

Teachers' Perceptions on Violence in Elementary Schools: Toward Safer Learning Environments in North Lamba Leda, NTT

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history Received April 11, 2025 Revised June 02, 2025 Accepted June 29, 2025	<p>This research aims to describe teachers' perceptions of acts of violence in elementary schools, with a focus on the North Lamba Leda sub-district, East Manggarai Regency. Quantitative methods were used in this research, by conducting a survey via questionnaire to the elementary school teachers involved. The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed to identify the views and experiences of teachers regarding violence in education. The results of the research show that the majority of teachers in elementary schools in this sub-district have witnessed violence among students in their schools. This phenomenon is considered a serious problem that must be addressed to ensure a safe and nurturing educational environment for children. Violence in education not only harms students physically and psychologically, but also reflects the social pathology that occurs in the school environment, as well as highlighting deficiencies in the essence of education which should promote humanist values and respect individual dignity. By understanding teachers' perceptions of violence in education, this research provides valuable insights for the development of educational policies and practices that are more responsive and oriented towards child protection and creating safe and supportive learning environments for student growth and development. Efforts to overcome violence in education must be a priority in improving the education system and creating a more just and cultured society.</p> <p>This is an open access article under the CC-BY license.</p>
Keywords Teacher Perceptions, Acts of Violence, Educational Environment	



I. Introduction

When we talk about children, what immediately comes to mind is the image of small human beings brimming with curiosity, whose world of play knows no bounds. They may appear as severe as young scientists when exploring new things, only to suddenly burst into laughter for no apparent reason, speak with wild imagination, and quickly dissolve into tears when reality falls short of their expectations. For these reasons, in the eyes of both parents and the nation, children are regarded as the most precious gift of the future, and the embodiment of hope for families and the country (Watini, 2019). According to Montessori, the child is endowed with hidden potentials that caregivers and professionals must carefully protect and thoughtfully nurture (Liu & Tian, 2023; Atabik & Burhanuddin, 2015) in a nurturing environment. A secure life is legally guaranteed through various international agreements and is reinforced by national legislation. The Republic of Indonesia's Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection and Law No. 17 of 2016 concerning the same matter explicitly state that every child has the right to be protected from violence, exploitation, and neglect. They

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are entitled to fundamental human rights, including access to education, healthcare services, and the right to be heard and to express their opinions.

Violence against children in primary schools is both a problematic and counterproductive phenomenon that hinders children's growth and development. Today, child violence has become a significant concern for various international organizations (Mustafa, 2018), Parents, mental health professionals, and child welfare advocates (Nayab et al., 2022). Due to its profound impact, violence against children has become a deeply concerning reality in the primary education system. Distressing instances of child abuse increasingly mark the landscape of elementary schools. First, traditional patriarchal culture, upholding the status quo, hierarchy, and dominance, subtly reproduces and perpetuates violent practices that spill over into the school environment. Second, this culture of violence is manifested in how schools approach student discipline. Teachers, staff, and principals often exhibit acts of violence as a legitimate means of educating and disciplining children, believing they have the right and

authority to do so. In such a social context, violence is not only normalized and accepted by adults, but children themselves begin to perceive it as a 'norm' that should not be questioned. Violence, which should have no place in education, is instead passively accepted and forms mental frameworks that may persist over time. The cultural "normalization" of violence, which frames it as a tool for building character, ultimately sustains and legitimizes the violence itself (Mustafa, 2018).

Violence is a learned behavior acquired through observation or experience. Children who have witnessed or experienced violence tend to exhibit more aggressive behavior toward their peers (Imran, 2024). Violence can originate from a variety of sources. It is the responsibility of schools to identify potential sources of violence, including those stemming from gender differences, ethnocentrism, physical and mental disabilities, stigmatization, and socioeconomic status ((Ferrara et al., 2019), and exclusive cliques or peer groups (Mestry, 2015), or children from dysfunctional families who frequently experience abuse, violence from parents, severe family poverty, and neglect (Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023).

