

Approaches to Life Skills Education for Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School, Binh Duong Province in The Context of Violence Prevention

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ABSTRACT: Violence is a concerning issue, particularly at the lower secondary school level, where students undergo significant psychological and physiological changes, making them more prone to conflicts and negative behaviors. At Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School (Dau Tieng District, Binh Duong Province), although most students are well-behaved and frequently engage in extracurricular activities that foster life skills, incidents of violence still occur, mainly among male students and those with behavioral difficulties. This study was conducted to propose several approaches to life skills education for the prevention of school violence, based on document analysis and field surveys. The findings highlight five feasible solutions: educating peaceful communication skills; developing emotional management skills; practicing hypothetical situation handling; strengthening collective and team-based activities; and enhancing collaboration among families, schools, and society. These solutions form an interconnected system that contributes to reducing violence, improving students' life skills, and creating a safe and friendly learning environment.

KEYWORDS: Violence, lower secondary school students, life skills education, Nguyen Binh Khiem, violence prevention.

1. INTRODUCTION

School violence has become one of the major challenges for the education sector and society as a whole. Physical fights, abuse, and psychological mistreatment among students not only have immediate impacts on their health and mental well-being but also leave long-term consequences on their personality development and learning process. Numerous studies have indicated that the causes of school violence stem from various factors, including age-related psychological changes, living environment, pressures from families and schools, as well as the lack of life skills among students.

In this context, life skills education for lower secondary school students is considered a strategic solution. Through skills such as peaceful communication, emotional management, conflict resolution, and teamwork training, students are not only able to protect themselves against the risk of violence but also develop positive, compassionate, and responsible attitudes toward life.

At Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School in Binh Duong Province, most students are obedient, gentle, and sincere, largely due to their upbringing in a predominantly agricultural community. The school places strong emphasis on extracurricular activities, youth union and team movements, as well as life skills training. However, incidents of violence still occur, mainly among male students and those considered "at-risk" or with behavioral issues, often taking place on the way to school or within the family setting. This situation highlights the urgent need for concrete solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of the school's students in order to prevent and mitigate violence.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Overview of Violence

2.1.1. Concept

According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, violence is defined as the use of force to coerce, suppress, or overthrow (1).

The Sociological Dictionary defines violence as destructive behaviors employed as an ultimate means of exercising power in unequal relationships, based on external superiority and without the consent of the weaker party (2).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violent behavior as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation" (3).

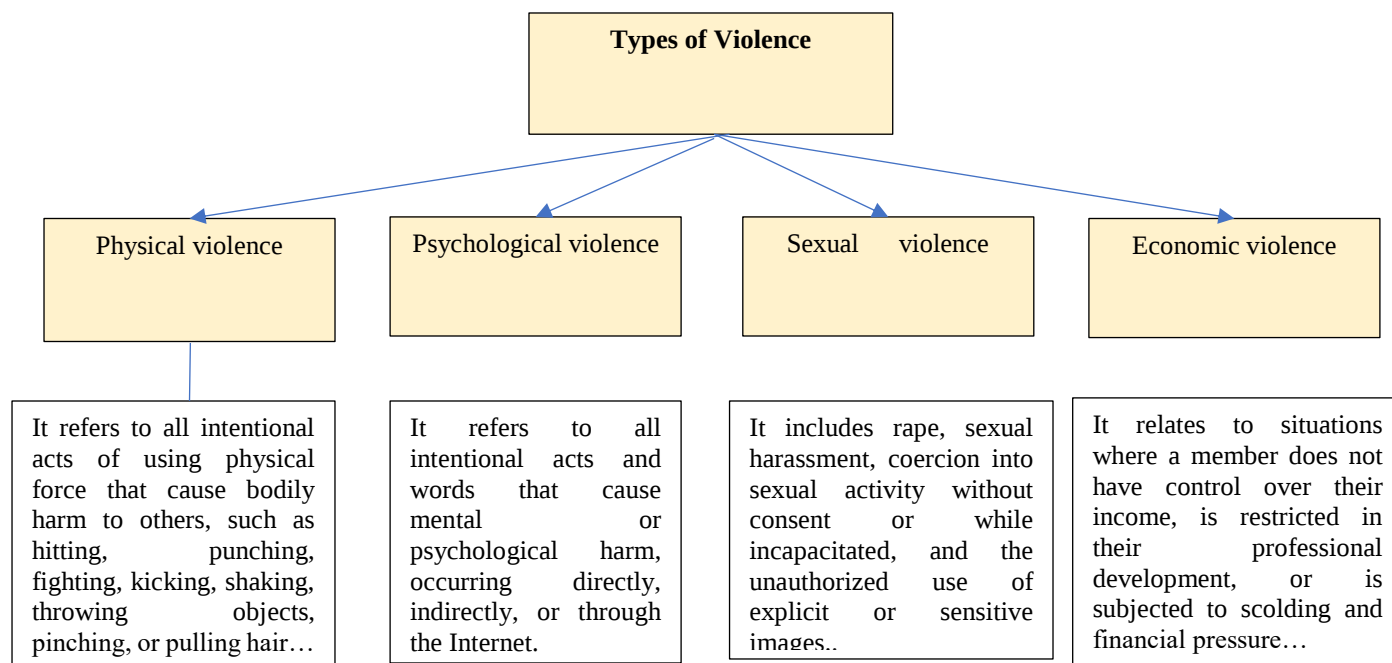
Violence does not only refer to actions that cause physical harm but also encompasses behaviors that inflict psychological or emotional damage on others (4).

