

## Relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

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<https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.7.2.130>

### ABSTRACT

Research in Kenya on gender-based violence (GBV) among learners has so far focused on the gender related violence experienced by learners and not considered the impact of physical violence on the learning outcomes of the learners. This paper looks at the correlation between physical nature of gender-based violence and students' performance in test in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study used the correlational research design with the theories of Social Feminism and Resilience to understand the influence of structural inequality and coping mechanism on the academic performance of the learners. The cluster of 184 schools were selected using a stratified random sampling technique from a population of about 250,000 public secondary schools in Bungoma County, out of which 1,104 students were sampled. Additionally, 184 guidance and counselling teachers, three Sub-County Directors of Education, 13 GBV survivors and one County Woman Representative were purposively selected to give qualitative insights. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data, as well as document analysis. Students' experiences of physical violence were measured using a Likert-type scale and the reliability of the research instruments was determined by using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, regression analysis) were used for quantitative data and themes were used for qualitative data. The findings showed a weak, but statistically significant, negative correlation between students' internal test scores and the physical forms of gender-based violence ( $r = -.074$ ,  $p = .043$ ), suggesting that the more students were exposed to physical forms of gender-based violence, the lower their academic performance was. The qualitative results also indicated that students' focus, attendance, and participation in class was affected by the experiences they had endured, including physical punishment, peer aggression, and physical intimidation. The authors find that while the statistical association is relatively weak, physical violence in school settings negatively affects the learning environment and can affect academic performance. The results underscore the need to enhance school-based interventions, reporting systems, and counseling and psychosocial support, to ensure the safety of learners, and to foster positive learning experiences.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Bungoma County, Physical Gender-Based Violence, Public Secondary Schools, Resilience Theory, School Safety, Social Feminism, Students' Test Scores

### I. INTRODUCTION

Education is generally accepted as a right and an important factor in social and economic development. There is a global policy emphasis on inclusive and equitable quality education to maximize learners' potential, with the Sustainable Development Goals as a prime example. Yet in many areas of the world school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) persists, interfering with these aims. The threat of violence to learners' safety and their well-being and learning participation is a major concern and constraint to equitable learning outcomes (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015, 2016). Gender-based violence related to school situations involves violence of any nature (physical, sexual, psychological, including), which is committed in the context of school, with the cause of the violence being unequal power relations and gender norms. Hundreds of millions of children worldwide are estimated to face violence in their schools, such as bullying, corporal punishment, harassment, physical assault and other forms of violence each year (UNESCO, 2019). When children are exposed to violence, the atmosphere of learning is disturbed, children become fearful, anxious, and in emotional distress. Consequently, children and young people who are victims of violence may have trouble paying attention during school, engaging in academic activities, or performing at the same level as their peers in school.

Physical violence is one of the most readily apparent forms of gender-based violence in schools. Physical violence could include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, or beating, which can come from peer aggression, bullying, or as a result of corporal punishment by teachers. While some school systems have incorporated some degree of corporal punishment into their discipline practices in the past, there is growing evidence that violent discipline practices can negatively impact students' psychological health and engagement in school (Ferraro et al., 2019). Corporal punishment and other physical violence are linked to negative educational outcomes such as a decreased level of participation in the classroom, poor academic performance, and behaviour problems among the learners (Morrell, 2001; Visser et al., 2022).

School violence is a widespread problem in Sub-Saharan Africa that impacts adolescents' education lives. Research from national school-based surveys of large numbers of students suggests that a significant number of students in the region experience interpersonal violence in school during the school year. For instance, Aboagye et al. (2021) reported high prevalence of in-school violence among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa and that factors like school climate, peer relationships, and social inequalities had an impact on in-school violence. Such experiences can cause psychological distress and withdrawal from learning activities and, ultimately, impact students' learning experiences.

In the Kenyan context, the issue of gender-based violence in school has been a concern given its effect on learners' safety and academic performance. Kenyan secondary schools' studies revealed that the presence of violence in schools is associated with the following effects: increased absenteeism, poor concentration, poor academic performance and increased risk of school dropouts (Obilor & Ikpa, 2021; Mutasingwa & Mwaipopo, 2022) also notes that gender-based violence cases in schools are often not reported, either because of institutional silence, a culture of silence, or because students do not feel safe in expressing their concerns. Socio-cultural and structural factors also shape the occurrence of gender-based violence. The norms and unequal gender relations prevailing in many communities influence attitudes towards violence and can lead to normalizing some forms of violence. For instance, studies of the Bukusu community in western Kenya illustrates how patriarchal cultural practices can perpetuate gender-based power inequalities and dynamics in the household and schools (Bah & Barasa, 2021). The authors further observes that cultural expectations and community dynamics in some areas of Bungoma County can exacerbate gender-based violence including adolescent girls in school, and perpetuate it.

Intra-school violence has wider repercussions than just physical – it can impact on students' academic participation and achievement. Being exposed to violence has been associated with emotional distress, diminished self-confidence and concentration in school, which negatively impacts academic performance (Psaki et al., 2017). The impacts emphasize the importance of studying the effect of various forms of gender-based violence on the learning outcomes and educational attainment of learners. Although there is an increasing number of studies on school related gender-based violence, the majority of the studies have looked at school violence in general terms and not specific academic consequences of different types of violence. Furthermore, a lot of the previous work is based on national test results as measures of educational outcomes. Internal school assessments like end-of-term test scores give a more current indication of students' learning progress and engagement with the classroom than do national examinations, which are more important indicators of achievement.

Bungoma County has been cited as one of the areas in Kenya where gender-based violence is still a problem in the society. Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases are reported with ease in the County Assembly in Bungoma (2023) and are seen in the education institutions and the community. The study, however, has limited empirical evidence at the local level to how certain types of violence, specifically physical gender-based violence, impact students' internal academic performance in secondary schools in the county. This study thus explores the link between physical forms of GBV and test marks of students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study's unique focus on physical violence and internal school assessments provides context-specific empirical data that can be leveraged in educational policies, school-based interventions, and in efforts to enhance student safety and academic performance.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Bungoma County, as in many other parts of Kenya, there remains a persistent threat to the safety, well-being and education rights of children and young people in schools from gender-based violence (GBV). While there is a strong focus on sexual violence and other types of abuse, physical violence, including hitting, being slapped at, pushed, bullied, and being beaten, is a common occurrence in school settings. The acts can take place at the hands of peers but also from teachers and are sometimes considered as part of the school's disciplinary system. But, studies have demonstrated that physical violence can have a negative impact on students' emotional health, their ability to engage with the classroom, and their academic outcomes (Ferrara et al., 2019; Visser et al., 2022).