Various studies have revealed that violence in schools creates an unsafe atmosphere for students. This reinforces the notion that schools involved in such practices can no longer be considered safe learning places. In reality, schools are more than just spaces for formal education; they are also crucial arenas where students learn about self-actualization. There, children acquire knowledge, skills, values, and ways of life based on fairness and equality. According to Raab (Oluwamumibori et al., 2022), there are four reasons why schools should be safe places: personal growth, social growth, social efficiency, and personal efficiency. However, all of these goals are systematically undermined by the culture of violence within schools.

Anyone can perpetrate violence against children, whether it be strangers or those who are supposed to protect children the most, such as parents, caregivers, and peers. According to Law No. 35 of 2014, individuals under the age of 18, including those still in the womb, are considered children. According to the WHO (2020), all forms of violence inflicted on individuals under the age of 18, regardless of the perpetrator, are classified as child abuse. The WHO emphasizes that if violence against children can be predicted, it can also be prevented. Under the guidance of the WHO, governments worldwide are encouraged to minimize child violence by 2030, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment is explicitly stated in Target 16.2, which reads: "to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children." According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as any person under the age of eighteen, unless, under the applicable law of the child, adulthood is attained

earlier (Article 1). Meanwhile, violence against children is defined as "any form of physical or mental violence, injury or torture, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual violence" (Article 19, Paragraph 1 of the Convention). In the Republic of Indonesia's Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, violence against children is defined as "any act committed against a child that results in physical, psychological, sexual suffering, and/or neglect, including threats to commit such acts, coercion, or unlawful deprivation of freedom."

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that violence against children refers to any form of action, whether physical, mental, emotional, sexual, neglectful, or exploitative, that causes suffering or distress to a child, defined as any individual under the age of 18. Anyone can perpetrate such acts: parents, caregivers, peers, or strangers. Even threats, coercion, and unlawful deprivation of freedom are considered forms of violence against children. Meanwhile, violence against children in primary schools refers to any actions that harm, torture, intimidate, humiliate, or cause harm to a child physically, emotionally, or psychologically, whether committed by teachers, school staff, classmates, or others within the school environment. Acts of violence may include:

Table 1. Acts of violence

Type of Violence	Description
Physical Violence	Hitting, pinching, slapping, or pushing a child.
Verbal Violence	Swearing, insulting, mocking, or humiliating a child in public.
Emotional Violence	Neglecting, ostracizing, or making a child feel unsafe and unappreciated.
Bullying by Peers	Direct bullying (physical/verbal) or indirect bullying (cyberbullying, social exclusion).
Sexual Violence	Inappropriate touching of a child's body, making sexual comments, or exposing the child to pornography.
Neglect	Allowing a child to be continuously oppressed without protection or attention from teachers or school authorities.

In Indonesia, despite having a clear Child Protection Law, most recently through Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, violence against children has actually been on the rise (Adawiah, 2015). There are still many children who experience various forms of violence in society and educational institutions. This has fatal consequences for the child's physical, mental and social development. Based on data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemenpppa) as of June 1 2024, there were 8,782 cases of violence against children reported through the Women and Children Complaint Information System (SIMFONI-PPA) (Asif et al., 2020). The following is a data table on child violence based on gender and place of occurrence:

Table 2. Data on Child Violence Based On Gender And Place Of Occurrence

Gender	Victim	Percentage
Man	1,932	22%
Woman	7,661	78%
Scene	Victim	Percentage
House	5,079	58%
School	1,384	16%
Public places	1,112	13%
Other	1,207	14%

Furthermore, if we look further into the types of violence experienced by victims, it is found that 3,273 (37%) children experienced physical violence, 2,611 (30%) experienced physical violence, and 1,582 (18%) experienced sexual violence. Neglect: 1,063 (12%), trafficking: 28 (0.3%), exploitation: 125 (0.1%), others: 100 (0.1%). Women are more victims of child violence than men. Home is the place where child violence occurs most often, and physical and emotional violence are the types of violence most often experienced by children (<https://kekerasan.kemendpppa.go.id/ringkasan>).

