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Public Discourse of the Chilean Ministry of Education on School Violence and *Convivencia Escolar*: A Subjective Theories Approach

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Abstract

This study analyzed subjective theories on school violence and *convivencia escolar* expressed in the public discourse of the Chilean Ministry of Education in 2022. This research focused on the return to in-person learning, a time when concerns about violence in schools increased and public policies aimed at addressing it were launched. Inductive content analysis and grounded theory techniques were used to examine 66 tweets issued by official ministry accounts during 2022. The analysis identified three interpretative sets. The first suggests that although violence has external structural causes, it must be eradicated from schools. The second links *convivencia escolar* with well-being and socioemotional skills, but without an explicit association with violence. The third locates the origin of psychological distress in external factors but assigns its management to the school system. A predominance of expert knowledge existed in the promoted solutions. These findings are discussed based on the idea that the Ministry of Education's discourse on Twitter not only informs but also seeks to shape educational common sense and validate public policies. This raises questions about its impact on the interpretive autonomy of school communities.

Keywords: subjective theories; school violence; *convivencia escolar*; public discourse; educational policy

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1. Introduction

Although school violence and *convivencia escolar* have become core concerns at the global level, there is not enough agreement in international literature to distinguish

clearly the differences and meeting points between the two concepts. *Convivencia escolar* can be defined as a form of peaceful and democratic coexistence of educational communities (Sainz et al. 2023; Urbina et al. 2020). On the one hand, school violence has been defined as a relationship of dominance that causes an imbalance of power (Hernández and Saravia 2016; Hughes et al. 2025; Liu et al. 2025) and is associated with bullying, prejudice, discrimination, aggressive behaviors, and bodily harm in school, among others, either in person or in virtual spaces (Ezenwosu and Uzochukwu 2025; Moretti and Herkovits 2021; Samara et al. 2024). When reviewing the different conceptualizations of school violence and its origins, the literature indicates that historically, it has been placed in opposition to school climate and *convivencia escolar*. The English-speaking tradition has addressed the phenomenon of school climate as a preventive factor of violence, defining it as the positive or negative perception of school interactions (Benbenishty et al. 2016; Moore et al. 2023). On the other hand, although the concept of climate has also been addressed in Ibero-America, progress has been made regarding the concept of *convivencia escolar*. Notwithstanding its development, disagreement still persists in the literature regarding a common definition (Andrades-Moya 2020; Fierro-Evans and Carbajal-Padilla 2019). The different research perspectives highlight that it is a complex reality whose approach involves different explanatory factors.

School violence has been linked to poverty, residential segregation, homophobia, neighborhood safety, type of school, social networks, media and family educational style, and external influences from society (Duque-Sanchez and Teixido 2016; Herrera-López et al. 2022; Medina and Paredes 2021; Puigvert Mallart et al. 2021; Villardón-Gallego et al. 2023; Zografova and Evtimova 2023). The *convivencia escolar* construct emerged across the Latin American continent as a reaction to social violence that arose as a result of the military dictatorships during the 1990s. Thus, a conception of education for peace, citizenship, and democracy has developed based on the promotion of strata participation (Carrasco-Aguilar et al. 2018).

The wide diversity of definitions of school violence and *convivencia escolar* has repercussions for research, the formulation of educational policies, and the design of interventions (Fierro-Evans and Carbajal-Padilla 2019), because the decisions and behaviors of educational communities are influenced by their perceptions of reality (Andrades-Moya 2020; Fierro-Evans 2013). In Chile, the literature has reported how *convivencia escolar* policies, implemented for 20 years, have high contradictions and occur in a hybrid or dichotomous scenario between punitive and formative logics, configuring a sociopolitical context that strains both the meanings and actions of school violence and *convivencia*. In the absence of clear political discourse, there is a risk of making more difficult the ability to outline and organize relevant and coherent experiences, actions, and knowledge at the school level (Carrasco-Aguilar et al. 2018).

