Violence in Algerian Society and its Eradication between Reality and Challenge: The Case of Algerian School

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Abstract

Violence in Algerian society remains a serious social evil and a difficult reality that has attracted the attention of scholars, academicians and researchers from different Algerian towns. The focus of different initial studies performed, mainly focused on the responsibility of the most important institutions concerned with the social up growing and education, namely the family and the school towards the birth of violence and its eradication. Indeed, in the case one of these crucial institutions fails to perform its duties and assume its responsibility, violence becomes the language of the family with its members, of the school with all its different components; consequently the language of a whole society. On this basis, important questions impose themselves: what is the reality of violence in Algerian schools? And what are the appropriate measures that Algerians should take to reduce or eradicate it? Our analysis resulted in the necessity to review the duties of both the Algerian family and school, and some suggested strategies to reduce or eradicate school violence in the Algerian society.

Keywords: violence, school violence, social growth institutions, strategies

Introduction

The human being is created to live in community and not in isolation. He has to live with the others and for them. He is required to live in harmony, recognizing the humanity of the other and exchanging knowledge. However, in our daily life, this human recognition of the other and exchange of interests with him, reflected in the image of harmony may be in a state of inconsistency. Consequently, instead of recognizing the humanity of the other, a complete denial results in transforming this human being and instrumentalizing him, making of him just a tool used for exploitation. In fact, this inhuman picture reflects the first most prevailing manifestation of violence in society.

Violence is a humanitarian phenomenon found in different societies. It results from the existing competition between individuals to obtain the recognition of the group. Its objective is dominance. The dominance of an individual over another in order to prevent him from development to achieve success, hence, wins a group's recognition and esteem. It may extend to ham him and even to cause his death. Similarly, such competition and repulsion which prevailin social life occur as well in schools.

School violence poses several problems related to how to create mechanisms and strategies to reduce it. The danger of violence in Algerian school is manifested in different ways. For instance, in 2016, the Algerian Ministry of Education registered 1661 cases throughout the different 48 Algerian towns; among these 1427 cases of violence were between pupils, 156 teachers against pupils and 87 pupils against their teachers. (Daloumi, 2016) Besides, during the first term of 2018-2019, the same ministry reported that almost 200 school violence cases were registered among teachers, pupils, administrative staff due to the lack of the needed training, overcrowded classrooms, absence of the teacher's pedagogical authority, the entrance of drugs in schools, besides the spread of other social problems such as divorce.

The latest statistics announced 161 school violence cases in the three different school stages during the first term of the academic year (2018-2019). Indeed, at the national level, 10 cases were registered in primary schools where teachers were the main actors against their pupils; 45 cases had to do with pupils who behaved aggressively towards their

classmates in class; in middle schools, 53 teachers were implicated in the assault on their pupils and 14 were aggressive towards their administrative colleagues. As far as secondary school is concerned, the same statistics reported that 22 teachers were violent with their pupils in class, 17 schools staff were violent with each other. However, the cases of violence among pupils were not announced because they were solved in class and did not reach the school administration. (http://www.elheddaf.com/16/07/2019)

In fact, the spread of violence in school prevents from achievingeducational and teaching objectives, a fact that negativelyaffects the pupil's personality from different aspects: psychologically, socially and academically, in particular. Moreover, it influences school structures, educational staff, systemsand social harmony in general.

This paper considers school violence in the Algerian society through the examination of the results achieved by different researches, practical academic studies, and statistics of Ministry of Education and National Gendarmerie. Besides, it attempts to propose some strategies to reduce or even eradicate it, identifying the role of family and the school given the fact that both of these institutions remain the first responsible for initial building of the individual's (pupil) personality, then of a good citizen after that.

1. Problematic of the study

School violence is one picture of the different kinds of practised violence in society. Its spread led the school, the academic educational institution set up by the society to educate and teach, and train its children, applying modern educational theories which forbade punishment in the teaching – learning activity, to lose a part of its tasks and renounce to its role and job, to become a violent field, where different kinds of maltreatment towards either oneself, or towards the other or the public and private properties occur. The negative impact of such social evil is disastrous on different components of the educational system and on Algerian society. In this context, the police provided statistics concerning the spread of violence in Algerian educational institutions. For instance, in 2014, it registered 134 cases of violence towards different categories: pupils, teachers and administrative authorities within the educational institutions; and in 2015, 99 cases of violence towards pupils under 18 years old. (Slimani and others, 2015)

