

Violence in Schools and their Surroundings: The Case of Morocco

LITERATURE REVIEW

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Preface

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Introduction

The Moroccan school has made some progress in access to compulsory education and in the education of girls in rural areas. Still, we also note that various reports produced on education, as well as the Vision Strategic 2015-2030, indicate the existence of major difficulties such as early school dropouts and high repetition rates. Added to this is the low level of the quality of learning outcomes at all levels. In 2019-20, there were officially 76,574 dropouts in primary, 160,837 in college, and 67,134 in qualifying.

The education system suffers from many problems, some of which can affect the levels of violence and school success. Among the aspects to be noted are the size of the classes, the school programs implemented, the teaching methods used, which do not seem to promote critical thinking, and the development of children's personalities in the sense of their empowerment. Adverse social conditions (poverty, family, and social problems) can also contribute to violence and vulnerability of young people. In addition, a majority of children are poorly prepared for social and professional integration. All these factors contribute to violence development.

Morocco does not appear to have an implemented policy for the prevention of violence. The approach adopted is essentially repressive; it is carried out mainly by the Ministry of the Interior. Exploring this theme prompts us to try to find answers, in particular to the following questions:

- a. What is the current state of violence in Moroccan schools, and what are its social and educational implications?
- b. What policy exists or should be put in place for the prevention of violence in the education system?
- c. What is recommended to do in this area?

Vocabulary and Concepts

There are different definitions of violence in the literature. Clarifications should be made in this vocabulary. Gabriële Goettelemann¹ recalls that the WHO defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force, of threats against others or against oneself, against a group or a community, which leads to or is highly likely to result in trauma, psychological damage, developmental problems or death."² Some aspects of violence are invisible and therefore difficult to measure. This is often the case with psychological violence and its consequences on the emotional development of individuals and families. Violence and its denunciation depend on the social and cultural context but also the legal provisions provided for by the countries concerned.

Extremism is often used to refer to people seen as not conforming to social norms. It can take non-violent forms, but some seek to defend a point of view in some cases through violence. Extremism in this sense is grafted on the development of the phenomenon of terrorism, which is part of attitudes and strategies that aim to provoke and exploit people's fear and even threaten their bodily safety or their lives.

For its part, the notion of radicalization takes on different meanings. Some individuals or groups express radical or strong points of view (concerning social norms). This does not necessarily raise problems and can be associated with the exercise of freedom of expression. Nevertheless, in the context of the development of terrorism, "radicalization" is a process by which a person adheres to and adopts extreme views or practices that may result in the rationale for resorting to violence. While emphasizing that violent extremism is almost absent from daily school life in Morocco, it should be recognized that school curricula, social conditions, educational relations can contribute to or partly explain violent extremism, which individuals or organizations wear outside of school.

Previous Studies

In this section, a summary of the existing literature on domestic violence against women and violence at school will be made.

Domestic Violence against Women

Violence against women has part of its origins in the family, marital relations, and social conditions. The 2011 violence against women Survey (HCP) results underscore the scale of this violence and its manifestations. Out of a population of 9.5 million women aged 18 to 65, nearly 6 million (62.8%) had suffered an act of violence in one form or another during the twelve months preceding the survey. In the family context, violence often also takes the form of child abuse. It produces devastating psychological effects on children and their behavior thereafter.

Rabat Social Studies Institute (RSSI) carried out a study on young people, violence, and marginality in Morocco. The survey focused on young people from different regions of Morocco (Souss-Massa, Fès-Meknes, Marrakech-Safi, Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima surveyed). The study found that young people suffer from many difficulties in accessing

¹ Gabriële Goettelemann, *La Planification de l'éducation au défi de la prévention des risques de violence et des extrémismes violents*. Unité1 (2017).

² OMS (2015). *Global violence prevention status report 2014*. Summary.

employment and public services, which often takes the form of social exclusion (N. Benabdeljlil et al.). Experiencing a sense of disregard, young people do not feel valued. The interviewees particularly demand freedom of expression within educational institutions.

After presenting different forms of violence (women, family, young people, etc.), we will now address the violence within the national education system.

