


Violence Prevention Policy Practices in Schools: A Systematic Literature Review

M Fahmi Zakariyah ^{1*}, Desika Putri Mardiani ¹, Muchamad Arif ¹, Varia Virdania Virdaus ¹, Yahya Raja Ado ¹, Mochamad Nursalim ¹, Wiwin Yulianingsih ¹

¹ Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

 fahmizakariyah7@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide a comprehensive and systematic review of violence prevention policies and practices in schools, focusing on the key factors that influence their effectiveness and the role of social, cultural and economic contexts. The approach used was Systematic Literature Review (SLR), analyzing 35 articles from highly ranked journals to synthesize evidence on the implementation and outcomes of school violence prevention policies. The review showed that key elements of effective policies include staff training, restorative approaches, mental health support, and inclusive policy design. In addition, social norms, cultural sensitivity and economic resources were found to have a significant influence on the successful implementation of the policy. This study provides practical implications in the form of recommendations to strengthen school leadership, increase community engagement, and prioritize mental health services in violence prevention strategies. This study contributes to the literature by offering a detailed framework for developing more effective and adaptive violence prevention policies, while emphasizing the importance of an approach that is responsive to the local context. The findings of this study offer a novel contribution by integrating contextual factors such as social, cultural and economic factors into the development of a school violence prevention framework, which is often overlooked in previous studies.

Keywords: School Violence, Prevention Policy, Mental Health, Restorative Justice, Inclusive Education

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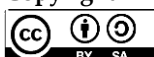
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INTRODUCTION

School violence has become a significant global concern due to its adverse effects on students' well-being, academic performance, and school climate. Incidents of bullying, physical aggression, and cyberbullying have been widely reported, leading to long-term psychological consequences for both victims and perpetrators (Astor et al., 2024; Susanto, 2023). The negative impacts of school violence extend beyond students to affect teachers, school staff, and overall educational outcomes. Unsafe school environments have been linked to increased dropout rates, lower academic achievement, and heightened emotional distress among students (Mayer et al., 2021; Reeping et al., 2021). In response to these issues, various violence prevention policies have been implemented worldwide, yet their effectiveness remains inconsistent across different social, cultural, and economic contexts (Swartz et al., 2016; Hanaya et al., 2020). This inconsistency underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation of existing strategies and the development of evidence-based interventions that take contextual factors into account.

The objective of this study is to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify key elements of effective school violence prevention policies and analyze how social, cultural, and economic contexts influence their implementation. Specifically, this research seeks to

evaluate the effectiveness of different prevention strategies, including legal measures, staff training, intervention program design, and collaboration with local communities (Riwanto et al., 2023; Sandwick et al., 2019). By synthesizing findings from previous studies, this research aims to provide a framework for improving current policy interventions and ensuring their adaptability to diverse educational environments. Furthermore, this study aims to address gaps in the existing literature by exploring how the intersection of policy design and contextual variables can impact the success or failure of school violence prevention efforts.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance school safety and foster a supportive learning environment. Effective violence prevention policies not only reduce violent incidents but also promote positive school culture, inclusivity, and student well-being (Mayer et al., 2021; Reeping et al., 2021). A well-designed policy framework can contribute to safer schools, better student-teacher relationships, and improved mental health outcomes for students (Haugen et al., 2020; Francis, 2022). Despite the existence of various intervention strategies, there is a need to integrate best practices and contextual factors into a unified framework to optimize policy effectiveness. In addition, this study has broader policy implications for educators, policymakers, and school administrators in developing sustainable and culturally responsive approaches to violence prevention.

Previous research on school violence prevention has examined multiple intervention approaches, including positive discipline, anti-bullying programs, and restorative justice (Cascardi et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2022). While some studies highlight the benefits of these policies in reducing violence, others question their applicability across different socio-cultural settings (Swartz et al., 2016; Hanaya et al., 2020). For instance, (Cornell & Limber, 2015) emphasized that staff training enhances policy effectiveness, (W. J. Hall & Chapman, 2018) reported that policy implementation varies significantly across schools. Furthermore, mental health support has been increasingly recognized as a critical component of violence prevention strategies (Francis et al., 2022). Studies have also explored how specific policies, such as zero-tolerance policies and increased school security measures, may inadvertently contribute to higher rates of student criminalization and exacerbate racial disparities in discipline (Madfis et al., 2021; Crawford & Burns, 2015).

Although substantial research has been conducted on school violence prevention, gaps remain in understanding the interplay between policy elements and contextual factors. Existing studies often focus on isolated interventions rather than a holistic framework that integrates policy design, mental health support, and socio-economic considerations (Nishijima & Pal, 2023; Madfis et al., 2021). Moreover, previous studies have largely examined violence prevention efforts in Western countries, with limited attention to how these strategies apply in diverse socio-cultural settings, such as low-income and marginalized communities (Hoefer et al., 2015). This study addresses these gaps by synthesizing findings from various contexts to identify universal and context-specific strategies for effective policy implementation. In addition, this research provides a critical analysis of how economic disparities affect the allocation of resources for violence prevention programs, particularly in underfunded public schools (Francis, 2022; Nishijima & Pal, 2023). By integrating multiple dimensions of violence prevention, this study offers novel insights into the design of adaptive and equitable policies.

