A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL SAFETY

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Abstract - The study of school violence and safety ma require the review of different perspective in order to understand all the factors and variables that contribute to such a phenomenon. This study will present the arguments made on the cause, impacts and various programs and regulations that was discussed in the literature. However, such a review highlights the need to view the integration of such perspective and the various dynamics that caused by school violence. This study conclude that school safety is part of the different aspects that influence societies and communities i.e. cultural, social, economic and political.

I. INTRODUCTION

Across the world and in every society, children attend schools to be educated, understand values and advance socially in order to become good citizens. As a social organization, schools are expected to establish an educational and social environment which help in achieving such goals. However, the growing threat of violence represents a serious challenge for schools to protect children and promote its cause. Within the school, teachers [1], schools' administrators and legislators [2], and parents [3] have expressed concerns regarding safety of students. The increase of violence in communities and school has become an alarming reality as incidents of deadly shootings at Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook have highlighted the news [4]. Initially school violence was conceptualized as the common values, attitudes and interaction that take place among students, teachers, administrators and parents of what is expected to be accepted behavior and interaction within the school's environment [5].

Considering the multiple impacts of school violence on children, families and communities, there have been a growing number of study focused on the complexity of school violence as a phenomenon. These studies tend to link between school safety and school climate [6] [7].For example, school climate was defined as "the physical features of the school building, social and demographic characteristics of students and staff, rules and social interactions between individuals, and beliefs and values of individuals within the school"[8] (p. 629).

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE & SAFETY

In general, similar to other systems of society, educational institutions are vulnerable to different types of threats, risks and hazards. Examples include violence, bomb threats, illegal drugs, property crimes, cybercrimes, and vandalism. Additional threats can be fire, accident, disaster, gangs, terrorism, infectious disease outbreaks, and the discharge of toxic substances [9]. Risk to school environment can be extended to include social and physical disorder, substance use, high-risk sexual activity, self-reported fear, and lower academic performance [10].

The literature has examined safety and school environment from the physical, emotional and social point of view. The need for not only focus on student accidents, cases of school violence or risks of the teaching profession, but also to consider broader issues was presented [11]. These need include promoting safer and healthier school environment. Safety is conceptualized as the feeling of protection that people experience when they are in a place that is free of danger [12]. The concept of safety has also been expanded as several authors introduced the socioemotional environment aspects that take place within the school environment. These aspects include a) the creation of a welcoming environment that is free of intimidation, b) the absence of violence or fear, c) the existence of an open and free climate, and d) the promotion of children personal need [13] [13].

III. FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND CLIMATE

Schools appeared to attach great importance to creating a welcoming school environment, where staff, students and families feel welcome and part of the community. Communication, dialogue and participation were aspects included in the schools' education projects and were pointed out by participants as actions that foster sufficient levels of emotional and school safety.Studies have consistently found a relationship between social and physical

disorder at the neighborhood level and adverse outcomes among adolescents including substance use, high-risk sexual activity, self-reported fear, and lower academic performance [10]. Researchers have noted, it is necessary to include commitments to safety in institutional documents if a comprehensive approach aimed at creating safer and healthier schools is sought [15]. Research has also focused on the responsibility of the community including the parents of the children to care about schools as an important element for cooperating with the schools' administration to create safe school environments [16] [17]. This implies that despite the responsibility for safe school environment is the focus of the school's administration, all members of the educational community including families have responsibilities, obligations, rights and duties regarding safety matters [11].It is often said that creating a school environment that protects children and young people from danger, and at the same time promotes conscious attitudes towards personal and collective safety, is primarily the responsibility of school principals and teaching staff.In addition, beyond a general duty of care, the cooperation of all members of the educational community is necessary in order to create safe school environments [17].It became imperative for paying attention to a set of aspects encompassing socioemotional as well as physical aspects. Studies have identified five themes that encompass the concept of school climate: "1) order, safety, and discipline; 2) academic outcomes; 3) social relationships; 4) school facilities (the physical environment within the school); and 5) school connectedness (engagement in and enthusiasm for school activities" [8] (p. 629). The specification of social climate features in the school environment was viewed in reference to how the school environment could promote positive engagement and feeling of comfort among students [7]. Accordingly, positive view of the school climate can produce prosocial student behavior and reduced levels of peer aggression and misbehavior at school [18][12]. Earlier a researcher noticed that difficulty in developing an interactions between staff and students which can led to low levels of school success for both and the existence of uncomfortable school climate. This can limit parents' involvement and often negative parent-staff interactions"[19].