Violence recorded by the Department of National Education

Surveys were carried out by the Atfale association in 2001 and by the Ministry of National Education (Higher School of Psychology) ³ in 2005 with the support of UNICEF. They underlined the extent of violence against children and the persistence of corporal punishment despite official bans. The study carried out by the Higher School of Psychology gathered the point of view of children, teachers, and parents and revealed frightening indications of violence in schools: 87% of children consulted said they had been beaten in the classroom. 60% had been hit by a pipe, a ruler, or a stick; 44% hit with the hands and feet; 35% were exposed to verbal abuse. It often happens at school without being denounced, given that 65% of children prefer not to mention the corporal punishment of which they are victims.

For its part, the Observatory (Marsad) of violence set up by the Ministry of National Education recorded around 24,000 cases of violence in 2013-2014. The bulk of these cases were recorded in schools (69%) and the rest in their immediate surrounding (31%). According to these statistics, the most dominant violence is between students (64%). Verbal violence represents 35%, followed by physical violence at school (20%) and in its immediate surroundings.⁴ 43% of violence cases occur between boys, a large part of the violence is carried out by boys against girls. Several reasons have been put forward to explain violence in educational settings. Among them are academic failure and deterioration of values.

The Official Point of View on Violence and Educational Policy Orientations

In this section, a summary of the official view on violence and educational policy orientations in Morocco will be made.

Official perspective on violence and extremism

A symposium on violent extremism was organized in Morocco in 2016⁵. The meeting sought to clarify the priorities for public intervention and the education sector's contribution to the implementation of a national strategy to combat radicalization and prevent violent extremism. According to the conference document, Morocco is leading a determined fight against terrorism, mainly on the security level.

The Minister of National Education at that time⁶ admitted that extremism was "a real problem." It was accepted that different aspects should be reviewed: "our school books are not good examples and all this must be taken up, and at the root, it is the very purpose of the revision that must be made within the framework of the strategic vision (of education)." He

³ MEN, (2015), La prévention de la lutte contre la violence en milieu scolaire fondée sur le genre (VFG).

⁴ MENFP (2014), 3^{ème} rapport national sur les cas de violence.

⁵ Colloque sur « L'École : Acteur de Prévention de l'Extrémisme Violent ». March 15 and 16, 2016. Unesco and the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

⁶ Extract from the Speech of Mr. Rachid Ben Mokhtar Benabdellah, Minister of National Education and Vocational Training.

proposed to review the methods, pedagogies, and school organization, which require changes considered fundamental and necessary.

The manifestations of violence (and incivility) within the education system experienced significant development during the decade preceding the emergency program, which was underlined in the diagnosis carried out during the preparation of this program (2008 -2012).

Thus, official positions and debates on violence converge to consider that the Moroccan school can and must help detect young people who suffer from violence or who present risks of radicalism. In general, it should ensure a preventive function against violence by promoting education for citizenship open to the world (human rights and openness to others).

Education reform: the 2015-2030 strategic vision

To consolidate the achievements and overcome the difficulties, the Strategic Vision of the education reform proposes an intervention according to 23 levers, the first seven primarily dedicated or related to compulsory education and seek to ensure quality education and equal opportunities for children. This reform aims to improve access and better education conditions, equity, and the quality of learning outcomes for all. The orientations of the strategic vision constitute a basis for building or consolidating a policy for the prevention of violence in schools. Major problems that hamper efforts to prevent violence (school dropouts, working conditions, infrastructure, school support, involvement of families, etc.) are explicitly and centrally considered in the educational reform project. They are essential pillars in constructing the violence prevention policy in establishments and the school environment. However, the question of the effective implementation of this policy remains open. Integrated strategy for preventing and combating violence⁷ was developed in 2007 around different axes which insisted on institutional strengthening and the skills of education actors; collecting information on violence. In fact, what was done to fight violence in schools has been judged insufficient according to various sources.

The Knowledge, Skills and Practices Survey (CAP): Confirmation of the development of violence

The phenomenon of violence, which particularly affects young people, is growing with the accessibility and use of media and social networks. Components and some groups of the latter participate and attract young people by channeling them towards radical movements.

