

Internet and the phenomenon of school violence in Algeria: Between the existing reality and the desired ideal

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Abstract---Today, the Internet is among the most important and costly means of communication compared with other communication media. This has made it an optimal technology, as it brings together a range of technologies within a single tool. It has also become the preferred option for communication among individuals and groups, particularly in the educational field. In Algeria, it has spread clearly and rapidly in homes, schools, and universities, where it has been integrated into educational tools that help reinforce school curricula, in addition to its role in cultural education in its various forms. Conversely, the excessive use of this technology, particularly by children and young people, has led to the spread of school violence, a global phenomenon whose causes differ from one society to another. It is also a significant issue that has preoccupied educators and educational professionals, particularly about the causes of violent behavior displayed by students of different ages and categories. Students have increasingly come to imitate what they watch across various programs, such as games, films, cartoons, chat websites, and other contemporary technologies that children and adolescents spend extended periods of time using. This contributes to their psychological and cultural formation, through which violent practices develop, such as hitting, verbal abuse, destruction, and vandalism.

Keywords---Internet, school, school violence.

Introduction

Internet is one of the most recent technologies of the modern age. It transmits and receives information across various fields of knowledge and therefore serves as a scientific encyclopedia, providing services to all users across all domains. Although it offers diverse services that effectively serve all users, it also

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has numerous negative repercussions for individuals, society in general, and students in particular. These repercussions may result from excessive or improper use. Among the most significant negative repercussions is the emergence of violence as a widely circulated phenomenon across various fields. It is one of the most widespread and expanding phenomena, especially in recent years, although it has accompanied human beings since their existence. It has increased and affected most societies of the world in their diversity, whether developed, underdeveloped, or developing, thereby hindering the dynamism and development of society, especially when it spreads extensively and contributes to its proliferation across various sectors of society, including the family, the street, the school, and others.

The school, as a basic and important institution for producing conscious and educated generations, has also witnessed this phenomenon, which has spread widely and rapidly among students. This has been termed the phenomenon of school violence. This situation calls for raising questions, formulating theories, and consulting experts to investigate its causes and seek solutions. However, if the main cause is the Internet and students' extensive engagement with it across various websites without supervision from parents or teachers, whereby the student watches films and plays violent games through which he acquires such behaviors and then attempts to reproduce and practice them, whether on his siblings at home, his classmates at school, or even his teachers who devote themselves to his education and upbringing, then, based on the foregoing, it may be said that students' violent practices within the school in particular raise a set of questions that require answers, especially if the Internet causes school violence as a primary driving force leading to its spread, and which must be eliminated or at least reduced in intensity. Hence, the following question arises: What is the relationship between the Internet and the spread of school violence in Algeria?

1. Definition of Concepts

1.1. The Internet Linguistically

The origin of the word Internet is Latin; more precisely, it is an English word composed of two words: interconnections, meaning the linking of more than one thing together, and network, meaning a network. Thus, "Inter" was taken from the first word and "Net" from the second, meaning "hundreds of networks connected" (Aissani, 2008, p. 122).

1.2. Terminologically

The Internet was defined in a United Nations Development Program publication in 1994 as "an international communications network composed of a set of computers linking more than 35,000 networks from among the various computer networks in the world" (Radmani, 2003, p. 33).

This concept illustrates one statistic about the Internet: it links more than 35,000 networks worldwide. The Internet is a group of computers connected, through which information is transferred and exchanged. It has currently become one of the means of communication and information transmission, and its use has spread remarkably in recent years because of its dynamic and interactive nature (Youssef, 2006). The Internet is, therefore, a global network of communication through which information can be obtained, and one of the most important and most recent means of communication and interaction, as well as the most widely spread and used among individuals throughout the world.

1.3. The School Linguistically

The Arabic word for school is the plural of schools and refers to places of study and education, such as primary, middle, and secondary schools. The word school is taken from the French word école, meaning the institution that provides social education.

1.4. The School Terminologically

According to Ferdinand Buisson, the school is "a necessary social institution that aims to ensure the process of communication between the family and the state to prepare new generations and integrate them into the framework of social life" (Watfa & Al-Shihab, 2004, p. 16). Through this definition, it

becomes clear that Ferdinand Buisson viewed the school from a social perspective to ensure communication and the integration of new generations into social life. John Dewey stated that the school can change the social system to a considerable extent, a task that all other social institutions are unable to accomplish (Dandash, 2003).