IV. SCHOOL SAFETY, POLICY REGULATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Organizations and professionals highlight the importance of educational establishments promoting safe and healthy work environments successfully, both for teaching staff and students [20]. From this perspectives, teaching-learning processes, as well as any other school activity, only make sense when students and teachers feel safe and protected [11]. Many institutions and organizations imitated and implemented programs to reduce school violence and enhance positive school climate. These programs were based on the assumption that school climate is a protective factor against violent and aggressive behavior [7]. On the government level, the U.S. Department of Education has initiated and implemented programs i. e., school healthy students program and the safe and supportive school program, to reduce school violence and enhance positive school climate.

According to these policies, schools are expected to make deliberate efforts to improve school climate and take steps in utilizing various resources such as the school climate surveys, action guides, schools' drills, emergency plans and training programs [21]. Managing school safety will concern, equally, the objectives of school seeks to achieve and the structure and organization of the school itself, involving a series of actions and measures that concern all levels of stakeholders in the school [11]. A study identified a host of safety and security measures at school which include: 1) Controlled access and locked doors; 2) Restrictions on student access to certain web site; 3) Anonymous threat reporting; and 4) Drug testing of students in extracurricular activities [14]. Similarly, although there have been policies that encourage parents' contribution to school safety planning and implementation, however, lack of commitment and funds, and the absence of realistic monitoring systems represent a challenge to schools to apply such measures leaving schools to face the complexity of school safety on their own [9].

Managing school safety will concern, equally, the objectives of school seeks to achieve and the structure and organization of the school itself, involving a series of actions and measures that concern all levels of stakeholders in the school [11].Specific safety measures can be viewed in the preparation and circulation of an emergency plan, as well as carrying out emergency drills which helped the schools to raise awareness safety among students and staff. Regulations on good relations and participation were considered preventive measures, given that: a) they organized school life; b) they encouraged the adoption of safe and healthy attitudes, behaviors, and habits; and c) they provide guidance on how to act in certain situations. School interventions that focus on creating a climate with clear positive behavioral expectations and establishing consistent consequences for behavioral violations, like the

positive behavioral interventions and Supports framework [22] which are important for reducing violence[7].

V. PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL SAFETY EFFORTS

Studies found that parents' participation in children education increase their perception of safety [23]. For example, parents can be active in school committees and collective activities or help out with the maintenance and upkeep of the school. Regarding students and families, their participation was determined by the extent to which principals, teachers and safety officers involved them in safety actions. In general, they continued to be passive subjects with regard to the creation and promotion of safe school environment, seeming to be long way from the responsibilities was listed [24]. Parents were encouraged to take the chance as representatives in parent advisory councils (PAC). Such involvement grew in programs which intend to allocate funds to support all eligible families [2], however, these programs were not concerned with other issues like school safety. In general, schools are required to take actions to facilitate positive and secured teaching-learning experience which tend to protect students and teachers from various forms of threats and risks.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on school climate has been heavily influenced by social-cognitive theory and the ecological model, which highlights the significant transactional processes at multiple levels that influence behavior [26]. Social disorganization theory [28] focused attention on the influence of environmental conditions on individual's decisions to engage in crime and violence. Work using this theory has emphasized the role of structural characteristics of neighborhoods, such as low socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility. In disrupting social organization which then leads to increases in crime and violence [29].

Based on Bronfenbrenner ecological framework, which viewed parental involvement in three levels: Microsystem, Exosystem, and Mcrosystem. Within the micro system parents' involvement contains "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of beliefs" [25]. Additionally, parental involvement was viewed on the microsystem to contain 5 levels: school-focused parent-child interaction, home-based involvement, general parent-child interactions, general family relations and parent' personal characteristics.

The mesosystem level of parental involvement includes activities intended to advance children's educational outcomes that parents perform at school. These activities can be seen in parent-teacher conferences and school meetings. Parents' involvement in interaction with teachers and school staff contribute to reduction in school absenteeism, higher completion of children homework, and the promotion of children's school motivation [30]. According to the Ecological framework [27]. Parents' involvement on the macrosystem level encompasses various aspects related to the community's characteristics, cultural and ethnic features, common belief system. These aspects are relevant to the study of school climate and parental involvement as they determine the nature of dynamics, imperatives and values that can be transferred from the environment to the school and from the school to the environment with reciprocal impacts [25].

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