



Approaches for Addressing Student Violence in Secondary Schools

أساليب مواجهة عنف التلاميذ بمؤسسات التعليم الثانوي

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Article abstract:

The phenomenon of violence among secondary school students constitutes a critical educational challenge for secondary schools. This issue not only compromises the physical and psychological well-being of students and educators, whether victims or perpetrators, but also disrupts the effective conduct of the educational process. Consequently, addressing this socio-educational phenomenon necessitates the implementation of preventive and remedial approaches to mitigate its impact. These approaches aim to create a secure and conducive school environment capable of achieving its educational objectives comprehensively and effectively.

Key words: School Approaches; Violence; Student Violence.

ملخص المقال:

تعد ظاهرة العنف لدى التلاميذ بالمرحلة الثانوية من الظواهر التربوية الخطيرة التي أصبحت تواجهها مدارس التعليم الثانوي، وذلك لما لها من انعكاسات سلبية تهدد السلامة الصحية والنفسية للتلاميذ والفاعلين التربويين بالمدرسة ضحايا العنف أو التلاميذ العنيفين أنفسهم، كما تؤثر على سير العملية التعليمية بشكل فعال، وهو ما يتطلب اتخاذ المدرسة لجملة من الأساليب الوقائية والعلاجية للتصدي لهذه الظاهرة السوسيو تربوية الخطيرة، من أجل توفير بيئة مدرسية سليمة وآمنة تؤدي أدوارها المنشودة على أكمل وجه.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأساليب المدرسية؛ العنف؛ عنف التلاميذ

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Introduction

Schools function as pivotal social institutions entrusted by society to preserve its cultural foundations. As primary sites for intellectual and moral development, they refine students' behaviors, address ethical lapses, and collaborate with other societal entities to foster growth. They also impart knowledge and skills across academic disciplines, enabling learners to contribute to societal advancement. Thus, schools shape both cognitive abilities and moral foundations.

Recently, however, educational institutions—including those in Algeria—have faced rising behavioral challenges. A key concern is the increase in violence among secondary school students. Adolescence is marked by major social, psychological, cognitive, and physiological shifts that can alter behavior, sometimes resulting in aggression that disrupts the educational climate.

Student violence may manifest as verbal abuse, physical aggression, psychological intimidation, or property damage. Such behavior, widely regarded as unacceptable, harms individuals and the broader educational environment. Addressing this complex issue requires a blend of preventative and corrective strategies to ensure a safe and supportive school setting.

Against this backdrop, the central question explored in this study is: **What are the most effective school-based approaches for preventing and addressing violence among secondary school students?**

The paper proceeds by examining three principal areas:

- Key conceptual definitions underpinning the study.
- The nature and scope of violent behavior among secondary school students.
- Comprehensive preventive and remedial approaches that schools can employ to mitigate this form of aggression in secondary education.

1. Conceptual Framework

1.1 Definition of School Approaches:

The term *approaches*—in its linguistic origin—denotes a method, path, or mode of action, emphasizing systematic and goal-oriented practices (Al-Sab'āwī, 2005, p. 14).

School approaches may be defined as a structured set of strategies, procedures, mechanisms, and tools implemented by educational stakeholders to correct and redirect undesirable student behavior (Abu Amshah, 2023, p. 400). These approaches reflect intentional pedagogical choices aimed at shaping student conduct and promoting a positive educational climate.

In this study, school approaches refer specifically to the educational measures and interventions adopted by schools to prevent and mitigate violent behavior among students, while fostering a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment. These approaches encompass both preventive and remedial dimensions, aiming not only to address the underlying causes of violence but also to promote prosocial behavior and constructive student interaction.

1.2 Definition of Violence:

Etymologically, the term *violence* originates from the Latin *violentia*, derived from *violentus*, meaning "vehement" or "forcible." This term, in turn, traces back to *vis*, signifying "force" or "power." The word entered the English language in the late 13th century, initially referring to "physical force used to inflict injury or damage" (Etymonline, 2025).

Terminologically, violence is defined as "actions or words that are intended to hurt people" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025) and "the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy" (Merriam-Webster, 2025). These definitions highlight that violence encompasses



behaviors involving physical force or verbal actions aimed at causing harm or damage, reflecting its multifaceted nature across physical, emotional, and social dimensions.