In the case of Chile, one of the key actors has been the Ministry of Education (Mineduc). As the ruling body of the state, it has the mission and responsibility to promote and guide the development of formal education at all levels. For this purpose, it uses different formal instruments: policies, plans, programs, and evaluation systems (Álvarez-Sepúlveda 2023). In its task of guiding educational institutions in a sizeable and diverse country and because access to social networks has been expanding through citizenship, the Ministry of Education has chosen to disseminate information, interests, and stances in the face of certain facts and decisions through Instagram and Twitter, among other platforms (Garrido-Cabezas et al. 2024). Studies conducted in recent years have shown the impact and influence caused by the dissemination and circulation of institutional public discourse through these media on the disposition of educational communities toward certain actions (Jiménez 2021).

Public discourse is defined as beliefs issued by the state and its authorities and by national and transnational political organizations (González 2007). To this end, studies on public discourse analyze the position of these bodies in the framework of critical and contextual junctures expressed in the media and social networks, which often aligns with media discourse or political discourse, whose interest lies in its impact on public perception (Erokhin and Komendantova 2024; Galimov et al. 2024). Thus, media and social networks shape public discourse by acting as agents of social reproduction that moderate or reconstruct society's assumptions, meanings, and ways of acting (Browne-Mönckeberg and Rodríguez-Pastene 2019).

1.1. School Violence and *Convivencia Escolar* in Public Policies in Chile

Internationally, the design and implementation of zero tolerance and violence control policies have persisted, despite the fact that they have been widely criticized due to their limited preventive impact on school life (Cohen and Moffitt 2009; Fierro-Evans 2013). In Latin America, these policies coexist with others promoted by UNESCO (2002), which has encouraged the citizenship and democratic education of students. This has led to the coexistence of multiple approaches to public policy in Latin America, including democratic, citizen security, child and youth mental health, and managerial perspectives of *convivencia escolar* (Morales and López 2019).

Particularly in Chile, the educational policy on *convivencia escolar* and school violence has been dedicated to peace and nonviolence, driven by UNESCO's (2002) initiatives, which sought to establish the association among *convivencia escolar*, absence of violence, and a culture of peace. Based on this model, the country developed the first national school coexistence policy (*política nacional de convivencia escolar*), in which *convivencia* was associated with a perspective of rights with a formative approach, citizen and democratic development with ethical consistency, and an equality orientation (Contreras et al. 2019). Subsequently and gradually, interactions in educational centers began to be regulated from laws and updates of this policy in 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2024. These changes have driven a rise of hybrid approaches to school violence and *convivencia*, which feature the coexistence of punitive, formative, participatory and right-based logics. Likewise, these initiatives have sustained dynamics of bureaucratization and legalization of *convivencia*, significantly affecting the actions and assumptions of educational communities (Ascorra et al. 2019; Carrasco-Aguilar et al. 2018; Contreras et al. 2019).

In this sense, in recent years, studies have warned that *convivencia escolar* is at risk of being represented as an ideal to be achieved, with an absence of conflicts and violence. This could have a profound impact, as it makes it harder to understand violence as a social construction with a mediating and communicative meaning, which in turn hinders its critical interpretation (Kaplan and García 2009). Thus, it is relevant to explore the mechanisms used by the public policy to produce these effects.

1.2. The Subjective Theories Approach

Subjective theories (STs) are explanatory hypotheses built from interactions with the environment. They are composed of beliefs whose objective is to explain some aspects of the social world (Sandoval and Cuadra 2018). The subjective nature is given by the opposition to systematically elaborated scientific theories, because they are constructed from a discourse created or transmitted by a certain community (Catalán 2016). Thus, STs possess an argumentative structure that confers on them an explanatory quality (Groeben and Scheele 2001) and can be expressed through different devices. Some STs are expressed publicly in socially legitimized platforms, modeling the explanations that audiences use to manage their social actions (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). Therefore, public discourse arguably contains STs, the analysis of which makes it possible to describe beliefs

held by an organization that guides actions that are especially relevant in junctural crises. In the field of education in Chile, this is the Ministry of Education.

These scenarios are used by social media to install public discourse, because their messages constitute communications of public interest (Austin et al. 2020). In this sense, and although recent research on social media has studied concepts such as representations, memory, discourses, social sentiment and public perceptions (Issaka et al. 2024; Jagodnik et al. 2024; Liu et al. 2024; Tudehope et al. 2024; Velasco-López et al. 2024), no studies have addressed public discourse on school violence and *convivencia escolar* using an ST approach.