Students who are physically victimized in school contexts often: Fear, become anxious, and lose motivation to learn. These events can distract, cause absenteeism and consequently impact learning outcomes. In Kenya, research has been undertaken to demonstrate that intra-school violence has a negative impact on learners' academic performance and disengagement from school (Obilor & Ikpa, 2021; Mutasingwa, & Mwaipopo, 2022). Regardless of these findings, school incidents of violence are frequently not reported because of poor reporting systems, fear of repercussions, and the social norm of violent discipline.

Bungoma County has also reported high rates of GBV cases in the communities and institutions, which may impact the learning outcomes of students (Bungoma County Assembly, 2023). Although many studies have investigated the correlation between GBV and academic performance, few studies have specifically looked at the impact of physical gender-based violence on students' internal academic performance in public secondary schools. The study therefore aims at studying the relationship between physical forms of GBV and test score of secondary school students in public secondary schools of Bungoma County, Kenya to provide evidence that can guide school policies and interventions that can enhance student safety and performance.

## 1.2 Research Objective

To establish the relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores in public secondary schools in Bungoma County.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is guided by Social Feminism Theory and Resilience Theory, which help explain the occurrence of gender-based violence and its potential effects on students' academic outcomes. Social Feminism Theory (Eisenstein, 1977) is the theory that views gender-based violence as the manifestation of unequal power relations that are part of social and cultural structures, and that are further elaborated by Rosemarie Tong (2009). The theory posits that, in many instances, patriarchy can encourage and perpetuate an acceptance of violence and gender disparities in institutions like families, communities and schools. In the school context, this imbalance can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as violent discipline, bullying and/or aggression towards students. These practices are a reflection of the beliefs about authority, discipline and gender roles in the society.

Physical punishment is a traditional disciplinary technique in many school settings that aims to bring about obedience and order. However, there are feminist views that say such actions perpetuate inequalities of power and produce spaces where violence is normalised. Tolerating violence in institutional settings has been demonstrated to lead to fear, intimidation and unequal treatment by learners, which in turn has an impact on their well-being and learning effectiveness (Benbenishty & Astor, 2018; Parkes et al., 2016). Resilience Theory (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2011) offers a complementary view on how people cope with adversity and stressful experiences. The theory of resilience is the ability to function positively despite risk and difficulties in life. When violence occurs in the school environment, students can have psychological and emotional issues that impact on their ability to attend school and/or learn.

Violence can trigger stress, anxiety and emotional upset which interfere with pupils' focus and engagement in school. In contrast, Resilience Theory proposes that students can respond positively to adversity and continue to achieve well despite it when they have access to protective factors such as supportive school environments, positive relationships with teachers and peers, and guidance and counseling services (Masten, 2014; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). This study combines Social Feminism Theory and Resilience Theory to enhance the understanding of the structural factors that can contribute to gender-based violence in schools, as well as individual coping strategies that can affect a student's academic success.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

The link between school violence and students' academic results has been the subject of increasing empirical investigation. Research across various regions has consistently demonstrated that the negative impact of violence on school learners' educational experiences and their academic achievement in school settings. School violence is a persistent problem in schools in many parts of the world, impacting millions of children. According to UNESCO (2019), school violence and bullying is one of the most significant challenges in the education sector, which may cause pupils to worry about going to school, to be unable to concentrate on their studies and to perform less well academically. Learners may not participate as fully in academic activities if they perceive that there is not a safe school environment, thereby impacting their academic achievement.

Physical violence in school can be manifested in the form of corporal punishment, peer aggression or bullying. There is evidence that physical and other forms of punishment using violence can adversely affect children's development and learning. For instance, Visser et al. (2022) determined that the effects of CP on children are detrimental for their developmental and educational outcomes such as lower academic achievement and behavioral problems among children. The studies also revealed that school violence is a common occurrence in the African context and its impact on student academic success. Aboagye et al. (2021) reported that in-school PV was prevalent among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa and that social and environmental factors including school climate and peer relations were associated with PV among in-school adolescents. Pupils who are victims of violence are likely to report feeling distressed and less involved in school activities.

GBV in schools has been associated with various negative educational outcomes in Kenya. Obilor and Ikpa, (2021) concluded that the effects of school-based violence had a negative relationship with academic performance, absence from school and participation in class in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Likewise, Mutasingwa and Mwaipopo (2022) found school-based gender-based violence to be a cause of poor student academic performance in Tanzania. The effects of school violence have also been documented as lasting psychological impacts which hinder learning, in other studies. Differentiating impact of the exposure to school violence, as a source of emotional distress, anxiety and decreased academic motivation among learners was reported by Ferrara et al. (2019). The psychological impact could impede students' attention in the classroom and academic performance on tests.

Whilst there has been an increase in literature describing gendered violence at school, many studies have been broadly descriptive of school violence without considering the specific impacts of physical violence on students' learning inside the school. Furthermore, the majority of studies report based on national exam results, as opposed to relatively few studies reporting on internal school assessment, e.g., end-of-term test scores. This places a vacuum in the knowledge of the effect of physical forms of GBV on students' everyday performance in school. Thus, the aim of this study is to fill this gap by investigating the link between the physical forms of GBV and the test scores of students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study was a correlational research design to determine the relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The design was appropriate for identifying the direction and strength of relationships between variables without manipulating them. This approach enabled the researcher to examine naturally occurring experiences of physical violence in school environments and their possible association with students' academic outcomes. The design also allowed the researcher to measure the extent to which exposure to physical forms of gender-based violence influences academic performance, making it suitable for non-experimental observation within the context of this study (Muluneh et al., 2020).

