OUR EVERYDAY VIOLENCE: "surviving" school

A VIOLÊNCIA NOSSA DE CADA DIA: sobre"viver" à escola

LA VIOLENCIA ES NUESTRA COTIDIANA: sobre"viviente" en la escuela

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ABSTRACT
The objective was to describe teachers' experiences with violence at school. This qualitative, ethnographic study was conducted in two full-time schools located in Parauapebas, Pará, Brazil. Data collection was conducted through field diaries and focus groups, and the information was subjected to content analysis. It was identified that, on a daily basis, the school community experiences aggression, fear, insecurity, trauma, bullying, cyberbullying, criminal acts, and sexual abuse. Schools are home to numerous forms of violence, particularly bullying, in which children and adolescents are both victims and perpetrators.

KEYWORDS: Teachers; Children; Adolescents; School violence; Exposure to violence.

Introduction

It is estimated that Brazil has a population of approximately 215.3 million people, of which 40,129,261 are under 14 years of age (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2022). These children and adolescents, according to national law, are subjects of rights, and it is the duty of the family, society, and the State to guarantee them, with absolute priority, health, life, education, and dignity (Brazil, 1988).

However, current data show that this group is exposed to numerous social vulnerabilities (Rebouças; Falcão; Barreto, 2022), such as inadequate nutrition; insufficient daycare centers; inequalities in income distribution; lack of housing and basic sanitation; drug-related crimes; and violence, with high homicide rates that match, and some-

times exceed, those of war-torn regions, constituting the leading cause of death among adolescents and young people in the country (Abrinq Foundation, 2025).

In Brazil, violence against children and adolescents presents worrying patterns of inequality. When considering ethnic origin, the Black population is more vulnerable, and in terms of gender, age, and type of abuse, girls are more vulnerable, especially when it comes to sexual crimes. The perpetrators, who are primarily the victims' fathers and mothers, demonstrate the importance of the family environment as a facilitator of violent acts (Wanzinack; Mélo, 2025).

In this context, in addition to the exponential increase in aggression against children and adolescents over the years (Niu *et al.*, 2024), the growing number of criminal acts perpetrated by this group is also noteworthy. This may reflect abuse suffered at home and in the community (Moreira, 2023). Minors in situations of violence are more prone to aggression, even in adulthood (Ranang; Zhang *et al.*, 2023), with a link between childhood trauma and criminal behavior, as well as a tendency toward violence (Cantürk; Faraji; Tezcan, 2021).

Thus, it is possible to observe various manifestations of violence perpetrated daily by minors, with an emphasis on the harm caused among their peers and occurrences in the school environment (Costa; Silva; Neto, 2024). From this perspective, the school environment, often considered safe in society's collective imagination, has increasingly emerged as a setting for the materialization of various forms of violence, stemming from social life, in which children and adolescents merely reproduce what is part of their realities (Barbieri; Santos, 2021).

Thus, it is clear that violence in the school context is a complex and multi-determined phenomenon and, if not adequately addressed, tends to recur, diversify, and intensify (Canci; Gassen; Rosa, 2024). Given these aspects, this study aimed to describe teachers' experiences regarding situations of violence in schools. The aim is to contribute to the visibility and reflections on the violence present in daily school life and on how teachers feel when experiencing this phenomenon, enabling interventions that can accommodate the social actors involved in school life and collaborate in the development of strategies to confront violence.

Methodological approach

This is a qualitative, ethnographic study conducted in accordance with the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) (Souza; Marziale; Silva, 2021). The study involved teachers from two full-time public schools in the

municipal school system of Parauapebas, Pará, Brazil. The two educational institutions, hereinafter referred to as School A and School B, offer full-time elementary education (grades 1-9), with approximately 400 and 250 students enrolled, and a faculty of 21 and 13 teachers, respectively.

These institutions were chosen because they are located in the area where one of the researchers works. This allowed for periodic visits, observations, and interactions, fostering closer ties with the field of study, as ethnographic methodology requires researcher involvement and awareness from the beginning to the end of the study (Novaes; Moraes; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2024).

