teacher who argued with a student who was caught copying during an exam subsequently lost his eye when he was attacked by that student outside the school. Other students, participants said, were forced to move away from where they were living.

The groups proposed the following remedial measures:

— provide moral education;
— strengthen guidance and counselling services;
— introduce school sex education;
— rehabilitate street children;
— create employment opportunities for the out-of-work young people;
— establish strict school regulations;
— insist on the wearing of school uniforms;
— create close collaboration between schools, the community, the police, etc.

**Results of the observation schedules**

To support the data obtained through the questionnaires and the focus group discussions, observation schedules were arranged: three consecutive observations in three schools (two senior and one junior secondary), around the school gates and their environs, and when the students came to school and when they left for lunch or for home. Two people conducted the observation every thirty minutes. Although observing the overall students' relationship may not have disclosed too much, studying group as well as individual
relationships did, for example, show uncertainty and fear on the face of some students. Only a few of them were seen to play, talk and interact with others without seemingly being offended or frightened by their equals. Most smaller children, girls in particular, confined themselves to talking to and playing with their classmates, or those sitting close to them. Furthermore, all discussions and play were managed so that they did not cause any situations where conflict and violence could arise. On the other hand, students who—individually as well as in a group—were extrovert and assertive, tended to dominate the discussion and play activities. If the small children and girls tried to resist this dominating behaviour, violence was almost inevitable.

The observation schedules also showed that most play activities and discussions were based on sexual identities: very few girls were seen to be chatting or holding discussions with boys.

Various degrees of intimidation and bullying were witnessed by some groups, including dramatic incidents such as stoning, kicking and concerted bullying.

In general, except for a minority of well-behaved students, the observers saw the regular use of bodily force, shouting, seizing and scattering pupils' books and other incidents. The main victims were the smaller children and girls who failed to conform to the school gangs' 'rules'—reinforcing the view that the school environments seem to be particularly hostile for hardworking students and girls.

Besides the use of physical force, girls and small children were also subjected to verbal abuse.

It was also observed, particularly around the two senior secondary schools, that small cafeterias and music shops attracted street children and others, which created further problems both inside and outside the schools: students being annoyed and even having their property stolen.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In this limited study, attempts were made to find out whether or not there are significant problems with school violence in a selected few junior and senior secondary schools in the capital and its environs. To this end, a few data-gathering instruments were used to identify the magnitude of the problem. Accordingly, responses from teachers and headmasters, students' face-to-face discussions and observation results have revealed the following findings:
Some Addis Ababa schools

- Teachers and headmasters (84%) have confirmed there is actual or potential violence in and around their schools. However, the responses revealed that there is considerably more violence in the senior than the junior schools. Violent acts range from intimidation and the use of minor physical force to bullying, snatching property, attempted rape, injury to sensitive organs, stabbing and even deaths.

- Most school violence is engineered by regular students, drop-outs, street children and gangs of jobless youths. The causes of violence have been found to be diverse (economic, familial, etc.), while the impacts have been found to be far-reaching. Violence of varying degrees is targeted mostly against the physically weak, smaller schoolchildren and girls. Girls are the most victimized in and around schools. Although student participants attribute the causes to the girls’ way of dressing and their general behaviour, the underlying reasons deserve further studies. The impact of school violence goes beyond inflicting psychological pain on the victims, to include serious physical injuries, and even death. Minor impacts include loss of concentration for learning, classroom repetitions, moving away from home, and dropping out from school.

- Schools have been employing certain measures to minimize violence problems through the application of appropriate and corrective measures, counselling and expulsion from schools. But, student participants do not agree with expulsion because they say that such a measure does not provide a lasting solution to the problem—rather, it aggravates the situation. Instead, students suggest a concerted effort by the community in co-operation with schools to enforce school regulations and observance of social norms by students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After recognizing and identifying the prevalence, causes and impacts of school violence in the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

Schools need to establish a functional regulatory framework setting out the rules to be followed and the disciplinary measures to be applied. These must be communicated and made clear to parents so that they can contribute to their implementation. School violence can only be reduced if all of society takes part in the campaign to stop it. This requires close parental follow-up and control of children’s behaviour, and parents also need to spend the time to counsel their children—to help them acquire skills in social respect,
appreciation of their own values and their roles in the building of their nation.

Harmonious relationships must be promoted between teachers and their students. This requires continuous dialogue and interaction, with teachers creating a caring culture, and adopting more flexible and accommodating instructional processes so that they can discover, listen to and attend to their students' needs.

Positive interactions that start early between parents, schools and students would help reduce the risk of school violence. Hence, interventions aimed at assisting children at pre school and primary school ages will help to detect anti-social behaviour early enough so that corrective and timely measures can be taken.

Teaching students to develop an attitude of tolerance and friendship, as well as social and mediation skills would help youngsters to live in greater harmony. Pertinent institutions, such as schools, churches, mosques, youth clubs and professional associations, have to exert a concerted effort to change the present hostile school environment to one that is safe for learning.

REFERENCES

Chaskin, R.J.; Rauner, D.M. 1995. Teaching themes of care. Phi delta kappan (Bloomington, IN), vol. 76, no. 9, p. 683-93.


APPENDICES
I. Questionnaire for teachers and headmasters

1. Is there any violence in and around your school?
   A. Yes      B. No

2. In what forms is school violence manifested?
   Please give your comments

3. Who commits the school violence?

4. Most violent acts are committed on: A. smaller children/students; B. girls.

5. Violence committed on girls or smaller students is:
   A. intimidation
   B. physical force
   C. robbery/snatching property
   D. attempted rape

6. The impact of school violence on the teaching-learning processes, and on students’ emotions is:
   A. High
   B. Medium
   C. Low
   D. None
   Additional comments:

6. The level of students who repeat classes and drop out of school because of bullying and intimidation is:
   A. High
   B. Medium
   C. Low
   D. None
   Additional comments:

8. Is there intimidation and bullying of teachers and headmasters?
   A. Yes      B. No
9. If your answer to question 8 was ‘A’, what are the causes?
   A. Related to examinations
   B. Related to failing to observe disciplinary regulations
   C. Related to private reasons. Clarify:

10. What efforts have been made by the school to solve the problem of school violence?
    A. Using appropriate punishment
    B. Total expulsion from school
    C. Advising/counselling
    D. Consulting with pertinent bodies
    Additional comments:

6. If the causes of school violence are assumed to be outside the school, what do you think
   are the problems?
   A. Family
   B. Living environment
   C. Modern media effects
   D. Economic
   Additional comments:

12. As a result of school violence, what were the further repercussions on school students?
    A. Bodily injuries
    B. Deaths
    C. Attempted rape
    Additional comments:

13. Which pertinent bodies follow up and take school violence to legal or counselling
    institutions?
    A. The school
    B. Parents
    C. Police
    D. ‘A’ and ‘B’
    Additional comments:

14. What objects or instruments do violent students use for bullying and other crimes?
    A. Sharp objects
    B. Mockery
    C. Physical force
    Additional comments:

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15. In general, in your opinion, what permanent measures should be taken to solve school violence?

At school level:

At parental level:

At community level:

At State/Government level:

II. Instrument for the face-to-face interviews
(Focus Group Discussion—FGD)
Themes for the Focus Group Discussion:

1. Of all the phenomena occurring in and around schools, which of them draw your attention most?
2. Of all the relationships that you have with school communities (teachers, principals, administrative staff members, etc.) which ones are satisfying/disappointing, and why?
3. As a result of your disappointments, what are you forced to do?
4. Have there been instances of violence committed on you or your friends?
5. Are violent acts committed on both sexes equally, or more on girls?
6. What do you think are the underlying reasons?
7. How do you resist or overcome such violence?
8. What are the most frequently used instruments/objects?
9. What were the outcomes of such violent events?
10. On boys?
11. On girls?
12. On teachers/headmasters?
13. What measures do you suggest for solving school violence (roles of students, teachers, community as a whole, etc.)?
III. Observation schedule checklist

1. Students’ overall relationships healthy/unhealthy

2. Whether most students talk confidently with their friends

3. Whether all/few students greet each other, play together, discuss with each other, etc.

4. Students go in and go out of schools peacefully/violently

5. If there is intimidation, bullying, hitting, etc.

6. Boys/girls relationship healthy/unhealthy

7. If the girls deal and play with boys without fear

8. Boys intimidate, bully and hit girls

9. If smaller students and girls feel or show intimidation

10. If all kinds of violent acts by larger children target the girls

11. Whether the school environment is prone to violence
Bullying and violence in the Malaysian school

Rahimah Haji Ahmad and Norani Mohd Salleh

STATE-OF-THE-ART REPORT ON BULLYING/SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN MALAYSIA

Introduction

Malaysia is a federation of thirteen states and two Federal Territories, which geographically stretches across the South China Sea. It covers a total land mass area of 329,758 square kilometers, with Peninsula Malaysia at the tip of mainland Southeast Asia, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak, as well as the Federal territory of Labuan on the north-west of Borneo island.

The country, formerly known as the Federation of Malaya, gained its independence from the British in 1957. In 1963, Malaysia was formed as a federation of the eleven States of Peninsula Malaysia, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak when the latter gained their independence. However, in 1965, Singapore left the federation.

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a monarch, His Royal Highness the Yang Di Pertuan Agong as constitutional supreme head of State. Sabah and Sarawak are self-governing states with foreign affairs, defence, internal security and other powers delegated to the federal government. The government is headed by a Prime Minister who is generally the leader of the party which commands the majority of seats in the Parliament. The Parliament is bicameral, having an upper house (Senate) or the Dewan Negara and the lower house (House of Representatives) or Dewan Rakyat. Presently, the government at the federal and state levels, with the exception of the state of Kedah, is led by the coalition party of the Barisan Nasional (National Front). Universal suffrage is at the age of 21.
The population of Malaysia, which is about 19 million, comprises three main groups, the Malays, Chinese and Indians in Peninsula Malaysia, and numerous indigenous groups such as the Ibans, Kadazans, Kenyahs, Bidayuhs and Muruts in Sabah and Sarawak. The national language, Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language), and English as a second language, are widely spoken by the population. The official religion is Islam, but there is complete freedom of worship.

The task of blending the multi-ethnic and cultural diversities has been the greatest challenge for the government since independence. The education system during the British colonial government was structured along racial, social and cultural lines, which reinforced the pluralistic structure of the society. After independence, the government policy adopted has successfully secured and maintained racial harmony and ensured continued economic growth and political stability.

The Malaysian economy is a blend of private enterprise and a soundly managed public sector which has spurred the country to its current developed state, with a remarkable growth record of 8.9% annually since 1987. Currently the dominant income-generating sector for the country is manufacturing, with export-oriented products like textiles, electrical and electronic products, and chemical and petroleum products. Malaysia is also the world's largest exporter of rubber, tropical timber, cocoa beans, palm oil and pepper. The rapid economic development has enabled Malaysia to enjoy a fairly high standard of living, and a substantial reduction of poverty with a marked decrease in unemployment to less than 4.5% in 1995.

**THE MALAYSIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

Education in Malaysia is centrally administered, with the national language (Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia) as the medium of instruction, with common content, curriculum and common textbooks. Beginning in the 1980s, the Malaysian education system has been undergoing reforms, with the revamping of the school curriculum, first with the introduction of the New Primary School Curriculum in 1983, followed by the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum in 1988. Recently, in 1996, the new Education Act was adopted. There is a strong emphasis on values education, with the philosophy of values permeating the curriculum, besides the teaching of Islamic education and moral education for the Muslims and non-Muslims respectively. The national philosophy of education is stated thus:

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Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large (Ministry of Education, 1993).

Primarily, the two overriding objectives of the Malaysian education system are: (i) national unity through a unified national educational system that emphasizes equal educational opportunity, a common language and a common curriculum; and (ii) human resource development with an emphasis on individual development, targeting the acquisition of knowledge and skills to cope within highly industrialized societies. The underlying factors of historical plurality of the society, which cuts across race, religion, culture and geographical location, has determined the general direction of the country’s socio-economic development to reflect the aspirations and principles of the nation consolidated in the Rukun negara (national ideology).2

Basically, the formal school system in Malaysia can be described as having a 6-3-2-2 system, that is: (i) six years of elementary education; (ii) three years of lower secondary; (iii) two years of upper secondary; and (iv) two years’ post-secondary or pre-university education. Universities also offer matriculation programmes which are specially designed as preparatory classes for entrance to a specific university. Pre-school education is as yet not part of the public school system, and hence formal schooling begins at age 6 when children begin their primary education.

Students sit for common public examinations at every level of their schooling, that is, the Primary School Achievement Test (PSAT) at the end of the sixth year, the Lower Secondary School Assessment Test (LSAT) and the Malaysian School Certificate Examination (equivalent to “O’-levels) at the end of the third and fifth year of secondary education respectively. Those who enter the two year pre-university classes sit for the Higher School Certificate Examination (equivalent to “A’-levels). There is also formative assessment or continuous school-based assessment aimed at monitoring pupil progress in mastering the basic skills, and planning strategies for school improvement particularly at the elementary school level.

Promotion in the elementary and the first three years of secondary schooling is automatic. Children from the national type primary school (Chinese or Tamil)—the vernacular schools—normally enter a transition year (remove class) before entering form one. The transition class is aimed
at providing the pupils with sufficient proficiency in the Malay language, the medium of instruction in secondary schools.

After completing their lower secondary education, and based on their performance in the LSA examination, as well as from personal choice, students enter either academic, technical or vocational schools. However, since the introduction of the new integrated curriculum, this level is still considered as general education, and all students take core subjects, comprising language (Bahasa Malaysia and English), science, mathematics, history, and Islamic/moral education. Special subjects which characterize the technical and vocational schools are taken as electives. Nevertheless, students in academic and technical schools sit for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or the Malaysian Certificate of Education, while those from the vocational schools sit for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Vokasional) or the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Vocational).

There is now near universal enrolment rate in primary level and a high enrolment rate at secondary level with almost equal numbers of boys and girls for both levels (Ministry of Education, 1993). According to the 1993 statistics published by the Educational Planning and Research Division, there were 2,710,100 elementary, 1,011,520 lower secondary, and 424,701 upper secondary students. This forms 98.57%, 85.97% and 55.74% of the respective cohorts. They were housed in 6,912 elementary and 1,409 secondary schools. The number of classes exceeded that of the number of classrooms: there were 126,027 classes, while the classrooms number only 102,591, which necessitates some schools to function in double sessions.

However, there is an uneven spread of population across the country. Enrolment in schools, especially in primary schools, varies from 2,500 to as low as below 50 students. In heavily populated areas, there is an acute shortage of classrooms which means that 44% of the primary schools and about 15% of the secondary schools (in Peninsula Malaysia) function in double sessions. Class sizes vary from 15 to 50 pupils. The national average class size is around 33 with the average teacher/pupil ratio for the primary and secondary levels at about 1:20 and 1:18 respectively. Large class sizes and double sessions were cited among the causes for indiscipline and violence in schools.