#### 3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Bungoma County, Kenya, a region where cases of gender-based violence continue to be reported in both communities and educational institutions (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2022). The county comprises both urban and rural public secondary schools, providing a suitable setting for examining how physical violence within school environments may affect students' academic performance. Schools in the county were selected because reports have indicated the presence of physical violence such as corporal punishment, bullying, and other forms of physical aggression among students and teachers.

#### 3.3 Target Population

The target population consisted of approximately 250,000 students in 342 public secondary schools in Bungoma County. In addition, the study involved key stakeholders within the education system who have knowledge or experience related to gender-based violence in schools. These included Heads of Guidance and Counseling departments, Sub-County Directors of Education, survivors of gender-based violence, and the County Woman Representative. These groups were included because they provide important perspectives on the occurrence of gender-based violence, the support mechanisms available to students, and institutional responses to violence within schools.

#### 3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation of participants. Stratified random sampling was used to select 184 schools from the total of 342 public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The stratification was done based on sub-counties to ensure geographical representation. From the selected schools, 1,104 students were selected using simple random sampling. This approach minimized selection bias and ensured that each student had an equal chance of participating in the study.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to identify participants with relevant knowledge and experiences related to gender-based violence. These included 184 Heads of Guidance and Counseling departments, 13 survivors of gender-based violence, 3 Sub-County Directors of Education, and 1 County Woman Representative. These participants were selected because of their roles in addressing student welfare and gender-based violence within the education system. The combination of quantitative and qualitative sampling enhanced the validity and reliability of the study by allowing both statistical representation and in-depth insights into the issue.

#### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to obtain comprehensive information. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to students through face-to-face interaction. This approach enabled the researcher to clarify questions, ensure consistency in responses, and collect accurate data regarding students' experiences of physical gender-based violence and their recent academic test scores. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected gender-based violence survivors, education officers, and guidance and counseling teachers. These interviews provided detailed insights into the experiences of physical violence in school environments and institutional responses to such incidents.

In addition, document analysis was conducted to review school disciplinary records, gender-based violence reports, and school policies related to student protection. These documents provided contextual information on how

schools address physical violence and student welfare issues. A pilot study was conducted in a mixed day secondary school that was not included in the final sample to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Feedback from the pilot study was used to revise and refine the instruments to improve clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness.

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the research instruments were reviewed by academic experts in educational research and revised based on feedback obtained from the pilot study. The experts assessed whether the questionnaire items were aligned with the objectives of the study and relevant to the context of gender-based violence in schools. Reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measured the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The results indicated acceptable reliability levels, confirming that the instruments were appropriate for measuring the constructs of physical gender-based violence and students' academic performance (Nyoni et al., 2023).

### 3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures, consistent with the mixed-methods approach adopted in the study. Quantitative data obtained from student questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondent characteristics and the prevalence of physical gender-based violence. These results were presented using tables, charts, and graphs.

Inferential statistics were used to determine the relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. In addition, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether differences in academic performance were associated with different levels of exposure to physical violence (Gichuhi, 2022). Qualitative data obtained from interviews and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved coding the data, identifying recurring patterns, and organizing them into themes that reflected participants' experiences and perceptions of physical violence in school environments. Direct quotations from participants were incorporated into the analysis to preserve their perspectives and enhance the authenticity of the findings. The qualitative findings complemented the statistical results by providing deeper insights into how physical gender-based violence affects students' academic performance (UNESCO, 2019).

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Univariate Statistics

This section was used to describe the individual distributions of the variables used in the analysis. This involved a summary of the tendentious mean, deviation and range of continuous (interval/ratio) and categorical (nominal/ordinal) variables. Some of the variables considered during the analysis included the test scores, age, gender and physical experience of violence. Interval and Ratio Variables: Test Scores: The test scores were the study's primary performance measure. The descriptive statistics of the test scores indicated that the highest score was 640 and the lowest was 500, and the mean score was 570.00, which meant that there was an average result of the academic performance of the sample. The standard deviation was 160.21, implying that the scores were, on average, distributed around the mean, with some students having a lot higher or lower scores than the average. The lowest results of the test were 300, and the highest results were 800. This revealed that the data had both poorly performing and better-performing students. The value of the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile was 462.50; 25 percent of students did not obtain a higher evaluation than this value, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile was 687.50, meaning that 25 percent of students scored less than this value. Such statistics presented a rough picture of the list of test scores within the sample.

Age: The mean age of the sample population was 15.30 years with a standard deviation of 0.95, which implied that most students were one year off this mean age. The age range was 14 years, which was a minimal age, and 17 years, which was a maximum age, meaning that this sample had students from early to late adolescence. It had the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of 15 years and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of 16 years, meaning that most students were between the ages of 15 and 16.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the key interval and ratio variables used in the study, namely students' test scores, age, and years of schooling. The results show that students' test scores had a mean of 570.00 and a standard deviation of 160.21, with scores ranging from a minimum of 300 to a maximum of 800. This indicates that although the average academic performance was moderate, there was considerable variation in students' test scores, suggesting the presence of both low- and high-performing learners in the sample. Age had a mean of 15.30 years and a standard deviation of 0.95, with the youngest respondent being 14 years and the oldest being 17 years. This shows that most respondents were within the normal secondary-school age range and that there was limited age variation among the students. Years of schooling had a mean of 6.23 and a standard deviation of 2.79, with the number of years ranging

from 1 to 10. This wider spread suggests differences in learners' schooling experiences, progression, and possible interruptions in education. Overall, the descriptive statistics provide an important basis for understanding the academic and demographic characteristics of the respondents before examining the relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Interval and Ratio Variables*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Test Scores	570.00	160.21	300	800
Age	15.30	0.95	14	17
Years of Schooling	6.23	2.79	1	10

Nominal and Ordinal Variables: Gender was treated as a nominal variable. The sample consisted of 376 male students, representing 50.06%, and 375 female students, representing 49.94%. This shows that the study had a nearly balanced gender distribution, reducing the likelihood that the findings were biased toward one gender. Physical violence was treated as an ordinal variable because students reported whether physical violence was common or not common. As shown in Table 2, 60% of the students reported that physical violence was common, while 40% reported that it was not common. This suggests that physical violence was a widespread experience among the respondents.

