RESEARCH ARTICLE

DEALING WITH DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NANDI SOUTH DISTRICT, KENYA

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
	This paper is based on a study purposed to find out the school factors associated with violence on secondary schools in Nandi South District in the North Rift Valley region of Kenya. The paper specifically identifies various forms of violence among students and ways in which they can be curbed or eradicated. The research was descriptive in nature. The target population consisted of head teachers, teachers and Form Three students in secondary schools in Nandi South District. Violence in secondary schools was noted in various forms, which range from destruction of school property, use of abusive language, fighting, bullying to strikes. These forms of violence can be alleviated by addressing the school factors in terms of head teacher, teacher, student, facilities and food and drug abuse factors. It is clear from the study that there is need to check the problem of violence through seminars, workshops and establishment of functional guidance and counselling departments in schools. It is also imperative that adequate facilities and food be provided and elaborate consultations and dialogue among education stakeholders be embraced to alleviate the problem of violence in secondary schools.

Introduction

Violence in schools is the most disturbing matter in the life of a school as an institution of learning where students, parents and the community at large are stakeholders. Violence worries governments, teachers, parents, and students alike because it disrupts the core of human formation in society.

Violence involves behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill somebody. It can be through physical or emotional force and energy. Sanchez and Agpaoa (1997), in their book *Contemporary Social Problems and Issues,* highlight that, violent people are irritable, discourteous, defiant and aggressive.

The subject of violence is not new. It has its origin in the very nature of human beings and continues to be nourished by society. *The Holy Bible: New International Version,* records in Genesis 4:3-8 that during the time of Adam and Eve, violence was witnessed. Cain attacked and killed his brother Abel

because the Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering but He did not on Cain and his offering. Furthermore, Rutebuka (2001), in his book *School Violence and Unspoken Messages to Children: The Remedy is in Your Hands,* also observes that by 1837 violence in America was an issue of concern. In fact, in the same year, Abraham Lincoln declared that the mortal threat to American democracy was not foreign military power but an internal flaw in the name of violence.

In his book, *Violence and Aggression* (1977) Bailey notes that, a Gallup Poll conducted in the United States in 1972 shows that the majority of Americans interviewed are afraid to walk alone in the streets of their own neighbourhoods at night for fear of violence. This is a clear indication of the fact that violence has been a part and parcel of daily incidences for a long time. Bailey (1977), in a survey conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, has shown that Television viewers overestimated the incidence of real life violence in their own cities.

Schools are not an exception to this problem of violence for the simple reason that they are part of societies that go through the dangers of violence worldwide.

Rutebuka (2001) has found out that the US is leading in violence because of its unrestricted access to firearms. Canada, which shares the same TV, movie and video programmes with the US, exhibits the same culture of violence with the US. The only difference is that Canada is slightly stricter on its gun control than the US. The US and Japan are also similar in respect to school violence. Rutebuka (ibid.), further reports that school violence in Japan is rampant and that crime rate by the youth is far worse than in the US, giving an example of an English teacher who was stabbed to death by a 13-year-old when she asked him why he was late for class. Since, January 1998 until when the report was given in April 1998, three killings and fifty-four knife-related violent events had been reported in schools (ibid.).

Rutebuka (2001) notes further that student violence against teachers and other students has doubled in Japan in the past five years and juvenile crime has reached record levels in a nation where guns were strictly forbidden. Instead, students resort to switch blade knives for weapons. School violence in French secondary schools, according to Rutebuka (ibid.) has been rising and that most of it has been verbal, physical, and theft. The same increase has also been recorded in Great Britain from September 1997.

Kenya has not been an island when the issue at stake is school violence. Student acts of violence in Kenyan schools dates back to 1908, when the first student strike was reported in Maseno Boys Secondary School. In July 1991, at St. Kizito Secondary School, nineteen girls died and seventy-two were raped in a midnight ordeal, orchestrated by their male colleagues. In April 1998, six men believed to have been former students of a Garisa High School teacher stabbed their teacher to death. The Nation team in the article "Another Nyeri School fire victim dies" which appeared in the *Daily Nation* of Friday, May 28th 1999 (p. 8) reported that four Nyeri High School prefects died in the hands of student arsonists. These acts of violence, among others, led to the formation of the Task Force on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Secondary Schools in September 2001 by the Government of Kenya. This was as a result of continued violence despite the banning of corporal punishment in schools in March 2001 as noted by the Ministry of Education (2001) in the paper *Task Force on Student Indiscipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools.*

