

**Relationship Between Physical Violence And Academic Performance Of Girls In Secondary Schools In  
Namayumba Town Council.**

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**Abstract**

The study investigated the relationship between physical violence and academic performance of girls in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council. The research employed a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches. A sample of 303 respondents was selected from a target population of 1,293, comprising female students, school principals, guidance counsellors, and teachers. Data collection utilized questionnaires and interviews, with stratified random sampling applied for students and teachers, and purposive sampling for principals and counsellors. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between physical violence exposure and academic performance among female students. Forms of physical violence including corporal punishment, peer violence, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence were significantly associated with poor academic outcomes manifested through low grades, absenteeism, concentration difficulties, and school dropout. The study found that 68.4% of female students had experienced some form of physical violence, with corporal punishment being most prevalent at 52.7%, followed by peer violence at 38.5%. Girls who experienced frequent physical violence scored on average 23.6% lower on academic assessments compared to those who experienced no violence. Psychological effects including anxiety, fear, depression, and low self-esteem mediated the relationship between violence and academic performance. The study concluded that physical violence constituted a significant barrier to girls' educational achievement in Namayumba secondary schools. Recommendations included implementing comprehensive anti-violence policies, establishing reporting and response mechanisms, providing psychosocial support services, training teachers in positive discipline alternatives, and strengthening community engagement in violence prevention.

**Keywords: Physical violence, academic performance, girls' education, secondary schools, corporal punishment, peer violence, intimate partner violence, Namayumba Town Council**

**1.0 Background of the Study**

Physical violence against girls in educational settings represented a pervasive global challenge that undermined efforts to achieve gender equality and quality education (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women established legal frameworks protecting children from violence and ensuring girls' rights to education (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). In Uganda, the Constitution (1995), the Children Act (1997), and the Education Act (2008) prohibited violence against children and guaranteed the right to education. Despite these legal protections, physical violence against girls in

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schools remained widespread, compromising their safety, wellbeing, and educational outcomes (Julius & Audrey, 2025).

Physical violence in educational contexts encompassed corporal punishment by teachers and school authorities, peer-to-peer violence including bullying and fighting, intimate partner violence in school-based relationships, and domestic violence extending into the school environment (Anthony et al., 2023). Each form of violence produced distinct and overlapping impacts on girls' physical health, psychological wellbeing, and academic engagement (Julius & Nancy, 2025a). Academic performance, measured through examination results, class attendance, classroom participation, and progression rates, served as a critical indicator of educational quality and student achievement (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a).

Namayumba Town Council, located in Wakiso District in central Uganda, hosted multiple secondary schools serving diverse communities. These schools enrolled substantial numbers of female students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. While education policies promoted girls' education and gender parity in school enrollment, concerns about violence against female students persisted (Mark et al., 2023). Reports from schools, parents, and civil society organizations indicated that girls experienced various forms of physical violence that potentially affected their learning outcomes (Moses, 2023).

The relationship between physical violence and academic performance operated through multiple pathways. Physical injuries from violence caused pain and disability that interfered with school attendance and concentration (Julius & Kazaara, 2025b). Psychological trauma including fear, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disrupted cognitive functioning and learning capacity. Social consequences such as stigma, isolation, and relationship difficulties affected girls' sense of belonging and engagement with school (Julius & Desire, 2025). Understanding how physical violence influenced academic performance was essential for developing effective interventions to protect girls and enhance educational outcomes (Julius & Desire, 2025). This study therefore examined the relationship between physical violence and academic performance of girls in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council, documenting violence prevalence, forms, and impacts on educational achievement.

## **2.0 Problem Statement**

Secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council enrolled increasing numbers of girls, reflecting progress toward gender parity in education access (Julius, 2025). However, academic performance indicators suggested that many female students underperformed relative to their potential, with high rates of examination failure, class repetition, and school dropout (Victor et al., 2023). While multiple factors influenced academic performance, emerging evidence suggested that physical violence constituted a significant but inadequately addressed barrier to girls' educational achievement (Julius & Nancy, 2025a).

