

**ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE  
BACKPACK INSPECTION PROTOCOL WITHIN THE  
FRAMEWORK OF SCHOOL SAFETY IN MEXICO CITY**

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**Abstract--** The main objective of this study is to critically examine the relevance and effectiveness of the Backpack Inspection Protocol as a preventive school safety measure in elementary and middle schools in Mexico City. To this end, it analyzes the protocol's legal, educational, and theoretical foundations, as well as its feasibility, scope, and limitations, particularly in contexts of high social vulnerability. This analysis seeks to assess its actual contribution both to preventing the entry of prohibited items and to building safe school environments, taking into account a shared responsibility approach among the school, the family, and the community.

Likewise, the study addresses the central question: Does the backpack search protect or violate students' rights? This issue is addressed in a context characterized by rising social violence and the increasing introduction of prohibited items into schools, such as knives, vape devices, illicit substances, among others. Based on this, the article conducts a critical analysis of the Backpack Search Protocol as a school safety strategy in Mexico City, from both legal and pedagogical perspectives, identifying its strengths, areas for improvement, and, above all, questioning its suitability in real-world application scenarios.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach, integrating contributions from various educational, psychological, and sociological theories, including social learning, moral development, and social control. These perspectives are integrated across the board with the current national regulatory framework and contextual experience, allowing for an understanding of the phenomenon in all its complexity. In this regard, the analysis reveals that the issue is not limited to the disciplinary dimension associated with the possession of dangerous objects, but is deeply linked to community, family, emotional, and social factors that influence adolescent behavior and the configuration of the school climate.

Finally, the study acknowledges that the Backpack Search Protocol can serve as a useful preventive measure for reducing immediate risks, provided it is implemented in strict compliance with the law, with respect for human rights, and with the active participation of parents and guardians; however, it also warns of its operational, pedagogical, and social limitations when implemented in isolation, in a punitive manner, or merely as an administrative measure, as it can generate adverse effects such as the stigmatization of students, mistrust in the school institution, and the creation of a false sense of control.

In this regard, the study argues that school safety cannot be guaranteed solely through physical searches but requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates prevention measures, social-emotional education, the strengthening of family co-responsibility, and the promotion of a culture of peace. Rather than taking a position for or against the protocol, the text invites us to rethink school safety from an educational, critical, and humanistic perspective, where protection implies not only control but also education, support, and understanding of the complex realities experienced by children and adolescents both inside and outside the school environment.

**Keywords—**Culture of Peace, Prohibited Items, Backpack Searches, School Safety, School Violence.

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Furthermore, the study addresses the central question: do backpack searches protect or violate students' rights? This question is explored within a context characterized by increased social violence and the growing presence of prohibited items in schools, such as knives, vapes, and illicit substances. Based on this, the article presents a critical analysis of the Backpack Search Protocol as a school safety strategy in Mexico City, from both a legal and pedagogical perspective, identifying its strengths, areas for improvement, and, above all, questioning its suitability in real-world application scenarios.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative and analytical approach, incorporating contributions from various educational, psychological, and sociological theories, including social learning, moral development, and social control. These perspectives are integrated with the current national regulatory framework and contextual experience, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In this sense, the analysis reveals that the problem is not limited to the disciplinary dimension associated with the possession of dangerous objects, but is deeply linked to community, family, emotional, and social factors that influence adolescent behavior and the configuration of the school climate.

Finally, the study acknowledges that the Backpack Check Protocol can be a useful preventive measure for reducing immediate risks, provided it is applied in strict accordance with the law, with respect for human rights, and with the active participation of mothers, fathers, and guardians. However, it also highlights its operational, pedagogical, and social limitations when implemented in an isolated, punitive, or merely administrative manner, as it can generate adverse effects such as the stigmatization of students, distrust in the school institution, and the creation of a false sense of control. In this sense, the work argues that school safety cannot be guaranteed solely through physical checks, but requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates actions of prevention, socio-emotional education, strengthening of family co-responsibility, and promotion of a culture of peace. Rather than taking a position for or against the protocol, the text invites us to rethink school safety from a formative, critical, and humanistic perspective, where protection implies not only control, but also education, support, and understanding of the complex realities that children and adolescents experience both inside and outside the school environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, schools in Mexico have faced a significant increase in situations that compromise safety, well-being, and school harmony. This phenomenon has become particularly evident in schools located in areas of high social vulnerability, where community dynamics, inequality, daily violence, and the lack of support networks directly impact the behavior and development of children and adolescents.

