

# Violence in Ugandan Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

This paper examines violence in Ugandan secondary schools in the past, at present and in the future. It starts by identifying the different forms of violence, before dealing with each of the forms holistically, arguing that the concept has several dimensions which collectively limit school and student educational achievement. The paper thus suggests efforts to be made to curb violence in Ugandan secondary schools. The paper brings out the fact that violence in Ugandan secondary schools has a long history. Efforts have been put in place to prevent violence though it remains a mountainous task that schools have to grapple with lest it spreads into the future. The paper ends by calling upon Government and other stakeholders to constantly make efforts towards the elimination of all forms of violence in all Ugandan secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Violence; Secondary Schools; Uganda.

## 1. Introduction

The author in [1] defines a secondary school as a school that is intermediate in level between elementary school and college and that usually offers general, technical, vocational or college preparatory curricular. In a related manner, a secondary school is defined as a high school or a school of corresponding grade ranking between a primary school and a college or university [2]. These definitions will inform what is meant by secondary school in this paper. These two definitions clearly show the important role of secondary schools in meeting every child's right to education as provided by the law [3]. It is through education that learners develop intellectually and are enabled to cultivate their creative talents and critical thinking. In addition, students gain life skills, join hands with friends and develop social relations, and grow with dignity, confidence and self-esteem as individuals [4].

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This puts education at the centre for creation of social justice and the development of humanity. While this is the desired end; more often Ugandan secondary schools have not provided an environment suitable for effective learning. The secondary schools in Uganda are largely characterised by violence in its various manifestations. This puts learners into a dilemma; why should schools -areas that should be at the forefront of eliminating violence seem to be the ones propagating it? Students join secondary schools with hopes of discovering and maximizing their potential. With violence however, such students become frustrated, disappointed and they lose focus. In some cases children's academic performance suffers, their health and wellbeing gets affected, and their capacity to operate as confident individuals, capable of developing open and trusting relations with others is compromised[4]. Violence in schools has far reaching effects which may be repeated in future by whoever previously suffered its consequences whether in school or after school. The negative impacts of violence may even go beyond schools to touch the lives of those who witness it, creating an atmosphere of anxiety and insecurity incompatible with learning [4]. Violence or the threat of violence can even be great such that families feel pressed to keep their children out of school, and to encourage school abandonment as a means of preventing further violence and harm. As a result, educational opportunity, with all its benefits for the individual and society, may be seriously hampered. For this reason, violence in secondary schools is a vice to be fought at all costs and if possible eliminate. While acknowledging the likely problems associated with violence in secondary schools, this paper will examine school related violence in light of the past, the present and future. This is an attempt to unearth the effects of the vice and certainly act as a catalyst for research into this area. It is hoped that the paper will contribute towards making the right to education achievable without restraint. This is very important because achievement of nonviolence in schools trickles back to the communities; this is an important step towards national peace building. This paper looks at violence in Ugandan secondary schools, using the past-present-future model.

## **2. The concept of violence in Ugandan secondary schools**

The World Health Organisation defines violence as 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood or resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation' [5]. Similarly, violence is used to mean an unjust force or injury that is done to that which is entitled to respect or observance [6] and it is found in all spheres of human interaction for example in families, society and political scenarios; a daily reality around the world [7] and Uganda is no exception.

According to the 2006 World Report on Violence against Children, there are four main forms of violence in schools. These include bullying, sexual and gender-based violence, physical and psychological violence, and violence that includes a dimension external to schools, including violence associated with gang culture, weapons and fighting [8]. The four forms of school related violence are discussed below:

### **2.1 Bullying**

According to the author in [9], bullying is an aggressive behavior in which one intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. This can be through physical contact, use of words or more subtle

actions. Research about bullying in schools shows that it is a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated event [8]. In Uganda, bullying takes different forms ranging from beating, forcing the victim to sing or dance, eating the victims' food stuffs, teasing and so on [10]. In all its forms, bullying causes both physical and emotional pain to the victim and is a precursor to physical violence [4].

Bullying has double edged effects; it affects both the victim and the perpetrator. Studies have reported that on either part-the bully and the one bullied- bullying negatively affects interpersonal relationships and reduces class performance [11]. Students who are bullied are more likely than their peers to be depressed, lonely, or anxious and have low self-esteem. At the same time, bullies often act aggressively out of frustration, humiliation, anger and in response to social ridicule [12]. The same information is recorded in the World Report on Violence against Children that around half of all children usually involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators, and that they are the most troubled of all children [8]. In the school setting, bullying is propagated by students, teachers or the other staff but in most cases, bullying is caused by peers [4].

