VIOLENCE IN PORTUGUESE SCHOOLS
NATIONAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

The present article presents the situation of violence in schools in Portugal. It aims to provide a revision of the literature with regards to both official statistics and research studies conducted in the areas of violence, such as delinquency, aggression, bullying, and indiscipline in the educational system. It reports the major conclusions from Portuguese experts in the field of school violence and implications for community-based prevention programs to be developed in this regard. Finally, the paper points toward future directions for further studies in order to deepen our knowledge and ability to prevent violence in schools.

KEYWORDS

Violence, schools, Portugal, prevention strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The present article presents the situation of violence in schools in Portugal. A Group of Experts[1] – from academia and professional fields - was created to assist and discuss the state of the art in Portugal, focusing specifically on this report. The authors also had the chance to present and review the draft with HEC[2] Research Group of CIS.

Portugal is a relatively small, south-European country with a population of approximately 10.5 million people. According to the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2008), over 1.6 million are aged 14 or under and 600 thousand have ages ranging from 15 to 19.

In Portugal, the Educational System subdivides schooling into the following categories: (1) pre-school education (which involves children aged 3 to 5); (2) basic school education (which comprises elementary school for children aged 6-10 in the 1st to 4th grades, middle school for children in 5th and 6th grades, and junior high for teenagers in the 7th to 9th grades); (3) secondary school education (which involves high school adolescents, mostly aged 15-18, attending 10th to 12th grades); and (4) higher education in universities and colleges.

Both state and private schools exist at all levels of education. Attendance to pre-school is optional, and may take place in settings that are exclusively dedicated to education in pre-school years such as kindergartens, or within schools that also comprise elementary education. Conversely, basic school education is mandatory, comprising 9 years. It is, therefore, universal and free (within the public system). Secondary school education is, on the other hand, also optional. It involves 3 years of schooling and/or training that may be directed at (a) deepening the knowledge base in order for the student to apply for higher education (university), or at (b) improving technical, professional and/or artistic skills in order for the student to begin an active work life. Parallel to this regular school system, there are Youth Education Centres, from Ministry of Justice, where adolescents (aged 12 to 16 years old) who committed a crime may complete their education.

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According to the report produced by the Office of Education Statistics and Planning of the Ministry of Education (GEPE, 2008), in the academic year of 2006/2007, nearly 1.8 million children and adolescents were enrolled in public (82%) or private schools (18%), of the pre-school (15%), basic (65%) or secondary levels (20%). Overall, 49% of these children and adolescents were female; while this percentage appeared to hold true for pre- and basic schooling, females approached 53% among high school students.

In the 2006/2007 academic year, the Education System Network comprised over 6800 pre-schools (1/3 private), over 6800 elementary schools (less than 8% private), over 2500 middle high and junior high schools (20% private), and over 900 secondary schools (1/3 private). This Education System Network involved all 7 geographical regions of Portugal (North, Centre, Lisbon area, Alentejo, Algarve, Azores Islands, and Madeira Islands), and employed approximately 76.000 non-teaching staff and approximately 180.000 teachers that year.

The 1986 Law of the Education System, which stipulated that all children must complete nine years of schooling, gave many children access to school. The number of students in the mandatory education system increased 27.5% between 1991 and 1997, and the dropout rates decreased from 12.5% in 1991 to 2.7% in 2001 (Ministério da Educação, 2001).

While this education accessibility had a very strong equity ideal, some difficulties arouse regarding this increase in student population and current resources. Firstly, an increase in grade retention due to the longer length of compulsory schooling and greater number of children were associated with school failure. Secondly, families and parental educational styles and socioeconomic backgrounds were more diversified. Thirdly, the preparation of physical resources and the training of teachers and other educational professionals were needed in order to deal with a variety of academic and social problems at school.

Although in Portugal, the percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) devoted to education was higher than the European Union average in 1999 and 2000, the educational results achieved were lower (Eurostat, 2003), thus suggesting a low effectiveness of the Portuguese education system.

Public awareness and intolerance of school violence has greatly increased over the last ten years, and today it is on political agenda, especially due to recent public debates after some student-student and student-teacher incidents were broadcasted by the mass media.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

In Portugal, the research on violence in schools has been conducted systematically since the mid-90's, by official authorities and scientific community. However, little consensus exists with regards to the definitions used.

