American Public Schools' Struggle with Daily Violence: Prevalence, Concerns and Prevention

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Abstract

School life is one of the most dynamic aspects of life. In today's society, school life is undergoing many changes and is therefore being labeled as a hectic annex of the societal development and changes. Such changes are often identified as the new social morbidities manifested through violence in all its forms. School violence is the 'culminating' outcome of the amalgam of the ills of society and their influence on the school system. Violence in schools is a challenging issue to educators and educationists which also negatively affects the educational value transmitted to and acquired by the students.

Keywords: School, violence, factors, impacts, bullying, policies, teachers, intervention.
I/ Introduction

School life is one of the most dynamic aspects of life. In today's society, school life is undergoing many changes and is therefore being labeled as a hectic annex of the societal development and changes. Such changes are often identified as the new social morbidities manifested through violence in all its forms. School violence is the 'culminating' outcome of the amalgam of the ills of society and their influence on the school system. Violence in schools is a challenging issue to educators and educationists which also negatively affects the educational value transmitted to and acquired by the students.

School violence is not comprised in acts of violence committed within the school vicinity only but also in the student's way to or from school or during any sponsored school activity. While some tend to define violence as only when physical contact is made, others are more inclined to consider that the act of violence is undertaken only when the first provoking utterance is articulated.

Most researchers agree that regardless of the adopted definition and typology, violence must be categorically banned from the school place and its vicinity where students are supposed to take refuge and acquire knowledge.

School violence, and especially school shootings, have drawn a great deal of attention during the last decades to the media and the public opinion because of the critical aspect that characterizes those tragic events. The perpetrators (school children), the victims (school children) and the setting (the school) are what make school violence a subject of focus more than violence in general or community violence.

While half a century ago, the teachers' main concern revolved around tardiness, overchatting and achievements, now it is rather about aggravated assaults committed by school children from different classes and social positions. "Forty years ago, surveys of public school teachers indicated that the most pressing classroom problems were tardiness, talkative students, and gum chewing. Complaints that are far more serious are currently heard from teachers, administrators, and students about the presence of drugs, gangs, and weapons on campus and the threat of assault, robbery, theft, vandalism, and rape."

Recapitulation of the evolvement of the teachers' main concerns throughout the year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>40 years ago</th>
<th>20 years ago</th>
<th>Today</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Chatting</td>
<td>*Gang affiliation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Tardiness</td>
<td>*Drug dealing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Absenteism</td>
<td>*Other issues mostly predominant in high density urban setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Attainment</td>
<td>*Robbing or stealing school properties and materials.</td>
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In a 1995 survey conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, about 2023 students from public, private and parochial schools from all over the nation have been interviewed. 12% of the surveyed students confirmed that they carry weapons (guns, knives, bats...) to school for

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their personal safety. 28% of the students almost never felt safe at school. 11% confirmed that they have already skipped classes fearing violent manifestations and crimes.²

In her book, Violence in School: Learning in Fear, Nancy Day reported that 11% of U.S criminal offenses occurring every year are committed in schools. In an attempt to circumvent disadvantageous propaganda and contemptible reputation, most of these schools evaluate the dreadful incidents as disciplinary issues and not as offensive civil crimes. “Many young people seem to have accepted violence as a way of life. For example, a survey found 20 percent of high school students at a suburban school saw nothing wrong with shooting someone who had stolen from them.”³

School violence reached its peak during the 1992-1993 school year, a bloody year that witnessed the death of 53 school children, a rate that dropped down to 24 in 1998-1999. Higher rates of school tragedies and deaths issuing from school shootings have become dangerously widespread among all categories of people and children regardless of their socioeconomic status. “The school massacres that have occurred since 1996, however, have reinforced the idea that deadly violence can erupt anywhere, even in a town where the students drive to school in BMWs.”⁴

Most schools have adopted multiple intervention and prevention programmes in their quest to keep violence out of schools. While some schools resort to practical undertakings like building spiked fences, metal detectors, video monitoring, and compelling students to permanently presenting their identification badges, other schools suggest reinforcing parental engagement, teaching love and harmony and how to deal with contentious situations through peer mediation.