Private education and training in Malaysia has been largely complementary to the public system, and ranges from the pre-school to post-secondary education. The Ministry of Education requires all private educational institutions to register with the Ministry. Hence all primary and secondary private schools in the country must follow the national curriculum and prepare the students for the same public examinations at LSA, MCE and HSC levels. However, since pre school education is currently not part of the
Bullying and violence in the Malaysian school

FIGURE 1. Structure of the Malaysian education system

formal education system, private pre-schools do not have to subscribe to the Ministry’s guidelines on pre-school. Currently, there are 55 private primary, and 148 secondary schools with a total enrolment of 11,450 and 86,603 respectively. There are 1,422 privately run pre-schools with a total enrolment of 146,974 students.

BULLYING AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN MALAYSIA

It is recognized that bullying and school violence is on the increase. The steady escalation of social and disciplinary problems involving school-age persons prompted the Ministry of Education to hold its first seminar on school discipline in 1980 in Penang. Consequently, in 1983 a committee to review the implementation of its recommendations was established and, in 1984, produced a report providing schools with guidelines on discipline. The guidelines were revised in 1988 and the second edition published in the same year. Schools were also required to submit annually to the district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of wrongdoing</th>
<th>Sub categories of wrongdoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>Gambling, stealing, fighting teachers and prefects, extortion, bullying, gangs, sexual harassment, trespassing, betting and threatening students, drugs, and demonstration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Immoral conduct</td>
<td>Bringing immoral/pornography materials; peeping-tom; words and drawings that are considered offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personal neatness</td>
<td>Having long hair; long finger-nails; moustache/beard; wearing inappropriate attire; wearing gold ornaments to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tardiness</td>
<td>Coming late to school and school assembly; eating during off-break hours; roaming about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Disrespect</td>
<td>Aggressive with teachers, prefects and other students; using harsh language; possessing and smoking cigarettes; disrespectful to teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Destructive behavior</td>
<td>Destruction of property belonging to the school, teachers, canteen or other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>Cheating involving money; and dishonesty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>Absent from school, classes, assemblies, co-curricular activities, exam and tests; and absence for purposes of doing private study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Bullying and violence in the Malaysian school

The report was basically aimed at monitoring the status of discipline in school. While bullying and school violence are recognized as serious offences and fall into the category of criminal wrongdoing, they have somewhat, for all intents and purposes, been subsumed under the broad banner of undisciplined behaviour. There are eight broad categories with wide-ranging and inclusive sub-headings of wrongdoing, as shown in Table 1.

According to Mohd Taib Hussin (1996), discipline is commonly accepted to mean 'allegiance, faithfulness and loyalty to the prescribed regulations' and this is commonly subscribed to by schools, parents, teachers and students themselves; sometimes with the added phrase like the 'training of the mind and character for self-control in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed or otherwise punishment is expected'. A study conducted by the Ministry of Education on students' perception of discipline reveals that many (54.4%) of the students think of discipline as providing advice and guidance. In fact, only 11.26% viewed discipline as rules and punishment (Ministry of Education, 1996). Many are, however, careful to contextualize it within the norms and expected behaviour of the society—particularly appropriate from the Asian and Islamic perspectives. Subsequently, the discussions on bullying or school violence become broad-based and encompassing in nature. Infrequently, the Malay word deru, which translates as abusive punishment, has been observed to be used by government officials and teachers in describing bullying conduct.

Often bullying behaviour includes any form of merciless actions involving physical or bodily harm inflicted upon another with intent, for example, kicking, slapping, hitting, etc. When this happens, a police report could be made by the abused, as it falls under the heading of a criminal offence and the visible evidence of physical abuse somewhat encourages the abused to seek redemption through the authorities. Another bullying behaviour sometimes reported to the police is extortion. The number is small, but is increasing and of concern to school authorities, as this is sometimes associated with gangster activities going on outside the school. For example, recently a newspaper (The Star, 11 November 1996) reported a case where eight students were seized for extortion while in the company of three who were suspected of masterminding the activity. Another story reported an 8-year-old boy who was hit on the head by an 11-year-old for money during recess (Metro Malaysia, 18 May 1993). Other bullying incidents cited in the Students' school discipline report involved in/out group's code-of-conduct such as preventing others not in a certain group from going to certain areas in the school. A Malay daily (Berita harian,
19 August 1995) reported an incident where a 14-year-old was beaten by a group of bullies for 'trespassing' on their classroom space without obtaining permission from them. Apparently the group had made it known that no one should walk by their classroom without first obtaining their permission.

Minor bullying and abusive behaviour are often dealt with at the school level, as foreseen by school regulations. Cases of verbal abuse using derogatory words with malice, such as name-calling, racist remarks, as well as subjecting the victims to unreasonable tasks, such as cleaning shoes, carrying school bags, copying notes, and such like, are often cited. Sometimes, victims are subjected to humiliating acts like being asked to undress and sleep naked on the floor, which have been reported to take place in residential schools, and such cases are often dealt with according to the provisions of the school regulations where 'orientation' is a tradition. Fortunately such acts are not widespread, and have been adequately dealt with according to the school regulations by the school authority.

It is also known that bullying incidents are often not reported, as victims are afraid or feel that school authorities might consider such incidents as trivial. Often, as most of the victims are juniors, they accept it as part of the ritual to show 'respect' for their seniors.

Nevertheless, school authorities are now looking into the increase in bullying incidents since the situation is deteriorating, especially in urban areas where parental supervision is lacking and peer influence is looming. One district education officer (1993) reported that a high percentage of primary (64.6 %), and secondary (34.7 %) schools fail to submit their annual 'Student discipline report'. It has been suggested that schools prefer to 'handle' their discipline problems without involving outsiders so as not to attract attention and subject the schools to inquiries that could tarnish the image of the schools and their administrators. Table 2 gives a summary of the reported number of discipline cases, as cited in the DEO report of 1993.

### TABLE 2. Summary of discipline cases reported (1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of schools</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>No. of schools with problems</th>
<th>No. of schools without problems</th>
<th>No. of schools which do not report</th>
<th>No. of student enrolment</th>
<th>No. of students from school with discipline problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>6929</td>
<td>2198</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>4482</td>
<td>2708193</td>
<td>1178880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>1490188</td>
<td>925422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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The number of cases which categorically fall under the sub-heading of bullying for primary and secondary schools in the 1993 DE0 report were 516 (0.02%) and 560 (0.06%) respectively of the total number of students enrolled for that year. However, if one considers extortion and threatening other students as bullying behavior, as was reported earlier, then the number increases to 4,712 (0.17%) for primary schools and 6,950 (0.46%) for secondary schools. In fact, that would make bullying the highest in terms of actual number of student involvement for both primary and secondary schools compared to other types of sub-categories of wrongdoing within the criminal category. Tables 3 and 4 show the breakdown of the offences committed under the criminal category for both primary and secondary schools for 1993.

Table 3: Primary students' involvement in criminal offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>No. of students involved</th>
<th>Percentage involved</th>
<th>Percentage of actual student enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>4,578</td>
<td>10.79</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Fighting with teachers</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Fighting with prefects</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Extortion</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>Gangsterism</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>Threatening students</td>
<td>3,681</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Trespassing</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Betting</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,522</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Education. 1993. Students' school discipline report

From the survey of DEO reports and studies done by the Ministry of Education, it would appear that school discipline and violence predominate in the urban poor and working-class groups. Low socio-economic status, peer-influence, lack of parental and religious guidance, school and teachers...
TABLE 4. Secondary students' involvement in criminal offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>No. of students involved</th>
<th>Percentage involved</th>
<th>Percentage of actual student enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>2511</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>2939</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Fighting with teachers</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Fighting with prefects</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Extortion</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>Drug abuse</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Carrying weapon</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>Threatening students</td>
<td>5636</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Trespassing</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Selling drugs</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Participation in demonstrations</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Betting</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15503</td>
<td>11.91</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


have been cited as contributory factors for the discipline problems in schools. Recent surveys have cited school and class absenteeism to be highest among the discipline problems, even though students seem to think of them as not very serious. The reasons cited for absenteeism are teachers and teaching rather than bullying, although there are infrequent cases which cite students refusing to go to schools, or wanting to transfer schools because they were afraid of bullies.

Bullies are often described as 'bigger' in size and older in age, less inclined toward learning, and generally aggressive in nature. Those who are bullied are generally 'juniors', small-sized, perceived as 'different' from the crowd, and timid. But there are no specific national studies that look into school bullying and violence, other than seeing them as part of the overall discipline concerns. A survey of theses and case studies available in the country shows a total of fifty-four research documents on discipline, but
TABLE 5. Brief summary of research and studies on discipline in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of study/research</th>
<th>Level/year</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

none of them categorically examine bullying or school violence or have the word bully or school violence reflected in the titles or texts. Local newspapers—rather infrequently—have addressed the issue more directly with headlines such as ‘Field day for school bullies’ (The Malay Mail, 25 May 1996), ‘Third victim of school bullies...’ (New Straits Times, 16 December 1994); ‘Cane school bullies...’ (New Straits Times, 11 June 1996).
1996). Table 5 gives a listing of the research under summative headings (to reflect research focus), year and total number of research reports. (See Appendix A for titles of these cases/studies.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6. Circulars and guidelines for schools between 1959 and 1994</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Regulations (School Discipline), 1959</td>
<td>Rules and regulations; role of school administrators in administering discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Guidelines of School Discipline—Ministry of Education, 1981</td>
<td>Outline the concepts and principles of school discipline; equal and fair treatment; considerations of students' interests and needs; respect; importance of harmony and unity; outlining the expected values and norms in the contexts of classroom and cocurricular activities; and the role of parents, administrators and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines for Parents regarding students' discipline in school—1982</td>
<td>Outlining the background on the current rules and regulations of school discipline; types of offences; parents' role and PTA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-abuse prevention through counselling—Ministry of Education, 1984</td>
<td>State government's policy on drug-abuse and factors that contributed to adolescents' involvement in drugs; types of drugs; and ways to recognize potential users and those already involved; consequences of drug-abuse and the role of religion, counselling and centres to help abusers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline book on pupils' integration programmes for unity—Schools Division, Ministry of Education, 1986</td>
<td>Outline the concept, objectives and the formation of committees to enhance integration among students. Provide examples of activities that could be carried out such as community work, games and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural guidelines on school discipline for headmasters and teachers—Ministry of Education, 1988</td>
<td>Outlining the concepts and authority to administer discipline—steps to be taken when administering discipline and punishment; teachers' role and ways and strategies to improve discipline problems in class and school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline Guideline for students—Ministry of Education, 1988</td>
<td>Provides guidance and discusses students' responsibilities and problems of discipline among them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline to solve the truancy problem in school—Schools Division, Ministry of Education, 1994</td>
<td>Listing of types of truancies and steps to be taken on absences and suggestions to reduce the problem; teaching, teachers and school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the context of the Malaysian school scenario, bullying and violence in school is a disciplinary matter. Apart from school discipline, the Ministry of Education has been sensitive and fast to act on concerns regarding drug abuse and truancy, especially among adolescents as revealed in the various guidelines and circulars introduced in schools over the years between 1959-94. Table 6 lists some of these circulars and guidelines.

It is also relevant here to note the context of criminal wrongdoing from the judicial perspective. Whilst the legal provisions allow for charges to be meted against the offender by the court system, the Juvenile Court Act (1971) takes into consideration a number of factors such as age, schooling, family background and the type of offences committed. In most situations, the juvenile court system is also seen as a family court where parents, welfare officers and magistrate, with the support of advisors, attempt to provide intervention schemes to help young offenders adjust and cope with their development. Counselling and training often accompanies ‘orders’ (sentences), and except for administrative purposes, these are not recorded.

STRATEGIES AND IMPACT

The issue of discipline has always stirred much passion and resulted in a volley of accusations. Lately, the situation was considered sufficiently ‘serious’ as to warrant lengthy debates in the mass media centering on ‘bringing back corporal punishment—caning’ by teachers. In fact, the Minister of Education was willing to undertake a serious review of disciplinary procedures, especially those related to teachers’ power to discipline the student. In August 1996 a national seminar on Discipline was held at the Institute Aminuddin Baki.

Presently, the guidelines provided allow only the headmasters/principals or discipline teachers, or others with authorization from the headmaster/principal, to use the cane on male students who have committed serious offences, like fighting in class, smoking, gambling and molesting. This would include physical bullying or more direct forms of bullying. Female students cannot be caned. Slapping is not permitted. Students committing other types of wrongdoing, as mentioned earlier, will generally be warned and a letter sent to their parents. It is not unusual for parents to be called and openly asked to share the responsibility for overseeing improvement in their children’s behaviour. Repeat offenders and those charged in court may be suspended or expelled from school altogether.

Over the years many innovative strategies have been tried out, sometimes with reasonable success. Realizing the importance of collaboration with
outside agencies, there are now more activities involving active participation of the police force, welfare department, parents and NGOs targeting adolescents in urban areas. Schools in practically all districts have a liaison officer from the nearby police station who makes frequent visits and conducts workshops or talks on relevant topics of discipline. Apparently this has shown some success. Another step was the introduction of police-cadets in schools, but this was reported to give little impact (Ishak, 1992).

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Education has been most responsive towards finding solutions to discipline concerns. When studies revealed that some of the problems of indiscipline among schoolchildren in Malaysia are not only linked to learning problems and student low self-esteem, but also to the climate of the school, the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education immediately embarked on a series of campaigns in an attempt to bring about a conducive learning environment, and in favour of beautifying the school compound. This included the annual event of presenting trophies to schools at all levels for the most attractive and clean compound, good track record of parent/teacher relations, and with rewards for outstanding achievements. Most schools are also encouraged to set up remedial classes to help slow learners.

Recently, some state governments have lent support by not renewing or not issuing new licenses for video and snooker arcades which schoolchildren are known to frequent. More vigilant enforcement of the law prohibiting the under-aged from going to the existing centres is pledged by the Royal Police Force of Malaysia (PDRM). It is apparent—and it is rather comforting to know—that Malaysian society still accepts that the responsibility for children’s discipline weighs heavily on parents and the family institution. Strong family values with good moral and religious guidelines, consistent loving care and supervision that is mindful of the challenges of today’s modern living is acknowledged as important. Clearly, any sustainable success in reducing and overcoming the problems depends on a concerted and collective effort that is decisive and congruous to the society.
Bullying and violence in the Malaysian school

NOTES

1. National Front, a confederation of thirteen political parties: United Malays National Organization Baru (UMNO); Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA); Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia; Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC); Berjaya Party; Bersatu Sabah (PBS); United Sabah National Organization (USNO); Party Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB); Sarawak United People’s Party (SUPP); Sarawak National Party (SNAP); and Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS). Major opposition parties are: Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS).