Violence in schools encloses a very broad range of behaviours such as aggression, bullying, intimidation, threatening, offences to integrity, fighting, theft, and vandalism. These actions may occur within or outside schools, and among different dyads (i.e. student-student, student-teacher, teacher-student). Furthermore, school staff, former students and other persons not belonging to school can be involved either as victims or as perpetrators. Weapon carrying and use of drugs and alcohol are also considered risk-behaviours. A deviant life style can be considered when different risk-behaviours are present.

Overall, with regards to violence in school context, quite a lot of studies were found that took indiscipline as a starting point for analysis (e.g., Amado & Freire, 2002), aggression (e.g. Costa & Vale, 1998; Negreiros, 2003), and bullying (e.g. Almeida, Pereira & Valente, 1995; Carvalhosa, Lima & Matos, 2001; Seixas, 2005). The official statistics report delinquent behaviour (Programa Escola Segura, 2006). In the present report, the following four different concepts will be used:

Delinquency: Delinquency is a legal construct for actions against the law. Criminal incidents are bomb threats, theft, possession/use of weapons, vandalism/damage to property, threats or injuries to the physical integrity, possession/consumption of drugs and sexual offences. The official statistics associated to violence in schools relay on safety.

Aggression: The concept involves any form of physical, verbal or psychological behaviour intended to hurt, inflict pain or injury to another person, to himself or to an object. Aggressive behaviours can be direct or indirect, and different functions are considered - reactive/emotional and proactive/instrumental.

Bullying: The definition proposed by Dan Olweus (1993) involves intentionality of behavior, repetition over time and abuse of power between students. The negative actions can be verbal (e.g. name calling), physical (e.g. hitting), and social (e.g. exclusion). In our native language, there is no exact word equivalent to "bullying." The term used is the original word in English, or "*provocação*" (provocation), or "*intimidação*" (intimidation).

Indiscipline: It can be a deviant behaviour regarding an expressed or implied standard, punished in school or in the community. Indiscipline in the school involves the deviance from the rules of work in class, such as making noise, leaving the place without permission, participating out of turn, and also involves the problems of teacher-student relationship, such as disobedience and verbal attacks.

THE SELECTED DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES AND THE FIELDS UNDER STUDY

Studies have been conducted within two major frameworks. First, an approach of violence in school considers it as a criminal behaviour (Criminology and Victimology), aiming toward its evaluation and monitoring at a national level. It is mainly conducted by the Safe School Programme (*Programa Escola Segura).* The Safe School Programme is a joint initiative of the Ministries of Home Affairs and Education, since 1992. Their action covers public and private schools, violence within and outside the physical grounds of the school, from primary school to university, in the main land and the islands. A second approach concerns research on Social Sciences, aiming to understand how and why violent behaviour occurs within and outside schools, and what are the consequences to individuals, groups and society.

Several fields have been considered: Health, Education, Justice and Human Development. The associations between violent behaviour in school and three types of variables have been explored: community/societal variables (e.g., inequality, ethnic and socioeconomic status, school environment), relationship variables (e.g., family and peer support), and individual variables (e.g., age, gender, weapon use, dropout of school, psychological traits).

THE METHODOLOGY

In the process of building this national report, several databases were searched, focusing on data from 1995 to the present. At the end, the following material was analysed: official statistics since 2001, 9 scientific published papers, 12 academic books, 4 book chapters, 5 papers presented in scientific events, 8 reports published and 2 unpublished reports provided by the Group of Experts. From these, only 2 studies used a representative sample of the Portuguese population.

The research studies developed by the scientific community have considered two methodological approaches – quantitative and qualitative. Surveys represent a fundamental component in the methodology of

researching violence in schools and they are essential in making available information about the prevalence, incidence and pattern of violence. Additionally to national surveys (Carvalhosa, 2008; Costa & Vale, 1998), there are a number of studies which are smaller in scale, which have been important in developing the research about violence in schools. Some other issues are important to consider, such as the context of the survey (within a broad survey or specific to the topic), the sampling methods, the type of participants, and the way that definitions were operationalised.

Self-reporting questionnaires filled out by students is the most common type of data collection instrument used, as the Olweus' Bully/Victim Questionnaire. Freire, Simão and Ferreira (2006) developed a self-report questionnaire to address aggressive behaviours among peers. In addition, nomination by peers is frequently used (e.g. Seixas, 2005).