This distressing situation led to the drastic alteration in the public conception of school safety, educational laws and disciplinary policies and the official endeavor to implement prevention, intervention and postvention strategies. Since my field of research is concerned with violence occurring within the school premises, the intervention strategies framework should be revolving around a review of the intervention plans and initiatives of the whole educational system on a large scale, and on the individual (the school children) on a smaller scale.

Intervention procedures can be classified into 3 different strategies: primary, secondary and tertiary strategies. The primary prevention strategy focuses on 'curing the disease' before its occurrence. The secondary prevention strategy focuses on preventive strategies that deal with students who started showing warning signs for potential violence. As far as the tertiary prevention strategy is concerned, the main focus is on students who are already categorized as victims or offenders and who need assistance to alleviate the problem.

Throughout this paper, I will first review and analyze the definition of school violence, its different aspects and manifestations. Then, I will examine the etiology of violence, its precursors and its related phenomena through an in-depth cultural investigation. Subsequently, I will focus on the ramifications of school violence and the ensuing concatenation of events. Eventually, the paper will be concluded with a highlight on the prevention and intervention policies initiated by school administrators and government officials.

II/ School Violence: A Conceptual Framework

Violence, and more specifically school violence, has become a subject of interest for many researchers (specialized in education, sociology, science, psychology, administration, politics...) who now feel the need to scrutinize this increasingly concerning phenomenon. The scholars’ main concern is based on the urge to analyze and understand the precedents and the consequences of violent behavior during school years.

This serious issue doesn't only constitute a threat to the safety of the individual but also to the teaching-learning process in the classroom (the student becomes antisocial and reluctant to learning while the teachers are less eager to transmit knowledge) and to the social integration of the peer students who, because of social isolation and adaptability issue, might in turn become potential criminals.

1/ Definition of School Violence

Violence includes visual, verbal and physical acts that do not only aim at inflicting physical injury but also emotional damage and abuse and infringement on others' civil rights. "School violence includes but is not limited to such behaviors as child and teacher victimization, child and/or teacher perpetration, physical and psychological exploitation, cyber victimization, cyber threats and bullying, fights, bullying, classroom disorder, physical and psychological injury to teacher and student, cult-related behavior and activities, sexual and other boundary violations, and use of weapons in the school environment."5

Because of the increasing rates of social violence, schools (which embody a fundamental constituent of society) are eventually converting into a conventional violent place too. Teenage violence within school facilities has become a predominant concern and is now identified as a major public health problem. The correlative association between the financial expenses and the psychological deterioration of the youth because of school violence is now tackled as a public health problem.

Juvenile delinquency is no longer processed and dealt with as a social issue. The prevalence of juvenile violence is no longer affiliated with the law enforcement and the judicial system. It has now become recognized as a major public health problem that should be approached first and foremost by educators, administrators, family members, the community, lawmakers and health care professionals.

In a study conducted by the National League of Cities6, 700 cities were surveyed, 38% of which reported that violence rates have been steadily expanding for the past 5 years. On the other hand, 17% only asserted that school violence did not constitute a prevailing issue. About 25% of the very same cities reported multiple cases of school crimes and assaults causing deaths and hospitalization. According to the US Department of Justice, statistics conducted in 1994 reported the tragic occurrences of about 16000 incidents every school day.7

6 The National League of Cities (NLC) is an American advocacy organization representing 19,000 cities, towns, and villages, and encompassing 49 state municipal leagues.
2/ Types of School Violence

Berkowitz drew a demarcating line between two types of violence: hostile violence which comprises both the behavioral and the intentional dimension, and on the other hand, the instrumental violence which includes violence carried out to benefit the assailant.  