In this context, the introduction of prohibited items such as knives, e-cigarettes, illicit substances, or even weapons has ceased to be an isolated incident and has become a recurring problem that demands immediate attention, in-depth analysis, and appropriate preventive strategies. What is concerning is not only the physical presence of these items, but also the implications they have for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the entire educational community, as well as for the creation of safe, peaceful, and educational learning environments.

The phenomenon cannot be understood solely as a disciplinary offense or an act of adolescent rebellion; it is part of a complex web where psychological, social, and family factors converge to shape youth behavior. which is why theories such as Skinner's behaviorism (1981), Bandura's social learning (1987), or Erikson's psychosocial development (1993) help us understand how peer validation, the search for identity, and the observation of behavioral models directly influence the decision to carry or bring dangerous objects onto school grounds. Furthermore, this perspective is complemented by sociological approaches such as Becker's labeling theory (2018) or Hirschi's social control (2003), which demonstrate how a lack of attachment, recognition, or a sense of belonging can lead adolescents to adopt risky behaviors. The school, for its part, finds itself caught in the middle of these tensions, attempting to reconcile its educational role with the responsibility to protect and safeguard the well-being of its students.

In response to this reality, various public policies have sought to address the issue through programs and guidelines aimed at strengthening school safety, ranging from the implementation of "Mochila Segura" in 2016 to the most recent guidelines on safe school environments and protocols for inspecting school supplies. Consequently, the Ministry of Public Education has sought to establish preventive mechanisms to reduce risks within school campuses; however, the relevance, legality, implementation, and social acceptance of these measures have been the subject of constant debate among authorities,

teachers, families, and human rights organizations, who emphasize that backpack searches, in particular, have generated divided opinions, as they are viewed, on the one hand, as a necessary preventive tool and, on the other, as a practice that may violate privacy and stigmatize students if not carried out under clear, transparent, and respectful criteria.

Within this framework, the purpose of this article is to comprehensively analyze the issue of prohibited items being brought into schools, as well as to evaluate the relevance and feasibility of the Backpack Search Protocol as a preventive measure within a school safety framework. Drawing on educational, psychological, and sociological theories, as well as national and international public policies, which seek to understand the phenomenon in its complexity and not merely from its superficial manifestation. Furthermore, the fundamental role played by parents and guardians in the education and support of students will be examined, recognizing that shared responsibility is a central pillar for any security measure to have a real and sustained impact.

The objective of this analysis is not to justify or question the application of the protocol, but rather to provide critical insights that allow school communities to make informed, context-specific, and pedagogically grounded decisions. In a country where violence has permeated every aspect of daily life, schools have an ethical and professional imperative to become protective environments. To this end, it is essential to understand the root of the problem, evaluate available strategies, and reflect on their scope and limitations. All of the above opens the door to a study that not only identifies a latent problem but also proposes considering school safety from an educational, preventive, and deeply human perspective.

### **Justification**

In Mexico City schools, there is a growing problem that directly affects school safety: the introduction of prohibited objects and substances by some students, such as knives, alcoholic beverages, e-cigarettes, and even weapons. This situation not only poses a physical and emotional risk to those who spend their days on school grounds but also creates a climate of mistrust, fear, and widespread uncertainty; It has been observed that these items often enter school campuses without being detected in time, which hinders the prevention of conflicts, accidents, or more serious situations. It has also been noted that there are not always

clear, effective, or respectful mechanisms exist to address these types of situations, which can lead to improvised practices that violate the students' own rights. Therefore, it is considered necessary to reflect and act responsibly in the face of this challenge; In teaching practice, it is urgent to thoroughly analyze the students' school context, the causes underlying these behaviors, and the possible strategies that can help us prevent them effectively. In particular, it is essential to assess whether tools such as the Backpack Search Protocol can be applied appropriately, balancing the need for safety with respect for students' dignity.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Contextualization of the issue of bringing prohibited items into the school environment**

Currently, it has become increasingly common to face situations that compromise the safety and well-being of the school community. One of the main challenges and issues we face in our schools is the introduction of prohibited items and substances by some students, such as knives, alcoholic beverages, vapes, and even weapons; This reality creates a series of problems that affect the school environment and the academic, emotional, and social development of adolescents.

Among the most frequently occurring issues are:

- Risk of physical violence among students (fights involving knives or sharp objects).
- Threats and/or aggression toward teachers, administrative staff, or their own classmates.
- An atmosphere of insecurity and fear within the school community.
- An increase in reports of bullying, linked to intimidation using dangerous objects.
- Difficulty maintaining order and discipline on campus.
- Use and sale of harmful substances (alcohol, e-cigarettes, drugs) on campus.
- Normalization of the use or possession of prohibited items among students.
- Conflicts with parents regarding the sanctions imposed.
- Risk of legal intervention, especially in cases involving the possession of weapons or injuries.
- Difficulty in applying fair and proportionate sanctions for each incident.
- Burnout among teaching and administrative staff due to constant attention to safety issues.