There are only a few longitudinal studies (e.g., Formosinho, Taborda & Fonseca, 2008; Pereira, 2008), observations with video recordings (e.g., Marques & Neto, 2008), case studies (e.g., Freire & Amado, 2008), semi-structured interviews (e.g., Sebastião, Alves & Campos, 2003) and focus groups (Carvalhosa, 2007).

There are two main official statistics reports, collected systematically, that are undertaken with the purpose of promoting safety in schools. The sources of information available, at a national level, are the Safe School Programme and The Observatory for Safety in School *(Observatório de Segurança na Escola)*. The data collected by the Safe School Programme is based on the complaints to or the reports by the program staff. They use a questionnaire that must be filled out by the program staff.

In summary, the methodologies used are largely those of the social sciences, in particular psychology, education science and sociology. That agrees with the notion that violence in schools relates as much to individuals and interpersonal relationships, as to contexts, and that school is shaped by social, political and economic conditions.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

DELINQUENCY

Regarding delinquency**,** the public reports of the Safe School Programme are available from 2001 until 2006. These data report the actions against goods (theft, vandalism, fire) and against people (body and sexual injury, harassment, violation, threats, trafficking/drug consumption, bomb threats,

weapons carrying, traffic accidents, other actions), and are presented in the Graph 1. It is important to note that the number of schools involved in the Programme may differ across years. Therefore, a trend interpretation should be cautious.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
—◆— Goods	325	528	452	317	211	288
—■— People	76	221	107	109	79	178
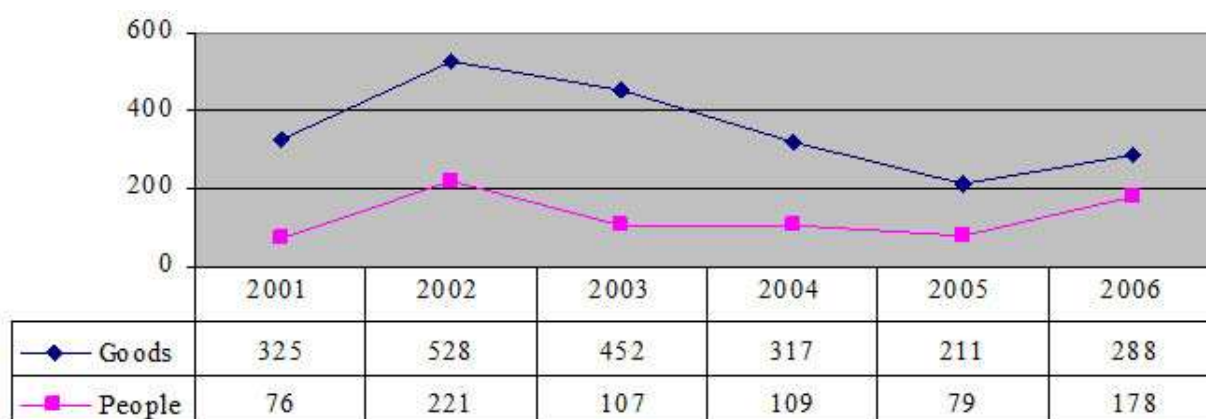
Graph 1 – Absolute frequencies of actions against goods and people

(source: Programa Escola Segura, 2006)

Another large scale study was conducted by the Portuguese Association for the Defence of the Consumers (DECO, 2006). Their goal was to identify and assess security problems and crime in schools, through the perception of students and teachers. It was completed in 2006, with a sample of 36.902 students from 7th to 12th grade, and 9.233 teachers, among 204 Portuguese schools (public, private, professional and artistic). The results showed that 37% of the students and 18% of the teachers had been victims of violence or physical or psychological crimes, within or near the school. As a consequence, 8% of students and teachers said that this had affected their performance in school. Injuries caused by violent situations (confrontations, assaults, etc.) led to absenteeism in 1% of the students. A quarter of the students reported they did not know of the Safe School Programme, and more than one quarter of the teachers did not know whether their school was covered by that Programme or not. Overall, teachers believed that the effectiveness of the Safe School Programme was "average". In addition, DECO argued that there is a direct relationship between security and facilities, such as infrastructures, personnel and organization.

In 2007, the APAV (Portuguese Association for Victim Support) recorded 39 complaints of victimization in schools, which corresponded to 72 crimes, namely: 47 crimes against people and humanity, 17 crimes of domestic violence (cases that occur specifically in the school), 5 crimes against property and 3 other crimes (Sampaio, 2008). In the northern region of Portugal, a study with students from 7th to 11th grade revealed that 4% had stolen, 14%

had physically harassed someone, and 7% had destroyed or damaged things on purpose (Negreiros, 2003).