Various cases of violence in schools have surfaced, and tragically, some of them have led to suicides by students unable to cope with the pressure. Ironically, many of these incidents of violence are seldom shared with parents. The victims remain silent, perhaps out of fear, shame, or not knowing whom to turn to for help. This situation worsens when the violence is perpetrated by students who are physically stronger or hold a dominant position, bullying their weaker peers who are powerless to resist (Nayab et al., 2022). A study conducted in six primary schools in the Malalayang District showed that nearly all respondents, 99.7%, had experienced violence, with the most significant proportion being female students (53.8%). The majority of them came from families with a middle-income level (40%). Physical violence was the most frequently experienced type of violence, accounting for 97.8% of all cases (Radja, at. al., 2016).

Children who experience violence tend to suffer from injuries ranging from mild to severe (Ferrara et al., 2019), anxiety disorders, social withdrawal, shyness, and fearfulness (Hollá & Kuricová, 2013), as well as poor academic performance and a lack of motivation to learn (Apisah et al., 2024). Emotional trauma can alter their behavior, making them melancholic, restless, or aggressive (Apisah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, sexual violence can abruptly shake a child's life, leading to physical disturbances, extreme emotional changes, and recurring nightmares. The child may feel dirty, guilty, and even lose the will to live. In an attempt to escape the pain, some children may begin to self-harm, run away from home, or become involved in substance abuse (Prastini, 2024).

Why is this issue important? First, violence against children in schools is a serious violation of the children's

rights guaranteed by Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, as well as Laws No. 35 of 2014 and No. 17 of 2016. Although child protection regulations have been established nationally, their implementation at the primary level, particularly at the school level, and in peripheral areas like North Lamba Leda still face many challenges. In the North Lamba Leda District, cases of violence in elementary schools indicate that the regulations have not been fully and effectively implemented at the local level. Teachers, who are supposed to be protectors and educators, in some cases, either allow or even become perpetrators themselves, or fail to prevent violence due to a lack of understanding and training.

Second, this study specifically focuses on teachers' perceptions of violence in schools and how these perceptions affect the success of child protection policy implementation. The lack of supervision, minimal teacher training, and weak reporting systems have made these regulations ineffective. Teachers' perceptions of child violence greatly influence how they respond to, prevent, or even unknowingly allow violence to occur. By understanding teachers' perceptions, this research aims to identify gaps in their knowledge and attitudes and develop more targeted interventions through training or school policies. The results of a child violence prevention and management training conducted by Abdul Hamid et al. (Hamid et al., 2023) on 30 teachers and school principals showed significant changes after they were provided with understanding and training. These teachers and principals were able to recognize and understand behaviors that show children who may be experiencing violence, apply logical consequences, provide reinforcement and positive encouragement, and manage conflicts related to violence in primary schools. The findings of this study are expected not only to provide insight into the conditions of child-focused violence in elementary schools but also to serve as a foundation for designing more effective prevention programs. This includes teacher training, the development included child-friendly school codes of ethics, and a more transparent and accessible violence reporting system.

This research focuses on violence in schools. Based on bibliometric analysis, numerous studies have been conducted on violence against students in elementary schools. This can be seen from Figure 1. The network visualization indicates that the term "dasar" (basic/elementary) occupies a central position in the research map and is connected to various key topics, signifying the dominance of elementary education studies. Four major clusters are identified. The green-yellow cluster includes topics such as "type", "year", "medium", and "public elementary school", reflecting attention to the structure and categorization of elementary education. The blue cluster highlights issues of child violence, particularly sexual abuse, with keywords such as "sexual abuse", "child abuse", and "sex education", demonstrating a strong correlation between elementary education and efforts to prevent violence. The red cluster centers on

character education, school programs, and cultural aspects, reflecting the importance of value-based education in shaping student behavior. Meanwhile, the purple–light green cluster illustrates research approaches such as “analysis”, “symbolic violence”, and “case study”, indicating the use of qualitative and critical methods to understand violence in elementary schools.

This network map shows that while elementary education and child violence have been widely studied, there remains significant room to explore teachers' perceptions more deeply, especially within local contexts and through participatory approaches, as Figure 2 shows.

