

Violence expressions in the school, its premises and its surroundings

Ensaf Abu-Ahmed

ensaf@walla.co.il

Introduction

The general meaning of the terms “*violence*” is perceived as a destructive illegitimate form of aggression. It is defined as using force, physical or otherwise against another person to harm his body, dignity, property, spirit or culture. In this sphere, when dealing with children, violence starts as light seemingly harmless aggression that can deteriorate into genuine violence. Curses, aggressive games, verbal and physical bullying, are often early indicators as well as causal factor of forthcoming violence. At an interview broadcasted on the Israeli radio on August 30th, 2012, Prof. Dani Gamshi, told the audience that school climate is the main factor in behavior norms formation on one hand, and violent delinquent behavior on the other hand.

In fact, school climate has a major impact on the personal sense of safety for both the pupils and teachers. Lack of reasonable sense of safety has a destructive impact on the perception of violence in general and upon the pedagogic capacity of the school in particular. The writer is in favor of the opinion that schools should be safe that will enable teachers and pupils to teach and acquire knowledge and education in the best optimal conditions.

However, in recent years schools in the Arabic sector in Israel are infested by diverse violent incidents of different severity level directed against teachers, property and pupils. <http://www.bokra.net/article.aspx?id=370249>

This article is based on a study of in-school violence and disciplinary problems conducted in junior high schools of the Arabic sector in Israel. It is a comparative study of combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The findings indicated that internal factors such as the learning conditions, teacher's attitude towards teaching, teaching methodology and implementations of rules and managerial consistency are imperative in smooth functioning of the school and in the reduction of disciplinary problems and violent incidents in the premises. The study

also revealed that parental involvement is not a factor because, in some cases, it was found to have a negative impact on school climate. It was also found that the local environment and the community may be a very positive external factor in this regard.

Abstract

This article focuses upon causal factors of violence in the school and presents other studies dealing with the issue. It refers to the school's climate, the mode and scope of school management, and upon external and internal factors affecting pupils' behaviors and the various modes of faculty responses.

Various studies indicated that situational factors, like those occurring within a given society or the school might cause change in the level of violence in the school. These factors can be external, like war or other crisis, or the rise of radical leadership in the surrounding society, and can be inner factors such as arrival of a new principal, employment of new teachers or changing the composition of pupils in the school.

The article presents findings similar to those found in other studies. It also presents findings that differ from other findings and/or conclusions of other studies and essays. The article also presents the impact of teachers' behavior and their class management mode and the overall functioning of the school upon the subject matter. It also talks about positive and negative influence of various external factors upon school climate and pupils' and faculty behaviors.

Key words:

School climate, manage, situational factor, violence, causal factor, disciplinary problems

Violence as product of situational factors

According to Prof. Gimshi, [interview, 2012] school is an organization of specific characteristics that differ from those common in society. These characteristics can be described as situation existing in a given location, but they are affected by external factors.

Major "situations" affecting pupils' behavior include social and physical characteristics, teacher's status in class, existence or lack of school rules and regulations, the modes of their application, and school's response to deviant pupil's behaviors. Schools maintaining obligatory consistent methodical rules with open positive teacher-pupils relations were found less violent than schools in which teachers' supervision was arbitrary, inconsistent and based mostly on teachers' instinctive responses rather than rules, procedures and positive atmosphere, embedded in the organization school's climate [Cajda, 2000; Lawrence, 2003].

Various studies indicated that situational factors, like those occurring within a given society or the school, might cause change in the level of violence in the school. These factors can be external, like war or other crisis or the rise of radical leadership in the surrounding society, and can be inner factors such as arrival of a new principal, employment of new teachers or changing the composition of pupils in the school like in cases of massive absorbance of immigrants [Horowitz, 2000; Soen 2003 and others].

Example of school's physical factors that influence on violence can be found in article written by Salant [2004] which indicated a positive connection between school's size and violence.