2. The Rukun negara was formulated in 1969 as a basis for achieving national unity and has provided guidance for political, economic, social and cultural policies. The aspirations and principles embodied in the charter directed the nation’s goals towards the following: to achieving a greater unity of all the peoples; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared; to ensuring a liberal approach to rich and diverse cultural traditions; to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology and pledged to belief in God, loyalty to King and country; upholding the Constitution; rule of law; and good behaviour and morality.

REFERENCES


School violence in Israel

Yaacov Iram

GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHY, ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT

The area of Israel within its 1949 armistice borders is 20,700 square kilometres. In addition, Israel controls ‘administered territories’ of about 7,500 kilometres occupied in the 1967 war against Syria, Jordan and Egypt. These territories are not dealt with here. They are administered by military government according to regulations in force prior to the occupation, and part of them has been turned over to the Palestinian Autonomous Territories entity. The State is bounded on the north by Lebanon, on the north-east by the Syrian Arab Republic, on the east by Jordan and by the emerging Palestinian Autonomous Territories in the West Bank, and on the south-west by the Gulf of Aqaba/Eilat and the Egyptian Sinai Desert (Europa Publications, 1996, p. 530).

Israel’s total population in December 1994 was 5,462,300, of whom 82% were Jews and 18% non-Jews. Of the non-Jewish population, 14.2% were Moslems, 2.3% Christians, 1.7% Druze and other (Circassians and Ahmadis) (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1994, p. 3). The Jewish population is preponderantly urban, while the Arab minority is rural.

One of Israel’s most striking characteristics is the rapid increase in its population. The main source for this growth was immigration, which accounted for 30% of the yearly increase in the total population, and 46.2% in the Jewish population, between 1948 and 1988 (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1989, p. 39-40). Thus, the ethnic composition of Israeli society changed according to the source of immigration. In 1948, the ethnic division according to the father’s origin was 80% Ashkenazim, 15% Orientals and 5% Israeli-born. Mass immigration from countries in the Middle East and North Africa caused an ‘orientation’ of the Jewish society in Israel, so that in 1989 the ethnic origin division was 38% Ashkenazim, 42% Orientals and 20% Israeli-born. The half-a-million Jewish immigrants who arrived from the former USSR countries again changed the ethnic mix in 1993 to 40% Ashkenazim, 37% Orientals and 23% Israeli-born (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1994).

In the early 1990s, Israel remained a migrant society. Of the 2,315,900 Israeli-born Jews, only one-third (33.9%) were second-generation Israelis:
of the total Jewish population, only 21.5% were second-generation Israelis (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1989, p. 83).

The large waves of immigrants in the early 1990s arriving mainly from the Russian Federation, but also from Ethiopia, resulted in a further cultural and social diversification of the Israeli society. This prompted major problems in economic absorption, social integration and education. Special programmes had to be introduced to teach the Hebrew language and to impart the Israeli culture to the new immigrants.

Israel is also a pluralistic society (Iram, 1992a, b). Nationally there is a Jewish majority and a non-Jewish, predominantly Arab minority. There are two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic. As a result of national, religious and linguistic pluralism, separate education systems emerged: Jewish, Arab and Druze (Mar'i, 1978; Al-Haj, 1996).

The Jewish majority is diversified ethnically, religiously, culturally and educationally. Ethnically, in the sense of country of origin, there are Ashkenazim, namely Jews whose origin is in Eastern and Central Europe and Sephardim or Orientals, Jews from the Mediterranean Basin and other Arab and Moslem countries (Shama & Iris, 1976). Israeli Jews are also divided into ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ (Liebeman, 1991). Cultural diversity arises from the different ethnic groups who brought from their countries of origin different customs, ceremonies, attitudes, values and ways of life.

Israel’s economic development was affected by such difficulties as heavy expenditure on defence (absorbing one-quarter of the budget) because of the continuous Arab/Israeli conflict, and the need to absorb mass immigration, about half from underdeveloped, semi-feudal, traditional societies in the Middle East and North Africa, lacking the formal education and skills required by a modern industrially oriented economy. Israel’s economy was also adversely affected by scarcity of water and natural resources. Despite these difficulties, between 1951 and 1972 the gross national product (GNP) at constant prices rose by an annual average of 10%; but from 1973 onwards the rate of growth decreased considerably to 1.3% in 1976 and 1977, before rising to 4.7% in 1989 (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1989). Defence takes the largest share of the annual State budget, about 20%, while allocation for education amounts to 7.4% (1990-91).

Israel’s government and politics share basic democratic principles and practices derived from, and associated with, Western parliamentary democracies. Israel is a parliamentary democracy. Elections are held every four years. National and local elections are strictly proportional, reflecting multi-party competition. No single party has been able so far to secure a majority of seats in the 120-member Knesset (parliament); as a result, all
governments have been formed by coalitions between political parties. The Arab and Druze citizens of Israel enjoy full rights of citizenship and formal equality, including equal rights in education (Landau, 1993). However, recognizing the identity of its non-Jewish citizens, the State provides for the existence of a separate Arabic system of education, with Arabic as the medium of instruction at all levels, with the exception of higher education. Unlike other levels of the education system, which are administered directly by the government, the higher education system is largely autonomous, in spite of the government funding 60-80% of its budget.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM – AN OVERVIEW

Modern Hebrew education in Israel dates back approximately fifty years before Israel gained independence. Many of the foundations laid during the early years are still in evidence. The system includes kindergarten, primary schools, secondary schools (including vocational and agricultural secondary schools), teacher-training institutions, post-secondary schools for continued and vocational studies, colleges and universities. Hebrew language and culture comprise the basis for studies. The school year is approximately ten months long, from September through July, and the study week is thirty to thirty-five hours. Studies take place in home-room classes headed by home-room teachers, who are responsible for class studies and for social activities. In the lower grades, the home-room teacher teaches most of the subjects, while in the higher grades, subjects are studied with specialized teachers. Schools maintain close contacts with parents, and most classes have parents’ committees. In addition to the formal studies, there is an extensive range of extracurricular activities (informal education) inside the school and elsewhere (Israel, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 1995).

The State education system includes separate schools for Arab and Druze citizens. The structure of the Arab school sector is similar to the Jewish sector: the main differences are in the language of instruction, Arabic, and in curricula to reflect the unique culture and history of the various Arab populations (Moslems, Christian and Druze) (Al-Haj, 1996).

Basic characteristics

Israel’s educational enterprise is a centralized system, financed by the State, directed and controlled by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. It is subdivided between Jewish and Arab schools, which means that it is a bilingual system—Hebrew and Arabic. The Hebrew-speaking schools are
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divided into two tracks, State schools ('Mamlachti—'State') and State religious ('Mamlachti-dati') schools. Parents have the right to choose between religious and non-religious schools. Schooling is free and compulsory between the ages of 5 to 16, and free but not compulsory between the ages of 3 to 4 and 17 to 18.

The education system is ideologically oriented and performs a dual mission: the social mission of providing equal educational opportunities to the disadvantaged children, mainly of Oriental origin; and a national mission of integrating the varied groups of immigrants, i.e. Russians and Ethiopians in recent years, into the fabric of the Israeli society (Iram, 1992a, b).

The education system in Israel has been coping with dilemmas and conflicts inherent in its historical and socio-cultural conditions: tradition and modernity, nationalism and universalism, uniformity and pluralism, elitism and egalitarianism, centralization and decentralization. All these dilemmas characterize all spheres of public life and institutions, but have a particular affect on education.

The structure of the system

Israel's education system is based on four levels: pre-school, primary school, secondary school, post-secondary and higher education (see Figure 1).

The first level includes municipal, public and private nurseries and kindergarten for children aged 2 to 6. The Compulsory Education Law of 1949 and its subsequent amendment (Stanner, 1963) made one year's attendance at a public kindergarten and ten years of primary and secondary schooling compulsory and free of charge, while two additional years of schooling, grades 11 to 12, are free of charge though not compulsory (Yifhar, 1984). Pre-school education is considered an essential prerequisite for further schooling for all children, and particularly for children of new immigrants and disadvantaged families. This explains the growing interest of both government and the private sector in this early stage of education, and the high rate of attendance. Until 1968, the primary education stage was mainly eight grades, followed by secondary schools offering four years of academic education, or vocational-technical-agricultural schools offering two to four years. As a result of the 1968 School Reform Act, the traditional school structure of 8+4 has begun to be replaced by a 6+3+3 structure. However, due to financial constraints and socio-political considerations, this structural reform has been only partially effected: by the late 1980s, the reform embraced about 54% of the total school population while 46% still
Pre-primary education
Kindergarten and nursery school (ages 2-6)
320,000 (90%)*

Primary education
Primary school (grades 1-8)
690,000 (96%)*

Secondary education
Lower secondary schools (grades 7-9)
193,000
Upper secondary schools (grades 10-12)
288,000 (90%)*

Free and compulsory education

Practical training & education

Figure 1: Structure of the education system, 1994

attended school under the traditional structure (Israel. Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 1988). Thus, both school structures continue to exist concurrently.

After completing six years (or eight) at primary school, all students transfer to a three-year comprehensive junior-high school ('intermediate division'). The third level of education is the senior high school ('upper division'), comprising grades ten to twelve. There are three main types of senior high schools: general-academic, which offer a variety of programmes both in the humanities and the sciences; the academic high school, which leads towards a matriculation certificate (Bagrut), a prerequisite for higher education; and the vocational-technological school, which has four programmes: (1) secondary technological, in which students earn a matriculation certificate; (2) ordinary vocational; (3) practical vocational; and (4) supportive guidance programme for low-performing students. The technological track also includes a post-secondary programme for grades thirteen and fourteen, leading towards a technician's or practical engineer's certificate. In 1992, about 55% of the high-school students attended general-academic secondary schools, while 45% were registered in the vocational technological secondary schools (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1993, no. 44, p. 641).

VIOLENCE IN THE SCHOOL

Situational factors and societal input

In the literature dealing with violence, there are various explanations for this phenomenon, which can be classified into three categories:

(a) Violence at school as an input of the wider community.
(b) Violence as a product of school experience.
(c) Violence as a product of 'situational' factors.

1. Violence at school can result from community input to school—students may bring to school antagonistic and violent behaviour as a result of being socialized within their antagonistic or violent sub-culture.

2. Violence as a product of school experience. Cohen (1955) argued that a delinquent sub-culture in general, and violence towards school in particular, is a response of frustration shown by students of lower socio-economic status (SES) towards the school with middle-class values. He maintained that lower SES students are alienated from school because they are less equipped with the necessary resources for
adjustment to the normative, social and educational demands of school which are strongly anchored in the middle-class values.

3. While the first two categories of explanations for violence at school deal more with structural factors, either at school or in the community, the third category deals more with 'situational' factors. The assumption was that violent behaviour in one sector of the population serves as a precipitating factor for the rise of violence in another group.

An empirical study on school violence in Israel (Horowitz & Kraus, 1987) compared the explanatory potential of these three interpretations for school violence: it appears from this that violence in Israel’s schools is mainly a result of exposure to violent behaviour—either at school, or in general society—and frustration and alienation, and the expression of youth subculture seems to have very little effect.

Violence at school is a new field of study in Israel. It was typically treated as a generalization of violence outside school in the context of juvenile delinquency (e.g. Cohen, 1955; Garbarino, 1979). When violence spread to middle-class areas, researchers started to perceive the phenomenon of violence as a distinct mode of behaviour worth studying.

Baker and Rubel (1980) argued that violence at school has two factors: violation of school laws, and violation of public laws.

The present study utilized data from a study of patterns of violence in Israeli schools carried out from 1979-80 (Horowitz & Amir, 1981).

The study was conducted in thirteen secondary schools selected randomly from a list of schools in which violence has been reported by their administrators. The schools were from the central and southern districts of Israel, and the cities of Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. Three types of schools were represented in the sample: academic, comprehensive and vocational.

The findings of this research seem to support the proposition that there is no one theory or explanation that explains delinquent behaviour. The most important variable affecting violence in the schools investigated tends to be the situational factor: 'Existing violence at school'.

Community input factors have a somewhat lesser effect on participation in violence at school: antagonistic views toward adult society and values have not gained momentum in Israel.

The social background effect is more difficult to delineate. It was found that students of vocational schools are more inclined to participate in violence than students in comprehensive or academic schools.

It appears that participation in school-based violence in Israel is mainly a result of an exposure to violent behaviour, either at school or in society at large.
School violence in Israel

Alienation from school does not seem to have a major effect on bullying. Violence in Israeli schools has little to do with protest—it is rather an expression of group or school subculture.

Gender and social factors

Research was conducted during 1987-88 on patterns of aggression among youth in Israel. About 4,500 students aged 15-16 in vocational schools, vocational tracks in comprehensive schools, in academic schools and academic tracks in comprehensive schools were asked to respond to self-administered questionnaires (Horowitz, 1992).

The questionnaire included questions on aggressive behaviour, experience of aggression, aggressive values, relationship with parents, balance of reward and punishment, relationship with peer groups at school and in the neighbourhood, attitude to schools, worries and frustrations, goals in life, leisure activities and television viewing.

According to the research, aggressive behaviour includes participation in aggressive acts, being a victim of aggressive acts and bearing aggressive norms and values.

The research dealt with the question of gender differences in aggressive behaviour, the effects of individual variables (gender, ethnicity and father’s education) and structural factors (type of school) on aggressive behaviour and norms, and with the question of whether there is a gender pattern in the relationship among the various components of aggression.

The findings were:

1. There are differences between male and female in each of the three components of aggression: participation, being a victim and aggression values.
2. It was found that neither of the two other variables, ethnicity or father’s education, interacted with gender.
3. In relation to the structural factor—type of school—it was found that gender and type of school interacted in most of the aggression scales.

In general, males in vocational schools tended to be more aggressive than males in academic schools. A similar pattern was found for females.

The major conclusions from the research are: (a) in explaining aggressive behaviour and values, gender is meaningful not only independently, but in conjunction with other social factors; (b) the content of aggression is similar among males and females; (c) among adolescents, school has a greater impact than personal variables.
School adjustment correlates

One of the most common expressions of school violence is quarrelling. Children’s quarrelling is a form of social interaction (Dodge et al., 1990), but is used to solve conflicts between children in a destructive manner. As opposed to the constructive form of solving through negotiation, Deutch (1973) has characterized quarrelling as an interpersonal process imposing a widening and escalating of a conflict beyond the initial problem on hand, and resorting to threats and reliance on mutual coercion.

