

School violence and convivencia escolar in Chilean public policy in the post-pandemic context

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Abstract

The return to in-person schooling after the pandemic heightened public concern about school violence and *convivencia escolar* in Chile. This study examines how the Chilean Ministry of Education constructs these phenomena. Using critical discourse analysis, we analyzed 34 official documents published between 2022 and 2024. The analysis involved coding excerpts referring to violence, *convivencia escolar*, and mental health, examining recurring discursive strategies, and grouping the excerpts into interpretive repertoires according to shared semantic and pragmatic patterns: (a) From conflict to violence: an institutional reading; (b) School violence and *convivencia* as objects of institutional regulation and control; and (c) *Convivencia escolar* as formative learning. The findings are discussed in relation to tensions among punitive, regulatory, and formative approaches, as well as school management. Limitations include the exclusive use of Ministry documents and the inability to generalize the results.

Introduction

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education has reconfigured institutional discourses and practices on school violence and *convivencia escolar*, thus raising new tensions in public policies on the matter.

The concept of *convivencia escolar* does not have a direct equivalent in English. In various academic and policy contexts, it has been translated as “school coexistence” or “school climate” or framed in opposition to school violence. However, these translations fail to fully capture its original meaning and sociocultural nuances. To preserve its conceptual integrity, the term *convivencia escolar* remains in Spanish throughout this article. In this study, *convivencia escolar* is understood as a formative, collectively constructed process in educational communities that promotes democratic, inclusive, and peaceful relationships, enabling constructive conflict resolution and the protection of participation and rights for all members (Andrades-Moya, 2020; Carbajal-Padilla & Fierro-Evans, 2019).

In Chile, the political response following the pandemic has involved the Chilean Ministry of Education (Mineduc) designing support documents for schools. Using critical discourse analysis, this study analyzed the interpretive repertoires that shape *convivencia escolar* and school violence in Mineduc’s guidelines between 2022 and 2024, examining their implications for educational communities.

The lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had consequences at the social and educational levels. Although studies reported lower bullying rates during the pandemic (e.g., Stewart et al., 2024), international evidence

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shows an increase in other problems faced by children and adolescents during that period, such as dating and family violence (Cheng & Gerassi, 2024; Morales-Chainé et al., 2023) and suicide at younger ages (Zhu & Crawford, 2023). Private spheres became critical for students, affecting couple and family relationships (Afshari et al., 2024; Ventura-León et al., 2024). Although positive attitudes and perceived self-efficacy are effective strategies for coping with the psychosocial consequences of isolation (Fernández-Millán & Bretones, 2020), in general, the greater the restrictions, the worse the mental health of the population (Garthe et al., 2023; Källmen & Hallgren, 2024).

In the case of teachers, these problems intensified their work by increasing their responsibilities and eroding their free time, because they were constantly required to address school-related problems (Santos-Bicalho et al., 2023). The extended closure of schools caused a delay in school achievement milestones and higher dropout rates (Barnes et al., 2024; Goh et al., 2023; Musoke et al., 2024). Likewise, adjustments in calendars and educational programs affected progress and grades, which increased teenage pregnancy and teacher discouragement (Ndejjo et al., 2023). This all implied the deepening of learning gaps (Arrieta-Cohen et al., 2024).

Once face-to-face classes resumed, different problems became evident across educational systems. International evidence reported increases in school victimization, bullying, anxiety, violent behavior, and mental health problems among children and adolescents in different national contexts. In Latin America and the Caribbean, prolonged isolation deepened academic gaps and educational inequalities, particularly among students from less educated families. In Chile, reports of school violence increased considerably at the beginning of 2022, leading to social concern and to a public discourse of fear and worry after a return described as ‘abrupt’ by experts and educational communities (López et al., 2022; Rojas-Andrade et al., 2024).

School violence and *convivencia escolar* as political discourse

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, discourses have pragmatic consequences that can be analyzed based on their function and linguistic variability (Wetherell & Potter, 1996). Thus, certain government documents can operate as devices to normalize interventions for certain social groups (Calquín-Donoso et al., 2020). Within this perspective, interpretive repertoires are understood as relatively stable systems of terms, descriptions, and figures of speech that institutions use to construct versions of reality (Wetherell & Potter, 1996). Their analysis makes it possible to identify recurring discursive patterns, rhetorical strategies, and ideological tensions through which public policies define problems, allocate responsibilities, and legitimize forms of intervention. In educational policy research, interpretive repertoires allow the examination of how institutional discourses construct school violence and *convivencia escolar* as governable objects. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the discourses on *convivencia escolar* policies constitute a framework for educational action. In Chile, these discourses confront a punitive approach with a formative approach (Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2018) and offer definitions of *convivencia* that are strained between approaches from a solely judicial, security, and development perspective (López et al., 2020; Morales & López, 2019). These policies, dominated by technical and administrative logics, create an environment that hinders the promotion of democratic and participatory *convivencia escolar* (Ascorra et al., 2019). However, policies in this area have evolved toward the creation of management structures aimed at democratizing school governance, such as the establishment of *convivencia escolar* teams to address issues of violence in schools, led by a designated *convivencia escolar* coordinator (Mineduc, 2024b).