Taken together, these definitions underscore the complexity of violence as a social phenomenon with multiple dimensions. The first definition depicts violence as the use of force aimed at causing harm—physical, emotional, or social—thereby disrupting the fabric of interpersonal and social relationships. In contrast, Pierre Vieux's perspective highlights the dynamic and coercive nature of violence, characterizing it as a form of physical or moral pressure that encroaches on individual autonomy (Rachid, 2016, pp. 53-54). This viewpoint underlines the authoritative aspect of violence, linking it to mechanisms of power and domination.

Hence, both definitions converge on the idea that violence is not a merely isolated or individual action; rather, it unfolds within broader social contexts where authority, power structures, and conflict play pivotal roles.

1.3 Definition of Violence Students:

Majdi Ahmed Ibrahim defines violence among students as a latent form of energy that emerges under the influence of external factors, termed as the determinants of violence. This energy becomes apparent through behaviors that include verbal abuse, destruction, and physical aggression, manifesting either between students and teachers or among students themselves.

Conversely, Ahmed Howaiti defines violence as behavior that is socially rejected and results in adverse effects, disrupting the overall harmony of the educational environment. His categorization of violence extends to physical acts like vandalism and physical altercations, as well as psychological forms such as ridicule and verbal chastisement (Naji, 2017, p. 108).

A sociological analysis of these definitions reveals distinct yet complementary views on student violence. Ibrahim focuses on violence as an outlet for internal energy shaped by social and educational influences, stressing the interaction between individual dispositions and environmental triggers. In contrast, Howaiti emphasizes violence as a violation of collective norms that threatens the structural integrity of the school, addressing both its physical and psychological dimensions. Together, these perspectives frame the school as a microcosm of society, where violence both reflects and shapes broader power dynamics—highlighting the need to address underlying educational and social conditions to mitigate its occurrence.

2. The nature of Violent Behavior among Secondary School Students

2.1 Types of Violence:

Violence in secondary schools manifests in a spectrum of forms, often as a response to psychological stressors, interpersonal conflicts, or the influence of negative behavioral models in their surroundings. Understanding and categorizing these manifestations are crucial for comprehensively addressing the issue and devising effective interventions.

- **Verbal Violence:**

Verbal violence typically serves as a precursor to physical forms of aggression. This type of violence encompasses a range of behaviors from insults and verbal reprimands to blame. It is executed by individuals or groups within the school community, targeting either peers or educational personnel. These interactions often escalate tensions and may lead to more severe forms of violence.

- **Physical Violence:**

This form involves students employing bodily force with the intent to cause physical harm to others within the school environment. Physical violence includes actions such as punching, kicking, and other forms of physical assault that aim to inflict pain or injury.

- **Psychological Violence:**

Psychological or emotional violence occurs through tactics of intimidation, isolation, exploitation, and degradation. Perpetrators may also forcefully impose their views on others,

resulting in significant emotional, physical, and behavioral damage to the victims. This form of violence deeply impacts the psychological well-being of those affected, stunting their emotional and social development.

- **Coercive Violence:**

Coercive violence in schools involves the utilization of symbolic aggression that inflicts psychological, cognitive, and social distress. It manifests through scorn, ridicule, or the overt disregard of individuals, thereby assaulting their dignity and eroding their sense of identity and belonging within the school community (Mamdouh, 2019, p. 31).

2.2 Factors and Drivers of Violence Among Secondary School Students:

A myriad of factors can precipitate and sustain the incidence of violence among secondary school students. These indicators, spanning personal, institutional, and societal dimensions, are outlined below:

