

## **(IJ-04) How to Manage School Violence**

*Junqiao Xiao*

EdD, JD, DBA, Esq.

Legal Counsel, Midland Credit Management, Encore Capital Group

Part-time Faculty, School of Business and Economics, National University

Adjunct Professor, California Miramar University

Adjunct Professor, Alliant International University

### **ABSTRACT**

School violence is a serious management topic in contemporary educational systems globally, so this paper will briefly discuss some educational management programs to reduce school violence, which include (1) Peer-Led Program: The Peaceful Schools Project, (2) Psychosocial and Psycho-educational Program: The Social Emotional Learning and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program, and (3) Special Programs: The Youth Relationships Project and the Expect Respect Project. However, due to the limitation of the literature review and research in the market, this paper has some limitations in research. The goal of this paper is to lead leaders to rethink, speculate, manage, practice, and reduce school violence.

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Henry (2009), to examine school violence, one needs to rethink violence in contemporary society. The analysis of school violence can be conducted on physical violence causing pain or death; material loss or damage; psychological fear or depression; a reduction in social status; and moral or ethical worries. The educational system has a responsibility to reduce violence at schools. Effective, innovative programs must be instituted in order to control or manage school violence.

Greene (2005) described that school violence contains violent and aggressive behaviors during school-based activities which impacted community, district, and nationwide levels. On a larger scale, a rapid increase in evaluation research described that a wide range of actual violence was in school. Fortunately, innovative programs on reducing school violence developed programs to handle those problems, such as Peer-Led Programs, Psychosocial and Psycho-educational Programs, and Special Programs.

Educational leaders, educators, students, and parents have become aware of violence at school currently (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). Exploring and discussing the effectiveness of mentioned different types of innovative programs are valuable in decreasing school violence from K-12 to higher education. The first innovative program is the Peer-Led Program: the Peaceful Schools Project, which provides valuable methods derived from research on controlling school violence in a decade. Psychosocial and Psycho-educational Program: the Social Emotional Learning and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program is the second innovative program that introduced appropriate concepts to avoid school violence and was applied in hundreds of schools. The last of the three is the Special Programs: The Youth Relationships Project and the Expect Respect Project, which utilize qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the study results on reducing school violence.

### **PEER-LED PROGRAM: THE PEACEFUL SCHOOLS PROJECT**

Positive youth development programs contain many objectives, which are: to promote societal, emotional, intellectual, behavior, ethical capability, and connection; foster resilience, autonomy, spirituality, self-efficacy, optimistic personality, and confidence; and provide an appreciation for positive performance and chances for involvement (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004).

Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2004) conducted an innovative program for reducing elementary school violence in the United States, called the Peaceful Schools Project. This program consisted of four major components of action, which were: (1) a project of constructive environment that encouraged and built thinking and communication in the classroom for all students and educators;

(2) a plan of classroom administration that paid attention to modify and understand problems rather than punishing students' behavior; (3) a program of physical education that was considered with self-defense and self-protect skills from the martial arts because basic martial arts skills help students protect themselves and others; and (4) motivated schools to provide mentorship for students, which provided additional restraint and character building to students to refine their conflict resolution.

According to Twemlow et al. (2004), an effective program was needed and had been presented for several decades. The Peaceful Schools Project began in three Midwestern city elementary schools. Currently, the program serves thousands of students in several school districts under the Peaceful Schools Project and effectively reduces school violence. The Peaceful Schools Project started with a challenge because it was hard to control violence in elementary schools. Young students appreciated being more responsible to take care of themselves and others, such as unpredicted conflict resolution by peers instead of asking for assistance from parents or educators. Additionally, young students are influenced by intricate psychological identification with educational leaders and educators (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004).

Johnson (2009) mentioned that school violence relates to the school's social environment, educational policies on violence, classroom and school culture, students' academic achievement, and relationships among schoolmates, classmates, and educators. Lowering school violence rate was related to positive relationships between students and educators, students accepting rules as fair and adhering to them, schools focusing on students' comprehension in academic performance, and providing a comforting and peaceful environment. Overall, the Peaceful School Project plays a significant role in anti-violence in school movements, as it emphasizes on the atmosphere of the school and could change the mind of the violent student's unconscious.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY PROGRAM**

Violence disturbs young students aged 10 to 25 in Chicago schools. More than one thousand school-aged youth were shot, and 20% of them were killed in 2010. In the same year, government officers, educational administrators, and public setting leaders joined together to create an innovative Social Emotional Learning and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program to reduce violence at schools.