A systematic literature review (SLR) was employed as the research methodology, analyzing 35 peer-reviewed articles from high-ranking academic journals. The study followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure a rigorous selection and synthesis process. Articles were retrieved from reputable academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, ensuring a high standard of scholarly credibility (Sdrolia & Zarotiadis, 2019). The review process involved identifying relevant literature based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, conducting qualitative coding of policy elements, and synthesizing thematic findings. To complement the analysis, bibliometric mapping was used to visualize emerging trends in research on school violence prevention (Donthu et al., 2021).

This research offers a novel contribution by integrating findings from previous studies to develop a comprehensive framework that can be used to evaluate and develop school

violence prevention policies. It focuses on identifying the most effective policy elements and exploring the influence of social, cultural and economic contexts in the implementation of school violence prevention policies. Based on this, the research questions raised in this study are as follows:

RQ1. What are the key elements of violence prevention policies that are most effective in improving the safety and well-being of school communities?

RQ2. How does the social, cultural and economic context affect the implementation of violence prevention policies in schools?

This paper is organized into five sections. The first section is an introduction that provides the background to the research and the urgency of conducting this literature review. The second section provides a brief overview of violence prevention policies in schools. The third section discusses the methodology. The fourth section presents the research results and findings. The fifth section is an analysis geared towards answering the research questions. Finally, there is a conclusion that also contains the limitations of this study.

METHOD

This research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to evaluate and synthesize violence prevention policies in schools. This approach is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy practice, implementation and its impact on learners.

a. Time Frame

This literature review was designed to cover a wide range of sources without setting an initial time limit, allowing exploration of older literature relevant to the research topic. However, an upper time limit was set to 2024, so the study only covers data and publications available up to that period. This timeframe was chosen to ensure that the data analyzed covers the full range of violence prevention policy developments, while also taking into account relevant previous research. Articles and policy documents published outside this timeframe were excluded, unless they contained important historical information that supported the analysis.

b. Database Selection

The database selection process is essential to ensure that the articles used in this study come from credible and easily accessible sources. For this reason, relevant publications were identified through the Scopus database using the Publish or Perish software. The Scopus database was chosen because it is one of the largest and most reliable sources in academia, with more than 256 research fields covered and nearly 22,000 journal titles available (Sdrolia & Zarotiadis, 2019b). In addition, Scopus is known for its wide reach and provides access to peer-reviewed articles, which ensures the quality and accuracy of the information obtained. In the selection of this database, only sources that have high credibility and can be accounted for will be used to ensure the validity of the research results.

c. Article Selection

The article selection process went through several stages. First, articles were searched using keywords with an asterisk (*) inserted at the end of each word to ensure wide coverage of lexical variation across articles. Keywords were selected based on references to thesauruses, dictionaries, and related terms in the literature. The literature search used specific keywords, such as "school violence prevention policy," "anti-bullying programs," "restorative justice in schools," and "violence prevention in schools." Logical operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were used to refine the search and ensure the relevance of the articles. Next, an initial screening was conducted based on article titles and abstracts to identify articles that met the inclusion criteria. Articles that passed this stage were then further screened based on the full text to ensure they fit the focus of the study. Inclusion criteria included articles that addressed school violence prevention policies, implementation approaches and impacts; research that focused on primary and secondary education; and publications available in English. In contrast, articles that were not based on

empirical data, not available in full text, or not relevant to the school education context were excluded.

d. Article Classification

Once relevant articles were collected, they were imported into the Covidence application to undergo a screening process according to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. PRISMA is a reporting guideline for systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses, which includes the steps of identifying, selecting, scoring and synthesizing existing articles (Yusoff et al., 2023). This protocol is important to ensure that the articles included in this literature review meet strict criteria and are relevant to the research objectives. At this stage, duplicate articles were removed and filtered based on predefined eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria used in this study are as follows:

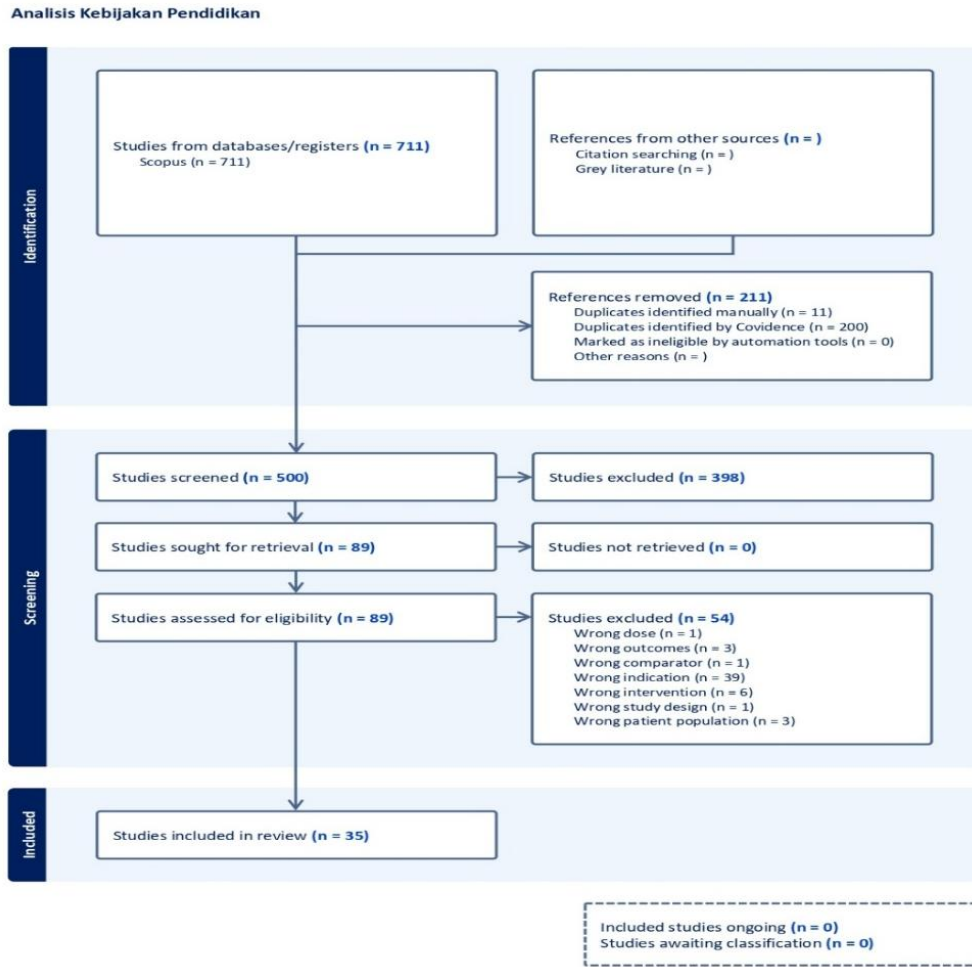
- 1) Articles must come from peer-reviewed journals and be accessible in full; therefore, books, chapters in books, reports, theses, and dissertations were excluded.
- 2) Article topics should focus on school violence prevention policies such as anti-bullying policies, restorative justice, and multitiered approaches.
- 3) Articles should be in English to be understood by international readers and facilitate further analysis.

Table 1 Keyword Search Command

Search Query	Total Articles
Policy* AND school* AND violence* AND (prevention OR intervention*)	150
Anti-bullying* AND policy* AND (school* OR education*)	120
Restorative* AND justice* AND school* AND (policy* OR program*)	100
Violence* AND prevention* AND school* AND (law* OR regulation*)	90
School* AND safety* AND policy* AND (violence* OR bullying*)	80
Teacher* AND training* AND violence* AND prevention* AND school*	50
Student* AND well-being* AND policy* AND violence* AND prevention*	30
Education* AND policy* AND violence AND (<i>impact</i> OR evaluation*)	40
Urban* AND school* AND policy* AND violence* AND prevention*	30
Rural* AND school* AND policy* AND violence* AND prevention*	11
Anti-violence* AND education* AND (policy* OR implementation*)	10
Total articles	711

After obtaining the final dataset, descriptive findings were presented and enriched with bibliographic mapping using VOSviewer software. Bibliographic mapping was created to visualize emerging trends in publications and research constituents as well as to explore the intellectual structure of a particular field within the existing literature (Donthu et al., 2021b). Next, an in-depth analysis of the article content was conducted by synthesizing the relevant components of the most relevant and influential articles to answer the proposed research questions.

Figure 1 Screening Protocol (PRISMA)



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Article Distribution

The literature review analysis collected 35 final articles. The preliminary results illustrate the distribution of articles by publication rank (Scimago), research method, and publication year, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Article distribution

	Publish Year											Total	%
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024		
Rating (Scimago)													
Q1	1	3	2	4	2	0	3	4	4	1	1	25	71.42
Q2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	6	17.14
Q3	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	8.57
Q4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unranked	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.85
Total	1	5	4	5	2	2	4	5	4	2	1	35	100
Research Method													
Qualitative	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	3	1	0	11	31.43

Quantitative	1	3	3	4	1	1	3	3	0	1	1	21	60.00
Mixed methods	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	8.57
Total	1	5	4	5	2	2	4	5	4	2	1	35	100
Source : Author's Own Work													

The distribution of articles in this study included a total of 35 articles published between 2014 and 2024. Based on the journal rankings according to Scimago, most of the articles came from Q1 journals, with 25 articles or 71.42%. Q2 journals contributed 6 articles (17.14%), while Q3 journals recorded 3 articles (8.57%). In addition, 1 article (2.85%) came from an unranked journal. No articles came from Q4 journals. In terms of research methods, articles using quantitative approaches dominated with a total of 21 articles or 60%. Qualitative approaches were used in 11 articles (31.43%), while mixed methods were used in 3 articles (8.57%). The annual distribution showed fluctuations, with the peak of publications occurring in 2015, 2017, and 2021 with 5 articles each. Other years showed a lower number of publications, such as 1 article in 2014 and 2024. This distribution reflects the trend of research focusing on high quality with the dominance of Q1 journals. The preference for quantitative methods indicates the need to generate data that can be measured and statistically analyzed in evaluating school violence prevention policies. This suggests that research in this area has been geared towards providing a strong empirical foundation to support evidence-based policy development.