1.5. School Violence

School violence is a complex concept that includes both criminal and aggressive behavior within the school, directed toward persons or property, thereby hindering development and the learning process and causing harm to the school climate. This prevents the school from fulfilling its cultural role and its function as an educational organization.

It is every act that harms one of the principal elements of the school, whether the student, the teacher, or school property. It is one of the most dangerous forms of violence, as it assumes numerous forms, whether physical or verbal.

Through these two definitions, it becomes clear that school violence is criminal and aggressive behavior that, as a whole, leads to causing harm and damage to everything that exists within the school, taking numerous forms, whether physical or verbal.

1.6. Indiscipline

Indiscipline is one of the concepts closely associated with school violence, as some consider it synonymous with it. It is what has recently been known as school indiscipline or “lack of discipline,” a term that has recently become recognized in educational circles in relation to education or school instruction. School indiscipline may be defined as a state of social deviance, which Émile Durkheim explained through anomie, which affects societies following violent transformations, whether economic or social, causing individuals to experience a state of loss of norms in their relationships with one another, with institutions, or with society as a whole (Jadu, 2005).

2. Characteristics of the Internet

The Internet is characterized by a set of features, represented as follows:

2.1. Interactivity

Interactivity is a system that links sources of news and information with users in homes and institutions, enabling mutual influence and interaction between the source and the receiver. This linkage takes place between the visual display and the printed word (Hamdi et al., 2011).

It is the most important characteristic of the Internet because it distinguishes it from other means of communication and media, which offer no scope for interaction, as they merely transmit messages to the recipient. With the Internet, however, there is unlimited scope for reception, discussion, response, message modification, reproduction, and freedom of communication with whomever we wish, on any subject and at any time.

2.2. Synchronicity

Synchronicity refers to online communication and is characterized by renewal, immediacy, and modernity to a degree that surpasses other means of communication. It is manifested in the many communicative patterns available online, such as instant communication, whereby the user can converse with the writer or send a message and wait for an immediate response. This gives the communicative process a high degree of interaction, as in chatting, which requires the presence of both sender and receiver.

2.3. Asynchronicity

Asynchronicity refers to the ability to send and receive via a communication medium at any time that suits both parties, without requiring them to use the system simultaneously. In an email, the message is sent directly from the sender to the recipient without the recipient needing to be present; the recipient can retrieve it later.

2.4. Demassification

Demassification refers to the ability to transfer information from one medium to another, such as converting an audio message into a printed or other readable form (Hamdi et al., 2011).

2.5. The Segmented Audience

The segmented audience refers to the ability of the communicator to deliver his message to numerous audiences, each of which represents an internally homogeneous sector, unlike traditional mass communication media, which reach a general, heterogeneous audience that is unable to communicate directly and immediately with the communicator or to interact with others within the same audience.

3. The Informational Function of the Internet

Today, the Internet has become a medium for communication and information available to the general public. It contains new journalistic applications in various forms that go beyond the traditional frameworks of journalism, news agencies, radio, and television. A single medium combines several services that are sometimes equal in scope, thereby complementing the provision of informational services, whether radio or television. There are also new applications that are neither newspapers nor news agencies. In addition, some media websites combine all forms with equal force, such as Fox News. It is neither a newspaper, nor a news agency, nor a television channel; rather, it is a hybrid of various communicative applications, ultimately referred to as news websites that benefit from the advantages of publishing and the Internet (Sadik, 2005).

Although the Internet developed on the ruins of communication technology, the media quickly rode the waves of the network because of the speed with which information could be transmitted. The press did not miss this development; it joined the ranks of this revolution, which came to be called electronic publishing on the World Wide Web. Many local and international, Arab and foreign newspapers have come to be issued in a fully electronic manner, beginning with the receipt of news from news agencies and correspondents, the search for information and images, and their selection from international databanks; passing through the processing of news and reports, the writing, editing, and proofreading of articles, and the design, preparation, and assembly of graphics and photographs into pages; and ending with the transmission of this information to any computer connected to the network (Hamdi et al., 2011).