Four years after the ban on corporal punishment and the establishment of the Task Force on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Secondary Schools, school violence was still an issue of concern. In an article "Court jails Kyanguli teachers for negligence" which appeared in the *Daily Nation* of Wednesday, January 30th 2002 (p. 3), Chepkemei reports that the head teacher and deputy head teacher of Kyanguli Secondary School, where a number of students died because of violence, were jailed for negligence. On the same subject of violence, the *Daily Nation* (2005, July 29, p. 20) reported that five hundred students of Isebania High School rioted, protesting at the transfer of their deputy head teacher. They also harassed motorists. The school was shut down when they threatened to put it on fire.

Moreover, Amadala and Kusimba have reported in the article "Students destroy property" that appeared in the *Daily Nation* of Wednesday, September 21st 2005 (p. 18) that the students of St. Anthony Secondary School in Trans Nzoia District smashed classroom windows and damaged their head teacher's car in 2005. Furthermore, the Nation Team in the article under the title "Schools to tighten transfer rules" featured in the *Daily Nation* of Tuesday, March 27th 2007 (p. 11), reported that the students of Mumbi Girls' Secondary School in Murang'a fled the institution in March 2007, protesting against lack of food and other provisions. They claimed that they were being served with insufficient food and tea without sugar.

The problem of violence has also hit secondary schools in Nandi South District. The Nation Team in the article "School closed after students run riot" which appeared in the *Daily Nation* of Monday, September 26th 2005 (p. 6) has reported of the students of Chebisaas Girls' Secondary School, in Nandi South District, who rioted leading to the closure of the school in September 2005. The students raised various grievances including shortage of teachers, poor sanitation and insecurity in the school. Tuiyot and Bii, in the article "School arson: teacher held", in the *East African Standard* of Thursday, July 5th 2001 (p. 3), have also reported of a case in which the police in Nandi District arrested a head teacher in connection with the petrol-bombing of Lelmokwo Secondary School in Nandi District. They noted that during the same period students of the same school were also being interrogated over the destruction of the dormitories.

The Nation Team in the article "Students held over demonstration" that appeared in the *Daily Nation* of Wednesday, March 6th 2002 (p. 3), clarified that three

hundred students of Tindiret Secondary School in Nandi South District went on rampage in 2002, demanding that their principal should not be moved since he had been in the school for less than six months. During the same period, four hundred students of Kilibwoni Secondary School in Nandi District stayed away from class to oppose the transfer of their principal.

It goes without saying that unless the problem of school violence is checked, it may continue, yet stakeholders in education are yearning for a peaceful climate in schools that encourages high academic achievement, morality and responsible citizenship. This paper thus looked into the forms of violence and ways to overcoming it in schools.

Forms of Violence

It is necessary to know the various forms that violence takes in schools so that school administrators, teachers, parents and students can be able to prevent it before it takes place. Rutebuka (2001) argues that violence includes injury or threat of injury inflicted by one or more people on other human beings, property, nature or environment. The injury may be physical or psychological. Violence in this case can be implied or directly inflicted. Poor discipline and specific discipline issues such as drugs, truancy, fighting and drinking are the biggest problems facing schools as noted in the book entitled *The Principal as a Leader,* 1994 by Hughes. It is further noted that force is often used in the cases above. This force can be verbal or physical. The explanation is that it is verbal when threats and bad language are used, but physical when it involves bodily confrontation and vandalism.

It is evident that the teaching profession has witnessed changes in student behaviour, according to Johnson and Johnson (1995) in *Reducing School Violence through Conflict Resolution*. Johnson and Johnson (ibid.) observe that problems on discipline such as running in halls, talking out of turn and chewing gum lead to violent actions which include physical and verbal aggressiveness, incivility and in some schools, drug abuse, robbery, assault and murder.

According to Adamson, Aleavy and Collins (2004), it is clear that bullying has increasingly become a predominant issue of school life, which impacts on students' social, emotional, psychological and educational development. It is further highlighted that name-calling, pushing, kicking, hitting, threats, teasing are methods of bullying in a school

environment. Goossens and Camodeca (2005) point out that bullying is a form of violence that has considerably expanded as a research issue over the past few decades and is now recognized worldwide as a problem. It is suggested that intervention programmes be sought to deal with this problem so that the victims can enjoy their learning in schools.