Table 3 shows the distribution of articles by journal source with the dominance of Q1 journals (71.42%), such as Journal of School Health and Journal of Interpersonal Violence, which contributed two articles each (5.88%). Q2 journals, such as Behavioral Sciences and Applied Economics, contributed 17.14% of the articles, while Q3 journals and the unranked category contributed 8.57% and 2.85% of the articles. Articles came from various disciplines, such as education, psychology, public health, and legal policy, reflecting the multidisciplinary approach in this study. The dominance of high-quality journals indicates the credibility of the sources and the validity of the results produced.

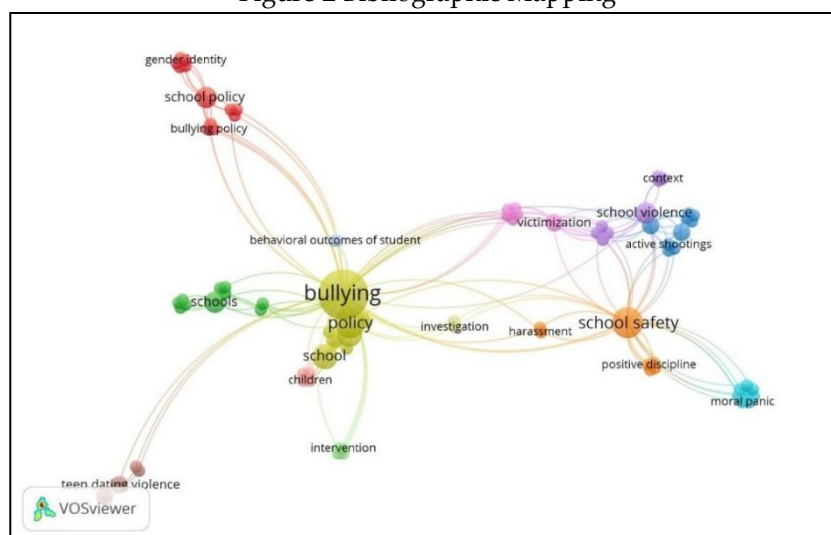
Table 3 Journal Source

Journal	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	%
Africa Education Review	0	0	1	1	2.94
American Journal of Criminal Justice	1	0	0	1	2.94
American Journal of Preventive Medicine	1	0	0	1	2.94
American Psychologist	1	0	0	1	2.94
Applied Economics	0	1	0	1	2.94
Behavioral Sciences	0	1	0	1	2.94
Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal	1	0	0	1	2.94
Current Opinion in Psychology	1	0	0	1	2.94
Education Policy Analysis Archives	0	0	1	1	2.94
Education Sciences	0	1	0	1	2.94
Educational Policy	1	0	0	1	2.94
Educational Psychology in Practice	0	0	1	1	2.94
European Journal of Developmental Psychology	0	1	0	1	2.94
International Journal of Bullying Prevention	1	0	0	1	2.94
International Review of Law and Economics	1	0	0	1	2.94
Journal of Adolescence	1	0	0	1	2.94
Journal of Community Psychology	1	0	0	1	2.94
Journal of Interpersonal Violence	2	0	0	2	5.88
Journal of School Health	2	0	0	2	5.88
Journal of School Psychology	1	0	0	1	2.94
Journal of School Violence	1	0	0	1	2.94

Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research	0	1	0	1	2.94
Justice Evaluation Journal	1	0	0	1	2.94
Middle School Journal	0	1	0	1	2.94
Pediatric Clinics of North America	1	0	0	1	2.94
Pediatric Obesity	1	0	0	1	2.94
Policing	1	0	0	1	2.94
School Psychology Review	2	0	0	2	5.88
Social Science and Medicine	1	0	0	1	2.94
Theory into Practice	1	0	0	1	2.94
Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi	1	0	0	1	2.94

The bibliographic mapping visualized in Figure 2 is organized by co-occurrence of keywords, with a minimum threshold to identify significant clusters in the analysis.

Figure 2 Bibliographic Mapping



Based on the resulting clusters, the main keyword for school violence prevention policies is “school safety” in the blue cluster. Furthermore, “bullying prevention” became the main focus in the red cluster, indicating researchers' attention to specific forms of violence in schools. In addition, some keywords related to “bullying prevention” in the red cluster include “intervention programs,” “teacher training,” and “anti-bullying policies.” Furthermore, “restorative justice,” which is related to conflict resolution and inclusive approaches, is an important keyword in the yellow cluster. Keywords in the yellow cluster also include “mental health support,” “community collaboration,” and “inclusive practices,” reflecting a holistic approach to school violence prevention. The bibliographic mapping also revealed broader policy-related themes in the green and purple clusters, such as “policy implementation,” “program evaluation,” and “stakeholder engagement.” These patterns will be further analyzed by extracting and synthesizing the selected literature.