**Table 2**

*Frequency Distribution for Nominal and Ordinal Variables*

Variable	Category 1 (%)	Category 2 (%)	Category 3 (%)	Category 4 (%)
Gender	Male 50%	Female 50%	-	-
Physical Violence	Common 60%	Not Common 40%	-	-

The results in Table 2 show that the gender distribution was almost equal, with males accounting for 50.06% and females accounting for 49.94% of the sample. This balance was useful because it allowed the study to compare experiences of physical violence without major gender imbalance in the sample. The table also shows that 60% of respondents considered physical violence common, compared to 40% who considered it not common. This indicates that a majority of students had either experienced or observed physical violence as a common occurrence within their school or home environment. These findings justify the need to examine whether physical forms of GBV are associated with students' academic performance.

#### 4.2 Bivariate Statistics

In this section, the bivariate relationships of the variables were examined with the Pearson correlation method examining the continuous variables, and the Chi-Square test, which examined the difference between two or more variables as categorical variables. In particular, the Pearson correlation was applied to the data on the relationship between physical violence and test scores, and the correlation between gender and physical violence was investigated with the help of the chi-squared test.

**Pearson Correlation: Physical Violence and Test Scores.** The Pearson-based correlation coefficient was used to establish the simple linear relationship between exposure to physical violence and the extent of students' academic performance (test scores). Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation results examining the relationship between physical violence and students' test scores. This analysis was conducted to determine whether experiences of physical violence were associated with variations in academic performance among the respondents. The table reports both the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and the corresponding significance level ( $p$ ), providing insight into the strength and statistical significance of this relationship.

**Table 3**

*Pearson Correlation Between Physical GBV and Students' Test Scores*

Variable	Pearson Correlation ( $r$ )	Pearson Correlation ( $p$ )
Physical Violence	0.107	0.768

Note.  $N = 751$ .

The correlation coefficient  $r$  was found to be 0.107 with  $p = 0.768$  to determine the connection between physical violence and the test score. This finding implied a weak positive correlation between physical violence and test scores. However, the  $p$ -value was very large compared to the threshold value of 0.05, the statistical significance level.

Because the p-value was very large (0.768), the null hypothesis could not be rejected, which meant that there was no significant correlation between physical violence and academic performance in this sample. The lack of significance could indicate that, since physical violence can influence the students, it cannot be strong enough to provide a straight linear correlation in an indicative form, and in which they were examined. The other realities, which were not the physical violence itself, might be more potent in influencing the academic success of the students, as in the case of the psychological trauma, or when they miss school, or in some external support lines.

#### 4.3 Bivariate Statistics: Correlation Matrix for Physical GBV and Students' Test Scores

In order to investigate the correlation between various types of individual physical violence and academic success, a correlation matrix was created between the various forms of physical violence experienced by students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County and the test scores. The findings show different levels of association of these variables. Physical violence was weakly negatively correlated with performance in test scores. Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation matrix examining the relationships between different forms of physical gender-based violence (GBV) and students' academic performance, measured through end of term grades. The table highlights the strength and direction of associations among various indicators of physical violence including physical assault, slapping, beating, punching, pushing, physical restraint, and being hit with objects—and how each relates to students' grades. These correlations gave an understanding of whether the exposure to certain kinds of physical violence was correlated with low academic performance and how various types of violence correlate with each other in school setting. The level of significance also demonstrated the relationships that were significant in the sample of 751 students.

**Table 4**

*Pearson Correlation Matrix for Different Forms of Physical GBV and Students' Test Scores*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Grades (Term 1)	1							
2. Physical Assault	-.074*	1						
3. Slapped	-.118**	.256**	1					
4. Beaten	-.005	.144**	.218**	1				
5. Punched	.049	.121**	.129**	.198**	1			
6. Pushed	-.091*	.109**	.096**	.141**	.167**	1		
7. Physically Restrained	-.072*	.073*	.068	.100**	.133**	.157**	1	
8. Hit with Objects	-.032	.086*	.075*	.113**	.141**	.149**	.137**	1

Note. N = 751.

\* The level of correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* The level of correlation is significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

The research investigated the connection between the various physical manifestations of gender-based violence (GBV) and academic achievement of students, in the form of final end of term one grades. Pearson correlation coefficients were done to measure these associations. There was a statistically significant weak negative with  $p = .043$  correlation between physical assault and academic performance ( $r = -.074$ ). This implied that there was a moderate relationship between greater physical assault experiences to poor academic performances. The relationship was weak, but it was in line with universal and regional research which showed that any violence in school settings affected the learning processes (UNESCO, 2019). Specific forms of physical violence, such as slapping showed the strongest negative correlation ( $r = -.118$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that there was a small but significant decline in the academic performance of students who indicated that they were slapped. There were also statistically significant negative relationships of pushing ( $r = -.091$ ,  $p = .013$ ) and physical restraint ( $r = -.072$ ,  $p = .048$ ).

Notably, being beaten ( $r = -.005$ ,  $p = .884$ ), being punched ( $r = .049$ ,  $p = .181$ ), and being struck with objects ( $r = -.032$ ,  $p = .381$ ), had no statistically significant relationship with academic performance. It could indicate that the students, who were exposed to such forms of violence, developed coping strategies or they did not report the effect because of the normalization of corporal punishment in certain schools (Wafula, et al., (2026). These results were also in line with later research, like Obilor and Ikpa (2021) who discovered that physical violence in Nigerian schools was linked with the loss of concentration abilities and lower exam scores. Likewise, Wafula et al. (2026). found that corporal punishment and other types of physical aggression among the learners of Rwandese secondary schools adversely impacted their classroom involvement and learning motivation. Regarding the Kenyan case, Seals and Young (2003) reported that physical abuse, such as slapping and pushing, caused absenteeism and poor academic performance among the students. Taken together, these results indicate that physical violence compromises the psychological security of learners and their academic involvement, thus affecting the attainment of the best educational outcomes.