## ***2.2 Sexual and gender-based violence***

In this paper, the definition adopted for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is that by [13]. Bloom defines GBV as “the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society” [13:14]. While GBV is commonly directed against women and girls, but the concept also applies to boys [14]. In the Ugandan school context, all children experience violence whether they are boys or girls. As suggested by [15] however, such experiences are gendered. An example is that whereas all children may be subjected to corporal punishments, the level of such violence experienced by boys is usually more severe. On the other hand, sexual harassment and violence appear to be overwhelmingly carried out against girl students by male students and teachers.

Sexual violence toward girls may be motivated mainly by sexual interest on the part of boys and men who are at times school staff including teachers. Research studies have previously reported that in Uganda, 8 per cent of 16 and 17-year-old boys and girls had sex with their teacher, and 12 per cent with ancillary staff [16]. It is also common for teachers to promise higher grades or reduced school fees or supplies in exchange for sex with girls. Sometimes, seduce or force girls to have sex with them, for example by threatening them with bad grades or by not giving them the certificate. In addition, male students are found to be among perpetrators of sexual violence in and around schools.

Whether perpetrated by students or teachers, sexual violence undermines a child's self-esteem, contributes to poor performance in school, encourages school drop-out and increases the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour at an early age. It also exposes a child to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Sexual violence is, for example, an important factor in the high prevalence rate of HIV among girls and young women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sexual violence also puts girls at risk of unwanted pregnancy, with possible harmful implication for both their own health and that of the baby.

### ***2.3 Physical (corporal) and psychological punishment***

Corporal punishment is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light [17]. On the other hand, the World Report on Violence Against Children asserts that psychological punishment involves various forms of cruel and degrading punishment that are not physical in nature, including punishment that belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child [8].

Corporal punishments such as the use of bad language and beating negatively affect learners' ability and they are not good for student's mental and physical health. Such punishments have been linked to slow development of social skills, depression, anxiety, aggressive behaviour and lack of empathy. Other effects include the perpetuation of violence in schools, reduction in critical thinking, discouraging sound moral. Worse still, corporal punishments teach students especially the young to always use force. This lesson leads to increased incidents of bullying and an overall culture of violence in schools [12].

### ***2.4 Violence with a dimension external to the school***

This type of violence includes fighting, physical assault and gang violence and wars which have an origin outside the school. The World Report on Violence Against Children states that physical assault is a result general feelings of rage, frustration or humiliation unprovoked by anything the victim may have done, as in the case of violent sexual assault and so on [8]. The report further states that boys in particular tend to engage in physical fighting and assault against each other as they seek to live up to male gender stereotypes. In countries mainly outside Africa, it is suggested that the impact of fighting and physical assaults and the fear and insecurity they generate, both among victims and those who witness such attacks, is exacerbated by the availability and use of weapons introduced into the school environment from outside [4]. In Uganda however, weapons are not accessible to students but other forms of personal fights are common.

## **3. Violence in Ugandan secondary schools in the past**

In this paper, "the past" refers to the period from 1924 when the Colonial Government in Uganda established the first secondary school for Africans [18] to 1995 when Uganda formulated a constitution. School related violence has been, over time, an issue of concern for schools and has a long history. As the author in [19] asserts; infanticide, cruel and humiliating punishment, neglect and abandonment, sexual abuse and other forms of violence against children date back to ancient civilisations. It was a challenge for students, educators, policy-makers and schools themselves. In this section, the paper will look at the different forms of violence in secondary schools considering the historical perspective.

### ***3.1 Bullying in Ugandan secondary schools in the past***

Aggressive behavior takes on different forms ranging from verbal (e.g. name calling, threats), physical (e.g., hitting), or psychological (e.g., rumors, shunning/ exclusion) [20]. This shows that bullying has multiple forms and the same can be employed by the perpetrators of bullying to intimidate their victims [21]. As noted in [22],

bullying exists universally across human societies wherever one goes; it exists all over the world and in Uganda since the colonial times. This shows that bullying is rather a behavior not a culture. There is inadequate literature about the existence of bullying in secondary schools in the past because little attention has been given to this issue. However, as the author in [22] suggests, bullying was a struggle for supremacy used to maintain social order and ensure that no one acquires too much dominance, status or personal power. Such struggles for supremacy brought along harmful implications and used to injure others physically, emotionally or socially.