Table 4 Summary of Selected Studies

No	Author	Methodology	Key Findings
1	(Astor et al., 2024)	Path analysis, data from 6643 teachers, Mplus 8	School policies impact teacher victimization and safety. Positive discipline strategies reduce victimization.
2	(Brown et al., 2022)	Qualitative method, focus groups, semi-	Bullying definitions are often misunderstood. Principals struggle with policy

		structured interviews	implementation.
3	(Cascardi et al., 2018)	State statute and regulation analysis, Chi-square tests	Overlap exists between anti-bullying and teen dating violence laws. Lack of specificity in TDV laws complicates interventions.
4	(Riwanto et al., 2023)	Socio-legal research, comparative legal approach	Collaborative governance is crucial in sexual violence policies on campuses.
5	(Swartz et al., 2016)	Propensity score matching, negative binomial regression	School resource officers (SROs) do not effectively reduce school violence. More place management activities correlate with increased reports of violence.
6	(Mayer et al., 2021)	Literature review, experimental and correlational studies	Bullying prevention programs and mental health support need strengthening.
7	(Reeping et al., 2021)	Literature review, analysis of gun violence exposure data	Bullying is a major risk factor for school shootings. Child access prevention laws can help prevent incidents.
8	(Cornell & Limber, 2015)	Review of school policies and anti-bullying laws	Policies should focus on prevention and training rather than punitive measures.
9	(Russell et al., 2016)	Multi-level modeling, school climate survey analysis	SOGI policies do not significantly reduce reported bullying. Safe spaces for LGBTQ students are essential.
10	(Crawford & Burns, 2015)	School Crime and Safety Survey, negative binomial regression	Armed security guards correlate with increased reports of serious violence. Access-controlled doors reduce weapon incidents.
11	(Madfis et al., 2021)	Review of research on school safety policies	Fear and moral panic drive securitization policies rather than empirical evidence. School security measures are disproportionately applied in marginalized communities.
12	(Hanaya et al., 2020)	Critical realist evaluation, survey analysis	South African school safety policies fail to support teacher agency effectively. Teachers are burdened with additional reporting responsibilities.
13	(Nishijima & Pal, 2023)	Difference-in-difference model, event study approach	Compulsory schooling laws in Brazil show little effect on reducing youth crime. Classroom overcrowding negates potential benefits.
14	(Hoefer et al., 2015)	Mixed linear models, state policy comparison	Stronger civil protection orders correlate with lower TDV rates. Democratic governors are associated with lower TDV prevalence.
15	(Renbarger et al., 2022)	Literature review, policy impact analysis	SROs have mixed effects on school safety. Their presence may criminalize student behavior, particularly in marginalized communities.
16	(McVie, 2014)	Longitudinal analysis, youth crime cohort study	Bullying perpetration predicts later violence; victimization predicts psychological distress. Resilience factors mitigate negative outcomes.
17	(Velez et al., 2020)	Review of restorative justice literature	Restorative practices improve student trust and social skills. Schools need to consider local context in implementation.

18	(Sandwick et al., 2019)	Case study, qualitative interviews, focus groups	Restorative justice reduces suspensions and improves school climate. Whole-school commitment is crucial for success.
19	(W. Hall, 2017)	Systematic review, PRISMA methodology	Anti-bullying policies have mixed effectiveness. Policies protecting LGBTQ students yield better results.
20	(Nikolaou, 2017)	Difference-in-difference framework, probit regression	Anti-bullying laws reduce victimization by 8.4%. Stronger definitions enhance effectiveness.
21	(Hatzenbuehler et al., 2017)	Multivariate logistic regression, policy review	Anti-bullying laws do not significantly reduce disparities in weight-based bullying. Compliance with guidelines improves gender-based bullying outcomes.
22	(W. J. Hall & Chapman, 2018)	Multivariate analysis, school policy evaluation	Implementation fidelity varies widely. High implementation fidelity reduces bullying incidents.
23	(Waasdorp et al., 2021)	Logistic regression, school staff survey analysis	Anti-bullying policies improve staff efficacy but not intervention rates. Additional training is necessary.
24	(Puhl et al., 2017)	Parental survey, chi-square analysis	Parental support for anti-bullying policies is high and increasing. Policies need to be implemented at multiple levels.
25	(Francis et al., 2022)	Scoping review, thematic analysis	Built environment influences bullying behavior. Common bullying locations include classrooms and playgrounds.
26	(Studer & Mynatt, 2015)	Qualitative analysis, mentoring intervention assessment	Collaborative approaches enhance bullying prevention. Emotional intelligence training is essential.
27	(Gower et al., 2017)	Multilevel modeling, student survey analysis	High-quality policies correlate with increased bullying victimization. Policy implementation is critical for effectiveness.
28	(Lessard & Puhl, 2021)	Online survey, linear regression	Weight-inclusive policies reduce educator weight bias. Policies that lack explicit weight language do not reduce bias.
29	(Purdy & Smith, 2016)	Content analysis, policy evaluation	Northern Ireland's anti-bullying policies vary significantly. Many lack clear implementation guidelines.
30	(Haugen et al., 2020)	Content analysis, policy coding scheme	Louisiana district policies show 64% compliance with coding framework. Cultural responsiveness is often lacking.
31	(W. J. Hall & Dawes, 2019)	Policy implementation analysis, school surveys	Higher implementation fidelity correlates with reduced bullying. Training and reporting procedures are critical.
32	(McGeough, 2022)	Case study, legislative review	Iowa Safe Schools Law did not significantly reduce bullying rates. Individual school policies are more effective than state laws.
33	(Tian et al., 2023)	Logistic regression, student survey	Anti-bullying intervention procedures reduce victimization. Other measures show limited effectiveness.
34	(Prince, 2020)	Youth Risk Behavior Survey analysis,	Anti-bullying laws show limited effectiveness in reducing bullying incidents. Implementation

