



## Effective educator training for preventing school violence: Insights from recent studies

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### ABSTRACT

Effective educator training plays a critical role in preventing and managing school violence, fostering safer and more supportive learning environments. Recent studies highlight various training programs' successes and areas for improvement. The Irie Classroom Toolbox, evaluated by Baker-Henningham et al. (2021), demonstrated significant reductions in teacher-perpetrated violence in Jamaican preschools, though it showed limited impact on class-wide aggression. Another study by Baker-Henningham et al. (2019) found that a brief school-based training program in Jamaican primary schools effectively decreased violence against children by teachers and improved classroom environments, despite no significant gains in class-wide child aggression or academic performance. Rodriguez-Oramas (2020) emphasized the importance of qualitative approaches in evaluating early childhood violence prevention. The Dialogic Teacher Training (DTT) method, which focuses on egalitarian dialogue and evidence-based strategies, led to significant changes in educators' responses to aggression, creating a zero-violence environment. Biffi and Bianchi (2021) stressed the necessity of comprehensive teacher training to address violence, highlighting that while international frameworks set the stage, practical training equips educators with critical skills to prevent and address violence effectively. Nkuba et al. (2018) assessed the Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T) intervention in Tanzania, finding it feasible and effective in reducing both emotional and physical violence, with promising initial results, though further research is needed to assess long-term sustainability. These studies collectively underscore that while various training programs have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing violence and improving classroom environments, ongoing development and integration of psychological support strategies are essential for long-term success in preventing school violence.

**Keywords:** Educator Training, School Violence Prevention, Teacher-Perpetrated Violence, Classroom Management, Socio-Emotional Skills.

### INTRODUCTION

Training educators is essential in preventing school violence, as it plays a crucial role in establishing safe and supportive learning environments. Educators who are well-trained can not only identify and address violent situations early but also foster a culture of respect and empathy within the school. A primary goal of educator training is to equip teachers with tools and knowledge to recognize and manage early signs of violence and problematic behavior. Effective training programs incorporate skills in classroom management, conflict resolution, and strategies

to handle aggressive behaviors, helping educators create constructive and peaceful classroom interactions.

Training should also cover theoretical aspects such as developmental psychology and social dynamics influencing student behavior. Understanding the root causes of school violence, including family trauma and emotional difficulties, allows educators to adopt more empathetic and effective approaches. Continuous training should include self-assessment and reflection practices, helping educators refine their skills and adapt strategies to meet student needs. Additionally, integrating psychological support strategies into educator training is crucial. Collaboration with school psychologists and mental health experts provides educators with valuable resources and support, enhancing their ability to address school violence effectively.

Furthermore, training should emphasize the importance of building positive relationships and developing socio-emotional skills among students. Activities that promote empathy, effective communication, and cooperation are vital for fostering a harmonious school environment. Educators trained in these practices contribute significantly to creating an inclusive and respectful learning atmosphere.

Figure 1: Teachers can help prevent school violence.



Source: Kingham (2017).



The study by Baker-Henningham et al. (2021) highlights the effectiveness of the Irie Classroom Toolbox in Jamaican preschools. This cluster-randomized controlled trial showed that the Toolbox, which focuses on classroom behavior management and enhancing social-emotional skills, significantly reduced violence against children by teachers. Although it did not impact class-wide aggression, the Toolbox proved effective in improving teacher practices in low-resource settings.

Baker-Henningham et al. (2019) also examined a school-based violence prevention program in Jamaican primary schools. The study revealed that a relatively brief teacher-training program significantly reduced violence against children and improved the emotional support provided in classrooms. Despite showing no significant effects on class-wide aggression or academic achievements, the program improved early learning skills and classroom quality.

Rodriguez-Oramas (2020) explored Dialogic Teacher Training (DTT), emphasizing qualitative methodologies to assess the impact of early childhood violence prevention. The study found that DTT significantly influenced educators' practices, leading to a zero-violence environment in the nursery, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach in fostering non-violent climates.

Biffi and Bianchi (2021) highlighted the urgent need for effective violence prevention strategies in schools, given the alarming prevalence of violence against children globally. They advocate for comprehensive teacher training to equip educators with the skills to prevent, report, and address violence. Their study, based on a training course in Italy, underscores the importance of building shared strategies among educators to create safer learning environments.

Nkuba et al. (2018) evaluated the Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T) intervention in Tanzania. The study found that ICC-T significantly reduced emotional and physical violence reported by teachers and students and improved teachers' attitudes towards violence. While promising, further research is needed to assess the long-term sustainability of these effects.

López García et al. (2022) investigate the effectiveness of the Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T) intervention in Haiti, a country facing significant challenges related to teacher violence. This study aims to evaluate ICC-T's impact on reducing violent disciplinary practices and enhancing teacher-student interactions in Haitian primary schools. Designed as a two-arm matched cluster randomized controlled trial, the research involves 468 teachers and 1,008 children from 36 schools in Cap-Haïtien. The intervention includes a comprehensive 5-day workshop divided into five modules focusing on improving teacher-



student interactions, maltreatment prevention, effective discipline strategies, identifying and supporting burdened students, and practical implementation in daily school activities. Outcomes will be measured through both teachers' self-reports and children's experiences of violence before the intervention, and at 6 and 18 months afterward. While previous studies have shown promising results for ICC-T in sub-Saharan Africa, this research will be the first to assess its effectiveness outside that region, potentially providing valuable insights into its applicability and impact in a different cultural and socio-economic context.

In conclusion, effective educator training is pivotal in preventing and addressing school violence, significantly contributing to the creation of safe and supportive learning environments. The reviewed studies demonstrate that targeted training programs, such as the Irie Classroom Toolbox and Dialogic Teacher Training (DTT), can substantially reduce violence and improve classroom dynamics by equipping educators with essential skills in behavior management, conflict resolution, and socio-emotional support. While interventions like the Irie Classroom Toolbox and ICC-T have shown success in decreasing teacher-perpetrated violence and altering attitudes towards violence, they also highlight areas needing further exploration, such as the broader impact on class-wide aggression and long-term sustainability of these effects.

The findings emphasize the importance of continuous, comprehensive training that includes both practical techniques and theoretical understanding of developmental psychology and social dynamics. Such training not only helps educators manage and prevent violent behavior but also fosters a positive school culture grounded in respect and empathy. The integration of psychological support strategies and the focus on building positive relationships and socio-emotional skills among students are crucial components of effective violence prevention.

Ultimately, investing in robust educator training programs and supporting their ongoing development is essential for safeguarding students' well-being and promoting a harmonious educational environment. The combined insights from these studies underscore the need for sustained efforts in teacher training and the adoption of holistic approaches to address and prevent school violence effectively.



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