Considering the psychosocial consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this study may be a crucial approach to understand its extent. This is particularly significant because globally, there has been evidence of an increase in violence among peers and toward teachers since the return to face-to-face classes (Anderman et al. 2024; Patte et al. 2024). Chile has not been an exception, which has led the state to launch actions such as the *Seamos Comunidad* (Let's Be Community) strategy, which is part of the *Plan de Reactivación Integral Educativa* (Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Plan) by the Ministry of Education (INDH 2022). In addition, extensive media coverage of school violence has alarmed the public (Troncoso 2022).

Studies on STs about school violence have described an interesting development in Chile. The emphasis has been mostly placed on school actors (teachers, principals, parents, and mothers) (Retuert and Castro-Carrasco 2017). No studies have analyzed the STs of a governing body of educational policy, such as the Ministry of Education. In this context, this study analyzed the STs on school violence and *convivencia escolar* in the public discourse of the Ministry of Education of Chile.

2. Methodology

This study used an inductive design of digital content analysis to analyze the STs on school violence and *convivencia* in public posts issued through the Twitter account of the Ministry of Education of Chile. This type of social platform has become an important tool for the dissemination of information, interests, and positions of individuals, organizations, and social causes. Increasingly, the discourse broadcast through this channel has been used as an alternative for the public structuring of ideas and policies, among others. This social platform was chosen because in terms of violence, previous literature has shown that it is possible to access complex beliefs that promote public discourse at a systemic level, unlike other social media (Austin et al. 2020).

The original corpus consisted of all posts published on Twitter by the Ministry of Education of Chile through its official account, @MINEDUC, during 2022—i.e., a year after the return to in-person classes in all schools in the country after the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, in accordance with the definitions of public discourse offered in this study, the posts published on the Twitter account of the Chilean minister of education, @ProfMarcoAvila, were added to the corpus, given he was the highest authority on education.

The data collection process involved searching for posts issued by both accounts between 1 January and 31 December 2022. Then, those containing the words “violencia” (violence) and “convivencia” (coexistence) were selected. Subsequently, posts containing the hashtag #SeamosComunidad (Let's Be Community) were selected, because this is the national educational policy designed by the Ministry of Education aimed at addressing postpandemic school violence and *convivencia*. All duplicate messages were deleted from the corpus, resulting in 66 posts: 50 tweets from @MINEDUC and 16 tweets from @ProfMarcoAvila. Table 1 shows the number of posts identified during the search.

Table 1. Number of posts on Twitter.

Content	Ministry of Education	Minister of Education
Only “violencia”	11	4
Only “convivencia”	12	9
“Violencia” and “convivencia”	2	2
Only #SeamosComunidad	23	0
#SeamosComunidad and “violencia”	0	1
#SeamosComunidad and “convivencia”	2	0
Total	50	16

The selected posts were transferred to a registry table classifying their origin and date. Then, they were analyzed using grounded theory (Flick 2020). This has been previously used for the study of STs in education, showing a wide effectiveness (Caamaño-Vega et al. 2023). Grounded theory is oriented toward constructing theoretical categories from empirical data, without starting from a pre-established conceptual framework. This approach is characterized by an inductive, iterative, and comparative inquiry, which allows building substantial understanding in specific contexts. First, open coding was carried out: It began with a detailed reading of each post, identifying text segments with relevant meanings. These fragments were converted into initial codes that attempt to capture the essence of what was expressed, using descriptive labels close to the original text. This phase was exploratory and sought to maintain an analytic openness. Second, a constant comparison was made between fragments: As new posts were coded, they were compared with the previous ones, assessing whether they fit into existing codes or whether they required new codes. This practice of comparing each unit of analysis with others allowed for refining conceptual precision and capturing the variety and recurrence of meanings. Third, we moved toward grouping content into emergent categories. Codes were organized into broader categories, representing interpretative dimensions or thematic axes relevant to the study objectives. These categories were not assigned beforehand but emerged from the analysis, therefore maintaining a direct relationship with the data. These categories represented the STs that this study analyzed.