Criminal assaults inside or outside school propinquity, carrying weapons and firearms at school, vandalism, larceny, embezzlement, bullying, sexual harassment are all different types of school violence. More specifically, violent behavior at school can be divided into two types depending on the target and the object of violence: Vandalism, as a violent offense directed towards schools' material and property; And verbal and physical violence directed to individuals (teachers, staff, or peers) and refusal to comply with the school's regulations and discipline. My focus will be on the second type of violence because of its frequency and serious aspect. The second type of violence can be summarized as follows:

- Student to student.
- School to student.
- Student to school authority.
- Student to teacher.
- Teacher to student.
- Teacher to teacher.
- Teacher to school-head.
- School-head to teacher.

From a specific perspective, it is also worth mentioning and discussing violence against educators. Actually, teachers are not exempt from this situation and might certainly be the targets as well. In 2003, 10% of urban schools teachers endured confrontational threats or verbal abuse. And 5% were physically assaulted. The fact that teachers are subject to physical and verbal abuse generates some inevitable repercussions such as the "battered teacher syndrome" which is generally manifested through an amalgamation of stress reactions entailing anxiety, disturbed sleep, depression, headaches, elevated blood pressure and eating disorders. 

Additionally, other school officials and staff such as the principals, the bus driver and the school assistants are also at a vulnerable risk of exposure to violent assault within the school premises or its whereabouts.

3/ Forms of School Violence

Little and Colleagues distinguished between 2 forms of violence: Direct or manifest violence Vs Indirect or relational violence. They have been narrowed down to school violence where the same characteristics related to violent behavior are manifested but while the perpetrators are school children and the crime scene is the school vicinity. Therefore, a violent student can be defined as someone who is unable to abide by the schools' regulations and who manifests violence through blameworthy antisocial behavior and violence.


A prevailing facet of school violence that is worth considering and scrutinizing besides physical violence is manifested through bullying. It is described by the National School Safety Center\(^\text{11}\) as "the most enduring and underrated problem in American schools." School bullying involves repeated acts of aggressive intimidation. Bullying can be physical, emotional, verbal or sexual. Most of the time, bullying suggests a discrepancy in power and control division. The perpetrators usually rely on their physical toughness and popularity to exert control or to harass the socially and physically inferior victim. Despite its prevalence in schools, most parents and school officials underestimate bullying. Instead of undertaking the necessary resolutions to terminate it, they often look away and rarely interfere. That would result in the victim's anxiety and depression and therefore either to self-inflicted violence (suicide) or social exclusion that breeds violence.

In order to better grasp the fundamental background of the violent behavior among school children, an in-depth study of the explanatory theories is mandatory. The main theoretical framework underlined by the educative and scientific researchers is comprised within the reactive or environmental theories. The most plausible explanation accounted for by behavioral profilers and analysts lie with the surrounding environmental and social milieu of the school children. According to this theoretical group of researchers, the student's behavior stems from the networking of environmental circumstances (Individual, family, school, and social factors) and their influence on the adolescent's acquired behavioral pattern.

### II/ Etiology of Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 factors</th>
<th>Level of empathy/poor satisfaction with life/nonconformist social reputation/attitude toward social norms and institutional authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Quality of family environment/Parent-child communication/family conflicts/parental support/family cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Quality of classroom environment/friendships/student-teacher relationship/social acceptance or rejection by peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>The effect of mass media, internet, and video games</td>
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The main risk factors and causes of violence stem from the interactional complex interplay of individual, societal and environmental factors which influence the development of the adolescents under definite sets of circumstances, and which therefore contribute to the emerging risk of violence.

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\(^{11}\) The National School Safety Center serves as an advocate for safe, secure and peaceful schools worldwide and as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence.
1/ Individual Factors

Teenage violent predispositions have been firstly assimilated to individual factors. Prenatal, pregnancy, birth, and delivery complications were, in some criticized studies, associated with numerous cases of violent offenses perpetrated by adolescents with traumatic childhood history. According to Kandel and Mednick, about 80% of juvenile delinquency can be traced back to a history of delivery and birth complications. They also state that prenatal trauma predicts hyperactivity and impulsivity and therefore violent behavior among children, especially those who are bred in family environment inappropriate for children in a vulnerable and decisive age.12

Another possible interpretation is that prenatal intricacies, the FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrom) and birth/delivery complications might cause damage to the brain mechanisms which are responsible for curbing violent behaviors. Nonetheless, these interpretations have not been validated yet by most of the researchers who claim that any correlation between delivery complications and violence is inconsistent and requires further in-depth investigations.