The researcher's interaction with the study sites and the schools' teachers occurred through weekly visits to the units from August to December 2024, each lasting approximately one hour and accompanied by the respective institutions' pedagogical coordinators. On these occasions, the researcher conducted participant observations, recorded field diaries, and informal conversations with the school's social actors. The goal was to build connections and gain a deeper understanding of the behavior, practices, and meanings teachers attribute to their experiences at school, as recommended in specialized literature (Novaes; Moraes; Rodrigues *et al.,* 2024).

Furthermore, in October 2024, two in-person meetings were held at School A on school Saturdays, each lasting two hours. Teachers from both units (A and B) were invited to attend. The methodology used was a "conversation circle" to encourage the exchange of experiences and the collective construction of meanings (Pinheiro, 2020). The triggering themes: mental health, human relations, teamwork, and burnout syndrome, were suggested by the participants.

For this research, data collection occurred through a focus group (FG) and a focus group (FG), with one meeting per unit scheduled according to their availability. All teachers received a printed invitation to the FG, which included information about the research, the location, and the time of the meeting at their school. The FGs took place in February 2025, during the units' pedagogical week. It is noted that the FG allows for the analysis of the ethical and political positioning of the relationship with the participants, the subject matter, and the institutions involved in the research in everyday life, seeking co-production between researchers, participants, interlocutors, and the object of study (Kroef; Gavillon; Ramm, 2020).

The FG refers to a technique that enables interactions and problematization, constituting an important strategy for inserting research participants into the context of

analytical and synthesis discussions that contribute to the rethinking of attitudes, concepts, practices, and social policies (Backes; Colomé; Erdmann *et al.*, 2011). For these reasons, it was used in this research.

The FGs were led by a psychologist and included the participation of an assistant (a psychologist) and an observer (a psychology undergraduate), all of whom were properly trained for this activity. Each meeting lasted approximately three hours and was conducted in accordance with the recommendations of the specialized literature (Oliveira; Santos, 2015), guided by the following questions: "How is the coexistence among students in the school setting?", "How is the coexistence between students and teachers in the school setting?", and "Are there situations of violence present in the school environment?" (Figure 1).

Figure *1*
Description of the steps implemented in the Focus Group. Parauapebas, Pará, Brazil, 2025
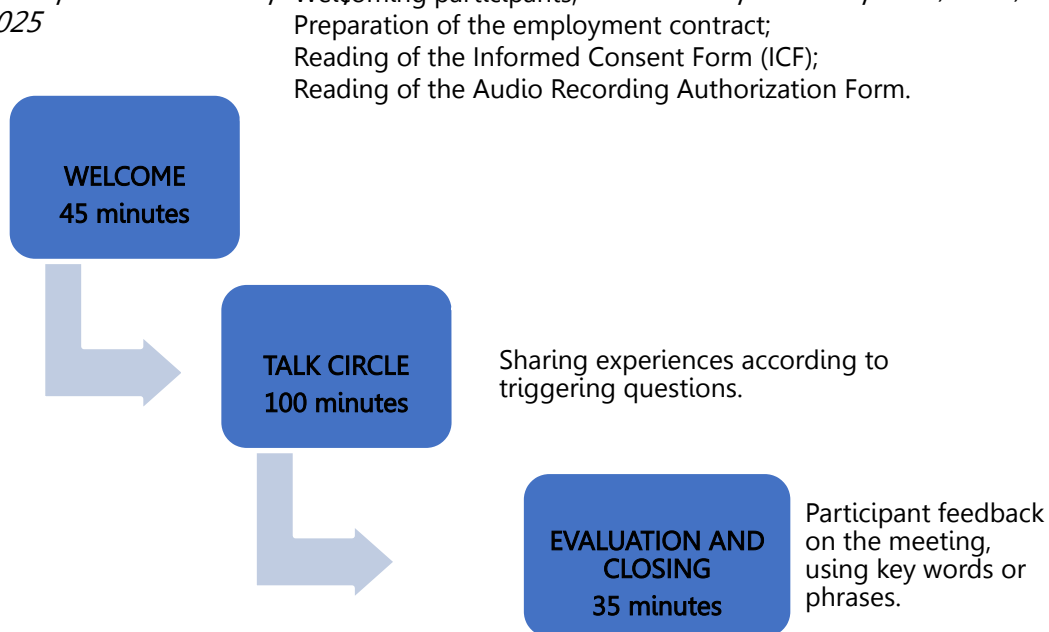
Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

The FG sessions were audio-recorded, and the statements were transcribed verbatim by the researcher who coordinated the meetings. Spelling adjustments were made to facilitate reader comprehension, but without altering the meaning of the statements that comprise the corpus of analysis for this study.