For this reason, it is advisable to analyze these issues at their source.

### **Manifestations and dynamics of the introduction of prohibited items into schools.**

The problem of bringing prohibited items into schools is not a recent one; it has its roots in various social issues linked to school violence and a limited culture of prevention in educational settings. Internationally, this situation gained particular prominence during the 1990s, especially in the United States, following incidents of student violence such as the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, where students brought firearms hidden in their backpacks, leading to a widely documented tragic outcome.

This event highlighted the need to strengthen preventive school controls and implement strategies aimed at preventing the recurrence of such incidents. In this regard, recent studies indicate that school shootings in the United States have increased in frequency and lethality between 1997 and 2022, reinforcing the urgency of implementing security and prevention measures in educational institutions, such as surveillance, monitoring, and the preventive screening of personal belongings (Rapa et al., 2024). In light of these data, the discussion on school safety transcends the U.S. context and becomes an international benchmark for rethinking preventive policies in other settings, which implies conducting a more critical analysis of measures that could prove effective and relevant, leading to comprehensive prevention strategies.

In Latin America, concerns about school safety began to intensify due to the rise in risky behaviors and youth violence linked to social factors such as inequality, family breakdown, and the presence of criminal groups. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2018), schools in this region face emerging dynamics of aggression, bullying, and the possession of dangerous objects on school grounds. Based on its analysis, the necessary measures must be taken to safeguard the well-being of students and other educational stakeholders, since the origin and purpose of school—or education, as it is called—is none other than to create and shape productive individuals for this planet.

In Mexico, the issue began to gain visibility in the early years of the 21st century, although attention initially focused on school bullying (referred to by many as “bullying”). Beginning in 2007, when incidents were documented of students bringing objects such as knives, awls (sharp points), e-cigarettes, and illicit substances (National Institute for Educational Evaluation

for Education 2007). This situation raised concerns among educational and public safety authorities, leading them to consider preventive strategies to avert tragedy. This scenario marked a turning point in the national education agenda, demonstrating that school violence is not limited to bullying dynamics but can escalate into greater risks if not addressed in a timely manner.

Against this backdrop, in 2016 and after much discussion and red tape, the Ministry of Public Education, in coordination with the Federal Police, implemented the “Safe Backpack” program nationwide as part of the National School Coexistence Program, with the sole objective of preventing risks within schools through random and non-invasive searches of school backpacks, with the aim of detecting objects that could pose a danger to the school community (SEP, 2016); although its implementation demonstrated that school safety policies require clearer operational protocols and an educational approach, as well as shared responsibility among authorities, teachers, and families, to be improved.

However, this program generated controversy because various social sectors and human rights organizations argued that its implementation could violate students’ right to privacy. In this regard, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH, 2019) noted that the searches must be conducted according to clear protocols, avoiding any form of discrimination or stigmatization; This debate reached its peak in 2019, when the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN) ruled that the Mochila Segura program was not unconstitutional, but ordered that it must be implemented under strict conditions that guaranteed respect for human rights and the participation of parents (SCJN, 2019), and from that point on, its implementation ceased to be a standardized federal program and was left to the discretion of each educational institution through its own school protocols for preventive searches.

During the previous administration’s six-year term (2018–2024), Article 3 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States was amended in 2019, and a new General Education Law was enacted; with this, the Mexican government stated that: “These changes sought to advance the goal of making education comprehensive because it educates for life and is focused on the development of individuals’ cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical abilities, so that they may achieve their well-being and thereby contribute to social development, among other things...” (Secretariat of Public Education 2019). Within this

context, the reform not only redefined the educational purpose of schooling but also placed so-called holistic well-being at the center as the guiding principle of educational policy, thereby emphasizing the commitment to create safe, inclusive school environments consistent with the aforementioned third article of the Constitution.

In the specific case of Mexico City, the Federal Education Authority established guidelines on school safety that allow for the implementation of the Backpack Inspection Protocol, provided it is carried out preventively, without criminalizing students, and as part of a comprehensive strategy for coexistence (AEFCM, 2021); evidence that the problem of bringing prohibited items into public secondary schools persists and demands pedagogical, preventive, and legal strategies in line with the current social context; in this regard, local regulations confirm that school safety must be viewed as a shared responsibility that balances prevention with respect for students' rights, and the protocol must be coordinated with educational and community initiatives that strengthen a culture of legality and peaceful coexistence in schools.