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Thus, violence can be understood as the use of force, power, or actions to coerce, suppress, threaten, or assault, resulting in physical, mental, or psychological harm to others.

2.1.2. Types of Violence

Figure 1. Types of Violence



2.1.3. Consequences of Violence

Violence can cause significant physical and psychological harm, not only in the immediate term but also with long-lasting effects that are difficult to remediate throughout life.

- Physical consequences: Violence can result in bodily injuries, threaten life, and may leave long-term sequelae (5).
- Psychological consequences: Exposure to threats or insults can lead individuals to experience fear, anxiety, insecurity, and a loss of trust in themselves and society (6). Psychological shocks may result in stress, depression, or even lifelong trauma, affecting the ability to learn, work, and build relationships. The consequences of violence can be more severe and enduring than visible physical injuries (5).
- Impact on behavior and personality: Victims of violence may develop more negative attitudes and exhibit increased violent behaviors later in life (Pham Thi Hong Tham, 2024). Children who experience physical violence at home often tend to repeat such behaviors toward others at school and in the community, manifesting as bullying or fighting. Violence can create a "cycle of violence," passed from one generation to the next. Many children may feel aggressive and develop a tendency to inflict harm on others (4). Negative personality changes may include being withdrawn, quiet, timid, shy, insecure, isolated, stubborn, disobedient, indifferent, depressed, or displaying rebellious, deviant, or morally degraded behaviors, expressed through selfishness, rudeness, vulgarity, arrogance, desire to stand out, laziness, hedonism, or indulgence (7).
- Impact on learning and work: Exposure to violence can reduce concentration and memory, leading to poor academic performance, lack of motivation, or school dropout; physical and psychological consequences also decrease work efficiency (8).
- Impact on relationships: Violence can cause emotional rifts, family breakdowns, transforming the home from a safe haven into a "hell"; it undermines trust in family members and isolates victims within the family and in social relationships with friends and relatives (4).
- Social consequences: Violence disrupts social order, undermines moral standards and local or national customs, dehumanizes individuals, constitutes unethical behaviors contrary to societal norms, and raises concerns across society (3).

2.1.4. Causes of Violence

According to researchers (4, 7, 9, 10), violence arises from multiple factors, including both subjective causes (stemming from the perpetrator) and objective causes (originating from family and society). Among these, psychological factors and age-related characteristics are commonly associated with adolescent violence.

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- Adolescent developmental factors: School violence often occurs among students aged 12–17. During this stage, significant physiological and psychological changes make adolescents more irritable, frustrated, and less capable of self-regulation in thought and behavior. In many cases, violence becomes a means for students to assert power, relieve tension, or achieve psychological balance. A lack of foundational life values, problem-solving skills, and emotional support from family further increases the risk of violent behavior.

- Family factors: The family is a direct contributor to many violent behaviors. Children who experience physical violence at home often repeat such behaviors at school and in the community. When parents are neglectful, adhere to the belief of “spare the rod, spoil the child,” or frequently engage in conflicts, quarrels, or domestic violence, children are heavily affected. Economic pressures and excessive family expectations may also drive adolescents toward violence as a coping mechanism.