On the other hand, genetic predispositions of violent adolescents have been studied and analyzed, and many researchers acknowledge the assertion which goes as the following: "hypothesized mechanisms for genetic transmission of a vulnerability to the development of violent behavior include serotonergic neurotransmission that modulates impulsivity, and variations in autonomic responsivity. Development of new techniques of molecular genetic analysis has expanded the capabilities of researchers seeking genetic alleles contributing to aggressive behavior."13

Some other researchers managed to establish a correlative relationship between violent behavior and behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and impulsivity and concentration deficiency. Actually, childhood hyperactivity and impulsivity might be perceived as pathways to later development of violent behavior. Besides, concentration problems and dyslexia commonly entail bad academic achievement which, in turn, predicates violence.

In addition to that, children who suffer from psychiatric disorders (psychopathy) like bipolar disorders, mood disorders and schizophrenia, are more likely to be violent because of their different perceptive mechanisms and disordered thinking process. Impulsive and bad-tempered children do not exhibit positive response towards socialization and parenting reinforcement. They are prone, therefore, to get involved in hazardous activities.

2/ Family Factors

According to Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, family risk factors that might breed belligerent attitude can be arranged into 4 categories: Family demographics, Parental characteristics, Parenting techniques, and Parent-child relationship.14

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Studies revealed that lack of monitoring and parental supervision are the most influential predictors of aggressive youth development. Unsupervised teenagers are expected to get involved in anti-social behavior with vicious partners and in fallacious situations and circumstances. Zucker established a cause-effect relationship between addicted parents and teenage delinquency. Alcoholic and drug-addict parents are incapable of mastering any parenting skills. Hence, because of poor parental monitoring, unsupervised children become exposed to the vicious circle of antisocial behavior.15

Furthermore, violence among and between family members, especially parents, and witnessed by children intrinsically impinges on the latter's behavioral development. "Farrington found moderate correlations between parental conflict and self-reported violence in adolescence. McCord and Ensminger also reported a correlation between marital disharmony and officially recorded violent crime in a sample of 201 boys.16

Maltreated children, victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect, express their rage and anger through violence. These helpless children are prone to develop feelings of simmering anger that will be manifested and exhibited through violent behavior and delinquency. Hawkins et al. (1998) undertook a thoroughly extensive study and came up with the conclusion that a strong correlated relationship between child maltreatment, and more specifically child neglect, and violence does exist.17

According to Wells and Ranking, parents' overuse of punishment and harsh disciplinary practices can also be predictive of a high level of aggressiveness and violence among children. Yet, very permissive parents influence child temperament and might also engender juvenile delinquency. Consistent punishment and authoritarian attitude have been found to be the most effective parenting strategy.18

3/ School and Peer Factors
Children's social environment (circle of friends, adaptability and isolation, involvement in school activities, educational and social attainment...) constitutes an additional important support risk for vulnerable children who are therefore predisposed to delinquency and antisocial behavior because of their lineage and inherited family antecedents.

As soon as they reach puberty and enter adolescence, children automatically pick up random peers to rely on as the selected models to follow for the development of their social values and behaviors. Children who acquire antisocial and aggressive values, which are manifested through violent behaviors at school, are socially rejected and subject to regular school contentions. Thus, their attachment to malevolent companions is tightened and their predisposition to aggressivity and offenses is reinforced. Hence, violent and offensive behavior can be attributed to peer rejection and social isolation which reinforce aggressiveness and foster antisocial behavior.

