

Educational Measures to Develop School Violence Prevention Skills for Junior High School Students in Ho Chi Minh City

Nguyen Thi Hong¹

Abstract

School violence is becoming a pressing issue in the educational environment, negatively impacting the psychological development, personality, and learning process of junior high school students. Based on theoretical research on education in preventing school violence, this article clarifies the role of equipping students with the skills to identify, prevent, and respond to violent situations in school. Based on that theoretical foundation, the article proposes several measures to educate students in Ho Chi Minh City on skills to prevent school violence. These measures aim to contribute to building a safe and healthy school environment.

Article History

Received 10 March 2026

Revised 12 June 2026

Accepted 20 June 2026

Published 21 June 2026

 OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

School violence, skills to prevent school violence, educational measures, a safe school environment.

Introduction

In recent years, school violence has continued to occur in some localities, including Ho Chi Minh City. Several incidents of students fighting, filming and spreading videos on social media, have caused public concern (UNESCO, 2019; Nguyen Van Luot, 2009a). For example, in 2025, authorities in Thu Duc City investigated an incident where a group of female students assaulted a classmate, and the video went viral on social media, attracting the attention of the community and educational management agencies.

Furthermore, there have also been reports of groups of students in uniform fighting at intersections in the city, demonstrating that student violence is not limited to school grounds but can also spread to the wider community.

These incidents demonstrate that school violence remains a significant issue in education. Therefore, strengthening education on preventing school violence for middle school students is crucial in building a safe, healthy, and friendly learning environment.

This study examines the theoretical basis of teaching school violence prevention skills to junior high school students. Based on this, it proposes measures for educating junior high school students in Ho Chi Minh City on school violence prevention skills.

Research Methods

In conducting this research, the study primarily employed theoretical methods. Specifically, the author collected and analyzed scientific documents, books, newspapers, educational texts, and research works related to school violence to build a theoretical foundation for the topic. Simultaneously, analytical, synthetic, and systematized methods were used to clarify the concepts, causes, and role of education in preventing school violence. Based on this, the study proposes

¹ Thu Dau Mot University, Viet Nam. Email: hongnt@tdmu.edu.vn

several educational measures to help prevent school violence among junior high school students in the current school environment.

Research results

Theoretical basis for teaching skills to prevent school violence.

a. The concept of school violence

School violence is understood as intentional acts that cause physical, mental, reputational, or moral harm to students, occurring within the educational environment or related to school activities. According to Clause 5, Article 2 of Decree 80/2017/ND-CP of the Vietnamese Government, school violence includes acts such as abuse, beating, physical assault, insults, defamation, isolation, ostracism, or other acts that seriously affect the physical and mental health of students in educational institutions.

Furthermore, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019), school violence refers to all forms of violence occurring in and around schools that students may experience, including physical, psychological, verbal, bullying, and cyberbullying. According to the author, the concept of school violence is: brutal, arrogant, and unjust acts that insult and oppress others, causing mental and physical harm, occurring within the school environment.

- Common Forms of School Violence.

School violence can manifest in many different forms, negatively impacting the physical and mental health and personality development of students. (UNESCO, 2019) According to studies by UNESCO and UNICEF, school violence is often expressed through several common forms:

First, physical violence.

This is the most easily recognizable form of violence, encompassing acts of using physical force to harm others, such as hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, pulling hair, or using objects to inflict injury. These acts can directly harm students' health and leave long-lasting consequences.

Secondly, verbal or psychological violence.

This form is manifested through the use of words, gestures, or attitudes to insult, ridicule, humiliate, threaten, or shame others. Psychological violence can cause serious psychological harm, reduce self-esteem, and affect the personality development of students.

Third, social violence (isolation or ostracism).

This is an indirect form of violence through the spreading of rumours, slander, ignoring, or intentionally isolating a student from the group. These behaviors make the victim feel separated, lonely, and unable to integrate into the school environment.

Fourth, cyber violence.