Girls in Namayumba secondary schools reportedly experienced corporal punishment from teachers, physical bullying from peers, violence in intimate relationships with male students, and domestic violence that extended into their school

lives (Victor et al., 2023). These experiences potentially caused physical injuries, psychological trauma, and emotional distress that interfered with learning processes. However, violence against girls in schools remained largely hidden, with limited reporting due to fear, stigma, and lack of effective response mechanisms (Moses, 2023).

The disconnect between education policies promoting girls' education and persistent violence in school environments raised critical questions about how physical violence affected girls' academic outcomes (Julius & Nancy, 2025a). School administrators, teachers, and education officials lacked comprehensive evidence on violence prevalence, forms, and impacts on academic performance. Without such evidence, schools could not develop targeted interventions to prevent violence and support affected students (Kazaara & Deus, 2024). The absence of systematic research on this issue in Namayumba Town Council limited evidence-based policy and practice (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). This study therefore investigated the relationship between physical violence and academic performance of girls in Namayumba secondary schools, examining violence prevalence and forms, documenting impacts on academic outcomes, and identifying mechanisms through which violence affected learning and achievement.

### **3.0 Main Objective**

To examine the relationship between physical violence and academic performance of girls in secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council.

### **4.0 Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively investigate the relationship between physical violence and academic performance. The research was conducted in five secondary schools in Namayumba Town Council, Wakiso District, Uganda. The schools included both government-aided and private institutions serving diverse student populations (Aslam et al., 2022).

The target population consisted of 1,293 individuals categorized into four stakeholder groups: female students in Senior 1 through Senior 6, school principals/headteachers, guidance counsellors, and teachers from science and humanities departments. A sample size of 303 respondents was determined using both stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques (Abiodun et al., 2022).

Stratified random sampling was applied to select 275 female students from a population of 1,250. Students were stratified by class level (S1-S6) to ensure proportional representation across all secondary education years (Nafiu et al., 2017). Random selection within each stratum ensured that every student had equal probability of inclusion. Stratified random sampling was also used to select 17 teachers from a population of 20, stratified by department (science and humanities) to capture perspectives from different subject areas (George Stanley & Nafiu, 2020). School support staff (12 individuals) were excluded from the sample as the study focused on stakeholders directly involved in academic processes (Anwar et al., 2022).

Purposive sampling was utilized to select all 5 school principals/headteachers and all 6 guidance counsellors due to their specialized knowledge about student welfare, discipline practices, and academic performance patterns. These

key informants provided institutional perspectives and policy-level insights unavailable from larger respondent categories (Nafiu, 2012).

Data collection employed two primary research instruments. Structured questionnaires were administered to female students and teachers, containing closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items measuring variables including violence exposure (types, frequency, perpetrators), academic performance indicators (grades, attendance, participation), psychological effects, reporting behaviors, and support mechanisms (Nafiu, 2012). Semi-structured interview guides were used with school principals and guidance counsellors to explore in-depth perspectives on violence prevalence, school policies, response mechanisms, and observed impacts on academic performance (Lydia et al., 2023).

Quantitative data from questionnaires were coded, entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, cleaned for errors, and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, independent samples t-tests, and multiple regression analysis) to determine relationships between violence exposure and academic performance variables (Nelson et al., 2022). Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded thematically using deductive codes derived from research objectives and inductive codes emerging from data, and analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and contextual factors explaining quantitative findings.

Ethical considerations were paramount given the sensitive nature of violence research involving minors. Research approval was obtained from relevant education authorities and school management. Informed consent was secured from school administrators, teachers, and counsellors. For students, informed assent was obtained along with parental consent for those under 18 years. Participation was voluntary with rights to withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality was strictly maintained through anonymous questionnaires and coded interview transcripts. Referral mechanisms to school counsellors and external support services were established for participants disclosing violence experiences requiring intervention.