The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership joined together to create statewide Social Emotional Learning standards to educate all levels of students In 2004. Additionally, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services used Social Emotional Learning martial and strategy to run the One Summer Chicago program to reduce violence by youth. It started in 2011 to serve 2,800 young students. The goal is to continue to coordinate with other programs city-wide to offer over 140,000 openings for students in total (Davis et al., 2011).

In 2010, a new model was proven to improve social-emotional abilities with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy that helps students handle conflict resolution and self-discipline strategies. Students frequently participating in psychosocial and psycho-educational programs have fewer behavioral problems and less depression. The cognitive Behavioral Therapy model was used in the Becoming a Man program at 15 Chicago Public Schools and in Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools from 2009 to 2010. Some strategies of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are helpful for public schools, such as the "Anger Coping" strategy for third to eighth-grade students and the "Think First" strategy for older students because it pays attention to increasing abilities of anger management (Davis et al., 2011).

Violence at school is a problem of contemporary public health worldwide. Farmer, Estell, and Hutchins (2007) described academic, behavioral, and social domains within the school climate that might cause conflict and violence among students. Worldwide strategies for educators exist to

solve students' problems, including providing academic and social assistance, giving positive feedback on students' personal development, and coordinating services to adjust students' multiple needs and problems.

Furthermore, four steps should be considered for reducing school violence, including measuring school violence, recognizing the causes of school violence, discovering plans to decrease danger, and supporting useful strategies in plans (Haegerich & Dahlberg, 2011). In addition, some recommendations for educational administrators to prevent violence at school included school policies to maintain students' behavior, forbidden violence on campus, and contact with parents when the violence happens (Stueve et al., 2006).

Flannery, Wester, and Singer (2004) asserted that school leaders and counselors should consider the influence of violence occurring at schools might impact students' academic performance, behavior, and mental health. School violence was found indifferent to the following factors: in urban or cosmopolitan locations, gender, age groups, ethnic groups, and educational levels. It occurred unpredictably. School programs and policies should address involvements with victims and perpetrators. In addition, staff and educators should pay attention to students who threaten, fight, are aggressive, and are violent to others in the school. The psychological theory supports the speculation that rejecting society may be related to violence (Leary et al, 2003).

Several qualitative and quantitative research studies from K-12 students have shown that the Social Emotional Learning program positively affects students, including improved attitudes toward self, others, and school. It also enhanced behavioral adjustments by increased healthy social interaction and decreased interruptive behavior; effects last at least for six months after learning, and impressive 11-percentile gain in academic performance. (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schelling, 2011)

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS: THE YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT AND THE EXPECT RESPECT PROJECT**

According to Crooks, Wolfe, Hughes, Jaffe, and Chiodo (2008), schools taught students how to use the “three R’s” – reading, writing, and arithmetic skills in the academic arena. However, the Fourth R (for Relationships) grew out in the Youth Relationships Project, which is a dating violence prevention project for young students with a family background of mistreatment and violence. The purpose was to support teenagers in developing confident characteristics in socialization by providing basic information, building skills, and assisting the participants to be involved in community service.

The Youth Relationships Project successfully represents changes in attitudes toward violent behaviors and violent relationships at schools. Fourth “R” pays attention to improving healthy relationships, solving problems and conflicts, and reducing violence (such as dating violence, group violence, harassment, and bullying). The first Youth Relationships Project was implemented in a few schools in Southwestern Ontario. From 2004 to 2005, the program was refined based on the feedback of educators and students. After several years of effort, it was implemented in over 350 schools across Canada in 2008 (Crooks, Wolfe, Hughes, Jaffe, & Chiodo, 2008).

There are several aspects of school-based violence prevention. First, school violence causes psychological and physical harm or damage directly to younger generations. Some useful and applicable innovation programs have the potential to decrease such negative impacts and influences on students. Second, it is tremendously challenging to recover from or alleviate the damage after violence develops a deep-rooted pattern. Third, the educational system must provide a safe climate for students to become knowledgeable (Crooks et al., 2008).