- Environmental and peer influences: The environment and peers play a significant role. The living environment directly impacts the personality and behavior of lower secondary school students. In a healthy, positive cultural environment, students are more likely to develop constructive lifestyles; conversely, exposure to violent, unsafe, or socially degraded surroundings can foster negative behavioral patterns and increase violent tendencies.

Thus, the causes of school violence stem from the interaction of age-related psychological and physiological characteristics, family influences, and the environment and peer groups, highlighting the need for coordinated efforts among families, schools, and society to prevent violence and guide students toward positive behaviors.

2.2. Brief Introduction of Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School and Its Students, Binh Duong Province

Dau Tieng is a district located in the northwest of Binh Duong Province, bordering Tay Ninh and Binh Phuoc. The area has an economy strongly shaped by agriculture, particularly rubber cultivation and various short-term crops. The socio-economic life closely tied to agricultural production has created the region’s distinctive characteristics, profoundly influencing cultural and educational development, including the upbringing of the current generation of students.

Within this context, Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School has emerged as a prominent institution in the district. Established in 1996, the school not only provides knowledge but also nurtures students’ character and aspirations for learning. Throughout its development, the school has achieved numerous accomplishments: it was recognized as a “Friendly School, Active Students” in 2011, met national education standards during 2013–2018, and received various other awards. The quality of education has remained stable over the years, with the lower secondary graduation rate consistently high, reflecting the continuous efforts of both teachers and students. Additionally, the school emphasizes extracurricular activities, youth union and team movements, and life skills training, contributing to the holistic development of students’ character.

Currently, Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School has over 1,500 students. They exhibit both the typical psychological characteristics of adolescents—high energy, a desire for self-assertion, emotional sensitivity, and a preference for group activities—and distinctive traits of students from an agricultural background. Growing up in an environment closely tied to farming life and nurtured by the school, these students often demonstrate outstanding qualities: gentleness, sincerity, diligence, emotional warmth, and a strong sense of community. These strengths define the school’s student identity and provide a solid foundation for character education and holistic development.



Figure 2. Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School

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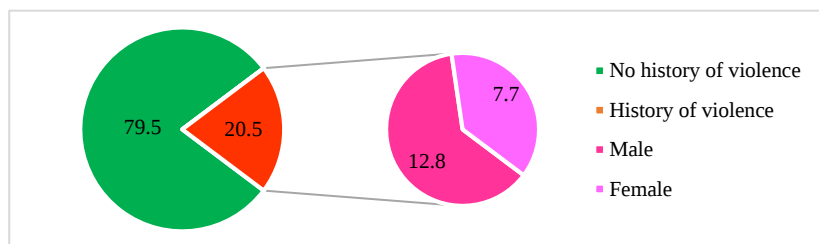


Figure 3. Percentage of Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School Experiencing Violence

2.3. Characteristics of Violence Among Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School, Binh Duong Province, 2024

The study on the characteristics of violence among students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School was conducted on 352 students (177 male and 175 female) across all four grades (6, 7, 8, and 9) from January to June 2024. The results indicate that 72 students, equivalent to 20.5%, had experienced violence. This rate is comparable to the prevalence of violence and bullying among students in several other localities—Hai Phong, Nghe An, Kon Tum, and Can Tho—as reported in the research by Tran Quynh Anh et al., where 19.8% of lower secondary students reported fighting, 17.8% reported being physically attacked by peers, and 22.2% reported being bullied (11).

In a lower secondary school in Hue City in 2018, the rate of school violence was 29.0% (12), 8.5% higher than at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School. At Ha Dinh Secondary School, Thanh Xuan District, Hanoi, the rates were much higher: physical violence 81.99%, psychological violence 95.70%, and sexual violence 38.98% (13). According to research by Le Thi Xuan, the percentage of students experiencing any form of abuse in Vietnam is also significantly high, at 71% (14). This may be explained by the fact that the local environment, socio-economic characteristics, and educational activities at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School have had a significant impact on students' behavior. The students' gentleness and sincerity, deeply shaped by the agricultural heritage of the region, contribute to a more harmonious and mild temperament.

