



AETIOLOGY OF STUDENTS' VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR: THE CASE OF AN URBAN SCHOOL IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The study is premised on the aetiology (causes) of violent behaviour in a purposively selected urban secondary school in Gweru - Zimbabwe. The visual participatory methodology was used, whereby drawings and focus group discussions were the methods used to generate data over a period of two weeks. Participants were fifteen conveniently selected students attending a typical high density urban secondary school (females = 7, age range 15-17, males = 8, age range 14-18). Findings showed that the majority of the students exhibited violent behaviour as a result of their family backgrounds, neighbourhood set-up, school environment and personal attitudes. Some prominent causal factors included high incidences of violence in the community where students live, parents' misunderstandings and fighting at home, shortage of school furniture, harsh parental discipline and overwhelming schoolwork. Violence among students in the selected urban secondary school requires urgent proactive policies, where stakeholders, including school authorities, parents, students and community engagement are incorporated in an endeavour to reduce or eliminate violence at school.

Key words: aetiology, violence, school, student, fighting.

1.0 Introduction

Violent behaviour among students appears to be a serious problem in both urban and rural schools of Zimbabwe. Learners seem to be the main perpetrators as well as victims of violence. For this reason it has become imperative to find out the causes of violent behaviour among students in secondary schools.

2.0 Context

Violent behaviour among students is a major concern to the teachers, parents and all interested with the education of learners (Bardick & Bernes, 2008). The increasing school violence has become a problem that hinders the perception and reality of a school as a safe place for both pupils and teachers (Husain, 2004). Violence in schools may sometimes undermine the notion that school days are the happiest days in the learner's life. School violence wears many faces which include gang activities, locker theft, bullying, intimidation, gun use and fighting (Basch, 2011). The focus of violence can be individuals, objects or the school itself. Both teachers and students may be affected by violence in schools. A learner can act violently towards other learners or can violently attack teachers.

Researchers have revealed that there is a strong relationship between the school characteristics and violence. Survey done in some parts of USA revealed that administration practices in the school may influence the behaviour of students. The school related factors include student teacher ratio and demographic characteristics of the school for example the location of the school (Husain, 2004). In addition Frey, Ruchikin, Martin and Schwabston (2009) observed that neighbourhood environment and violence exposure clearly affect student's development. Students living in violent neighbourhood have been found to model this behaviour at school.

School based violence is also a problem in developing countries. Studies conducted in Lesotho by Delliet (2007) provided evidence of learner to learner and learner to teacher verbal and physical abuse. In the case of Nigerian schools what became evident (Olaogyn, Ayandrian & Oyelele, 2008) were forms of school based violence which range from verbal abuse to female genital mutilation (SACE, 2011). In the study of some Nigerian students in Benin City, Engbochuku (2007) revealed that almost four in every five participants, (78%), reported being bullied and 85% admitted to bullying others at least once (Aluede, 2011).

In Zimbabwe a research carried out on vandalism to school property in the capital Harare, was cited to be a problem among students (Manguwo, Whitney & Chareka, 2011). Chimhenga (2002) in his study of behaviour problems among adolescents found out that bullying, aggressiveness and vandalism to school property were violent behaviours that were exhibited by adolescent learners in Bulawayo (the second largest city in Zimbabwe). Shoko (2012) revealed that students harassed each other verbally and physically in the rural day secondary schools of Gweru for various reasons.

Instinct theory of aggression is based on the nature approach. Aggressive behaviour is innate, genetically inherited and is inevitable (Fieldman, 2009). Freud in his instinct theory believed that aggression is rooted in biology. Freud suggested that all humans are born with potent aggressive instincts and these instincts create a drive to commit aggressive acts that must be satisfied (Lahey, 2008). Gasa (2005) suggested that humans are born with thanatos that seeks the cessation of life that might be directed towards self injury or can be discharged towards others. Displacement, a defence mechanism, can be referred to as the kick the cat phenomenon when applied to frustration. When a child is frustrated he or she cannot retaliate against the person causing the frustration but might decide to kick the next weak person (Gasa, 2005). This might be happening in our schools with the students who are violent. They might be charged with aggressive

drive which emanates from the circumstances around them hence they might end up being involved in the displacement kick the cat phenomenon.

Frustration and aggression are linked in a cause and effect relationship. Frustration is a cause of aggression and aggression is the result of frustration. In this theory one becomes aggressive when a goal is blocked and this leads to frustration and eventually leads to violence (Fieldman, 2009). It might not be surprising that violence is more common among students who are frustrated.

Social learning theory is contrary to instinct theory and the frustration-aggression theory, Bandura (1973) believed that people are aggressive only if they learn that it is to their advantage to be aggressive (Lahey, 2008). Fieldman (2009) states that Bandura pointed that one will act aggressively in relation to frustration only if he or she has learned to do so. Bandura believes that one can learn by observing the behaviour of others which he called modelling. In Bandura's laboratory studies of modelling, children learned to be more aggressive or less fearful as a result of observing the behaviour of models in films. The Bobo doll experiment is an example. By demonstrating violent behaviour in our communities one can unknowingly encourage violent behaviour amongst students.

Burton, (2007) argued that a series of interrelated factors impact negatively on young people in different ways. Furthermore, Benavente, (2008) indicated that no single factor causes an individual to engage in violent behaviour. The causes of violent behaviour are complex and are often unique to the personal history of the individual as well as the situational characteristics of the setting in which the behaviour occurs (SACE, 2011). Causes of violent behaviour among students can be classified into three forms; learner related, family based and school based causes.

The development stage of the learner, (Morais and Meier, 2010) may contribute to one being violent. When examining learners motives with the view of responding appropriately to their outward behaviour, it can be helpful to look at some developmental issues that play a role in this regard (Morais & Meier, 2010). According to Erikson's stage theory adolescent learners are in an identity versus role confusion stage (Aluede, 2011). Major theme for development in this stage is developing a sense of self and personal identity. If one does not resolve his or her identity questions how he or she is likely to experience identity crisis which might lead to negative behaviours. Accordingly, these students might become violent.

Inexperience or ignorance may also result in learners acting violently towards each other. Learners may misbehave simply because they do not understand the rules of the class (Morais and Meier, 2010). Mental pressure may result in a learner being violent. Barbour (2011) pointed out that parents want their children to excel in every field. This may create a large amount of mental pressure on the learners. As a result of this, children might be unable to handle this mental pressure and become violent. By becoming violent they will not only trouble themselves but other people as well.

Some of the learners according to Resnick, Ireland & Borowsky (2004) may become violent as a way of seeking attention. Some of the students have a tendency of opting for wrong means of becoming famous in the school if they are unable to become famous by adopting right means. This violence can be the result of wanting others to pay attention to them even if it is negative attention.

Poor academic performance may result in violent behaviour among learners. Academic failure as pointed out by Difonzo, Gall & Quante (2008) may increase the risk for later violent behaviour. Learning difficulties can lead to frustration and lashing out.

A depressed child according to Gasa (2005) may develop violent attitude. As a result of violent attitude they threaten and fight other learners. Poipoi, Agak & Kabuka (2011) in their study conducted in public secondary schools in Western Province of Kenya revealed that 72.2% and 70.4% of male and female students respectively admitted to have been violent because they experience anxiety and depression problems.

Retaliation against provocation and bullying at school may lead to violence (Bester and Plessis, 2010). Burton (2007) pointed out that in most cases perpetrators of violence may be victims of bullying over an extended period of time such that these students will display this kind of behaviour as a way of getting back or revenging their bad experiences.

Children who have been exposed to possible traumatic experience at a tender age will struggle to learn and process verbal information and might experience language and communication difficulties (Paterson, 2012). As a result of their difficulties in using language as a form of communication they might struggle to express themselves verbally or to deal with verbal conflict hence they will resort to violence. This concurs with the findings of Poipoi et al (2010) where 32.2 % of male and 38.9% of female students confessed that they resorted to violence because they experienced communication problems.