In Uganda, like anywhere else in the world, bullying in the past happened because it had support from those that were supposed to stop it for example the parents, teachers and other adults [23]. Certainly it was because such adults believed that ignoring the perpetrators would eventually stop bullying [24]. Others thought that bullying was an inevitable phase of childhood that would pass without their intervention while others thought that all children must learn 'to stand up for themselves', so that adult intervention to protect victims of bullies would merely inhibit a valuable social lesson [24]. Such beliefs seemed to suggest that bullying was okay and such has kept it around. In a related manner, Ugandan secondary school teachers looked at bullying as a way of maturing up while others accepted it as a way of life and were largely in its support [23]. Thus, in the past, bullying in secondary schools happened because those meant to prevent it acted as if they never cared. It was thus left to blossom to and thus had to spread to the present. In some other cases, bullying was in schools and directed at children perceived as transgressing norms of masculinity or femininity.

### ***3.2 Sexual and gender based violence in Secondary school in the past***

In the past, sexual and gender based violence received very little attention in government policies and plans around the world [25]. Certainly, this explains why secondary schools were characterised by lack of awareness about sexual and gender based violence by then. The lack of concern could be attributed to the interpretations about violence held by researchers and policy makers at the time. For example the author noted in [26] defines violence as behaviour by people against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm. Such were the views about violence that focused on individual acts while neglecting the inequalities. As a result, ways in which violence is embedded within broader power dynamics could not be perceived correctly. At the same time, gender-based violence was considered predominantly as sexual violence and there was little awareness about ways in which other forms of violence can also be gendered. This explains why studies relating to gender based violence only emerged after the year 2000 for example [27; 28].

It can also be argued that the cultural beliefs of Ugandans at the time supported gender inequality. The mistreatment of women was therefore assumed to be normal. According to the author noted in [29], traditional attitudes towards gender relations in Uganda were in favour of men. For men, women were regarded as economic commodities and girls as good only for marriage. Many parents preferred to see their girls get married to sending them to school. These traditional attitudes towards gender roles tended to limit the number of girls accessing education [30]. Other explanations for the gender based violence in the past can be traced from political unrest and violent conflicts that characterised the country.

### ***3.3 Physical (corporal) and psychological punishment in secondary schools in the past***

Different writers have delved into the largely unattended issues surrounding corporal punishment in the past describing it as an unbearable experience. According to the author in [31], it is asserted that “the history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of childcare, the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused” [31:1]. This shows the long history of corporal punishment. For long, it has been the accepted form of socialization in both homes and schools.

Uganda received her mode of education from her colonial masters; the British. It is certain that the same educational practices in Britain were transferred to Uganda. The author in [32] claims that in the past harsh discipline were a child’s lot and children were often terrorized deliberately. As if clarifying on the preceding, the author noted in [33] explains that severe flogging was a normal and daily occurrence in the grammar school” and “whipping was the normal method of discipline. This shows that corporal punishment is what characterised the Ugandan education system in the past.

Corporal punishment is the infliction of pain intended to change a person’s behaviour or to punish them. Though it mainly refers to physical pain either through hitting or forcing the child to sit /stand in uncomfortable positions; an evolving definition also includes within its ambit wrongful confinement, verbal insults, threats and humiliation, which are used with impunity and in utter disregard to the law of the land and principles of learning [34]. Corporal punishments have been regarded to be normal part of children's upbringing. World over, the use of corporal punishments in school was historically justified by the common-law doctrine in loco parentis, whereby teachers were considered authority figures granted the same rights as parents to punish children in their care[35].

The author in [36] notes that past African beliefs supported the use of corporal punishments; it was believed that one must prepare children to live in an environment that will be physically and psychologically hostile. They thus viewed physical punishment as virtuous teaching which explains the tolerance toward corporal punishment in schools. In all ways, such a belief would never discourage the use of corporal punishment in a secondary school. Maurel further asserts that “in school, teachers would not hesitate to land blows on students for not having learned their material. Sometimes the teacher's reaction would strictly be verbal, yet no less harmful.