AGGRESSION

In the 1995/96 academic year, Costa and Vale (1998) developed a national survey concerning aggression with a representative sample of students from 8th and 11th grade. Regarding physical aggression, 64% had been pushed, 29% had been hit, and 7% had been threatened with a weapon. This type of aggression was reported most frequently by students from the Centre (coast) region and Lisbon area (only when threatened with a weapon). With regards to verbal aggression, 68% had been insulted and 55% threatened with words, and it was most frequently reported by Centre (coast) students. Concerning sexual aggression, 42% had been touched against their will and 20% had been a target of exhibitionism. Sexual aggression was most frequently reported in the countryside of North and in the Centre region (touching) and Centre coast (exhibitionism). For all forms of aggression, 8th grade students were more victimized than 11th grade students, boys were more victimized than girls (except for sexual aggression, in which an opposite difference was found).

As outlined, verbal aggression was the most frequent type of aggressive behaviour, younger students and boys were more frequently the victims. Furthermore, Martins (2005) revealed that spreading rumours was the behaviour most reported by victims, aggressors and bystanders, in the southeast of Portugal.

According to the international report from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) in the 2001/02 and 2005/06 surveys (Currie et al., 2004, 2008), the prevalence of physical fighting, at least three times in the last 12 months, is presented in Table I and Graph 2.

Physical fight	11 years		13 years		15 years	
	2002 (n=1174)	2006 (n=1201)	2002 (n=964)	2006 (n=1335)	2002 (n=802)	2006 (n=1383)
Girls	7%	4%	6%	4%	1%	4%
Boys	30%	24%	22%	18%	7%	11%
Total	37%	28%	28%	22%	8%	15%
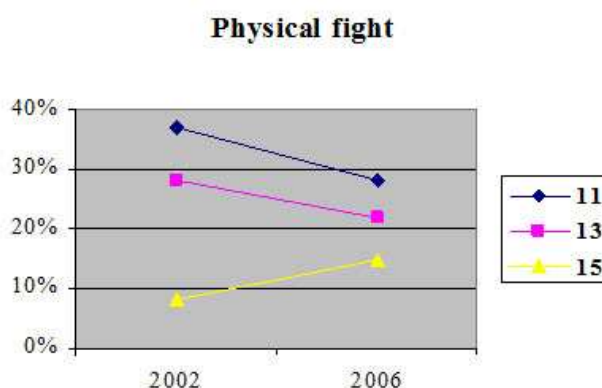
Physical fight

Table I & Graph 2 – Prevalence of physical fighting

(source: HBSC 2001/02 and 2005/06)

As reported, the prevalence of physical fighting was higher among younger students, and boys were more involved than girls. Still, rates from 2006 seemed lower than previously reported in 2002, with an exception for older students (15 years old). Children involved in fighting (play and real) are usually nominated by peers as aggressive victims, they typically have less or no friends in their class, and their teachers frequently see them in more negative ways and do not have high expectations about their future (Marques & Neto, 2008).

The different profiles of aggressive and non-aggressive rejected students were explored (Musitu, Veiga, Herrero, & Lila, in press), in a sample of 1069 adolescents (12 to 16 years old). The results showed that aggressive and rejected students differed (they have poorer levels of personal, family, social, and school functioning) from the control group and other non-aggressive-rejected students. Additionally, a moderate level of adjustment was found among the nonaggressive/rejected students, when comparing with the control group.

During one academic year, an intervention program using dance was implemented with 10 problematic youth from a school in Lisbon (Batalha & Soares, 2008). The referral was made by their teachers, parents and school professionals, and the comparison pre-post showed improvement of non

aggressive behaviours. Another program was developed by Raimundo, Pinto and Lima (2008). They implemented and evaluated a social and emotional learning program, in 4 schools with students from 4th grade. The authors concluded that the program was effective.