Research has shown that regulations on school violence in Chile represent the exercise of disciplinary power, with sanctions and individualizing practices (Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2012; López et al., 2011). Many times, this is complemented by fatalistic hegemonic discourses aimed at stigmatizing schools and individualizing and pathologizing violence (Patierno & Southwell, 2020; Saez & Silva, 2017).

In Chile, until before the pandemic, school staff members relied on discourses and meanings about school violence and *convivencia* organized in two logics: a standardizing, individualizing, and results-oriented one, with a medical, accountability, and disciplinary approach; and a community-based one, focused on difference and oriented to the educational process, with a collective and socioemotional approach (Ascorra et al., 2018). This variability, consistent with political tensions, shows its performative effects based on which approaches are legitimized and which are

marginalized, thus shaping the practices and responses of educational communities when facing school violence and *convivencia*.

At the international level, these tensions do not represent a singular feature of the Chilean case; rather, they form part of a broader field of discursive problematization surrounding school violence and *convivencia escolar*. Several studies show that equity-oriented policies can operate as performative devices when technical-administrative rationalities and neoliberal logics frame them in ways that privilege institutional management and accountability over structural transformation, thereby constraining their democratizing potential (Eizadirad & Walton, 2025).

Scholars have also traced how actors have historically reconstructed school violence as an object of knowledge through the articulation of disciplinary and pastoral power, expanding intervention into students' emotional and family lives and consolidating technologies of self-regulation that echo the individualizing practices identified in Chile (Axelsson, 2026). In this vein, researchers have problematized the category of bullying as a moral construction that delineates responsibility, distinguishes between "normal" conflict and exceptional violence, and produces self-governing subjects, reinforcing preexisting school orders under the guise of technical neutrality (Ellwood & Davies, 2010).

The articulation between micro- and macro-levels of discourse further clarifies how these rationalities take shape in situated practices. For example, the identity of the victim emerges as an effect of interpretive repertoires that oscillate between innocence and provocation, reproducing moral hierarchies and attributions of blame that resonate with the processes of individualization described in the Chilean context (Karagianni & Sapountzis, 2023). Similarly, appeals to democratic citizenship and the role of the bystander can generate ambivalent effects when inclusive language shifts collective responsibility toward individualized solutions, thereby limiting the political dimension of *convivencia* (Sapountzis & Karagianni, 2022).

Researchers have also conceptualized violence as a resource for negotiating status within masculine hierarchies structured by exclusionary forms of cultural capital (Klein, 2006). In elite contexts, the intersection of disciplinary traditions and market logics shapes how schools manage their reputations and discursively reinscribe violent incidents (Saltmarsh, 2008). More recently, scholars have framed violence as a socio-material assemblage shaped by ableism and affective economies that produce everyday forms of exclusion, shifting attention from exceptional events to systematic processes of normalization (Straus et al., 2025).

Based on these tensions, this study addressed the following research questions: What political framework on school violence and *convivencia escolar* emerged in Chile during the post-pandemic period? What political discourses are configured around these phenomena, and what discursive practices do they entail? Accordingly, the objective of this study was to analyze the interpretive repertoires on *convivencia escolar* and school violence constructed in Chilean ministerial guidelines published between 2022 and 2024, discussing their implications for educational communities. Over the past two decades, the notion of *convivencia escolar* in Chile has sought to consolidate itself as a paradigm grounded in an ethic of care, progressively displacing a model centered on discipline and behavioral control. In this sense, *convivencia escolar* has been framed as a formative and democratic approach, although it continues to coexist with regulatory remnants (Mineduc, 2024b).

Research context

The psychosocial impact of lockdown contributed to the development of a generalized climate of fear and insecurity in educational settings (McMahon et al., 2022), which is a particularly troubling scenario, because schools have been reported in the global literature as increasingly safe places for children and adolescents (Verdugo & Schneider, 2023). Although the most visible effects of the pandemic, such as the use of facemasks and physical distancing, have disappeared from schools, its multiple psychosocial impacts persist (Sylvan et al., 2024). This has led to the implementation of government programs to mitigate long-term effects (Bracco et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2025; Musoke et al., 2024) and turn schools into protective environments (Shayo et al., 2024).

In Chile, in March 2020, the Social Roundtable COVID-19 (*Mesa Social COVID-19*) was created, composed of health experts, researchers, and authorities. Based on public health and community mental health approaches, the

roundtable recommended promotion, prevention, and mitigation strategies focused on the well-being of the educational community (López et al., 2025; Rojas-Andrade et al., 2024). Based on these recommendations, since 2022, Mineduc (2024a) has promoted *convivencia escolar* and mental health in its educational reactivation policy. To ensure effectiveness, this strategy must include families and the community, foster collaboration, guarantee inclusion, and ensure clear governance and a comprehensive understanding of the approach (López et al., 2025).