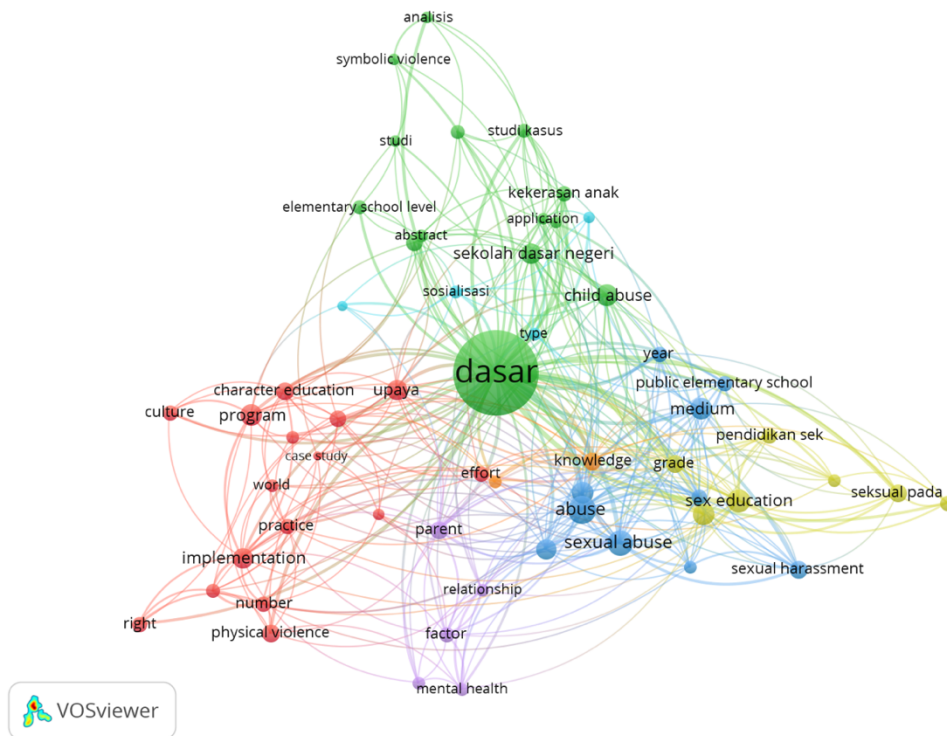


Fig. 1. Network Visualization

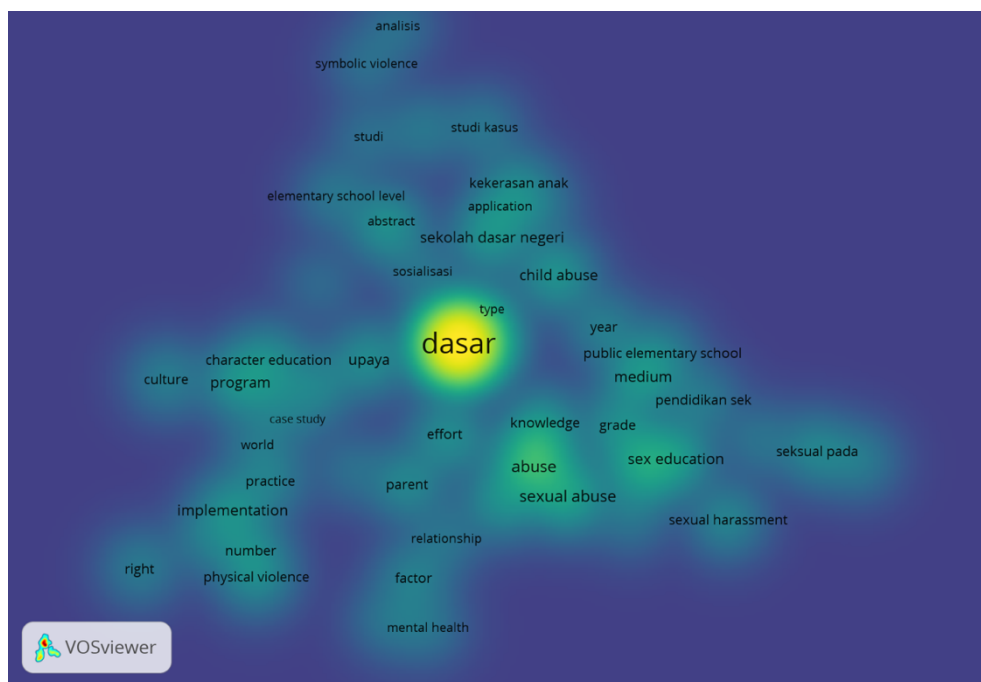


Fig. 2. Density Visualization

Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The target population comprised all elementary school teachers in the district. A non-probability sampling technique was applied, specifically purposive sampling, based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) currently active teachers in the 2023/2024 academic year; (2) teaching in elementary schools located in North Lamba Leda; and (3) voluntarily and truthfully completing the survey. A total of 45 teachers from various public and private elementary schools participated in the study.

The instrument used for data collection was an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections: the first section gathered demographic information such as name, school location, and grade level taught; the second section comprised 30 items, including closed-ended and open-ended questions, designed to assess teachers' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge regarding school violence. The items addressed issues such as the frequency and types of violence, perpetrators and victims, its impact on learning, school policies, the need for teacher training, and the role of parents and social media. Before dissemination, the instrument underwent content validity review by two education and child protection experts. Their feedback was incorporated to improve clarity and readability. In addition, a reliability test was conducted with a pilot group of 10 teachers outside the main sample. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.81, indicating a high level of reliability. Data collection took place online during March 2024. The collected data were exported into Microsoft Excel for further analysis. The analysis primarily employed descriptive statistics, using frequency distributions and percentages to summarize responses to the closed-ended questions. Meanwhile, responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to the causes of violence and barriers to prevention and intervention.

III. Results and Discussion

Violence in schools is one of the problems haunting education in North Lamba Leda District. This phenomenon affects students and teaching staff, damaging the learning environment, which should be a safe and conducive place for children's growth and development. Through this research report, we can explore various aspects of school violence, from teachers' perceptions as the main stakeholders to the factors that influence the effectiveness of prevention and handling efforts.

This survey reveals an alarming reality: violence in schools has become a familiar experience for most respondents. As many as 80% of teachers reported having witnessed or directly experienced acts of violence within the schools where they teach. This indicates that violence is no longer incidental but has permeated the daily practices of educational institutions. Although such incidents may seem commonplace, nearly all respondents