In the same context, a study presented at the Maghreb Conference held in Algiers University (17-18/12/2011), demonstrated that in 2010, 4555 teachers were victims of their violent pupils/students whereas 1942 pupils were violently treated by their teachers and their schools' administrative staff, respectively. Indeed, school violence among pupils /students themselves reached 17.645 cases; and the Ministry of Education confirmed that this social phenomenon is most significant and increasing in middle schools. (Djazaris, 2015)

Moreover, another study led by the Ministry of Education (2010-2011), emphasized that the extent of violence in educational institutions increased. For instance, it registered 25000 cases. In 2010-2011 academic year, 201 cases of violence : primary schools' pupils against their teachers and the educational staff, 2899 cases in middle schools against teachers, 1455 cases in secondary schools against teachers and 521 cases between teachers themselves. (Djazaris, 2013)

Thus, it became necessary to denounce this dangerous social phenomenon and take measures to eradicate violent practices which have prevailed in an increasing way in the Algerian schools, particularly in middle and secondary schools where pupils/students are facing significant transformation with their adolescence, a phase in which they are in most need of the adults' assistance in their search for identity and building of personality. In this respect, school staff in general and teachers in particular are required to play a remarkable role in accompanying these teenagers to overcome different crises without damages. Indeed, the absence of any school framed assistance would lead them to be violent in order to attract the attention and interest of the others. Obviously, violent practices on the part of pupils / students in schools can only result in an augmented violence between different components of the educational institution. This, in fact, leads us to ask ourselves what are the reasons behind school violence in our society and what are the possible mechanisms to reduce or eradicate it? Before answering these questions, it is worth considering the identity of violence and school violence.

2. What is Violence?

School violence is a mirror that reflects violence in society. Therefore, it is important to refer briefly to the concept of violence before considering school violence: its reasons and the needed mechanisms to reduce it.

Violence is any resulting behaviour from the individual, verbal or physical or material, individual or collective, direct or indirect, dictated by anger or depression or annoyance caused by others' aggressive behaviour or social conditions,

harming the individual himself or the others or different institutions (Khouli, 2006, p. 4). It occurs under several and diverse shapes such as threat, fear-provoking, banishment sense of hate, quarrel, assault on properties and people physical or moral aggression or both of them at the same time. (Matar, 2005, p. 33)

As to school violence, it is defined as being any violent behaviour on the part of the pupils towards the others: pupils or teachers or towards school. In other words, it is a series of socially unaccepted behaviours influencing negatively the general functioning of school and causing school failure. It can be confined to material violence as beating, quarrelling and stealing school properties, destruction inside schools, writing vulgarities on class-walls and sexual assault, anxiety, suicide, carrying a weapon, and moral violence as verbal swearing, mockery, disobedience and making noise in schools' classes. (Houiti 2006, ps. 12-13)

In fact, this school violence can only produce different quantitative and qualitative harmful and negative components that contribute to the destruction of rules, systems and tools of social and scientific building of the human being. Thus, the Algerian educational institutions must be made areas of science, peace and rights in order to reduce school violence otherwise, violent behaviours there, will make of them a source and a birth place of violence, a social phenomenon which will be too difficult ,if not impossible, to eradicate in the case it becomes the commanding force in our schools. (El Kholi, 2008, p. 57)

In the same context, Khaled Abdou Salam clarified that school violence is every behaviour harming to others either physically or psychologically. For instance, irony, mockery of the individual, forceful opinions, hearing obscene words are all different forms of the same phenomenon, namely violence. (Abdou Salam, 2014, p. 317)

Thus, school violence embodies the most dangerous form of social violence. It is closely linked with the social growing up of the individual and both the teacher and pupil/student are victims of different kinds and forms of school violence. Besides this, school violence is identified as an irrational behaviour which takes several forms to harm oneself or the others or destruct properties.

3. Analytical context

To identify the reality of violence practiced in our Algerian educational institutions, the scientific literature and field studies carried out in different Algerian states and on various educational levels show the danger of violent behaviours in our schools, which clearly reflect an important aspect of the reality of violence in our educational institutions as the following selected studies illustrate.