In Chile, during the first six months of 2022, 2,968 reports of violence within schools were filed with the Superintendence of Education—1,700 more than those submitted during the two years of pandemic-related restrictions (Rodríguez-Pastene et al., 2025). Reports of violence among students increased by 56.2% compared to 2018 and 2019 (Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2022). Likewise, reports of mistreatment against adult members of the educational community rose from 52 in 2021 to 264 in 2022, demonstrating a significant increase following the return to in-person schooling (Aqueveque Muñoz et al., 2025).

However, certain conditions could constitute barriers to these initiatives. Chile is a highly neoliberal country, where public policies based on the new public management approach prevail (Sisto et al., 2021). This approach applies market and business management principles to educational administration, promoting elements such as accountability, evaluations, standards, decentralization, and competition among institutions to improve quality (Portales & Vásquez-Heilig, 2015). These policies reproduce the conditions of social exclusion and inequalities in the country. Even during the first months of the pandemic, the state imposed the exclusive responsibility for academic results on schools, without considering the socioeconomic and structural conditions of the moment. This accentuated the priority of quantitative indicators over educational well-being and therefore did not protect the school system (Sisto, 2020).

Despite this backdrop, there is currently a context of educational reform in the country involving the installation of a new public education model (*nueva educación pública*) that, although reproducing the new public management approach, seeks to challenge the marketized tradition, trying to move toward higher levels of inclusion and social justice (Corral et al., 2024). These political tensions are typical of the Chilean educational system, in which a contradictory and hybrid logic has historically prevailed (Ascorra et al., 2019) and remains present in the different understandings of approaches to school violence and *convivencia* in Chile.

Methods

This study involved critical discourse analysis of political documents. Following Wetherell and Potter (1996), discourse has pragmatic consequences in the construction of society. Based on their recommendations, this study analyzed interpretive repertoires, understood as relatively stable discursive and linguistic structures that construct versions of reality. They rely on metaphors and discursive figures of speech such as factualization, depersonalization, listings, and discursive ventriloquism, among others, and possess a certain level of variability—i.e., they change depending on the objectives being pursued, with a specific style and grammar (Mattingsdal-Thorjussen & Wilhelmsen, 2025). In recent years, they have been used globally to account for the power structures and legitimization of certain narratives (Goodman et al., 2024); learn how educational communities interpret and justify their experiences and practices (Mattingsdal-Thorjussen & Wilhelmsen, 2025; Rousaki et al., 2025; Skjelstad & Ellefsen, 2024; Werbińska, 2023); and analyze the implications of certain government documents (Calquín-Donoso et al., 2020).

Regarding the study procedure, we began by selecting and downloading all documents published between 2022 and 2024 on Mineduc's official website, specifically within the section "*Convivencia para la Ciudadanía*" (Mineduc, n.d.), which compiles ministerial materials related to *convivencia escolar* and school violence. We conducted an exhaustive review of that section for the defined period and did not use keywords, since the universe of analysis included all documents available in that space during those years. We identified a total of 64 documents. We excluded materials whose authorship did not correspond directly to Mineduc—even if the platform hosted them—as well as documents that were purely informational or intended for general dissemination and did not provide guidelines, orientations, or directives for schools. As an inclusion criterion, we considered only official documents issued by Mineduc that offered explicit guidance on matters related to school violence, *convivencia escolar*, or mental health in

Table. 1 Analyzed documents.