## **5.0 Results and Discussion**

### **5.1 Respondent Characteristics**

The study successfully collected data from 303 respondents across four stakeholder categories in Namayumba Town Council secondary schools. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Target Population (N)</b>	<b>Sample Size (n)</b>	<b>Response Rate (%)</b>
Female Students (S1-S6)	1,250	275	100.0
School Principals/Headteachers	5	5	100.0
Guidance Counsellors	6	6	100.0
Teachers (Science & Humanities)	20	17	85.0

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School Support Staff	12	0	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,293</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>97.7</b>

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The overall response rate of 97.7% (excluding support staff who were not sampled) was exceptionally high, reflecting strong cooperation from schools and participants. Female students, principals, and counsellors achieved 100% response rates, while teachers recorded 85.0% participation. The high response rates enhanced the reliability and generalizability of findings within the study context.

### 5.2 Prevalence and Forms of Physical Violence

Female students were asked about their experiences with different forms of physical violence. Table 2 summarizes the prevalence findings.

Table 2: Prevalence of Physical Violence Among Female Students (n=275)

Form of Physical Violence	Ever Experienced	Frequency in Past Term		
		Never	Sometimes	Often
	n (%)			
Corporal punishment by teachers	145 (52.7%)	130 (47.3%)	98 (35.6%)	47 (17.1%)
Physical bullying by peers	106 (38.5%)	169 (61.5%)	79 (28.7%)	27 (9.8%)
Intimate partner violence	58 (21.1%)	217 (78.9%)	42 (15.3%)	16 (5.8%)
Domestic violence affecting school	73 (26.5%)	202 (73.5%)	54 (19.6%)	19 (6.9%)
<b>Any form of physical violence</b>	<b>188 (68.4%)</b>	<b>87 (31.6%)</b>	<b>124 (45.1%)</b>	<b>64 (23.3%)</b>

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Results revealed that 68.4% of female students had experienced at least one form of physical violence, indicating widespread violence exposure. Corporal punishment by teachers was most prevalent, with 52.7% of students reporting such experiences. Physical bullying by peers affected 38.5% of students, while domestic violence impacting school life affected 26.5%, and intimate partner violence affected 21.1%. Regarding frequency, 23.3% of students experienced violence often during the previous term, while 45.1% experienced it sometimes. These findings demonstrated that physical violence was a common experience for girls in Namayumba secondary schools, occurring across multiple contexts and perpetrators.

### 5.3 Academic Performance Indicators

Academic performance was assessed through multiple indicators including examination scores, attendance records, and self-reported academic engagement. Table 3 presents academic performance data disaggregated by violence exposure.

Table 3: Academic Performance by Violence Exposure Status

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Performance Indicator	No Violence (n=87)	Any Violence (n=188)	Difference
Average exam score (%)	64.8 ± 12.3	49.5 ± 15.7	-15.3%
Attendance rate (%)	91.2 ± 6.4	78.6 ± 14.2	-12.6%
Class participation (1-5 scale)	3.8 ± 0.9	2.7 ± 1.1	-1.1
Days missed per term	4.2 ± 2.8	11.7 ± 8.3	+7.5 days
Considered dropping out (%)	12.6%	47.3%	+34.7%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Significant differences in academic performance emerged between students who experienced violence and those who did not. Students experiencing violence scored on average 15.3 percentage points lower on examinations (49.5% vs 64.8%), had attendance rates 12.6 percentage points lower (78.6% vs 91.2%), and missed 7.5 more days per term. Class participation ratings were substantially lower for violence-exposed students (2.7 vs 3.8 on a 5-point scale). Critically, 47.3% of students experiencing violence had considered dropping out of school compared to only 12.6% of non-exposed students, suggesting violence contributed significantly to school dropout risk.

#### 5.4 Relationship Between Violence Frequency and Academic Performance

To examine dose-response relationships, academic performance was analyzed across violence frequency categories. Table 4 presents these findings.

Table 4: Academic Performance by Violence Frequency

Performance Measure	Never (n=87)	Sometimes (n=124)	Often (n=64)	F-statistic	p-value
Average exam score (%)	64.8 ± 12.3	52.1 ± 14.2	41.2 ± 15.9	F=47.32	p<0.001
Attendance rate (%)	91.2 ± 6.4	81.4 ± 12.1	71.8 ± 15.7	F=39.18	p<0.001
Class participation	3.8 ± 0.9	2.9 ± 1.0	2.2 ± 1.1	F=42.65	p<0.001

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Analysis of variance revealed significant relationships between violence frequency and all academic performance indicators. Students who experienced violence often scored 23.6 percentage points lower on examinations compared to those who never experienced violence (41.2% vs 64.8%). Attendance rates showed similar patterns, declining from 91.2% among non-exposed students to 71.8% among those frequently exposed (Nelson et al., 2023). Class participation demonstrated a clear gradient across violence frequency categories. All relationships were statistically significant at p<0.001, demonstrating strong dose-response patterns where more frequent violence exposure associated with progressively worse academic outcomes.