### **Theoretical Approaches to the Analysis of School Safety and Risk Management**

The issue of bringing prohibited items into schools can be analyzed from a behavioral perspective. According to Skinner (1981), human behavior is shaped by reinforcements received from the environment, whether positive or negative. From this perspective, when a student brings prohibited items into school and receives peer recognition or social attention, these elements act as reinforcers that increase the likelihood of repeating the action, demonstrating that behavior does not arise in isolation but is rather the result of interactions and prior learning conditioned by the immediate environment; from this perspective, school intervention should not be limited to punishment but should instead aim to modify the reinforcers that sustain the behavior, promoting positive alternatives for recognition and belonging; thus, the behavioral approach helps us understand that effective prevention involves transforming the educational environment to foster appropriate and safe social learning.

For its part, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1987) maintains that individuals learn behaviors by observing and imitating significant models such as peers, family members, or public figures. Adolescents, in particular, are highly sensitive to the influence of their peer group, as they seek acceptance and social belonging. In this sense, the introduction of prohibited objects

(sharp objects, prohibited substances, or firearms) can become a behavior learned by observation within the school environment, especially if there are no clear consequences or if the group validates such actions. For this reason, prevention requires establishing clear rules and consequences and strengthening the leadership of all educational stakeholders in order to counteract the imitation of risky behaviors and thereby consolidate a school culture based on responsibility and peaceful coexistence.

From a psychosocial development perspective, Erikson (1993) explains that adolescents go through a stage known as identity versus role confusion, in which they seek to construct their own identity and achieve recognition within their social environment; this process can lead to defiant or rebellious behavior toward school authority figures; similarly, Kohlberg (1992), through his theory of moral development, asserts that many adolescents are still at a preconventional level of morality, guiding their behavior solely to avoid punishment or receive rewards, but without understanding the ethical function of school rules; Within this theoretical framework, the introduction of prohibited items can be interpreted as an expression of identity-seeking or self-assertion among peers, rather than as a purely delinquent act. Therefore, preventive strategies must incorporate educational guidance and the development of moral judgment to ensure that students understand the ethical and social significance of the rules, beyond mere fear of punishment.

In the educational sphere, Ortega and Del Rey (2008) argue that school coexistence is built on rules, shared values, and preventive protection mechanisms; when educational institutions lack preventive strategies or clear disciplinary mechanisms, risky behaviors such as bringing prohibited items are more likely to arise. Similarly, Nelsen (2016), from the Positive Discipline approach, argues that corrective measures should focus on guiding behavior rather than humiliating students or violating their rights, which is key when implementing preventive actions such as backpack searches. In this regard, effective prevention requires balancing clear rules with pedagogical practices that respect student dignity, and only in this way can a culture of coexistence based on dialogue, shared responsibility, and formative discipline be maintained, which will result in a reduction of risky behaviors without undermining or damaging the school climate.

From a sociological perspective, Becker (2018), with his Labeling Theory, warns that when students are classified as “problematic” or “troublesome,” this label can generate an effect

of social confirmation, pushing them to continue or intensify inappropriate behaviors; likewise, Hirschi (2002), drawing on Social Control Theory, explains that a lack of attachment to school, family, or emotional bonds increases the propensity to engage in deviant behavior; therefore, the issue of prohibited items is related to a lack of a sense of belonging and the weakening of the school–family bond; In this vein, prevention should not focus solely on control; rather, it should strengthen students’ emotional bonds and sense of belonging to the school and their community. This avoids stigmatization and promotes relationships based on trust and support, which reduces recidivism and fosters positive social integration processes.

### **School safety from a comprehensive risk management perspective**

School safety is a fundamental pillar in guaranteeing the right to education, as students can only fully develop their abilities in a safe and violence-free environment. In this regard, educational institutions must adopt a comprehensive approach to safety that encompasses both the physical protection and the emotional and social well-being of students; According to UNESCO (2018), school safety should be conceived as a set of preventive, participatory, and educational strategies that enable proactive risk management, thereby preventing incidents and strengthening a culture of prevention, coexistence, and resilience within the educational community.

In Mexico, the Ministry of Public Education (SEP, 2022) adopts this approach in the Safe Schools program, which seeks to build protective environments through the participation of teachers, students, and parents; this program emphasizes that control measures, such as backpack searches, must be integrated into a pedagogical and educational strategy that promotes responsibility and risk awareness, avoiding punitive or authoritarian approaches; therefore, comprehensive school safety involves both emergency preparedness and the promotion of an emotionally safe environment that fosters learning” (UNESCO, 2018); Under this approach, school safety is conceived as a comprehensive process that integrates prevention, values education, and community participation, all of which go beyond isolated supervisory actions. Thus, the challenge is to avoid immediate risks and consolidate a culture of shared responsibility within the school that ensures trust and creates conditions conducive to learning.