	Year	Document
1	2022	Understanding and Caring for Mental Health in Educational Communities [CCSMCE, based on its Spanish acronym]: Primer 1. Mental Health Strategy in Educational Communities: Approaches and Fundamental Concepts
2	2022	CCSMCE: Primer 2. Arts and Physical Activity as Essential Elements of Holistic Wellness: Tools and Recommendations for Educational Teams
3	2022	CCSMCE: Primer 3. Procedural Guidelines for the Detection, Referral, and Follow-Up of Students for Mental Health Care between Schools and the Public Health System
4	2022	CCSMCE: Primer 4. Procedures for the Detection, Referral, and Follow-Up of Situations of Student Rights Breaches
5	2022	Guidelines to Promote Attendance and Continuity of Educational Pathways in Kindergarten and Middle School Levels
6	2022	Recommendations of the Advisory Council on Convivencia Escolar, Wellness, and Mental Health for Educational Reactivation
7	2023	10 Ways to Ensure Collaborative Conflict Management in Your Educational Community
8	2023	Worksheet for Teaching Teams: Self-Care: Caring for Those Who Care
9	2023	Advisory Council for Convivencia, Well-Being, and Mental Health in Early Education: Systematization of Ideas and Proposals
10	2023	Handbook of Wellness and Occupational Health of Educational Teams: Strategies from Management and Leadership
11	2023	Thematic Orientation (TO) 1: What are the Regulations that Protect the Rights of LGBTQIA+ Students?
12	2023	TO 2: What are the Concepts that Allow Us to Know, Understand, and Dialog with a Respectful and Values-Oriented Attitude towards LGBTQIA+ Students?
13	2023	TO 3: What Opportunities do Circulars N°707 and N°812 Provide for the Protection of the Rights of LGBTQIA+ Students?
14	2023	TO 4: Educational Experiences for the Protection of the Right to Education and Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Students
15	2023	TO 5: What is the Role of the Educational Community in Protecting the Mental Health of Students with Diverse Gender Identities and Sex-Affective Orientations?
16	2023	TO 6: Why Talk about Comprehensive Sexual Health in Educational Communities?
17	2024	Nonsexist Education Resource Kit
18	2024	Inclusive Education: Guidelines for Safeguarding the Welfare of Students with Diverse Gender Identities and Sex-Affective Orientations in the Chilean Educational System
19	2024	Orientations for the Day against Cyberbullying
20	2024	Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Emergencies in Critical Situations, Constituting a Crime, which Seriously Impact the Welfare of Educational Communities
21	2024	National Policy on Educational Convivencia: Framework for Action and Institutional Vision
22	2024	National Policy on Educational Convivencia: Action Plan 2024–2030
23	2024	Primer 2: Starting the Path of Convivencia as a Family
24	2024	Primer 3: To Coexist is Learned from Early Childhood
25	2024	Primer 4: To Coexist is a Lifelong Learning Process
26	2024	Primer 5: Educational Convivencia in Rural Multigrade Schools
27	2024	Primer 6: Learning to Coexist in Justice, Democracy, and Peace
28	2024	Primer 7: Inclusive Convivencia
29	2024	Primer 9: From the Episode to the Situation
30	2024	Primer 10: How to Prevent and Address Violence in the Educational Community?
31	2024	Primer 11: Forming and Managing the Educational Convivencia Team
32	2024	Primer 12: Management of Territorial Networks for the Continuous Transformation of Educational Convivencia
33	2024	Guidelines for the Educational Convivencia Day
34	2024	Guidelines for the Internal Regulation Revision Session

the postpandemic context. This process resulted in a final corpus of 34 documents (860 pages), which we analyzed in

full. Six documents were published in 2022, 10 in 2023, and 18 in 2024. The period from 2022 to 2024 was selected because it corresponded to the post-lockdown period following the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 describes the documents analyzed.

All primary documents analyzed were originally published in Spanish by Mineduc. We did not translate the documents in full; we translated only the excerpts selected for analysis and presentation in the article. The research team carried out the translations, and one of the authors—who is both an education researcher and formally trained as a professional translator—systematically reviewed them. This process included cross-checking and collective discussion of excerpts whose meaning could present ambiguities relevant to the discursive analysis. We prioritized preserving the semantic meaning, tone, and pragmatic function of the statements over producing strictly literal translations. We also paid special attention to culturally situated terms, such as *convivencia escolar*, which does not have a direct equivalent in English and therefore remains in Spanish throughout the text.

We coded the documents by extracting textual excerpts that explicitly referred to “coexistence” (*convivencia*), and “violence” (*violencia*) which we transcribed into an Excel analysis matrix. This process yielded 23 excerpts on violence and 45 on *convivencia*, as well as 20 excerpts directly related to mental health and well-being in connection with these phenomena. We first conducted open coding of each excerpt by identifying the specific meanings and functions attributed to violence and *convivencia escolar* in the texts (for example, conflict, learning, prevention, regulation, or institutional management). We then identified the discursive strategies that contributed to stabilizing these constructions, including factualization (presenting statements as unquestionable facts), universalization (homogenizing experiences or actors), extreme case formulations (emphasizing highly severe consequences), depersonalization (omitting agents through impersonal structures), and the use of lists (enumerating situations to produce an effect of exhaustiveness). Based on this coding process, excerpts that shared similar semantic meanings, discursive functions, and rhetorical constructions were grouped into preliminary interpretive repertoires. We subsequently compared and refined these preliminary repertoires according to recurring semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical patterns in order to construct the final macro-level repertoires presented in the Results section. The construction of the repertoires was therefore interpretive rather than purely classificatory, as it involved identifying recurring ways in which the documents discursively framed violence, *convivencia escolar*, responsibility, and institutional action across different texts. We present all five repertoires, with particular emphasis on the three most prevalent ones, illustrated through excerpts that highlight the discursive figures sustaining them.

Frequency was considered in distinguishing predominant from secondary repertoires, but it was not the sole criterion used to determine their analytical autonomy. A pattern was retained as an independent interpretive repertoire when it combined three distinguishable elements: a specific construction of the problem, a particular attribution of causality or responsibility, and a corresponding logic of institutional intervention. Repertoires 4 and 5 occurred less frequently than the three predominant repertoires and were therefore classified as secondary. However, they were retained as independent repertoires because they organized the phenomena through distinct discursive configurations. Repertoire 4 constructed mental health and *convivencia* through a combined logic of individual self-regulation and institutional detection, referral, and monitoring. Repertoire 5 constructed school violence and mental health problems as consequences of the post-pandemic crisis, thereby legitimizing responses centered on educational reactivation and psychosocial support. Treating these patterns as dimensions of the predominant repertoires would obscure their distinctive constructions of causality, responsibility, and intervention.