(95%) firmly reject the normalization of school violence, emphasizing that it is a serious issue that must not be overlooked. This finding reflects a collective awareness that violence should have no place in the relationship between teachers and students, as it fundamentally contradicts the very essence of education. Such awareness is not limited to merely recognizing the existence of violence; it also encompasses a deep understanding of its harmful consequences. Respondents acknowledged that violence has far-reaching adverse effects. In fact, 85% agreed that violence in schools negatively impacts both the quality of learning and children's psychological well-being. This assertion is further supported by correlation analysis, which reveals a firm relationship between school violence and students' mental health.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between X8 and X9

	X8	X9
X8	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—
	N	27
X9	Pearson Correlation	.918**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	27

The results of the correlation test indicate a very strong relationship between violence in schools and children's mental well-being. This statistical finding underscores that exposure to violence, whether as a witness, victim, or even an indirect participant, has a significant and measurable impact on the psychological condition of students. The strength of this correlation suggests that violence is not a peripheral issue but a central factor influencing students' emotional stability, sense of safety, and ability to engage meaningfully in the learning process.

When students are subjected to or surrounded by violent environments, it can lead to a range of psychological consequences, including anxiety, fear, trauma, depression, and decreased motivation to learn. The data affirms that the mental health of children cannot be separated from the school climate, and that any form of violence, both verbals, physical, and symbolic, creates disruptions that compromise not only individual well-being but also the collective educational atmosphere. There is a strong correlation between violence and a decrease in students' learning motivation, and violence leads to other behavioral disorders in students. This is supported by the fact that violent acts indeed result in reduced learning motivation and the emergence of other behavioral issues in students.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation between X11 and X12

	X11	X12
X11	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—
	N	27
X12	Pearson Correlation	.746**

X11	X12
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	27

In looking at who is most vulnerable to violence in schools, data shows that students are the most common perpetrators and victims. As many as 60% of respondents reported that violence most often occurred between students. However, violence between teachers and students cannot be ignored, with 20% of respondents admitting the existence of this phenomenon. This highlights the complexity of relationships within the school environment and the importance of holistically addressing the problem of violence (Hartiwi et al., 2020).