The study of Khaled Abdou Salam (2002-2003), carried in the Algerian state: "Setif". He relied on analyzing the minutes of disciplinary boards. He found that school violence is more frequent in urban areas than in rural areas. For instance, the two states, "Setif" and "El Oulma", alone registered 102 cases with 70.43% against 43 cases with a lower percentage, 29.65% in the remaining semi-urban and rural areas. Moreover, the results confirmed that violence is more practiced by male than female students (126 males with 86.89% against 19 females with only 13.11%). Besides, aggressive behaviour is practiced by students, with low school scores, with 92.5%. The researcher concluded that school violence was against the school administrative and teaching staff. Yet, the teaching staff, in general, and female teachers, in particular, remain the biggest share of victims of school violence; and that the main cause behind this phenomenon, with its various forms, is embodied in lack of discipline in the classroom. (Abdou Salam, 2014, ps. 331-332)

The study of Houiti Ahmed (2003), entitled "School Violence: Causes and Manifestations". In his attempt to study the phenomenon of school violence in Algerian schools, he selected 21 secondary schools in the capital city of Algeria, namely Algiers, representing 19% of the total number (east, west, south and center) in Algiers. It is worth noting that the study cases included 364 teachers, 54 guidance counselors and educational assistants and 1028 secondary school students, selected at random from the first, second and third years. This study revealed that the cause of school violence is first of all "society" with 49.5% and which is represented by the environment in the neighborhood or street in which students witness the practices of violence in their way to schools. In the second position comes "the family" with 36% given the students situation caused by, for instance, family disintegration or troubled relationships between parents, or quarrels between brothers, or as a result of violent discipline methods adopted by parents. Thus, the family is also considered as an assistant- factor generating violence. On the other hand, according to guidance counselors, educational assistant and teachers, school environment contributes with only 13.5% to school violence. As regard the other factors, cited by the

studied cases, that contribute to make of students violent individuals, one can cite films and series of violence watched without censorship on various satellite channels, estimated to 72%. (Houiti, 2006, p. 79)

The study of Hafida Ben Mohamed (2005) relied on 4 secondary schools in Algiers being Okba Bnou Nafi in Bab El Oued, Mohamed Bedjaoui in Madania, El Mokrani (1) in Ben Aknoun and Cheikh Bou Amama in Mouradia. This study aimed at identifying the direct and indirect factors that caused violence in Algerian secondary schools. The main results were as follow:

The authoritarian character of social relations within the Algerian family makes the student reproduce violence within the school.

There are several violent behaviours that entered the school environment from the street.

The power of pedagogical domination influences the behaviour of the student, making him engage in violent practices towards the school and its staff. (Ben Mohamed, 2005)

The study of Kheira Khaldi (2007), entitled "School Violence and its Determinants, as Perceived by Teachers and Students", was led in 8 secondary schools in the state of Djelfa, on 8483 students and 323 teachers. The researcher tried to discover school violence manifestations and its determinants from the teachers' and students' viewpoint, respectively. This, in fact, was achieved through a questionnaire which included, among others, the following: To what extent are violent behaviours present and how do they manifest in educational institutions? Do teachers feel safe in and outside the educational institutions? What are the determinants of school violence as perceived by teachers? The results of this study revealed that the most important causes behind school violence in the secondary schools of Djelfa, according to teachers' perception, were embodied in family neglect, then school problems. (Khaldi, 2007)

Another study led by Noureddine Hakiki (2011), in an international conference on youth violence in schools of the Arab Maghreb, emphasized that 60% of pupils were subject to their teachers' violence whereas 40% of them were violent themselves. It was reported that Algeria was the first country of the Maghreb where school violence reached its peak. This, in fact, was due to several factors that were directly linked with social realities such as the demographical explosion, economic factors, the inappropriate adopted educational system, social inequality, without forgetting the bad influence of mass media. For instance, the studies led on the influence of cartoons reflected that the latter consolidate the aggressive behaviour of the pupil who tries to imitate what she/he watches. (Bounab, 2011)

In addition to this, the Algerian Ministry of Education 2016 study on the phenomenon of school violence concluded that Middle Schools registered the highest statistics of school violence, namely 52%, followed by Primary Schools with 35% and Secondary Schools with 13%. Besides, it claimed that school violence: pupils against pupils represents 80%, pupils against their teachers 13%, teachers against pupils 5%, teachers against teachers 2%. Besides, the same study demonstrated that moral violence represents 75% including cursing 44.20%, threats 17.37%, lack of respect of the other 13.15%. On the other hand, physical violence represents 25%. In this context, Chaib Draa considered that the growth of violence during the last years was nourished by the bad use of social media and the development of audio-visual means which show dangerous scenes of violence. (El Khabar, 2017)

Despite the fact that the above cited studies on school violence, led in different Algerian towns, their results were relatively similar as far as the causes, forms and factors leading to this dangerous social phenomenon are concerned. Moreover, the most important institutions responsible for the social upbringing, namely the family with all its constituents, and school with all its structures are the main causes behind the appearance and spread of school violence in the Algerian society.