With the development of technology and social media, school violence also occurs in the form of posting false information, making offensive comments, and disseminating images or videos to defame the honor and dignity of others on online platforms. (UNESCO, 2019; Tran Thanh Tu & Tran Binh Nguyen, 2014)

Thus, school violence does not only occur in the form of physical violence but also exists in many other forms such as psychological, social, and online violence. Correctly identifying these forms of school violence is crucial for schools and educational forces to take timely preventive and intervention measures.

b. The concept of skills for preventing school violence.

Skills for preventing school violence are understood as students' ability to recognize, prevent, and respond appropriately to violent situations that may occur in the school environment. These

skills include the ability to control emotions, resolve conflicts peacefully, communicate positively, and seek support from teachers or adults when necessary to protect themselves and contribute to building a safe learning environment. (Nguyen Thanh Binh, 2013)

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), equipping students with social and life skills such as communication, cooperation, emotional management, and conflict resolution is one of the important measures to prevent violence and bullying in schools. (Boler & Aggleton, 1996; UNESCO, 2019)

Furthermore, Decree 80/2017/ND-CP of the Vietnamese Government also emphasizes that "educating and equipping students with knowledge and skills for self-protection and preventing school violence" is mandatory content in schools.

Furthermore, according to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, education on preventing school violence is a process that helps students develop the necessary skills to identify the risks of violence, know how to behave appropriately, and actively participate in building a safe, healthy, and friendly educational environment in schools.

Therefore, it can be understood that skills for preventing school violence are a system of competencies that help students proactively prevent, respond to, and minimize the impact of violence in the learning environment.

c. Components of skills for preventing school violence

Students' skills in preventing school violence can be comprised of three basic components: identifying, preventing, and responding to school violence.

First and foremost, the skill of identifying school violence.

This skill helps students recognise the signs and symptoms of violent behaviour such as fighting, bullying, defamation, isolation, or online violence. Correctly identifying these behaviours helps students raise their awareness and develop appropriate attitudes towards situations that may involve violence. According to UNESCO studies, school violence can manifest in many forms such as physical, psychological, verbal, or bullying violence, and helping students recognise these forms of violence is an important step in prevention.

Based on this concept, the ability to identify violent behaviour is considered a crucial component in educating students on preventing school violence.

Secondly, skills to prevent school violence.

This skill is demonstrated in the ability to proactively limit situations that could lead to conflict, such as controlling emotions, communicating positively with friends, respecting differences, and not participating in or encouraging violent behaviour. According to guidelines on preventing school violence from the WHO, UNESCO, and UNICEF, equipping students with life skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and emotional management can help reduce the risk of violent behaviour in schools. Educating students on violence prevention skills helps them enhance their self-protection awareness and contributes to building a safe and friendly school environment. (Nguyen Van Luot, 2009a)

Finally, skills for responding to school bullying.

This skill helps students learn how to handle violent situations appropriately. This includes remaining calm, finding a way to leave the dangerous situation, seeking support from teachers, family, or trusted adults, and knowing how to protect themselves and support their friends when needed. International organizations such as UNESCO and WHO also emphasize that equipping students with coping skills and the ability to seek support is a crucial element in educational

programs aimed at preventing school violence and building a safe and healthy learning environment. These skills are specifically defined as follows:

- Skills for handling school violence situations

The ability to handle school violence refers to a student's capacity to choose and implement appropriate responses when conflicts arise or when confronted with violent behavior. This skill is demonstrated through the ability to control emotions, use calm language to resolve conflicts, and avoid negative reactions or using violence in retaliation. Developing this skill helps limit the escalation of conflict and contributes to preventing school violence.

- Skills for seeking support when school bullying occurs.

The skill of seeking support essentially refers to students' ability to recognize when they need help and proactively seek out appropriate sources of support such as teachers, school counsellors, parents, or relevant authorities. This skill helps students avoid isolation and fear when faced with violence, while also enabling timely intervention and support from educational forces. According to the Ministry of Education and Training's guidelines on life skills education, developing this skill is a crucial component of education aimed at preventing school violence.

d. Psychological characteristics of middle school students are related to violent behavior.