#### 5.5 Psychological Mediators of Violence-Performance Relationship

The study examined psychological effects of violence that potentially mediated impacts on academic performance. Table 5 summarizes these findings.

Table 5: Psychological Effects Among Violence-Exposed Students (n=188)

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Psychological Effect	Frequently (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Fear and anxiety at school	58.5	31.4	10.1
Difficulty concentrating	62.2	28.7	9.0
Depression and sadness	45.7	36.2	18.1
Low self-esteem	52.1	32.4	15.4
Sleep disturbances	41.0	38.8	20.2
Feelings of helplessness	48.4	33.5	18.1

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Among students exposed to violence, psychological effects were widespread. Difficulty concentrating was most prevalent, with 62.2% experiencing it frequently and 28.7% sometimes. Fear and anxiety affected 58.5% frequently, while 52.1% experienced low self-esteem frequently. Depression, feelings of helplessness, and sleep disturbances affected over 40% of violence-exposed students frequently. These psychological effects directly compromised cognitive functioning, motivation, and learning capacity, explaining pathways through which violence influenced academic performance.

### 5.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships between violence exposure, psychological effects, and academic performance. Table 6 presents correlation coefficients.

Table 6: Correlations Between Violence, Psychological Effects, and Academic Performance

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Violence frequency × Exam scores	$r = -0.692$	$p < 0.001$
Violence frequency × Attendance	$r = -0.648$	$p < 0.001$
Violence frequency × Class participation	$r = -0.673$	$p < 0.001$
Psychological effects × Exam scores	$r = -0.714$	$p < 0.001$
Violence frequency × Psychological effects	$r = 0.738$	$p < 0.001$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

All correlations were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Violence frequency showed strong negative correlations with exam scores ( $r = -0.692$ ), attendance ( $r = -0.648$ ), and class participation ( $r = -0.673$ ), confirming that increased violence exposure associated with worse academic performance. Psychological effects showed strong negative correlation with exam scores ( $r = -0.714$ ) and strong positive correlation with violence frequency ( $r = 0.738$ ), supporting the hypothesis that psychological effects mediated the violence-performance relationship.

### 5.7 Reporting and Response Mechanisms

Students were asked about reporting behaviors and institutional responses to violence. Results indicated that only 24.5% of violence-exposed students reported incidents to school authorities, while 38.8% told friends and 19.7% told

family members. The majority (52.7%) never reported their experiences. Primary barriers to reporting included fear of retaliation (cited by 68.1%), belief that nothing would change (59.0%), shame and stigma (51.6%), and lack of knowledge about reporting mechanisms (42.0%).

Among students who reported violence, only 31.8% indicated receiving helpful support from schools. Guidance counsellors in interviews acknowledged inadequate response mechanisms, citing limited training in trauma-informed support, absence of clear protocols, and insufficient resources for victim support. School principals identified policy gaps, with three of five schools lacking comprehensive anti-violence policies despite national policy requirements.

### **5.8 Teacher Perspectives**

Teachers (n=17) provided important perspectives on discipline practices and violence impacts. While 82.4% acknowledged using corporal punishment occasionally, 70.6% believed it was necessary for maintaining discipline despite legal prohibitions. Only 41.2% had received training in alternative discipline methods. Teachers who had received such training were significantly less likely to use corporal punishment ( $\chi^2 = 8.73, p < 0.01$ ).

Regarding violence impacts, 88.2% of teachers agreed that students experiencing violence showed lower academic performance, and 94.1% observed that violence-exposed students had poor concentration. However, only 35.3% felt adequately equipped to support violence-affected students, highlighting capacity gaps in teacher preparation for addressing violence-related educational challenges.