To safeguard scientific rigor, the coding process and the construction of interpretive repertoires were discussed and reviewed collaboratively by the research team. Differences in coding, interpretation, and repertoire grouping were resolved through iterative comparison of excerpts and collective analytical discussion until interpretive consensus was reached. Because these were public documents, ethical safeguards were related to data selection and processing procedures. The research team ensured that the documents contained no restrictions on use and dissemination, the sources of information were precisely indicated to allow the replicability of the study, and when necessary, information that identified individuals was anonymized.

To improve clarity and organization, we used AI-assisted writing tools (ChatGPT and QuillBot, both through paid subscriptions) in a limited capacity for stylistic editing purposes only. These tools did not contribute to the

Table. 2 Interpretive repertoire summary.

	Predominant repertoires
1	From conflict to violence: an institutional reading
2	School violence and <i>convivencia</i> as objects of institutional regulation and control
3	<i>Convivencia escolar</i> as formative learning
	Secondary Repertoires
4	<i>Convivencia</i> and mental health as an individual responsibility and object of institutional monitoring
5	The post-pandemic crisis as an underlying cause of school violence and mental health problems

development of the study’s content, analysis, or interpretation. The authors retain full intellectual responsibility for the manuscript and are solely accountable for its substance.

Results

Table 2 summarizes the five interpretive repertoires that emerged from the analysis. Table 3 presents the description of the interpretive repertoires and the organization of document excerpts by year corresponding to each IR.

From conflict to violence: an institutional reading

In the first repertoire, school violence is represented as a manifestation of inadequately solved conflicts. It is presented as an unquestionable fact that conflicts should be understood as disagreements resulting from diversity and that addressing them through other strategies will lead to violent interactions. This factual discourse combines strategies of causality—conflict and violence—and strategies of universalization, because it homogenizes the experience of conflict, assuming that conflict is experienced in relatively similar ways and therefore should be addressed through similar institutional strategies: “When conflicts are not adequately solved, they can lead to violence or mistreatment. At their origin, there is always an attitude of rejection of ‘what is different’” (Document 27, 2024).

Once the causal relationship between conflict and violence is established, its link with management is incorporated. To validate this relationship, a discursive strategy of factualization is used with the formulation of extreme cases, emphasizing that conflicts can lead to problematic situations of high emotional impact.

Reflection and analysis of pedagogical and institutional practices make it possible to see how *convivencia* is experienced in educational communities. They also allow discovering the different ways to transform daily practices in order to find concrete solutions to conflicts through dialogue, before they become complex problems that are difficult to solve. (Document 29, 2024)

In addition, the responsibility for preventing and mitigating violence appears to be concentrated in *convivencia escolar* teams. Through a factual discourse, the promotion of harmonious relationships and dialogue is reinforced as a central strategy and the conception of conflict as a learning opportunity is shifted to violence as a consequence of its intensification. Thus, school violence is constructed as a severe fact. “The *convivencia escolar* team has the challenge of promoting harmonious relationships and creating spaces for dialog to prevent and mitigate conflicts before they lead to situations of violence” (Document 31, 2024).

This repertoire focuses on institutional mechanisms, which may contribute to weakening the social, structural, and political dimensions of conflict. However, this repertoire is also slightly nuanced, as reflected in one of the first documents published after the return to on-site classes. This document expresses the variability of the discourse, in which the causal relationship between conflict and violence, or conflict and negative *convivencia*, is questioned. “*Convivencia escolar* has been poorly understood in its definition, creation, and development and, therefore, not assumed as a structure and culture to be institutionally managed in educational communities, far beyond the resolution of specific conflicts” (Document 6, 2022). In any case, this formulation appears only exceptionally and does not constitute a dominant repertoire within the analyzed corpus.

Table 3 Description of the interpretive repertoires and the organization of excerpts by year.

Interpretive Repertoires		Description	Total Excerpts			
			2022	2023	2024	
1	From conflict to violence: an institutional reading	This repertoire constructs school violence as a direct consequence of poorly managed conflicts, establishing a linear causal relationship between the two phenomena and situating their response at the level of institutional management, thereby obscuring their structural dimension.	20	3	4	13
2	School violence and <i>convivencia</i> as objects of institutional regulation and control	This repertoire constructs violence and <i>convivencia escolar</i> as objects of normative regulation and technical management, emphasizing protocols, instruments, and administrative frameworks as the primary response within a logic of institutional control.	20	2	2	16
3	<i>Convivencia escolar</i> as formative learning	This repertoire conceives <i>convivencia escolar</i> as a formative and ethical process that is taught and learned in everyday school life, positioning it as a central pedagogical axis for preventing violence and promoting educational quality.	35	3	5	27
Secondary Repertoires						
4	<i>Convivencia</i> and mental health as an individual responsibility and object of institutional monitoring	This repertoire links <i>convivencia</i> and mental health through a logic of individual self-regulation, complemented by school-based mechanisms of detection, referral, and monitoring.	8	4	4	0
5	The post-pandemic crisis as an underlying cause of school violence and mental health problems	This repertoire interprets violence and mental health problems as direct effects of the pandemic, privileging a conjunctural reading centered on reactivation and psychosocial support, without problematizing their structural roots.	5	0	1	4

School violence and convivencia as objects of institutional regulation and control

School violence is defined as a critical event that jeopardizes the safety of the educational community. It is conceptualized as physical aggressions, fights, confrontations, homicides, and serious threats that can lead to emergency situations. This repertoire emphasizes the need for protocols to guarantee the safety of the community. For this purpose, the strategy of factualization and formulation of extreme cases is used, emphasizing the magnitude of the consequences of school violence.