Lack of self regulation skills might result in one being violent. In this case one might not have the ability to identify their emotion and to act accordingly (Paterson, 2012). The children tend to rely on inappropriate and inadequate coping skills like aggressive behaviours.

Involvement with drugs maybe another risk factor associated with school related violence. Reddington (2007) suggested that there is a relationship between alcohol and drug abuse and antisocial behaviour like being violent. Reddington (2007) found out that youth arrested for either violent crimes or property crimes were involved in the issue of substance and alcohol abuse at the scene of the crime.

Negative self concept is another risk factor associated with school related violence. Resnick, et al, (2004) found a direct correlation between engaging in violent behaviour and having a negative self concept. Learners who feel that they are not important may use violence in an attempt to prove their self worth. They will be acting out of frustration.

The family according to SACE (2011) has been argued to be one of the most influential socialising contexts in childhood and throughout adolescence. It is important to explore family as an external determinant to establish how these factors contribute to violent behaviour among students.

Parents play an essential role in modelling behaviour. If children are exposed to violence at home they tend to model that behaviour (Barbour, 2011; Paterson, 2012). If they see constant fighting in the house they will learn to judge violent behaviour as the appropriate manner to deal with conflict Ward, (2007 cited in Burton, 2008). Frey, Ruchkin, Martin and Schwob-Stone (2009) found out that violence exposed students reported significantly high levels of antisocial behaviour and willingness to use physical aggression than their non-exposed counterparts. Homes in which

parents frequently quarrel has been linked to stress in children and this usually results in physical and emotional illness. Morais and Meier (2011), argue that about 10% of respondents professed to often seeing their parents verbally or physically fighting. Therefore if children are exposed to aggression displays between adult partners at home, they will carry these experiences with them into the school.

Lack of love and affection by parents or guardians maybe linked to violent behaviour exhibited by learners. It has been scientifically proved that if a child is not getting proper love and affection then he or she will have mental disturbances (Resnick et al, 2004). This mental disturbance can lead to violent attitude in the child. In most cases the child will grow to be an arrogant child because he or she might feel neglected. It is important that parents give sufficient care and love to their children in order to make sure that their child grows with proper attitudes. Barbour (2011) pointed out that neglect can inhibit the development of communication skills and self esteem can be seriously damaged.

Limited involvement of the parents in the child's activities may result in him or her being violent (Difonzo, et al, 2008). Parental supervision and involvement help children to cope despite challenging environment. Parents' encouragement of discussing the child's feelings and parent led conversation about morality play a strong role in children's capability for socio-economic adjustment after witnessing community violence (Frey et al, 2009). Without adult supervision learners may find it difficult to distinguish right from wrong. They struggle without the ability to resolve conflict peacefully. Poipoi et al (2011) in the Western Province of Kenya revealed that 51.2% of respondents in rural schools perceived low level of supervision as contributing to violence in schools.

Harsh parental discipline is associated with higher levels of aggressiveness among students (Resnick et al, 2004). Harsh physical punishment given to the child at home may influence the child to exhibit violent behaviour as a way of protesting against their parents. If children watch his or her parents divorcing, he or she might experience mental tension and pressure. This experience might lead to violence as divorce brings in unpredictability, unreliability and insecurity into the child's life (Gasa, 2005). Anxiety, anger, grief and shame are common responses.

Parental attitude towards drugs and crime is associated with child's behaviour. Parental alcohol abuse and presence of guns in the home may encourage a child to follow his or her parent's footsteps (Difonzo et al, 2008). Parents who abuse alcohol and drugs affect children in the sense that it leads to psychological, emotional, social neglect and low self-esteem. The child of a drug and alcohol dependent parent can be deprived from appropriate physical care and can be neglected. This can impede the child's social and psychological development and might influence children to become drug users themselves (Paterson, 2012). This might in turn influence the child to be violent.

In a research conducted by Gasa (2005) about 25.3% of respondents confirmed that their fathers drink excessively. Furthermore, in another research conducted by Paterson (2012) in South Africa revealed that drug and alcohol abuse was prevalent in many homes and neighbourhood of the participants. Accordingly it is evident that drug and alcohol abuse is often accompanied by violent behaviours.

Television media have also been linked to violence among students. Allowing students to watch movies that depict violence and other illegal activities, will lead students to try and imitate because of their fascination (Harris, 2013). Entertainment shows like wrestling and fighting usually drive young minds crazy hence they are easily prone to imitate the moves on their friends. A study by Poipoi et al (2011) revealed that 38.3% of students in rural schools and 44.6% in urban schools pointed out exposure to violent films and movies as contributing to violence among students.

Some of the parental practices may contribute to students' violence. For example parents who refuse to visit the school to discuss the antisocial behaviour that is manifested by their children will actually be indirectly supporting the student violent behaviour. Some of these parents are said to be tired of dealing with their child's problems and some parents believe that there is nothing they can do to control their children (Harris, 2013).

Low parental education and income may contribute to violence among learners. (Resnick et al, 2004). Some parents tend to concentrate more on the economic survival of the family and less attention is given to the attitude and behaviour of their children. These parents may fail to provide strong and positive guidance to their children (Resnick et al, 2004).

The community from which the learners come from might also contribute to violent behaviour among students (Frey et al, 2009). Some of the youth come from community where majority of them had hostile experiences and where they had to fight for survival. These young students are filled with rage and a sense of rejection and they do not believe that they owe the society anything. Therefore they become violent since they view it as favourable.

Blakeslee (2003) asserted that administration practices and demographic characteristic of the school have a large influence on school violence. School size is said to have an influence on school violence. High number of students studying in a particular school may encourage violence among students (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne & Gottfredson, 2005). In Zimbabwe, a normal class may have about 35-40 students for the teacher to take care of each and every student. Most schools with large enrolments may accommodate between 60-70 students in a single classroom. This means that the teacher would take time to identify violent students. The research conducted by the National Centre for Education statistics in 2007 found out that disciplinary problems are related to school size as large schools yield more disciplinary problems than small schools (Cohen, McCabe, Mitchell & Pickeral, 2009).

Geographic location of the school is a risk factor for school related violence (Estevez et al, 2006). This refers to whether the school is located in the town, urban fringe or in rural areas. If the school is located in an area that is characterised by violence, students are likely to be violent as they may regard it as something that is normal.

Lack of guidance and positive role models at school might be associated with violent behaviour among students (Blakeslee, 2003). In this case students might find difficulties in distinguishing right from wrong and might struggle without the ability to resolve conflict peacefully.

Inconsistent disciplining style used by the teachers in the classroom is perceived to be contributing to violence (Bester & Plessis, 2010). If a group of students is involved in an antisocial behaviour and treated differently, students might manifest violent behaviour as a way of protesting against some of these acts. It may be a way of making the teacher realise that they are not happy with the way they are treated.

Instructional approach contributes to school related violence Keller & Taspasak, (cited in Bester & Plessis, 2010). An enthusiastic educator instils enthusiasm and motivates his or her learners. This application of effective teaching skills

prevents feelings of frustration with learning, fear of failure and other possible academically related antecedents of aggression and violence.

Lack of support from the administration can be linked to violence among students (Bosworth, Ford & Hernandez, 2011; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne & Gottfredson, 2005). In a study conducted by Bosworth et al, (2011) in Arizona public and charter schools, the respondents revealed that the principals were dictators who did not value opinions of other staff members. Hence there is no team work to combat violent behaviour among students as the principal was the one who wanted to deal with everything alone.