Middle school students (ages 11–15) are in the early stages of adolescence – a period of significant psychophysiological changes. According to the World Health Organization, this is a stage where the brain, particularly the areas controlling behavior and emotions, is not yet fully developed, while the emotional system is highly active. This leads to students being easily agitated, reacting impulsively, and lacking the ability to control their emotions in conflict situations. This imbalance increases the risk of verbal or physical violence.

Furthermore, the need for self-affirmation is a prominent characteristic of middle school age. According to studies in developmental psychology, Erik Erikson's perspective, adolescence is closely linked to the process of self-identification. In this context, students often tend to express their "self," desiring recognition and a position within their peer group. However, lacking communication and conflict resolution skills, this need can manifest itself in a distorted way through aggressive behavior, bullying, or imposing on others, thus giving rise to school violence.

Furthermore, middle school students are strongly influenced by their peer groups and social environment. According to UNESCO, peer pressure is one of the important factors leading to school violence, as students tend to imitate or act to be accepted within the group. Especially in the context of developing digital technology, social media has become a new interactive environment where cyberbullying is increasingly common. These behaviors not only cause lasting psychological harm but also increase the level and scope of school violence.

Another notable characteristic is that the moral and legal awareness of middle school students is still developing. According to UNICEF, many students in this age group are not fully aware of the consequences of violent behavior and the associated legal responsibilities. This makes them more likely to participate in harmful acts without fully understanding the seriousness of the issue. The UNICEF report also indicates that a significant proportion of students aged 13–15 have experienced or participated in bullying and school violence, highlighting the prevalence and alarming nature of this phenomenon.

Based on the aforementioned psychological characteristics, it can be affirmed that the education of skills to prevent school violence for junior high school students needs to be designed appropriately for the developmental characteristics of this age group. The educational content should focus on developing skills in emotional control, conflict resolution, positive

communication, and safe use of social media. Simultaneously, it is necessary to combine awareness education with experiential practice to help students form appropriate behaviors, contributing to the prevention and reduction of violence in the school environment.

e. The role of education in preventing school violence.

Educating middle school students on skills to prevent school violence plays a crucial role in shaping their awareness and guiding their behavior towards positive conduct in the learning environment. Through educational activities in school, students are equipped with basic knowledge about the manifestations and consequences of school violence, thereby enabling them to identify violent behaviors and proactively prevent situations that may lead to violence during their studies and interactions with friends. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), raising awareness and equipping students with social skills is one of the important measures to prevent and reduce violence in schools (UNESCO, 2019, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*).

Furthermore, education preventing school violence helps students develop appropriate behaviour skills when conflicts or disagreements arise in their friendships. Students are guided on how to control their emotions, communicate positively, respect differences, and resolve conflicts peacefully instead of resorting to violence. According to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Training, teaching life skills to students is of great importance in shaping cultural behaviour and contributing to building a safe and healthy school environment (Ministry of Education and Training, 2017, Decree 80/2017/ND-CP on a safe, healthy, friendly educational environment and prevention of school violence).

Furthermore, educating students on skills to prevent school violence helps them improve their self-protection abilities and know how to seek support when faced with dangerous or violent situations. Equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, students will proactively share their experiences with teachers, family, or responsible individuals to receive timely support and intervention. This not only helps protect students themselves but also contributes to preventing and minimizing violent behavior in the educational environment.

Thus, education in preventing school violence not only contributes to protecting the rights and safety of students but also plays a crucial role in building a safe, healthy, and friendly school environment, creating favourable conditions for the comprehensive development of students.

f. Legal basis for education on preventing school violence in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the education and prevention of school violence is based on a relatively complete and increasingly完善 legal framework. One of the important documents is Government Decree 80/2017/ND-CP, which regulates the creation of a safe, healthy, and friendly educational environment and the prevention and control of school violence. This decree emphasizes the responsibility of schools in organizing life skills education, equipping students with self-protection skills, and establishing mechanisms for early detection, intervention, and handling of violent acts in the school environment. This is considered an important legal framework guiding educational and management activities in general schools.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training has issued and implemented numerous life skills education programs, integrated into the main curriculum and extracurricular activities. These programs aim to comprehensively develop students' qualities and competencies, including the ability to cope with violent situations, communication skills, emotional control, and conflict resolution. This reflects a shift from purely knowledge-based education to developing practical skills and competencies for learners.