The magnitude and extent of the consequences derived from recent episodes of violence that have led to emergency situations in schools have already been addressed through the recommendations of various United Nations agencies, by countries such as the United States and Mexico, and even in some PISE [Spanish acronym for internal school safety plan] in Chile. (Document 20, 2024)

Once the seriousness of violence is established, these Mineduc documents consider *convivencia escolar* as a prevention mechanism. Alongside this, the normative framework of the ministry is positioned as a central mechanism for preventive action, operating as a device that seeks to orient school practices. An example of this is the discourse in the primers that support the National Policy on Educational *Convivencia*, which are enunciated as devices that naturalize certain values that shape policy approaches.

The most effective way to prevent violence is to continuously transform educational *convivencia*, as established in the general objective of this Policy, for which a total of 12 primers are made available, which provide a series of tools for this comprehensive approach based on the Rights, Gender, Formative, Participative, and Territorial approaches. (Document 30, 2024)

To validate this normative framework, a highly negative evaluation of violence is constructed, viewing it as a phenomenon that should be prevented and institutionally managed within the school context. Through the strategy of factualization and checklists, phenomena such as mistreatment among children, discrimination, and disciplinary measures are associated. This not only reinforces the idea of a generalized increase in problems of *convivencia escolar*, but also by referring to the Superintendency of Education, seeks to provide the argument with greater legitimacy. “Also, in the increase of complaints about *convivencia escolar* (Superintendencia de Educación, 2023) especially situations of mistreatment between children and/or students, situations of discrimination or regarding the application of disciplinary measures” (Document 22, 2024).

This repertoire shows how school violence is constructed as an object of regulation and complaint, approached from a normative and management perspective. Thus, a response closer to a judicial and regulatory perspective of the phenomenon is reinforced by means of action protocols and disciplinary measures contained in structured regulations.

The checklist strategy is used repeatedly for the same purposes. For example, ministerial documents list situations that affect *convivencia escolar*, presenting them as objective facts that cover a broad spectrum of problems. This practice seeks to give an impression of completeness and legitimacy in the identification of actions contrary to educational *convivencia*, reinforcing the idea that they require intervention.

It refers to solving conflicts, addressing situations of violence, assisting those who manifest behaviors that are contrary to the Internal Regulations or to the type of *convivencia* to be promoted, solving situations that take place through social media or other platforms or digital media, among other situations that affect educational *convivencia*. (Document 21, 2024)

This quote exemplifies how Mineduc discursively equates internal regulations and the promoted model of *convivencia escolar*, granting them the same level of legitimacy in the institutional framework. Moreover, the absence of an explicit subject in the grammatical structure of the quotation (“type of *convivencia* to be promoted”) creates indeterminacy regarding the agent, making it less clear whether the initiative to promote *convivencia* comes from the state, educational communities, or another actor. This discursive construction impersonalizes the source of regulation,

contributing to the naturalization of *convivencia*—and its management—as an institutional ideal, without making clear its origin or construction process.

The regulations on *convivencia escolar* expressed in different forms, such as the *Convivencia escolar* Management Plan, are central in different documents, emerging as highly legitimized through factual discourse strategies and institutional devices that seek to promote the appropriation of normative prescriptions. “The *Convivencia Escolar* Management Plan constitutes a very central instrument in the transition to a school culture that prevents violence and mental health problems” (Document 6, 2022).

The team must carry out reflective, systematic work and collaborate in the operationalization and projection of the contents in its management instruments. This implies participating in the articulation of the *Convivencia Escolar* Management Plan with all other instruments defined by the school. (Document 31, 2024)

Based on this evidence, this interpretive repertoire conceptualizes violence and *convivencia escolar* in a normative and administrative framework that emphasizes educational planning and management from a technical and regulatory vision, which associates violence prevention with the implementation of institutional structures.

School convivencia as formative learning

In this repertoire, the discourse of the ministerial guidelines articulates a sociocultural perspective on violence, highlighting its “learned” nature.

Violence is a relational, cultural and multicausal phenomenon. It refers to those ways of relating that are characterized by the illegitimate use of force and power, and that result in harm to another person, physically or psychologically. Since violence is a cultural phenomenon, it is understood that it is transmitted and learned, which also opens the possibility of teaching other forms of relationships that are peaceful and aimed at preventing its appearance or use in the daily *convivencia* in the educational space. (Document 30, 2024)

By stating that violence is “transmitted and learned,” a social vision of human behavior based on the acquisition of practices through culture is made explicit. Thus, through a factual discourse, the responsibility for its removal is placed on the pedagogical sphere. On the other hand, the word “illegitimate” introduces a normative dimension that allows the discussion of what forms of power and force are acceptable in daily *convivencia*.