16 Stephanie Verlinden, Michel Hersen, Jay Thomas. «Risk factors in school shootings.» Clinical Psychology Review January 2000: 3-56.
Poor parental control has also been linked to wicked peers association and choice. Studies have also confirmed the existence of a potential correlation between affiliation with a mischievous peer group and later development of violent behavior. Through a longitudinal data analysis, Elliott and Menard established that vulnerable children’s propensity to get involved with deviant peers constitutes a major factor in the development of self-reported delinquency.19

Howell accounted that 82% of delinquent assaults were performed with more than 2 accomplices. Gang affiliation and delinquency is more affictive and destructive than individual delinquency. Vulnerable and lost children looking for an identification model find acceptance, relief, and understanding with gangs and deviant peers.20 Actually, Even though incidental occurrences in schools decreased, the number of victims has escalated because of the multiplicity of victims per incident.

Gang members aim at exposing resistance and invulnerability and affirming their status within the group. Gang and anti-social groups find the least resilient recruits and apprentices among unsuccessful students who fail to fit in prosocial peer groups and who could not manage to construct healthy family connections. These impediments would undermine children’s ability to discern the most suitable social environment for them and increase risks of antisocial and gangs influences.

On the other hand, as far as school factors are concerned, low commitment to school at the age of 14 and 16 was found to be a risk factor and predicator for later criminality and violence. Children who fail to bond to school illustrate the correlative assessed relationship between low commitment to school and aggressive behavior. Farrington claimed that low academic attainment and poor school performances are likely to pave the way for later violent and offensive behavior.21

Actually, there is a substantial overlap between delinquency and poor academic achievements because disruptive children are less committed to learning and acquiring knowledge which may consecutively cause persistent learning troubles. Academic failure and delinquency hold a two-way interactional relationship.

4/ Social Factors
Multiplying rates of school violence have also been associated with community issues including poverty, segregation, gang affiliation and community violence, media violence, and possession of harmful weapons, drugs and damaging components. Research at The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado established a strong correlation linking school violence to some intrinsic social antecedents such as demographic turnovers, low socioeconomic status, crowded habitations and slums. These conjectural social operatives undermine the community's endeavor to organize and control. Disorganized communities are incapable of controlling local violence and crime. Adolescents’ involvement

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in associative networks and school activities along with church attendance do not only tame their unsettled temperament but also cultivate youth resilience.

Social disorganization, therefore, fosters pervasiveness of violence among children and alienate them from any irenic structured environment. In fact, social organization that encompasses family and community cohesion and religious affiliation contributes to the minimization of youth's responsiveness to violence.

Besides, it is worth mentioning that violent media, including movies, T.V, social networks, internet and video games have all been recognized as a risk factor for nurturing violence and aggressive attitudes among children. Children who are exposed to violent media accept violence as a standard way of life. They become unaffected by the horrifying display of violence and find it more conveniently appropriate to reproduce the violence they watch on T.V to resolve common complications of life.

During their early social and psychological development, children are easily influenced. This would destabilize their social interaction with peers and classmates. In 1999, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry demonstrated that children who experience behavioral, emotional, learning, and impulsive control issues, respectively such as isolation, dyslexia, and drug abuse are more vulnerable than healthy children.

On the other hand, easy access to dangerous weapons, with or without intention of use, increases school children's predisposition to violence either as a victim or a perpetrator. Children access weapons either through smuggling or even from their own homes where careless parents might keep their guns within children's reach.

### III/ Impacts of school violence:

The negative ramifications of school violence constitute a major concern that should also be addressed. There is a discrepant analogy between the increasing rates of school violence and the decreasing sense of invulnerability among school children. In a 1995 study reviewed by Louis Harris and Associates, 11% of the surveyed students reported that they have already skipped classes fearing school violence. In 1998, The U.S Department of Justice reported that 14.6% of school children aged 12 to 18 have already experienced violent acts at school.

Accordingly, these distressing conditions endured by most of school children will eventually impact on students' educational opportunities, achievement and attainment which, in their turn, will certainly be jeopardized.