4. Advantages of the Internet

The Internet is one of the twentieth century's discoveries. Like other technologies, it has several benefits and advantages for different groups, whether within the framework of scientific or educational research in schools. The following presents some of these advantages:

4.1. Email

By connecting to the network, the user can send and receive mail to and from anyone in the world in the fastest time and at the lowest cost, with guaranteed delivery.

4.2. Access to Research and Information

Through the Internet, it is possible to access developments in research and information of interest to the researcher in his field of specialization from websites, bulletins, and periodicals, as well as to search for references and books through electronic libraries such as the Library of Congress and the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies.

4.3. Access to News

It provides access to a wide range of news from around the world through news agencies and other websites.

4.4. Connecting the World

It connects the world and provides the opportunity to travel around and within it through a computer screen, obtain information, and conduct scientific research.

4.5. Access to Employment and Services

It provides access to employment opportunities, and commercial activities and other services are also conducted through the Internet (Abd al-Jabbar, 2009).

Thus, the horizons of the Internet are vast. The subscriber finds in it enjoyment and benefit in broad fields that cover all types of knowledge and services, including access to the latest newspapers, magazines, and periodicals; obtaining full texts of the latest research, articles, and scientific, technical, and medical reports; watching the latest tapes; or following the Olympic Games and their activities moment by moment on the personal computer. No one can predict the extent of its expansion or what the human mind will bring in the coming years. The network will certainly be a vital part of the lives of members of society in the present century and a means of mass communication worldwide.

5. Manifestations of School Violence

School violence, like other patterns of human behavior, does not take only one form; rather, it takes many manifestations. The reason for this is the student and his nature, since the student himself is a variable whose behaviors and actions differ from one time to another and from one period to another. The student also differs depending on the situations to which he is exposed at school.

5.1. Physical Violence

Regarding physical violence, there is no significant difference among the definitions provided by researchers, as the term's clarity does not introduce ambiguity. Among the definitions of physical violence is the following:

“The deliberate use of physical force against others to harm them and cause them damage, resulting in pain, suffering, and psychological distress due to such harm, and also exposing the child’s health to danger” (Yahia, 2000, p. 186). Examples of physical violence among students include burning or cauterizing with fire, kicking with the feet, hitting with the hands or with tools, twisting body parts, pushing a person, slapping, kicking, pulling hair, and pinching.

5.2. Psychological Violence

Psychological violence occurs through an act or through refraining from performing an act, according to societal standards and scientific knowledge of psychological harm. Examples include rejection or nonacceptance of the individual, insults, intimidation, threats, isolation, exploitation, emotional coldness, and shouting. Imposing opinions on the student by force is also a form of psychological violence.

5.3. Verbal Violence

Verbal violence is rejection aimed at causing harm through speech and words, such as insults, abuse, exclusion, and belittlement. This type usually precedes physical violence and remains within the bounds of speech, accompanying anger, insults, mockery, threats, and so forth, to cause harm or create an atmosphere of fear. It may also be directed at the teacher or occur among students themselves (Yahia, 2000).

5.4. Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence consists of a set of symbols, signs, and indications whose purpose is to impose force or authority indirectly. Pierre Bourdieu defined it as “arbitrary and subjugating violence manifested in the imposition of force and authority over other persons” (Yahia, 2000, p. 186). In this definition, symbolic violence shares the qualities of arbitrariness and subjugation with other forms of violence, all of which share the same objective: causing harm to others. Examples include writing and drawing on walls.

5.5. Neglect

Neglect is defined as the failure to meet the student's basic needs for a continuous period of time. It is classified into two categories: intentional neglect and unintentional neglect (Majid, 2008).