Older students put in charge by the school administration would find it simpler to whip fellows. To make matters worse, teachers were supported by the African sayings for example when parents entrusted their child to a master for apprentice, they would say: “The flesh is yours, and the bones are ours”, a remark which served to grant authorization to hit the child up to a certain point. To the teacher at a Koranic school, parents may say: You kill him, and I'll bury him. Another saying: It takes a stick to make the goat walk. These are indication of the extent to which African (Uganda inclusive) were always in support of corporal punishments.

We may also need to recognise the fact that Uganda was colonized by the British and the remnants of British colonialism are evident in both the structure and content of the Ugandan educational system [37]. What the colonial masters handed over through education through education is what shaped the nature and practice of secondary education in Uganda. Therefore, even though corporal punishments existed in Uganda, how such got

into the education system can be attributed to colonialism.

### ***3.4 Violence with a dimension external to the school in the past***

We are all shaped by our social context. Whether we are passively molded by the external forces in which we grow and develop, or we actively rebel against such forces, there is no escaping the fact that our social contexts define in large part who we are and what we do [38]. Basing on this submission, this paper asserts that whatever occurred in schools in the past, what students did and learnt was all influenced by whatever was occurring in the immediate community.

External violence affects schools in various ways [39]; violent conflict or war, for example, has an impact on education because it can potentially affect education globally. Such external conflicts have regularly directly affected the provision of schooling and in such circumstances pupils are not necessarily safe at school. However, the categories of ‘external’ violence impacting on schools and ‘internal’ violence happening within schools or caused by schools are not necessarily watertight or clear cut because some types of violence are at times both internal and external to the school.

Apart from political violence and war, other forms of external violence can impact upon educational provision. For example, gang violence involving theft, drugs and weapons can extend from the surrounding community and streets into the schools where students are seen as fair game [39]. This can take place on the way to and from school and inside school as well, especially when gang members enter school to sell drugs, steal or extort money [40; 41]. However, even this is not straightforward form of ‘external’ violence as some students at the school may be in league with gang members and help and facilitate them while other students may be willing consumers of drugs.

Since its independence in 1962, Uganda has struggled – on all fronts Racked by successive wars and oppression [38]. Uganda has suffered from several bloody regime changes and civil wars just after independence, accounting for the deaths of approximately one million people [42]. The worst presidency in the history of Uganda so far is that of Idi Amin Dada who reigned for eight years that were characterised by terror and murder. These effects were felt everywhere and even in secondary schools [38]. Effects of these wars made schooling difficult and those who endured entered the workforce and are currently propagating the same effects and this limits educational achievement.

## **4. Violence in the present**

This section demonstrates a remarkable increase in concern about violence in and around schools in recent years. The drift in concern can be attributed to the current political, economic and social climate [25]. Governments’ commitment to human rights, the education for all framework and the need to increase girls’ access to and achievement and completion in school have all contributed towards this change. In effect, there has been considerable work in building national legislative and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence. Policy formulation has occurred and intervention by both governmental and nongovernmental organisations is evident [25]. These are indicative of a national trend towards mitigating violence in secondary

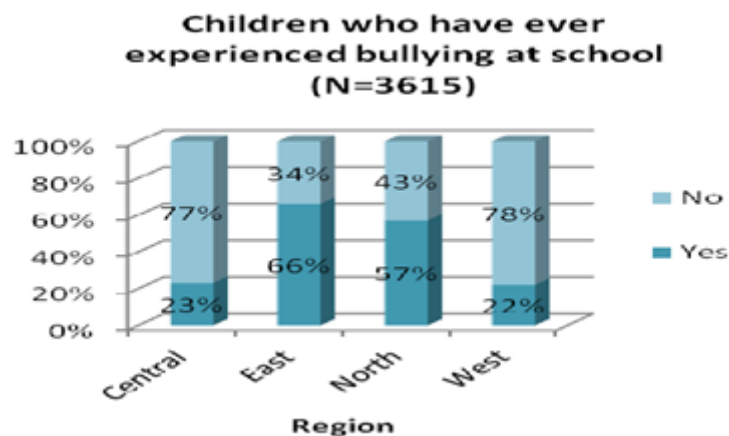
schools.

Despite these developments, the interventions are only recent yet violence in schools has been in existence for ages. Thus, violence is still being experienced in schools and children still encounter violence it. What makes matters worse is the fact that children face violence from those whose primary concern would be protection of such children e.g. teachers at school. In Uganda, despite the legislation against child violence, practices such as corporal punishments are still common in schools. In the next subsections, the paper will address each of the forms of violence in secondary school setting in the present times.