The analysis process was iterative because each time a new post was added, an assessment is made as to whether the STs adequately covered it or should be reformulated, subdivided, or expanded. This dynamism ensured that the STs were indeed supported by evidence. Finally, an axial coding process was carried out in which the STs were grouped into interpretative sets that shared a common explanatory orientation, allowing the identification of three major articulating axes of public discourse: (a) Although violence comes from outside, the schools must eradicate it; (b) educational policy works when schools implement what experts design; and (c) because the mental health of students has been damaged, the schools must implement measures to contain or repair the effects of violence.

Because these were public posts, the informed consent of the ministry or its minister was not required, although safeguards have been considered in this regard, such as omitting the names of schools and individuals, whenever appropriate.

In this article, the Results Section outlines the findings of the interpretative analyses accompanied by STs that have been grouped, along with sample tweets.

This study is situated within the interpretive paradigm (Flick 2023). In line with this approach, the aim of the research process is to interpret the meanings present in the discourses of individuals, collectives, or documents. Thus, by analyzing the implicit and explicit subjective theories within messages communicated through the media, the research entails an act of double hermeneutics (Bruhn-Jensen 2018). In this work, the researchers interpreted the subjective theories of the corpus from a position that acknowledges the

coexistence of diverse explanations—both in the everyday discourse of society and in the educational literature—regarding *convivencia escolar* (Fierro-Evans and Carbajal-Padilla 2019) and school violence. This diversity of perspectives reflects different ways of understanding and addressing these phenomena.

Furthermore, we recognize that our professional and academic trajectories in the fields of education, psychology, and the social sciences shape the lens through which we approached this analysis. Our longstanding involvement in the study of *convivencia escolar*, school violence, and educational policies in Latin America informs both the selection of this topic and the interpretation of the data. By making this positionality explicit, we aim to provide transparency about the perspectives guiding our work and to strengthen the legitimacy of the study's findings.

3. Results

3.1. *Although Violence Comes from Outside, the Schools Must Eradicate It*

The first finding involves the explanation of school violence and *convivencia* as different phenomena. This is mainly explained by the origin of each: Although school violence seemingly originates outside educational centers and therefore, is the responsibility of “extra-school” society, *convivencia escolar* is the responsibility of educational communities that are strengthened by community life and the common good. Thus, schools should address school violence because it is part of their educational role, but not because they have any role in its origin, facing the risk of making their intervention ineffective.

Despite this, the public discourse of the Mineduc contained STs that show violence as a phenomenon that must be eradicated by educational centers. Specifically, they highlighted forms of violence such as those perpetrated through digital media, harassment, and violence against girls and women, all of which were constructed as constituting risks for individuals. Likewise, they expressed a belief that violence puts education workers and students at risk, threatening education in general, especially public education and the work of the State. In this regard, several STs related to the creation of safe spaces, for which complaints and the creation of laws were described as key, expressing STs that judicialize school violence (see Table 2).

Table 2. Subjective Theories Constructing Violence as a Social Threat to Be Addressed Through Educational and Legal Measures.

ST	Tweets
Because structural violence and mental health issues already existed before the pandemic, the school must take responsibility for addressing them.	There is structural violence in our country, a mental health problem that predates the pandemic ... that is why we propose in our protocol a more flexible Full School Day.
Although violence comes from outside, it poses a risk to those who work in education, which is why it must be addressed by the school system.	A few moments ago someone stoned the windows of @Mineduc, endangering employees. Violence is never the way, even less against workers.
Violence threatens public education, so it must be eradicated from educational spaces.	Violence only attacks what we want to defend: public education. Students lose and citizenship loses.
Because school violence reflects social problems and the pandemic has exacerbated them, the school must intervene with formative actions.	This reality, which is a reflection of the problems that are expressed in society, has been exacerbated by the pandemic.
To redress victims of harassment, laws are needed to ensure safe spaces in schools.	We must provide students with spaces where they can feel free and safe, promote different forms of school coexistence and provide redress for those who have been victims of harassment. That is why it is so important to advance the #LeyJoséMatías proposal.