3.1. Causes of School Violence

Violence in its different forms does not come from the vacuum but different sources such as the non-satisfaction of psychological and social needs, can contribute in a way or another to frame it, and prepare the appropriate conditions to allow its appearance in its final disastrous shape. Moreover, different mass media in general, T.V and cinema in particular, play station games and social media, all can play a significant role in promoting the culture of violence and broadcasting aggression in the youth's spirit through their shows of scenes of violence that adolescents or youth in general observe and try to imitate. (El Fokaha, 2001, p. 483)

Before considering the appropriate technics and programmes, school, with its different education, social and didactical tasks in society, should adopt to reduce or eradicate school violence, it is worth mentioning that the neglection of social institutions to fulfill their duties of educating and teaching the youth the needed values, made of them lose educational signs and become violent towards themselves and towards the others.

3.1.1. The Family

The family is the first social cradle where the child grows, experiencing good and bad events which will have a tremendous impact on his future personality. For instance, emotional deprivation caused by parents, bad treatment (either verbal, physical or breaking of furniture) odd economic conditions, the manifestations of physical and moral family disintegration, all of these, obviously, affect negatively the child's future, starting with manifestations of violence in the outside, in the street, and after that – in school, either with his peers, teachers and even with himself.

In this respect, several academic studies (such as Imad Fouad Kachif's, Ibtissam Ismail Mohamed's in 1997) came up with research results confirming that the personality character of any individual is built out of the family in which he was up brought. Moreover, his behaviour towards himself, at work, and in society depends on the relatively fixed character which was built in his life in the family. Indeed, the impact of family education on the individual's character is not limited to childhood but rather extends to his life as a pupil in school and as a student at university. (Khouli, 2008, ps. 64-65) In this context, El Iza confirmed that education is not a school's responsibility alone and the family is the unity through which the social, economic, political and religious systems' formation is achieved. Furthermore, it is the source of several traditional satisfactions for the individuals. For instance, it provides love, respect, security, psychological and physical protection. (El Iza, 2000, p. 30)

3.1.2. The School

School is the second institution responsible for the social up bringing after the family. It is the first link between the individual and the society, responsible for the transfer of culture, traditions, social habits and bond to provide education and knowledge to the pupil in best conditions. In this respect, Abdeenconsiders school as a basic social institution created by society, given the complexity of cumulative heritage of knowledge, to up bring and educate children in a targeted way, imbibing them with its philosophy, systems and values consistent with them. (Abdeen, 2001, p. 41)

However, this educational institution may sometimes give up its task and become a source of violence among pupils, between pupils and teachers, and can even reach the extent of damaging school furniture. For instance, the teacher's marginalization of the pupil/student, contempt, non-appreciating in front of classmates, inhibition of her/his potentials, lack of pupil/student motivation to school achievement, irons and mockery, all these factors lead the pupil to depression which in its turn gives way to aggressive and violent behaviour towards the teacher and peers. On the other hand, overcrowded classes remain a serious educational and behavioural problem which disables lesson and wastes its time. These unusual behaviours lead the teacher to miss his educational and pedagogical goals, a fact that makes of the school environment inappropriate for any successful educational achievement and discourage pupil/student motivation and ambitions.

This, in fact, is confirmed by Cécile who considers that school violence is not only caused by external factors as the family, but is also linked with the prevailing climate in the school which is basically embodied in the system and functioning of the educational institution. (Cécile, 2009, 19) In this context, studies preoccupied with the educational relationships in school, concluded that the democratic teacher is the most qualified and competent. He relies on the substantive dialogue in the supervision and teaching of his pupils/ students, without resorting to violence. On the other hand, the teacher who uses bullying, hypocrisy and negative words perpetuates violence and distorts the psychological climate of the pupil/student. Indeed, when school follows such negative methods of coercion and frustration towards the pupils/students, it becomes an institution for destruction of the future generation as it causes failure in different fields. (Watfa, 2016)

Thus, from what was said above, we conclude that school violence is the result of several factors and the abandons of the most important social and educational institutions of their roles, namely the family and school, a fact that intensified this dangerous phenomenon in schools. The giving up of the family to bring up and orient the child, and the teacher to guide, train and educate, and the school with all its human components to fulfill its task as delegated by society, drives the pupil/student to cling to external stimuli which distracts and bring him transient pleasure to catharsis for himself.