BULLYING

In the north of Portugal, the prevalence of bullying in Braga and Guimarães district public schools was assessed (Almeida, 1999; Almeida, Pereira & Valente, 1995; Pereira, Almeida, Valente & Mendonça, 1996). Students from 1st to 6th grade (N=6197) reported that, in the last term, 22% had been bullied three or more times. Concerning the grade of the students, the authors found that 20% (years 1-4) and 15% (years 5-6) had bullied others three or more times. The most frequent type of bullying was physical (e.g. hitting) in primary schools, and verbal (e.g. calling names) in 5th to 6th grade. Boys were more involved than girls and the frequency of bullying decreased with age. Bullying had taken place mainly in playgrounds (78%). This study was replicated including schools from Lisbon area (Pereira, Mendonça, Neto, Valente & Smith, 2004). Students (5th and 6th grade) reported that 20% had been bullied and 16% had bullied others, three or more times in the last term. No differences were found in the prevalence between Lisbon and Braga schools. Regarding the type of bullying, the most common was verbal and occurred mainly in playgrounds.

According to the HBSC data (Currie et al., 2004, 2008), the prevalence of bullying (being bullied and bullying others), at least twice in the past couple of months, is presented in Tables II and III and in Graphs 3 and 4, respectively.

| Being bullied	11 years		13 years		15 years	
	2002 (n=1174)	2006 (n=1201)	2002 (n=964)	2006 (n=1335)	2002 (n=802)	2006 (n=1383)
Girls	15%	15%	16%	13%	9%	10%
Boys	31%	17%	27%	19%	10%	13%
Total	46%	32%	43%	32%	19%	23%
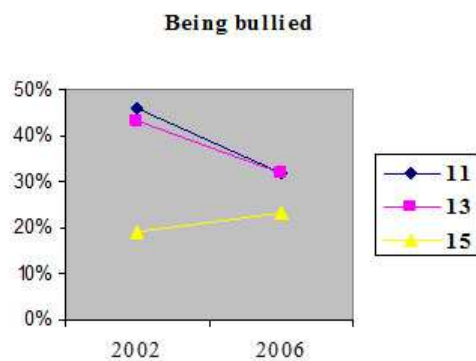
Being bullied

Table II & Graph 3- Prevalence of being bullied

(source: HBSC 2001/02 and 2005/06)

The prevalence of being bullied, as shown, decreased with age, and boys were more involved than girls.

Bullied others	11 years		13 years		15 years	
	2002 (n=1174)	2006 (n=1201)	2002 (n=964)	2006 (n=1335)	2002 (n=802)	2006 (n=1383)
Girls	8%	8%	8%	9%	6%	8%
Boys	15%	14%	17%	15%	11%	13%
Total	23%	22%	25%	24%	17%	21%
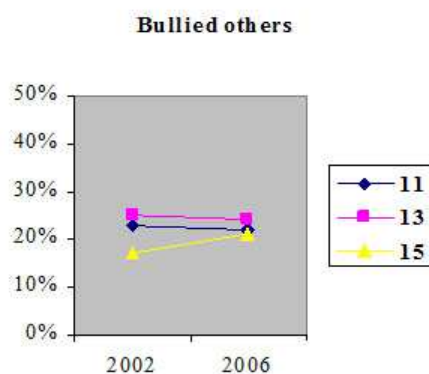
Bullied others

Table III & Graph 4- Prevalence of bullied others

(source: HBSC 2001/02 and 2005/06)

As shown, the prevalence of bullying others increased from 11 to 13 years old and then decreased. Boys were also more involved than girls. On the basis of the data available, one can estimate that around 1 in 5 students in basic schools in Portugal were involved in bullying situations. However, it is always important to take into account the gap between experienced, recorded and reported as occurring phenomena.

The HBSC data set was re-analyzed and the sample was divided into four different sub-groups – bullies, victims, bully/victims and those non-involved in bullying situations. Carvalhosa (2005) described the trend of bullying behaviours and variations across gender and age in Portuguese schools. The author found that the frequency of being a victim and bullying others, once a week or more, had increased since 1998 to 2002. In another study (Carvalhosa, 2008), it was found that 13% of students were victims, 5% were bullies, and 6% were bully/victims. Subjective health complaints, health perceptions, worst life satisfaction, more injuries, weapon-carrying, and fighting were associated with all groups involved in bullying, compared to those not involved. The verbal bullying was the most frequent type of bullying. Bullies were often characterized as distant from the family and the school, with more consumption of substances as alcohol and drugs, and more physical and psychological complaints and depression. Victims frequently showed distance from the school, problems in relationships with peers, physical and psychological symptoms and depression. Bully-victims usually reported distance from the family and the school, problems in relationships with peers, and physical and psychological symptoms and depression (Carvalhosa, Lima & Matos 2001). Carvalhosa, Samdal and Hetland (Carvalhosa, 2008) built a model for the relationship between bullying and perceived social support, in nationally representative samples of Austrian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, and Portuguese students. The results showed that, for Portugal, compared with those not involved in bullying, within school, victims and bully/victims reported lower levels of support from their classmates, and bullies and bully/victims reported lower levels of support from their teachers. Outside school, victims reported lower levels of support from friends, and bullies reported lower levels of support from family, than did the non-involved group. Involvement in bullying correlated with other forms of anti-social behaviour (Formosinho, Taborda & Fonseca, 2008).