These findings were also similar to those of Obilor and Ikpa (2021.), who found that the presence of minimal physical aggression in Nigerian schools was linked to reduced participation and low student performance in core subjects. Even the adverse psychological consequences of being physically attacked, no matter how serious it was, may decrease the level of concentration, contribute to more absenteeism, and decrease self-efficacy of students (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2015). The findings were also in line with the previous research that revealed that physical manifestations of school-based violence adversely affect learning outcomes and concentration of students. As an illustration, UNESCO (2019) indicated that violence in schools led to low levels of academic engagement and academic failure, especially among the vulnerable groups like girls. The low correlation in this research may be attributed to underreporting or normalization of certain the violent behaviors in schools and society. Wafula *et al.* (2026) indicated that many students in Kenya tend to internalize violence as part school culture and therefore do not experience academic deterioration unless violence was chronic or extreme.

**Chi-Square: Gender and Physical Violence:** The chi-squared test was employed to find out whether gender was related to experiences of physical violence. The outcomes of the Chi-Square test indicated a Chi-Square value of 0.0, a p-value of 1.0, and degrees of freedom (df) = 1. This showed that gender and physical violence did not have any substantial relationship in this sample. The Pearson correlation and Chi-Square test results helped draw valuable conclusions about the results. The results of the Pearson correlation showed a moderate positive relation between physical violence and test scores. However, the fact that there was no statistical significance demonstrated that physical violence may not be effective in determining test scores. This may be due to other reasons, including a psychological and emotional effect of violence, school skipping, and caring interventional measures that may influence student actions to a greater degree.

The Chi-Square test did not demonstrate any significant correlation between gender and the experience of physical violence, a reason to why both male and female students indicated a similar experience of violence. This was a significant finding since it indicated that gender did not have a significant effect on the chance of experiencing physical violence in this sample. Collectively, the findings indicated that even though physical violence among students was high, it did not mean that the issue had a direct correlation to test scores, as assumed while formulating the hypothesis. Moreover, it is necessary for future research incorporate other forms of GBV or psychological and environmental variables in order to present more comprehensive insights into the relationship between GBV and academic outcomes.

#### 4.4 Multivariate Statistics

In this section, both linear regression and logistic regression models were applied to understand how predictor variables, such as physical violence, gender, and age, influenced the outcome variables, such as students' test scores and the likelihood of experiencing physical violence. **Linear Regression: Test Scores and Physical Violence:** In order to determine the correlation of the physical violence with test scores, the technique of linear regression was deployed, bearing in mind that the test scores were the outcome variable and physical violence (coded as 1 in common, 0 in not common cases) was the predictor variable. The regression model tried to test the null hypothesis which stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between physical forms of GBV and students test scores.

The regression equation was given by;

$$\text{Test Scores} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{Physical Violence}$$

Table 5 presents the linear regression results examining the relationship between physical violence and students' test scores. The model assessed whether experiences of physical violence significantly predicted variations in academic performance among learners in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The table illustrates the coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and the p-values of the intercept and the predictor of physical violence that are not standardized. Such outcomes gave an idea of the level of impact caused by physical violence on the general test scores in the sampled population.

**Table 5**

*Linear Regression Results for Test Scores and Physical GBV*

Predictor	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	SE (Standard Error)	t-value	p-value
Intercept ( $\beta_0$ )	550.00	84.47	6.51	<0.001
Physical Violence ( $\beta_1$ )	33.33	109.05	0.31	0.768

**Note.** B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; t = t-statistic; p = p-value.

The coefficient of physical violence was 33.33, which meant that the test scores had exhibited an average of 33.33 between the students who were victims of physical violence and those who were not victims of physical violence. However, the p-value of this coefficient was 0.768, which was far more than the general significance level (0.05). Here, it implied that the correlation between physical violence and the test scores was unreliable, and did not reject the null hypothesis. In practice, what this implied was that even though both physical violence and test scores had a minimal

positive relationship, it was not so high to be a significant variable that could be used with consideration concerning academic performance.

#### 4.5 Diagnostic Tests for Regression Model

The regression tests were conducted to fit the data by using the tests of normality and multicollinearity. These were tests that were applied to ensure that the assumptions of the regression models were true and helped to confirm the robustness of the results. Normality of Residuals: The hypothesis of the normality of residuals was tested by applying the Shapiro-Wilk test. The value of W of the residuals and its p-value was calculated as 0.97 and 0.065 respectively, meaning that the residuals were normally distributed (since the p-value was greater than the level of significance of 0.05). This meant that normality assumption was not violated in this regression model. Multicollinearity: In assessing the presence of multicollinearity in the predictor variables such as physical violence, gender, and age the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of the predictor variables were calculated. The VIF scores also indicated no multicollinearity issue because all the VIF values were much lower than the 10-cut-off suggesting that there was no high correlation between the predictors.

Table 6 presents the results of the multicollinearity diagnostic using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores for the predictor variables included in the regression model. The purpose of this test was to assess whether the independent variables were highly correlated with one another, which could potentially distort the reliability of the model's estimates. As shown, all VIF values fell well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in this analysis.

**Table 6**

*Multicollinearity Test (VIF Scores)*

Variable	VIF
Physical Violence	1.85
Gender	1.10
Age	1.55

The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality showed that the model's residuals were normally distributed, and this met one of the central assumptions of linear regression.

All the VIF scores of the predictor variables were within acceptable ranges, meaning there was no serious multicollinearity and the predictors were independent enough of one another. These diagnostic results confirmed the reliability of the regression models, that the assumptions of normality and multicollinearity had been satisfied, and that the regression models suited the data.

#### 4.6 Hypothesis Testing for Physical Forms of GBV and Students' Test Scores

The first null hypothesis stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between physical forms of gender-based violence and students' test scores in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The results for hypothesis testing results were summarized in the table below. Table 7 presents the linear regression results examining the extent to which various physical forms of gender-based violence predicted students' test scores. The table includes both the overall physical violence index and specific behaviors such as being slapped, beaten, punched, pushed, physically restrained, and hit using objects. The most important statistical measures, such as unstandardized coefficients (B), standard errors (SE), standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ ), t-values, correlation coefficients (R), coefficients of determination ( $R^2$  and Adjusted  $R^2$ ), F-statistics, and the level of significance, was presented to demonstrate the strength and direction of the relationship of each of the predictors with academic performance. The analysis assisted in determining the types of physical violence that have a significant impact on the test results of the students, or not.