Vietnam's policy directions are also consistent with the recommendations of international organizations such as UNESCO, which emphasize building a safe, learner-centered school environment and strengthening socio-emotional skills education to sustainably prevent violence.

Overall, the current legal framework has provided an important foundation for implementing measures to educate students on preventing school violence in junior high schools. However, the effectiveness of implementation depends on the level of specificity and organization at each educational institution.

g. The role of factors influencing education in skills for preventing school violence.

Education in skills to prevent school violence is a process influenced by many different factors, most notably the family, school, and social environment. First and foremost, the family is considered the primary educational environment and has a profound influence on the formation of students' personalities. According to UNICEF, children who lack attention and supervision or grow up in environments with domestic violence are at high risk of developing aggressive behavior and repeating violence in social relationships, including the school environment. Therefore, close cooperation between families and schools is a crucial element in educating children in skills to prevent violence.

Furthermore, schools play a central role in organizing and implementing skills-based education activities for students. The quality of curriculum content, teaching methods, and the learning environment directly influence educational effectiveness. According to UNESCO, programs to prevent school violence are only truly effective when implemented comprehensively, including building a safe learning environment, developing students' social and emotional skills, and enhancing teachers' capacity to detect and intervene early in violent behaviors. If schools focus solely on imparting knowledge without experiential and practical activities, educational effectiveness will be limited.

Furthermore, the social environment, particularly the development of media and social networks, also strongly impacts students' behavior and perceptions. According to the World Health Organization, social factors such as cultural norms, community violence, and media influence can either increase or decrease violent behavior among adolescents. In the current context, social networks are not only a communication tool but can also become a breeding ground for online bullying and the spread of negative content, thereby affecting the effectiveness of education on preventing school violence.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that education on preventing school violence cannot be separated from the context of family, school, and society. Therefore, to achieve high effectiveness, synchronized coordination among educational forces is needed, along with building a positive and safe living and learning environment for students.

The current situation of school violence and education on prevention skills in junior high schools in Ho Chi Minh City.

In recent years, school violence in junior high schools in Vietnam in general and in Ho Chi Minh City in particular has remained complex, with many diverse forms such as physical violence, psychological violence, and especially cyberbullying. According to a UNICEF report, a significant proportion of students aged 13-15 have experienced or participated in bullying, indicating that this is a widespread problem that needs serious attention. In fact, at many middle schools, incidents have escalated from minor conflicts to organized bullying, involving video recording and sharing on social media, negatively impacting students' mental health and the learning environment.

In terms of education, schools have made considerable efforts in implementing education on preventing school violence through subjects such as Civic Education, experiential activities, and extracurricular programs. However, according to UNESCO's recommendations, current education in many places remains formalistic, lacking systematic approach and failing to adequately focus on developing practical skills for students. Educational content is still highly theoretical, while methods such as role-playing, case studies, or school psychological counseling are not widely and effectively applied.

Furthermore, the coordination between families, schools, and society in educating and preventing school violence is still not truly effective. A segment of parents still lack concern or are not adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills to support their children.

Simultaneously, the impact from the social environment, especially social media, is posing many new challenges as violent behaviors tend to spread, become difficult to control, and have long-term effects on students. According to the World Health Organization, school violence is a problem influenced by many interdisciplinary factors, therefore, a comprehensive and synchronized approach in education and intervention is needed.

From the above situation, it can be seen that, despite positive changes, the education of skills to prevent school violence in junior high schools still has many limitations, requiring more scientific, appropriate, and feasible measures in the future. This is also an important practical basis for proposing measures in this research.

System of educational measures to teach skills for preventing school violence to junior high school students.

i. Integrating education on preventing school violence into school educational activities.