- **Student-Centric Factors:** Several key factors contribute to the emergence of violent behavior among students, with research pointing primarily to dysfunctional socialization. Poor parental practices—such as neglect, authoritarianism, and emotional disengagement—are linked to anxiety and psychological stress in children, which can manifest as aggression (Badriat & Driouche, 2022). Academic failure is another major risk factor; struggling students often experience frustration and inferiority, leading some to adopt violence as a coping mechanism (Aouchebi, 2019). Peer influence also plays a critical role, as students may imitate violent behavior to gain acceptance or prove loyalty within deviant groups (Mebarkia, 2024). Substance abuse further heightens risk, with drug use strongly correlated with verbal and physical aggression (Rafie & al., 2021). Lastly, psychological stressors—such as perceived injustice, marginalization, and chronic frustration—are significantly associated with violent tendencies (Taybi & Sakhri, 2022). Together, these factors illustrate the complex interplay of personal, familial, academic, and social dimensions in the development of school violence.
- **Pedagogical Factors:** Inadequacies in educational methods and curricula that fail to cater to the diverse needs and interests of students contribute significantly to student disengagement and subsequent behavioral issues. The application of teaching methodologies that do not resonate with or actively engage students can exacerbate feelings of alienation and frustration, potentially leading to violent outbursts. A study conducted by Saleh Al Agoun, entitled *School Environment and Its Relationship with School Violence Among Secondary School Students*, provides empirical evidence indicating that both the curriculum and instructional methods constitute significant institutional factors contributing to the manifestation of violent behavior among students. The findings suggest that when pedagogical approaches lack inclusivity, engagement, or fail to accommodate diverse student needs, they may inadvertently foster frustration, disengagement, and ultimately, aggression within the school setting (Al-Agoun, 2017).
- **Organizational Factors:** The lack of effective disciplinary and oversight frameworks within educational institutions can diminish the efficacy of violence prevention efforts. The absence of robust organizational structures, such as active parent-teacher associations and coherent administrative oversight, often results in a lack of accountability and insufficient conflict resolution mechanisms. The empirical study conducted by Mukhlid al-^عAmarin, entitled *The Causes of School Violence Among Secondary School Students in the Southern Shouneh Educational Directorate from the Perspective of School Principals*, offers a rigorous analysis of school-based determinants contributing to violent student behavior. Drawing on administrative and psychological perspectives, the study identifies the absence of systematic

administrative oversight and the lack of structured school counseling services as significant institutional risk factors (Al-‘Amarīn, 2019).

- **Legal Factors:** The absence of clear, enforceable policies and regulations within schools can create an environment conducive to violence. Al-‘Amarīn further highlights deficiencies in school leadership as a critical institutional factor contributing to student violence. Specifically, the research points to weak administrative leadership and the inability of school management to effectively regulate violent student behavior—primarily due to insufficient professional training—as key elements exacerbating the problem. The findings suggest that the lack of leadership competencies in behavior management, conflict resolution, and crisis intervention undermines the school’s capacity to enforce discipline and maintain a safe learning environment, thereby facilitating the persistence of violent conduct among students (Al-‘Amarīn, 2019).
- **Security Factors:** Insufficient security personnel relative to the student population can significantly undermine the ability to monitor and control student interactions effectively. Often, the limited number of available staff, coupled with a potential lack of training, hinders the institution's capacity to manage and mitigate aggressive behaviors adequately.
- **Media Influence:** The pervasive influence of media, particularly through visual content that glorifies violence, plays a critical role in normalizing aggressive behaviors. Regular exposure to violent content in films and series broadcast across various media platforms can desensitize students to the severity of violent acts and shape their perceptions and behaviors accordingly. The study conducted by Adeeb Ahmad al-Shāṭirī and Chafik Aykufan, entitled *Media Content and Its Relationship with School Violence Among Middle School Students*, provides empirical evidence on the influence of violent media exposure as a contributing factor to aggressive behavior in school settings. The findings indicate that students who are regularly exposed to violent media content are more likely to internalize and reproduce such behaviors, suggesting that media socialization plays a non-negligible role in shaping students’ behavioral patterns. The study underscores the psychological impact of media stimuli and positions violent media consumption as a significant exogenous variable in the emergence of school violence (al-Shāṭirī & Aykūfān, 2021).
- **Environmental Factors:** The physical layout and condition of educational facilities, including overcrowded classrooms and the absence of necessary amenities like libraries and sports facilities, can exacerbate stress and facilitate the occurrence of violent acts. These environmental constraints can intensify the challenges faced by students, thereby heightening the risk of violence. (Awad, 2015, pp. 61-62).

Al-‘Amarīn further identifies specific environmental and infrastructural conditions within schools that contribute to violent behavior. According to the study’s findings, overcrowded classrooms and the absence of adequately equipped facilities for sports and recreational activities are significant institutional factors linked to the manifestation of aggressive conduct. In such contexts, students experience heightened frustration and limited avenues for constructive physical and social engagement, thereby increasing the potential for violent incidents (Al-‘Amarīn, 2019).