### **6.0 Conclusions**

The study established a significant negative relationship between physical violence and academic performance of girls in Namayumba Town Council secondary schools. Physical violence exposure was widespread, affecting 68.4% of female students through corporal punishment, peer violence, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence extending into school contexts. Violence frequency showed strong negative correlations with academic performance indicators including examination scores, attendance rates, and classroom participation, demonstrating clear dose-response relationships.

Students experiencing frequent violence scored 23.6 percentage points lower on academic assessments compared to non-exposed peers, missed significantly more school days, and were nearly four times more likely to consider dropping out. Psychological effects including anxiety, concentration difficulties, depression, and low self-esteem mediated the relationship between violence and academic performance by compromising cognitive functioning and learning capacity.

Critical gaps in violence prevention and response mechanisms were identified. The majority of violence-exposed students never reported incidents due to fear, stigma, and lack of confidence in institutional responses. Schools lacked comprehensive anti-violence policies, systematic reporting mechanisms, and adequate support services for affected students. Teachers continued using corporal punishment despite legal prohibitions, reflecting inadequate training in alternative discipline methods.

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Physical violence constituted a significant barrier to girls' educational achievement in Namayumba secondary schools, undermining efforts to promote gender equality in education. The findings demonstrated that creating safe, violence-free learning environments was essential for enabling girls to achieve their academic potential.

### **7.0 Recommendations**

Based on research findings, the following recommendations were proposed to address physical violence and improve girls' academic outcomes:

School authorities should develop and implement comprehensive anti-violence policies explicitly prohibiting all forms of physical violence including corporal punishment, peer violence, and intimate partner violence. Policies should specify prohibited behaviors, outline consequences for perpetrators, establish reporting mechanisms, and detail support services for victims. All stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, and community members should participate in policy development to ensure ownership and commitment.

Clear, accessible reporting and response mechanisms should be established in all schools. This should include multiple reporting channels such as suggestion boxes, dedicated counsellors, trusted teachers, and confidential helplines. Schools should widely publicize reporting mechanisms through orientation programs, posters, student handbooks, and regular reminders. Response protocols should ensure prompt investigation, protection of victims from retaliation, appropriate consequences for perpetrators, and referral to support services.

Comprehensive psychosocial support services should be established or strengthened in schools. Guidance and counselling departments should be adequately staffed with trained counsellors capable of providing trauma-informed support. Schools should establish peer support programs where trained student leaders provide initial support to violence-affected peers. Partnerships with external mental health professionals and organizations should be developed for cases requiring specialized intervention beyond school capacity.

Teachers should receive mandatory training in positive discipline alternatives, classroom management without violence, recognizing signs of violence exposure, trauma-informed teaching practices, and referral procedures for supporting affected students. Pre-service teacher education programs should integrate these competencies, while in-service teachers should receive regular professional development. Schools should establish teacher support mechanisms including peer learning communities and mentorship programs focused on violence prevention and positive discipline.

Student empowerment programs should be implemented to build girls' knowledge about their rights, develop assertiveness and self-protection skills, promote peer support networks, and encourage help-seeking behaviors. Life skills education incorporating violence prevention, healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and stress management should be integrated into the curriculum. Student-led clubs and organizations focused on girls' empowerment and violence prevention should be supported.

Community engagement strategies should mobilize parents, local leaders, and community organizations in violence prevention efforts. Parent education programs should address disciplinary practices, recognizing violence impacts, supporting children's education, and reinforcing school anti-violence messages. Community awareness campaigns should challenge cultural norms accepting violence and promote alternative approaches to discipline and conflict resolution.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should strengthen enforcement of existing policies prohibiting corporal punishment and violence in schools. Regular inspections should monitor compliance, and consequences should be applied to schools and individuals violating policies. National monitoring frameworks should track violence prevalence and responses, enabling evidence-based policy refinement.

Academic support interventions should be provided for violence-affected students to mitigate educational impacts. This could include remedial classes, flexible attendance arrangements, individualized learning plans, and temporary academic accommodations while students receive psychosocial support. Early identification systems should flag students showing warning signs of violence exposure for timely intervention.

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