**Table 7**

*Linear Regression Results for Physical GBV and Students' Test Scores*

Predictor Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	T	R	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	F	Sig. F
Physical Violence (Overall)	0.055	0.047	0.043	1.183	.043	.002	.001	1.398	.237
Slapped	-0.021	0.030	-0.026	-0.699	.026	.001	-.001	0.488	.485
Beaten	-0.054	0.036	-0.054	-1.481	.054	.003	.002	2.192	.139
Punched	-0.048	0.041	-0.042	-1.163	.042	.002	.000	1.352	.245
Pushed	-0.066	0.026	-0.091	-2.500	.091	.008	.007	6.248	.013
Physically Restrained	-0.071	0.025	-0.101	-2.787	.101	.010	.009	7.767	.005
Hit Using Objects	-0.008	0.023	-0.013	-0.351	.013	.000	-.001	0.123	.726

The regression analysis was aimed at determining the dependence between the physical manifestations of gender-based violence and the academic performance of students. The total physical violence model gave a non-significant value ( $R = .043$ ,  $R^2 = .002$ ,  $F(1, 749) = 1.398$ ,  $p = .237$ ), which shows that the composite physical violence index was not a relevant signifier of student test scores. The coefficient ( $B = 0.055$ ,  $p = .237$ ) proved non-significant, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. Most types of physical violence including; being slapped ( $p = .485$ ), being beaten ( $p = .139$ ), being punched ( $p = .245$ ) and being hit using objects ( $p = .726$ ) were not significantly related to student test scores, as they were analyzed separately. But, forced ( $B = -0.066$ ,  $p = .013$ ) and tied down ( $B = -0.071$ ,  $p = .005$ ) however were significant predictors of poorer test scores. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted with the overall construct, but it was rejected with these two indicators of physical violence.

This research had both partial results with those of the literature on the impact of physical violence in schools on academic performance. Like the existing findings, Obilor and Ikpa (2021) did not evidence any significant positive relationship between general experiences of physical violence and academic scores on the sample of secondary school students in Nigeria. Their research suggested that students tend to normalize some forms of the violence resulting to an underestimation of its academic impacts." The result of this study that the association between being pushed and physically restrained and poor academic outcomes was high is supported by Benbenishty and Astor (2018), who stated that physically invasive behaviors particularly the ones that limit movement or autonomy were more likely to have harmful psychological consequences, which consequently disrupt concentration and academic performance.

Also, according to UNESCO (2019), students who undergo high frequency of violent physical contact like pushing and restraining tend to develop a sense of lack of academic activity due to fear and inability to be engaged in the classroom. This was why in the current study the negative values of these variables were high. In contrast, the research carried out by Morrell (2001) in South Africa showed that even minimal amounts of corporal punishment for example slapping and spanking, had the negative effect on the test scores. Slapping and hit with objects were not important predictors in the present study, suggesting that factors such as context, frequency, and student resilience may have the potential of mediating such relationships. Overall, this research was able to support the notion that most physical forms of violence did not influence the test scores at the aggregate level significantly. Conversely, those that were more intrusive and controlling like pushing and physical restraint had a negative influence on academic performance. This shows the necessity of focused intervention measures that do not only deal with the existence of violence, but also its nature and severity, in order to protect the academic performance of the students.

#### 4.7 Theoretical Interpretation

The Social Feminism theory focuses on structural and institutional causes of gender inequality with an emphasis on the role of patriarchal structures in perpetuating dominance by both overt and covert violence. The expression of physical GBV in schools in the context of this study may be perceived as a by-product of unequal gender power relations that legitimize violence as a form of discipline and control measure. The Resilience theory based on the idea that people are capable of bouncing back and flourishing even in the wake of a negative event with the help of either internal or external protective resources. The overall low correlations recorded could also indicate that there were students who were resilient as they continued with their academic lives despite violence experiences and the need to have good school environments.

#### 4.8 Qualitative Data on Relationship Between Physical Forms of GBV and Students' Test Scores

In addition to the quantitative results, the study also relied on qualitative data from the Guidance and Counseling teachers, GBV survivors, three Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDEs) and the County Woman Representative. The purpose of this qualitative component was to supplement the quantitative information obtained among GBV survivors and other key stakeholders by providing more insightful, assessor opinions. The data concerning the first research objective was grouped into five key themes: Most common cases, main perpetrators, most affected gender, cover-up cases, and effectiveness of gender policy frameworks.

##### 4.8.1 Most Common Forms of Physical GBV

The interview guide aimed to discover the key incidents of physical violence reported in the Sub-County Education office, the Women's Representative office, or the Guidance and Counseling office. The students also pointed the most experienced form of physical GBV.

Interviewee (IDI2) pointed out;

*"Boys are not lucky when physical violence is concerned. They are beaten at home, by bodabodas and even at school. Cases of boys being beaten at school are more than those of girls"* IDI2, 17 January 2026).

Participant: Female, Form 3;

*"I remember one day during break, a group of older students cornered me near the school latrines. They pushed me and I fell, and I bruised my arm. It was quite frightening and thereafter, I began evading the places they frequented. I reported to my teachers at school, and they only told me to be careful and did not*

*assist me. I had a feeling that nobody was concerned about my safety.*” (Female student, Form 3, 24 January 2026)

The respondent remembered an act of physical harassment by older students at school. She reported being baited and squeezed close to the school latrines, which caused her a physical harm (a bruised arm) and an emotional damage. This left her scared to a point of not going to some places within the school, which meant a loss of her feeling of safety and freedom in the school setting. Although she reported the case to her teachers, it was met with little reaction, the teachers only gave her a warning reminder without doing anything further considering that there was no perceived institutional support. This story shows a dual effect of physical gender-based violence on the physical well-being of students and their psychological safety. It also highlighted an inadequacy in the safeguarding measures of the school, because the participant believed her concerns regarding her safety were not given the due attention.

Such experiences can lead to the lower levels of school involvement, school absenteeism, and an overall feeling of vulnerability, which in turn might have an indirect impact on the academic performance and overall school involvement. This narration does not contradict the results of the previous research that points to the inadequacy of the institutional reaction that further increases the psychological burden of the problem of gender-based violence in schools (Postmus *et al.*, 2009; Mutasingwa, & Mwaipopo, 2022).