The concept of quarrelling is distinct from playful fighting (rough and tumbling play) and aggressive fighting (Boulton, 1993). Although both playful and aggressive fighting (quarrelling) have in common features such as mutual chasing, kicking and wrestling, they are separated by their motivations, intentions, emotions and outcomes (Pellegrini, 1993). Sociologists and psychologists have shown that playful fighting performs one or more of the following: (a) it performs an affiliative function among young school-aged children; (b) it is related to dominance among peers; and (c) associated with boys’, and to a lesser extent girls’, social competence for popularity among classmates (Boulton, 1991; Pellegrini, 1993). Aggressive fighting (quarrelling) was found to be related to being disliked by other children (Shantz & Hobart, 1989).

In a recent study of primary school-aged children from socio-economically integrated public schools in the Jerusalem vicinity, Last & Avital (1995) examined quarrelling from two aspects of school adjustment: social acceptance among peers, and scholastic attainment. The perspectives were both within-gender and cross-gender. The findings of this study are:

1. In the eyes of both boys and girls, involvement in quarrelling was consistently greater in boys than in girls at any given grade level.
2. The inter-correlation between involvement in quarrelling and social acceptance, as assessed by peers, shows, in general, a high negative relationship.
3. The inter-correlation between involvement in quarrelling as assessed by peers and scholastic achievement as rated by home-room teachers indicate for boys a strong inverse relationship. This inverse relationship was found to have increased with age and grade level. For girls, this relationship held only for lower grades, but was absent at higher grades (fourth and sixth grades).

The significant gender difference between school-age boys and girls in involvement in quarrelling supports the findings of general studies about the greater inclination of boys towards aggressive behaviour (Maccoby &
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Jacklin, 1974), and the relationship between the rate of involvement in conflicts and social acceptance (being accepted or rejected by peers). School-age children are able to distinguish between both active and reactive aggressive behaviour and playful aggression, and while the former is related to social rejection the latter was not affected by it.

No definite answer was given in this study, or in the research literature, to the possible interaction between the following hypotheses: are children who are socially rejected and alienated by their peer group likely to develop a violent reaction, or are children with aggressive inclinations likely to be socially rejected? It is therefore incumbent upon all involved in the educational process, teachers and peers alike, to prevent feelings of rejection and alienation as a pre-condition to minimize school violence by those who are prone to such behaviour.

As for scholastic achievements, there are indications that a threshold level of violence may exist, which could be detrimental both to school adjustment and academic attainment. However, as long as this threshold is not exceeded, academic achievements will not be affected adversely. Once this threshold is exceeded, violent behaviour may cause trouble for those involved, both in the social sphere, and adversely affect the scholastic achievement. Again, it is the schools'—mainly teachers'—responsibility to contain potential antisocial behaviour by preventive means in and out of class.

CONCLUSIONS: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In the last decade, the issue of school violence has gained visibility. This is reflected in: policy papers by the Israeli Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (1988, 1992, 1995); in the press; in educational committees of the Knesset (1994); and by a special investigation committee which was established by the Teachers Union in 1994.

The most common explanations and possible reasons for an observed increase in school violence are the relaxation, and sometimes even demise, of the family structure and kinship bonds, which leads to family violence. Studies show that more than half of students whose parents are in conflict have problems adjusting to the school environment. Home-school interaction is diminishing, and with it also the teachers' authority. Also, mass immigration and problems of social and economic adjustment of immigrant children and their families are reflected in feelings of alienation and resentment which, in turn, transform into school violence.
The Ministry of Education established an ‘alert centre’ in 1996 to report on violent acts in schools. Special teachers’ guides, which include 156 programmes and suggested activities at school to prevent and cope with violence, were distributed throughout the education system.

Although few teachers and school administrators consider violence as an acute problem for their schools, it is nonetheless important to prevent a ‘bandwagon effect’, whereby a moderate degree of violence may deteriorate into more serious violence.

Thus, it was recommended by a team of researchers (Horowitz, Frenkel & Yinon, 1990) to adopt the following measures:

- Since pupils in the vocational stream are more exposed to, and participate more readily in violence, the quality of teaching should be improved, and the social commitment and the educational orientation of the teaching staff should be examined, to assess which of these factors contributes to the higher level of violence among vocational school pupils.

- In view of the findings that girls are also involved in violence, albeit to a lesser extent than boys, attention should be paid to patterns of violence among girls. The treatment of girls’ violence should not be neglected.

- Since some patterns of thinking in relation to violence are rational while others are irrational, and because certain thinking patterns characterize certain groups, it would seem that rehabilitative teaching could provide the basis for the construction of pedagogic models for use with pupils in school.

- Violent situations influence whether violence will erupt, or whether it will remain ‘bottled up’. Teachers should be taught how to ‘defuse’ violent situations by use of simulation games.

- Teachers should distinguish between ‘pathological’ violence, which stems from a disturbed personality, and violence stemming from a certain outlook on life or a chance encounter. The treatment of ‘pathological’ violence requires methods different from those available to the education system, and therefore should be treated by professionals: in extreme cases, violators should be removed from school.

- Violence is sometimes a result of drinking and drugs. The school curriculum should include a programme on drinking, drug abuse and the effects of these on behavioural patterns at school.

The above recommendations refer to the system as a whole. At the individual school level, several innovative approaches and educational
School violence in Israel

Programmes have been introduced in some schools in Israel. The most promising ones involve peers as counsellors to pupils who have suffered from violence at school: pupils are encouraged to share with fellow students their personal experience of either bullying others or being victims of bullying. Sometimes bullies are not aware that their actions pose a threat to their classmates. Making both the aggressor and the victim aware of the situation might provide a clue to the solution. Also, students may hesitate or be afraid to tell their teachers that they are being bullied. Peer counsellors know more about the sensitivities of their fellow students, and therefore may be more qualified to act as facilitators of conflict resolution between those involved.

Finally, teachers and school administrators should be aware that refusing to admit the existence of violence in their schools might actually encourage, rather than discourage, disruptive behaviour there.

REFERENCES


Yuacov Iran
COUNTRY PROFILE

The Slovak Republic covers an area of 49,039 sq. km and is situated in Central Eastern Europe. It has a population of 5.3 million, broken down between 85.6% Slovaks, 10.8% Hungarians, and 3.6% Romany peoples (Gypsies, Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Germans). The average population density is 106 inhabitants per sq. km. The official language is Slovak.

The birth-rate fell from 1980 until 1994. In 1995, 22.8% of the population was under 14; and this is expected to drop to 20% by 2015. On the other hand, the over-65s rose from 9.2% in 1970 to 10.7% in 1995, and are expected to reach 11.6% in 2015.

Registered unemployment reached 11.8% in 1991, 14.4% in 1993, 14.8% in 1994, 13.5% in 1995 and 12.3% in 1996. The working age population represented 3.2 million people (1995). Youth unemployment was 340,000 people in May 1995, of whom 41,000 (12%) were school-leavers.

The Slovak Republic is governed by a democratically elected parliament (The National Council of the Slovak Republic), which is the only constitutional legislative body. It has 150 deputies, elected for a four-year term by secret ballot in universal, fair, equal, direct elections. The next election will take place in September 1998.

The President of the Slovak Republic is elected by the National Council through a secret-ballot vote for a five-year term. The approval of a candidate requires a three-fifths majority vote of all deputies. The President appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and the members of the Government.

An independent and sovereign Slovak Republic, one of the states arising from the former Czechoslovakia, was declared on 1 January 1993. On 19 January 1993, the Slovak Republic became a member of the United Nations and on 30 June 1993 a member of the Council of Europe.
Slovakia is a post-communist country in transition, restructuring its economy and labour market. A tight monetary policy and resistance to generous benefits and wages resulted in one of the lowest inflation rates in the region among post-communist countries, and a currency that is convertible for current account transactions.


In 1992, the education budget was 5.8% of net governmental expenditure and rose to 6.3% in 1994. Per-pupil expenditure in 1995 was 9,115Sk (US$305) in (State) gymnasia (secondary grammar schools), 10,939Sk (US$367) in vocational schools and 17,395Sk (US$600) in special (remedial) education.

**STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

*Governance and decision making*

The legislative framework for education in Slovakia is based on the Bill of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which includes the right to education. Education is basically free of tuition fees, but parents pay for supplementary teaching and consumable materials.

The School Law of 1984 and the Law on School and Pre-School Institutions (1990) govern primary (basic) and secondary education, together with the Law on State Administration and Self-government in Education (1990). Since 1993, a series of ministerial decrees (on teaching, certification, equivalence, vocational schools, finance and material provision, facilities, etc.) amend and complete the laws governing secondary education.

The language of instruction is Slovak, with some teaching in minority languages in regions where linguistic minorities exist (e.g. Hungarian, Ukrainian, Romany, etc.). However, all minority-language students must study Slovak. There is a proposal to offer some courses in the Slovak language in order to assist minority groups in integrating themselves into higher education and the labour force.

School administration is executed by a school headteacher, a local/regional educational authority (LEA) and the Ministry of Education.

The headteacher is responsible for submitting to the school board budget proposals, proposals for executing economic activity at the school and
reports on the results of the school management—as well as for curriculum implementation, educational standards and the financial management of the school.

Local educational authorities in seventy-nine district offices administer primary and lower secondary schools, and eight regional educational authorities (REAs) in regional offices administer upper secondary schools. The local and regional educational authorities are entitled to establish and dissolve the schools after negotiations with the municipality. They also allocate funds for teachers’ salaries, textbooks and other recurrent (teaching-related) costs, as well as the maintenance of schools. The district and regional offices are subordinated to the Ministry of Interior.

The Ministry of Education controls the performance of the State administration in the educational sector. It is the main policy-making body, with competence to establish and dissolve the sector institutes, inspectorate and regional methodology centres. It is responsible for strategic studies and policies for educational development and innovation, issuing regulations for educational management, policies for vocational education and training, building-up the network of basic and secondary schools and school facilities, issuing rules on the provision of finance for schools and school facilities.

The transition to the independent State was relatively smooth in the area of education because under the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, the responsibilities for education were with the individual republics—there were (Slovak and Czech) national ministries of education, and no federal ministry.

The Ministry of Education centrally determines the intended curricula for primary and secondary schools. The development of the curricula is the responsibility of the National Institute for Education (SPÚ).

The curriculum specialists at the institute, with the assistance of curriculum subject committees consisting of teachers, headteachers, inspectors and teacher trainers, elaborate the mandatory curricular documents which are submitted for approval to the Ministry of Education.

The latest complete curriculum revision took place in 1976-84; changes and amendments occurred after 1989.

Textbooks are provided free of change at all pre-university levels. Until 1990, uniform textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education were used. Sample books are now prepared by textbook publishing houses (companies) and submitted to a ‘competition’, so that schools can choose books from an approved list. Alternative textbooks are available in some subjects, including mathematics in primary school. Generally, there is at least one textbook per subject, and minority-language books for selected subjects.
Structure of the system and participation rates

The education system is organized as follows:

The school system consists of three levels: pre-school and primary education, secondary education, higher education.

**Pre-school level**: Pre-school education is regulated by the 1993 Law on Pre-School Establishments, which separated crèches from nursery (kindergarten) schools.

**Crèche** covers children up to the age of 3, and is managed by the Ministry of Health. Kindergarten cover the ages 3 to 6, with preference given to children 5 years and up, and 2-year olds are admitted if places permit. The main function—besides the care for children—is their preparation for school attendance. There are special kindergartens and classes for pre-school handicapped children (due to the 1993 Act on School Facilities). Over 90% of the age cohort attend kindergarten.

**Primary education level**

Compulsory education lasts nine years. It covers primary level (four years) and lower secondary level (four or five years). Grade nine can be attended either at a local school or the compulsory attendance can be completed within the secondary education. The main task of a primary and lower secondary level is to provide the pupils from 6 to 14 years of age with the basics of education in general subjects (mother tongue, mathematics, etc.) as well as health, environmental, physical and religious education. Since 1990 denominational and private schools came into being. In 1993-94, eighty-one of 2,483 schools were denominational (church-affiliated) and one private; in 1994-95, eighty-six of 2,394 schools were denominational. Compulsory schooling is provided in children’s mother tongue (Slovak, Hungarian, Ukrainian). There are many small schools: 39.85% have less than 100 pupils.

**Secondary schools**

The flow rate into upper secondary schooling is high: 98.3% of pupils finish lower secondary education. Only 1,091 (1.16%) of primary school-leavers entered the labour market, or were registered as unemployed in 1992-93.

**(Upper) Secondary education level.** There are three types of secondary schools at the upper secondary level of education: gymnasium (academic track); secondary vocational schools (SVS); secondary apprentice schools (SAS).
Gymnasia run four-year standard, five-year bilingual and eight-year specialized programmes. Their main task is to prepare students for further study at institutions of higher education. The standard gymnasium programme covers four years, starting with grade nine: the eight-year gymnasium starts after grade four. Bilingual gymnasia (started in 1990) cover five years. In 1995, there were fourteen bilingual gymnasia, with the instruction in English, French, German and Spanish, enabling their graduates to continue studies at institutions of higher education abroad.

Approximately up to 21% of the cohort are enrolled in gymnasia: of these, 7.2% of students attend non-state/denominational, private/gymnasia.

The eight-year gymnasium offers an academic programme for pupils who complete grade four of primary school. Admission is controlled by an entrance examination. The programme, preparing for higher education studies, is internally differentiated. The new curriculum was introduced from 1 September 1994 starting with grade one. In 1995, 101 schools were registered in the network as providing the eight-year programme.

At the end of the four-, five- and eight-year programmes, gymnasia students sit a school-leaving examination (Maturita), consisting of a minimum of four subjects (Slovak and either mathematics or a second language, plus two optional subjects chosen from a list). Students may offer a fifth subject if they wish. Students must pass this examination to be eligible to take university entrance examinations.

Secondary Vocational Technical Schools: These are sometimes referred to as secondary specialized schools. They offer four- and five-year programmes. The transition to a market economy has affected vocational education and training, and brought about changes in study branches and curricula, especially in technical and information services, commerce, banking and financing, hotel services and catering, but also in branches of manufacturing industries (engineering, chemistry, civil construction, food processing, etc.), health care, social services and others.

Other types of secondary vocation technical schools include conservatories, schools of forestry, agriculture, viticulture, fine arts, library science, education (teachers of kindergartens), home economics and specialized schools for girls. All these schools prepare for occupations or jobs in technology, national economy, health, art, social work, culture and administration as well as for nursery schools. They are attended by about 32% of the age cohort. The school-leaving exam at the end of the four- and five-year programmes is obligatory.

Secondary apprentice schools: They have the same position in the formal school system as other upper secondary schools and prepare youth mostly
for skilled occupations. But, they are attended by only 46-48% of the age cohort, and have been in decline in recent years.