2-3 Phases of Violence Development Among Secondary School Students:

Violence among secondary school students typically evolves through distinct phases, each reflecting the complex interplay of social and psychological factors within their educational environment. Understanding these phases is essential for identifying the underlying drivers of violence and devising effective preventative approaches to foster a safe educational setting. Below, these phases are delineated:

- **Initial Phase:** The onset of violence often begins with seemingly minor non-compliant behaviors that can serve as early warning signs. These behaviors include deviations from

school norms such as not wearing the school uniform, neglecting to bring necessary academic materials, or showing disrespect during school assemblies.

- **Escalation Phase:** At this stage, student behavior becomes increasingly oppositional and disruptive, moving beyond passive non-conformity to active violation of school rules and norms. This may include deliberate destruction of school property, verbal aggression, or physical confrontations with peers. The escalation phase is particularly critical because it signifies a transition from covert forms of resistance to overtly aggressive conduct. It often correlates with a breakdown in classroom management, peer conflict, or unresolved emotional or psychological difficulties. Without timely intervention, students in this phase are at heightened risk of normalizing violence as a mode of expression and conflict resolution.
- **Critical Phase:** It represents the apex of behavioral deterioration, characterized by the manifestation of severe and often dangerous forms of violence. In this stage, students may commit acts of physical aggression against educational personnel, engage in threats or intimidation, and in extreme cases, bring weapons or hazardous objects into the school environment with the intent to harm. Such behaviors reflect a profound breach of institutional safety and require immediate, multi-level intervention involving psychological assessment, disciplinary action, and often legal consequences. The critical phase is typically the result of prolonged unaddressed behavioral, emotional, or environmental issues that have compounded over time. (Youssef El-Sayed, 2015, pp. 41-42).

2.4 Consequences of Violence Among Secondary School Students:

The prevalence of violence among secondary school students has far-reaching negative consequences, affecting various dimensions of their lives. These repercussions are evident in behavioral, educational, and emotional domains, underscoring the pervasive impact of school violence.

- **Behavioral Implications:** Violence among students often manifests in disruptive and maladaptive behaviors that undermine the school environment. Key indicators include a lack of discipline, diminished concentration and attentiveness, heightened irritability, and engagement in aggressive actions such as verbal abuse, vandalism, and even substance abuse. These behaviors highlight the detrimental effects of violence on students' conduct, often creating a ripple effect that disrupts the broader school community.
- **Educational Impacts:** School violence has serious academic consequences. Students exposed to violence often show declining performance, reduced participation in activities, and increased absenteeism. In severe cases, this leads to dropout and academic failure. A violent school climate disrupts concentration, fuels fear, and undermines psychological safety—key conditions for learning. As motivation drops, students disengage from both academic and extracurricular life, increasing the risk of chronic absenteeism and eventual dropout. Without targeted interventions, these patterns contribute to educational discontinuity and heightened vulnerability to exclusion from the formal education system.
- **Emotional Repercussions:** Violence in schools deeply harms students' psychological well-being, often leading to low self-esteem, anxiety, fear, sadness, and even depression (Al-Qarala, 2015). These emotional disturbances arise from a lack of psychological stability and security, which undermines students' ability to function both academically and socially. Exposure to violence fosters persistent fear and insecurity, eroding self-confidence and increasing vulnerability to emotional distress.

This instability disrupts concentration, peer and teacher relationships, and overall engagement in school life. As negative emotional states intensify, they impede both learning and social interaction, potentially triggering a cycle of academic disengagement and emotional maladjustment. Addressing school violence, therefore, requires confronting its emotional toll



to restore psychological resilience and promote a healthy, supportive educational environment.

2-5 Sociological Theories Explaining Violence Among Students:

A. Structural Functionalism:

Structural functionalism views society as a system of interdependent parts that maintain balance and cohesion. When one part breaks down—such as weakened norms or fragmented social ties—the whole system is disrupted. From this lens, student violence reflects systemic disintegration, where the erosion of shared values and norms leads to social disorganization and normative uncertainty (Qasim & Habib, 2021). Without clear behavioral guidelines or stable social roles, students may turn to violence to cope with a lack of belonging and identity. As schools, functioning as social subsystems, lose their integrative capacity, their ability to maintain cohesion weakens. Addressing such violence requires reinforcing students' social bonds, promoting moral and ethical values, and restoring shared norms to support positive behavior within and beyond school.