A Theoretical Perspective on Violence

In this paper, the author analyses violence based on two theories. The first one is the behavioural theory, which is psychological in nature, and the other is Anomie theory, which is basically sociological in outlook. The behavioural theory, typically known as stimulus-response theory, has been explained by Anderson and Carter (1974) in their book *Human Behaviour in the Social Environment: A Social Systems Approach.* This theory holds that behaviour is influenced by the environment one lives in. In this case, individuals can be studied by looking at their behaviour. It is evident from this theory that what is vital is studying what people do (behaviour). In fact, Myers (1992) in *Psychology* notes that one cannot observe people's feelings but their outward behaviour in reaction to external stimuli. Myers (ibid.) further notes that stimuli in the environment elicit certain responses. In fact, when rewards and punishments are varied, responses change (ibid.).

The argument is that behaviour modification helps people to eliminate problems in their lives by acquiring necessary skills in a specific environment. In this case, the subject of violence in schools can only be dealt with if the school factors associated with violence are identified and addressed within the school environment itself. These factors represent the stimuli in a school environment. When the head teacher, teacher, student, drug abuse, facilities and food factors are changed, students are bound to respond to this change. The response by students in this respect can be positive or negative. The proponents of this theory further observe that a person's behaviour can be understood if it is possible to discern what the person finds rewarding through watching overt acts and their consequences. They hold that the environment needs to be manipulated to reinforce the desired behaviour. If positive behaviours are not positively rewarded, children will exhibit negative behaviours for them to at least receive negative rewards.

The oldest sociological explanation of deviance is Emile Durkheims Anomie theory, first proposed in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). Emile Durkheim applied this theory in a study of suicide in 1897 and found out that one type of suicide was

rooted in the view that deviant behaviour is without regulation. He notes that social rules play an important role in regulating people's lives. Norms govern behaviour and people know what to expect as well as what is expected of them. During sudden economic downturns and upswings, suicide rates tend to be higher than usual. Both depression and prosperity are disturbances of collective order. When social norms break down, people become disoriented and deviant behaviours occur *(*Smelser, 1981).

The sociological Anomie theory has also been expounded by Anderson and Carter (1974) in *Human Behaviour in the Social env*ironment: A Social Systems Approach,* to the effect that deviant behaviours arise from normlessness. According to Emile Durkheim, Anomie theory is the social condition in which norms are weak, conflicting or absent. Anomie causes societies to become disorganized and individuals to lose a sense of shared values norms. In fact, according to another proponent of this theory (Merton, 1938), deviance is likely to occur when there is a discrepancy between culturally prescribed goals and legitimate means of obtaining them. The resulting strain causes some people to engage in deviant behaviour.

As Shepard (1990) points out, deviance has certain benefits. Shepard (ibid.) notes that deviance can clarify norms, and act as a temporary safety valve so that parents who punish children harshly may then resort to fulfilling their socially defined roles. Deviance can also increase unity within a society or group. It may also promote needed social change. On the same breath frequent riots may lead to the reform of inhuman conditions in a given environment. In this case, violence in schools becomes a pointer that students, teachers and head teachers do not share the same values and norms. It may be a hint to the leadership of the school that certain things in the school require to be addressed and dealt with immediately. This actually means that schools will experience violence when there is a gap between the cultural goals of the school and the means to achieving them. This means that necessary structures were not put in place to enable students realize the school goals. As such students find difficulties in adjusting to school environments, and resort to rejecting the institutionalized means of achieving institutional goals, since the school has not defined rules, regulations and values to guide the behaviour of the child. It therefore means that the head teachers in secondary schools should ensure that the school values and goals are shared by teachers, students, parents and management among others. In other words, the head teacher needs to provide direction

and ensure that those he is leading know what is expected of them. These two theories therefore illuminate on the problem of violence from the psychological and sociological points of view, targeting a better understanding of the subject of violence in schools.

Statement of the Problem

Violence in secondary schools is a pertinent contemporary issue that requires urgent attention because of the damage it causes. It leads to death, destruction of school property, and disruption of teaching and learning, resulting to poor academic performance. Apparently, no study has been done on factors associated with violence in secondary schools in Nandi South District. The study, on which this paper is based, therefore, endeavoured to find out the forms of violence that are manifest in secondary schools in Nandi South District, and seek ways to deal with it as perceived by head -teachers, teachers and students.