#### 4.1 Bullying in the present

Although bullying is a worldwide problem, much of the available the literature on bullying pertains mostly to the industrialised world [8]. In sub section 3.1, bullying was shown to be an endemic problem in secondary schools and it still exists. But there is hope because there has been growing recognition of the threat posed by bullying in schools to children's well-being, and an increasing body of literature examining its causes, prevalence and impacts on both victims and perpetrators since the 1970s [40].

The problems associated with bullying in the past are as bad as they have always been though efforts are being put in place to manage the situation. Common forms of bullying include physical aggression, intimidation, and exclusion, name calling, damage to property and extortion. To assess the extent of bullying and other related forms of violence, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and sports carried out a study entitled 'assessing child protection /safety and security issues for children in Ugandan primary and secondary schools' in 2012. The study, found out that bullying still all over the country's schools. Below is a figure representing the percentages of school children who experienced bullying across the four geographical regions of Uganda:



**Figure 1:** Distribution of students bullied by geographical regions of Uganda adapted from the 2012 report by the ministry of education and sports.

From figure 1, we note that children from the Eastern part of the country experience high rates of bullying (66%) followed by the Northern region (57%). The Western and Central regions have the least percentages of bullied students with 22% and 23% respectively.



In addition to the common forms of bullying, there is a new form of bullying in the Ugandan context; this is called Cyber bullying which is increasingly common and continuously evolving. Cyber bullying is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies [4]. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying.

Despite the above, there has been a better understanding of bullying among school children, the government and the stake holders. It is believed that this understanding will be instrumental in reducing the violence in schools. However, it is imperative that the focus should be put on what children call bullying rather than defining it from the point of view of an adult. This is because children consider a much wider variety of situations as bullying than what adults consider it [24]. Unless the two interpretations for both the children and the stake holders are harmonized, it is likely that complaints about the vice will remain high.

#### ***4.2 Sexual and gender based violence in the present***

It is possible for gender violence to occur anywhere in school; both during class and after classes. It can also occur and on the way to and from school. Abuse can occur while walking to and from school or at bus stops and taxi stands [43]. Authors in [44] reported that almost 40% percent of children experience gender based violence on the way to and from school. The same report claims that girls are sexually harassed by boys through physical contact and by making sexual advances; teachers' use of derogatory language with regard to the physical appearance and intellectual ability of female students.

Despite the above, school-related gender-based violence and its negative consequences are receiving increased attention globally and even in Uganda [43]. Donor organizations, private foundations, international nongovernmental organizations, and university-based researchers are collaborating with national and community-based organizations to address gender violence directly. Thus, there is marked increase in policy, research and action on gender based violence in schools.

Presently, violence against children is mostly carried out by people known to the children [8]. In addition, attention is being drawn to everyday physical violence and also psychological violence; including insults and humiliation, neglect, maltreatment and discrimination, and to its harmful short- and long-term repercussions for children's well-being. Schools are now viewed both as having an important role to play in protecting children from violence, but also as settings where they may be exposed to corporal punishment, fighting and bullying, often linked to discrimination associated with poverty, disability or appearance.

Thus, there is growing awareness about violence in schools stemming from this accumulating body of evidence, and particularly the 2006 World Report on Violence Against Children, have helped to bring gender based violence onto the international policy agenda and had some impact on policy making at regional and national levels. The government has also begun to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks, with the main area of progress being banning corporal punishment.

#### ***4.3 Corporal punishments in the present***

Like with the other forms of violence, efforts have been made to curb corporal punishments though cases of such punishments are still being reported. In a study carried out by the Ministry of Education and Sports, 43% of the surveyed respondents had been bullied. Of these, 31% were secondary school students. The 2012 Ministry of Education and sport's report on assessing child protection /safety and security issues for children in Ugandan primary and secondary schools suggests that several forms of corporal punishment still exist in Ugandan schools. These forms together with how they are distributed are shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Percentage distribution of children affected with type corporal punishment

<b>Form of corporal punishment</b>	<b>percentage of children that have ever been affected</b>
Caning	75%
Kicking	31%
Hitting	27.3%
Beating	57.7%

**Table constructed using ideas adopted from a report by Uganda's ministry of education and sports (2012).**

The table shows that caning was the most common form of corporal punishment experienced by children in Uganda (75%) followed by beating (57.7%). Hitting and kicking are the least common with the percentage occurrences of 27.3% and 31% respectively. In addition, the Eastern region was leading in terms of students that had ever been hit (60%) followed by the west (45%). On the overall, more boys (49%) experience hitting as a corporal punishment than girls (41%). Beating (the second most common form of corporal punishment) was most common in the Eastern region (82%) followed by the central region (68%).