		binary predictor model	remains a challenge.
35	(Davis & Bourne, 2016)	Qualitative analysis, school policy review	Safe School Climate Coordinators improve safety and reduce bullying. Ongoing policy monitoring is essential.

RQ1. What are the key elements of violence prevention policies that are most effective in promoting the safety and well-being of school communities?

Based on the analysis of the 35 research articles identified, it was found that an effective violence prevention policy should include key elements that support the safety and well-being of the school community. These elements include not only aspects of the policy itself but also its implementation and adaptation to local needs. The following are the key elements that emerged from the analysis:

a. School Staff Training and Engagement

Staff training and engagement are critical to improving the effectiveness of violence prevention policies. Studies show that policies alone are not enough; additional training can increase staff self-efficacy in dealing with violent incidents and increase the likelihood of their intervention (Waasdorp et al., 2021). This training includes:

- 1) Reporting and Intervention Procedures: Teachers and staff need to understand how to report and handle violent incidents, as found in a North Carolina study where knowledge of reporting procedures had a direct impact on reducing student bullying rates (W. J. Hall & Dawes, 2019).
- 2) Conflict Management Skill Development: Communication and conflict management skills training helps staff handle situations more effectively without creating additional tension (Davis & Bourne, 2016).

b. Restorative and Collaborative Approaches

Restorative approaches offer a constructive alternative to traditional disciplinary approaches that tend to be punitive. They focus on building healthy relationships between students and teachers, creating a more inclusive community, and reducing the likelihood of conflict escalation.

- 1) Focus on Trust and Ownership: Restorative justice programs increase the sense of ownership among students and strengthen interpersonal relationships. In NYC schools, this approach has reduced incidents of violence and improved overall school climate (Sandwick, 2019).
- 2) Collaboration between Teachers, Counselors, and Parents: Collaborative approaches involving various school stakeholders have been shown to create safe learning environments, such as in middle school efforts that prioritize counselor involvement to support students (Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

c. Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

Mental health plays an important role in preventing school violence. Policies that include mental health services for students can significantly reduce violent behavior:

- 1) Counseling Services for Victims and Perpetrators: Mental health support helps victims cope with trauma and provides interventions for perpetrators to prevent similar acts in the future (Haugen et al., 2020).
- 2) Emotional Wellbeing Programs: Teaching emotional and social skills in schools through programs such as emotion management can help students develop the ability to avoid or resolve conflict (Studer & Mynatt, 2015)

d. Components of a Comprehensive Policy

A well-designed policy should include the following elements:

- 1) Clear Definition of Violence: Policies need to specifically define forms of violence, including physical, verbal, and online bullying, so that staff and students are on the same page (Hall, 2017; Haugen et al., 2020).

- 2) Easily Accessible Reporting Procedures: Effective policies should include safe and anonymous reporting procedures to protect whistleblowers from potential retaliation (Tian et al., 2023).
 - 3) Inclusivity for Vulnerable Groups: Policies that include special protections for vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ students have been shown to have a more significant impact on increasing students' sense of safety (Lessard & Puhl, 2021).
- e. Strong Leadership and Continuous Monitoring
- Strong leadership from school administrators is the cornerstone of successful policy implementation. Administrators play a role in:
- 1) Monitoring and Evaluation: Policies need to be evaluated regularly to ensure their effectiveness. In Connecticut, for example, annual evaluations of school safety policies help adjust strategies to evolving needs (Davis & Bourne, 2016).
 - 2) Providing Operational Support: Administrators should ensure the availability of resources such as training, safety manuals and facilities that support the implementation of the policy (Davis & Bourne, 2016).
- f. Responsive Approach to School Context
- Effective policies must be tailored to the unique context of each school, including student demographics, school size, and past levels of violence. Studies show that schools with specific contexts require different approaches:
- 1) Small vs. Large Schools: Small schools benefit more from a personalized approach, while large schools may require a more organized reporting system (W. J. Hall & Chapman, 2018).
 - 2) Cultural and Social Variations: In some communities, policies need to consider cultural sensitivity to be accepted and effective (Haugen et al., 2020).