However, there is a gender difference in the occurrence of violence: 62.5% of cases involve male students, while 37.5% involve female students. This indicates that male students experience violence nearly twice as often as female students. This can be attributed to gender-related psychological and physiological characteristics: boys tend to be more aggressive and hot-tempered, with limited emotional self-control, making them more easily provoked than girls.



Figure 4. Characteristics of Violence Among Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School

Regarding the frequency of violent incidents, 52.8% of students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School experienced violence once, while 47.2% experienced it two times or more. This rate is higher than that reported in 2018 for two lower secondary schools

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in District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, and two schools in Ham Thuan Nam District, Binh Thuan Province, in the study by Nguyen Van Tuong, where 45.9% of students had been victims of at least one form of school violence (15). These findings indicate that repeated incidents of violence (two times or more) are concentrated among certain “at-risk” students, particularly male students, who account for 64.7% of these cases. Therefore, Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School should place greater emphasis on educating and supporting these male students who are more prone to repeated violent experiences.

Regarding the locations where violence occurs, 43.1% of students experienced violence on their way to or from school (consistent with UNESCO’s report on school violence in Vietnam related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (16)), while 41.7% experienced violence at home. Thus, a total of 84.8% of violent incidents occur outside of school, similar to the situation in several lower secondary schools in Ba Ria–Vung Tau, where most student fights take place off school grounds, beyond the control and intervention of teachers and school administrators (14, 16, 17). The incidence of violence occurring within school premises is 25%, which is 3.4 times lower than that occurring outside school. These findings highlight the need for monitoring and managing student behavior even when they are outside the school environment.

After experiencing violence, injuries leave marks on both the body and the mind. According to the survey, the physical injuries sustained by students are as follows:

Table 1. Injured Body Parts – Consequences of Violence Among Students Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School

Injured Body Part	Total		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Head-Face-Neck	12	16.4	6	50.0	6	50.0
Trunk	33	45.2	24	72.7	9	27.3
Limbs	7	9.6	4	57.1	3	42.9
Multiple Injuries	9	12.3	7	77.8	2	22.2
Other	12	16.4	5	42	7	58.3

Following incidents of violence, the most frequently injured body part was the trunk (45.2%), while the limbs were the least affected (9.6%). Among male students, injuries to the trunk accounted for the majority (72.7%), with multiple injuries being the least common. In contrast, for female students, aside from other body parts, the head–face–neck region was the most frequently injured (50%). These findings suggest that male students involved in violent incidents tend to target the trunk, using actions such as punching, kicking, or stomping, whereas female students’ violent behaviors primarily involve hair-pulling, scratching, or striking the face and head regions.

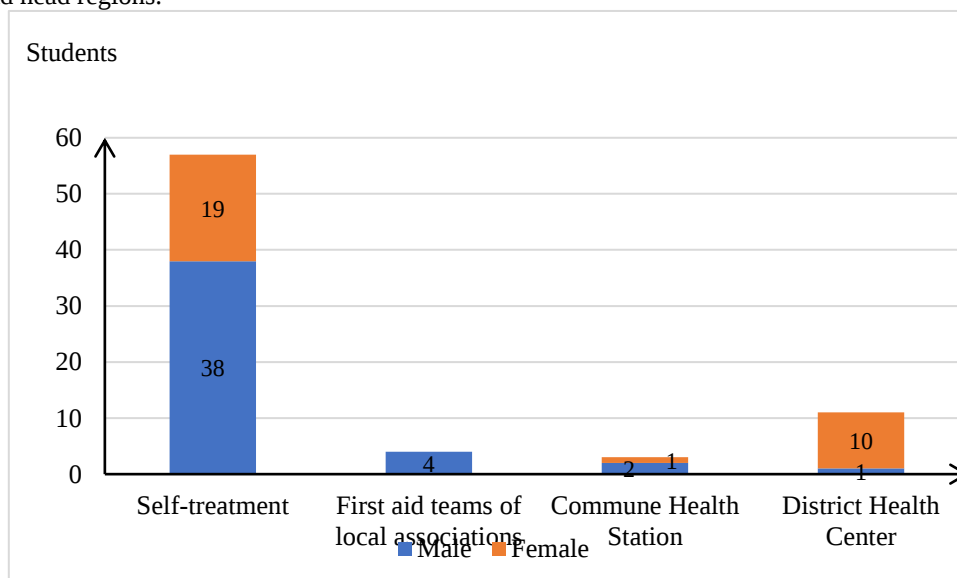


Figure 5. Choice of Healthcare Facilities Following Violence-Related Injuries Among Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School