To understand the experiences shared in the FG sessions, the analytical process was based on the assumptions of Bardin (2010). It began with the exploration of the

materials through skimming, aiming to capture and organize the information in an unstructured manner, seeking a global understanding of the main ideas and their general meanings. This was followed by the selection of units of analysis, a dynamic and inductive process of attention, until categories were proposed. In this research, the inclusion criterion adopted was: being a teacher (temporary or tenured) affiliated with School A or B; and the exclusion criterion: teachers who had not been working directly in teaching for at least six months.

Participants were informed about the study and signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF). The research complied with the precepts of Resolution No. 466 of 2012 of the National Health Council (CNS); was approved by an ethics committee (CAAE 81953924.0.0000.5519) and the Municipal Department of Education of Parauapebas; and was guided by the COREQ guidelines (Souza; Marziale; Silva *et al.*, 2021). To identify the origin of each excerpt of the statements and preserve the anonymity of the teachers, ensuring the confidentiality of the narratives, the generic terms "Group A" and "Group B" were used, represented by the expressions "GA" and "GB," and "teacher" by the letter "P" followed by an Arabic numeral, according to the chronological order of the statements in the FG. For DC records, speeches/impressions were represented by the letter "P", referring to teacher.

Results

A total of 31 teachers participated in the study, 18 from School A and 13 from School B, the majority of whom were female (23; 74.2%). During school visits and in the FG sessions, teachers shared experiences and opinions about violence in the school environment. They explained how interactions between students are complex and often permeated by conflict.

Based on the FG's testimonies, it was possible to propose the following category of analysis: "Everyday Violence: About 'Living' at School" and, considering the records in the DC, "Challenges in Teaching Practice." The results showed that numerous forms of violence affect students and are reproduced by them, contributing to the revictimization of their peers, teachers, and other social actors within the school, as presented below.

Everyday Violence: About 'Living' at School

Aggression, fear, insecurity, and trauma plague the school community. According to the testimonies of the participants in this research, violence is present in schools, exposing teachers, students and the school community to harm to their physical and mental integrity:

"[...] a student was physically attacked during the game. During the game, she missed a step, made a mistake, and the whole team came at her, fighting her, and she had to run away." [GAP1]

"[...] he threw the chair and beat her. The other student asked for help, and the other students just listened. Then someone came and helped. And when I got to the office, I cried a lot. As a teacher, I felt incapable of helping in that moment; it was horrible. I don't want to go through that again." [GBP9]

Bullying ana cyberbullying also represent recurring rights violations in the school environment, especially those perpetrated through exposure, humiliation, and even racism, negatively impacting students' lives, as evidenced by teachers' reports:

"[...] another very common type of violence is racist comments about someone's body, undermining their self-esteem." [GBP8]

"Bullying is an example in schools, which is now a crime and which we try to combat, but it's still very difficult." [GAP7]

"[...] videos exposing students are published. Those who have suffered this, therefore, no longer want to attend school, out of shame." [GAP15]

"Technology itself contributes to youth violence. With the internet, anything is thrown into the media, and people feel attacked, and this increases violence. Therefore, the virtual environment makes violence even more complex." [GBP13]

Criminal acts, such as theft and sexual violence, are common in schools, demonstrating that this place reflects the social vulnerabilities to which students are exposed in their home and community environments:

"One form of violence that happens a lot is theft, because it happens too much, and sometimes it's not even what the student needs." [GAP5]

"Violent acts can even be unconscious, like children engaging in sexual acts at school." [GAP18]