School environment is a significant concern in considering school violence because adult observation decreases as students transfer from elementary to middle school. Therefore, general violence in school is related to not only school problems such as unsatisfied academic achievement, but also a combination of other non-academic factors, including attention by peers or educators,

disability, cultural differences, race, and sexual orientation (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010).

The Expect Respect Project is another innovative violence prevention program sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and was developed by Safe Place, which is a violence prevention school-based counseling service in central Texas. Additionally, the Expect Respect Project was established to teach students, parents, staff, and educational leaders of healthy and respectful behaviors and to avoid violent behaviors. The educational involvement highlighted applicable strategies for replying to unsuitable behaviors (Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, & Robertson, 2003).

The Expect Respect Project was designed to support students who are partaking in school violence. It contains five elements, including curriculum, staff education, parent training, support services, and educational policy improvement. The curriculum focused on educating students to reduce their participation in school violence. Furthermore, educational leaders, educators, and staff were required to attend training to avoid school violence (Meraviglia et al., 2003).

Moreover, school leaders were encouraged to improve educational policies to prevent violence. Parents were invited to participate in some training on handling school violence, and newsletters were sent to the parents each semester. The staff in the school monitored the learning environment, controlled students' behaviors, and reported school violence immediately. Additionally, specialized training was delivered for school counselors, and all counselors received resources and materials for school anti-violence (Meraviglia et al., 2003).

Overall, research illustrated that the Expect Respect Project had been a success, with healthy conflict resolution manners and behaviors raised over the period of the intervention for 144 participants. The program has been proven effective in reducing violent behavior. However, the study confesses that it has yet profoundly reformed the concept and belief of violence as a means of gaining power, for that kind of mindset is tied to male gender norms. Though researchers did not discuss further this failure to alter the mindset, it is possible that gaining power and control is not a necessary motive in the environment of studies. No follow-up data shows that if the result persists after the study concluded (Ball et al, 2012).

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

A successful anti-violence innovative program at school needs to teach students and educators how to create successful programs that reduce school violence. However, educational leaders cannot ignore global political and economic reasons that can cause school violence. Debarbieux (2003) claimed that school violence had become a worldwide concern in the contemporary educational system. This phenomenon caused public attention, and led to many anti-violence educational programs and policies developed in schools. Ttofi and Farrington (2010) discovered that four functional measurements had been adopted in assessing the efficiency of anti-violence programs, which are: (1) experiment randomization, (2) before and after comparisons of the use of innovative violence programs, (3) comparisons with other intervention-control, and (4) different age groups compared in schools.

Pais (2012) stated that education had an exclusive responsibility to educate our younger generations to avoid violence and to negotiate with conflicts. School settings offer safety in the learning environment and promote non-violence. Male students were more prone to taking part in physical violence, and female students more often engaged in verbal harassment of peer perpetrators. Some beneficial recommendations for students to avoid school violence are as follows: endorse innovative programs to address violence at school; provide legislation assistance, ensure students have enough counseling services and resources; increase parents' consciousness and participation of anti-violence innovative programs; encourage responsible behavior and manner; and reinforce worldwide collaboration and evidence-based investigation to end violence against students.

Greene (2005) explained that to avoid violence in a school setting, school officials need to promote effective plans, moral programs, prevention strategies and policies, multi-level evaluations, and realistic school-based guidelines. Additionally, Bilchik (2007) remarked that a well-trained team to improve school safety was necessary. School officials should recognize that school-based anti-violence innovative programs affect students' behavior. Innovative programs should maintain the leadership to scaffold public attention on reducing youth violence.



Educational leaders, staff, parents, and the general public settings require correctly knowing the nature and background of problems, and then they could successfully conquer violence happening in the K-12 American school system. On the other hand, it was hard to estimate the possibility of violence in school settings. Reasonably, a design that briefly summarizes how to avoid violence in the school system accessible to students (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012).