In a comparison between measures used, self-report questionnaire vs. peer nomination, in a sample of 680 students (aged 12 to 17 years old), Seixas (2005) found that 12% of youth reported they had been bullied (once in the last term) vs.15% nominated by peers, 30% reported they had been bullied vs.15%, and 24% reported they had been bully-victims vs. 6%. The author concluded that self-report measures seemed better able to identify victimized

students and peer nomination measures seemed better able to identify aggressive students.

In a recent study, Almeida, Correia, Esteves, Gomes, Garcia and Marinho (2008) explored cyberbullying. Using the phone, 6% of girls and 3% of boys reported being involved as victims and 3% and 5%, respectively, as bullies. Via the internet, 6% of girls and 4% of boys reported being involved as victims and 2% and 4%, respectively, as bullies.

Concerning the association between macro-level indicators and bullying behaviours, a U-shaped curve relating GDP and the number of bullies or victims was found for all age groups in a study developed by Carvalhosa, Samdal and Hetland (Carvalhosa, 2008). Countries with low and high GDP showed a higher prevalence of bullying behaviour reported by both victims and bullies, whereas countries with a middle range of GDP showed a lower prevalence of bullying behaviour. These results suggest that there is a relationship between bullying and the economic development of countries.

INDISCIPLINE

With regards to indiscipline behaviors, the results have shown a higher self-concept among adolescent students who are less undisciplined, whose socio-economic level (SEL) is medium-high and who live on the coast (Veiga, 1995). This study also found that indiscipline was less frequent in the female, rural and medium-high SEL groups. In 2000, Veiga developed a study on indiscipline and violence as a function of family variables, where he argues that prevention programs focused in indiscipline and violence should "focus on strengthening the sources of support, particularly those supplied by parents and brothers and sisters, but also by teachers".

In a comparison between students' and teachers' perceptions about indiscipline (Caeiro & Delgado, 2005), the first group revealed that harming the teacher is considered the most serious attitude that a student can have at school. Both students and teachers identified causes of indiscipline in the family context, in the student-teacher and student-peers relationship, and also identified individual factors.

In 2001, Amado developed an ethnographic and longitudinal study in a school with students from 7th grade in year 1, 8th grade in year 2 and 8th and 9th grade in year 3. He explored the factors associated with indiscipline such as teacher', student' and institution' responsibility and also social and familiar variables. These results also suggest the multidimensional nature of indiscipline in school.

OTHERS DOMAINS OF VIOLENCE BEHAVIOR

It was also deemed important to refer some official statistics of the Child Protection System, given its relation to schools as a referring party and to child behaviour, including at school. According to the National Report of the Child Protection System (CNPCJR, 2006), concerning 2006, there was a total of approximately 25.000 new reported cases, involving maltreatment and/or neglect. More male children and adolescents were referred to the child protective system (53%), with 6-10 years old (25%), 13-14 years old (16%) and 15-17 years old (15%) being the most represented age groups. Dropout and truancy were present as a referral reason for all age groups. Nonetheless, these problems appeared to have a greater importance for teenagers aged 13 and older. Still, 3% of children aged 6 to 10 years and 3% of children aged 11-12 did not attend school systematically, whereas 4% and 13% of teenagers 13-14 and 15 and older, respectively, did not attend school at all. The number of new cases represented an increase of 60% from 2005, and represents a steady increasing trend every year in the last decade. Most of the new cases in 2006 were referred by schools, comprising over 21% of all referring parties (after police forces, health centres, parents and the legal/justice system).