Inconsistency in the disciplinary system can be linked to school related violence. Some schools are said to negotiate with misbehaving learners while others try to expel them (Gottfredson et al, 2005). This would promote school related violence in the sense that those students who are not punished for their violent behaviour will continue to exhibit that behaviour hence affecting other students, teachers and the smooth running of the school. Bosworth et al (2011) reported that the discipline handbook is never followed hence the increase in the incidences of violence in the school as most perpetrators go unpunished. The respondents speculated that the administration was reluctant to expel or suspend students for fear of losing enrolment and funding.

The school curriculum contributes to school related violence (Bester & Plessis, 2010). The curriculum tend to frustrate some of the learners as it is objective oriented, thus it is rigid and there is no room for choices of students as teachers will be racing to cover the syllabus for examination purposes. As a result, students might exhibit violent acts as a way of showing their displeasure.

Friends have a great psychological effect on the child. Learners are easily influenced by their friends. Youth who have friends who are involved in violent behaviour are at a high risk of learning and accepting violent behaviour as a norm (Benavente, 2008). Generally students have shown that peer group pressure is the fastest growing and most disturbing case of acts of violence among youth in schools (Barbour, 2011). Poipoi et al (2011) in their study discovered that some learners would exhibit violent behaviour to please their friends. Accordingly, 45.8% of males and 45.6% of females confessed that they engage in violent activities because they had fear of losing their friends. It is against this background that we sought to find out the aetiology of violent behaviour in a selected secondary school located in an urban high density suburb of Gweru in Zimbabwe. The main research question was: What are the causes of violent behaviour among students attending Munhu secondary school in Gweru urban?

3.0 Methodology

The study was conducted in a secondary school located in Gweru high density suburb. Gweru district is located in Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The city is the provincial capital for the Midlands. The school was purposively selected because it was deemed to provide information concerning violent behaviour. We targeted Ordinary Level ("O" Level) students. It was observed that violent behaviour was high among "O" Levels.

Visual participatory approach was considered suitable for this research because it involved an interpretative naturalistic approach to the world (Mitchell, 2011). This approach was motivated by an in depth inquiry to study a phenomenon in its natural setting as well as to interpret the phenomenon in terms of meaning and understanding constructed by people (Gudyanga, Matamba and Gudyanga, 2014). Visual participatory methodology tends to focus on a smaller population but probing deeper into a given problem (Richards, 2011; Mitchell, 2011). It has a hands-on activity by the students as they drew the causes of violence, the doing itself, is an intervention (De Lange, 2008). The participants were actively involved in knowledge generation. When they interrogated their drawings and further reflected on them, such action taken had a probability of bringing about a social change and creating a context for prevention and elimination of violence tendencies in someone as they engaged through the visual participatory methodology.

For these reasons, we adopted this methodological approach to understand students' perceptions on the causes of violent behaviour among students. One of the other main advantage of using visual participatory methodology is that it allows open ended views to be formed therefore giving a more comprehensive understanding of participants and their experiences. The researchers believed that by using visual participatory methodology to gather data, new insights and ideas might emerge from the study and this would bring about the greater understanding of the aetiology of violent behaviour.

Participants were selected on the basis of their availability and willingness to respond (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006). This is why only those who were willing to participate in the research were used. They were fifteen conveniently selected students (females = 7, age range 15-17, males = 8, age range 14-18) who had a record of being violent. The number of participants was motivated by the need to have a detailed analysis of the phenomenon under study. Drawings had a minimum of four sessions over a period of two weeks. The prompt was: Draw a diagram which shows a cause or causes of violence in your school. In the diagram, write some words which show the causes of such violence.

Visual participatory methodology was selected because it gave participants a sense of ownership over the research process and this makes them more likely to invest time and energy required to make the project a success (Richards, 2011; Deacon, 2000). Therefore, for the sake of this study, we used drawings to solicit for information about the causes contributing to violent behaviour among students and even ways to reduce it.

Drawings can provide data in a fun and creative manner and participants can be actively engaged in the data collection process by asking them to draw (Deacon, 2000). This method actually brings out information that may remain hidden during verbal interviews (Lorenzo & Kolb, 2009). Visual methods promote a more divert understanding of people, their life experiences and their perceptions than is possible with data controlled solely by the researcher (Lorenzo & Kolb, 2009).

Due to their engaging nature, participatory drawings emerge to be a highly efficient research strategy that is suitable when working with young people. The more involved the participants are in the different aspects of the research, the increased likelihood of long term personal benefits for those taking part (Richards, 2011). Drawing can be used in order to understand how people see the world (Guillemin, 2004). Discussions of the drawn images were done so that depiction

of concepts, emotions and information in an expressive, empowering and personally relevant manner was done. A social change is expected in the lives of the (violent) participants, (Richard. 2011).

The focus group discussions were conducted with the same students who were selected for drawings under participatory visual method. Focus group discussions were meant to enrich information obtained through drawings as students were able to explain some of the underlying factors driving violent behaviour among students at their school. We compiled notes during the interview session. In order to avoid dominance by few individuals during the interview session, we provided a platform for all individuals to participate without feeling intimidated or inferior by giving each participant the room to make contributions.

Permission was sought from the Ministry of Education in order for the study to be carried out in the selected school. We sought permission in writing from the school head to collect data. We also sought consent in writing from the parents to collect data from their children, since some of the participants were minors. We then sought the consent of each individual participant, who gave their consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity among participants was also granted to protect the participants. They were asked not to write their names on the drawings. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, if they felt like doing so. We explained the study method that is, drawings to the participants as well as the aim and purposes of the study. We explained to the participants that when answering the question asked they should do so in the form of drawings.

The participants discussed as a group their drawings. In the process we were in a position to understand what was being portrayed by the drawings. During the focus group discussion (fgd) session, the participants took the lead while we listened and gave necessary guidance. We jotted down some of the important information from the discussion and audio recorded everything that was discussed.

We used codes to refer to the participants and produced themes from the discussion of the participants. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and common themes were generated from the transcriptions. These transcriptions were used to interpret the students' perceptions on factors that contribute to causes of violent behaviour among students. These themes were then further debated by researchers for refinement.

4.0. Results

The causes of violent behaviour were classified into; learner related, home and school related. Five participants were of the view that the causes that contributed to violence were related to them as learners. Three participants, in their drawings, argued that alcohol, drug abuse and peer pressure caused violence. One participant had a drawing which shows revenge as a contributing factor (fig. 1).

Student G, during the focus group discussions confessed that at one time he was involved in a fight with another student because he wanted to revenge what had happened to him. In figure 1, one of the students is saying; *'Nhasi ndinoda kukugadzirisa zvawakambonditirawo'* which is a local language, when translated, it means that he wanted to beat her because of what she once did to him.