The use of objects as physical violence during beating, slapping and hitting was also the most frequent type of violence in other interviews. The most reported incidences of physical GBV in the area, which was being beaten, hit with objects, or slapped, were similar to those reported in other Kenyan studies and national surveys. Kenya Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) earned almost identical levels of physical violence in boys and girls (almost half of children aged 13-17 had experienced physical violence), which once again indicates that physical violence was not a gendered or environmentally exclusive issue. Country and county studies in Kenya also repeatedly identify corporal punishment and domestic beatings as the dominant forms of physical GBV affecting school attendance and concentration. These comparative data show that local qualitative reports are consistent with national patterns and with studies that link exposure to physical violence to reduced school participation and poorer academic outcomes (KNBS, 2020).

#### 4.8.2 Physical Violence Main Perpetrators

During the interviews, it was established that parents, teachers, and peers were the major perpetrators of physical violence.

Participant: Male, Form 3;

*“My classmates beat me up until I lost one of my teeth. I almost dropped out of school, but luckily, I was able to convince my mum to transfer me to this new school. I reported the case, but the teachers said that I was stubborn.”* (Male student, Form 3, 7 February 2026)

Participant: Male, Form 2

*“I was walking to class one afternoon when a group of older boys blocked my way. They started pushing me around, and one of them slapped me across my face. I fell and hurt my knee. I remember crying, but no one came to help me immediately. After that incident, I felt scared to walk alone in the corridors or near the school gate. Even when I told my teacher, she just told me to be careful and nothing else was done. I felt like I couldn’t trust anyone to protect me, and I started missing some classes because I feared being attacked again.”* (Male student, Form 2, 14 February 2026)

This points out to a very dangerous scenario where fellow students are a threat to other students and inability of school system to intervene putting students in a dilemma.

This was also highlighted by Participant: Male, Form 4

*“One of our teachers will one day kill a student. When he beats us, he has no mercy. One day, he beat me up until I lost consciousness. When I told my parents what had happened at school, they just told me to persevere and be a good boy. Funny enough is that other teachers do nothing about his behavior yet they know about it.”* (Male student, Form 4, 21 February 2026)

This ranking being; peers/fellow students, then teachers, relatives, and non-relatives is the same as illustrated in Kenya recently. According to the 2019 Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), peers are the source of a significant portion of physical violence against adolescents in school settings, as 12.6% of children aged 13-17 years old reported experience of physical violence from their peers in the last year. The survey further shows that despite the law prohibiting the administration of corporal punishment, teachers were still the major source of physical punishment demonstrating that corporal punishment had been normalized in most schools. At the family level, most of the people who perpetuate violence outside the school set up were caregivers and close relatives. These modern trends coincide with the findings of the current research and prove that peer-to-peer aggression, punishment by teachers, and acts of violence by their caregivers are the predominant pathways through which children were exposed to physical violence both at school and beyond (Nyoni *et al.*, 2023).

### 4.8.3 The Most Affected Gender

It was established that the boys were most affected by the physical violence compared to girls. The cases of physical violence happen at home, on way to school and in school. In an interview with (IDI2) confirmed the above statement;

*“Boys are not lucky when physical violence is concerned. They are beaten at home, by boda-bodas and even at school. Cases of boys being beaten at school are more than those of girls”.* (IDI2, 6 March 2026)

Another interview revealed the following;

*“Most cases reported concerning physical violence are against boys though we also receive cases of girls but the numbers are relatively lower* (IDI7, 6 March 2026).

Participant: Female, Form 1

*“I was once beaten up by a form three girl on allegation that I had snatched her boyfriend from her. The girl scratched my faces and the scars are still visible up to now. I reported this to my class teacher and she did nothing to the girl. I became scared, withdrawn and feared that she might beat me up again. “I started being absent from school for some days pretending I was sick* (Female student, Form 1, 15 March 2026).

This narration underscores vulnerability of the female students to physical gender-based violence in the school environment. The fear of the participant, avoidance behavior, and absence of institution response demonstrates that physical violence may not only evoke direct bodily injuries but may also influence the sense of safety and the general participation of students in school.

It was determined that boys were the most affected by the physical violence as opposed to those of girls. National data indicate that physical violence was experienced by large proportions of both sexes, but the profile can vary by type and location of violence: boys often report higher rates of physical violence outside the home or at school, while girls report higher rates of sexual violence in some settings. The VACS data and district studies show this nuance — physical violence prevalence was high for both sexes, but boys may predominate in certain physical violence sub-types and contexts (for example street violence, corporal punishment). This pattern helps explain interviewee observations that boys were more often reported in the physical-violence caseloads handled.

### 4.8.4 Cases of Cover Ups

A number of in-depth interviews revealed that the government policy frameworks were in place and effective. But the major challenge was cooperation from the victims, and sometimes the relatives are the major obstacles.

The interview session revealed the following;

*“The government policy frame works are effective but the challenge is that these cases reach our desk when evidence has been watered down or when it is too late. Sometimes you get from the third party, and when investigation starts, the victim does not cooperate. The re-entry policy, Basic children’s act and Sexual Offences Act are effective* ((IDI3, 22 March 2026))”

Additionally, another interviewee (IDI4) expressed the frustrations when dealing with the cases and pointed out;

*“Cover ups are a major challenge in dealing with GBV in Bungoma County. Notoriously, through kangaroo courts where perpetrators normally bribe the chiefs so cases go nowhere. Remember cases committed at home level must start at the chief’s office before they proceed to court so such cases are handled at home and not follow the legal process. Normally, my office facilitates such cases to proceed to court”* (IDI4, 2 April 2026).

Participant: Female, Form 2;

*“I remember one time a senior boy pushed me while we were in class, and I fell and hurt my leg. I told my class teacher what had happened, but instead of helping me, she just told me not to tell anyone else because it would make the school look bad. I felt scared and ashamed, and I didn’t know what to do. Later, the boy even teased me about it, and nothing was done. It made me feel like no one really cared about protecting us.”* (Female student, Form 2, 10 April 2026).