The majority of training courses last three years, with about 10% lasting two years and 10% four years (with Maturita). General academic and vocational education is organized in schools, with practical training (usually two days a week) provided in workshops of enterprises or other work places.

Public and private (non-state) systems

Private education is permitted again, and private schools exist at all school levels, although the number of non-state pre-school and primary schools is low (in 1993-94, only one pre-school and eighty-two primary schools). At secondary level, twenty-six out of 175 gymnasium, thirteen out of 307 secondary vocational schools and sixteen out of 344 secondary apprentice schools were non-state in 1993-94—most of these denominational.

There are no private universities.

Education is tuition-free in all state schools and the budget is funded by the Ministry of Interior through local/regional educational authorities. The non-state schools receive subsidies from the state budget which are lower than the funding for state schools. The non-state schools make up the balance through fees, church, community or donor contributions.

ORGANISATION OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

The school year begins in the first week of September and ends in the last week of June. It is divided into two terms of eighteen to twenty weeks, and instruction takes place over 190 to 200 days each term. The organization of the school year is set by the Ministry of Education.

Instruction times

Pupils in primary school grades one-four attend school for up to five hours a day, and grade five to eight pupils for up to six hours, five days a week from Monday to Friday. The school day includes approximately one to one-and-a-half hours for breaks, room changes and lunch.

The study load at the first stage of primary school (pupils aged 6-9) is from twenty one (grade one) to twenty five (grade four) lessons per week: the study load at the second stage in primary school (aged 10 to 14) is from twenty hour up to thirty lessons per week.
Class sizes

The maximum number of pupils allowed in first-stage classes is 30—with 34 for the other stages. The average number of pupils in a class is 24.1. The previously-restricted maximum number of 34 pupils per class at secondary schools has been increased temporarily to 38. The average class size is 32 (31 at specialized secondary schools and 24 at secondary apprentice schools).

Extended instruction

Classes with extended instruction in foreign languages, mathematics and science, physical education and sport have been established to promote the development of particular talents, abilities and skills. Extended instruction in mathematics starts in grade five, in physics in grade six, in chemistry in grade seven and in foreign languages in grades three or five.

In 1993-94, 9,581 pupils (1.39%) attended extended mathematics and science classes, 8,049 (1.17%) attended sports classes, and 42,690 (6.2%) attended foreign language instruction. Extended instruction represents two lessons a week.

MINORITIES IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Background

According to 1994 data, the population of the Slovak republic at December 31, 1993, was 5,336,445: 4,573,715 (85.71%) was of Slovak nationality, 568,545 (10.65%) Hungarian, 82,391 (1.55%) Rom, 56,801 (1.06%) Czech, Moravian and Silesian, and 31,187 (0.58%) Ruthenian and Ukrainian nationality. At the 1991 census, 17,197 people (0.33%) declared Ruthenian nationality, 5,386 (0.10%) German, 2,973 (0.06%) Polish and 1,614 (0.03%) Russian.

Mixed settlements are considered to be localities where the minority population is more than 10%, or 100 people per 1,000 inhabitants. The 1991 census identified 551 such towns and municipalities.

Primary schools

Primary schools in the Slovak republic include those teaching only in Slovak, as well as schools teaching Slovak and Hungarian, Slovak and Ukrainian and Hungarian and Ukrainian.
TABLE 1. Teaching languages in primary schools, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of schools</th>
<th>2,485</th>
<th>Slovak and Hungarian teaching language</th>
<th>31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak teaching language</td>
<td>2,166</td>
<td>Ukrainian teaching language</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian teaching language</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>Slovak and Ukrainian teaching language</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2. Nationality of primary school pupils, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of children</th>
<th>661,080</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak nationality</td>
<td>592,453</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech, Moravian</td>
<td>1,544</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>7,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>56,853</td>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenian</td>
<td>487</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary schools

Gymnasia: a gymnasium provides general education, mainly preparation for university study. A gymnasium course takes between four and eight years, and provides a complete secondary-level education, including A levels. The number of gymnasia has increased progressively, up from 128 in 1989 to 190 in 1995; the number of students has similarly risen from 51,531 to 70,072 over the same period.

Gymnasia teach in Slovak, Hungarian, Slovak and Hungarian, Slovak and Ukrainian and Bulgarian. From 1989, gymnasia began to introduce their own course content—some of it traditional, other elements including mathematics and natural sciences. Bilingual classes were also introduced.

TABLE 3. Gymnasia teaching languages, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of schools</th>
<th>190</th>
<th>Ukrainian</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak teaching language</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>Slovak and Ukrainian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak and Hungarian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 4. Nationality of gymnasia students, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak nationality</td>
<td>61,709</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech, Moravian</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>5,135</td>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenian</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary technical schools

These schools prepare mainly for professional technical-economic, economic, pedagogical, health service, social-legal, administration, art and cultural activities, as well as for universities. Their number has increased from 131 in 1989 to 361 in 1995, and was matched by a rise in the number of pupils, from 80,545 to 117,145. Secondary technical schools teach in Slovak, Hungarian, Slovak and Hungarian, and Slovak and Ukrainian.

TABLE 5. Teaching language in secondary technical schools, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of schools</th>
<th>Total number of schools</th>
<th>Slovak and Hungarian</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak teaching language</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>Slovak and Ukrainian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak nationality</td>
<td>106,417</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech, Moravian</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>7,458</td>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenian</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary vocational (apprentice) schools

These schools prepare young people for worker professions and vocational activities according to their specializations. The number of schools increased from 311 in 1989 to 358 in 1995, but the number of students fell from 155,240 to 138,173 in that period. The schools teach in Slovak, Hungarian and Slovak and Hungarian.

TABLE 7. Teaching language in secondary vocational schools, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of schools</th>
<th>358</th>
<th>Hungarian</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak teaching language</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>Slovak and Hungarian</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8. Nationality of secondary vocational school pupils, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of pupils</th>
<th>137,091</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak nationality</td>
<td>124,768</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech, Moravian</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>11,362</td>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVAKIA

Until the end of the Second World War, life in Slovakia had been strongly influenced by Christianity. It was the basis for the development of models and patterns determining the behaviour, interpersonal relationships and educational practice. Christianity was associated with a high level of solidarity and social feeling. The low mobility of the population strengthened these qualities, and contributed to the growth of traditionalism, which still affects social life today. This traditionalism had the following effects in relation to children and young people:

1. All family members were subordinate to the father (as head of the family).
2. The continuing subordination of the younger generation to the older generation reduced the former’s independence, self-sufficiency and opportunity to make decisions.

3. Women were subordinate to men in all public, fiscal and societal matters.

The advent of the Communist regime in 1948 evoked some changes. Women were declared equal, and almost 100% employment of women in industry and other sectors guaranteed them economic independence. However, the woman’s role in the family, especially with regard to the children’s education, was diminished. The education of children and young people was more or less secured by public institutions, as intended and promoted by the Communist government. The network of State nurseries, kindergartens, school clubs and dormitories with low charges was expected to contribute to the education and formation of people according to Communist values and ideals. Individualism and other traditional values were neglected, with the result that, since 1948, the development of society has displayed the following features:

A. The break-up of the traditional large family: the number of children has decreased significantly from thirty-five per 1,000 people in 1920 to fifteen in 1990, while the large-scale construction of small apartments has made it impossible for three generations to live together.

B. The increase in early marriages, strongly dependent on external support. The average age of couples at marriage in the 1990s was close to the lowest in Europe—21 to 22 years for women, and 23 to 24 years for men.

C. The break-up of the patriarchal model of life: the high ratio of women in employment, and the relatively high ratio of educated women meant they were no longer subordinate to men.

D. The spread of double standards of morality.

E. The increased dependency on the State, to the detriment of personal initiative and autonomy.

F. The false egalitarianism that prevented natural social differentiation.

G. The replacement of traditional family solidarity by general paternalism.

H. The replacement of a strong leader by a strong personality.

The children and young people now aged between 15 and 20 years experienced this situation that existed before 1989. Their values, norms and
attitudes were influenced by the way society developed during the previous decades. Moreover, the years of long isolation from the rest of the world meant that young people were uninformed, inexperienced and unprepared for the pressures of crime, violence, aggression, drugs and gambling.

The result has been inactivity, an incapacity to act, a passive approach to life, apathy towards public affairs, and disinterest in civic participation.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION
OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children up to the age of 14 are 100% economically dependent on their parents or guardians. In the 15 to 18 years age group, 73.5% are dependent students, 19.9% have joined the labour force, 4.5% are looking for jobs, and 0.7% are girls on maternity leave.

Every year, there is an influx of 18- to 20-year-olds into the labour market, while the number of jobs available continues to decline.

Unemployment obviously is the fate that awaits many of these youngsters, arousing feelings of disappointment and frustration, contributing to an excess of free time and leading them to associate with other young people who, like themselves, too often have a tendency to adopt negative patterns of behaviour.

The Slovak Republic has experienced the same problems as other post-Communist countries—principally the phenomenon of unemployment. This varies regionally, but strikes mainly at the unskilled—those who left school after eight or nine years of compulsory attendance—and who now may be aged up to 25 and even 30 or 40. The lowest unemployment is found among university and secondary school graduates.

Children and youngsters experience a country’s economic situation through the standard of living of their own families. Up to 1989, the situation was that everyone earned and owned too little, but they earned and owned approximately the same: there were no major differences between individual households and families. Now, there has been an increase in the number of wealthy people, matched by an increase in the number of people whose standard of living has fallen. This is particularly true for families with children—their situation has significantly deteriorated.

DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF THE POPULATION

Slovakia is one of the smaller European countries in terms of land area and population. It has developed as a multinational, diverse community, with
ten distinctive national minorities, in addition to the majority Slovak population. The population consists mainly of Catholics, together with Lutherans, Graeco-Catholics and Orthodox and believers in other religions, as well as a significant number of atheists.

The overwhelming majority of people live in towns, whereas, in 1950, about two-thirds of the population lived in the country.

The adult productive population is mainly composed of secondary school graduates, the strongest group, while the number of university graduates reached 10.7% in 1994.

There has been a downward trend in birth rates, reaching just 1.6 in 1994—an alarmingly low figure. This has resulted in a change in the age distribution of the population, in favour of older people—the number of children is falling, and the post-productive group is increasing. Nonetheless, from a European perspective, Slovakia has a young population: children up to 14 represent 22.9% of the total. However, in terms of life expectancy—68.4 years for males and 76.7 for females—the situation compares less favourably with many other European countries.

Marriage and the family retain a high social status. The majority of people get married at least once, the majority of women give birth to children, and the majority of children are born into a family. What is significantly different about Slovakia is the low age of fiancées, and the low age of mothers giving birth. The average family has two children, and they are born relatively quickly one after another. This means that there is: (a) a fast turnover of generations; (b) relatively young grandparents; (c) the gradual stabilization of the two-child family model; (d) little difference in the ages of brothers and sisters; (e) a reduction in the number of nuclear family members, and (f) a vertical extension of families (to include the grandparents' generation).

The 1991 census confirmed this situation: family households represented 77.8%, while families with two children were the highest group of households with dependent children—46.2%.

Life in Slovakia does not undergo too many or too rapid changes. It remains largely based on habit and tradition, and on community values and norms. During the last fifty years, it has been characterized by low social and geographic mobility, the strong influence of the community and the wider family, and—paradoxical as it may seem following the changes of 1989—by uniformity.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH POPULATION

Demographic trends have had their effect on the structure of the youngest generation: (a) there has been a decrease in the number of young children; (b) an overwhelming majority of today’s children were born to very young parents (22-24 years is the average age of mothers)—and those parents are very often unprepared to fulfil their full parental roles; (c) an average of 2% of new babies are born to mothers aged under 18; (d) over 90% of children are born to a married couple; (e) in more than 50% of cases, pregnancy was the main reason for getting married; (f) for many married couples, marriage coincided with the birth of a child, finding a new job and starting a household. Frequently, young couples have been dependent on the grandparents for support. The majority of today’s children started their lives with their parents living with the grandparents, or other relatives; (g) in the 1980s, some 10,000 children (0.6% of the child population) had to cope with their parents divorcing; (h) the most common form of family life after divorce is a single-parent family headed by the mother.

INTRODUCTION

BULLYING AND VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

Bullying represents a complex problem that has educational, psychological, sociological and ethical aspects. Morally, it can be considered a more serious offence than theft or other unlawful acts.

Society today is overwhelmed by, and disgusted at, the level of aggression and violence. No one can be sure that they will not become victims themselves. Yet, aggression and violence has not been the subject of intensive study by educators: given the problems facing them today, it is essential that these issues are studied and addressed.

Bullying and aggression

Bullying is considered to be a phenomenon of social pathology—a significant deformation of interpersonal relationships and roles, which is manifested in, for example, humiliation, intimidation, blackmail and even torture. Bullying is aggressive behaviour towards an individual, a group or a social surrounding: it is socially unacceptable and undesirable. Bullying is defined as ‘negative intervention by someone else into the physiological and psychic integrity of a person’ (Kulman in Nakoneeny, 1993, p. 147). Aggression is defined as ‘a tendency towards aggressive action against another person or environment’. In psychology (e.g. Hartl in Nakoneeny,
1993), aggression is described as a universal quality, manifested in either a crude form (physical attack) or a refined form (mockery, irony).

While family upbringing and education usually suppress aggression, it is in some cases (in the armed forces, police, sport) reinforced.

Bullying is a form of aggression. It may adopt the form of a defensive mechanism, when a person (the aggressor) reacts to situations by dominating another person. Aggression can also be transferred to objects, for example vandalism in schools—which can be regarded as a manifestation of disapproval with the requirements of school order, rules and regulations. Bullying represents a form of psychic and physical coercion (compulsion) with the aim of achieving individual or group goals. It is also an integral feature of group rituals and rites.

Bullying in schools

Bullying is a specific example of aggression. The word bullying (in Slovak, šikanovanie, šikan, šikana) has been derived from the French word chicane (dispute). The definition (cf. Olón, 1995, p. 26) which has been generally accepted in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic is derived from the English (cf. Parry and Carrington).

In school, it is usually manifested by kicking, destroying things, damaging the property of another pupil, throwing objects out of the window, name-calling and verbal insults. Bullying occurs when one child abuses another child verbally, strikes or threatens another child, and so on. Adverse comments about the child's family and relatives can be commonplace: these incidents are repeated over and over, and the victim finds it hard to cope with them or retaliate. However, a fight between two equally-matched opponents is not usually considered to be bullying.

Bullying means repeated aggression or inflicting harm on a helpless or defenceless victim. In school, it usually takes place in rest rooms, cloakrooms and other areas outside the teachers' control. However, it can also take place in the classroom, in front of other students—who, frequently, do not come to the victim's support because of indifference, fear or lack of sympathy.