Furthermore, this report reveals a lack of support from schools in dealing with cases of violence, which is a common problem. As many as 45% of respondents felt that there was not enough support from the school in handling cases of violence. This shows that there is a gap between the need to handle cases of violence and the ability of the school system to provide adequate support (Astuti et al., 2020).

However, respondents expressed support for special training for teachers to handle violence cases. As many as 80% of respondents agreed that special training is needed. This highlights the need to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in addressing situations of violence in schools. Thus, investment is needed in training and developing teacher professionalism (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Respondents generally consider efforts to prevent violence in schools ineffective. They rated the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts as "less effective" or "ineffective." This indicates an urgent need to evaluate and improve prevention strategies to achieve a safe and conducive educational environment for all parties involved.

The data also reveals the stigma associated with school violence that hinders the reporting of cases. As many as 45% of respondents agreed that stigma related to violence hinders reporting cases. Therefore, efforts are needed to overcome this stigma and create a supportive environment for victims to report instances of violence (Hesbol, 2019).

The debate surrounding policies for handling violence in the school environment is heating up. The latest data is surprising: only 35% of total respondents agreed that harsh policies against violence are genuinely effective in reducing disturbing incidents. This indicates the need for an in-depth review of the effectiveness of existing policies and the importance of appropriate adjustments to make them relevant to the circumstances and needs of each school. Violence in schools is not a trivial problem that can be ignored. The data notes that the involvement of many parties, including teachers, students, school staff, parents, and the community, is significant in resolving this problem. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive

approach is needed. It involves all relevant parties (Hou et al., 2019).

One proposed solution is to provide special training for educators in dealing with violent situations. As the spearhead in the field, teachers need adequate knowledge and skills to handle conflict effectively. Not only that, the role of school supervisors is also key in maintaining consistent implementation of school rules and policies. They must be supported with adequate resources and receive appropriate training to deal effectively with violent situations. Education about violence prevention is also an important step (Anggriani et al., 2019). By involving students, parents, and the community, outreach programs can increase awareness of the negative impacts of violence and the importance of peaceful conflict resolution (Mahaputra & Saputra, 2021).

Thus, dealing with the problem of school violence requires cooperation from all relevant parties. By implementing these solutions comprehensively, it is hoped that schools in North Lamba Leda District can create a learning environment that is safe and inclusive and supports the growth and development of all students (Normianti et al., 2019).

The survey results indicate that 80% of teachers reported having either witnessed or experienced violence in schools. The most prevalent form of violence was student-on-student violence (60%), followed by teacher-on-student violence (20%). These data suggest that violence is not an incidental occurrence but rather a structural phenomenon that has become internalized within the school culture.

From the perspective of the hidden curriculum theory (Jackson, 2014), violence in schools does not solely manifest as a violation of formal values, but is instead perpetuated through informal, unwritten norms that are routinely practiced. Teachers, as key actors in the educational process, may inadvertently contribute to the reproduction of a culture of violence through either passive tolerance or direct involvement.

95% of teachers acknowledged that violence constitutes a serious issue, and 85% believed that violence negatively affects the quality of learning. This reflects a relatively high level of normative awareness. However, this awareness has not yet been effectively translated into preventive or responsive action, primarily due to limited capacity and a lack of systemic support. As Freire (Freire, 2012) emphasized, critical consciousness is necessary so that individuals not only recognize injustice but can also analyze its root causes and engage in transformative action.

Furthermore, 45% of teachers reported feeling unsupported by their schools in addressing violence, and 80% expressed support for specialized training. This highlights a gap between awareness and institutional capacity. Schools have yet to function as safe and

responsive environments in the face of violence. Within the framework of ecological systems theory (Ummah, 2019), failure at the microsystem level, such as within schools, undermines broader child protection efforts at the macrosystem level (e.g., national policies and regulations).