From the above, it is evident that corporal punishments are still being used unlawfully. Practical steps have been taken to address the situation. According to the author noted in [45], the following have been done at policy level to address the challenge of corporal punishment in Uganda:

- In 1999, the Supreme Court ruled against corporal punishment in the penal system. While this was welcome, all corporal punishment in schools were not condemned.
- In Emmanuel Mpondi v Chairman Board of Governors & 2 ORS UHRC 1 (1999-2002) the Human Rights Commission Tribunal ruled that the beating of a student to the point of severe injury violated his right to protection against cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. This ruling shows that corporal punishment was not provided for in the laws of Uganda.
- Ministerial Circular No. 15/2006 discourages corporal punishment in schools. This was however not accompanied by a law that prohibits the same.
- In August 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports banned corporal punishments in schools. This was done through issuing a circular entitled "Ban on all acts of violence against children in schools, institutes and colleges" (Circular No. 2/2015). In this circular, it is indicated that the constitution of the republic of Uganda outlaws all forms of violence everywhere in

the country and school is no exception. The same circular states that the Children Act, the Penal Code, the Domestic Violence Act and the Employment Act and that, schools should review their rules and regulations to replace corporal punishment with positive learning sanctions/actions. It is the hope of the many that these will be affected so as to address the current situation.

#### ***4.4 Violence with a dimension external to the school in the present***

Since its independence in 1962, Uganda has struggled – on all fronts Racked by successive wars and oppression [38]. Uganda has suffered from several bloody regime changes and civil wars just after independence, accounting for the deaths of approximately one million people [42]. The worst presidency in the history of Uganda so far is that of Idi Amin Dada. He reigned for eight years that were characterised by terror and murder. These effects were felt everywhere and even in schools [38] and made schooling difficult. Those who endured and survived the oppression entered the workforce and certainly propagating violence. This was because they were made to think that violence is the best way to solve problems.

The oppressive regimes were followed by ousted by Mr. Yoweri Museveni after leading a victorious rebel army to capture the presidency in 1986. President Museveni is the current president and his regime brought peace to many Ugandans decreasing violence across the country. However, at a later time, Northern Uganda [38] and the Western Districts such as Kasese were not at peace. Northern Uganda experienced the insurgency of Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) while the western districts were terrorized by the Allied Democratic Forces. In these two regions, there was violence interpreted as being external to school and certainly limited educational achievements in Uganda.

The Northern regions of Uganda endured an insurgency by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) for more than two decades. This insurgency was responsible for displacing 95% of the population of 2 million Acholi, killing 200 000 people and abducting approximately 60 000 children [46]. This made schooling impossible and it is certain that most school going children were deprived of their right to education during the time of war. This is because this insurgency was characterised by child abduction from secondary schools and villages to be soldiers, porters, or sex slaves. To avoid abduction, people were concentrated into camps which were highly congested, characterised by fear, chaos and violence. As a result of these actions, even up to now, most children in the area live in a state of fear [38].

The situation calmed down when Kony and his rebel group fled the country. However, according to the author in [48], even the adolescents who were never abducted experienced violence, and large numbers are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Psychological effects of war now pervade its schools and classrooms. Daily, teachers and students must struggle with the traumatised from living in a war zone for two decades. Amazingly, no Acholi students in school had known peace in their lives prior to 2007. Such people cannot achieve much from their education and this is attributed the violence external to the school.

The reentry of the formerly abducted children into schools has introduced a new, dangerous dynamic into the schools throughout the region. The newly either captured or escaped abductees must make the transition from

living a lawless rebel life in which they may have commanded other rebels and killed soldiers, civilians, and/or children, to the subservient role of student within the Uganda education system. Such are challenging situations for both teachers and students. Thus, while the teachers and students throughout northern Uganda struggle to rebuild their educational system, the vast majority of them must come to terms with their traumatic pasts individually, unassisted by counseling or support services.