After sustaining injuries from violence, choosing an appropriate healthcare facility is crucial to ensure safe and effective treatment and to support students’ recovery. The majority of students (79.2%) opted for self-treatment, which is 3.2 times higher than the combined proportion of students who sought any form of professional medical care. Only a small number of students sought

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assistance from first aid teams of local associations or commune health stations, accounting for 5.6% and 4.2%, respectively. District health centers were slightly more utilized, at 15.3%, approximately one-fifth the rate of self-treatment. These findings highlight the need to strengthen health communication and education, equipping students with knowledge and skills for basic self-care and fostering awareness of seeking appropriate medical attention when injured.

2.4. Some Methods of Life Skills Education for Students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Secondary School, Binh Duong Province, in the Context of Violence Prevention

2.4.1. Education in Communication and Peaceful Interaction Skills

During personality formation and development, lower secondary students often face numerous physiological and psychological changes, which can lead to conflicts in daily communication. Without proper guidance, students may resort to violence as a means of resolving disputes. Therefore, educating students in communication and peaceful interaction skills is a crucial strategy, helping them express themselves positively while fostering a safe and friendly learning environment.

One of the core components is organizing skill-based lessons that train students to listen actively, manage their emotions, and resolve conflicts verbally rather than through violent actions. These lessons can be integrated into class meetings, extracurricular activities, or specialized life skills education sessions. Teachers not only convey knowledge but also provide opportunities for students to practice, share, and discuss, thereby fostering mutual respect.

Simultaneously, creating simulated scenarios in the classroom plays a crucial role. Situations such as being teased, provoked, or misunderstood in academic contexts are presented in the form of scripts or role-playing games. Students are assigned roles to directly handle these scenarios, which helps develop self-control, the ability to choose appropriate responses, and emotional regulation. This approach not only embodies the principle of “learning by doing” but also provides a safe environment for students to experiment and gain experience before applying these skills in real-life situations.

It can be affirmed that educating students in communication and peaceful interaction skills through skill-based lessons and simulated scenarios not only contributes to the prevention of school violence but also promotes the holistic development of students’ character, teaching them to respect others and live harmoniously within a community. This forms an essential foundation for building a healthy, humane, and sustainable school environment.

2.4.2. Developing Emotional Management Skills for Lower Secondary Students

During lower secondary school, students enter puberty, experiencing significant physiological and psychological changes. They are often prone to anger, sensitivity, or overreactions to external stimuli. Without the ability to recognize and manage their emotions, students are highly susceptible to conflicts and may even resort to violence as a means of release. Therefore, developing emotional management skills is a crucial component in preventing and reducing school violence.

A practical approach is to organize experiential activities, games, and specialized educational sessions that help students identify their emotional states. Teachers can guide students to keep an “emotional diary,” allowing them to analyze the causes of anger, jealousy, or sadness. Through this process, students learn to label their emotions, understand their effects, and choose more appropriate responses.

In addition, the school can combine relaxation exercises and emotional control practices, such as deep breathing, counting, and pausing to think before reacting. Specialized sessions titled “Mastering Emotions – Saying No to Violence,” with participation from psychological experts, provide opportunities for students to practice and receive concrete guidance. With regular instruction, students gradually develop the habit of regulating their behavior rather than reacting impulsively.

Developing emotional management skills not only helps students reduce conflicts and violent behavior but also enhances their self-learning, self-discipline, and adaptability in life. This forms a foundation for building positive relationships with peers, teachers, and family, while fostering a harmonious and resilient character capable of coping with the pressures of modern society.

2.4.3. Equipping Lower Secondary Students with Self-Protection and Situation-Handling Skills

In addition to peaceful communication and emotional management skills, equipping students with self-protection and situation-handling skills also plays a crucial role in preventing school violence. Lower secondary students are often energetic and eager to express themselves but lack experience in responding to dangerous situations. Without timely guidance, they may either confront threats directly or endure them silently, both of which pose risks of physical and psychological harm.

An essential component is helping students identify and assess dangerous situations. Through extracurricular activities, scenario-based games, or life skills training, teachers can guide students to distinguish between conflicts that can be resolved through dialogue and situations that require avoidance or seeking adult assistance. This approach enables students to protect themselves without resorting to violence.