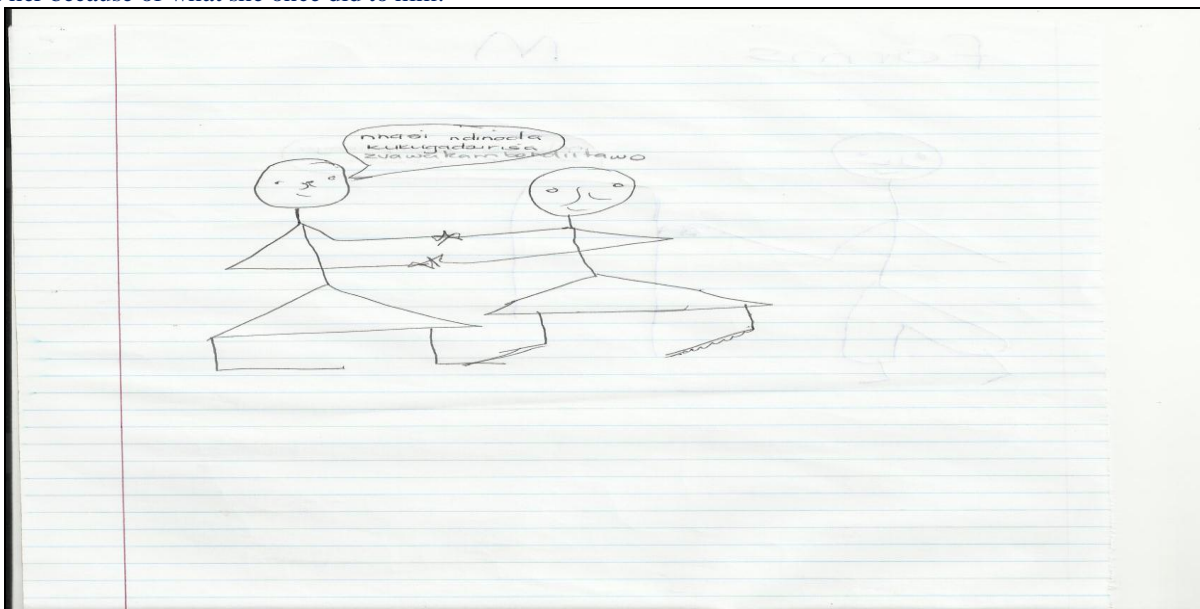


Fig. 1. Female students fighting as a way of revenging

Two participants believed that peer pressure also contributed to violent behaviour among students. In her fgd, student N said, *'Chinonetsa vamwe vedu ndechekuti vanoda kutevedzera zvinoitwa nevamwe kunyangwe zvakaipa'*. Student N was saying that some students have a tendency of imitating what is done by their colleagues no matter how bad it is. From the discussions it was noted that peer pressure forces students to be involved in violent behaviour so as to be accepted by others. In her drawing (figure 2), student N shows two male students who are drinking alcohol and smoking and are saying;

'Huyai veduwe tipute mbanje hazvina basa'

'Huyai veduwe timwe doro hazvina basa'

These two students are inviting other two fellow students to drink and smoke with them, as though everything was acceptable within the school environment.

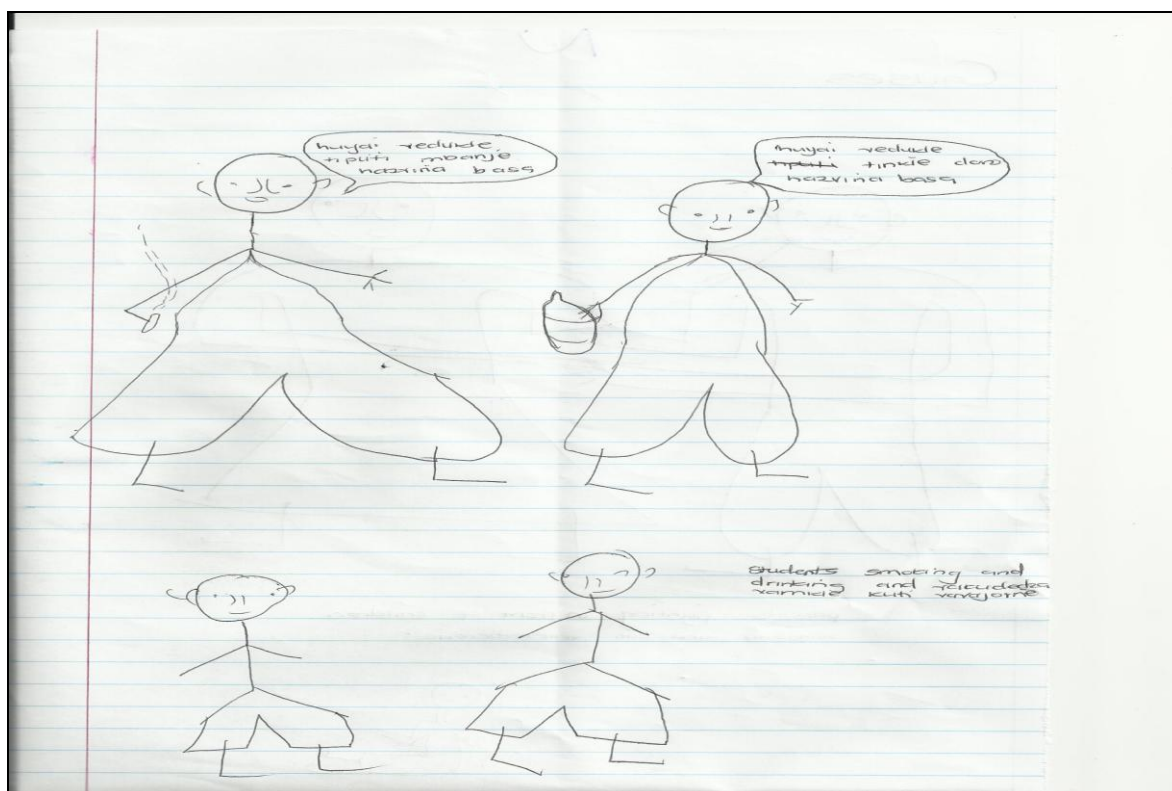


Fig. 2: Male students drinking and smoking in the presence of other students

Four participants agreed that the school system contributes to violent behaviour among students.

Some school factors under the following themes; humiliating remarks by teachers, shortage of furniture and too much work by the teachers were some of the causes. Student B had a drawing of a teacher making humiliating remarks towards a student in front of the whole class (fig. 3). The teacher in figure 3 is saying;

'Wakakodzera kugara musango nekuti unaita semhuka Lizzie'

On translation, the teacher is saying that as a result of an incorrect answer given by Lizzie in class, she is just like an animal fit to stay in the forest. During the focus group discussions students explained that such humiliating remarks embarrass them. They get angry and develop the feeling of fighting back. Such comments make students feel insecure and emotionally unstable. They argued that they would never want to contribute anything in class in fear of such comments. During break time other students at times further laugh at the victim, like Lizzie. Such behaviours usually end up with students fighting. Therefore, inappropriate jokes and comments by teachers spark off frustrations resulting in violent behaviours.