It has been established that school safety is not merely an administrative requirement; rather, it is conceived as the essential condition that allows students to learn, coexist, and develop fully. It is said that in an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe, school dynamics are transformed, which leads to increased participation, reduces tension among students, and strengthens the trust that families place in our school. Therefore, the vision proposed by UNESCO (2018) states that school safety is like a “web” of preventive and educational actions aimed at building resilient communities capable of managing their own risks. From this perspective, school safety stands as a structural pillar of the educational project, integrating preventive, educational, and community-based actions that impact the institutional climate.

In line with this stance, programs such as the SEP’s Safe Schools initiative (2022) have sought to translate this approach into concrete practices; however, day-to-day experience shows us that these measures only have a real impact when applied from a pedagogical perspective and not merely an “operational” one. Therefore, actions such as backpack searches—which have been so hotly debated in the educational sphere—can be useful only if they are integrated into an educational strategy that promotes shared responsibility and self-care, avoiding punitive practices that damage the relationship between students and teachers. In this vein, school safety goes beyond incident prevention; that is, it seeks to build a school climate where students feel supported, heard, and protected. Thus, ensuring a safe environment means guaranteeing the right to a full and dignified education, in which every student can develop their potential without fear and with full confidence in the community they are part of.

In this regard, we revisit the theory of situational crime prevention developed by Ronald Clarke (1980), which argues that crime can be reduced by modifying the physical and social conditions that facilitate the commission of wrongdoing. This perspective proposes reducing opportunities and increasing the perceived risks for potential offenders, without necessarily resorting to punishment; When applied to the school context, this approach justifies the implementation of protocols such as backpack searches, provided they are conducted in accordance with legal standards, respect, and transparency, since the goal is not to criminalize students but to prevent risky situations through responsible surveillance and cooperation among the school, family, and community. Given

the foregoing, it can be asserted that: Situational prevention focuses on altering immediate environments in ways that reduce opportunities for crime, without the need to profoundly modify the social structure (Clarke, 1997).

Meanwhile, situational prevention invites us to reconsider how we understand safety in the school setting, especially in high-incidence contexts, since this approach highlights the importance of intervening in “immediate environments to reduce opportunities for risky behavior,” which is particularly valuable in schools where small adjustments can generate significant changes in community life. Therefore, far from requiring “profound structural transformations,” situational prevention focuses on practical strategies based on the design, supervision, and organization of space, which help strengthen the protection and well-being of the community at a time when school safety occupies a central place on the public agenda. All of the above offers a viable and effective path to improve learning conditions and promote safer and more trustworthy environments for students and teachers, as mandated by the Safe Schools Model promoted by the SEP since 2008 and updated in 2018, which seeks to ensure educational spaces free of violence through three pillars: prevention, response, and follow-up (SEP, 2018). This model promotes shared responsibility among teachers, authorities, and parents, fostering safe practices and reporting mechanisms. Within this framework, backpack searches are considered a preventive measure that can contribute to the protection of students, provided they adhere to respect for human rights and the involvement of parents or guardians. The SEP emphasizes that all actions related to school safety must be guided by the principles of proportionality, confidentiality, and respect for students’ dignity. Consequently, school safety measures must prioritize student protection without violating their right to privacy or causing stigmatization (SEP, 2019). In summary, school safety cannot be limited to the application of physical or coercive protocols; rather, building on the above, the reviewed theories of comprehensive safety, crime prevention, and the safe schools model agree that effective prevention depends on a balanced combination of control and education. Therefore, backpack searches—far from being an end in themselves—must be understood as a tool within a broader approach to risk management and a culture of peace in schools.

## Shared Responsibility of Parents and Guardians for School Safety

Well-being and safety in schools cannot be understood solely as the responsibility of educational authorities or teaching staff; the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents requires the active and coordinated participation of the entire educational community, especially parents or guardians, who constitute the primary educational environment and the main moral and emotional reference point for students. According to the General Education Law (2019), the family shares responsibility for the comprehensive education of students and for promoting safe and respectful environments both on and off campus. This shared responsibility implies a joint commitment between the school, families, and the community to prevent risky behaviors. UNESCO (2018) maintains that school safety is achieved when parents actively participate in prevention programs, collaborate in defining rules, and reinforce values of coexistence at home. In this regard, parental support is not limited to supervision; rather, it refers to shaping children's awareness and habits, encouraging reflection on the consequences of bringing, carrying, or using prohibited items within the school environment.