Another kind of bullying is the deliberate exclusion of someone from group games.

The causes of bullying

In the case of boys, bullying might be based in the belief that it is acceptable masculine behaviour. Other motives include the desire for power and
domination, cruelty, curiosity in order to obtain a reaction, or even the result of boredom.

**The most frequent components of bullying**

The psychological component occurs in many peer groups, and in a variety of forms (verbal insults, name calling, etc.). The physical component includes physical attacks and aggression which usually take the form of torture. The economic component includes theft of money or possessions, usually by older children from younger ones. However, bullying can include several of these components, for example, in rites of passage required for acceptance by a peer group. This can take the form of psychological bullying to make the individual participate in the rite, physical coercion by caning or other painful procedures, and an economic component including the forcible contribution of money, sweets, cigarettes, etc.

**Factors of bullying**

The investigation carried out by Tomeek in 1995 revealed the typical factors which affected the form and content of bullying. These included: (a) the level of relationships in a group (formal or informal); (b) the level of manifestation of relations in activity; (c) the atmosphere experienced in the group; (d) leadership style; (e) the form or process of rituals and rites of initiation; and (f) the state of relationships.

**The characteristics of bullies**

Bullies are usually self-confident, anxiety-free boys or girls, who have a desire to dominate and control others. Paradoxically, they themselves are easily offended and may have a tendency to perceive aggression against themselves even when none is intended.

Most male bullies are physically well-developed and strong. Any lack of physical power can be overcome successfully by intelligence associated with ruthlessness and cruelty. The bully is not necessarily directly involved in actions, but can act as group organizer.

**The victims of bullying**

The victim of bullying can be anyone, but those most at risk are: (a) the newcomer to the class, (b) a child with a particular gift or advantage; (c) a thoughtful or gentle child; (d) a child on good terms with the teacher; (e) a plain child; (f) a child from a socially or economically deprived back-
Bullying and violence in the Slovakian school

ground; (f) a child from a different ethnic group; and (g) a child with a handicap.

A typical victim might be described as quiet, shy, or sensitive and lacking in self-confidence. He or she might be an outsider or a lonely child without friends, or a child who finds it difficult to form relationships, or who exhibits annoying behaviour. While most victims do not provoke aggression, others may do so by offensive behaviour, verbal or non-verbal, towards their peers or those who are physically stronger or older. Lack of independence and absence of assertion in victims has also been reported.

Manifestations of bullying

These can be divided into direct and indirect categories. The direct category includes: (a) mockery, e.g., using disagreeable nicknames, verbal humiliation and comments; (b) criticism particularly in a scornful or hostile tone; (c) use of a commanding tone requiring subordination; (d) chasing, jostling, prodding, kicking and hitting.

Indirect manifestations are more subtle and are revealed by the observation of a child in various situations by various observers, such as: (a) the child spends break times alone and classmates are unconcerned; (b) in collective sports, a bullied child will be chosen to participate last or only as an understudy; (c) the child will seek the proximity of teachers; (d) the child will be uncertain and intimidated if required to present him/herself in front of a group or a class; (e) school achievement and marks may deteriorate, sometimes abruptly; (f) the property and dress of the child is damaged or becomes lost; and (g) the child presents unexplained bruises, scratches or wounds.

Bullying and the teacher

A weak teacher may become a victim when students create an atmosphere where the teacher is mocked and humiliated, and does not have sufficiently developed skills to handle the situation or interact with pupils (Oléan, 1995, p. 28). However, most teachers are merely observers or consider bullying to be a concern of the students, and therefore show indifference. They do not understand the humiliation endured by a victim. A professionally mature teacher will act vigorously and quickly to stop any bullying, in order to demonstrate that it is unacceptable behaviour. Often, the visible consequences of bullying, such as injury or material damage, are considered by teachers to be more serious than the psychological effects.
Bullying and the school

The school counsellor or psychologist always fulfills the role of a consultant: the teacher remains accountable. Teachers, together with the headteacher, should consider the eradication of bullying from their school as a priority. Experience has revealed that when bullying has been reduced, there has been a parallel decrease in vandalism and theft—and the consequent respect for the school has resulted in increased satisfaction of students with the school.

The classroom should be the place where the socially acceptable behaviour is taught, together with participation in public affairs. If bullying goes unchecked, the school is promoting totalitarianism among pupils and teachers. Education on human rights and democracy is therefore extremely important.

Every school has an ongoing responsibility for the safety of its pupils, and today this is a priority. Therefore, the only effective solution for bullying is the removal of the perpetrator. The following approaches can be used:

• reproaching small children to make them aware that their actions may cause suffering or injury to another child;
• compensating the victim;
• reporting bullying to the aggressor’s parents;
• reporting it to the headteacher;
• reporting it to the school board or governors;
• excluding the bully from a school trip or excursion;
• placing the aggressor in close proximity to the teacher;
• moving the bully temporarily to another school;
• reporting the aggressor to the police;
• placing the aggressor in a house of correction or similar establishment.

The teaching staff should be encouraged to act immediately to solve each individual act of bullying, and be trained to observe and anticipate undesirable actions.
The manifestations of violence represented by various forms of bullying, as well as child prostitution and pornography, sexual abuse, etc., cause irreparable trauma to victims.

The manifestation of violence is difficult to prove. Research carried out on the status of youth in 1995 confirmed that the most frequent negative phenomenon appeared to be bullying, particularly in large towns, in peer groups of boys and in the army. Research on bullying and violence among young people in school or peer groups has intensified recently, although the theories of the problem were already defined in research carried out in the mid-1980s.

The first attempts to describe, analyze and assess the issue of bullying were carried out by M. Zelina and M. Pavlovkin (1986). The researchers concentrated on the rituals of adolescents connected with violence based on the theories of aggression, frustration and social learning. ‘The asocial rituals of adolescents’ was considered a pioneer work in the investigation of the causes of aggression in adolescents. It is worth remembering also that this work was carried out under a communist regime, which did not allow any negative social phenomena to be revealed.

**Psychological research on bullying**

Recent investigations in the Czech Republic carried out by psychologists focused on 379 youths between 14 and 19 years of age attending different types of secondary schools (Eervený Kubešová, 1996). Respondents were asked to make ratings and comments on four definitions of bullying. The definitions were:

1. The person is bullied when the other person or group of persons (students, soldiers, etc.) make unpleasant statements, humorous remarks, mocking expressions or insults in order to humiliate.
2. Bullying means actual physical injury or the threat of physical violence.
3. Bullying means provocation with the aim of humiliating or mocking the other person.
4. Bullying is not an exaggerated but a justified requirement in order to fulfil the task set by a superior.

The research concluded that: (a) 36.75% of respondents confessed to active participation in bullying; (b) 48.87% of respondents attempted to prevent or
stop the bully and only 4.6% reported aggressive behaviour to the authorities; (c) 45.31% of respondents were oblivious to any bullying, preferred to leave the scene of bullying or did not know how to respond to the situation; (d) the above-mentioned situation seems to be favourable with gymnasium students; (e) most cases of undesirable bullying were manifested in apprentice schools; (f) a high percentage of bullying was reported by female respondents attending home-economics courses in secondary school (exclusively attended by females).

Conclusions

1. Bullying is closely associated with the misuse of informal authority. In some peer groups, physically strong individuals and their associates set norms of behaviour for the whole group or class, and demand that the others accept these norms.

2. There is a tendency for bullying to increase in the younger generation, and new styles of behaviour are also emerging, e.g. blackmail.

3. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents condemned bullying, 50% behaved passively when witnessing it.

4. Bullying may be caused by lack of leadership and organization, and because members of groups do not understand their roles. In groups with good leadership and organization, undesirable behaviour is less frequent.

The growth of undesirable phenomena in the young population

For a long time, the people of Slovakia have been aware of the growing phenomena of alcohol abuse, criminal activity, premature sexual activity, etc. However, the former communist regime did not allow these problems to be made public. Since the fall of communism and the opening up of borders, other previously unknown phenomena, such as drug abuse, sects and gambling, have spread rapidly in a society which had no or little experience of them. Such activities went unidentified and their influence was unrecognized (even today, some parents are ignorant of the symptoms of drug abuse in their own children). The appearance of these new undesirable phenomena grew alongside previously known ones, but the occurrence of these phenomena has been neither assessed nor evaluated. While there are statistics on criminal acts and treatment of drug abuse, there is no database on social pathology among young people.

Empirical research on the problems of young people (1996) investigated experience with the occurrence/growth of undesirable phenomena over the
Bullying and violence in the Slovakian school

last three years. The following have been identified by experts as the activities most on the increase: (a) drug abuse/drug dependence (growth identified at 94.7%); (b) gambling (89.5%); (c) criminal acts (88.4%); (d) acts of aggression (86.3%); (e) violence; (f) unemployment; (g) loss of values; (h) promiscuity, early sexual activity; (i) sects, sectarian membership. (Seven other phenomena, such as alcoholism, unsafe sex, lack of interest in education, etc., were assessed in a different way.)

Young people themselves provided the following estimates. (a) drug abuse/drug dependence (growth given at 97.6%); (b) criminal acts (88.3%); (c) gambling (86.7%), etc. Both groups ascribed the increases to alcoholism, unemployment, early sex and promiscuity—whereas aggression and the loss of value orientation were given lower scores.

It is clear that undesirable behaviour is only a consequence resulting from a variety of causes, among them: the poor quality of family life; the crisis in parental authority; conflicts with parents; differences between education in the family and in the school; authoritarianism and stress at school; the impact of peer groups; negative behavioural patterns; the increased opportunities for delinquent behaviour; the growth of poverty; and indifference.

PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In 1996, the study *Situation of children and young people in Slovakia: problems and perspectives* (Filadelfiová & Gurád) examined the views of adult experts and young people on the major issues in society. Collectively, they identified the following problem areas and problem groups: (a) the social situation of the population; (b) the political situation; (c) the situation of children; (d) the health situation of the population; (e) family relationships; (f) school and education; (g) unemployment; (h) the economy; (i) leisure/free time; (j) environmental issues; (k) situation of retired people.

The adult experts (230 respondents) comprised 57.4% females and 42.6% males; 57.6% were aged under 40, and the remainder over 40. They felt the main problems were: (a) the social situation of the population; (b) the political situation; (c) the situation of young people; (d) the health conditions in the population; (e) family relationships.

The 260 young people—primary and secondary school students and employees, in the age range 12-20—reached different conclusions: (a) environmental issues; (b) unemployment; (c) the social situation of the population; (d) the situation of children; (e) the political situation.
At-risk groups of children and young people

The same study also identified the groups most at risk. According to the adult experts, the order of priorities was: (a) unemployed young people; (b) children from poor families; (c) children from orphanages; (d) young people with no qualifications; and (e) gypsy children.

The young respondents again had a different perspective: (a) gypsy children; (b) mentally handicapped children; (c) children from single-parent families; (d) unemployed young people; (e) children from poor families.

Regarding age groups, problems were perceived in the following areas:

1. Age group 11-14: problems of leisure/free time for children, lack of free time for parents, parent-child relationships, school overload, entrance exams for secondary schools, emotional problems.

2. Age group 15-17: problems with alcoholism, tobacco addiction, aggression, early sex, criminal acts, drug abuse, problems with value orientation (loss of values, preference for material/consumer values), problems of free time, parent/child relationships, problems with school.


Several other research projects focusing on the young generation have come to broadly similar conclusions in terms of the at-risk groups: (a) gypsy children and young people; (b) children from poor families; (c) children from orphanages; (d) physically and mentally handicapped children; (e) children from single-parent families; (f) children from special (remedial) schools; (g) children from the suburbs; (h) young people with no qualifications; (i) children in cities; and (j) unemployed young people.

Common characteristics of at-risk groups

At-risk groups share several common characteristics in terms of educational possibilities, family situation and where they live.

The educational process is still too unified, standardized and based on an authoritarian approach, and does not take into account individual needs. Any student needing more flexible education can become an at-risk individual or member of an at-risk group.

Since 1990, there have been several officially-approved, long-term projects designed to address this situation by: (a) implementing flexible teaching methods within the standard curriculum; (b) enabling educators to
apply different approaches; (c) broadening the educational profile of schools; and (d) providing core curricula aimed at teaching key skills for work and life.

Nonetheless, the education sector remains one of the causes of later unemployment, and the at-risk development of certain groups (e.g. apprentice school graduates). The low level of general education and provision of social skills reduces youngsters’ prospects on the labour market; when coupled with their low resistance to negative phenomena, this creates the conditions for delinquency.

With regard to the family situation, it used to be taken for granted that parents would support their children during their passage to adulthood. Children accepted this dependence as the norm, and expected their parents to help them.

Where children and young people live is important, certainly with regard to the major cities and towns and their outskirts. For example, by 1995 Petralka in the Bratislava District V, built in the mid-1970s, had a population of 126,000 (28.2% of all Bratislava inhabitants). The population density had reached 4,422 people per sq. km. The population of District V included 34.4% children and young people aged between 0-17 years. Their environment is a dehumanized one, offering few opportunities for sport and leisure activities: such a situation creates the ideal conditions for crime and drug abuse—and District V has the highest rate in the country.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

The Convention on the Rights of the Child became international law in 1991, applying to children aged from 0 to 18. However, children today remain the most defenceless and most vulnerable group in an adult world. The growth of xenophobia and violence in many parts of the world represents a major menace to children—as victims or as active participants.

There is a special situation in relation to the rights of children in post-communist societies (Kroupová, 1995, p. 55-56). These countries were characterized by the past suppression of human and civil rights and freedoms, counterbalanced by an egalitarian policy on social welfare, especially through financial support for mothers on maternity leave and government subsidies for pre-school educational facilities.

A preference for material goods and the material aspects of rights and freedoms is one of the consequences of totalitarian systems. In this regard,
the convention is perceived not as an amendment to universal human rights, but as a claim to material goods without respect for the rights and opportunities of others.

During the process of ratifying the convention, it was assumed there would be no problems with its implementation. However, the crucial issue of the status of the child in law and in education was not raised. The countries of central and eastern Europe underestimated the lack of awareness of the law. Rights are frequently understood as justified claims—not as possibilities, or involving a measure of personal responsibility, or an obligation not to restrict or infringe the rights of others.

Sudden changes and difficulties during the transition phase often resulted in social conflicts. In these situations, the application of the rights of the child became a marginal issue. The lack of educational means to solve new problems leads to an increase in stress, brutality, violence and the collapse of solidarity. In addition, the mass media have acquired greater influence as educators—they participate in determining culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships and values. Action films popularize violence and brutality—and they penetrate the privacy of homes and families. The child is exposed to a double threat: to everyday brutality, and to fictional brutality.