Limitations of the Study

The study limited itself to head teachers, teachers and form three students as members of the school society. Specifically, thirteen head teachers, ninety-five teachers and two hundred and twenty Form Three students were targeted. As such, the study was limited to school factors only. Members of the non-teaching staff were left out. Besides, form four students would have also been used in the study, but during this time, they were busy revising and registering for KCSE examinations. In fact, most of them had been sent to their previous primary schools to collect their KCPE certificates.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in secondary schools in Nandi South District. The District is located in the North Rift Valley region of Kenya. The research was descriptive in nature targeting a population of head teachers, teachers and Form Three students in secondary schools in Nandi South District. There were forty-five (45) head teachers, three hundred and sixty (360) teachers and seven thousand and two (7002) students in the forty-five secondary schools in the District. The Form Three students were one thousand five hundred and three (1503) in total.

The author employed purposive sampling to group the forty-five secondary schools in Nandi South District according to type in terms of boarding status and gender. The co-educational boarding secondary schools were nine, co-educational day secondary schools were seventeen, boys boarding secondary schools were nine and girls boarding secondary

schools were ten. Thereafter a simple random sampling was used to select three co-educational boarding schools, five co-educational day schools, three boys' boarding schools and three girls' boarding schools to give a total of fourteen secondary schools selected for study. The total number of possible respondents in the fourteen schools of the sample amounted to three hundred and sixty-one persons (14 head teachers, 112 teachers and 235 form three students).

The author developed questionnaires that were used in the study to collect data after validation. Data analysis was done based on research questions using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected information. The descriptive statistics used included frequencies, percentages and

means whereas the inferential statistic used was the Pearson correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Forms of Violence

The study asked the respondents to state the forms of violence found among secondary school students in Nandi South District in terms of verbal and physical violence. To answer this question, the three hundred and twenty-eight respondents involved in the study, were asked to respond to close-ended items and an open-ended question in the questionnaire on forms of violence. The open-ended question stated, "What forms of violence have you witnessed in your school?"

Table 2 (a): **Frequency Table on Forms of Violence**

	Head teachers		Teachers		Students		Overall	
	F	%	*F*		*f*	%	*f*	%
students destroy school property	5	38.5	43	45.3	83	37.7	131	39.9
students exchange bitter and abusive words in school.	5	38.5	45 33	34.7	33	33.1		33.8
senior students bully dents in this school	4	30.8	22	23.1	22	24.5	80	24.4
fighting among students goes in school	1	7.7	23	24.2	44	20.0	68	20.7
student's carry weapons such knifes pangas	1	7.7	21 21		28	12.8	50	15.2

Destruction of school property by students, was noted by 38.5% of head teachers, 445.3% of teachers and 37.7% of students. Although the use of bitter and abusive words in school, bullying,

fighting and carrying weapons such as knives and pangas to school as forms of violence attracted various percentages, the form that attracted the least percentages of 7.7%, 22.1 % and 12.8% from head teachers, teachers and students respectively

was carrying weapons to school.

Overall, table 2 (a) shows that 39.9% of the respondents agreed that students destroyed school property while at school. The respondents further agreed that students exchanged bitter and abusive words in school (33.8%), senior students bullied junior students (24.4%), fighting among students went on in schools (20.7%), and that students

carried weapons such as knives and pangas to school(15.2%).

Table 2 (b) shows the frequencies and percentages of respondents on the forms of violence they had witnessed in their schools. These were the answers to the open-ended question, which stated, "What forms of violence have you witnessed in your school?"

Table 2 (b): Frequency table on witnessed forms of violence

	Head teachers		Teachers		Students		Overall	
Form of violence	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
• Destruction of property	6	46.2	44	46.3	90	40.9	140	42.7
• Fighting	8	61.5	54	56.8	65	29.5	127	38.7
• Use of abusive language	5	38.5	25	26.3	73	33.2	103	31.3
• Bullying	3	23.1	29	30.5	45	20.5	77	23.4
• Strikes	4	30.8	18	18.9	34	15.5	56	17.1

From table 2 (b), sixty-one point five percent of the head teachers noted that fighting was evident in their schools. They also identified destruction of school property (46.2%), use of abusive language (38.5%), strikes (30.8%) and bullying (23.1 %) as forms of violence in their schools.

The teachers (56.8%) noted that fighting was common in schools. They also identified destruction of school property (46.3%), bullying (30.5%), use of abusive language (26.3%) and strikes (18.9%) as forms of violence.

The students on the other hand, noted that destruction of school property (40.9%), use of abusive language (33.2%), fighting (29.5%), bullying (20.5%) and strikes (15.5%) were common forms of violence in their schools.

