# Peace Culture in School Communities Besieged by Drug Dealing and Poverty: A Utopia?

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### Abstract

This paper elaborates a reflection on the possibility of promoting a culture of peace among the members of a school community that must deal with social conflicts such as drug dealing within the school premises, peer violence and extortion. The question that this paper aims to answer is: how to build a culture of peace in a school inserted in a community characterized by poverty and the daily presence of organized crime? Through a qualitative study it was possible to collect data documenting the intensity of direct violence carried out by criminal groups and the latent violence perceived by members of the school community. It is concluded that, in conditions in which personal integrity is at stake, perhaps the only thing that can be aspired to is to achieve negative peace, since the problems of poverty and organized crime have even exceeded local authorities.

**Keywords:** *Organized Crime; Poverty; School Violence; Negative Peace; Positive Peace; Peace Culture*

### Introduction

If we start from what Galtung (1969) raises about the impossibility of speaking of full peace in conditions where social injustice prevails, then it would be impossible to find peace in societies in which poverty forces people to migrate in search of a better life or to participate in criminal groups to obtain income that allows them to have a decent life. This has effects on the way in which social institutions such as schools operate, where violence is constant, and the aspirations of many young people are aligned with the reduced opportunities for personal development or the options open to them to escape poverty, although these entail delinquency and illegality. However, even in the face of a gloomy outlook, the question arises: can we aspire to build peace, at least negative peace, or at some point could we consolidate a positive peace within schools? It should be noted that this document does not present a proposal to promote a culture of peace, but rather a brooding that aims to provoke dissertations on the feasibility of this task, since the authors are academics who recognize our scope and limitations with

respect to what it happens in Mexican schools, as well as the risks to which we expose ourselves, as teachers or managers, when trying to modify the school reality, affecting the interests of criminal groups.

This study was carried out in a middle school in the State of Mexico, one of the states with the highest population density, outstanding economic activity and outstanding regional diversity (cultural and environmental). The municipalities or counties that make up the State of Mexico have very varied profiles, some are urban with a predominance of tertiary economic activity, others are rural with an agricultural vocation, some concentrate a lot of wealth, while others are distinguished by the poverty of their inhabitants. Thus, while this piece of research was carried out it was highlighted what happens in a school in the County of Tejupilco, which has been taken as the foundation for this study. Tejupilco is located in the south of the State of Mexico. It is one of the counties with the greatest poverty in this State, the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (2020) reports that 59.8% of the population lives in poverty. Regarding the Human Development Index, the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (2015) registers a value of 0.654, which places it at a medium level and in 95th place out of 125 municipalities (counties) that make up the State of Mexico. It has a mountainous and irregular relief, its climate is warm, with favorable conditions for the cultivation of fruits and other products such as corn, beans, squash and sugar cane. Most of its population is dedicated to commerce; however, poor conditions of road infrastructure and telecommunications impede local development. That's the reason why many people emigrate to other cities or to the United States of America, The State of Mexico is one of the five states that receive the most remittances (money from people that has emigrated) and, in turn, Tejupilco is one of the five municipalities or counties in the state with the highest reception (Padilla et al., 2020). The conditions described above have generated that for many years, this county has had the presence of organized crime, for a long time the cultivation of poppies and marijuana by local gangs was something common that did not affect the daily life of the inhabitants, however, the recent presence and dispute among drug cartels has caused armed confrontations and the tranquility of the communities has been disrupted. In addition to this, according to the teachers interviewed for this study, the intense emigration of inhabitants of the municipality means that parents leave their children under the care of grandparents or other relatives, which in turn implies particular conditions of upbringing; From an early age, they tend to spend a lot of time away from home, playing or simply spending time with friends, thus, they establish friendly relationships with peers of the same age and even with adults. Young people living in these conditions are often distracted from school activities, start working in informal jobs, and some are attracted to drug dealing groups that operate in their community.

Around these conditions, the following analytical and somewhat speculative exercise is carried out to assess the viability of transforming the culture of an institution from the conceptual references provided by one of the classic authors of studies for peace. In this way, some studies on the impact that poverty and violence generated by organized crime or other types of actors have on the lives of young students will be presented as background. Subsequently, the conceptual references from which the critical analysis is made are proposed, to give way to the presentation of the methodological procedure and the description of results. Finally, some reflections are presented with which the paper concludes, without this being understood as a closing of the discussion, on the contrary, it is understood as an invitation to continue the dialogue regarding what can be done to promote positive peace in schools, despite the environment around them.