In these situations, education on human rights—including the accountability and obligations of the child to the family, friends, classmates, peers, teachers and the general public—can play a decisive role.

The analysis of the living conditions and status of children in the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1992, conducted in co-operation with UNICEF (cf. Kroupová, 1995, p. 59) showed that there is still a lack of self-discipline and self-correction among children and young people, which is manifested in violence and brutality. The right to associate is considered as the right to create groups with any orientation—including a destructive purpose. There has been a growth in such groups with members aged under 12.

In education, the new challenge is to teach children and young people that applying human rights means, above all, that the right to and opportunities for education for each child must not be at the expense of other children.

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Violence and aggression in the schools of Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru

Liliana Mayorga Salas

INTRODUCTION

The violence and aggression to which children and young people are exposed in countries such as Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru is a serious and widespread problem. In fact, in Latin America millions of children and youngsters are the victims of violent situations caused by the economic, political and socio-cultural conditions in which people live.

There is, indeed, a culture of violence that goes far beyond aggression to children and young people: it permeates society, including the family and at school, as a whole—and creates a reference model for children and young people.

The five countries mentioned have a combined population of about 85 million people. They all are marked by poverty: per capita income in Nicaragua is about US$830, rising to US$1,470 in Peru.

In Latin America, children and young people try to survive in the context of wars, guerrilla activities, inter-party struggles, criminality, the drug trade and the social exclusion of the native population (which, almost everywhere, is in the majority in nearly all of these countries).

Despite this background, the topic of violence and aggression in schools has not been sufficiently analysed to identify its factors, causes and relationships. But, from studying reports and conclusions from seminars organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it is possible to notice some emerging trends.

THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IN LATIN AMERICA

To obtain a proper understanding of the characteristics of violent conduct and aggression against children and youngsters—and to try and find
solutions at the cultural, political and social levels—it is essential to examine their relationship with the environment, cultural standards, values, stereotypes and biases.

These behaviours are created and transmitted by society in itself, by relationships within families, and by the kinds of pedagogical relationships established and imposed by the schools.

The situation in Colombia

Colombia has a population of about 33 million: about 70% are concentrated in urban areas, a consequence of the need to escape from the war and other problems going on in the rural areas. This has led to an increase in the conditions of poverty and misery which thousands of families endure on the outskirts of the cities.

Violence arises directly out of this context of general poverty (Mojica, Quintero, 1993). Almost 13 million people live below the poverty level (UNICEF, 1992): 47.7% of those under 18 years live in poverty, and 23.6% live in complete destitution. In 1991, 78% of all children under the age of 5 were living in homes beset by some form of poverty.

Living in poverty means that a family lacks a minimum income to buy sufficient food, health care, education and public services like drinking water and electricity: living in destitution implies that the family income is not enough to satisfy even minimum consumption.

One of the factors that has led to worsening poverty in Colombia is the country’s indebtedness: in 1991, servicing the foreign debt reached 43.5% of the GNP, and attempts to adjust the economy, including privatizing of state-owned companies, have brought about a decrease in spending on public health, education and house-building.

The groups that are worst hit by these measures are women and poor children. This has led to a higher death rate among children and mothers, as well as an increase in health problems for schoolchildren—for example, 31.4% of children between 7 and 14 years of age are anaemic, with around 47% suffering from iron deficiency and 50% lacking enough vitamin A.

And while educational statistics do not show matriculation problems at the basic school level, they do confirm the scale of repeating and dropping out at that age. Secondary education is out of reach of 50% of the pupils. Economic considerations are one of the major factors for the high level of drop-outs from school.

The strong growth of the informal sector of the economy, the weight of financial adjustment problems, low productivity and the lack of social security, plus some historical features have turned Colombia into a country
beset by armed struggle—and the militarization of the Colombian society. As such, violence is a part of the everyday situation for Colombian children and youngsters, and violence is today the reference point for conduct.

The situation in El Salvador

According to 1964 figures from CEPAL, the poorest 20% in El Salvador received only 2% of GNP, while the richest 20% received 60%. In 1992, CEPAL reported that the poorest 20% received only 1.8% of GNP. Some 65% of the Salvadorian people are illiterate.

A study of young people, carried out through collective interviews in different classrooms, concluded that 25% of the pupils work in order to finance their studies—and 90% disapproved of various subjects, did not eat properly, and felt tired, bored and suffered from headaches. The lack of attention by these pupils contrasts with the interest shown by their parents, and has created tensions between them (Castillo, 1994).

The so called maras or gangs are a reaction against the adult world: it is the only way they have found to respond. Yet, this situation leads young people to drug addiction and violence, or to leaving school prematurely to find jobs.

El Salvador signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990; this is important, for it obliges the Salvadorian government to protect children at the social, economic, legal and humanitarian levels.

By analyzing the various institutions in charge of caring for children affected by violence, it is possible to observe that the rate is far below the level at which it should be considered a problem, although only six institutions carry statistical records regarding the dimension of maltreatment of children in El Salvador.

The situation in Guatemala

Guatemala also experiences high rates of child malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and social marginalization. Social tensions arise from the conflict caused by the displacement of thousands of peasants from their land and the concentration of agricultural property in the hands of a few big landowners.

While the state is not unaware of the application of diverse forms of violence on the society, there is a growing frustration among the Guatemalan people (Sandoval, 1976). Frustration is the root of violent behaviour, as it is seen as the only alternative to the existing order, which is regarded as oppressive.

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The situation in Nicaragua

In the 1980s, Nicaragua experienced a deep change at the political, juridical and social levels, due to the serious economic problems and the lasting armed conflict, which brought about the death of thousands of people and the destruction of vital infrastructure in the country.

Although Nicaragua has made a series of efforts to overcome the negative results of the war, to tackle inflation and to direct resources towards production, the benefits of these measures have reached only 15% of the urban population and 29% of the peasants. On the other hand, unemployment among young people is escalating, because the state is incapable of absorbing the economically active population, and about 40,000 young people are excluded.

This situation undoubtedly imposes restrictions on the development of children and young people, and creates fertile conditions for the organization of gangs and the appeal of violence as a means to solve problems.

Many Nicaraguan children face an atypical familial ambience: for one reason or another, they are not living with their blood relations; their adopted parents or guardians play an important and influential role in their lives. As a result, children face very early problems of responsibility away from the home, and respond by dropping out of school and entering the labour market prematurely, skipping important stages in their development in the process.

Because Nicaragua is still a patriarchal society, women must shoulder all the responsibilities of running the household and caring for the children, and if they do not perform these tasks well, they risk punishment by their men.

Nicaragua is a post-war society, where violence has long been used to solve different conflicts. Democracy is a task which must be undertaken by everyone, and it must involve establishing permanent relationships between all social groups and entities. One challenge requiring immediate attention is the family: Nicaraguan society is characterized by the domination of males over females, and parents over children—which means that the wife always comes second, the son third and the daughter last.

Democracy in Nicaragua requires instilling tolerance, respect, knowledge of the other and equitable relations. But, many people ask how will it be possible to do this if children are seen as a problem and parents as a solution? The social reality reaffirms the concept of the child as a person with needs that should be satisfied. Communication, at home and in school, is vertical and authoritarian; yet, the religious institutions preach patience
and promote resignation, which does not address the issue of violence, let alone solve the problem.

Families mostly abide by the following principles: (a) children shall respect adults; (b) the wife shall obey and yield to the husband; (c) the children shall obey their parents; (d) the father supports the home; (e) the father imposes the rules and discipline; and (f) disobedience and disrespect are severely punished.

Seen this way, the familial relations are a one-directional model: the underdog obeys the top dog; children obey their parents, never mind whether they understand or not.

The situation in Peru

Peruvian society seems framed by political violence, which the family and school appear to survive, despite an escalation of very violent behaviour by subversive groups aimed at taking over the schools and subjecting them to the ideological and militant struggle.

Ten years of violence and war between terrorists and the armed forces have shown to Peruvian children that there is both ‘good’ and ‘bad’—but the permanent feeling of being shadowed by death naturally leads the people to be afraid.

The impact of violence and aggression on children

The origins of violence

The principal causes of child and youth violence are social marginalization, problem families, limited educational opportunities, lack of recreational opportunities, and the absence of a true family environment and upbringing. Thus, among the factors that incite aggressive behaviour is the poor economic situation of their households, as well as the educational environment of the school, with its rigid discipline, rote learning and absence of proper training for teachers. The majority of the children who suffer from violence belong to broken families with very little resources and little education, most live in poverty, lack a balanced diet and many of them cannot study because they must work to survive. A major problem here is the so-called maras or gangs, which attack these youngsters, who are unable to defend themselves because they lack support from teachers or the police. Many youngsters associate with the maras because it is the only means they have left to rebel and express their opinion—even though this leads to many problems because the gangs resort to violent conduct. Sometimes the
victims are arrested on suspicion that they are the offenders. This may lead to their expulsion from school for being guilty of misdemeanours—which is not always true. Most of them are afraid of speaking out for fear of hastening their expulsion from school by the teachers or directors. Their parents also feel that silence is the best policy.

Maltreatment of children has always existed; it is worse for those children who are economically and emotionally fragile, and it leads them directly into relationships that are based on violence. This behaviour is considered commonplace by parents, because they suffered the same violence when they were young.

The environment in which the children grow up is a serious handicap, affecting their learning, even their sleep, and provoking fear and insecurity. The family duties lead to frustration for the adults, contributing to intra- and extra-familial violence, because most of the mothers must work in order to feed the family, leaving them with only a minimum of time to dedicate to their children.

Another important influence is television, which extols violence and portrays the reality of life as a struggle between ‘good’ and ‘bad’.

Schools work within the frame of a hierarchical and authoritarian system and although the Ministry of Education does not allow corporal punishment, it still happens and is not denounced—except when very severe injuries force parents to go to the police.

The principal causes of maltreatment of children in El Salvador can be divided into four groups:

- **Social**: poverty, unemployment, tensions, overcrowding, excessive workload, etc.
- **Cultural**: parents who believe that children are their property; others who believe that violence makes a child tough; or that punishment leads to improved discipline.
- **Emotional**: family or conjugal problems; drug abuse; unwanted children; parents and teachers who recall and pass on the violence that they suffered themselves.
- **Lack of legislation to protect children**: existing laws are ineffective; there is a lack of awareness about the rights of children.

In the case of Peru, children often communicate through aggression, because, for them, the limits are not always clearly defined, and often the parents themselves teach their children how to resort to violence.
The victims

Violence is often defined as a way of exerting power and of solving conflicts through force, aggression or threat, in order to make another person submit. The fact of using violence, be it at the interpersonal level or within groups, should be viewed as a simple abuse, rather than a way of resolving a conflict—for example, when the parents use violence to ensure the obedience of their children.

Children are affected when they witness kidnappings, rape and murder; even whole families have been killed. It is no surprise that the children have been very much affected by these phenomena, physically as well as psychologically.

In the relationship between adults and children, the former look on the child as ‘an incomplete or immature person’, and therefore tend to see the child as someone unprepared for social participation, whose protests are not to be heeded because it may result in spoiling him/her, and whose thoughts are interpreted as mere fantasies. The child’s individuality as a person is ignored, and its capabilities are not given due recognition. This fact leads children to obey out of fear of the violence that may be exercised by their parents, which is part of their tradition and reflects social and cultural reality. This situation gives rise to a feeling of suffering, fear and low self-esteem on the part of the child.

During the group work carried out on this topic of violence, some children told of their experiences:

- Because I failed to pass the course, they hanged me by the throat and lit a fire under my feet, in order to burn them. When they saw I had turned purple, they threw me on the bed. (My grandmother did it, because I am an orphan.)
- They hung us like hammocks to the ceiling, tied up by our arms and feet.
- They beat me on the face and pierced my lips.
- They cut my hair off when I was naughty. (PDDH, El Salvador.)

Girls are prone to be victims of sexual abuse, and children are often used in activities related to pornography. Most of the people responsible for the sexual abuse of children are already known to the victim, and the abuse also takes place in a location with which they are familiar. In urban areas, most of the abusers are friends who take advantage of the absence of the parents, whereas in rural areas it is relatives. Street children are often abused by strangers.

In Nicaragua, maltreatment of children occurs most often in the family: it is physical as well as psychological. There is a growing, step-by-step
Violence and aggression in the schools

A child who has been the victim of violence almost never admits it. This is because of fear, because it felt obliged to obey the person who committed the offence, because it lacks the means for protesting, or does not know how to do so. Fear leads to a culture of silence and obedience—with the result that the juridical system is unable to work properly.

In Colombia, because young people and children are forced to subsist in poverty or destitution, they are completely stripped of any right of protection at an early age. For them, the street becomes a substitute for the family because it is in the various gangs that they discover their ‘kinfolk’ who give them a sense of belonging and identity, and provide them with values and stereotypes. This is one of the reasons why many children are members of criminal gangs or groups: by doing so, they create alternative ways of surviving, even though the consequence is that they become juvenile offenders, beggars, prostitutes, etc.—persons rejected by the rest of society.

The Colombian tradition of education and relations between pupil and teacher is based on vertical authority maintained through force and punishment, which contributes to the very high murder rate—62.8 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1988 (Losada & Vélez, 1989).

It is also important to remember that 88% of the children under 5 do not go to a kindergarten—they begin school between 6 and 7; but only some 50% of youngsters stay on beyond 16 years of age, and 43% to 18. The primary school system does not reveal any details about the problems of repeating and dropping out, but at the secondary level only 50% of pupils go to school.

The 1985 census showed that a very large number of the children between 12 and 17 years of age were illiterate, leading to the conclusion that ‘the right to free primary education is to a large extent non-existent for many children, who were not taught at all or not taught well enough to reach a minimum level of reading and writing’ (Yepes). The standard of teaching and teachers clearly needs improvement: many teachers refused to answer our questions, and many have no respect for the dignity of their pupils.

Although secondary schools are theoretically free, parents must pay for maintenance, teachers’ salaries and other items. Many students have to work to finance their studies.

However, other schools—who do not enrol young people with scarce resources—dedicate hours to studies and research work, and teachers often sacrifice recreational time or the time that could be dedicated to their own family. The problem for the youngsters in these schools, unlike those in the
public institutes, is not poverty or family problems, but the academic demands and pressures to which they are exposed.

The forms of violence

It is important to establish the difference between maltreatment and strong punishment—the latter involves beating children when they behave badly. This is a tradition in Nicaragua. Parents do not feel that such punishment demonstrates a lack of love, but is rather a necessary process in a child’s education. Nevertheless, maltreatment is more than punishment, and a child is maltreated when punished unfairly for reasons alien to it. Frequent punishment may also be considered as maltreatment.

Violence has been associated with evil, with feelings of guilt and power. There are various types of violence, and they all allow one person to exert power over others.

