



Partnership in Development Research

Research Briefs

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Violence among School Pupils Applied study in Maadi Educational Directorate

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Introduction and Research Problem:

Violence inside schools is not a new phenomenon. During the UN Ninth International Conference on Crime Prevention and Dealing with Criminals held in 1995, a separate session was devoted to the impact of the media on children and youth. Some studies indicated that violent and terrorist scenes in the mass media deprive children of their human feelings and enhance aggressive tendencies among them. They also encourage them to become introvert and violent

It is important to mention in this context the role of the family, which through understanding and observation, provides children with the basic principles of how to deal with others. These early experiences help create the appropriate atmosphere for the development of the child's personality; then comes the role of school and the role of the educational circle in forming the child's individual personality, helping him/her to adapt with the environment, and empowering him/her to achieve social integration, sound social and individual growth and promote their feeling of responsibility. These tasks are accomplished through school activities and curricula.

The work team of the present study focused on violence inside schools. This phenomenon has been progressively increasing in recent years, calling for more attention to these hazardous developments that threaten the life of the child inside educational institutions.

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The study hopes for the cooperation of the ministry of education and other institutional and societal agents and specialists, in order to find solutions to this problem and put an end to the violence that characterizes the pre-university phase.

The Developmental Program for Women and Children, a non governmental organization, emphasizes the need to identify the role of parties in the educational process in order to collaboratively address the problem of violence and highlight the role of the violent child's family and family environment in enhancing this phenomenon.

Objectives of the Study:

The goal of the study is to highlight the phenomenon of violence among school pupils and identify its various dimensions. Other related goals are:

- Identify the social and psychological reasons that contribute to violence among pupils as a way of self defense and regaining rights.
- Identify role of parties involved in the educational process inside school (school principals, social worker, teacher) in addressing the problem of violence
- Throw light on the role of the pupil's family in enhancing his/her violent tendencies
- Present examples of children who committed acts of violence and are deposited in juvenile delinquency institutions, in order to closely examine their social, psychological and life situations.

Methodology:

In this descriptive study, the team presented an overview of the problem and the main features of violence inside schools. A sample of 15 schools affiliated to Maadi Educational Directorate was chosen, covering all educational stages. This particular directorate was selected for its proximity to the NGO, the understanding expressed by the educational directorate's administrators, cooperation and enthusiasm of teachers and social and psychological workers, and finally that fact that the school principal granted the research team the permission to interview the children and the administrators in charge, and allowed the team to meet the families of the children with more violent tendencies. All the sample schools were public governmental schools.

A random sample of actors in the educational process and government school pupils aged 6 to 15 was chosen. Operationally, a pupil was defined as “any pupil whose age ranged between 9 and 18 who receives instruction at the educational institutions of the Ministry of Education, and interacts with other actors and colleagues within the educational process”

A purposeful sample of families of the more violent children was chosen. Violence was operationally defined to indicate “any physical or psychological harm that befalls a pupil inside the educational institution, as a result of interaction with a fellow pupil or teacher or any other individual within this institution, bearing consequences”

One thousand and one hundred interview questionnaires were distributed: 1000 copies of the basic violence questionnaire distributed to girls and boys in different stages of education; 50 questionnaires distributed to officials in charge of the educational process and another 50 to the families of the most violent pupils.

Content analysis was used to analyze cases of violent incidents. Data was gathered from newspapers during the school year 2000-2001. Events were classified according to their kind (violence, suicide, rape, hooliganism). The duration of the study was 18 months.

Findings:

First: Characteristics of the sample:

- Females accounted for 50.1% of the sample; males 49.9%.
- The distribution of the sample according to educational stages showed the following: 7.6% in primary education, 47.5% in the preparatory stage and 44.5% in the secondary stage.
- Pupils liked to play sports (42%), followed by reading and going to school (32.9%), and watching thrilling movies (20.8%).

Second: Socialization and impact on violence among children:

1. Findings indicated that 50.2% of the parents work for the government while 26.5% work in the private sector. Professions vary between regular and irregular jobs. It is well known that government jobs are more stable than private sector jobs but provide less income. When fathers spend long hours outside home, they are less capable of supervising their children; also income instability and irregularity create tension within the family.

2. 4% of the sample of children have bad relations with their families; 24.4% have moderate relations with them and 71.4% have very good relations with their family. Usually parents form the safety valve for the child's security. If the child's relations go bad with his/her parents, this may cause tension and violence.
3. A child's feeling of relaxation and safety within the family affects his/her behavior. If the family atmosphere is tense, the child's personality becomes uncontrollable and he/she cannot restrain emotions and might resort to violence. 74.2% of the sample said they sensed feelings of love, cooperation and belongingness, while 11.2% said they felt angry.
4. Findings indicated that among the main reasons why families do not encourage their children to become successful, is their preoccupation with other things (27.2%), lack of cooperation and belongingness (25.3%), family breakdown (23.2%)
5. In case of a family problem in which the pupil is not party, he/she tries to reconcile the disputing parties as indicated by 81.8% of the total sample; some children express a passive behavior, like running away from home until the problem is solved (8.2%), others demonstrate a violent behavior such as yelling and screaming (4.1%), while the rest punish the innocent party by beating him/her (1.3%). Many of these reactions reinforce violence among pupils.
6. If the child is an active party to the dispute, he/she can be violent (beating) (91.3%); silent (71.5%) or can yell and become emotional (20%).
7. Punishment by parents in case the child makes a mistake affects their personality. The most common punishment is withholding allowance money (41.3%), grounding at home (14.5%), and in extreme cases, burning (.5%)