The study of Gimshi, [2012] called "Anatomy of Violence" revealed that a high ratio of pupils complaining about faculty violence/inappropriate conduct: one of every 4 pupils reports that a faculty member mocked him, offended him or humiliated him. One of every 10 pupils claimed that a faculty member cursed him. A relatively high ratio of pupils claimed that a faculty member struck him or pinched him, and approximately 5% of the pupils complained about sexual harassment.

Harel, Keni & Rahav [1997] found that school catering to weak socio-economic population has higher tendency for severe violence. A disturbing finding points out a connection between poverty and low education level in the surrounding environment of the school and among pupils' parents and the extent of severe violence reported by the pupils.

To sum up, it appears that violence is a product of the overall erosion that occurred in several public educational systems throughout the world, including deterioration in teachers' quality, education and teaching quality, teacher's status in the school and the erosion in the school status in the community and the society.

This overall erosion is part of the general erosion of state and administration authority, the authority of law enforcement agencies and parental authority.

Violence in the Arabic sector is comprehensively surveyed in the study of Dr. Abu-Asba [2010] who found that almost 25% of Arab pupils come to school equipped with sharp instruments, 11% use drugs, and approximately 6% use hard addictive drugs.

Field experience and observation lead the researcher to realize that currently pupils are even more prone to violence as they no longer stop at sharp weaponry. Recently, [early 2012], in an incident that occurred at one of the sample schools of this study, a pupil released tear gas in class, and a number of pupils had to receive treatment in the nearby hospital, a case that only indicates that violence in the Arabic educational system is on increase.

The system has a tremendous influence in the case. Violent incidents originated by an individual, as in smoothly functioning efficient school, are much easier to handle and contain. However, violence that occurs when the system is restless, its functioning deficient forms an impression that the entire school is violence struck. The issue gets out of control; local and sometimes even national press, parents' complaints create a sense of helplessness, while supervision and other factors add burden the school.

Abu-Gazal [El-Arab, 2009] claims that the main causal factor for violence in the schools of the Arabic sector in Israel is the over-crowded classes; he presents data showing that classes in the Arabic sector are more crowded than classes in the Jewish sector; he demands from the ministry to address the problem. However when the writer checked this issue, she found out that a large rate of the Jewish sector suffers from similar problem and therefore there must be additional causal factors to this phenomenon.

There are several studies concerning violence in school in the Israeli educational system. Some focus on quantitative aspect of the phenomenon, such as the extent and frequency of violence, others focus on socio-economic and personal characteristics in

the context of violent behavior [Benvenisti, 2005; Horowitz, 2000; Harel, 2005; Rolider & Okhayon, 2005].

Table 1 shows distinctive statistical difference in violence perception according to residence: (F (1,56) = 41.317; $p < 0.05$) indicating that pupil in urban school have higher tendency to use violence compared to pupils in rural school. (M=3.59; SD=0.621)

Table 1

Average, standard deviation test F statistics and significance level of in-school violence according to gender and school type:

	School	Gender				Test F statistics significance level Of freedom grade
		Male		Female		
		Average	S Deviation	Average	S Deviation	
Violence	Rural	2.93	0.57	2.99	0.63	(F(1,156)=41.317;P=0)
	Urban	3.53	0.61	3.65	0.64	
(F(1,156)=0.902;P=0.344)					(F(1,156)=0.093;P=0.761)	

Writer’s reflection

The researcher was surprised to find out that at gender comparison indicated an insignificant difference since the dominant traditional believe attributes higher tendency to male pupils to use violence. Nevertheless, details found in the researcher's log confirm this finding by entrance describing an extremely violent incident that involved only female pupils and an extremely rude violent mother of one of the most active culprits.

At that incident the teacher was frightened and left the class, and other teachers were too scared to interfere. Eventually other teachers got read of the mother and brought the guilty party to the school manager; however, no one dared to call the police and no report was submitted.

Such an incident could have never occurred in the rural school; teachers and pupils are all related and each looks after the others. In the rural school violence among pupils is stopped immediately, the teachers interfere at once. They will definitely extinguish the flames from the start and do not let fires to spread.

Supporting findings

Berkowitz, in her study of 2006, found that insecurity was more common among the bullies and the victims than among bystanders, but she also remarks that in other studies security and insecurity were both found significantly connected to other factors such as pupils caring cold arms at school, and pupils' social support networks.