Developing safe schools through purposeful preparation and well-organized structure is significant. This procedure starts with violence prevention plans with the help of school safety team leaders, including educational policymakers, faculty, staff, parents, and students. Educational leaders need to put efforts in recognizing various needs, selecting possibilities, supporting the community, maintaining a peaceful campus, training staff to be observant and replying to students' needs before resulting in unhealthy behaviors, and coordinating successful services. Three fundamental anti-violence components should be considered, they are problem identification and analysis, communication, and prevention strategies evaluation (Furlong, Felix, Sharkey, & Larson, 2005). Programs that have evidence of their effectiveness have been mentioned above, such as Peer-Led Program: the Peaceful Schools Project, Psychosocial and Psycho-educational Program: the Social Emotional Learning and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program, and Special Programs: the Youth Relationships Project and the Expect Respect Project.

## REFERENCES

- Ball, B., Tharp, A. T., Noonan, R. K., Valle, L. A., Hamburger, M. E., & Rosenbluth, B. (2012). Expect respect support groups: preliminary evaluation of a dating violence prevention program for at-risk youth. *Violence against Women, 18*: 746-762.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801212455188>.
- Bilchik, S. (2007). The importance of universal school-based programs in preventing violent and aggressive behavior. *American Journal of Preventive Medication, 33*(2): 101-103.

- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S. & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Development programs positive youth development in the united states: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591: 98-124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260102>.
- Crooks, C.V., Wolfe, D. A., Hughes, R., Jaffe, P. G., & Chiodo, D. (2008). Development, evaluation and national implementation of a school-based program to reduce violence and related risk behaviors: Lessons from the fourth R. *Institute for the Prevention of Crime Review*, 2: 109-135.
- Davis, F., Chou, J., Fernández, A., Patterson, J., White, M., Larkin, C., Smith, L. (2011). *National forum on youth violence prevention: City of Chicago youth violence prevention plan*. Chicago Police Department CompStat.
- Debarbieux, E. (2003). School violence and globalization. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41(6): 582-602.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schelling, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>.
- Farmer, T. W., Farmer, E. M. Z., Estell, D. B., & Hutchins, B. C. (2007). The developmental dynamics of aggression and the prevention of school violence. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 15(4): 197-208.
- Flannery, D. J., Wester, K. L., & Singer, M. I. (2004). Impact of exposure to violence in school on child and adolescent mental health and behavior. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(5), 559–573.

- Greene, M.B. (2005). Reducing violence and aggression in schools. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 6(3): 236-253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838005277406>.
- Haegerich, T. M. & Dahlberg, L. L. (2011). Violence as a public health risk. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 5(5), 392-406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827611409127>.
- Henry, S. (2009). School violence beyond columbine a complex problem in need of an interdisciplinary analysis. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(9): 1246-1265.
- Johnson, S. L. (2009). Improving the school environment to reduce school violence: a review of the literature. *Journal of School Health*, 79(10), 451-465.
- Leary, M. R., Kowalski, R. M., Smith, L. & Phillips, S. (2003). Teasing, rejection, and violence: Case studies of the school shootings. *Aggressive Behavior*, 29: 202–214.
- Meraviglia, M. G., Becker, H., Rosenbluth, B., Sanchez, E. & Robertson, T. (2003). The expect respect project creating a positive elementary school climate. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18(11), 1347-1360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260503257457>
- Furlong, M. J., Felix, E. D., Sharkey, J. D., & Larson, J. (2005). Preventing school violence: A plan for safe and engaging schools. *Student Counseling*, 9: 11-15.
- Pais, M. S. (2012). *Tackling violence in schools: A global perspective bridging the gap between standards and practice*. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children.
- Robers, S., Zhang, J., Truman, J., & Snyder, T. D. (2012). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2011*. The National Center for Education Statistics & The Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- Swearer, S. M., Espelage, D. L., Vaillancourt, T., & Hymel, S. (2010). What can be done about school bullying? Linking research to educational practice. *Educational Researcher*, 39(1): 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357622>.
- Stueve, A., Dash, K., O'Donnell, L., Tehranifar, P., Wilson-Simmons, R., Slaby, R.G., & Link, B. G. (2006). Rethinking the bystander role in school violence prevention. *Health Promote Practice*, 7: 117-124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839905278454>.
- Ttofi, M. M. & Farrington, D. P. (2010). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7: 27–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9109-1>
- Twemlow, S.W., Fonagy, P., & Sacco F. C. (2004). The role of the bystander in the social architecture of bullying and violence in schools and communities. *New York Academy of Sciences*, 1036: 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1330.014>.