### Context and Background

According to Toro (1995), since the time of the Second World War, Mexico became the main supplier of marijuana to the United States and around the year 1960 began the trafficking of Mexican heroin. By the 1980s, drug trafficking was declared a national security problem in Mexico without the

measures implemented by the national government putting an end to the situation, on the contrary, criminal organizations were strengthened. For his part, Boyer (2001) highlights that in those years cocaine became the new preferred drug on the market, over marijuana and heroin; there is the dismantling of the Cali and Medellín cartels that distributed their product directly to the United States, as well as the opiate routes from Turkey and Asia; Colombian and Mexican mafias create new collaboration networks and the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement opens the borders to Mexican products destined for the United States. The sum of these factors, among other things, shaped a scenario in which the entry of drugs into US territory increased substantially.

That is when Mexico positioned itself as the main supplier of marijuana, cocaine and heroin for the US market, despite the efforts undertaken by the Mexican and US authorities to stop drug trafficking and production. Even as a response to the toughening of the anti-drug policy, the phenomenon of "cartelization" of the market was generated, the traffickers with greater resources faced the prohibitions through corruption and violence, putting small producers out of business or putting them at their service (Toro, 1995).

In this way, around the year 1990 the operations of the cartels become visible to Mexican society, who begin to know the name of organizations, cartel leaders and public officials linked to drug trafficking. Likewise, executions and clashes between cartels are more frequent and strident. At the beginning of the new century, the violence generated by drug trafficking was already present in the streets and homes, so the Mexican government's war with the cartels, declared in 2006, did not give rise to drug violence, it only increased it and gave a different nuance, since the new strategy to combat drug trafficking was carried out by the army, not the police (Ortiz, 2013).

While all this was happening on the international scene, a particular phenomenon had been experienced at the local level since Richard Nixon undertook the so-called Operation Interception in 1969, which had the objective of combating the entry of narcotics through the southern border of the United States. This operation consisted of monitoring border crossings and pressuring Latin American governments to take charge of stopping the production and distribution of drugs, which brought about the destruction of thousands of hectares of marijuana and poppy (amapola) in Mexico, at the same time large quantities of both drugs, in addition to cocaine, were seized. The criminal organizations understood that the crops should be located in more remote and inaccessible areas for the military forces, in addition to deepening ties with the political authorities, which implied corrupting the weakest link: municipal governments. Thus, Operation Interception ended up causing the expansion of drug trafficking to various geographical areas of Mexico (Ortiz, 2013).

In the "Tierra Caliente" area, where Tejupilco is located, the arrival of cartels occurred around 2007, when the war against drug trafficking began and the groups that operated in Michoacán retreated to less exposed areas where they could weave networks with local police; The place was highly potential due to the difficult access to the mountains for the military forces and because it was on the transport route for marijuana and poppies grown in the mountains of Nanchititla, Tarasca and Guerrero. This condition caused the territory to be disputed by different cartels, such as the Michoacán family and the Knights Templar, and armed confrontations became frequent. The result of this was an insecure environment reflected in the distrust of the residents, their reluctance to talk, the continuous circulation of soldiers, extortion of merchants, charging peasants for cultivating their land, warnings for visitors and drug dealing in the communities. (Ramirez, et al., 2010). Currently, organized crime in the region controls basic consumer goods, such as eggs and chicken, by paying a tax that must be paid to the cartel to be authorized to continue selling. The municipal presidency also has to pay a fee to preserve calm in the community, which extends to even the municipal workers, who sometimes stop receiving their salary because the municipal government does not have money to pay the payroll. Thus, the administration in

power must negotiate with the local leaders of criminal organizations to ensure minimum conditions of governance and security (Ibarra, 2021).

*Theoretical Framework*

The problem studied has been approached in different contexts and from different angles. Some authors have analyzed 1) the social climate generated by the actions of armed groups and organized crime, likewise, some more have studied 2) how the violence that occurs in the community affects interpersonal relationships held by peers within the school, and 3) the perspective of peace studies, starting by conceiving the act of organized crime as direct and symbolic violence in order to frame the viability of developing a culture of negative or positive peace within the school. Based on this sequence, a presentation will be made of the findings that precede this research and the conceptual references that guide it.