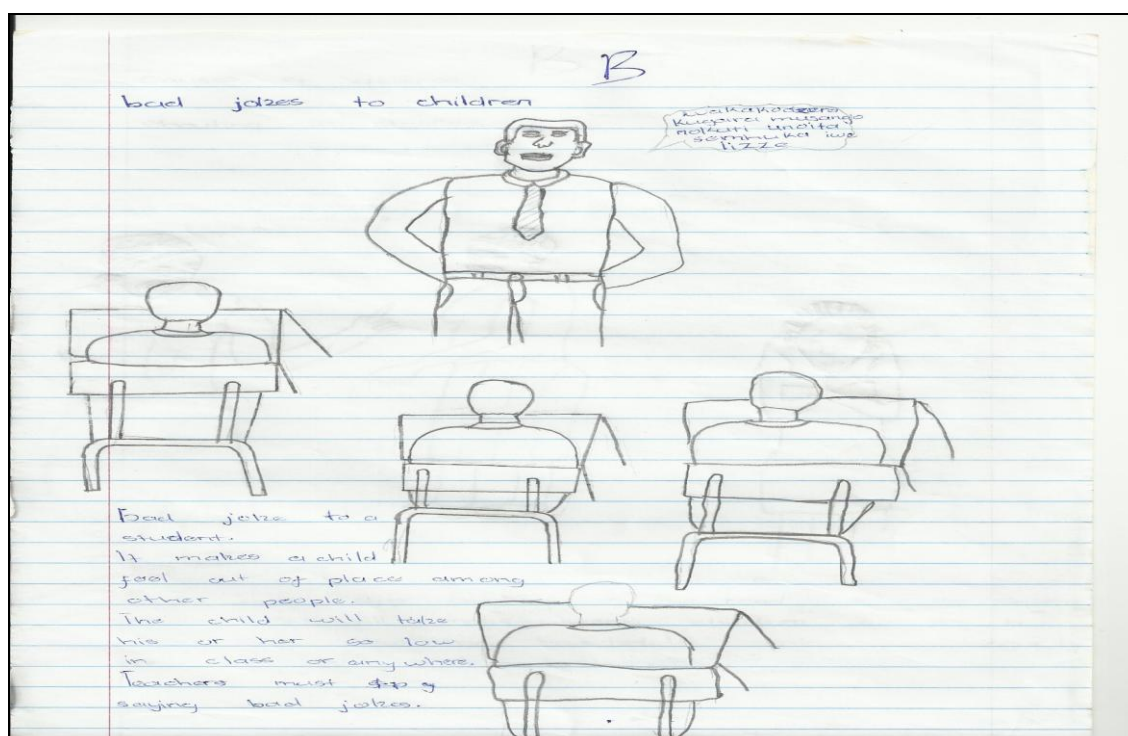


Fig. 3: Teacher joking in front of the class

Two participants admitted to have engaged in a physical fight as they scrambled for inadequate chairs and desks (fig. 4). Student I had this to say; *'Unenge watanga kuzviwanira chair yako umwe munhu oya achikutorera munobva matukana mogona kupedzesera magwa'*.

The participant was saying that one comes to school early in the morning in order to secure a chair to use for the day, because they are not enough. When you get one, some bully students sometimes forcibly take away the chairs from others resulting in exchange of harsh words which can deteriorate into fist fighting. Most of the participants agreed that furniture was a problem in the school such that every morning one has to come to school very early so as to secure a chair and a desk. The problem arises when someone comes and claims that it was his or her chair. It was during this time that students would begin to shout at each other or even fight with each other as said by student I during the focus group discussions.

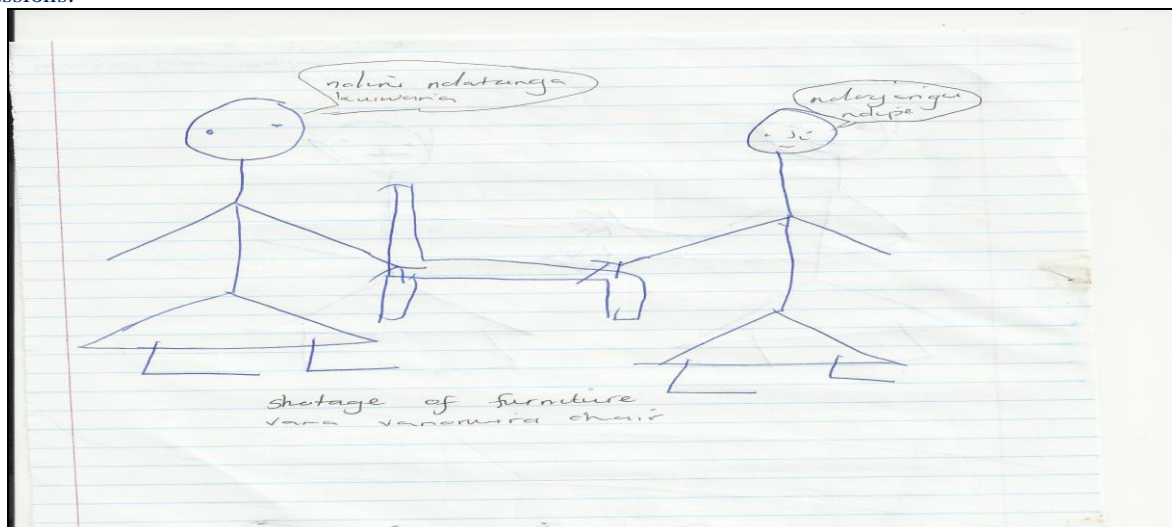


Fig. 4: Female students quarrelling over a chair

Student M had a drawing of a teacher (not shown in this article) giving too much work to the students. During the focus group discussions participant indicated that too much work created mental stress, and frustration. It is this stress that resulted in one fighting with others, especially if the work is difficult and emotionally draining.

According to participant C, boys had a tendency of verbally and sometimes physically abuse girls who could have turned down their love proposals. This was driven by sheer jealousy or hatred as they do not normally expect to be turned down or resisted. In most cases if a girl asked for assistance from the boy whose love proposal she once turned down, that would give the boy opportunity to revenge violently against the girl as shown in figure 5. The girl is asking for a pen from the boy. The reply from the boy is "shut up, why did you leave your home without a pen?"

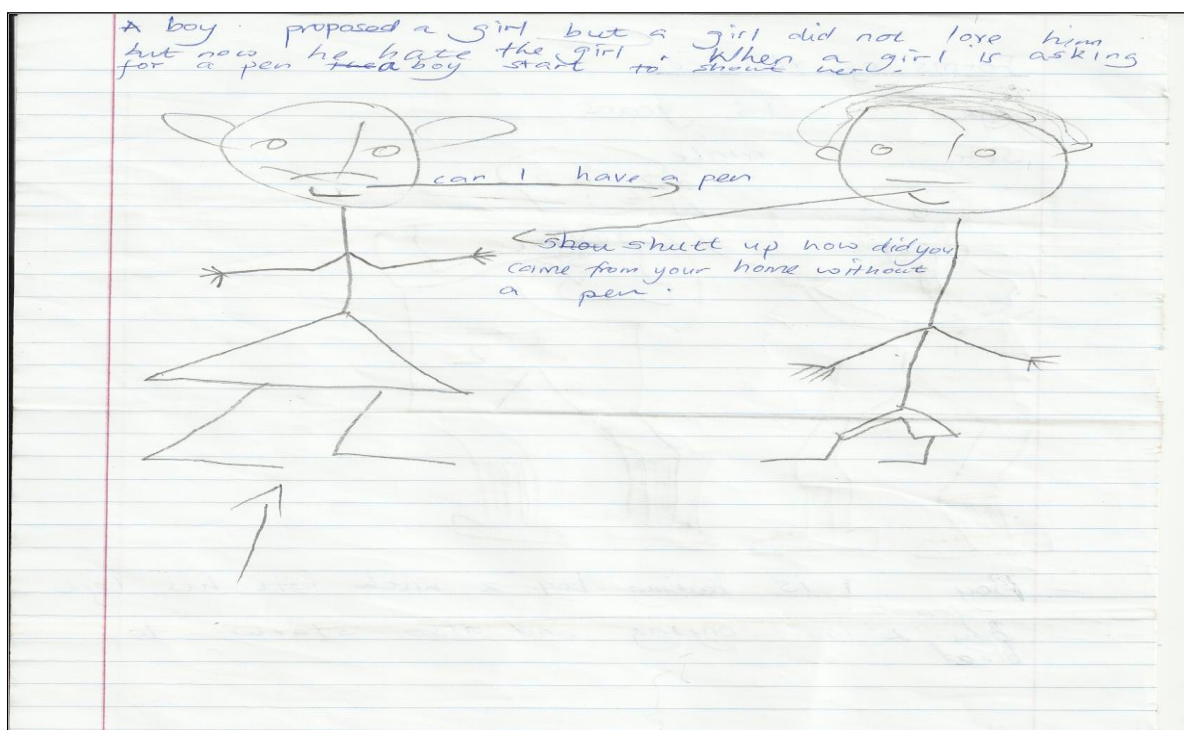


Fig 5: Male student shouting angrily towards the female student

Eleven participants (73%) were of the view that the home environment contributes to violent behaviour among students. The majority of the participants argued that witnessing violence in the neighbourhood had a great effect in shaping one's behaviour. This was followed by those who pointed out witnessing parents fighting, as this contributes to violent behaviour. Some of the participants had drawings which pointed out harsh parental discipline, watching violent movies and parents' abuse of alcohol and drugs as also contributing factors to violent behaviour among students.