The General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (2014) establishes that parents have the obligation to ensure the comprehensive development of their children in environments free from violence and risk; therefore, their participation in preventing the entry of dangerous objects is essential. When parents or guardians check backpacks at home, discuss the risks, or supervise the items students bring to school, a culture of shared responsibility and prevention is reinforced. In this sense, family shared responsibility complements school actions and strengthens a preventive network that begins at home and is consolidated at school.

Studies on school life agree that a lack of communication between school and family increases the likelihood that adolescents will engage in risky behaviors (Hirschi, 2002; Ortega & Del Rey, 2008). conversely, when the relationship is based on trust and support, young people develop a greater sense of self-control and belonging. For example, in everyday life, parental collaboration is of vital importance, given that the immediate social environment presents vulnerability factors, such as community violence and family breakdown, which undoubtedly influence students' behavior and development.

In light of this situation, the Ministry of Public Education (SEP, 2019) emphasizes that all school safety measures, such as the “Backpack Inspection Protocol,” must be implemented with the active participation of parents, who must be aware of the objectives, procedures, and limits of the inspection; This inclusion not only ensures the transparency of the process but also strengthens trust between families and the school. Furthermore, it has been observed that when parents serve on school safety committees, preventive actions are legitimized, and misunderstandings or perceptions of an invasion of students’ privacy are avoided.

On the other hand, the CNDH (2017) notes that parental involvement is essential to ensure that protocols are applied with a human rights-based approach. In this way, backpack searches become a pedagogical and preventive practice—not a punitive one—that seeks to foster awareness and shared responsibility. Family involvement allows students to understand that security measures are not a form of control, but rather an expression of shared care. The ethics of care proposed by Gilligan (1982) emphasizes that moral responsibility arises from the recognition of the other and the need to act with empathy and protection. From this perspective, parents must assume their role as guardians and emotional companions, listening to and understanding their children’s motivations, especially in contexts where young people may turn to dangerous objects out of fear, insecurity, or a need to belong. Promoting shared responsibility involves strengthening school-family communication; informational meetings, guidance workshops, and coexistence committees are spaces where parents can learn strategies for dialogue, positive discipline, and conflict management, aligned with the New Mexican School (SEP, 2022), which promotes community participation and social-emotional learning as pillars of peaceful coexistence. When families participate consistently, adolescents perceive consistency between the values taught at home and at school, which reduces disruptive behaviors and the bringing of prohibited items.

Parental co-responsibility is an indispensable condition for the success of any school safety strategy; backpack checks, awareness campaigns, and coexistence programs are only effective when accompanied by a genuine commitment from families. Prevention begins at home and is reinforced at school; constant collaboration between both

environments guarantees students' physical safety and their emotional, ethical, and social development—referred to by the current government as “well-being development.”

### **Regulatory Framework for the School Supply Inspection Protocol**

Referring to the document titled Safe School Environments in Basic Education Schools, published by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), which constitutes a national regulatory and operational framework aimed at guaranteeing the right of children and adolescents to develop in safe, peaceful, and inclusive educational environments, in accordance with the principles of the New Mexican School and the current General Education Law; this protocol guide presents a comprehensive vision of school safety, which is conceived as the absence of violence and the creation of environments of physical, emotional, and social well-being, where the educational community participates in a co-responsible manner. In this regard, the protocol document proposes a set of educational, preventive, and risk-response actions aimed at strengthening school coexistence and a culture of peace.

One of the most significant sections addresses the prevention of the entry and detection of prohibited objects and substances in schools, establishing the School Supply Inspection Protocol, known as the backpack check; This procedure aims to reduce risks within school premises by preventing the entry of “inappropriate items” and “prohibited items,” which are classified as: weapons, sharp objects, toxic substances, or any material that could endanger the physical or emotional well-being of members of the school community. The aforementioned document emphasizes that backpack searches should not be viewed as a punitive act or an expression of mistrust toward students, but rather as an exceptional preventive measure to be applied only as a last resort, after educational and awareness-raising strategies have been exhausted, which circumscribes all of the above.

The SEP stipulates in the aforementioned document that all searches must be conducted with the active participation of parents or guardians, under the coordination of school authorities, and in accordance with the principles of legality, transparency, confidentiality, non-discrimination, and respect for students' privacy and dignity. To this end, it provides for the creation of School Oversight Committees, composed of teachers, administrators, and parents, who are responsible for agreeing on procedures, drawing up lists of prohibited items (based on the document), defining

checkpoints, and recording incidents confidentially. Furthermore, the document emphasizes that body searches are NOT permitted and that the handling of information and “seized” items must be carried out in accordance with regulations on personal data protection and children’s rights.