It is necessary to distinguish between corporal and symbolic violence: but they are related and cannot be separated. Symbolic violence is exerted by the State, generally through its judiciary and political systems—physical violence is direct.

Children face various types of violence. They depend on the environment in which they grow up: therefore, children forced to work are exposed to economic, physical or sexual abuses, while within their families children are affected by the violence dealt out as ‘punishment’. This situation endures due to the fact that no strong legal measures exist to protect children. Violence against children and youngsters involves:

Conflict: a situation in which two persons (a child and an adult) do not reach an understanding. The method of resolving the situation through power and authority is important here.

Aggression: conduct that may be verbal, psychological, even moral. The aggression is highlighted by the fact that it has an origin, a purpose and an intention (to harm).

Violence: whatever form it takes, it is characterized by exerting power through the use of force (psychological, physical and economic). Violence may arise in the realm of interpersonal relationships, or through group ‘institutional violence’. Using violence as a means to solve problems is increasingly acceptable.

Child maltreatment: violence against children is expressed through ‘any action or non-accidental omission that will produce physical or bodily injuries to a child on the part of an adult person’. The
different kinds of maltreatment of children are: physical, emotional, physical and emotional abandonment, and sexual abuse.

In the case of El Salvador, the strongest violence is related to situations of physical maltreatment—defined as non-accidental injuries to children. Maltreatment has also been defined as punishment, as well as the use of force against a child.

Moreover, maltreatment is also neglect or carelessness on the part of adults in charge of children when they do not satisfy their material or emotional needs: leaving them alone for too long, always giving them the same food when there are opportunities to vary the diet, etc. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between poverty and indolence.

The parts of the body where children are most often beaten are the backside, genitals, head and limbs. Most of the children covered by the research said that they had been beaten with sticks, rulers, electric cables, shoe heels, etc. The beatings were classified into: ‘severe’, including all kinds of broken bones, wounds, burns and swallowing of toxic material; ‘strong’ punishment that did not leave traces on the body; and ‘moderate’. Half the children examined had received severe beatings.

At school, psychological punishment is more frequent than physical punishment, because the children said that they were told off by their teachers when they behaved badly, as confirmed by the study by the Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de El Salvador. Boys are punished more often than girls. But street boys are subject to greater physical and emotional punishment by the teachers. Punishment by teachers is the product of authoritarian concepts regarding education, and the lack of training on the part of teachers.

Children accept punishment as necessary for their education, that is, they feel guilty and deserving of punishment. However, the punishment has a negative impact on their learning capability, and their development (low self-esteem, sadness, lack of interest in education).

Pushing, insulting and name calling by children are commonplace. The school is a hostile and violent environment, where the power of the strongest over the rest predominates. In one sense, the violence is permitted, because Peru is a country where violence is used to extinguish the violence exerted by others. Movements like Sendero Luminoso are active in the educational arena, promoting their ideologies and recruiting adolescents and teachers. There is concern among the Peruvian institutions over the activities of such violent groups and drug dealers, who regard the school as a military and political stage, offering a violent alternative to children, young people and teachers in order to bring about social and political changes.
The perpetrators

The people who most often maltreat children are mothers (62.2%), fathers (42.3%) and other relatives (20.3%). Stepmothers or stepfathers rarely beat the children. Mothers punish most often, because it is a machista culture in which the woman must take care of the household and the children. Boys are punished most frequently, in the belief that men must grow up to be strong.

Parents harbour false ideas regarding parenthood. They maltreat their children, for example, because they believe that, as adults, they are allowed to educate them as they wish and can use any means to achieve their aims—so that if a child does not do as it is told, the only way of educating it is through punishment.

Important factors explaining such parental attitudes include: (a) many of these adults were themselves punished when small; (b) their own violent impulses which they are unable to control; (c) rejection towards an unwanted child; (d) ignorance about the developmental stages of children; (e) problems between married couples; and (f) a low cultural level.

There are different theories regarding frustration, and some have suggested (Miller, in González, 1985) that the relationship between frustration and aggression is not innate but learned. In the same way, inadequate familial environments can generate aggressive conduct by the child, because they feel rejected by their parents. This leads to a deformed and diminished self-perception by the child.

We should also bear in mind that the problem begins the moment the child is born, and is the legacy of a situation that has been handed down from generation to generation, within the family and in society as a whole. What is important is to establish that, from the moment it is born, a child needs gentle care—emotional and physical.

To determine the causes of child maltreatment, we gathered information from a group of fifty persons who had reported cases of violence against children. From these data, it is possible to deduce that 34.1% of the aggressors were men and 65.9% women: while they lacked education and most were illiterate, 66.9% were considered to be normal, 16% alcoholic or drug addicts (all men), and 9.1% suffered from mental disorders (women).

Sexual maltreatment is understood to have occurred when a person involves a minor in activity with sexual content, and in which the aggressor receives some kind of gratification. Data collected in El Salvador report an average of 230 such accusations a month. The people most involved in this kind of maltreatment are: fathers, 41%; mothers, 25%; non-relatives,
Violence and aggression in the schools

16%; grandmothers or stepmothers, 6% (Procuraduría para la defensa de los Derechos Humanos). Between January and August 1993, there were 549 reported cases, of which 31% correspond to physical maltreatment, 46% to sexual abuse and 23% to abandonment (Fiscalía General de la República). The Institute for Forensic Medicine reported 230 cases between January and July 1994.

There are some factors which make children susceptible to violence. They include:

— Infant literature, whereby the traditional fairy tales show a clear-cut division between good and evil, for example through the characters of an ogre and a fairy. This situation leads the child to take a position, one way or the other.

— From birth, the child may be called by a nickname because it 'looks like someone'. Therefore, violent behaviour by the child is interpreted as a 'violence from birth'.

— Generally, teachers tend to categorize a child and its behaviour as having a certain geographical origin. For example, if it is from a backward region, it may be called by certain surnames, and very often this makes the child feel ashamed about its origins.

School is where children are taught obedience, as well as learning. In certain schools, there is a high degree of violence by the teachers towards their pupils. This situation may be explained by the despair of the teacher faced with the need to accomplish the curriculum. The children are aware that they may be subject to any kind of punishment.

In Guatemala, research into aggression by schoolchildren shows that such conduct is expressed by beating other students, challenging authority, screaming, breaking objects and a tendency to isolate themselves (Castro, 1993).

Such aggression is often a way of demanding more attention from parents. These same children exhibit a certain degree of passivity in their learning processes, and establish an unsatisfactory relationship with their teachers.

Another important point in the development of the young is the acquisition of a value system, which can only be transmitted by the family and the school working together—although, very often, the family has abdicated its role as a supportive and positive agent, and becomes a source of friction instead. The number of children and young people leaving school is also rising, not to mention those who never go to school. This poses a question about the schools' ability to provide a value system that can foster their future development.
The effects of violence

Violence towards children leads to dropping out of school, repeating classes, malnutrition and drug addiction—because the maltreated child discovers that drugs provide a way out. And, the child soon finds out that violence is the only way of relating with others, and therefore exacts it against other children, and against himself.

The immediate consequences of such violence for children and society as a whole are: the impairment of self-esteem; distortion of the personality; variable ethics (they have a different code of conduct depending on whom they are with); and the imitation of this authoritarian model in their own dealings with other people.

Some of the research into violence against children has focused on children who work (González, 1996) because of the way these children subsequently behave at school: many of them show problems of concentration—falling asleep during class, boredom, becoming tense and behaving aggressively towards their schoolmates, or inciting others to misbehave in class. This situation requires the teachers to co-operate with the child's parents, and persuade them not to give, for example, the older children responsibility for taking care of their smaller brothers and sisters, but rather to allow them to go to school and develop in a normal way.

It has been observed that working children do not necessarily drop out of school, due to the fact that, for them, school is an escape from the hardships they face at home. In some cases, they show a good level of communication with their teachers, because they want to tell them what is happening in their lives.

For adolescents to become integrated into Nicaraguan society, society as a whole must make it possible for them to develop an identity and reassert themselves as responsible and productive citizens. At present, these young people feel humiliated and diminished because many of them face unemployment.

For a considerable number of the young people in marginal urban regions, revolutionary movements and drug dealing are the only way of becoming someone in life—and they offer economic rewards too. The fact has to be faced that young people feel resentment towards, and want to exact revenge against, a society that otherwise offers them no future.
Children are perceived as being affected by violence at three levels: individual, collective and societal. Therefore, efforts are being made to apply an integrated approach covering education, health, housing and other areas related to the quality of life.

Some of the strategies for improving the quality of life of poor children and youngsters, especially in Colombia, point to:

1. A balance between the individual and society, fostering the identity of children and young people through the establishment of emotional links with community goals.

2. Highlighting the formative character based on the educational potential of diverse activities inside the school.

3. Promotion of socially active subjects.

4. Focusing on the interests, needs and expectations of the child.

Most of the organizations try to change the political framework through community actions and social processes.

The infantile and juvenile populations of Colombia are affected by four different kinds of violence, and different measures are adopted to address their situation, viz.:

Children displaced by violence (most of them come from rural zones in conflict). One remedy is to offer boarding not only to children and young people, but also to their families. This is the first step towards organizing children and youngsters to receive education. To achieve this goal, agents need to be trained and research developed in this area.

Young people in violent urban sectors. These children need the support of, and to be involved in, existing and new groups, as well as to be able to participate in projects which will allow them to foster their self-esteem and socialization, etc.

Children and youngsters on the street. The objectives of measures are: (a) rehabilitation of the child through programmes covering educational, health and the productive capabilities; (b) improving the street environment and the quality of life there.

Child and adolescent prostitution. This phenomenon affects more girls than boys.

Two action plans have been prepared: one with a preventive outlook, concentrated on the adolescent in crisis; and the other aimed at reintegrating...
adolescents into society and the family, including through educational actions.

The Hospital Benjamín Bloon conducted a study of child maltreatment during 1989, 1990 and 1991, covering a total of 770 cases, and concluded that most of the children suffering maltreatment were punished by their mother and other relatives, while 41% of the fathers had problems of drug addiction, alcoholism and mental illness. It also concluded that there is a lack of institutions to provide treatment for such cases: those which do exist offer curative, not preventive treatment. With the exception of Benjamín Bloon, hospitals do not keep statistics on the children arriving there for treatment following violence. Only a few cases are ever taken to court. This points directly to the need for establishing programmes to reinforce the parental role, improve communication and dialogue between parents and children, and allow the community to deal more vigorously with the problem of violence against children.

To solve the problem of the mares, it has been necessary to train teachers so that youngsters will not see them as 'an enemy', and to motivate the young people to practice sports, as well as listen to and respect their opinions.

Other actions include: creating relationships between governmental and non-governmental institutions, the church and other organizations in order to provide an alternative that focuses more on prevention than cure, and improving the family situation so that adolescents may see the family as a source of support and safety.

In New York in 1990, at the first global meeting on childhood, El Salvador pledged to take measures to deal with its schooling and educational problems, including high levels of non-attendance and a high illiteracy rate.

The Minister for Education of El Salvador, the Policia Nacional and the Nacional Civil are supporting research on parents whose children display violent behaviour. It is being conducted in association with the directors of selected schools, examines the needs of the children and also plans for providing a different kind of education for youngsters relapsing into the cycle of violence.

During the 1980s, Nicaragua installed 310 child and youth centres, financed by private and public institutions, as well as by private companies. At the national level, some institutions have been set up to look after maltreated children, while others take care of abandoned children, or children considered at risk, as well as war orphans.

The programme ‘Niño de la Calle’ (street children) is aimed at reintegrating the child into its family. A new element is the ‘Educadores de la Calle’,
which focuses on preventing children from leaving home by helping families to provide creative, cultural and educational activities.

It should be mentioned that 66% of all the centres in Nicaragua are in the rural areas, and as part of the battle against malnutrition, they include children's canteens.

In 1988, the so-called 'Campaña Nacional por la Defensa de la Vida del Niño', which aimed at adopting an integrated approach to childhood issues, began operating at various levels, such as health care, with working children, etc.

Since 1979, five laws have been published covering matters directly related to children, their development and education: (a) the law on adoption; (b) the law on the relations between mother, father and child; (c) the law to promote breast feeding; (d) the reform of the guardianship law for children; and (e) sanitary nomenclature for the protection of infants' lives. There are other laws covering other areas of interest to children, for example guaranteeing that children will be educated in their mother-tongue and according to their traditions.

The present system fosters the abuse of authority, poverty, hunger, unemployment. There is a need is to create a climate and culture for peace. To achieve this, everyone must support a process that leads to social change, and this requires that people are educated not only formally, but also through social experiences.

Children are raised in a world of 'chiefs' (father, brothers, adult teachers, etc.), both at home and in school—where the teacher instructs the child to do all what he (the teacher) considers to be right. This means that education is being confused with discipline, obeying orders with learning, and it ignores the point that to educate means to liberate each person's capabilities and potential, so that they can fully develop their own personality.

An important issue in the realm of education is cheating: this creates false values in the children, because those who copy someone else's work seem to obtain the same mark as the child who genuinely studied. While a child is punished for not doing his/her homework, a cheater is not punished. The danger is that this system can lead to future adult corruption, because people realize that it is a perfectly acceptable way of doing things.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AT SCHOOL

The first step is to identify the most urgent problems, and also to be clear about the conditions under which children and young people live. This may
provide better solutions which also include diverse forms of participation and organization by the civil society.

Research projects are basically oriented towards prevention, and their action plans point to socialization and the possibility of personal development and growth, putting emphasis on family relations and relations with the community.

Other projects have a remedial focus, that is, they work with children who have already met violence. This approach, which includes the concept of ‘children in risk’, favours the generation of new action plans, both at governmental level as well as by NGOs.

An integrated intervention strategy could involve: (a) creating alternative spaces such as lodgings, open centres, etc.; (b) participatory methodologies to integrate children and youngsters into the programmes; (c) training the trainers, so those who are more advanced in their progress can draw on their experience to teach the rest; and (d) workshops on how to work with violent children and adolescents.

One idea to improve the communication between children and their parents and teachers is to organize meetings involving all the parties, so that everyone can share views and express their opinions.

Other proposals include:

— Defining the rights of children and youngsters to make everyone aware of their responsibilities and tasks.
— Encouraging and stimulating young people to form groups which do not commit violence.
— Creating activities of interest to young people, and giving each young person his/her own space.

To improve education, it is also essential to improve the quality of life, because it is a violation of human rights to keep people undernourished, ill-educated, badly housed, etc.

Violence provokes harmful consequences in the child—low self-esteem, psychological traumas, etc. If an adult person suffered the same experiences as a maltreated child, it would be classified as a violation of human rights. It is time to change the concept of ‘child’, and understand that the violence inflicted on children is a crime against human rights.