"[...] when we talk to those responsible, we understand the reason for their behavior, which is a reflection of their upbringing. So, they seek other references. Faced with this, there's a constant internal conflict." [GBP11]

Self-harm is becoming increasingly common in schools. For teachers, this health hazard constitutes a complex phenomenon, in which students' emotional pain manifests itself through bodily harm:

"[...] we had a student who seemed like a happy boy, a fun-loving boy. And, out of nowhere, the boy would appear with cuts. Not out of nowhere, because we don't know what's really going on inside, right? He would appear, he just appeared there, all mutilated." [GAP10]

"[...] and when we talk about self-harm, they [students] come to mind, especially the sixth-grade students. This student, because she self-harmed a lot." [GAP11]

"Pain that causes extreme pain, which ends up being transferred to the body in the form of injuries. The student, faced with problems, starts to self-harm." [GBP1]

"I've seen students at school hurt themselves, like punching themselves against the wall to relieve stress." [GBP10]

There's a pain hidden beneath the layers of clothing and social isolation, present in self-inflicted and non-self-harming violence, where students' emotional distress only becomes apparent when there are physical signs (injuries) and/or behaviors that deviate from the group's norms. Before this, teachers can't even imagine the difficulties and internal struggles this group experiences:

"[...] hood, sweatshirt, isolation, unwillingness to play or do other exercises or social interaction." [GAP8]

"We see a lot of boys; they hide behind what is usually very dark clothing. When I see some children hiding in those dark sweatshirts, I get worried. Why? Because I know there's something there besides that clothing." [GAP17]

"Sometimes, we notice small signs like: the air is foul and the student is wearing a hoodie, sad behavior, head down in the chair, not socializing with anyone, creating a problem and asking to go home." [GBP3]

The school environment, often considered safe and secure in the social imagination, harbors serious forms of violence, becoming a stage for aggression of all kinds and exposing students, teachers, and other members of the school community to the risk of bodily harm and emotional trauma, which compromises both their physical and mental health.

Challenges in teaching practice

Based on the dialogues, sharing, and constructions established between teachers and the researcher during school visits, it was possible to record numerous impressions in the DC. The meanings attributed to these impressions are represented below (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Meanings attributed to teachers' statements during school visits. Parauapebas, Pará, Brazil, 2025
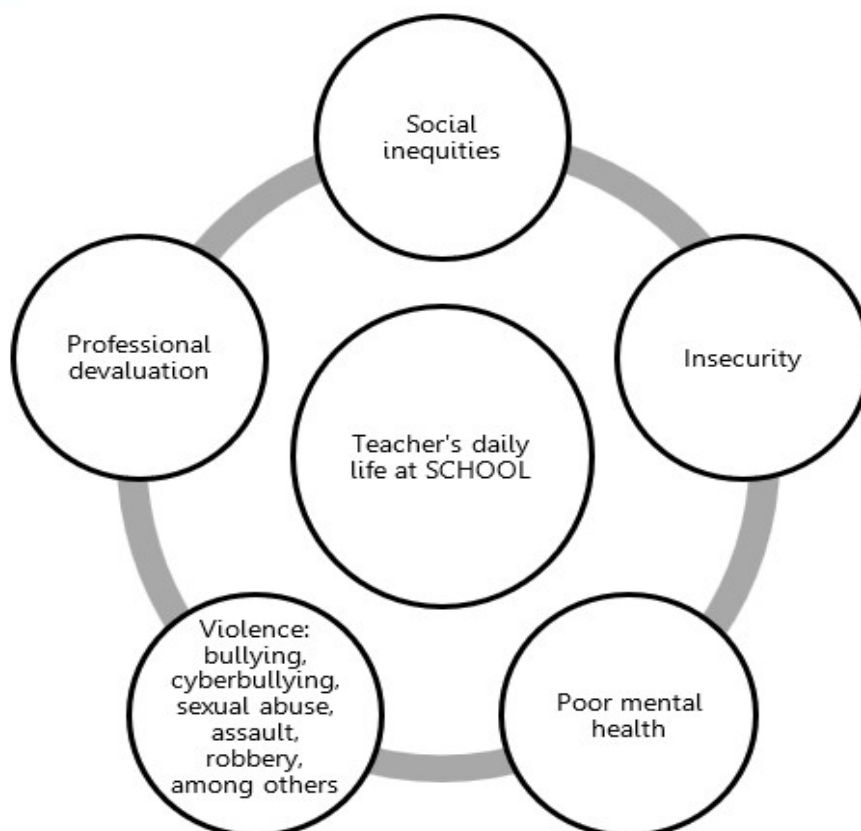
Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Teachers spoke of fears, anxieties, and insecurities. They often expressed hopelessness and were overlooked by public policies. Based on the DC records, it was clear that teaching is stifled by countless institutional demands and professional devaluation, especially by students and their families. Analysis of the records also suggests that teacher well-being and safety are neglected aspects of the teaching profession.