In addition, the finding that 45% of teachers perceive a stigma associated with reporting violence indicates the absence of protective mechanisms for victims and witnesses against intimidation or retaliation. Drawing on Foucault's (Massin, 2017) concept of power, schools may function as disciplinary spaces where power is exercised through surveillance and control, not only via formal rules but also through silent and repressive mechanisms that discourage disclosure.

Interestingly, only 35% of teachers believed that punitive policies are effective in reducing violence. This suggests that repressive approaches, when not accompanied by cultural reform and value-based education, fail to address the root causes of the problem. In contrast, participatory and restorative approaches offer more promising alternatives. Aligned with the principles of restorative justice, it is essential to foster dialogue among perpetrators, victims, and the school community, positioning the restoration of social relationships, not punishment alone, as the primary goal.

From a local cultural perspective, it is crucial to examine how patriarchal values and entrenched hierarchies continue to influence educational practices in regions such as North Lamba Leda. In many contexts, cultural norms of deference toward teachers can suppress critical feedback, even when teachers are perpetrators of violence. This phenomenon aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, in which power and domination are exercised in ways that are often invisible and unquestioned, even by those subjected to them.

A. Policy and practice implications:

School culture transformation: A genuine paradigm shift is required to move away from punitive models of discipline toward classroom management approaches rooted in empathy, restorative practices, and mutual respect. This transformation entails redefining disciplinary methods so that the focus is not merely on punishment, but on healing, accountability, and the restoration of relationships. By cultivating a culture of care, schools can nurture environments where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow from their mistakes.

Strengthening teacher capacity: Professional development must go beyond technical or content-focused training to embrace holistic dimensions of teaching. This includes fostering ethical awareness, integrating a child-rights perspective, and developing a critical understanding of power dynamics within classrooms and schools. Teachers should be equipped not only with pedagogical tools, but also with the emotional intelligence and

reflective capacities needed to create safe, inclusive, and equitable learning spaces.

Safe reporting mechanisms: Schools must institutionalize secure, confidential, and child-sensitive reporting systems that protect victims and ensure timely, transparent, and accountable follow-up procedures. Such mechanisms are crucial to breaking the silence that often surrounds violence in educational settings. When students trust that their voices will be heard without fear of retaliation or stigma, schools can begin to dismantle cultures of impunity and foster a climate of openness and justice.

Multilevel approach: Preventing and addressing violence in schools requires a comprehensive, multilevel strategy that brings together diverse stakeholders. The collaborative involvement of local governments, school committees, parents, communities, and traditional leaders ensures that policies and interventions are both contextually grounded and culturally responsive. By weaving together institutional policies with community wisdom and values, schools can build sustainable frameworks that protect children and promote their holistic well-being.

IV. Conclusion

Violence in schools is a serious problem in North Lamba Leda District, with 80% of respondents having witnessed or experienced it. Violence in schools hurts the quality of learning (85% of respondents agree). The main factors causing violence in schools are a lack of understanding of how to manage conflict, inconsistent supervision and enforcement of rules, and social and environmental problems. The perpetrators and victims of violence at school are most often students (60%), but violence between teachers and students also occurs (20%). There is a lack of support from the school in handling cases of violence (45% of respondents felt there was not enough support). Respondents support special training for teachers to handle violence cases (80% agree). Efforts to prevent violence in schools are generally considered ineffective (respondents rated their effectiveness as "less effective" or "ineffective"). Stigma related to school violence inhibits reporting of cases (45% of respondents agree). Based on this conclusion, the recommendation is to enhance violence prevention programs in schools by implementing more effective strategies. Provide special training for teachers to handle cases of violence. Increase support from schools in handling cases of violence. Creating a supportive environment for victims to report instances of violence. Overcoming the stigma related to violence in schools. Increase understanding of how to manage conflict peacefully and effectively. Strengthen supervision and enforcement of rules in the school environment and overcome social and environmental problems that influence student behavior.

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