RQ2. How does the social, cultural and economic context affect the implementation of violence prevention policies in schools?

- a. Influence of Social Context on Policy Implementation
- Social norms and interpersonal relationships in the school community greatly influence how violence prevention policies are implemented and accepted. In communities with social norms that are permissive of violence, policies often face barriers because behaviors such as bullying are considered part of normal social dynamics (Russell et al., 2016). In addition, stigma and fear of reporting violent incidents can hinder policy implementation, as students fear retaliation or negative labeling from their peers (W. J. Hall & Dawes, 2019). Therefore, policies that provide anonymous and safe reporting procedures are crucial (Tian et al., 2023). Intergroup relations in schools also affect the effectiveness of policies; schools that promote social inclusion tend to create safer environments compared to schools with high social tensions (Sandwick, 2019).
- b. Influence of Cultural Context on Policy Implementation
- The culture of the school community determines how violence is understood and how the community responds to prevention policies. In multicultural schools, policies that are not responsive to cultural diversity are often ineffective (Haugen et al., 2020). For example, certain traditional norms may discourage reporting of violence because it is perceived as violating the “honor” of the family or community (Renbarger et al., 2022). In contrast, approaches such as restorative justice are more accepted in cultures that emphasize harmony and collective conflict resolution (Velez, 2020). Furthermore, traditional gender norms in some communities can exacerbate gender-based violence, which calls for policies that explicitly protect female students and other vulnerable groups (Russell et al., 2016).
- c. Influence of Economic Context on Policy Implementation
- Limited economic resources are a major challenge in the implementation of violence prevention policies. Schools in economically weak areas often lack funds to train staff, provide mental health services, or ensure a safe physical environment

(Francis, 2022; Nishijima & Pal, 2023). Poor physical facilities, such as overcrowded classrooms or unsupervised play areas, increase the risk of violence despite policies (Francis, 2022). In addition, schools with budget constraints often prioritize basic needs, resulting in violence prevention policies receiving less attention and support (Haugen et al., 2020). An adequate built environment and supportive infrastructure have been shown to reduce incidents of violence (Francis, 2022).

d. Interaction of Social, Cultural, and Economic Contexts

Social, cultural and economic contexts interact and significantly influence policy implementation. Schools in communities with high social and economic inequality often face challenges of higher levels of violence and power dynamics that create conflict (Madfis et al., 2021). Differences between urban and rural schools also demonstrate the influence of context; urban schools tend to face higher levels of violence but have greater access to resources, while rural schools often lack financial support despite having closer community ties (W. J. Hall & Chapman, 2018). In addition, bias and discrimination against minority groups, such as LGBTQ students or students of certain ethnicities, often exacerbate inequalities in policy implementation. Policies that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups are necessary to ensure their effectiveness (Lessard & Puhl, 2021).

DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review revealed that the effectiveness of school violence prevention policies is strongly influenced not only by the content of the policies themselves but also by the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which they are implemented. The main findings demonstrate that the most impactful policies are those that incorporate (1) structured staff training, (2) restorative justice practices, (3) mental health and wellbeing support, (4) inclusive reporting systems, and (5) continuous policy monitoring. These elements are most effective when adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of the school community, rather than being applied as one-size-fits-all models.

The results of this study expand the current understanding of school violence prevention by integrating policy content with contextual influences, particularly social, cultural, and economic factors, which have often been neglected in prior research. While previous studies have underscored the importance of clearly defining violence and bullying in policy documents to ensure consistent understanding among school stakeholders, they have not adequately explored how cultural interpretations can affect the enforcement of such definitions. The interpretation of bullying, for instance, may vary significantly across communities depending on prevailing norms and values, a nuance that was overlooked in studies that focused solely on legislative clarity without cultural grounding (Cornell & Limber, 2015).

The implementation of violence prevention policies is often examined through the lens of fidelity how closely schools follow prescribed guidelines. Although research has shown that high fidelity in policy implementation tends to improve outcomes (W. J. Hall & Chapman, 2018), this finding does not fully address the resource disparities that many schools face. Institutions in underfunded districts often lack the financial and human resources necessary for consistent and comprehensive policy execution, a limitation that the current study directly addresses by highlighting the economic constraints faced by marginalized educational environments.

In relation to school safety infrastructure, existing research has frequently focused on the presence of school resource officers and other security measures. While such interventions are intended to reduce violence, studies have shown mixed results regarding their effectiveness and have rarely accounted for the sociocultural acceptability of security presence in different communities (Swartz et al., 2016). This review extends that analysis by arguing that overly securitized approaches can alienate students and staff, particularly in communities with histories of over-policing, and suggests that more culturally sensitive strategies such as restorative justice may offer a more sustainable alternative.