When analyzing the violence perpetrated by organized crime groups in a semi-urban community, we have focused on thinking about how this is experienced by teachers and students of a high school and how this affects the way of living within that institution. In this sense, it becomes important to know what has been documented about the relationship between crime and other variables such as poverty and school violence.

According to the studies by Guillén (2006), Ortega (2010), Nateras and Zaragoza (2017), Trajtenberg and Eisner (2015), crime does not have a consistent relationship with economic conditions, there are other factors with greater explanatory weight, such as impunity and certain subjective notions related to the commission of the crime. Likewise, in a study carried out in Mexico by Millán-Valenzuela and Pérez-Archundia (2019), it was found that poverty, education and crime are associated; but their influence on crime is indirect when it comes to explaining high-impact crimes caused by organized crime, the opposite happens with non-violent common crimes, in which they do have a direct impact.

In particular, the effects of drug violence in Mexico on university students were studied by Brown and Velásquez (2017), who found that youth exposed to greater local violence achieved significantly fewer years of education, were less likely to complete compulsory education, and had more likely to drop out of school to find a job. However, an interesting element that the study reveals is that this does not seem to be a consequence of the fear of violence, rather it is the result of the financial difficulties of the household, especially for students with parents who work on their own, the labor group most affected economically by the War on Drugs.

Thus, the effect of crime on poverty is exposed. The results of this study provide important evidence of the negative externalities of living in a violent environment on educational training, having the financial link as a mechanism: local violence that restricts economic activity, reduces household resources and motivates early entry. of young men in the labor market to provide additional income for the family, which suggests that the adverse effect of this conflict on the Mexican economy may persist even after the armed confrontations cease (Brown and Velásquez, 2017).

In this order of ideas, it is important to consider that in Mexico, early entry into the labor market entails precarious wages and usually occurs through informal employment, for which the family does not fully meet its needs, it only reaches a suboptimal balance (Millán-Valenzuela, 2019). Given this scenario, an opportunity for social mobility opens up for young people through participation in organized crime groups that recruit students for their service (Romero, 2011). Drug culture manages to penetrate strongly among young people from marginalized areas because it represents an alternative to having a more dignified life, although it also implies risks of death and loss of freedom. The drug trafficker is a figure of power who displays symbols of social and economic success; the characteristic clothing of the drug

trafficker, trucks with tinted windows, gold chains, among other elements, make up regional identities of social differentiation (Alvarado, 2011).

Thus, crime and poverty maintain a complex link that cannot be reduced to a determining causal relationship: being poor does not always translate into being a criminal, but it would be feasible in the case of some communities in Mexico that, because they are not criminals, they live in poverty, therefore, to avoid this condition the subject prefers to join criminal groups.

Now, organized crime in relation to school violence is a relatively new topic. Gonzalez et al. (2013) consider that the study of drug violence in schools begins during the first decade of the 21st century, because as of 2006 President Felipe Calderón declared the war against drug trafficking and that caused the violence to move to the interior of the school. schools, whether through shootings that occurred in school contexts, extortion and kidnapping of teaching staff, assaults on school communities on the outskirts of schools or on the roads they travel to reach them, even practices of the armed groups that some students replicate inside the schools: charges for protection to teachers and students or the games in which students pretend to be hit men.

The irruption of organized crime in school settings can also be seen in the recruitment of students to carry out the sale of drugs inside and on the outskirts of schools. Likewise, to carry out these tasks they hire children and young people who do not study or work or who have been orphaned due to the drug war (Romero, 2011).

The violence that exists in the community will also affect daily life within schools, hence the relevance of the study carried out in Chicago by Burdick-Will (2018) in which an association between exposure was identified to aggression and violence at school and social connectedness: victims of violence were more likely to report that they feel they do not belong in school. In this way we arrive at another central component: what form do interpersonal relationships take in schools characterized by the existence of persistent violence in their environment. In this regard, what is found by Burdick-Will (2018) stands out, who identified that exposure to neighborhood violence is associated with the behavior of students and their participation in the classroom, a relationship explained by stress and behavioral adaptations directed at feel protected from the dangers of the streets. To which we must add that the stress experienced limits attention and reduces impulse control. According to this author, growing up in a violent neighborhood leads to higher rates of aggression and depression, the result of a feeling of hypervigilance and a tendency to interpret the actions of others with a bias towards hostile intent. Young people can also use aggressive behavior as a form of protection; however, this attitude and behaviors can be misinterpreted in the classroom setting and cause their peers and teachers to feel less safe and interpersonal relationships are undermined. Finally, in this study it was found that when students experience higher levels of violence in their neighborhood, the entire school community feels less safe, there are more disciplinary problems, and there is less trust in their teachers. The findings of Chavez (2020) point in the same direction, who reviews a series of studies carried out between 2009 and 2020 regarding the psychological impact of exposure to armed conflicts, which show a significant prevalence of mental health problems in adolescents living in communities plagued by high-intensity violence.