## **5. Secondary school related violence in the future**

The period prior to 2016 has been seen to be marred with violence in all its manifestations. For this reason therefore, “the future” in this paper means the period beyond 2016. Again, violence in terms of bullying, gender based violence, corporal punishment and violence external to the school will be of primary interest. The paper suggests on what ought to be done in order to stamp out violence in Uganda basing on what characterises the present.

### ***5.1 Need to address bullying in future***

Subsection 4.1 demonstrated that bullying still exists in Ugandan secondary school. Although this is widespread, it is preventable [8]. While steps have been taken in attempt to stamp out the problem, the following must be done so as not to let bullying spread into the future.

Stakeholders in the education sector must come up with policies and programmes that will make school bullying free. This requires strong leadership, an ethos of caring, and clear and consistently enforced policies [8]. Thus the paper calls upon stake holders to address the leadership issue in secondary school in Uganda so as to overcome bullying.

Bullying has been characterised as a group process [48]; this paper therefore suggests that interventions to manage bullying in secondary schools should target peer-group level rather than individual bullies and victims. In Uganda, most schools apply quick-fix solutions by expelling the perpetrators rather than attempt to change their behavior. This just transfers the problem to another school or the wider community. It is thus suggested that interventions to reduce bullying be focused on group dynamics.

There is need for systematic attention to the behaviour of the school heads, teachers and other school staff. More than often, school staff engages in abusive behaviour and show disrespect for the rights, comfort and safety of others. This is a direct lesson to students to do the same whenever situations allow. This borrows understanding studies carried out in Botswana and Ghana that found that when teachers tolerate sex segregation and tension between them in effect sustain cultures of bullying and sexual and gender-based violence.

As cyber bullying has also come in to challenge Ugandans, it calls for stringent laws on the usage of the internet and other communication technologies. In the school setting, strict monitoring should be emphasized to protect school children from being bullied. This seems to be within the means since cyber bullying only happens when using ICTs. The control on ICT usage would certainly control cyber bullying.

### ***5.2 Need to address sexual and Gender based violence in the future***

There is evidence showing responses towards managing secondary school gender based violence in Uganda [8; 49]. There is however lack of evidence that the actions taken so far have led to significant reductions in sexual and gender-based violence [25]. Unless we have evidence, the point of intervention will elude us. This implies that stake holders should aim at gathering evidence relating gender based violence aimed at taking corrective measures. In the same way, there is need to tackle the largely unexplored form of gender violence: that which is perpetrated by girls, usually girl-on-girl violence but also girl-on-boy violence [27]. Although the phenomenon is well known in some parts of the global North [50], research in Uganda has not aimed at establishing evidence for its existence in Uganda. The paper argues that the lack of evidence is no substitute of the absence of this kind of violence. According to the report by Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against Children, boys too can fall victim of sexual harassment and abuse. This is something that has to be acknowledged and managed [4]. In the same way, stakeholders need to put in place mechanisms of measuring success against the corrective measures already in place. Otherwise, less will be reaped from the process. Thus, for the future, we need better evidence about what works, including more robust systems for measuring levels of and responses to gender-based violence, intersecting inequalities and patterns of exclusion [25]. Research has shown that gender based violence is embedded within everyday interactions, school cultures and broader socio-cultural. To address it, contextual considerations can offer more effective policy and programming approaches. As the author in [25] suggests, more research is needed to inform policy on these areas. Also, the existing policies need to be strengthened. National interventions should work in tandem with those at the grass root level for example in a local school where gender based violence is perpetrated. The good policies should be translated into plans and actions, and with feeding back local knowledge to influence policy formulation [25]. This calls for a concerted effort from teachers, district education officials, health workers, police, NGO staff and many others.

### ***5.3 Need to address corporal punishments in the future***

Being a victim of violence is a contributing factor to becoming a perpetrator of violence in the future. There is growing evidence that corporal punishment leads children to become bullies in school and abusers as adults [51]. Witnessing or being a victim of violence teaches children about the use of power and models behavior that children may grow up to replicate. Thus, corporal punishment –a form of violence should be eliminated from the school setting in Uganda. Corporal punishment is unlawful in schools in Uganda. In March 2016, the Children Act was amended with the insertion of a new article 106A: “Corporal punishment in schools. (1) A person of authority in institutions of learning shall not subject a child to any form of corporal punishment. (2) A person who subjects a child to corporal punishment commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to a fine not exceeding one hundred currency points or both” [45]. As at October 2016, regulations were being developed to implement the law. This shows commitment to eliminate corporal punishments in secondary schools in Uganda. What therefore remains is to translate such policies into corrective actions. In future, schools as custodians of children’s hopes and aspirations will accept the responsibility for creating an environment that will help them thrive [52]. This suggests that corporal punishments will no longer be part of the school environment. This will make a great contribution towards the

achievement of the strategic development goals.