Within a systemic framework, a study was conducted in 2005 aiming to describe absenteeism and school dropout, together with school outcome and school violence (Sales, Quintas, Machado & Faísca, 2006). A convenience sample of 557 severe absentees was identified by their teachers (N=272) in 78 schools, from 12 districts, mainly in rural interior regions of the country and Madeira island. Absenteeism was positively and significantly correlated with negative outcomes, especially during the first six grades. A discrepancy between the age of the student and the class was found to lead to lack of adaptation and indiscipline within the class, thus suggesting the inclusion of this measure of age-grade discrepancy in school violence or indiscipline studies (Sales, 2007). The role of the family seemed to be crucial: reduction of the absenteeism happened significantly more when families had more contact with school. When family-school contact did not exist or was obstructed, network intervention in collaboration with other professionals (police, social services, youth justice services) was the most effective approach.

Using focus groups with students from 9th to 12th grade in 3 public schools and one Education Centre, Carvalhosa (2007) found that, according to participants, "violence generates violence" and is caused mainly by social inequalities, by feelings such as fear, and by behaviours such as a response to violence. A majority said that, in order to prevent violence, good education at home is crucial, as well as a good climate at school, teacher support, and change in peer attitudes towards violence (zero tolerance). According to them, more training is needed, as well as more supervision at recess. They also

referred the need for places to talk with friends and teachers, in confidence, and also more awareness of the importance of reporting the incidents. Consequently and after collecting some narratives, a theatre-forum play (enabling protagonists and audience to discuss what they have seen and help one another to create the solution to the story) was built based on their stories, in a partnership between academia and *Aparece* (Appears) – Centre for Adolescents Health and USINA - Association of Social Intervention. The play was presented in a Conference for Young People and is being disseminated in some Portuguese schools.

In summary, violence in schools has been associated with (1) individual factors: gender, age, school achievement, age-grade discrepancy, abuse of alcohol and drugs, subjective health complaints, life satisfaction, expectations about future, injuries, and weapon use; (2) familiar factors: familiar support and functioning; (3) peer factors: number of friends, support from peers within and outside school, rejection, friend's attitudes toward violence; (4) school factors: teacher support and perceptions, school functioning; and (5) social/political factors – country region, socioeconomic status, GDP.

ANY POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS ON THE FIELD (RANGING FROM PUBLIC POLICY TO LOCAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES)

The main findings reported provide support to the ecological model, wherein violence in schools was associated with macro-level factors, micro-level factors as by individual-level factors. Violence in schools is, therefore, a serious problem, not only for those directly involved, but also for the total community because of its impact on the ecology of human development. It is, thus, important to promote good relationships within and between families, peers, schools and communities, for extended periods of time.

Within a systemic approach, the impact on the field ranges from national policies to local practices, concerning different prevention strategies: universal (address the entire population), selective (target subsets of the total population that are deemed to be at risk) and indicated (high-risk groups or individuals who are showing early danger signs).

- Universal Prevention Strategies: *Equipa de Missão para a Segurança Escolar* (Mission Team for School Security); *Estatuto do Aluno do Ensino Não Superior* (Student's Rules for non-High Education); Curriculum module "*Cidadania e Segurança*" (Citizenship and Security) mandatory in 5th grade; the selection of school violence as a priority for research

by the Attorney General's Office, under the new Criminal Law Policy; the violence in schools' theme has been included in programs of continuing education for teachers; the use of magnetic card to identify students and as a substitute of money inside school; the design of the recreational areas within schools; the creation of the line SOS teacher; the Visionary project[3]; *Aparece* and USINA project; *GerAcções[4]* project – Generate Actions Across Generations.

- Selective Prevention Strategies: Safe School Programme; APAV[5] projects; School mediation, carried out by the Offices of Student Support and Family from *Instituto de Apoio à Criança* (Institute for the Child Support).

- Indicated Prevention Strategies: *Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária* (Educational Priority Areas of Intervention); *Comissão de Protecção de Crianças e Jovens em Risco* (Comission for the Protection of Children and Youth at Risk); *Programa Escolhas* (Program Choices); PETI (Program for Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour Exploitation); Observatory for Bullying to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered children and youth by Rede Ex Aequo and the Ministry of Education in 2006.

When planning prevention policies and programs, it is important to consider the stage of development of a given country, the relationships with peers, families and communities, and the life style of people involved.

THE DIMENSIONS WHICH REMAIN TO BE EXPLORED OR REQUIRE FURTHER STUDY

There are a number of areas for improvement - Theory, Methodology and Intervention.