Two participants (13%) had drawings on harsh parental discipline as causation of violent behaviour among students. When asked to explain her diagram, student A said the following;

‘.....kumba kwatinobva ukashandisa chimwe chinhu sekuti sugar ikapera wobva warohwa kana kutukwa unenge wabva wakatsamwa kumba zvokuti ukadenhwa zvokuwedzera hashwa wobva warovana nevamwe’.

Student A was saying that at home parents beat or shout at them over petty issues like shortage of basic foodstuffs such as sugar to the extent that by the time they go to school they would be mentally depressed which could result in violent behaviour if they fail to contain their anger. Student M also pointed out that their parents were always shouting at them such that they would end up not knowing what is expected of them so as to please them (fig. 6). From the findings above it seems the students who were exposed to this kind of situation were affected in such a way that even if they go to school they would still have that bitterness within them that would make them project their aggression towards other students.

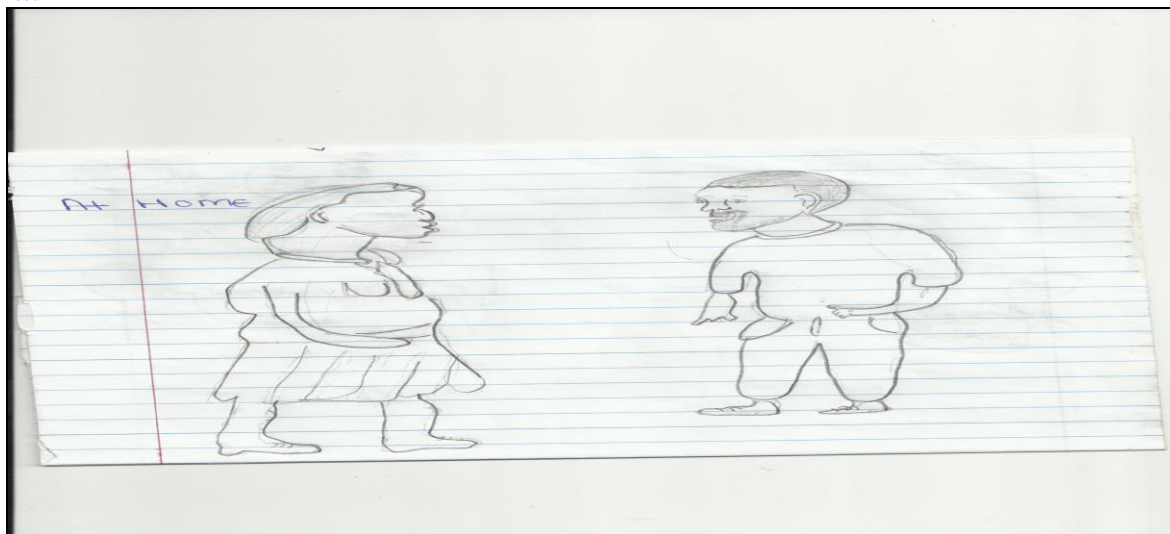


Fig. 6: Father shouting angrily at his daughter

Five participants (33%) believed that witnessing violence in the neighbourhood contributed to violent behaviour among students. Violence in the neighbourhood ranged from people shouting angrily at each other to street fighting. During focus group discussions, participants pointed out that they came from the community where fighting, shouting at each other and use of vulgar language was common.

Student A and C had drawings of two people fighting (not shown) while bystanders were encouraging them to fight so as to resolve their differences. Student O had a drawing of people fighting in the street while students were on their way to school. Student B had a drawing (fig. 7) which shows two women shouting using vulgar language at each other in the presence of a school girl who was passing by. Students L and O had drawings showing people fighting in the street in the presence of students. During the focus group discussions the participants explaining the meanings of their drawings, said that if students were exposed to that kind of behaviour they would tend to view violence as the appropriate manner to resolve conflicts. Student A had this to say; *‘Unogona kupinda muroad wonzwa vanhu vachitukana iwe wozoshandisa mashoko acho kutuka vamwe kuchikoro’*. The participant was saying that when they move around in the neighbourhood they always hear people using vulgar language and they would get accustomed to the situation to the extent that they use the same language at school against other students

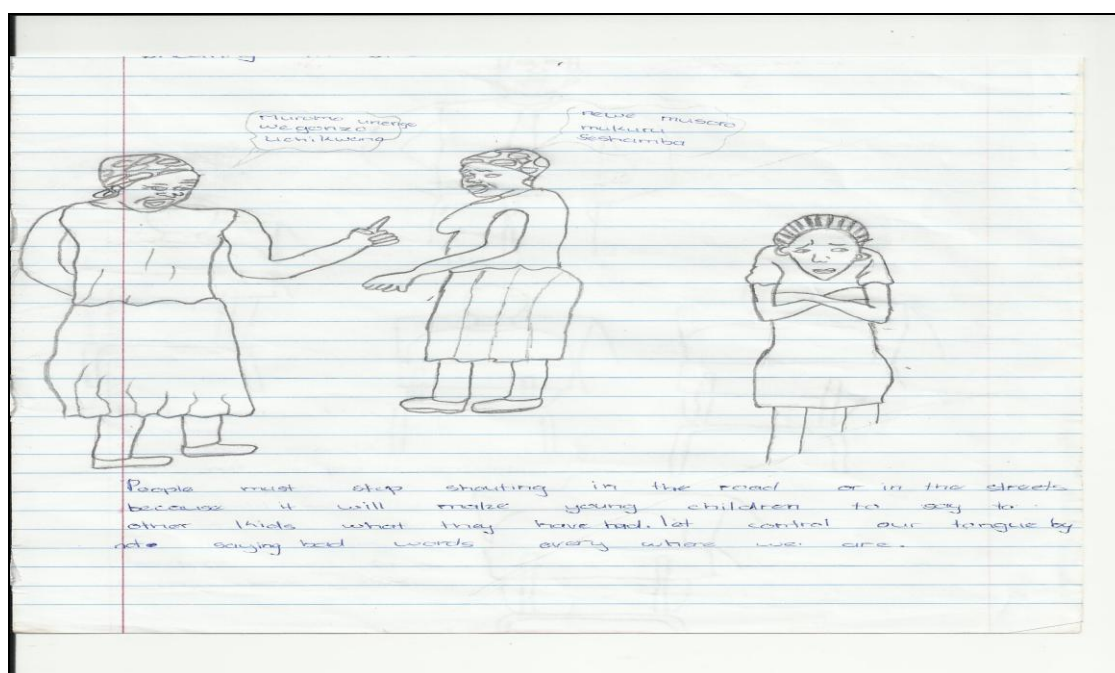


Fig. 7: Women shouting using vulgar language at each other in front of a school girl

Student C and E were of the view that television programs like violent movies and wrestling also contributed to violent behaviour among students. Student C had a drawing of a boy watching a violent movie (Fig. 8) while student E had a drawing of a boy watching wrestling on television. Student E went on to draw the same boy practicing what he had

seen on television on another student. The following is an extract from the focus group discussions on what one participant said regarding watching violent movies;

'Mwana akaona vanhu vachirwa paTV iye anouya kuchikoro otevedzera.'