B. Social Control Theory:

Social control theory provides a valuable lens for understanding student violence, emphasizing that social order relies on strong group norms that discourage deviance. Families and peer groups serve as key informal regulators, but when these controls weaken or fail, students may lack the behavioral guidance needed to avoid violence (Jadou, 2005). In this view, violence emerges when regulatory structures within families, peer circles, or schools are ineffective or absent. If formal mechanisms—like school rules and disciplinary systems—do not adequately compensate for these gaps, the risk of violent behavior increases.

The theory underscores the cascading impact of insufficient socialization: when primary groups do not instill norms promoting non-violence and cohesion, students lose essential safeguards against deviant conduct. To prevent this, both informal controls at the family and community level and formal institutional measures must work in tandem. Addressing student violence therefore requires reinforcing value-based socialization in primary groups while ensuring schools maintain clear, effective regulatory systems to preserve order and promote prosocial behavior.

C. Symbolic Interactionism:

Symbolic interactionism offers a nuanced lens for interpreting violent behavior, focusing on the micro-level interactions that shape individual actions. This theory posits that violence is not an innate trait but rather a learned behavior, acquired through socialization processes within primary institutions such as the family and school. It emphasizes that individuals internalize the meanings and symbols associated with their environment, shaping their understanding of acceptable and normative behavior (Moubarka & Kourachi, 2018, p. 845).

From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, student aggression is not innate but learned through social interactions and symbolic meanings. When students are raised in environments where violence is subtly legitimized—whether by family, peers, or institutional authority—they internalize it as a functional response to gain status, resolve conflict, or assert control. Schools play a critical role in this process: neglect, exclusion, or punitive discipline can signal devaluation, prompting students to adopt violence as a means of self-assertion. Over time, such experiences shape their self-concept and embed violence within their cognitive-emotional framework. Thus, violence becomes a socially constructed behavior, rooted in the meanings students derive from their surroundings. Addressing its causes requires unpacking the symbolic messages conveyed across social and institutional contexts.

3. School-Based Approaches for Addressing Violence Among Secondary School Students

Addressing violence among secondary school students necessitates the adoption of comprehensive and well-designed approaches by school stakeholders. These approaches fall into two primary categories: preventive measures, which aim to create a supportive and proactive environment to reduce the likelihood of violence, and remedial interventions, which focus on managing and resolving incidents of violent behavior. The approaches are summarized as follows:

3.1 Preventive Approaches:

Schools play a crucial role in safeguarding students from potential psychological and social challenges by cultivating an environment conducive to their psychological health. This entails creating a positive social climate marked by cooperation, mutual respect, and clarity, ensuring no student faces discrimination. Schools actively engage in fostering robust social and educational activities, guiding students to utilize their leisure constructively and enhancing the ties between students' families and the educational environment.

Preventive approaches are essential for fostering a safe and stable school climate that discourages violence and supports positive behavior. The following measures, applicable across various school settings—including classrooms, break times, and extracurricular activities—help create a supportive educational environment:

- Ensure that students and families are clearly informed about school rules and consequences for violations through regular communication such as class discussions, announcements, newsletters, and parent meetings.
- Teachers should consistently model ethical behavior and positive values to influence students' conduct.
- Educators must identify students' emotional, social, and behavioral difficulties, particularly those related to developmental stages, and coordinate with counselors to implement timely support and interventions.
- Promote respect for diverse opinions to reduce conflict and cultivate a school culture based on empathy and mutual understanding.
- Treat all students fairly and equitably, while recognizing individual differences to strengthen belonging and promote positive peer relationships.
- Offer a range of extracurricular activities to direct students' energy into constructive and enriching experiences.
- Reinforce positive behavior by recognizing prosocial actions and consistently discouraging violent conduct.
- Encourage student participation in group projects and community service to foster teamwork, social responsibility, and interpersonal skills, while reducing isolation (Jarrah & Ali, 2016, pp. 58-59).
- Establish safe spaces where students can share their feelings and opinions without fear of judgment, helping prevent emotional build-up that may lead to violence.
- Avoid harsh disciplinary methods such as public shaming, which can cause psychological harm and reinforce aggression. Instead, apply constructive, supportive interventions that consider individual contexts (Al-Rifai, 2014, pp. 90-91).
- Implement awareness campaigns and educational programs on the consequences of violence to foster a school culture rooted in empathy and non-violence.
- Ensure that schools are equipped with functional libraries, sports facilities, and recreational areas to provide students with positive outlets for energy and stress relief (Salam, 2012, pp. 118-121).
- Facilitate regular seminars with parents, law enforcement, religious figures, and community leaders to promote shared responsibility in addressing school violence and offer practical conflict-resolution guidance.