This protocol is aligned with a comprehensive safety approach, linked to other mechanisms outlined in the aforementioned document, such as: crisis management, response to risky situations, family counseling, and interagency coordination, which involves government agencies such as the National DIF System, the National System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA), and the Offices of the Attorney General for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, which seek to ensure that any detected case leads to processes of care and restoration of rights, rather than punitive measures.

**Procedures and circumstances for implementing the backpack inspection protocol**

The following table summarizes the measures outlined in the document: Protocol for the Protection and Care of Children and Adolescents During School Supply Inspections in Elementary and Secondary Schools Administered by the Ministry of Public Education, as well as the corresponding procedures for various scenarios, in accordance with the principles of legality, respect for dignity, and participation of the educational community.

**Table 1.** *Backpack Inspection Protocol.*

STAGE / SITUATION	ACTION TO BE TAKEN	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
<p><b>1. Planning and authorization of the protocol.</b></p>	<p>Convene the School Board and the School Safety Committee. Collectively agree on the implementation of the protocol and inform the school community.</p>	<p>School administration, safety committee, parents.</p>	<p>There must be prior consensus and written authorization from parents or guardians. It cannot be implemented by surprise.</p>

<p><b>2. Communicati on prior to the screening.</b></p>	<p>Notify in advance of the date and reason for the search, explaining its preventive nature.</p>	<p>School administration, teachers, safety committee.</p>	<p>The right to information and transparency must be protected; the measure must not instill fear or stigmatization.</p>
<p><b>3. Routine search. (preventive)</b></p>	<p>Search backpacks in the presence of the student and a parent or guardian, in a private space and without displaying personal items.</p>	<p>School Safety Committee, parent, designated teacher.</p>	<p>The search must not be a body search nor involve handling personal without wi thout consent. The student's dignity and privacy of the student.</p>
<p><b>4. If non-hazardous prohibited items are found.</b></p>	<p>Discreetly remove the item, file an administrative report, inform the guardian, and secure the item.</p>	<p>School administration, parent, teacher witness.</p>	<p>Do not public public sanctions. The incident must be handled in an educational and educational.</p>
<p><b>5. If dangerous or illegal objects are detected.</b></p>	<p>Suspend the search and immediately notify the appropriate authorities. Notify the parents and prepare a confidential report.</p>	<p>School school administration, local educational , parents.</p>	<p>Must comply with the General Law on the Rights of Children, Children and Adolescents and principles of best interests, confidentiality, and</p>

			non-criminalization.
<b>6. Follow-up and follow-up guidance.</b>	Refer the student and family to school counseling or psychological support.	Educational counseling, school administration, committee for coexistence.	The goal is to restore harmony and prevent repeat offenses, avoiding a punitive approach.

	Record actions for follow-up.		
<b>7. Communication to the educational community.</b>	Inform the community about the operation without disclosing personal data.	School school administration, for social participation.	Promotes the institutional transparency and education in values of coexistence and respect.

**Source:** Prepared by the author based on information contained in the document: *Protocol for the Protection and Care of Children and Adolescents During School Supply Inspections in Basic Education Schools of the Ministry of Public Education.*

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the implementation of the School Supply Inspection Protocol in schools located in contexts of high social vulnerability is feasible, relevant, and necessary, provided that it is strictly adhered to in accordance with the principles established by the SEP and is accompanied by educational initiatives that comprehensively address the risk conditions faced by students; In environments where violence is part of daily life, the possibility of objects compromising school safety being brought in cannot be minimized; on the contrary, it requires the implementation of carefully designed preventive measures to protect children and adolescents without violating their rights.

Important notes according to the document.

- The search cannot be random or unannounced.
- It must at all times respect the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and respect for privacy.
- Confiscated items are kept at the school office and may not be destroyed or displayed.
- Body searches or physical contact with students are prohibited.
- All procedures must be witnessed by parents and documented.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis conducted, it is evident that the Backpack Search Protocol is intended to serve as a preventive measure to ensure school safety; however, its implementation faces serious structural, operational, social, and cultural limitations that may render it ineffective and even counterproductive in certain contexts. The daily reality of schools located in high-risk areas demonstrates that the risks associated with the entry of prohibited items do not stem solely from the lack of physical searches, but from a broader network of factors, such as community violence, family breakdown, the normalization of risk, the absence of emotional support networks, institutional shortcomings, and the fragility of the school community, that is why, under these conditions, backpack searches run the risk of becoming a superficial measure that addresses the symptoms but not the root causes of the problem.