3.2. Mechanisms for Reduction of School Violence

There is no doubt that school violence represents an obstacle that prevents pupils/students from a total benefit of educational opportunities to realize their potential. Indeed, grumbling, sexual harassment and corporal punishment in school have a destructive impact on children. Besides, violence in schools harms school attendance and contributes to low academic attainment results and leads to high school dropouts. Ultimately, it hurts the future of children. (World Health Organization, 2016)

Therefore, it became necessary to provide some mechanisms that may contribute to-even if only in a small part of- the alleviation and reduction of violent behaviour in educational institutions. For instance, the emergence of institutions and movements that defend the rights of the child, in particular, led to, among the various conventions, a convention on the rights of the child which called for the need to protect children from all forms of abuse, including the Education for All Programme and the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), which is part of the follow-up to the Global Report on Violence against Children in the World, the first comprehensive international effort not only to examine the scope of violence against children in the world (2006), which represents the first comprehensive international effort not only to study the scope of violence against children but also to study its overall impact. (Tayar, 2005, p. 26)

Thus, previous studies on school violence in the Algerian society concluded that violence moves from family to school and from school to society. This phenomenon has become a source of an educational and social bothering, requiring to assume responsibility for finding appropriate solutions to reduce it, starting with fathers and mothers in the family, teachers and administrative staff in school, mass-media, comrades and different educational institutions. (mosques, cultural centres, theatre, and others), each one from its location and according to its potential and means. Such given serious reality dictates the proposition of mechanisms which family and school are in most need.

3.2.1. Family Related Mechanisms

Achhaboune sees that education is not the business of school alone; and that the family is the very first educational institution, to a larger extent, in the upbringing of children and their preparation for successful schooling as well as their subsequent educational and professional careers thereafter. (Ashabun, 2007) Therefore, when the family is good the whole community is, and if it abandons its role and its function, the society will become weak and corrupt, and it has to reconsider its role and raise its children by giving everyone his/hers right. This, is reflected in the non-practice of violence between parents themselves and towards their children and understand the characteristics of the stage passed by their children, with media exploitation the right way (control what children watch).

3.2.2. School Related Mechanisms

School is a means of intellectual radiation in the environment. It is a civilized tool to rely on in order to provide a prestigious cultural environment. The latter in its turn, contributes to the provision of knowledge, promotion of culture, the acquisition of individuals the ability to produce knowledge and continue its role in strengthening social relations; connect generations with their past and heritage, their social values. Moreover, to prepare individuals scientifically and ethically to understand, adapt and develop their present. (Fodil, 2009, p. 13)

As indicated earlier, school is the second most important institution concerned with the educational and social upbringing of the individual (pupil), after the family ; therefore, it is prerequisite to fight school-violence and allow peace to prevail because it is crucial for the education of a proper generation. This, in fact, can be achieved by reconsidering the teacher and the pupil/ student at the same time. Such operation can be realized through some strategies, the most important of which are suggested below:

Recruitment of a competent director in terms of scientific and educational qualifications.

Equipping the teachers with a cognitive, psychological and educational training to allow him understand the specificities of his pupil's/student's age stages.

To respect the pupil's/student's rights and make her/him aware of her/his duties within the class and in school.

To understand the violent pupil/student and help her/him overcome the problems that caused the violent behaviours.

Making of dialogue the dominant language within the class and spreading the culture of tolerance and peace among the members of the educational institution.

Employing material and moral incentives to encourage pupils/students to study while avoiding threats, intimidation and punishment within the class.

Activation of the role of school instructor and the educational counselor in school to listen to the preoccupations of the pupil / student and try to solve her/ his problems.

Programming entertainment and sports activities to bring the student's moral up ; discover her/his talents and allow her/ him achieve self-realization ; programming study-days about social pests and their dangers on individuals and society ; and employment of media for such activities.

Based on what was suggested above, it is possible to make of school an educational institution in which pupils and teachers coexist far from extremist and violent behaviours. Besides, when the most important institutions, responsible for the social upbringing, reconsider their roles towards the individual and the society, the individual (pupil/ student) will live without violence in social environment dominated by security and tranquility.

Conclusion

Thus, the family, school and society must be aware of this dangerous phenomenon, namely school violence, which represents a real threat hampering any development. Furthermore, it is prerequisite to multiply efforts, using all educational and psychological offered means, in order to reduce this destructive phenomenon. Besides, we must confirm that social up bringing institutions-particularly family and school- are considered as a double edged weapon. Indeed, they educate and up bring the coming generation, but when they give up their tasks, they destruct and give birth to different shapes of extremism and violence towards the individual and the society. Therefore, the social up bringing is considered one of the most important means through which a society can preserve its specificities and continuity through generations. Indeed, it is this up bringing which protects the pupil/student from unusual tendencies which may start with the use of violence that harms first of all oneself and also the others. Although there are several institutions for the social up brining, family and school remain the cornerstone of a laying up of a non-violent education and educational environment where peace can dominate.

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