Convivencia escolar was presented as a key condition for the development of a comprehensive education, appearing strongly linked to the strengthening of socioemotional skills. Some posts argued that improving individual socioemotional skills and support can enhance *convivencia* and contribute to the well-being of the entire community and mental health. To this end, they highlighted the role of continuous teacher training (see Table 3).

Table 3. Convivencia escolar and Socioemotional Skills.

ST	Tweets
Because structural violence and mental health problems predate the pandemic, the school is seen as responsible for addressing them.	There is structural violence in our country, a mental health problem that predates the pandemic ... that is why we propose in our protocol a more flexible Full School Day.
Although violence comes from outside, it poses a risk to those who work in education, which is why it must be addressed by the school system.	A few moments ago someone stoned the windows of @Mineduc, endangering employees. Violence is never the way, even less against workers.

Finally, even though school violence and *convivencia escolar* are described as two different phenomena, the pandemic would have affected both. The related STs were: “Since there was a pandemic and no on-site attendance, *convivencia* conflicts are greater” and “Since the pandemic has exacerbated problems in the school, formative actions are implemented.” These are an example of how the effect of the pandemic and increase in conflicts are theorized. *Convivencia escolar* was affected because in-person attendance plays a key role in students’ interactions and the school’s well-being. Therefore, schools should make “all necessary efforts” to ensure that students attend classes (see Table 4).

Table 4. Convivencia Escolar and In-Person Attendance Post-Pandemic.

ST	Tweets
Because there was a pandemic and no face-to-face interaction, the conflicts of <i>convivencia</i> are greater.	At the beginning of this school year, we have seen how the pandemic and the lack of face-to-face contact have affected our ways of living together and have led to situations of conflict, in some cases, greater than expected.
As the pandemic has exacerbated problems in schools, formative actions are implemented.	This reality, which is a reflection of the problems that are expressed in society, has been exacerbated by the pandemic. As @Mineduc we are implementing intervention programs in the most critical communities, training tools for teachers and assistants, guidance and more.
If there is on-site attendance, <i>convivencia escolar</i> is recovered.	We know that presentality is the only way to deal with the effects of the pandemic. But the abrupt return ... has been complex. We will continue to work for the well-being of children and adolescents. The second semester is beginning, and we have great challenges. We must recover what we have learned, recompose coexistence and achieve full attendance. The school experience is irreplaceable.
Skills for human development are lost if classes are missed.	The entire educational community plays a fundamental role in accompanying students to reverse missing class ... you lose learning, bonds and skills for your development.

3.2. Educational Policy Works When Schools Implement What Experts Design

A second finding that emerged from the STs related to the primacy of the voice of experts in addressing school violence. The return to face-to-face classes was defined as a

critical situation that affects student well-being by creating problems of *convivencia* and violence, for which specialists, experts, and authorities should offer support, beyond the educational communities and their improvement trajectories (Table 5).

Table 5. Expert Authority in Addressing School Violence.

ST	Tweets
When there are <i>convivencia</i> problems, experts are needed to address them.	Today we formed the Board for School Coexistence and Nonviolence, made up of mental health experts.
If cases are critical, external specialists must intervene.	This strategy contemplates teaching resources ... and direct interventions with specialists in educational establishments with critical cases.
<i>Convivencia escolar</i> should be guided by technical recommendations.	The purpose of the Advisory Board will be to provide technical recommendations ... on school coexistence and socioemotional education.

In this way, an ST is formed that shows that if school violence is not addressed by experts, it cannot become a public policy problem. This implies conceiving educational policy as programs with a standardized and universal design and a prescriptive role, although there are also certain promotional elements. The focus is on the educational communities reviewing the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education to deal correctly with violence or follow the rules provided by laws regulating interactions in educational centers. With this, a new paradigm is sought, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Standardized Policies and Prescriptive Approaches to School Violence.

ST	Tweets
The new educational paradigm is built from public policy.	The Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Policy (Política de Reactivación Educativa Integral) contributes with actions that seek to improve conditions ... but it also begins to outline the path towards the construction of a new educational paradigm.
School violence is addressed through specific programs defined by the Ministry of Education.	One of the axes of #SeamosComunidad is the strengthening of coexistence, well-being and mental health of educational communities. ... we will implement an intervention program for 60 priority communities for school violence.
The Ministry of Education directs resources so that schools fulfill their role in <i>convivencia escolar</i> .	What we are doing ... is to better direct the resources and policies that exist today, so that schools can contribute to the training and timely approach to school coexistence problems.