First, the school environment itself can make the systematic implementation of the protocol unfeasible; for example, a lack of sufficient staff, administrative overload, constant teacher turnover, and limited training in risk management make it difficult to conduct searches with the standards of legality, care, and thoroughness established by the SEP. In schools where staff can barely meet basic academic needs, allocating time and resources to complex administrative processes—such as planning, conducting, and documenting searches—becomes a burden that is difficult to sustain in the long term. In these cases, the protocol tends to be applied only partially, symbolically, or sporadically, reducing its capacity for real impact.

On the other hand, the protocol's effectiveness is compromised by the strategies students themselves develop to evade searches. In high-risk contexts, teens often quickly learn to hide items in strategic locations, swap them before entering the school grounds, or coordinate with outsiders to bring them in through unmonitored areas. This demonstrates that backpack searches, by focusing solely on a physical container, may prove insufficient in the face of more complex dynamics of youth behavior, community influence, or peer pressure; In other words, the measure may fail because the students themselves find ways to circumvent it.

Likewise, there is a psychological and pedagogical factor that limits its viability: when searches become routine or excessively formal, they can create the perception among students that the school is a space that is surveilled, controlling, or distrustful, thereby undermining

the pedagogical relationship and undermining the creation of learning environments based on trust and shared responsibility. In communities where adolescents already face stress, violence, or emotional instability, this perception of control can exacerbate rebellious or resistant behaviors, increasing rather than decreasing school-related tension.

Another critical issue lies in parental involvement. Although regulations stipulate that the search must be conducted in the presence of parents, in practice this proves challenging in areas where informal work, long hours, or fragmented family dynamics are prevalent. Low parental attendance renders the protocol impractical as designed, forcing schools to improvise or suspend operations, which undermines the measure's validity and continuity.

Finally, the unworkability of the protocol stems from the absence of a comprehensive policy addressing the structural causes of school violence. In communities plagued by drug sales, the presence of criminal groups, or domestic violence, bag searches alone can hardly change the behaviors students exhibit at school. Unless accompanied by psychological intervention, social-emotional programs, inter-institutional support networks, and community prevention strategies, the protocol remains isolated, limited, and doomed to marginal effectiveness.

Ultimately, insisting on backpack searches as the central solution amounts to applying a “Band-Aid” to a problem that demands deeper, structural actions; no protocol, no matter how rigorous, can compensate for the lack of emotional support, institutional fragility, or the violence surrounding many of our students; placing school safety in an isolated measure is betting on an illusion of control that is difficult to sustain in the face of reality, likewise, if the school aspires to be a truly protective space, it must go beyond checking backpacks; it must review its practices, its relationships, and its comprehensive support strategies. Only then can we address at the root what no physical check, on its own, will be able to resolve.

## **FUTURE WORK**

Based on the findings of this study, several lines of work have been identified that can guide future research and actions in the field of school safety. While the analysis revealed the limited utility of the Backpack Search Protocol as a preventive measure, it also highlighted the need to explore more comprehensive approaches that address the structural causes of the problem.

In this regard, a first line of future work consists of developing empirical studies that evaluate the actual impact of the protocol in different school contexts, particularly through mixed-methods approaches that integrate quantitative and qualitative data, as it is important to analyze variables such as the frequency of application, the perceptions of students, teachers, and families, as well as the incidence of risk events before and after its implementation, in order to determine its effectiveness beyond the theoretical level.

Similarly, it is proposed to delve deeper into the analysis of the psychosocial factors that influence student behavior, especially those related to the possession of prohibited items; future research could focus on aspects such as identity formation in adolescence, peer group influence, community violence, and family dynamics, with the aim of designing more relevant and context-specific preventive strategies. On the other hand, it is considered necessary to analyze in greater depth the role of family co-responsibility in school safety, particularly in contexts where the participation of mothers, fathers, and guardians is limited. Future research could focus on identifying effective school–family engagement strategies that adapt to current social conditions and strengthen the educational support provided to students.

Finally, there is a need to broaden the analysis toward a public policy perspective that allows for the integration of school safety with broader social, community, and institutional programs. This involves studying the relationship between school violence and structural violence, as well as the effectiveness of inter-institutional interventions involving various social actors.

In conclusion, future work should aim to move beyond a reductionist view of school safety centered on control, advancing toward comprehensive, preventive, and educational models that recognize the complexity of the phenomenon and promote safer, more inclusive, and more humane educational environments. **REFERENCES**

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