Despite these circumstances, it has not been documented that the violence of the context becomes a causal factor of school violence between peers: bullying. The explanation could be in what Furlong et al. (1996) pointed out several decades ago, the way in which violence is perceived is subjective and is affected by the context: some practices, such as bullying or intimidation, are not perceived by students as violence. Even if one does not consider these behaviors to be forms of violence, they clearly influence the school climate and help create an atmosphere that encourages or tolerates interpersonal or property violence. Therefore, perhaps bullying is not perceived, and this means that it is not possible to record it, even though it exists, and even less to find the possible relationship with the violence of the context. Thus, in places like the United States, where Furlong and his colleagues conduct their study, episodes of deaths caused by shooters inside schools can cause other forms of violence to go unnoticed. In the same

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way, it could be happening in Mexican schools where the exacerbated violence of organized crime that is observed in the streets and in the homes overshadows the seriousness of bullying, sexual harassment, psychological violence and other violent behaviors that are observed in schools.

The latter draws attention to the subjectivity of the violent: a blow ceases to be a violent act when it is part of a game, for some, but not all will conceive it in the same way. Therefore, when talking about violence with the members of a school community they will think of different things, that is when subjectivities become relevant due to the symbolic nature of the phenomenon in question.

In terms of Bourdieu (1999), class differences are reflected in relations of domination. In schools, some young people operate a symbolic capital that manifests itself in symbolic violence: the ability to subdue the members of their community is a kind of magical force that falls on others, sometimes it is glimpsed in the form of charisma, other as generosity or as an outstanding ability and sometimes it can be a personal debt that permanently commits them to their protector. Thus, symbolic violence is this invisible form of violence that operates through the mental categories imposed by the system with the complicity of the dominated. It is a violence that submits without the subject being aware of it because their submission is based on instilled beliefs. Thus, a series of socially legitimized meanings is appreciated that affirm the primacy of the individual in the causality of behavior. This system of meanings contains implicit cultural norms regarding the use of written language, the communication of personal opinions, an interest in the arts and literature, school knowledge, body posture, and the capacity for active participation in collective affairs. Because these practices are far from the cultural dispositions of the working class, they constitute an arbitrary dominant that guides an educational system inherently biased in favor of students from privileged backgrounds (Croizet et al., 2017).

The presence of drug violence and armed groups in the school environment turns into latent violence. According to Galtung (1969), latent violence is something that does not exist, yet it could easily occur. Since violence by definition is the cause of the difference between the real and the potential, between what could have been and what is, there is latent violence when the situation is so unstable that the level of threat intensifies, although it is not visible immediately.

This relationship between violence in the streets and violence at school, requires considering the conditions that prevail in a society regarding the existence or not of peace in order to understand the phenomenon at the micro and macro level. In this order of ideas, two experiences are taken up: Colombia, Ethiopia, Timor-Leste and Mexico, which are analyzed from the theoretical notions of negative peace and positive peace.

Previously, the distinction between the notions in question will be clarified. Although conflicts appear as a constant in the history of humanity, man can live in peace, regardless of ideological, religious or political differences (Calderón, 2009). Thus, Galtung (1969) argues that the term peace is used to achieve the social objectives agreed by the majority of a community, despite the fact that these are complex and difficult to achieve. One of the obstacles to being at peace, always present, is violence, which not only manifests itself in damage to people or objects, it is also integrated into social structures and is shown as inequality of power and consequently as inequality of life opportunities. The latter is also understood as social injustice. Thus, peace is not only the absence of violence, but it also entails the consolidation of a life characterized by social justice.