Thus, the core ST is that if the educational communities implement the expert solutions of Mineduc through specific programs, they will strengthen *convivencia*, well-being, diversity, and mental health. Therefore, the role of Mineduc is to ensure the implementation of the educational policy, monitor schools, and communicate the progress of the policy. Likewise, the role of the educational centers apparently is only to comply with and provide feedback to these educational policies and laws. Communities are not the origin or center of the response, but rather the recipients or beneficiaries of an external design (Table 7).

Table 7. Communities as Recipients of Externally Designed Policies.

ST	Tweets
To deal well with violence, it is necessary to follow the guidelines of Mineduc.	On the Day Against Violence and Bullying we tell you about these phenomena to properly address violence in communities. Find material and guidelines ...
Educational communities should use data and reports to implement public policy.	In the report you will find detailed statistics of your establishment ... so that together we can continue to promote the #SeamosComunidad policy.
Training in <i>convivencia escolar</i> comes from institutional agreements with universities.	A collaboration agreement was signed that will initiate teacher training workshops on school coexistence and socioemotional support.

Other STs were associated with a more promotional than prescriptive role, which is evident in the contradictions between posts published on the previous STs, outlining an educational policy that must be adapted to the reality of the educational centers; it is “comprehensive” and seeks to “prevent violence and discrimination” (Table 8).

Table 8. Toward a More Adaptive and Preventive Policy Approach.

ST	Tweets
Educational policy must be adapted to different contexts to educate well-rounded individuals.	The Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Plan (Plan de Reactivación Educativa Integral) seeks the installation of a new educational paradigm that adapts to different realities and contexts and that educates students in a holistic way.

Finally, for the success of the educational policy, certain STs indicated the need to establish alliances with civic society through organizations and universities, which are built as executors of the educational policy through collaboration agreements, to train teachers in *convivencia escolar*, socioemotional skills, and mental health. In addition, they must support students who are falling behind in school. This is a strategic condition for policy implementation (Table 9).

Table 9. Collaboration with Civil Society and Universities.

ST	Tweets
To implement the educational policy, alliances with civic society must be established.	... met with the @AC_educacion group to present the Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Policy and establish alliances and synergies with civic society.
To support students who are falling behind, alliances with organizations that run programs are needed.	“Peer Tutoring” is an initiative of @Educacion2020 and @fundacionchile ... we seek to generate alliances to provide more support ... to children and adolescents who are falling behind.

3.3. Because the Mental Health of Students Has Been Damaged, Schools Must Implement Measures to Contain or Repair Its Effects

Certain STs in the public discourse of Mineduc indicated how mental health is socially constructed in the school context. There was repeated use of the concept of mental health in a negative tone, associating it with crisis, damage, or deterioration, especially after the return to face-to-face learning. This representation reinforced a dominant ST that conceived of mental health as a critical alteration, with individual consequences, whose approach requires support from the educational system (see Table 10).

Table 10. Mental Health as a Post-Pandemic Crisis in School Discourse.

ST	Tweets
Because the mental health of students has been affected by the pandemic, the school must implement measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.	We know that face-to-face attendance is the only way to deal with the effects of the pandemic. But the abrupt return to schools after two years, with the effects it has had on mental health, has been complex. Addressing the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of students is one of the bases of our Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Policy.
The mental health of the school community was damaged by the pandemic, so the system must act urgently for its recovery.	One of our top priorities is recovering educational communities from the consequences of the pandemic.
Because mental health is at risk, it is necessary to implement compensatory programs for students and teachers.	Workshops on mental health and school coexistence for teachers, kindergarten educators and education assistants began.