Concerning theory background, there is a clear lack in the literature. Whereas descriptive research exists, as well as some intervention studies, an integration and explanation of violence in schools within theories of human behaviour is still poor. It is our belief that the theoretical framing of the

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[3]. The project aims the creation of an internet portal for collect and structure information and for networking. Amado and Freire collaborated in Visionary project (Jäger, Bradley & Rasmussen, 2003).

[4] Community intervention project in Santa Maria de Belém, Lisbon, that aims preventing violence through community engagement (Carvalhosa, Domingos & Sequeira, 2008).

[5] APAV developed several projects associated with school violence, e.g. IUNO and MUSAS.

research on violence in schools will only result in strengthening our understanding and intervention capabilities in this area. A number of theories seem to be readily available and adjusted to this purpose. First, we highlight the importance of the work from Kurt Lewin, according to whom Behaviour is a function (dependence between) of the Person and his or her Environment: $B = f(P, E)$. Second, the social facilitation theory (Zajonc, 1965) is also important, according to which the presence of others can have a positive effect in the individual achievement, and it is related to the audience effect, in which the passive bystanders affect the performance of an individual. Third, we stress the effect of the bystanders (Latane & Darley, 1970), that is related to two theories: the diffusion of responsibility, in which the more bystanders the less individual responsibility, and the pluralistic ignorance, according to which if no one else acts, the individuals do not see the situation as one requiring action. Finally, the systemic and ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1997) is an area of investigation that needs to be extended, especially regarding the association with meso- and exo-level factors.

Regarding methodology, violence has been viewed from a developmental ecological systems perspective based upon Bronfenbrenner's research. This can be achieved by using Participatory Action Research (PAR), that is, research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together the current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. The use of empirically robust instruments (e.g., Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire) is also recommended. In addition, it would be essential to develop a meta-analysis to synthesise all the studies.

Since school is permeable to the environment, especially to the economic, family and social grounds of students, disturbances within school, such as poor outcome, absenteeism, dropout, or violence, are often associated with and a mirror of psycho-sociological problems. It is, therefore, recommended that research designs of violence studies also include other variables of school-related disturbances, and also contextual variables.

When facing violence and other disturbances associated with psychosocial problems, Portuguese schools often engage in multiagency networks, such as the Child Protection System and the Police. It is recommended to conduct research aiming to describe how this collaborative intervention is conducted and how it is systematically evaluated. In particular, it would be important to know the professionals' point of view and their suggestions for an effective integration of processes.

Even though most violence occurs within schools, its prevention and intervention should focus on the entire community. Everyone has an important role to play: children and young people, family, schools, and the

community. On the topic of Intervention, a comprehensive-community approach (across settings, involving peers, family, school, and community) should be adopted. An assumption of one-size-fits-all in prevention programs can delay their effectiveness and the duration of intervention should be extended. For example, the use of a theatre-forum can be used to empower children and youth, and the community. Interventions should focus on the transfer of responsibility for prevention to the involved groups and should emphasise the evaluation methodology. One goal that needs more investment is the development of guidelines to train adults, such as teachers and other professionals, parents and community leaders.

Several local and national level initiatives are taking place in Portugal for overcoming violence in schools, which are conducted by highly experienced and trained professionals (teachers, and professional network peers). Following a Positive Psychology framework (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), we suggest conducting research in order to learn from positive experiences and to integrate this knowledge in future actions, for instance, to explore the factors associated with discipline, low violent-schools in disturbed communities or social exclusion contexts

Ensuring the ecological validity and potential sustainability of the violence prevention programs seems extremely important. The concept of ecological validity refers most narrowly to the degree to which the definition of a unit of analysis reflects the way that unit is defined in real life by people or natural features. A broader, more fundamental use of ecological validity is the idea that research should attend fully and carefully to the many contexts of phenomena, including multiple levels of analysis, various environmental domains (socio-cultural, physical, economic, political), and the dynamic context of capturing change over time. Regarding the potential sustainability, mobilization of all the stakeholders groups is essential for successful implementation and sustainability of the project. Involvement is critical for implementation and sustainability of a violence prevention project.

Finally, research in Portugal should also focus on social inequalities, minority groups (such as immigrant children and adolescents; and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and adolescents), cyberbullying, negotiation and conflict mediation, quality of human resources, and the dissemination of Good Practices[6].

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[6] Aiming at developing consistent and high standards, the Society for Prevention Research, in 2004, appointed a task force to establish criteria for prevention programs and policies that can be considered efficacious, effective, or ready for dissemination.

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