Herath (2016) recovers Galtung's approaches to specify that negative peace is the absence of direct violence or fear of violence; while positive peace is the strengthening of attitudes, institutions and structures that lead to the integration of people in society. Negative peace is understood as peace without justice: a false sense of peace that often comes at the cost of justice. This condition is delicate because an open conflict may not be appreciated, however, the tensions derived from the lack of reconciliation go unnoticed. On the other hand, positive peace is a true, lasting and sustainable peace built on the basis of justice for all peoples, which implies the elimination of the root causes of war, violence and injustice. In

this regard, Caireta and Barbeito (2005) point out that positive peace is distinguished by the presence of justice, freedom, the maintenance of order and tranquility of the spirit. This perspective places the identification of the basic structural and cultural assumptions to work in the construction of peace. In this sense, it is understood that the construction of a positive peace requires societies characterized by a permanent dialogue for decision-making, which can only be guaranteed by the consolidation of social institutions (López, 2011).

Then, from this referential framework, in the context of the post-conflict in Colombia between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) and the government, a study was carried out with victims of the municipality of Soacha. It was found that the victims identify themselves more with positive peace, because even when they recognize that the ceasefire with the FARC-EP will benefit many regions of the country, the cessation of direct violence is not enough to have a decent life, either due to the precarious socioeconomic situation or the government's neglect to guarantee comprehensive reparation for the damage they have suffered over many years. The victims refer to the need to continue working in the defense of human rights and the promotion of justice and equity (Chávez-Plazas, 2017). In contrast, we have the reference of Ethiopia, where violent conflicts prevail between the government and the armed opposition forces; The population has lived through intense conflicts and episodes of crude violence, caused by ethnic and religious diversity, as well as by competition for resources such as land, pastures and water. In this regard, Tilahun (2015) points out that negative peace is a precondition and a necessity to have a positive peace; relapses to direct violence must be avoided to achieve positive peace, which is a daunting task in extremely poor countries like Ethiopia. Hence, positive peace is not easy to achieve and cannot be understood as a short-term project, it requires a sustainable effort that lays the foundations of a just society: having a genuine and legitimate government, fighting poverty, active participation of all Ethiopian citizens, dialogue between religious leaders, among other things. All institutions must promote a culture of peace that encompasses broadening the understanding of peace and combating structural and cultural violence. In this direction, Cross (2021) declares that transitions do not materialize in the short term, this assertion is based on the study carried out in Timor-Leste, where the transitional justice policies employed have not been as successful as expected due to the impunity that prevails in that country regarding human rights violations, even so, an increasing number of victims has gained an appreciation of their rights and have started to demand the opportunity to exercise them. Behind this change were the persistent calls for transitional justice from civil society and the implementation of programs that provide social assistance to victims. So, Timor-Leste has broken through a structural bottleneck and that allows it to aim a for a long-term transition.

Finally, the previously cited experiences outline a route to follow in Mexico, a country in which there is a desire to achieve positive peace, as in Colombia, but which recognizes that the first thing to be achieved is negative peace, as in Ethiopia. However, Romero (2011) points out that in Mexico the actions and strategies of the police and educational institutions, through the installation of checkpoints or the incursion of the police into schools, do not contribute to the development of positive peace in schools. , it may even be that instead of ending the violence, they encourage armed confrontations or that the perception of these scenarios is promoted as something every day. On the other hand, in Mexico a transition is required in the justice system, similar to the one experienced by Timor-Leste, to consolidate a rule of law that guarantees the human rights of the population. In this sense, schools are overwhelmed, but transformation can begin from these spaces by implementing actions such as those suggested by Romero (2011): it should begin by developing participatory diagnoses, followed by actions that seek to regenerate the social fabric through promote social cohesion in the population and the exercise of citizenship.

Summarizing, in a society such as Mexico with high levels of poverty and with many years suffering from drug violence, it is easy to appreciate the effects on the educational environment, not only in the deterioration of the social fabric but also in the quality of educational relationships. From this base, the possibility of reaching positive peace and what would have to happen to achieve it will be analyzed.

*Methodology*

The study was carried out from a qualitative approach. The setting was a technical middle school offering agricultural training in which young people from 13 to 16 years of age of both sexes study and, it should be noted, it is one of the oldest schools in Tejupilco that at some point had high prestige, but currently the inhabitants of the community think that it is the secondary school more problematic, especially due to peer violence and the drug trade that operates in and around the school.

Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with students and other members of the school community, accompanied by four participant observation sessions. The principle of selecting key actors was used, in such a way, the three tutors and the social worker were interviewed, who have constant and close communication with all the students, especially with those who present academic or personal problems. Subsequently, these actors were the ones who selected eight students from the three existing high school grades, based on the request made by the researchers that they be outstanding or problematic students and that they be influential figures over their classmates. The participant observation sessions were carried out during the entire school day, from when the students took their first classes until they left for their homes, different spaces were visited: classrooms, patios, sports fields, workshops, dining room, bathrooms, offices and the outskirts of the school. the institution. The researchers toured the space and engaged in casual conversations with administrative staff, teachers and dining room staff, and a record was made of what happened, the dialogues heard and the conversations held. Due to the sensitivity of the subject studied, the identity of the participants is not mentioned for security reasons, since anonymity will safeguard their integrity.

The objective was analyze from the subjectivity of school actors how poverty and violence caused by organized crime affect the interpersonal relationships they maintain with other members of their school community, in order to glimpse the feasibility of developing a culture of peace within the school. This led to exploring the ideas and emotions of the actors around the violence and insecurity that characterizes their world of life, from which an analysis was carried out on the possibility of transitioning to a culture of peace in said institution. As theoretical base the notions of negative and positive peace, raised by Galtung (1969) were taken into account.

*Results and Discussion*

The data collected will be presented below, following this order: a) participation of parents in school matters, b) sale and consumption of drugs, c) violence towards the school community, d) violence among peers.

The participation of parents in school matters is usually not active, according to what the study participants refer; however, they do assure that some mothers do get very involved. In the school, mothers can be observed who stand guard during recess to ensure that drug dealers do not approach to sell drugs to students. It should be noted that the latter is possible because the school does not have a perimeter fence at the back, there is only a metal fence that allows anyone to come into contact with young people. Although most students walk home alone at the end of the school day, there is the presence of some mothers who wait outside the school for their sons and daughters to come out to walk them home. At dismissal time, there are also members of the National Guard guarding the school, they carry heavy caliber weapons and are vigilant of people who arrive at the school and pass through the street.

The absence of parents around the monitoring of the academic development of their sons and daughters is mainly due to the fact that they emigrated from Tejupilco and because their work prevents them from attending school meetings or attending subpoenas from the tutors. Some of the most complex cases for the teaching staff are those of those young people with whom it has been impossible to establish communication with parents, despite the fact that there is a written request to talk about the existing problems; Sometimes it is the grandmother who is in charge of caring for the young person who attends,

however, the grandmothers often express that the grandchildren ignore them and it is useless to try to attract their attention. In this sense, it was mentioned that the parenting style that prevails in the community is characterized by granting a lot of freedom to spend time away from home, staying awake until late at night, not demanding the completion of schoolwork, or being interested in social relations of the young people (with whom they relate and what they do with their friends). This distance from the parents is related to the conditions of poverty that characterize the community, the absence is mainly due to the need to work outside the municipality due to the reduced work options in the locality (coupled with precarious wages).

It should be noted that some students already work, which confirms what Millán-Valenzuela (2019) and Brown and Velásquez (2017) pointed out about early insertion into informal work and possible dropout from studies; When they leave school, the students join a work day with the authorization or requirement of their own parents, one works collecting the fare in public transport vans, another works in a vulcanizer and one more is a bricklayer's assistant, the latter works with his father as punishment for bad behavior at school. Thus, as Alvarado (2011) mentions, all this places young people in less favorable conditions exposes them to the influence of criminal groups, because work leads them to live with all kinds of adults and to feel pride in obtaining their own resources, which they show off to their peers and positions them above the rest, thus preferring to work rather than study. Furthermore, if we consider the weight of poverty not only resides in the person who lives it but also in the stigma that the rest of the community is in charge of placing on the person, we can understand how the drug trafficker's lifestyle easily penetrates the aspirations of young people. Although none of the students interviewed said that they aspire to be part of organized crime, diverse answers were found regarding their life plan, the outstanding female students aspire to study a bachelor's degree, the rest plan to study high school and perhaps find a good job. worked. All the interviewees mentioned their desire to have a life with less deprivation, but in the case of men it was not clear how they would achieve it. In contrast, the teachers interviewed report that there are students and parents who are members of organized crime.

Thus, there is a coincidence with the findings of Millán-Valenzuela and Pérez-Archundia (2019), there is no absolute and direct causal relationship that indicates that being poor will make you a criminal. Participation in high-impact criminal activities is mediated by different factors, first of all, not all young people living in poverty join organized crime and those who do may find different motivations, either the economic aspect or the social status afforded by being a member of these groups. The students interviewed will not necessarily become drug traffickers, however, the conditions that surround them make them vulnerable to being co-opted by the cartels.