Built environment factors have also been explored in relation to bullying behavior, as seen in studies linking classroom design and space supervision to student safety (Francis et al., 2022). However, those studies often failed to recognize how schools in lower-income areas may be structurally disadvantaged due to limited funding for physical improvements. The present research draws attention to this inequity and argues that any infrastructure-based recommendations must be contextualized within schools' economic realities to ensure feasibility and long-term impact.

Leadership and administrative capacity are also recurring themes in violence prevention literature. Prior findings indicated that school principals often struggle to interpret and operationalize anti-bullying policies due to a lack of clear guidelines (Brown et al., 2022). However, those studies tended to treat the problem as a technical issue, rather than as a symptom of broader systemic challenges such as insufficient training, high administrative workload, and lack of stakeholder engagement. This study reframes the issue by emphasizing the importance of school leadership that is supported not just by policy documents but by collaborative networks and sufficient resources.

Some studies have drawn attention to the connections between bullying and extreme forms of violence, such as school shootings, and have called for more proactive prevention strategies (Reeping et al., 2021). However, their findings often remain contextually bounded, primarily addressing the U.S. educational system without offering flexible frameworks that can be adapted across varying cultural and institutional settings. The present study attempts to bridge that gap by synthesizing international literature and proposing a context-sensitive model that accounts for the diversity of educational environments.

Critiques of securitization in school policy have also emerged, with arguments suggesting that many safety measures are driven more by fear and political pressure than by empirical evidence (Madfis et al., 2021). While these critiques are valuable, they have often lacked concrete, constructive alternatives. This review responds to that need by outlining practical and evidence-based approaches such as mental health integration, inclusive policy design, and trauma-informed practices that prioritize long-term relational change over short-term punitive responses.

Restorative justice has been widely discussed as a promising approach to building community and reducing conflict in schools. However, its implementation has frequently been described as inconsistent and under-resourced, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged populations (Velez et al., 2020). This study builds on that observation by emphasizing the need for systemic support such as funding, training, and leadership commitment to ensure that restorative practices are not only introduced but institutionalized in ways that reflect local values and needs.

In contrast to earlier studies that examined isolated components of violence prevention, this review provides a more integrative and systemic analysis. It brings together key elements such as staff training, mental health support, restorative practices, and leadership with contextual variables like economic conditions, cultural diversity, and community engagement. By doing so, it offers a holistic framework that not only identifies what works, but also explains why and under what circumstances certain policies succeed or fail. This broader, more inclusive perspective contributes to the ongoing development of adaptive and equitable school violence prevention policies that can be meaningfully applied across diverse settings.

The findings of this study have several practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the results can guide school administrators and policymakers in tailoring violence prevention strategies that are not only evidence-based but also socially and economically viable within their unique contexts. Policies that fail to account for local values or are not accompanied by proper training and mental health resources are less likely to succeed. Theoretically, this research proposes an adaptable policy development model, bridging micro-level interventions (e.g., teacher training) with macro-level determinants (e.g., income inequality, cultural beliefs). It encourages future policy frameworks to move beyond compliance and towards community ownership and cultural inclusion.

Despite its comprehensive scope, this study has limitations. First, the review only included peer-reviewed articles from Scopus-indexed journals, potentially excluding valuable insights from gray literature, regional reports, and local case studies. Second, while this study integrates diverse geographic contexts, the majority of analyzed policies originate from Western education systems. This may limit the generalizability of some conclusions to low-resource settings in the Global South. Future research should expand to include non-English sources and explore longitudinal outcomes of implemented policies across diverse school systems.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review highlights the need for school violence prevention policies that are more adaptive and contextually relevant. While existing research demonstrates a variety of approaches, the findings reveal a persistent gap in policies that adequately integrate local social, cultural, and economic factors. The review underscores the importance of comprehensive staff training, restorative justice practices, and the integration of mental health services as crucial components of effective prevention strategies. Additionally, strong leadership, consistent policy monitoring, and sufficient resource allocation play a vital role in ensuring the successful implementation of these measures. However, challenges such as economic constraints and contextual barriers must be addressed to maximize the impact of violence prevention initiatives. Schools in underprivileged areas, in particular, require additional support in terms of training programs, infrastructure development, and accessible mental health services. Furthermore, policies must be designed inclusively, ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ students and socio-economic minorities, through safe and anonymous reporting mechanisms.

To advance this field, future research should broaden its scope beyond Scopus-indexed publications to incorporate insights from other academic databases and gray literature, providing a more comprehensive perspective. By addressing these gaps and strengthening policy frameworks with adaptive, inclusive, and well-resourced approaches, schools can foster a safer and more supportive learning environment. Ultimately, the success of violence prevention policies depends on their ability to proactively mitigate risks, promote positive behavioral change, and create a culture of safety and respect within the school community..

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

MF conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, and supervised the research process. DP conducted the literature review, performed data analysis, and contributed to manuscript drafting. MA assisted in data collection, synthesized findings, and provided critical revisions. VV contributed to theoretical framework development and reviewed relevant policies. YR assisted in reviewing and validating the research findings. MN contributed to the discussion section and ensured methodological rigor. WY provided final manuscript editing, proofread the content, and handled citation management. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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