Discussion

As in this study, other studies (Savaş; Aras; Gençoğlu *et al.*, 2024; Tanton; Bhatia; Pearlman et al., 2023; Tu *et al.*, 2024) have shown that violence is present in schools. Among students, it typically occurs as physical abuse, characterized by attacks with knives and other sharp objects, scratches, slaps, shoves, and fights, and psychological abuse, expressed through insults, humiliation, insults, drug use and sale (Xerinda; Guambe, 2024), and especially bullying (Ran *et al.*, 2023).

According to the participants of this study and several authors, multiple forms of bullying affect the school environment, representing a serious violation of the rights of students and other school personnel (Drubina *et al.*, 2023; Hughes *et al.,* 2025; Ran *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2025).

This violence is characterized by repetition, an imbalance of power between aggressors and victims, and the intention to cause harm. Forms include verbal, physical, relational, sexual, and cyberbullying, with verbal bullying being the most frequently reported (Ran *et al.*, 2023). It is worth noting that, considering the exponential increase in cases in recent years, cyberbullying has become more prevalent among students, characterized by some authors as the use of electronic communication to attack, mock, and harm other people (Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

In this context, it is observed that personal factors such as gender, frequent use of social media platforms, depression, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, sleep deprivation, and suicidal tendencies are often related to becoming a victim of cyberbullying. On the other hand, being a high school student, past experiences with violence, impulsivity, inadequately controlled family upbringing, inadequate teacher-student relationships, and the urban environment can represent risk factors for perpetrating cyberbullying (Zhu *et al.,* 2021).

In Brazil, a study found a higher prevalence of cyberbullying among students who reported feeling sad, that no one cared about them, that they had no friends, that life was not worth living, that they suffered aggression from their parents, that they skipped school without permission, that they exhibited risky behaviors such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, and that they had already had sexual relations. Having parental supervision over free time, being male, and being 16-17 years old were associated with a lower prevalence of cyberbullying (Malta *et al.*, 2024).

It is noteworthy that, regardless of classification, bullying negatively impacts the mental health of children and adolescents, affecting not only victims but also aggressors and bystanders, leading to short- and long-term consequences such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal behavior (Ran *et al.*, 2023). This highlights the importance of addressing this violence from multiple perspectives, including the individual, family, school, and societal levels (Ran; Zhang; Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Strategies aimed at improving students' emotional intelligence are a valuable resource for reducing the risk of bullying at school and online (Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, it is important to understand that several factors can contribute to the worsening of violence in schools. In this sense, it is noteworthy that the increase in child abuse during social isolation due to COVID-19 may have led to an increase in aggressive behavior among students (Moreira, 2023).

More than one in five children and adolescents worldwide reported experiencing violence during the pandemic. Consequently, they returned to school with various difficulties, especially relationship-related ones, culminating in increased aggression and episodes of violence, even among very young children (Moreira, 2023). Furthermore, there is evidence that the period of social isolation during COVID-19 dramatically increased screen time among children and adolescents (Choi; King; Duerden, 2023). Early and intense exposure to violence in specific media, such as music, video games, and television, may be linked to serious violent behavior in adolescence and adulthood (Ybarra; Mitchell; Oppenheim, 2022).