#### **5.4 Violence outside the school and the future**

Sub section 4.4 demonstrated how violence from outside the school affected schooling in Uganda. Ugandans have had to live with its consequences but this should not be allowed to go on untamed. This calls for efforts tailored towards peace building. Issues of tolerance and humane understanding to avoid war and confrontations will go a long way in improving personal relations-an important step in avoiding violence. Such violence would distablise schools though having an external origin. Abused children reported learning that adults abuse their authority, often without serious consequences [53]. By being victims, perpetrators, and witnesses of violence, children learn that violence is an acceptable way for the strong and aggressive to get what they want from the comparatively weak, passive, or peaceful [54] This should be discouraged if we need to have productive secondary schools in Uganda. The 2012 report from the special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against Children claims that the impact of fighting and physical assaults and the fear and insecurity they generate, both among victims and those who witness such attacks, is exacerbated by the availability and use of weapons introduced into the school environment from outside [4]. Basing on this, the paper argues that the education sector should ensure maximum control over the access of weapons or other life threatening equipment in secondary schools.

#### **6. Conclusion**

The paper examined violence in secondary schools in Uganda in the past, at present and in the future. It started by outlining the importance of secondary education, before dealing with the concept of “violence, arguing that the concept has several dimensions, suggesting that it is a mountainous task to make schools in Uganda violence free. The paper brought out the fact that violence existed in secondary schools in the past certainly because that’s how it was received from the colonial masters. Also because the prejudices held at the time supported it. Present efforts to make secondary schools violence free were highlighted together with the hurdles so far met. The paper ended by calling upon Government and other stakeholders to constantly make secondary education in Uganda violence free trough policy interventions and research

#### **7. Recommendations**

This paper shows that for a long time there have been socio-cultural practices and traditions that supported the practice of violence in Ugandan secondary schools. It is therefore necessary to step up efforts to confront cultural traditions which are harmful to the stay of learners in school. With reference to gender based violence in school, the writer opined that there is limited gender balance. This is coupled with male opposition to gender balancing efforts which often involved male demands that empowerment takes place within boundaries determined to suit them and which doesn’t challenge traditional male-decision making hegemony. Regarding this, the writer recommends that men should be involved in gender balancing particularly the need for equal treatment of girls in the classroom and the school environment. What propagates school related violence is the lack of awareness of human rights. Ugandans, especially those in rural areas have not sufficiently received

information regarding their rights and how they can pursue them. It is therefore important that all stake holders take an initiative to educate learners- boys and girls alike about these injustices and how they can be eliminated. Schools should prioritise making school a safe place where all students can achieve their educational goals without limitation or hindrance. In a related case, boys should be encouraged to treat female students in a proper way. For example practices in which boys taunting girls who gave incorrect answers in class should be discouraged. This may call for use of harsh punishments so as to increase the confidence of female pupils and a greater an important step towards elimination of gender based violence in schools. It is also recommended that schools should put in place functional guidance and counseling departments. In case the departments are already in place, it is imperative that they be equipped and staffed to help address students' problems. This may call upon the involvement of policy makers at the ministry of education and sports. Lastly, research is needed to understand the full scope of secondary school-related violence in Uganda. This paper has shown that violence in school has nothing good to offer and such a vice needs to be addressed without further delay. Violence in schools has life-long consequences for all students irrespective of their gender. These consequences include poor physical and mental health as well as increased rates of absenteeism and school dropout. The paper shows a growing commitment and a number of interventions to address secondary school violence. However, it is recommended that more action be taken so as to ensure that all children are able to realize the benefits from education.

## **8. Limitations**

The paper examined the concept of violence in Ugandan secondary schools basing on secondary data. This limits the reliability and validity of the issues presented because what has not been documented in the available literature may not have been examined by this paper. In the same way, the scanty literature about the existence of violence in the past could not provide an in depth examination of the topic at hand. It therefore suggested that informed studies employing both qualitative and quantitative methods be conducted to study the concept of violence in Ugandan secondary schools.

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