Violence in schools and education open to the world

A study carried out by UNESCO focused on a theme that considers the issue of violence, but also the promotion of education for world citizenship in relation to the concept of living together. It has retained several objectives, such as preventing violence in schools and promoting the values of human rights and tolerance. All national education levels from primary to secondary education were included in this survey, which included both qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative analysis was based on the opinions gathered from participants in focus groups (resource persons, students, teachers from different disciplines, educational inspectors, etc.). As part of the qualitative survey, the educational

⁷ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (2007), « Stratégie Intégrée de Prévention et de Lutte Contre la Violence à l'Égard des Enfants Scolarisés ». Avec l'Appui de l'Unicef. Document préparé par Najat M'jid, Abdelaziz Ghordaf (AMASDEQ).

actors focused on the relationship between violence and what is happening in society. These results were corroborated by those of the quantitative survey, part of which we will present here.

Quantitative survey: Knowledge, Aptitudes, Practice (CAP)⁸ : survey results

The CAP survey collected information on all aspects relating to the theme of violence in schools and global education. A central part of the questionnaires focused on manifestations of violence in the school and its immediate surroundings. The survey covered two Academies of Education (Fès-Meknes, Casa-Settat, and four provinces). Three educational levels were studied. The survey covered 227 primary school pupils. In college, 491 students were surveyed. In total, there were 718 pupils. The number of teachers surveyed was 451 people. In addition, 128 administrators and directors were included, in addition to 27 educational inspectors. Data on the educational attainment of parents of primary school students overall showed a high proportion of those who had never been to school. Most of them were with limited schooling. For all the pupils surveyed, few mothers were working: 85.2% are without paid employment (housewives). On the other hand, there are few unemployed fathers (1.33%). The majority of parents belong to low socio-economic categories.

Frequent connection and use of social networks and assessment of the situation of schools by educational actors

The availability of ICT equipment is reasonably high at schools and at home. The most frequent uses of the media and social networks by teachers are: "to explore/seek general knowledge" (95%), "to seek knowledge related to schooling" (93%), "to visit educational sites" (86%) and "use the internet for homework" (80%). Despite this development in internet usage, for a comfortable majority of teachers, the media and social networks are never (48.8%) and rarely (15.6%) discussed in class. The data collected suggest that a significant effort must be made to cover the needs of the pupils in these areas. And given the importance of skills associated with the internet in contemporary life, consolidation in this area is crucial.

Questions were asked to assess the situation of schools and the attitude of educational actors, knowing that the school climate plays an essential role in the functioning of schools and the onset of violence or not. For all students, the overall assessment seems to highlight two groups who have different views on the situation and climate of schools. On the issue of security, pupils (all levels) are divided: 31% strongly disagree (and 9% somewhat) that their school is secure, while 36% think it is. Similarly, the school environment is considered unsecured by a significant proportion of teachers.

Overall, most students, regardless of their grade level, have complete confidence in school (83.1%) and express pleasure in going to school, which is a positive sign with regard to schooling. However, a minority speaks its fear, which must constitute a warning—to be taken into account—about the difficulties which they are experiencing.

Violence Manifestations, actors, and locations

The various educational actors surveyed confirm the existence of multifaceted school violence. For the students surveyed, most forms of violence are cited with relatively high

⁸ This survey was realized with the UNESCO and the Ministry of Education support.

frequencies. The top forms of violence cited include "Speak badly about others," verbal harassment, and physical aggression. However, although rape is rarely mentioned in schools, it remains a serious concern that exemplifies violence in the school surroundings. As such, it is cited by 299 respondents (and 8.8%). According to the students, the places where violence occurs are varied. They concern both the classroom (10.8%), the changing rooms (7.5%) and the toilets (11.7%), but the most mentioned places are the way to school (28%), playground (20.8%), and the immediate surroundings of the school (16%).

The comparison between the responses of educational actors about the perpetrators of violence in the school underlines the importance of violence linked to the behavior of boys. Accordingly, the responses vary between a minimum of 27% declared by the inspectors and 42.6% suggested by administrative staff and a similar percentage by teachers. 36% of students also confirm that boys rank first as perpetrators of violence. The second position is attributed to external people. These data corroborate what was found by the official Observatory (Marsad) statistics of school violence.