It is clear that minors are exposed to vulnerability factors within and outside the family context, and that involvement in violent acts produces deleterious behavioral effects (Costa *et al.*, 2024). These effects have been reflected in schools through anxiety attacks, excessive insecurity, and aggression (Moreira, 2023).

The consequences of violence perpetrated by minors in schools include low educational achievement, dropout rates, loss of interest, learning difficulties, trauma,

social isolation, humiliation, grade repetition, feelings of shame, insecurity, and fear, theft from peers, and juvenile delinquency (Xerinda; Guambe, 2024). For teachers, violence leads to emotional exhaustion, with conflicts with students being one of the main causes of burnout syndrome (Silva; Bragio, 2025).

Therefore, it is necessary to implement actions in the school environment aimed at confronting and reducing violence, especially bullying (Gaffney; Ttofi; Farrington, 2021). To this end, it is necessary to offer education professionals training in the development of psychosocial skills, both in undergraduate and continuing education programs, enabling them to promote actions to develop students' psychosocial skills, integrated into daily classroom activities, including an approach aimed at improving the school climate and, thus, promoting health and a culture of peace (Moreira, 2023).

In addition to supporting students, measures are also needed to welcome, protect, and value teachers (Moreira, 2023), who are exposed to various forms of violence, which compromise their physical and mental health, their assets, and their job performance (Plassa; Paschoalino; Bernardelli, 2021), as observed in this study. It is noteworthy that addressing violence in schools requires a collective and ongoing commitment, with intersectoral approaches that combine efforts across education, health, and social services, strengthening support networks capable of addressing the multiple factors that contribute to violence in schools. Such measures are essential for building safer, more inclusive school spaces conducive to the comprehensive development of students (Silva; Bragio, 2025).

A limitation of this research is the lack of inclusion of other social actors within the school. However, from the teachers' perspective, experiences emerged that shed light on the interactions and challenges inherent in the day-to-day life of this school.

Final Considerations

Schools harbor multiple forms of violence, particularly bullying, in which children and adolescents are both victims and perpetrators. Teachers, in turn, lack the knowledge to handle these situations, suffering from fear, insecurity, and a sense of powerlessness.

Strategies for addressing violence in schools include ongoing teacher training, the inclusion of socio-emotional topics in student curricula and teacher training, the strengthening of networking, especially in the health, social assistance, and education sectors, and the involvement of families in educational initiatives.

Finally, we reaffirm the potential of schools as a privileged space for actions to promote health and a culture of peace, in an ethical, humane, inclusive, and life-affirming manner. To this end, public policies are needed that recognize and value the centrality of teachers and schools as fundamental agents in building healthy behaviors, safe environments, and promoting social equity.

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RESUMO

Objetivou-se descrever as experiências de professores em relação às situações de violência na escola. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, do tipo etnográfico, realizada em duas escolas de tempo integral localizadas em Parauapebas, Pará, Brasil. A coleta de dados ocorreu por meio de diário de campo e grupo focal, e as informações foram submetidas à Análise de Conteúdo. Identificou-se que, no dia a dia, a comunidade escolar vivencia agressões, medo, insegurança, traumas, *bullying*, *cyberbullying*, atos infracionais e abuso sexual. A escola abriga inúmeras formas de violência, com destaque para o *bullying*, em que as crianças e os adolescentes estão na condição de vítimas, mas também de perpetradores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Professores; Criança; Adolescente; Violência escolar; Exposição à violência.

RESUMEN

El objetivo fue describir las experiencias de los docentes con la violencia escolar. Este estudio etnográfico cualitativo se llevó a cabo en dos escuelas de tiempo completo ubicadas en Parauapebas, Pará, Brasil. La recopilación de datos se realizó mediante diarios de campo y grupos focales, y la información se sometió a análisis de contenido. Se identificó que, a diario, la comunidad escolar experimenta agresión, miedo, inseguridad, trauma, acoso escolar, ciberacoso, actos delictivos y abuso sexual. Las escuelas son escenario de numerosas formas de violencia, en particular el acoso escolar, en las que niños, niñas y adolescentes son tanto víctimas como agresores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Docentes; Niños, niñas; Adolescentes; Violencia escolar; Exposición a la violencia.