Overall, the respondents listed that destruction of property (42.7%), fighting (38.7%), use of abusive language (31.3%), bullying (23.4%) and strikes (17.1 %) had been witnessed in their schools.

These findings indicated that violence was witnessed in secondary schools. This was in agreement with the observation of Rutebuka (2001) in which he pointed out that violence was noted to involve verbal threats, abusive language and physical or bodily confrontations. Whereas use of bitter and abusive language was verbal the rest of the forms of violence witnessed were either physical or involved bodily confrontations. Furthermore, Adamson et al (2004) stressed that bullying had become a predominant issue of school life, that was seen in terms of name calling, pushing, kicking, hitting, threats and teasing. Moreover, the revelation that there were students who carried weapons to school was a cause for concern. These students were likely to use the

same weapons to destroy property or attack their colleagues when abused by others or during the process of fighting.

4. Research Question Four: Ways of Reducing Violence

Research question four asked, "How can violence be reduced in secondary schools in Nandi South District?" To answer this research question, respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question, which stated, "List three suggestions in order of priority that you think could be used to reduce violent act in school". Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages were used to analyze data from this question. The responses of the respondents (328) are given in table 11.

Table 11: Frequency table on ways of reducing violence

	Head teacher		Teacher		Student		Overall	
way of reducing violence	f	0/0	f	0/0	f	0/0	f	0/0
Guidance and counselling	8	61.5	55	57.9	128	58.2	191	58.2
Fairness by administration In implementing rules and regulations	0	0	0	0	139	63.2	139	42.4
Provision of enough facilities and food	4	30.8	30	31.6	79	35.9	113	34.5
Dialogue with students	5	38.5	36	37.9	59	26.8	100	30.5
Proper management of schools	0	0	80	84.2	0	0	80	24.4
Keeping drugs off school	4	30.8	35	36.8	25	11.4	64	19.5
Involve parents in disciplining students	0	0	15	15.8	0	~. 0 ,	15	4.6
employing enough teachers	0	0	0	0	17	7.7	17	5.2
Strict discipline and clear les	7	53.8	0	0	0	0	7	2.1

The head teachers suggested guidance and counselling (61.5%), strict discipline and clear rules (53.8%), dialogue with students (38.5%), provision of enough facilities and food (30.8%) and keeping drugs off school (30.8%) as ways of reducing violence in secondary schools.

The teachers raised proper management of schools (84.2%), guidance and counselling (57.9%), dialogue with students (37.9%), keeping drugs off school (36.8%), provision of enough facilities and food (31.6%) and involving parents in disciplining students (15.8%) as ways of reducing violence.

The students on the other hand suggested that school

administrators should be fair in implementing rules and regulations (63.2%), guidance and counselling be used (58.2%), enough facilities and food be provided (35.9%), dialogue with students (26.8%) keeping drugs off school (11.4%) and employing enough teachers (7.7%) be considered if violence is to be reduced in secondary schools.

Overall, the head teachers (61.5%), teachers (57.9%) and students (58.2%) suggested that guidance and counselling could be used to reduce violent acts in secondary schools. The provision of facilities and enough food (34.5%) dialogue with students (30.5%) and keeping drugs off schools (19.5%) were also suggested by the respondents as possible ways of

reducing violence in secondary schools in Nandi South District.

It was further noted that whereas the head teachers (53.8%) suggested the use of "strict discipline and clear rules" as a way of dealing with violence in schools, none of the teachers and students suggested this. Instead, teachers (84.2%) suggested that schools required proper management to alleviate violence as a problem. A small number of teachers (15.8%) were of the opinion that parents be involved in the disciplining of their children. A good number of students (63.2%) put forward that violence could be reduced if fairness was practiced by school administration in implementing rules and regulations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
On the basis of the results of this study, a number of conclusions were drawn.
1. Violence in form of destruction of school property, use of bitter and abusive language, fighting, bullying and strikes exist in secondary schools in Nandi South District.
2. Head teachers, teachers and students have a feeling that guidance and counselling can   help reduce violence in secondary schools in Nandi South District.

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were made:
1. Workshops and seminars for education stakeholders need to be organized to illuminate on forms and solutions to violence in secondary schools.
2. Functional guidance and counselling departments need to be started in all secondary schools to help address students' problems. This could involve the Teachers Service Commission posting the relevant staff to these departments.

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