Second: Impact of child's relationship with school and friends on generating violence

1. It is a positive sign if the child likes to go to school. 15.5% of the children don't like to go to school for many reasons including: it is useless to go to school (44%); dislike that teachers beat them (37.4%) and they do not like the teachers (26%).
2. The way teachers deal with pupils inside school affects the latter's personality and reflects on their behavior both inside and outside school; 55.5% said that teachers offer pupils guidance, counseling and love, while 18.8% use violence and abuse the children.

44.9% of the teachers said that the punishment most commonly used is reporting misdeed to parents, followed by preventing the pupil from attending class (20.8%). Of the total sample, 25.7% prevent pupils from attending classes for several days, and 24.9% abuse and beat the children while 29.9% write down the children's names in the class book.

3. Punishment sometimes leads to violent reactions and contributes individuals who suppress humiliations and blow up when they have the opportunity. Findings pointed out that in case of an outstanding punishment, 55.8% said they report it to the principal, 12% react violently towards the teacher; 6% decide, together with their peers, to sabotage the school. As violent methods continue to be used, children get used to them; 21.2% said that they do not do anything about the punishments they receive.

4. 48.5% of the pupils indicated that using violence (such as going out on demonstrations) is a good way to express opinion, while 48% believe that violence is not a good way of self expression. Reasons why violence is considered a good way of expression include that it is the only effective way (41.2%) and a good way to draw society's attention to the views of young people (37.3%).

5. Pupils have different opinions about the method of punishment to be used inside school. Understanding and guidance comes first (71.5%), followed by reporting to parents (10.2%). Pupils' preferences did not include recourse to violence.

6. Motives for using violence differ. Some deal with upbringing and socialization (39.5%); others with the school, ways of punishment and treatment of teachers (46.2%); and the rest deal with mass media such as watching violent movies that promote violence among children (34%).

Reasons behind violence at school: Perceptions of school administrators

-Most school principals believe that some factors contribute to violence inside schools such as the family, school, media, and the personality of the child. Other factors also include the social and cultural context such as family breakdown, socialization and child neglect, in addition to the impact of mass media; misuse of leisure time, watching action and violent movies and imitating others.

-Some principals believe that punishing pupils by expelling them from school causes more violence. They believe that the method of punishment be appropriate to the act committed by the pupils

-It is important to promote cooperation between pupils, encourage them to use their leisure time constructively and enhance their school activities. Teachers should become role models. Parallel to this, the school should have the right to expel misbehaving pupils. In all cases, the school must raise awareness of pupils and change their attitudes with regard to violence. All principals agree on the important role played by teachers in addressing violence. Teachers should be role models and provide guidance.

-Teachers believe that the law does not protect them if pupils treat them violently. They believe in the need to stipulate laws that protect teachers and ensure that they obtain their rights. Laws should limit the privileges granted to pupils in order to maintain the balance of power between teachers and pupils.

Following are some appropriate means to address this issue, according to the teachers:

-Organize seminars and meetings to explain the phenomenon and promote cooperation between pupils

-Dismiss pupils who are accused of violence inside school

-Guide pupils, raise religious awareness and organize positive behavior promoting seminars

-Pay more attention to the role of social workers inside school

Methods most appropriate to do that are:

-Regular meetings for parents boards in order to discuss the problem, reasons and solutions

-Decisive measures for pupils who commit violent acts; the need to rationalize the behavior of pupils.

-Create role models among teachers and give social workers the opportunity to deal with pupils.

Recommendations:

1. Prepare and train staff that are specialized in dealing with youngsters both in government institutions or justice related agencies
2. Impose strict penalties in cases where youngsters are involved in criminal activities both as culprits and as victims
3. Impose strict penalties on adults responsible for children according to Law no. 31 of 1974 (articles 20,21,22 and 23) taking into account the socio economic changes in the Egyptian society, and providing maximum and minimum limits.
4. State should set up new schools, enhance the capacities of teachers and improve their financial and material conditions
5. Emphasize the role of parents' boards and enable them to play a role as mediators between school and parents in order to promote cooperation and solve problems of delinquency
6. Put in place plans to secure educational institutions in order to protect them against criminal acts
7. Organize training programs for teachers in order to enhance their capacities
8. Reinstate the full school day so that pupils would have time to do other activities at school
9. Promote democracy among pupils and enable them to participate in solving societal problems and express themselves through dialogue.
10. Serious follow up and supervision of private schools
11. Ministry of education and teachers' syndicate should participate in enhancing teachers' financial status in order to ensure their continuous dedication to their mission.

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About the Program

The Egyptian Partnership in Development Research Program aims to inform development policies and strategies by linking those who conduct research with those who can utilize its findings to promote development in local communities. It promotes a research agenda which is responsive to the needs and priorities of local communities. The program is characterized by a multi-disciplinary, demand-driven, and participatory approach. The program began in Egypt in 1999. The program is directed by an Advisory Board of prominent members who are concerned with development issues.

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