For many parents and students seeking successful educational accomplishment, the school place provide children with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, to learn, to explore, and to thrive in a comforting and reassuring environment. Yet, as soon as feelings of fear overshadow feelings of safety, the school no longer constitutes a resourceful place of knowledge. The cognitive outcomes expected from children necessitate a safe environment in order to meet the educational requirements.

Direct or indirect exposure to violence at school threatens the student's aptitude to learn, to focus and to improve his academic proficiency. The situation is challenging for students (who cannot learn) and teachers (who cannot teach). School violence may affect the

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social, psychological and physical comfort of both the student and the teacher, distracts the students, and impinges therefore on the 'learning process'.

As a result, apprehension and fear about their safety and their perpetual endeavor to "stay alive" make school children lose their eagerness and ability to learn as well as their emotional readiness to achieve because of the degrading learning environment and the alarmingly spreading phenomenon. Students lose self-esteem and nurture a negative perception of school and hence might engage into antisocial behaviors and retaliation which would contribute to the generation of a vicious circle of violence.

IV/ Costs of School Violence
1/ Physical Costs
According to the National Center for Health Statistics\textsuperscript{23}, gun injuries constitute the largest-scale cause of death of American teenagers. In 1996, every 1.9 hours a teenager died from a firearm. A national survey reported that between 92-94, 80\% of the reported deaths were on account of school homicides. The 1992-1993 school year was reported as a bloody school year (105 deaths).\textsuperscript{24}

2/ Economic Costs
Overwhelming economic costs of gunshot injuries: In 1994, the National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center estimated that $2.3 billion in medical costs were already devoted to firearm offenses, half of which were covered by taxpayers.\textsuperscript{25}

3/ Psychological and Emotional Costs
These costs cannot be evaluated in terms of bills and capital, but they encompass the emotional distress and PTSD symptoms that might affect children's psychology and hinder their natural mental development. The most stirring symptoms include perpetual reminiscence and flashbacks of the traumatic event, hyper arousal and numbing of memories, and the probable development of aggressive and delinquent behavior. (And hence the vicious circle of violence)

\textsuperscript{23} The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System which provides statistical information to guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people.
The social, physical, economic, and psychological ramifications of school violence are identified in order to establish, to implement, and to assess the most appropriate reforms and disciplinary policies for a broad scale and a long term approach in order to provide the safest school environment and the most appropriate place for learning.

V/ Intervention and Prevention Plans

The student should first and foremost feel safe, comfortable, and happy at school. Otherwise, the repercussions are multiple and serious. Children will feel safe only if they know that it is not up to them to maintain their safety but that there are people in charge who look out for them, and that any breach of the law by any fellow student will not remain unpunished. Therefore, establishing safe schools is not an option but rather an obligation. School safety must be addressed in an accurate and careful approach. It encompasses a secure environment where children should feel protected and serene.

Safe Schools are depicted as the immune place where students, school teachers, officials and staff are responsible and concerned about the preservation of the school where disciplinary codes and policies regarding illegal substances and weapons are respected and sustained. In safe schools, insubordinate students are reluctantly unwilling to misconduct because they know that they will undoubtedly be penalized for their actions. The other schoolmates would therefore feel safe and be able to focalize their attention on achievement and knowledge rather than on the most appropriate methods to stay safe at school.

As a result, school safety is a critical issue that has become the major concern of school officials and federal agencies. Tragic criminal incidents within school premises have increased, which cause the alarming call of the scared and anxious American citizens for efficient preventive measures that should eventually restore peace of mind and reassure the public.

In an attempt to protect schools and provide them with the mandatory safety standards, the federal government passed in 1994 two important legislations to keep school safe and to supply them with the necessary funds to foster and promote drug prevention programmes: The Gun-Free Schools Act and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. "The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) funds violence prevention and education programs for students and training and technical assistance for teachers [...] Every state receiving federal aid for elementary and secondary education must require school districts to expel from school for at least one year any student who brings a gun to school."26

During the very same year, another important piece of federal legislation "The Goals 2000: Educate America Act" was passed. Actually, in the 1990s, the US Congress set the National Educational Goals in order to establish some educational reforms to be achieved by the year 2000. The Goal number 7 included the following objectives:

- "Every school will implement a firm and fair policy on use, possession, and distribution of drugs and alcohol.
- Parents, businesses, governmental and community organizations will work together to ensure the rights of students to study in a safe and secure environment that is free of drugs and crime, and that schools provide a healthy environment and a safe haven for all children.