The need to facilitate support from schools was expressed in tweets linking mental health with individual well-being, promoting physical, recreational, or emotional support activities as institutional response mechanisms. In this ST, suffering is represented as an individual and transitory psychic disturbance, whose approach can be managed from the school through compensatory interventions. This way of understanding mental health reveals a model that places distress in the subjective sphere of students and school communities without referring to the structural conditions that cause it, beyond the explicit mention of “the pandemic” or fractures in social bonds. By focusing on the individual emotional dimension and implementation of institutional actions, these STs displace the possibility of reading suffering as an expression of broader social tensions or an effect of the decomposition of social bonds typical of crisis contexts such as the one experienced during the pandemic (Table 11).

Table 11. Mental Health as Individual Distress and Institutional Response.

ST	Tweets
Mental health is strengthened through physical and recreational activities promoted by the school.	On #SportsDay, we invite school communities to engage in physical activity as part of strengthening mental health and wellness.
The emotional well-being of students can be promoted through educational, cultural, and recreational activities organized by the educational system.	One of the axes of #SeamosComunidad is the strengthening of the emotional well-being of students through formative, cultural and recreational activities.
Talking about mental health with authorities legitimizes the idea that institutional recognition is a form of response to discomfort.	Today the Minister @(Mention to Minister of Education) together with the Minister @(Mention to Minister of Health) met with students to discuss their mental health and the significance of safe spaces.

4. Discussion

The objective of this research was to analyze STs on school violence and *convivencia escolar* present in the public discourse of the Ministry of Education of Chile. The analysis of tweets published during 2022 showed the coexistence of multiple STs that configured a dual representation of the phenomenon of school violence. On the one hand, they expressed structural social problems that surpassed the school level; on the other hand, they constructed school violence as a direct threat to the educational system that must be managed and eradicated from schools. This tension was expressed in a call to promote legal measures, thus framing educational action in a judicial approach. The first interpretative

set of STs located the causes of violence outside the school space and aligned with previous research that explained school violence as a manifestation of macro social factors (Herrera-López et al. 2022; Medina and Paredes 2021; Zografova and Evtimova 2023). However, the institutional emphasis on school intervention as the main suppression strategy strains this structural approach, shifting action to the institutional level with little problematization of the conditions that cause it. Likewise, the STs identified were mostly based on a definition of school violence centered on its physical or explicit dimension, mainly associated with events of interpersonal aggression. Although hinting at the existence of structural violence, the public discourse of Mineduc tended to omit other forms of violence recognized by critical research, such as symbolic or institutional violence (Knoblauch and de Medeiros 2022; Ngobeni et al. 2023; Nogueira and Resende 2022). This conceptual limitation restricts the understanding of the phenomenon by focusing interventions on its visible expressions, weakly addressing the deeper mechanisms of exclusion and inequality that operate in school contexts.

In contrast, other STs presented *convivencia escolar* as a significant component of educational development, especially associated with the strengthening of socioemotional skills. This association appeared to reflect efforts to improve the well-being of students and school communities. However, these STs did not explicitly link *convivencia escolar* and school violence, contrasting with research that has highlighted this relationship (Benbenishty et al. 2016; Moore et al. 2023). Nor was there a clear discursive construction in the corpus that articulated *convivencia escolar* with democratic principles or values such as participation, respect, or justice, as proposed by other scholars (Ochoa Cervantes and Pérez Galván 2019; Sainz et al. 2023; Urbina et al. 2020). The public discourse described the pandemic as a factor that increased both school violence and *convivencia* problems, highlighting that returning to in-person classes is important to rebuild *convivencia* and positive relationships at school. This reinforced an ST that linked the improvement of *convivencia escolar* with the return to in-person classes, valuing face-to-face school interactions as necessary for educational well-being.

Another set of STs suggested that the Ministry of Education prioritizes the voice of experts in addressing *convivencia escolar*, excluding educational communities. These STs showed that the development of effective programs to address violence and strengthen *convivencia* was associated with the validation of expert knowledge and technical design of solutions from key points, outlining a prescriptive approach to educational policy. Thus, the idea that the improvement of *convivencia escolar*, associated in the discourse with face-to-face and positive interactions, must be managed through standardized programs defined by specialists was reinforced. In this sense, as the literature has warned (Andrades-Moya 2020; Fierro-Evans 2013; Fierro-Evans and Carbajal-Padilla 2019), the definitions of *convivencia escolar* that circulate in the public discourse have conditioned the type of educational intervention that is considered legitimate—in this case, with a low protagonism of school communities.