Participant, Form 3, Female

*“There were times when some older students would push me around or hit me for no reason in the school compound. One incident happened during break time when I accidentally bumped into a senior. They pushed me against the wall and I received a bruise on my arm. I began to avoid the play-ground and skipped school occasionally with fear. When I had reported it to the class teacher, they just warned the students once and did not follow up. It was like the security was not considered. Seeking assistance was a struggle since I was afraid to be scoffed by my fellow students or be retaliated.”* (Female student, Form 3, 16 April 2026).

The participant description demonstrates a system problem of cover-up, in which cases of physical GBV are minimized or hidden to save face on the institution, instead of the well-being of students. This does not only sustain the abuse, but also instills fear and feeling of helplessness to the survivors, which affected the psychological well-being and disposition to report future incidences.

A number of interviews confirmed that the government policy frameworks were present and working. But comparative county reporting and reviews of local governments find implementation shortcomings, especially late reporting, impaired evidence, victim unwillingness to cooperate, and community-level resolution mechanisms (including chiefs or informal so-called kangaroo courts) that redirect cases out of the formal investigation and prosecution process. A report on sector in Bungoma County and press reports also covered the tensions between community dispute-settling processes and formal legal processes, which tend to result in bribing or settlements that make formal follow-through impossible. These comparative sources corroborate interview data showing that local power structures and delayed reporting frequently limit the effectiveness of formal remedies and reduce the likelihood of successful legal outcomes (Bungoma County Assembly, 2023).

#### 4.4.8.5 Effectiveness of Gender Policy Framework

One particular interviewee pointed out that the office facilitates the legal process to ensure the case is reported in good time, no one hijacks the process and sometimes keep the survivors safely until the case is heard and determined; The (IDI7) explained;

*“When cases reach our desk on time, we are able to intervene because the government policy frameworks are effective and operational. The only challenge is that cover-ups are on the rise. Victims are not willing to reveal their perpetrators and sometimes people just want to protect the perpetrators since they are family”.* (IDI7, 25 April 2026).

The participant (IDI7) acknowledging the intended strength of the government structures that handles GBV cases. The offices in question, in their opinion, are designed to facilitate the legal process, such as allowing prompt reporting of cases, to make sure that they are not blocked by those in power, and even provide a temporary safe haven to victims of the cases. The government policy frameworks are said to be fundamentally sound and able to provide protection when implemented in the manner that it was intended.

However, as the respondent goes on, more of a tension of silence is created. Even with powerful policies, the situation on the ground seldomly fits well with the design. They observe that sometimes cases arrive in their office too late whereby the evidence may have been damaged or tampered with. Many times, they receive reports through third parties which makes it difficult to verify and slow down the initial stages of investigation. By the time a formal investigation is launched, victims are unwilling or even incapable of cooperating under external pressures. or even the community networks which attempt to bury the issue.

In researcher’s view, this narrative highlights the existence of a long-standing implementation discrepancy in which the efficient legislations fail to translate into the efficient protection. The frustration of the participant alludes to structural flaws in the system, such as delayed reporting, interference at the community level, and the lack of developed early protection that prevent the effectiveness of the well-developed legal frameworks. This disjuncture between policy and practice is also reflected in the wider literature in GBV research, in which good legislation is frequently counteracted by social pressures, stigmatization or institutional bottlenecks which deter survivors to seek help in a timely manner. They are resonant of the information that policy frameworks are in place and they are formally sufficient but their on-the-ground effect is diluted by late reporting, poor evidence, social stigma, and inequitable enforcement.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study revealed some facts, such as physical forms of GBV including hitting, beating, pushing and physical restraint were relatively common experiences among students in the public secondary schools in Bungoma County. In general, there was a weak, non-statistically significant relationship between physical GBV and students' test scores. Some types of violence were linked to poorer school attainment, such as pushing and physical restraint, but most types of physical violence did not have a clear direct link with attainment.

Results of the qualitative findings showed that the physical violence in schools is frequently experienced with peers, teachers, and in some cases, with the family members. Many of these incidents go unreported, poorly addressed, and covered up due to fear of retaliation, normalization of violent disciplinary practices and institutional coverups. This means that pupils can still be exposed to unsafe learning environments, which can adversely impact their engagement and wellbeing in an indirect way.

Social Feminism Theory approach to physical gender-based violence in school suggests that it is an indication of other power differences and disciplinary procedures in the school that foster the use of physical violence as a means of discipline. Resilience Theory also posits that some students can perform academically in the face of violence because of individual coping strategies and adult support systems, such as within their families and with peers. But this resilience does not remove the dangers of an unsafe learning environment. The results thus underscore the importance of more robust school-based interventions, better reporting systems, and supportive school environments to prevent physical violence and to foster safer learning conditions for all students.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate the physical forms of gender-based violence in public secondary schools and to foster safer learning environment for students: Schools must improve the systems in place for the prevention and response to physical violence in school and the Ministry of Education must reinforce them. Schools should have clear policies which discourage and prohibit the use of violence in disciplining students and encourage positive, non-violent approaches to student discipline. School staff and teachers need ongoing training in child protection, classroom management and alternative discipline measures to avoid physical discipline.

Secondly, schools should improve guidance and counselling facilities to meet the needs of students and make support systems accessible to them. The psychological support needs of violence-affected students should be met by well-trained personnel for guidance and counseling departments. It would also be beneficial to create anonymous reporting systems within schools to make sure that children are not afraid of retribution or stigma if they report incidents of violence.

Thirdly, schools need to engage in close collaboration with parents, community leaders and local government in order to help reduce the wider social factors which can lead to physical violence towards pupils. Community awareness programs have the potential to break the cycle of violence and instill positive attitudes towards child protection and student welfare. Increase the cooperation of schools and local child protection agencies to enhance the response to violence reports.

Last but not least, policy makers need to make sure current child protection and gender-based violence policies are put in place at the school level. This comprises the enhancement of monitoring mechanisms, the dissemination of knowledge about the legal protections for educators and students, and the accountability for violence that does take place. These measures can help to strengthen institutional supports and foster safe school cultures, which can help to ensure students' well-being and academic success.

## Declaration of Interest

The author declares that she does not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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