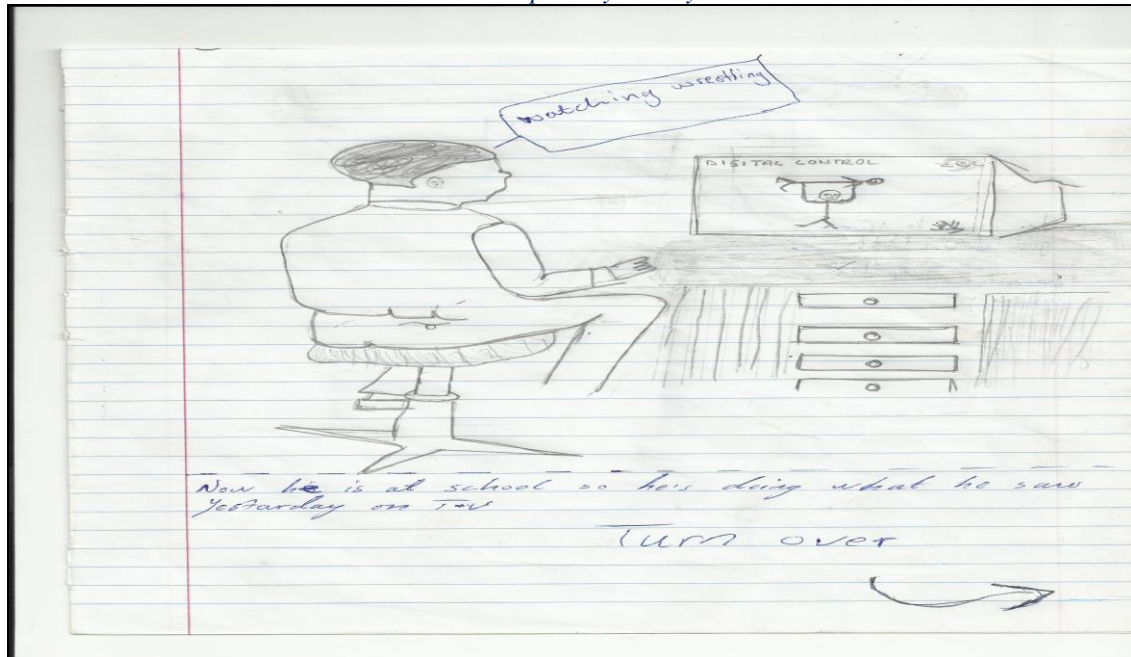


Fig. 8: Student watching wrestling show on television

On translation, the participant was simply saying that sometimes they are involved in violent behaviour because they would be imitating what they could have watched on television.

Four participants had drawings showing parents fighting in the presence of their children (fig. 9). Hence these participants were saying that this might result in students exhibiting same violent behaviour. Participant C said the following; *'Vana vakaona vabereki vachirwa zvinovaitisa hashu zvekuti vakadenhwa kuchikoro vanoita hashu vorwa.'* Student C was saying if students witness their parents fighting at home, they became emotionally unstable to the extent that they would direct their anger to other students at the slightest provocation.

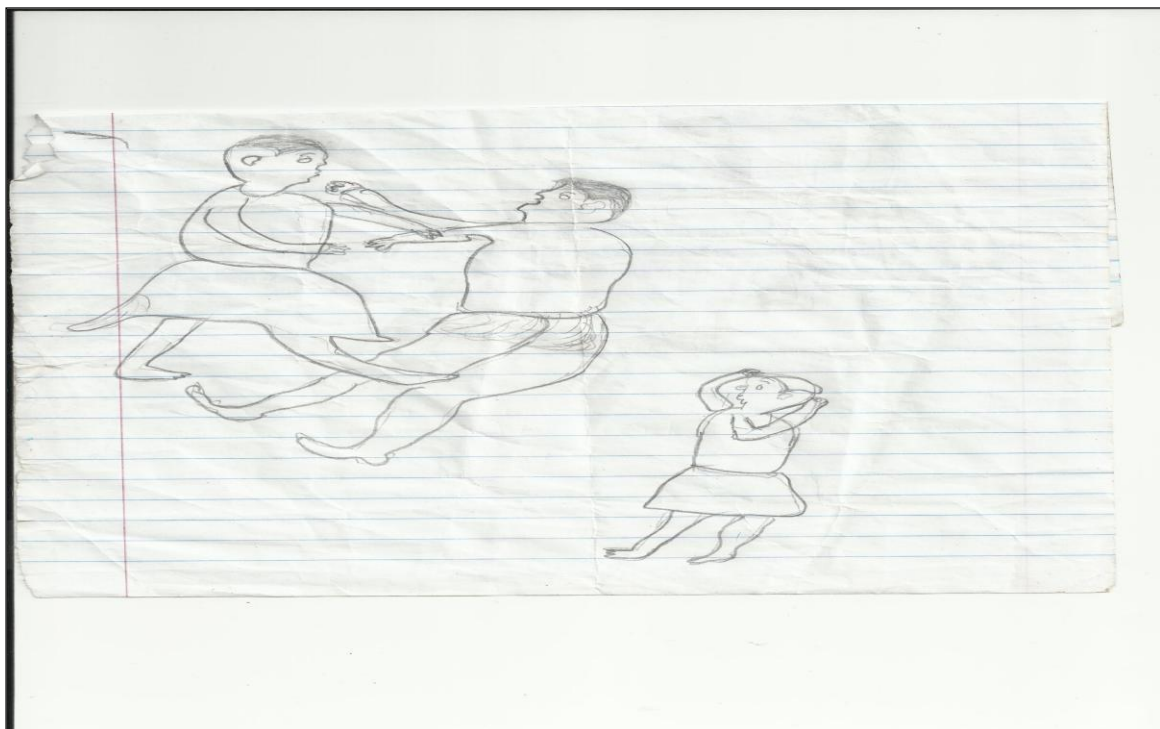


Fig. 9: Parents fighting in the presence of their child

All participants retorted that seeing their parents verbally or physically fighting has a negative impact on them as this disturbed them even when they are at school. This kind of situation usually results in students being stressed up and leads to aggressive behaviour towards others at school.

Two participants (13%) mentioned drug and alcohol abuse by parents as contributing to their violent behaviour. The participants pointed out that drug and alcohol abuse is often accompanied with violent behaviours. Student J said that when his father was drunk he would be violent towards all family members including his mother. Student J went on to say that it terribly annoyed him when he saw his father shouting angrily towards his mother over what he called 'silly' things. This participant said that these experiences affected him even at school such that he might end up vandalising school property and shouting at others as a way of venting out his rage.

Student D pointed out that if students live with parents who abuse drugs and alcohol they might also end up abusing them as they would be readily available to them. Due to the effects of drugs and alcohol, such students ended up fighting with others at school and vandalising school property.

5.0. Discussion

5.1 Learner related factors

Causes of violent behaviour were classified into learner related; home related and school related factors. Under learner related causes, three were mentioned, namely student peer pressure, revenging and alcohol & drug abuse. Students who watched others drink and smoke might end up modelling the behaviour of their peers as Bandura (cited in Gasa, 2005) argued. Stevens (cited in Gasa, 2005) purports that children learn certain behaviours from their peers, good or bad. Imitation is common among the children, the youth and their peers. A young person who behaves out of the norm is usually 'thrown' out of the group, by design or by default. Therefore other young people end up following peers blindly as a result of some peer pressure. Schools were encouraged to have some peer educator groups focusing on positive life issues (Gudyanga, Matamba & Gudyanga, 2014). During secondary school life, peer life is critical in shaping behaviours. The more positive living peers have, the better it is for the other peer student.

During the focus group discussion, it was reported that one student was involved in a fight with another student because he wanted to revenge what had happened to him. Bester and Plessis (2010) indicated that retaliation against provocation and bullying at school may lead to violence. This can be explained by the Freudian process in the instinct theory whereby one employs a defence mechanism of displacement (Gasa, 2005). This may be referred to as kick the cat phenomenon which refers to the situation where an individual is frustrated but cannot retaliate against the person causing the frustration but might attack the next person. In this case, the student might attack the next weaker person as a way of retaliating. Hence there is need for the teachers to help violent students to resolve their difficulties through discussion rather than aggression. Weaker students including females must have policies to that effect. Parents must help in the implementation and execution of such protective policies or else students will hate school life.