Purpose of the measure:

To help students develop a correct understanding of school violence, comprehend its causes and consequences, and cultivate positive attitudes and behaviors in the learning environment.

How to implement the measure

Schools need to integrate education on preventing school violence into subjects such as civics, experiential activities, class activities, and flag-raising ceremonies. Teachers should use practical situations, educational stories, or discussion activities to help students identify violent behavior and respond appropriately.

ii. Tổ chức các hoạt động trải nghiệm nhằm rèn luyện kỹ năng phòng chống bạo lực học đường

Purpose of the measure:

Create opportunities for students to practice communication skills, conflict resolution, and emotional control in specific situations.

How to implement the measure:

The school organizes activities such as group discussions, role-playing, student forums, thematic sessions, or extracurricular programs on preventing school violence. Through these activities, students practice conflict resolution skills, positive communication, and respect for others.

iii. Enhancing the role of homeroom teachers and school organizations.

Purpose of the measure:

To enhance the guidance, supervision, and support of teachers and organizations in educating students on skills to prevent school violence.

How to implement the measure:

Homeroom teachers regularly monitor students' academic performance and relationships within the class, promptly identifying and resolving conflicts. Simultaneously, student organizations such as the Young Pioneers should organize awareness-raising and educational activities to improve students' understanding of preventing school violence.

iv. Strengthening coordination between schools, families, and society.

Purpose of the measure:

To create unity among educational forces in forming and developing skills to prevent school violence among students.

How to implement the measure:

The school regularly communicates with parents about their children's academic performance and behavior through parent-teacher meetings or online communication channels. It also collaborates with social organizations to conduct awareness and educational activities on preventing school violence.

v. Educating people on safe social media use and preventing cyberbullying.

Purpose of the measure:

To help students become aware of the dangers of cyberbullying and develop skills to use social media safely and responsibly.

How to implement the measure:

The school organizes thematic sessions on internet safety and social media skills. Teachers guide students on how to identify cyberbullying, protect personal information, behave respectfully online, and report acts of cyberbullying.

vi. Applying digital technology in education to prevent school violence.

Purpose of the measure:

Leverage digital technology platforms to enhance the effectiveness of education and awareness campaigns on preventing school violence.

How to implement the measure:

The school uses websites, social media, and online learning platforms to share materials, videos, and infographics on preventing school violence. Teachers organize online competitions, forums, or digital learning activities for students to participate in, learn about, and practice skills to prevent violence.

vii. Creating a safe, friendly, and supportive school environment for students.

Purpose of the measure:

Create a positive learning environment where students feel respected, safe, and supported when they encounter difficulties.

How to implement the measure:

The school establishes rules of conduct within the school environment, encouraging a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect among students. Simultaneously, it sets up school-wide psychological counseling and feedback channels so that students can share and seek support when facing violent situations.

*The relationship between the proposed measures:

Educational measures to prevent school violence are developed as a unified, interconnected, and mutually supportive system, aiming to raise awareness and foster positive behavior among junior high school students. In this system, integrating educational content into teaching activities plays a fundamental role, helping students develop a correct understanding; experiential activities provide opportunities to practice and apply skills in real-world contexts. At the same time,

homeroom teachers and school organizations play a guiding and supportive role, combined with coordination between the school, family, and society to ensure consistency in education. The application of digital technology and education on safe social media use contributes to expanding educational forms and enhancing the ability to prevent violence in cyberspace. Furthermore, a safe and friendly school environment is essential for the effective implementation of measures, facilitating students' development of positive skills and reducing violent behavior. Thus, these measures are not separate but form a comprehensive system, contributing to improving the effectiveness of education in preventing school violence.

Conclusion

School violence continues to be a major challenge, negatively impacting the holistic development of students. Based on theoretical foundations, this research proposes a system of educational measures to teach violence prevention skills suitable for junior high school students in Ho Chi Minh City. These measures are interconnected and mutually supportive, aiming to develop the ability to identify, prevent, and respond appropriately to violent situations. The synchronized implementation will not only enhance the effectiveness of life skills education but also contribute to building a safe, healthy, and friendly school environment.

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