6. The Contribution of the Internet to the Spread of the Phenomenon of School Violence

Alongside the positive image of the Internet in the lives of adults and children, there are negative effects on juveniles and adolescents, the most important of which are as follows:

- Information hacking constitutes one of the most important problems of the Internet and one of its most serious disadvantages. This is related to public morals, given the existence of websites that violate them.
- The increase in the number of online games and the resulting time spent on them, especially among children and young people, is another concern. Some games are also characterized by violence, which affects children and young people, and remaining in front of these games leads to a state resembling addiction.
- Excessive use of the Internet leads to the development of individualistic tendencies. The child may find pleasure in isolation and self-centeredness, and this may become a pathological condition.
- It distracts children from their studies and from following up on their academic achievement because of the long periods they spend on the device and their immersion in its programs.
- It affects their eyesight due to the device's proximity to their eyes and the time they spend staring at and focusing on its screens.
- Children become accustomed to isolation due to their constant preoccupation with the Internet (Hawamdeh et al., 2006).
- Through the Internet, children turn away from books and from sources and references written in books and preserved in libraries.
- It weakens students' writing skills because they rely on copy-and-paste programs and write electronically.
- There is also the financial cost of maintaining continuous Internet connectivity.
- Communication through the Internet relies on late-night hours, which affects children's morning activities, the peak period of productivity and diligence.
- It provides juveniles and adolescents with harmful and unlawful information that may ultimately lead them to become perpetrators or victims of crimes of indecency and moral corruption.
- The network transmits to juveniles a culture of pornography, as it contains approximately one million images, narratives, or descriptions, all of which are directly related to sex. In addition, the network provides clear information about brothels in many countries worldwide (Hijazi, 2004).

In addition, the Internet has also entered schools, particularly through some negative behaviors that are transmitted to students or that help them develop such behaviors, including the following:

- The use of the Internet for cheating in examinations has become possible for some students, who, by owning a phone with an Internet SIM card, can cheat via the World Wide Web. Once the examination topics arrive, the student takes advantage of the supervisor's inattention, writes the topic on the phone, searches for it with no more than a Google search, and then begins writing on the answer sheet.
- Cheating is also practiced in completing school assignments, which fall under the category of academic effort or homework. Some students resort to the Internet or have someone else do their homework, whether it is their mother, sister, or maid.
- The violence practiced by students inside schools is nothing but a reflection of the quantities of violence represented in computer games and Internet websites, and in the violent materials they broadcast, which children and students in general wish to imitate.

7. Methods for Addressing School Violence in Algeria

Addressing the phenomenon of school violence in educational institutions certainly requires confronting the causes of this phenomenon and searching for the most effective ways to treat it. The following presents some of the solutions adopted by the Algerian state to prevent school violence. These methods may be summarized as follows:

In Algeria, efforts to establish a national program to combat violence in schools began in the 1999–2000 school year.

As a result of the events witnessed by schools in several provinces of the country, which left victims among students, teachers, and others, as well as various successive events in recent times, the Ministry of National Education formed a national committee to prepare a national strategy for combating and preventing violence within Algerian schools, since combating school violence is, first and foremost, one of the government's priorities (Favre, 2007).

Within this framework, the members of the national committee proposed three main areas for reflection, centered on the school charter, its internal laws and regulations, and communication and the role of the various councils.

It is also necessary to work toward presenting a new culture and new educational and moral objectives, which constitute the message conveyed to children, that is, students, to produce generations that respect laws and regulations and value human life.

Hence, the phenomenon of school violence can be curbed or reduced through the following:

- Spreading a culture of tolerance and rejection of violence.
- Ensuring optimal use of the Internet and monitoring students' use.
- Early diagnosis of children who are under stressful conditions and who may develop abnormal methods.
- Developing the value-based dimension among students.
- Organizing workshops for teachers through which the final characteristics of each age stage and the psychological and social requirements of each stage are discussed.
- Using effective communication skills based on the human dimension, the most important of which are good listening, attentive listening, showing empathy, and demonstrating concern.
- Providing time for the student to participate in numerous sports and hobbies.

Conclusion

From what has been presented above, a comprehensive synthesis emerges: the Internet, as a global communication network, has transformed the world across social, economic, and cultural spheres. It is therefore a double-edged sword. It has sought to serve students scientifically and culturally; however, in return, it has become one of the modern means of communication that has helped spread school violence in its various types and manifestations, whether verbal, moral, symbolic, or physical. Its causes have varied and differed from one field to another. On this basis, the optimal use of the Internet is necessary in a way that benefits students and does not constitute a danger threatening their lives. Therefore, caution and vigilance must be exercised in this regard, and general and comprehensive supervision must be imposed on them, whether by parents or teachers. This phenomenon must not be allowed to spread unchecked. Electronic monitoring must also be imposed so that students are not given the freedom to browse whatever they want whenever they wish.

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