Various studies indicate that situational factors, like those occurring within a given society or the school might cause change in the level of violence in the school. In addition to external and internal factors listed above, there is an important internal factor of external origin like the enforced change in the composition of pupils in the school, like in cases of massive absorbance of immigrants [Horowitz, 2000; Soen 2003 and others].

Example of the influence of school's physical factors on institutional violence can be found in article written by Salant [2004] which indicates a positive connection between school's size and violence. Catriel, [2004] also refers to environmental conditions in the school.

Conclusion

In my opinion, effective class management requires knowledge and understanding of pupils' social and psychological factors. Therefore, there is a need to adapt courses, materials and address behavioral problems and their causal factors. Thus, educational and clinical intervention methods should be made available to teachers and all faculty members.

Behaviors of pupils with chronic disciplinary problems can cause teachers disappointment, frustration, anxiety, anger and sometimes even aggressive response. When there are such pupils in a well-managed class, the teacher should seek effective non-judgmental communication modes with these pupils, and thrive to form mutual trust relations with them, to help them exit the circle of despair.

The writer recommended that the teacher should display personal interest in the disrupting pupil, find the time to talk to him and listen to what he has to say. He

should better focus on the feeling of the pupil, consult and confer with him, encourage him to suggest solutions to the problems and offer him a fair opportunity to succeed, and adjust to the rules.

The researcher found out that disrupting pupil is not necessarily a pupil who is socially rejected, since "losers" never become models for others, and if they misbehave they are either ignored or hushed up by intolerant peers, whereas any disturbance performed by charismatic pupil, or by a pupil enjoying high social status, can spread in classroom like fire in the bush.

The researcher witnessed a case in which a highly charismatic pupil, who apparently was not a great scholar. The pupil did not not only initiated in-class disciplinary breaches, but also he formed with others pre-agreed serial of physical signs which he used in class quietly and then pretend innocence and leave the others to break lose, carry on and force the teacher to lose control and flee.

A further examination of the situation revealed that when the teacher attempts to use a given pupil as a snitch, the rest of the class might retaliate and ban this unfortunate pupil. It appears that pupils tend to form their own intimate "gangs", they show loyalty to each other and often tend to ignore the teacher considered by them as an outsider.

This view is supported by a study published by Prof. Rolider A, about the issue of bullies in the educational system. It seems that currently almost every second pupil is being or has been harassed by bullies at school.

http://www.irgun-hamorim.org.il/content%5C12438_sela1.pdf

References

1. Rolider A & Ohayon M, [2005] The Social Climate in Educational Institutions is Buckling [slowly but studiously].
2. Prof. Dani Gimshi, [2010]; Anatomy of Violence in Educational Institutions.
3. Salant A, [2004], The Issue of Size and Structure in the Optimal School – articles review, inside: Salant A [ed], World Round Exemplary, Teachers' Training Educational Substance Portal, The Ministry of Education, Jerusalem.
4. Katriel A, [2003], Violence and Design of Educational Buildings Structures inside: Ortner T, [ed], Designing and improvement of educational buildings,- aspects of the physical space on violence reduction, The Ministry of education, Jerusalem.
5. Harel Y, Kenny & Rahav,[1997], Youth in Israel, Social Welfare, Health and Risk Behaviors from International Perspective, The Ministry of Health, Disease Control National center.
6. Horowitz H, [2000], Violence as Anti-Social Phenomenon, Henrietta Sold Institute, Jerusalem.
7. Doen D, [2003] "Lets Beat them" on Violence and Violence Prevention in Israeli Schools, HaHinuch U-Svivo [Education and its surroundings], Vol 24, 107-127.
8. Gajda, R. (2000). *Becoming a teacher in awake of school violence*. Colorado
9. <http://www.alarab.net/Article/170717>
10. <http://www.bokra.net/article.aspx?id=370249>
11. http://www.irgun-hamorim.org.il/content%5C12438_sela1.pdf .
12. Lawrence, R. (2003). *School crime and juvenile justice*. New York: Oxford niversityPress.