Alcohol and drug abuse were mentioned as factors that contribute to violent behaviour among students. One of the participants confessed that he was involved in a fight because he was under the influence of alcohol and the participants were of the view that alcohol and drugs have negative effects on them. These findings compliment those of Reddington (2007) who highlighted that there is a relationship between alcohol and drug abuse and antisocial behaviours. From the findings it seems that alcohol affect students in such a way that they will not be in a position to make decisions and might end up being violent. It is the responsibility of both school teachers and parents, to work in liaison and curb alcohol and drug abuse for the benefit of the learners, whose future requires serious guidance.

5.2 School related factors

A participant had a drawing of a teacher making unwanted comments about a certain student in front of the whole class. The participants pointed out that if teachers make humiliating remarks about the learners, the learners would get angry but their problem is that they may or may not retaliate against the teacher. Due to their frustration, they may be forced to act violently towards other students who may make any unwelcome behaviour towards the grieved as a way of relieving their anger. This might also be explained by the same Freudian kick the cat phenomenon. The curriculum for pre-service training of teachers should train teachers in such a way that they will be sensitive to the feelings of the students and they will avoid comments that humiliate students. Good morals like respect of each other must be the culture of schools. It is mainly the responsibility of school heads to set such ethos in the school. Teachers are the *loco parentis*. Love and belongingness cannot be separated. School liking and school achievement are inter-related hence teachers have a critical role to play.

Shortage of furniture as a school related factor was highlighted as a contributory factor to violent behaviour. Most of the participants during the focus group discussion agreed that furniture is a problem in the school; hence students have to scramble for the few chairs or else would spend the whole day learning while standing. The findings seem to suggest that it was during the time when the students tried to secure chairs that in most cases resulted in students quarrelling and fist fighting. Thus, there is need for the school administration to look into this matter and make sure that there is enough furniture in the schools. Those in the school administration should discuss the problem of shortage of furniture with the parents so that they will make a plan together in order to secure enough furniture for the students.

Too much work was pointed out as contributing to violent behaviour. During the focus group discussion participants pointed out that too much work create mental pressure on them such that sometimes it becomes difficult for them to contain it. The frustration-aggression theory explains such behaviours. Frustrated people react with anger and aggression. Consequently being unable to withstand the pressure may result in the students shouting and fighting with innocent students unintentionally. The ability of the students should be considered by the teachers before they give students some work so that learning remains interesting and meaningful to them. School work must be moderately challenging. The work which is too difficulty discourages learners from attempting it. It is imperative that students need intrinsic motivation if they are to perform well academically. The probability of passing must give the incentive to the learner to tackle the work in the shortest possible time. There must be some time left for the student to do even other constructive school activities.

5.3 Home related factors

The majority of the participants were of the view that the home environment contributes to violent behaviour among students. Witnessing violence in the neighbourhood has a great effect in one's life. Paterson (2012) argues that the community in which the learners come from might contribute to violent behaviour. Most participants during the focus group discussion reported that fighting, shouting angrily at each other and the use of vulgar language is common in the neighbourhood. Hence figure 7 shows women exchanging vulgar words in front of the female student. Some of the

participants pointed out that if people are fighting in the streets others would just be watching them without making any effort to intervene. This might also show that they believe this is the best way to resolve differences, a situation which can be modelled by students at school.

More research findings suggest that students display violent acts because they are partly exposed to it and they now perceive this form of behaviour as normal. Ruchkin et al (2008) reported high levels of antisocial behaviour and willingness to use physical aggression. It is possible that they consider this kind of behaviour as normal because they have been used to it. Bandura's social learning theory provides a link between exposure to community violence and later development of aggressive behaviour. The theory states that one can learn by observing the behaviour of others. Thus those students who will have been exposed to violence in the neighbourhood will become violent simply by observing the behaviours of others Bandura, (cited in Lahey, 2008). There is need for the school to desensitize such exposure among students during guidance and counselling lessons when they discuss topics that are related to violence. The head of school has the capacity to utilize assembly times to address the whole school. School Development Associations' meetings of parents can be utilised also to discuss student violent issues with the hope to produce resolutions.

Harsh parental discipline was observed as another contributing factor. Participants reported that their parents always shout at them and created ill-feelings toward parents such that they do not know what to do. It seems the students who were exposed to this kind of situation will be affected in such a way that they might end up being violent towards other students at school. This as well can be explained by the Freudian kick the cat phenomenon explained above. Students therefore need to be taught how to manage anger. The law enforcement agents like the police may also be invited into the schools to give lectures on what the law says about violence and how to resolve and manage conflicts.

Violent movies and wrestling on television programs were mentioned as contributing factors to violent behaviour among students. The participants during the focus group discussion were saying they will be imitating what they watch on television, thus in the process will act violently towards other students. Exposure to violent films contributes to violent behaviour (Poipoi et al, 2011). Bandura's social learning theory pointed out that one can learn to be aggressive through imitating. In this case the television shows act as models. Entertainment shows like wrestling make young minds crazy hence they will be prone to imitate the movies on their friends (Harris, 2013).

The participants reported that it is distressing for them to witness episodes of domestic violence such as father striking the mother. Barbour (2011) and Paterson (2012) pointed out that children who are exposed to violence at home will model that behaviour. A child who is exposed to violence at home may learn to be violent simply by constantly witnessing parents fighting. It seems that children who are exposed to violence may want to retaliate but are powerless hence this might result in the child reacting violently. This might suggest that the child was at risk of becoming aggressive. There is need for the parents to be taught about the effects of violence that is exhibited at home to the child. The school may engage parents or guardians through meetings and workshops in an attempt to adopt collaborative initiatives towards reduction or elimination of violent incidences.

Alcohol and drug abuse by parents were observed as another contributing factor to their violent behaviour. The participants reported that if parents abuse drugs and alcohol this affects them. The fighting parents will project their violence towards all family members. It seems that these students will become violent because it will be the only way to express their anger. Parental drug and alcohol abuse affect the development of the child and might influence the child to become drug users themselves Hogan, (1998 cited in Paterson, 2012). If the student is frustrated by the behaviour of his or her parents when drunk this will increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour and the student will end up being violent at other students as a way of relieving himself or herself of anger.

6.0 Conclusions

Violent behaviour is a common problem in the school where the research was conducted. Fighting was the most common form of violence that was exhibited by the majority of the students. Causes of violent behaviour were learner related, school related and home related. Witnessing violence in the neighbourhood observed as contributing factor to violent behaviour among students. Witnessing parents fighting was said to be creating problems for the entire family hence violence may become an acceptable response to deal with a threatening situation. Parents abuse of alcohol and drugs, watching violent movies and harsh parental discipline were some of the home related causes that contribute to violent behaviour among students. Overwhelming school work, inappropriate jokes by the teachers and shortage of furniture were school related factors which contributed to violent behaviour among students. Strong discipline by the school head and parents, introduction of guidance and counselling lessons, involvement of the police and indoctrinating culture of remorse were recommended as mechanisms to reduce violence in the school.

The hands-on activity by the students as they drew the causes of violence, the doing itself, is an intervention (De Lange, 2008). The participants were actively involved in knowledge generation. When they interrogated their drawings and further reflected on them, such action taken has a probability of bringing about a social change and creating a context for prevention and elimination of violence tendencies in someone as they engage through the visual participatory methodology.

The study was limited to one school, hence more studies can be done which includes more schools in order to generalise the findings to a larger scale.

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