Nonetheless, the results of this study show that Mineduc has recognized in some tweets the need to adapt educational policy to the reality of schools, which suggests the coexistence of a more flexible dimension in a predominantly prescriptive discourse. This could reflect a hybrid way of operating, in line with the literature on Chilean policies in this area (Ascorra et al. 2019; López et al. 2014). Considering these findings, questions arise about the role that schools can play in the autonomous and critical definition of their own forms of action and the complexity involved in designing national policies while school communities are expected to interpret the meaning of school violence and *convivencia* in their contexts (Kaplan and García 2009).

Finally, the third set of STs attributed the origin of mental health disorders to out-of-school social factors, even when their expression becomes visible at the individual and

community level in schools. From this perspective, the school is understood as a context of manifestation and not creation—one of discomfort—so its response consists of modifying contextual conditions such as making the school day more flexible. These STs reinforced the logic already observed in the first set of STs: Phenomena that supposedly emerge outside the educational centers end up being managed from the schools. This pattern aligns with previous findings on the STs of teachers and principals, who also tend to attribute the causes of school violence to factors outside the schools (Retuert and Castro-Carrasco 2017).

Although this study did not directly inquire about STs present in educational communities, it is worth asking to what extent the public discourse of Mineduc could influence its explanatory arguments. The analyzed STs moved away from more classical definitions of *convivencia escolar* present in schools, so it is possible that the ministry's posts also seek to influence public perception of the phenomenon, validating the need for educational policies implemented after the return to face-to-face classes (Austin et al. 2020; INDH 2022). In this framework, institutional communication on Twitter not only informs short-term actions but could also act as a mobilizing device for shared common sense, facilitating adherence to the proposed interventions.

This study focused exclusively on analysis of the public discourse of the Ministry of Education on Twitter during 2022, so its results do not allow the establishment of direct links with STs present in educational communities. Moreover, because the corpus was limited to a specific social network, the identified STs reflect a discursive construction mediated by the logics of this digital platform. Given these limitations, future research could comparatively explore the STs of public discourse and present among school actors such as teachers, principals, students, and families, considering different territorial and contextual scales. It would also be relevant to study how these STs circulate and are debated or reinterpreted in deliberative spaces in schools, along with the role of other communication devices of the state in the configuration of meaning regarding school violence and *convivencia escolar*.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the role of public media as a strategic channel through which the Chilean Ministry of Education communicates and legitimizes its views on school violence and *convivencia escolar*. The analysis shows that institutional discourse not only informs but also seeks to shape educational common sense, validate policies, and mobilize social support around specific interventions. The findings suggest that public communication by government authorities has become a central mechanism for addressing post-pandemic challenges in education, positioning social media as tools for policy dissemination and symbolic regulation. This trend aligns with international experiences where ministries of education and other public institutions have used digital media to frame social problems and propose solutions (Austin et al. 2020; Erokhin and Komendantova 2024).

From our perspective, this institutional strategy presents a double edge. On the one hand, it contributes to raising public awareness and generating shared discourses around urgent issues. On the other, it risks reducing the interpretive autonomy of educational communities by prescribing top-down frameworks and excluding other forms of knowledge, such as the experiences of teachers, students, and families.

Different researchers (Ascorra et al. 2019; Carrasco-Aguilar et al. 2018; Benbenishty et al. 2016; Moore et al. 2023) have warned that policies on *convivencia escolar* are most effective when they integrate participatory logics and address structural forms of violence. As authors of this article, we believe that while the Ministry's discourse advances relevant initiatives to promote *convivencia escolar*, it remains insufficient to articulate a more democratic and inclusive approach that strengthens the agency of educational communities.

In conclusion, analyzing public discourse on social media makes it possible to understand how educational policies are not only designed but also symbolically constructed and legitimized. Future policies should balance the necessary technical and expert guidance with greater recognition of the voices and contextual knowledge of school actors. Only in this way will it be possible to build sustainable strategies to address school violence and promote *convivencia escolar* as a democratic and participatory process.

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Abbreviation

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ST Subjective theory

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