Furthermore, students need specific guidance on available support channels when incidents occur. Rather than remaining silent or handling issues alone, they should be encouraged to contact teachers, school administrators, student unions, or healthcare facilities

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when injured. Schools can establish “school counseling corners,” hotlines, or peer support groups to provide students with safe spaces to share and seek timely assistance.

Equipping students with self-protection and situation-handling skills not only helps them avoid risks associated with school violence but also enhances their confidence and proactivity in life. It serves as a foundation for fostering a sense of responsibility, the ability to protect oneself, and the willingness to support others, contributing to the creation of a safe, friendly, and humane school environment.

2.4.4. Strengthening Collective and Student Union Activities

One of the key strategies for preventing school violence is to strengthen collective activities and student union (Doan–Doi) movements. These activities are not only valuable recreational opportunities but also provide an environment for developing life skills and fostering positive character traits among students.

Firstly, promoting cultural, sports, and student union (Doan–Doi) activities provides students with opportunities to develop teamwork skills, learn to share, and cooperate. Participating together in cultural competitions, sports tournaments, or group activities allows students to bond, relieve academic stress, and reduce the likelihood of conflicts.

Additionally, the school should proactively assign students with behavioral challenges to participate in group activities. This approach helps them integrate into the community, develop positive interaction habits, and reduce isolation or oppositional attitudes. Through experiencing roles within a group, these students have the opportunity to change their perceptions, gradually decrease violent behavior, and learn more harmonious ways of interacting.

Thus, strengthening collective and student union activities not only contributes to a friendly school atmosphere but also serves as a practical measure to guide behavior, enhance life skills, and reduce violence among lower secondary students.

2.4.5. Coordination among Family, School, and Society

To effectively prevent school violence, close coordination among the three main educational environments—family, school, and society—is essential. This mutually supportive relationship forms a cohesive network that guides student behavior and fosters healthy character development.

Firstly, the family plays a foundational role. Schools can organize seminars and workshops for parents on positive parenting skills, emphasizing respectful and non-violent interaction rather than coercion or punishment. When parents listen actively and serve as role models, children are less likely to resort to violence as a way to solve problems.

Secondly, the school serves as the central connector. Beyond delivering academic knowledge, schools need to maintain regular two-way communication with parents to promptly identify students at risk of engaging in violent behavior and coordinate interventions. Extracurricular activities and student union (Doan–Doi) programs should also integrate content on violence prevention.

Finally, support from society and local authorities is indispensable. Schools should collaborate with community organizations, police, and local government to monitor the environment around the school, especially in front of school gates and along routes students travel—areas prone to conflicts. Creating a safe social environment significantly contributes to preventing and reducing school violence.

The coordination among family, school, and society forms a robust educational triangle that guides behavior, enhances life skills, and builds a safe and healthy learning environment for students.

Together, the five aforementioned solutions create an interconnected system that impacts students’ cognition, emotions, behavior, and living environment. Communication and emotional management skills serve as the foundation; simulated scenarios and collective activities provide practice and experiential learning; and coordination among family, school, and society acts as a protective framework. This integrated approach helps mitigate school violence and fosters a safe and healthy educational environment.

3. CONCLUSION

School violence remains a pressing social issue, leaving significant consequences on students’ character development, mental health, and physical well-being. The study conducted at Nguyen Binh Khiem Lower Secondary School, Binh Duong Province, indicates that although the prevalence of violence is relatively low compared to the national average, concerning cases persist, particularly among male students and those with behavioral difficulties. Therefore, life skills education is considered a fundamental and sustainable solution to prevent and mitigate school violence.

The five proposed measures—education in peaceful communication skills, development of emotional management skills, training through simulated scenarios, enhancement of collective and student union activities, and coordination among family, school, and society—not only equip students with essential competencies for positive social interactions but also contribute to creating a safe and friendly learning environment. Implementing these measures in a coordinated manner helps students cultivate healthy personalities, respect others, share, cooperate, and reduce conflicts, thereby minimizing the risk of violence.

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Life skills education is not only a preventive measure against school violence but also a strategic approach in the holistic education process. It lays the foundation for students to develop harmoniously in knowledge, character, and skills, contributing to the formation of a healthy, compassionate, and responsible young generation.

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