At this point, it is necessary to point out that in the school studied there are those responsible for dealing with cases of bad behavior and low achievement, entering into communication with the parents to find out what is happening with their son or daughter, as well as generating agreements that favor the resolution of the problems presented. In addition, home visits are made to students who have poor academic achievement due to family, economic or health reasons, and collective activities are carried out to promote healthy lifestyles, such as campaigns against addictions, among other things. However, the impact that this has on the educational performance and behavior of young people is limited, as it was said before, the parents of problematic students do not usually get involved in school activities despite being visited at home, favoring conditions of greater freedom for young people to participate in criminal activities and replicate practices of armed groups within the school, as pointed out by González et al. (2013) and Rosemary (2011). What Burdick-Will (2018) refers to also seems to be true, with respect to living in a violent context leading the subject to feel insecure at school and experience a feeling of not belonging to this institution, for which it is preferred to start life labor.

This kind of activities opens the way to the second subheading of the section, sale and consumption of drugs. Alcohol consumption among young people who study middle school is a common problem in the State of Mexico, however, drug use has a particularity in Tejupilco, unlike other

municipalities in the same federal entity. In this municipality, the consumption of marijuana is common and, according to what the teaching staff of different schools points out, there is no higher level of consumption among the members of this community. What is observed as a substantial difference is the active and open participation of some students in the sale of narcotics, mainly marijuana. Testimonies were obtained of the sale and consumption of drugs inside and outside the school by students, as documented by Romero (2011) in addition to the fact that there have been threats towards the teaching staff of the institution when they have tried to stop these activities. At school parties, young people often get drunk and some of them have been found with drugs among their personal possessions. It is highly surprising that the attitude of young people has been one of indifference, despite the implications of latent violence that this behavior entails, considering that in a state of intoxication reckless and offensive acts are more likely to be committed, the community is shown in the terms referred to by Furlong et al. (1996): some practices are not perceived as violence. Coexistence with alcoholics at school is perceived as something natural, something that does not imply the risk of suffering aggression or foster interpersonal conflicts. An attempt has been made to speak with the parents of those who are involved in these activities and they have been channeled for their attention at the Center for Primary Attention in Addictions, however, the results have been meager. It is worth emphasizing that it is men who are more involved in illicit activities and drug use, although alcohol use is widespread, without gender differences. It should not be forgotten that, as Burdick-Will (2018) mentions, these conditions impact the mental health of young people, exposure to neighborhood violence limits attention and reduces impulse control, generating a deterioration in human relationships and the school climate.

What has been stated in the previous paragraph has dire consequences in the school community, corresponding to the third subtitle, this has generated constant episodes of direct and latent violence, following the categories proposed by Galtung (1969). The case was presented of a teacher who was forcibly removed from the school by a drug dealing group in retaliation for promoting the non-consumption of drugs and preventing the sale of marijuana inside the school, the teacher was held captive for several days, until he paid an amount of money and promised not to continue with the actions taken at the school, in addition to ensuring that he would provide protection in the institution to young people who sell drugs. One more example is a teacher who, on the way from the city of Toluca, where she lived, to her workplace in the south of the State of Mexico, was detained for several hours by organized crime, who knew her identity well. Well, after a while, because she was the community teacher, they let her go. Several thoughts passed through her mind, among which the possibility that she would be killed appeared, a clear example of what is called latent violence, because although there was no direct damage, the threat of losing her life is enough to cause a profound impact on the mind and emotions of the victim.

These experiences have caused the other teachers to see themselves as possible victims since the same thing could happen to any of them. Teachers and students are part of a system of domination directed by criminal groups; In terms of Bourdieu (1999), there is a complicity between the dominator and the dominated: not claiming or denouncing extortions and collections allows them to avoid greater damage to their integrity. However, a normalization of violence is also perceived, the actors interviewed assume the events as something they must deal with, they are concerned without feeling overwhelmed. As I have said before, the naturalization of violence pointed out by Furlong et al. (1996), can help to understand that the charge for protection or the intimidation suffered within the school are seen as things that must be dealt with because that is the reality in which they live.

