Prevention in Public Schools: Strengthening Safe Spaces

Online Survey
A Look at Public Schools in Unsafe Contexts

Research Program: Education in Risk and Conflict Situations (ERCS)

Application Period: May–June 2021

Survey Universe:
Schools participating in different initiatives of violence and gang prevention in El Salvador

Objectives
- Verify results obtained in previous research phases.
- Obtain information about school-based violence prevention.
- Inquire about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and their families.

Sample
Intentional, not representative
- Public schools located in insecure zones in El Salvador.
- Some who have participated in educational programs of prevention.
- Others with their own initiatives for a positive school environment.

Online Survey

61 Schools
512 Participants
467 Valid surveys
**Sex**

- 67% Female
- 33% Male

**Position**

- 11% Principal
- 4% Vice-principal
- 85% Teacher

**Grade Level Taught**

- 7% 1st-3rd grades
- 20% 4th-6th grades
- 73% 7th-9th grades

**Age**

- 50 Years average
- Range: 26-69

**Years at the School**

- 17 average years
- Range: 2 - 41 years

### Methodology

**Survey Protocol:**

1. Contact the principal by telephone and request participation
2. Explain and invite teachers by video conference.
4. Follow-up and reminders to answer the survey.
5. Thank you note for their participation.

**Advantages of the online survey**

- Broad sample despite quarantine and distancing conditions.
- Teachers used to virtual tools.
- Follow-up and accompaniment of the response process.

**Difficulties encountered**

- Sending links by email.
- The preference for WhatsApp hindered follow-up.
- Errors in the answers, such as answering more than one survey, not finishing the questionnaire, etc.
1) Insecurity
The survey respondents consider that:

- Somewhat or very insecure: 40%
- Very secure: 16%
- Cordial relationships with the surrounding community and students’ families: 72%
- Presence of security forces: 26%

School surroundings are:

Security around the school depends on:

- The presence of security forces (police and soldiers): 36%
- Applying national security policies: 27%
- The decisions of gangs: 9%

Maintaining a secure environment depends on:

- Schools generally manage to maintain a secure environment, but when they serve more gang-related students, educational processes are more affected.

2) Relationship between families and school
What teachers and principals expect from parent participation in schools:

- Attend school meetings: 81%
- Participate in making decisions: 62%
- Support their children’s learning at home: 89%

3) COVID-19
According to survey respondents, the impact of remote education on students is:

- Little family interest in continuing studies: 58%
- Assuming responsibilities at home: 33%
- Going to work: 4%
- Participating in making decisions: 62%
- Support their children’s learning at home: 89%
4) School-based Prevention Initiatives

A series of questions about the effects of prevention initiatives, indicate that:

- These have less impact on “involving parents” and “the relationship among teachers.”
- They have more impact on “the relationships among teachers and students” and “the school climate.”
- Schools’ own prevention initiatives tend to gain higher ratings than external interventions.
- However, there are no statistically significant differences among the appraisal of the different prevention initiatives.

Conclusions

- Schools highly value the relationships with the family and surrounding community.
- Educational relations are influenced by students who have close associations with a gang.
- Teachers have long trajectories and generally achieve efficient pedagogical relationships with students.
- Insecurity adds an additional dimension of stress to teachers’ tasks.
- The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have a differing impact on boys and girls.
- Overall, no prevention intervention can be considered better than the others.

Recommendations

- Strengthen school-family relations and contacts with the surrounding community.
- Offer psychological support and professional accompaniment for teachers to reduce the adverse consequences of teaching in insecure environments.
- Foster families’ interest in their children’s studies.
- Involve the local schools in the design and implementation of school-based prevention programs, for better adaptation and higher approval of the interventions.