Accordingly, as the following excerpts show, *convivencia escolar* is associated with the pedagogical in the first place and the ethical in the second place.

Repositioning the formative and ethical meaning of *convivencia* as a dynamic process that is taught and learned on a daily basis, being a guiding thread of the relationships that are woven among all those who make up the educational community and, therefore, a fundamental pillar for creating conditions that favor educational climates that care for and promote the mental health and general well-being of students. (Document 1, 2022)

[The National Policy on Educational *Convivencia*] establishes a comprehensive framework that emphasizes the formative and ethical aspects as fundamental dimensions, understanding *convivencia* as a dynamic process that is taught and learned on a daily basis, being an important thread in the relationships that are woven among all those who make up the educational community. (Document 2, 2022)

Thus, two metaphorical figures are used to suggest that *convivencia escolar*, as a pedagogical element, articulates school phenomena. The first is “guiding thread,” i.e., indicating it is responsible for connecting all school relationships. The second is “fundamental pillar,” which implies that it is a structural support of the educational process.

Once the relationship between *convivencia escolar* and pedagogical processes is established, it is presented as reciprocal: *Convivencia* affects learning, and at the same time, learning contexts affect types of *convivencia*. This reaffirms the idea that *convivencia* is a learning process acquired at school. “It is true that *convivencia* contributes to the effectiveness of learning, but it is important to emphasize that it is a value and a learning process in itself for the entire educational community: *convivencia* is learned jointly by all” (Document 21, 2024).

This analysis suggests *convivencia escolar* is conceived as a teaching and learning process, intended and managed to prevent violence and improve educational quality. It is viewed as something that can be shaped through pedagogical strategies, evidencing certain discursive variability when confronting *convivencia* as a value versus a tool to promote effective learning.

Secondary interpretive repertoires

The fourth repertoire, *convivencia* and mental health as an individual responsibility and object of institutional monitoring, reflects the relationship between *convivencia* and mental health. It tends to frame the latter as an individual responsibility that must be managed through self-regulation and self-care. At the same time, it is conceived as a situation that requires monitoring by schools, which should detect warning signs, make referrals to health centers, and promote behaviors considered healthy.

The fifth repertoire references the post-pandemic crisis as an underlying cause of school violence and mental health problems. In this repertoire, both phenomena are interpreted as direct effects of the pandemic and return to face-to-face classes. It emphasizes the emotional impact, prioritizing a circumstantial reading that displaces the structural roots of these problems. This approach tends to center reactivation strategies and psychosocial support as solutions, while giving less visibility to previous structural conditions. Institutional legitimization is perceived, depicting Mineduc as a legitimate actor that articulates the response to the crisis and reinforcing its authority.

Discussion

This analysis of interpretive repertoires revealed tensions in the discursive construction of the phenomenon, particularly between the repertoire that frames violence as a consequence of unresolved conflict and the one that constructs it as an object of regulation and control. These tensions reflect the traditional struggle between punitive and formative approaches (Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2018) and inform the discussion on *convivencia escolar* as a safety (López et al., 2020; Morales & López, 2019) or individual problem. Likewise, elements of a technical and administrative vision of *convivencia* (Ascorra et al., 2019; Calquín-Donoso et al., 2020; Eizadirad & Walton, 2025) become visible, especially in the repertoire that positions school violence and *convivencia* as objects of institutional management. In these constructions, conflict appears primarily as a phenomenon to be managed in close relation to school violence, which is treated as a disruption of institutional harmony.

In this scenario, and as evidenced in the repertoire centered on institutional regulation, the management of *convivencia* is positioned primarily as a task of schools, especially of *convivencia escolar* teams, which may reinforce a logic of institutional over-responsibilization. Communities are positioned as responsible for complying with prescriptive regulations, while the structural factors involved in *convivencia* remain largely unaddressed. This discursive configuration, insofar as it emphasizes regulatory mechanisms and institutional responsibilities, may foster individualizing practices (Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2012; López et al., 2011; Axelsson, 2026; Ellwood & Davies, 2010): If *convivencia escolar* becomes a legal imperative to be managed, normative pressures may operate on its managers within broader accountability frameworks. Both management and accountability strategies are consistent with the new public management approach (Sisto et al., 2021).

The repertoire that reads violence as a linear consequence of conflict tends to privilege peaceful resolution as the most legitimate form of *convivencia*, which may obscure the political and structural dimensions of confrontation. Although this emphasis may be linked to the social climate of fear and insecurity documented in the aftermath of COVID-19 (López et al., 2022; McMahon et al., 2022; Rojas-Andrade et al., 2024), the resulting simplification of conflict—reduced in some documents to an “attitude of rejection of what is different”—obscures its broader social roots.