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Every local educational agency will develop and implement a policy to ensure that all schools are free of violence and the unauthorized presence of weapons. Every local educational agency will develop a sequential, comprehensive kindergarten through twelfth grade drug and alcohol prevention education program. Drug and alcohol curriculum should be taught as an integral part of sequential, comprehensive health education.

Community-based teams should be organized to provide students and teachers with needed support. Every school should work to eliminate sexual harassment.”

Goldstein and Conoley recommend the implementation of some strategical plans and initiatives in order for the schools to make a successful difference. Those strategies are summarized as follows: campus access control, restricted access to campus parking lot, regular meticulous search of students’ car, closing the campus during the day, compelling the students to wear identification badges, implementing school safety programs in the educational agenda, establishing an enforced dress code for staff and students, clearing out lockers... “These strategies represent the beginning of a continuing collaborative process to create safe schools for all U.S. children and youths. Making schools safe requires an ongoing commitment to the skilled and continuing implementation of such strategies.”

According to the CDC, prevention and intervention approaches to school violence involve no less than 5 interference levels:
- The social level: to restructure the educational system/ to amend the social norms.
- The school-based level: reinforcing disciplinary policies and security plans.
- The family level: educating and counseling parents.
- The individual level: identifying the children at risk and the warning signs.
- The legislative level: passing laws that reinforce gun control laws and disciplinary actions.

**Zero Tolerance Policy**

The Congress, along with several state legislatures, resolved to settle the issue through the implementation of school disciplinary laws, mostly known as the zero tolerance policies.

The Zero Tolerance policy can be traced back to the US Navy and the US Customs Service endeavors to eradicate drug use in the military. This disciplinary initiative served as a model for schools which applied it to wipe out drug use as well as violence and crimes. Zero Tolerance refers now to the automatic expulsion of students whose threatening behavior do not abide by the school safety rules or because of unlawful possession of guns at school.

In many schools, school officials and administrators extended the Zero Tolerance policy to include the prohibition not only of firearms and lethal weapons but also of any toy weapons, bladed weapons or objects that might be presumed life-threatening.

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VI/ Concluding Thoughts

Parents trust schools with their children to cultivate them, to teach them responsibilities and to enlighten them about life's trials and errors. Schools are considered as a significant stage in children's life as schools epitomize a substantial rite of passage for active learners craving for education and academic attainment.

However, during the last decades, school violence has become a pandemic phenomenon that hinders children's natural development and identification. Victims or perpetrators, school children have started to embrace violence as a typical way of life.

Schools are facing bomb threat issues, students bringing and using weapons, students bullying each others to suicide...etc. School administrators and governmental public health agents and facilitators are not only looking for answers to explain students' aggressive behavior and criminal offenses but they are also striving to remedy the predicament and keep students safe from danger and constant fear.

Schools endeavor to introduce prevention and intervention plans and initiatives aims at providing a better and safer place for young learners to acquire knowledge. But many critics question the implications and limitations of school-based intervention policies. Educators, academicians, children's advocates, attorneys, and psychiatrists embarked upon a denunciatory enterprise to unveil the probable outcomes and implications of Zero Tolerance and other disciplinary policies. They all contended that school safety promotions in most school districts are excessive procedures that would probably lead to the opposite expected outcome. In their pragmatic resolution to impose new disciplinary reglementations and law reinforcement actions, schools' strategical plans raise the following questions: Are school administrators, the government, parents, and other agencies reaching their intended objective? Or are they, on the contrary, aggravating the situation? Should we speak of attenuation or deterioration of the situation? Are those programs a cure or a disease?
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