The reasons at the origin of school violence put forward by the different educational actors surveyed are consistent: The items "the person suffers" or "has problems" both together represent a significant proportion: 43.3% among students, 51, 8% of teachers, 36.4% of inspectors. It can be noted that some of the reasons chosen are mutually reinforcing, and others are considered necessary by all educational actors. In fact, the "school failure" factor is also considered very important by all educational players. In addition, all educational actors agree to attach great importance to the humiliations and feelings of injustice to which students are exposed at school.

Overall, it emerges from these data that most of the factors and causes of violence are considered important by all educational players. Preventive action in this area, therefore, requires a comprehensive and integrated intervention. This policy must take into consideration the mechanisms, places, and means that would make it possible to reduce the violence that affects the school; and promote positive communication likely to alleviate the tensions that arise at this level.⁹ On the other hand, the consultation of educational actors on aspects relating to human rights, the promotion of critical thinking, and tolerance shows that some of the actors indicate a satisfactory situation. Still, at the same time, we find a significant amount of individuals who do not share this point of view and raise questions about actual practices.

Beyond the manifestations of violence, what values!

Curriculum reform—especially of Islamic education—has been initiated, but inconsistencies remain. For example, the questions raise different views or interpretations of the tenets of Islam, sometimes presented as absolute truths. This poses problems of inconsistency and incomprehension, especially since these interpretations are submitted to young children who are poorly equipped to grasp the nuances, the requirements of contextualization—particularly historical ones—and the consequences of rigorous explanations. For example, in a French textbook, we find an unveiled little girl, and in the Islamic education book, there are pictures of veiled little girls. The same is true of the inconsistency of the prohibition of Riba (interest on loans) in Islamic education textbooks, but at the same time, young people learn in financial mathematics the calculation of interest and its use.

⁹ Rabat Social Studies Institute, 2021, Akesbi Azeddine et Zerhouni Saloua , Prévenir les conflits et violences en milieu scolaire :

In a book in the form of an interview between Adonis and Houria Abdelouahed,¹⁰ the authors addressed several topics related to violence and changes in the Arab-Muslim world. Adonis considers that a major shift in Arab society should be based, in particular, on secularism and the liberation of women from Sharia law. Throughout Arab-Muslim history, many writers, poets, and philosophers have challenged the official discourse and vision of Islam. However, critics have often been fought or, at a minimum, marginalized. Innovators have been opposed by political power. In fact, the Arab-Muslim state was founded on power and tribal membership. This type of power reduces or eliminates plural expression and attitudes (Adonis, 2015 et al., p. 26).

Beyond these remarks, in Arab-Muslim culture, what poses a problem—particularly in relation to human rights—is the place given to the sacred, to taboos and their consequences on individual, collective and social freedom of expression. Developed monopolies of power - relying on an official version of religion - produce authoritarian systems that block the flourishing of people, speech, and creativity. They are a source of multiple violence. Reforms of education systems and school programs often come up against these structural bottlenecks.

¹⁰ Adonis, *Violence et Islam*, (2015), Entretiens avec Houria Abdelouahed, Edition Seuil.

Conclusion

This work presented and analyzed data on violence from different sources and surveys. Among the conclusions and lessons that emerge, it is worth highlighting the commonality of violence observed in Moroccan society. It strongly affects women, children, and young people. This is also the case in different countries. Violence, which takes on a multifaceted nature, has also been identified and studied in schools according to several sources and surveys. Educational actors confirm that school violence is multifaceted and well established. It varies in intensity and in accordance with places and actors. For instance, it is considered more frequent in school surroundings and roads to school.

Public awareness about the manifestations of violence has been expressed in educational reference documents. However, there was no formulation of a comprehensive school violence prevention policy. The CAP survey presented made a positive observation—according to some educational actors—of a good knowledge of the principles of human rights, of the culture of other peoples. However, a majority of inspectors believe that the teachers they supervise are not (“Never”) able to critically analyze and decipher the content of messages conveyed on media and social networks.

It is also essential to promote extracurricular activities to develop a civic notion of responsible citizenship and offer young people spaces to express themselves and integrate socially. These activities have an essential role in the development of children and adolescents. They must be institutionalized and be part of the structure of school curricula. The policy in this area should consider that the school can become a space for practicing and learning about democracy and human rights. This includes giving an important place to young people in this space. Finally, all the measures to be taken can only be successful if there is a review of school curricula, which implies revisiting the values conveyed by the dominant culture.

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