Rather than conceptualizing violence as a structurally conditioned phenomenon, the repertoire of regulation and control prioritizes administrative devices and normative frameworks (Ascorra et al., 2018, 2019) as the primary

means of response. In doing so, violence tends to be addressed through management instruments oriented toward institutional stability. By locating the problem mainly within school administration, there is a risk of weakening the role of the State (Sisto, 2020) in creating protective environments (Shayo et al., 2024). Effective post-pandemic educational and child protection policies (Bracco et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2025; Musoke et al., 2024) would require articulating school-level strategies with recognition of broader social inequalities, rather than isolating both spheres.

Simultaneously, the repertoire that frames *convivencia escolar* as formative learning introduces a sociocultural perspective by emphasizing its teachable and relational character. However, even within this pedagogical framing, *convivencia* is assigned a dual function: as an ethical value and as a requirement for educational quality. This dual positioning may also be read in relation to new public management logics (Portales & Vásquez-Heilig, 2015; Sisto et al., 2021), as effectiveness becomes intertwined with normative expectations. Furthermore, defining violence as the “illegitimate use of force and power” maintains ambiguity regarding which forms of authority are considered legitimate, opening questions about the role of teachers and the institutionalization of *convivencia escolar* teams (Sapountzis & Karagianni, 2022).

Finally, although less dominant, the secondary repertoires also illuminate relevant discursive movements. The framing of mental health as an individual responsibility may reinforce individualizing approaches (López et al., 2011), while the attribution of violence and *convivencia* problems primarily to the post-pandemic crisis displaces attention from pre-existing structural inequalities. By emphasizing COVID-19 as the central explanatory factor, these constructions may obscure long-standing issues such as segregation and the commercialization of education. However, the excerpts do not provide clear documentary evidence suggesting that *convivencia escolar* policies rely exclusively on an individual-level framework. Therefore, it would not be accurate to claim that ministerial policies deny or underestimate collective responsibility.

Taken together, these findings suggest that *convivencia escolar* is discursively positioned not only as an area of institutional management aligned with new public management, but also as a contested space in which meanings about social relations, authority, and responsibility are negotiated beyond the strictly educational domain (Straus et al., 2025; Saltmarsh, 2008).

This study presents several limitations that warrant consideration. First, we constructed the corpus exclusively from documents publicly available on Mineduc’s official website, which introduces a potential digital availability bias and excludes internal guidelines or documents not published on that platform. Second, we focused the analysis solely on ministerial discursive production and did not incorporate documents from other relevant actors in the educational field, thereby limiting the interpretive scope to the institutional construction of the phenomenon. Finally, as a qualitative analysis of interpretive repertoires, this study does not aim for statistical generalization; rather, it seeks to provide a critical understanding of the discursive configurations present in the analyzed corpus.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the interpretive repertoires through which Chilean ministerial documents constructed school violence and *convivencia escolar* in the post-pandemic period. The findings revealed tensions between formative, regulatory, and managerial approaches, showing how violence and *convivencia* are discursively framed both as pedagogical processes and as objects of institutional control and technical management. The analysis also identified the coexistence of sociocultural perspectives with individualizing and administrative logics that tend to position schools and *convivencia escolar* teams as central actors responsible for prevention and regulation.

The study contributes to research on educational policy and critical discourse analysis by showing how interpretive repertoires organize institutional understandings of school violence and *convivencia escolar*, legitimizing particular forms of intervention while rendering other dimensions less visible. These findings are relevant for understanding the political and discursive tensions shaping postpandemic educational policies in Chile and potentially in other contexts marked by similar debates around regulation, well-being, and school management.

These findings refer to the ways in which ministerial policy documents construct school violence and *convivencia escolar* through institutional discourse. They should not be interpreted as evidence of how these policies are enacted,

negotiated, or experienced in schools, as educational practices and actors' perspectives were beyond the scope of this study.

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Author contributions CCA coordinated the methodological design, data collection, and analysis, and manuscript writing. FRP and VGF contributed to the selection of the documentary corpus, critical discourse analysis, and manuscript review. PJCC and VCV supported the theoretical discussion and systematization of results. MZ assisted with coding and analysis validation. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data availability The qualitative dataset generated during this study is openly available in Zenodo at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21696282>. The repository includes the coding matrix, analytical categories, interpretive repertoires, discursive strategies, codebook, and source inventory used in the analysis. The original policy documents analyzed are publicly available through the official website of the Chilean Ministry of Education (Mineduc).

Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics approval and consent to participate This article reports exclusively the document analysis component of the broader Fondecyt Regular Project No. 1231667, which was reviewed and approved by the Comité Ético Científico (Scientific Ethics Committee) of the Universidad de La Serena, Chile (Approval No. 05/23, May 4, 2023). The study involved only the analysis of publicly available policy documents issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education and did not involve human participants, human data, animals, or plants. Therefore, informed consent was not required.

Informed consent This manuscript reports exclusively the document analysis component of the broader Fondecyt Regular Project No. 1231667. This component involved the analysis of publicly available official documents issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education and did not include human participants or human data. Accordingly, informed consent was not required for the study reported in this manuscript.

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