Regarding the fourth element of analysis, it stands out that family dynamics, addiction of young students and the irruption of organized crime in school life have configured an institutional scenario in which violence between peers also has a strong presence and is related to precarious educational results. There is a generalized notion among the school community that students with poor educational attainment are distinguished by not receiving enough attention at home, to which we must add that young people themselves do not make enough effort: they miss classes a lot and do not deliver. works. It should be noted that young people do not believe that their condition of poverty determines their performance, they

consider themselves personally guilty of their results, because for them grades are not something that deserves concern; What absorbs your time and energy the most are meetings with friends, dating relationships and family problems: separation from parents, absence of father and / or mother, financial shortages, long working hours of their parents, among other concerns. This seems to confirm what was said by Croizet et al. (2017) regarding the systems of meanings that surround the subjects and that determine their behavior: in a community in which formal education does not represent a tool for social and economic success, it becomes unnecessary to study and they are assumed as priorities having fun or dealing with family conflicts.

The impression of the study participants is that students with low grades are influenced by the conditions of the family environment, causing disinterest, fatigue, indiscipline and lack of participation. It must be added that, in this particular school, students with low grades are generally those who intervene in acts of aggression or violence towards their peers. According to what they obtained in the interviews, they are young people who get into fights because they feel frustrated and angry, which may be related to what Chavez (2020) said about the impact on mental health suffered by young people when exposed to high-intensity violence. There have been fights triggered by a look that was considered offensive, by jealousy towards the couple or simply by bravado of those who are involved with criminal groups. To this must be added that students who are part of drug dealing groups, position themselves before the rest of the school community (teachers, administrators and students) as those who decide what to do and what not to do. In terms of Bourdieu (1999), these students make use of a symbolic power in the school. The administrators and teachers are overwhelmed in their attempts to prohibit the sale of narcotics and the consumption of alcoholic beverages within school facilities. In this regard, according to Chávez-Plazas (2017) y Cross (2021), it is necessary to work so that the school community recognizes the domain of justice, so that violence is approached from an appropriate approach: the legal framework. As Tilahun (2015) mentions, the absence of violence is the first step that should be taken, only in this way can it be possible to move towards a society characterized by social justice and respect for the rule of law, however, the work of the school community is is restricted by being inserted in a community where impunity and corruption are the hallmarks of public administrations, as Cross (2021) points out, justice and respect for human rights cannot be achieved under these conditions.

### Conclusions

This study documents the transfer of drug violence that operates in the community to the interior of schools in the form of extortion, intimidation, fights between students and drug sales. Likewise, an indirect relationship was found between poverty and involvement in organized crime activities. The lack of opportunities for social mobility of young people means that participation with organized crime groups is one of the few options to get out of poverty, therefore, the insufficient presence of variables such as the possibility of pursuing higher education or having a Well-paid formal employment seems to be what positions the economic dimension as a determining factor. In addition, this occurs in a context in which drug violence has become naturalized and the social priorities are not social justice or citizen participation, but rather resolving the crises that are experienced within the home and having the essential resources to satisfy basic needs.

Within the conditions described above, the integrity of the school community is under constant threat: direct and latent violence are part of the daily routine. Now, in Tejupilco county, physical violence is not the only threat, poverty and the lack of a rule of law present a scenario of social injustice, structural or symbolic violence, which is manifested in the absence of peace. This, without a doubt, has caused family relationships, between peers and between members of the school community, to deteriorate. The ability to concentrate on learning and teaching is not the same when organized crime and poverty appear within classrooms and homes, so perhaps the only thing that can be aspired to is to achieve a negative or partial peace. At least in the short term, managers and teachers can focus on avoiding direct, physical or

symbolic violence, since the problems of poverty and organized crime have even surpassed local authorities.

In the long run, you can think of a positive peace within the school promoted through new discourses, ways of interacting and ways of conceiving the other. This task seems complicated because structural problems go beyond the school and its members, however, it can be thought of trying new forms of coexistence within the institution, characterized by dialogue, inclusion, peaceful conflict resolution, empathy, respect for the rules and democratic participation. Of course, the support of public institutions is essential, public security, social programs to combat poverty, sports and culture programs should be strengthened, so that the school community sees social injustice diminished and can envision a more promising future. Despite how utopian this may seem, we can close with two sentences: 1) it is urgent to stop the existing violence, to achieve negative peace; 2) It is essential that the schools make visible to young people that there are other ways of living in community and relating to others, despite what happens in the environment, the school must position itself as a sanctuary in which positive peace is fostered.

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