- Advise students on building healthy peer relationships while raising awareness about the potential risks of negative social influences (**Attia, 2017, p. 86**).

3.2 Remedial Approaches:

The management of student violence in secondary schools extends beyond preventive measures, often requiring the implementation of remedial approaches. These approaches involve specific actions, interventions, and procedures aimed at addressing violent behaviors and mitigating their impact. School stakeholders play a crucial role in designing and executing these targeted approaches to effectively combat the issue. Below are several remedial approaches that can contribute to resolving and reducing instances of student violence:

- Involving students with violent tendencies in physically demanding sports, such as boxing, judo, or karate, offers a constructive outlet for their aggression. These activities help channel negative energy in a structured, educational, and disciplined manner.
- Strengthening the role of parent councils and fostering their active engagement with schools creates a vital link between families and the educational environment. This collaboration enhances early identification of violent behaviors, enabling schools and families to work together to address and resolve underlying issues.
- Applying school policies impartially and without favoritism underscores the principles of justice and accountability.
- Recognizing and rewarding students who demonstrate positive behavioral changes—whether through material incentives or moral encouragement—serves as a powerful motivator. (**Salam, 2012, pp. 118-120**)
- Addressing violent students directly and discussing the consequences of their actions fosters self-awareness and accountability. Clearly articulating the risks associated with violence and issuing firm warnings against recurrence can encourage reflection and behavioral change.
- When necessary, schools should impose appropriate and proportionate consequences for violent acts. Providing clear explanations for these disciplinary actions ensures that students understand the rationale behind them, helping to prevent future infractions.
- Students exhibiting persistent violent behaviors should be referred to school counselors for tailored intervention programs. (**Jarrah & Ali, 2016, pp. 58-59**)
- Understanding the personal and environmental factors driving violent behaviors is crucial. Determining whether these behaviors stem from individual challenges, external influences, or a combination of both enables schools to address the issue comprehensively and effectively.
- Encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions—such as repairing damaged property or apologizing for harm caused—fosters accountability. This approach reinforces the idea that actions have consequences, reducing the likelihood of future incidents.
- Educating students about the importance of preserving school facilities and resources helps foster a sense of collective responsibility. (**Al-Rifai, 2014, pp. 90-91**)
- Open communication with parents is essential for addressing violent behaviors effectively. School administrators should inform parents about their children's actions and encourage their involvement in corrective measures. This collaborative approach strengthens the impact of interventions and ensures consistent reinforcement at home (**Attia, 2017, p. 86**)



Conclusion:

In summation, it becomes evident that the efficacy of approaches aimed at curbing student violence in secondary education hinges on a balanced integration of preventive and therapeutic approaches. The educational milieu is instrumental in reinforcing pedagogical values and fostering constructive interactions. This enhancement is achieved by engaging families and the broader community in concerted efforts to address the issue. Additionally, the deployment of comprehensive regulatory frameworks contributes significantly to reducing violent behaviors, thereby cultivating a conducive and supportive educational climate.

Recommendations

Drawing from the insights discussed in this article, the following recommendations are articulated:

- It is imperative to consistently apply a spectrum of both preventive and therapeutic approaches to all students exhibiting violent behaviors, without exception or negligence.
- Schools should vigorously encourage students to participate in a wide array of extracurricular activities, encompassing sports, cultural, scientific, and artistic pursuits. These activities serve not only as preventive measures but also as therapeutic interventions that mitigate the phenomenon of violence among students.

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