

# The Influence of Gender Centred Aggressiveness on the Academic Performance of Learners: Chishakwe Primary School in Mutare District

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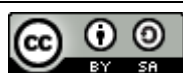
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## Abstract

This qualitative case study aimed to explore the influence of gender-centered aggressiveness on the academic performance of students in a school in Mutare District, Manicaland. A sample of 25 students was selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using interviews, focus group discussions, and the analysis of existing documents. A descriptive approach was applied to analyze the data. The findings revealed that gender-centered aggressiveness negatively impacted students' academic performance, contributing to poor academic outcomes due to disruptions in the learning environment, emotional distress, and decreased engagement in academic activities. Based on these results, the study recommends that the government and educational stakeholders take immediate action to address gender-based aggression in schools through policy development, awareness programs, and the establishment of support systems to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment for all students.

**Keywords:** academic, gender centred aggression, physical, emotional, psychological



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## Introduction

Gender-Centered Aggressiveness (GCA), often termed Gender-Based Violence (GBV), refers to any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm based on gender. While both males and females may experience this violence, it predominantly affects girls and women due to deeply ingrained societal norms and power imbalances. GCA includes physical violence, sexual assault, emotional abuse, verbal harassment, and economic coercion, all of which adversely affect the victims' well-being and opportunities in life. The widespread nature of GCA, occurring in nearly every region and culture, highlights its pervasive influence on the lives of children and adolescents. Although GCA affects both genders, research consistently indicates that

girls are disproportionately impacted, with violence often linked to traditional gender roles that subordinate women and girls within society <sup>1</sup>.

In educational settings, GCA creates an unsafe and hostile learning environment, which significantly impedes students' academic performance. Schools, ideally spaces for intellectual growth, become sites where societal power dynamics manifest, often contributing to a hostile atmosphere for girls. The United Nations (2006) identifies gender-based violence as a major barrier to education, particularly for girls, contributing to poor academic outcomes, absenteeism, emotional trauma, and high dropout rates. The effects of GCA in schools are compounded by the lack of effective prevention and intervention strategies, which leaves many children vulnerable to violence and abuse. The consequences of GCA on education are profound and far-reaching, as they not only disrupt academic engagement but also hinder the personal development and emotional stability of students, affecting their future prospects <sup>2</sup>.

GCA affects children in many parts of the world, including both developed and developing countries. In Bangladesh, for instance, 91% of children reported having experienced physical punishment at school, while in India, over half of children experienced various forms of sexual exploitation <sup>3</sup>. In more developed countries, such as Romania, the situation is equally concerning. A report by Drob <sup>4</sup> revealed that 30% of Romanian children had been affected by physical or sexual violence, and many victims faced long-term consequences such as emotional distress and reduced academic performance. These findings align with those from other countries, where children exposed to violence report lower academic achievement and higher levels of absenteeism, both of which negatively impact their education <sup>5</sup>. In sub-Saharan Africa, where gender norms and traditional practices are deeply entrenched, the impact of GCA is particularly severe, often leading to forced marriages, early pregnancies, and poor academic outcomes for girls <sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Andere A.M, "Relationship between Schools Related Gender Centred Aggression and Students Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya," *Kenyatta University. Nairobi* (n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> Maria Luisa Alaniz et al., "The Impact of Gender-Role Identity, Gender Ideology and Drinking Motivations on Binge Drinking and Behavioral," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 21, no. 2 (2013): 3380, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9163-3>; <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.alliant.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psych&AN=2010-16263-007&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; <http://friederike.zimmermann@psychologie.uni-heidelberg.de>; <http://0-search.e>; Alexander K Koch and Julia Nafziger, "Self-Regulation through Goal Setting\*," *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 113, no. 1 (2011): 212–227, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9442.2010.01641.x>; C Teixeira and D Gomes, "Insights into Learning Profiles and Learning Outcomes within Introductory Accounting," *Accounting Education* 26, no. 5–6 (2017): 522–552, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-84986223144&doi=10.1080%2F09639284.2016.1221767&partnerID=40&md5=6d4afc202694d77bf785251ef0a931b6>.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus Wahl and Cornelia Metzner, "Parental Influences on the Prevalence and Development of Child Aggressiveness," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2012); Shinae Jang and Kyungsoon Lee, "Prevalence and Predictors of Teen Dating Violence among High School Youth," *Korean Association For Learner-Centered Curriculum And Instruction* (2019).

<sup>4</sup> Martin Lövdén et al., "Education and Cognitive Functioning Across the Life Span," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 21, no. 1 (2020): 6–41.

<sup>5</sup> F & Machakanja Leach P., "An Investigative Study into the Abuse of Girls in African Schools.," *DJID* (n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> R P Corcoran, "Preparing Principals to Improve Student Achievement," *Child and Youth Care Forum* 46, no. 5 (2017): 769–781, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85017663795&doi=10.1007%2F010566-017-9399-9&partnerID=40&md5=7a30bb261012e888b268c48a52a1e03f>.

The various forms of GCA include physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, and economic violence, each of which manifests differently across cultural and social contexts. These forms of violence often overlap, compounding the effects on victims and making it challenging for them to escape the cycle of abuse.

This involves the intentional use of force that can cause injury, disability, or death. Physical violence in schools often takes the form of corporal punishment or bullying. According to McGee<sup>7</sup>, physical violence includes behaviors such as slapping, hitting, kicking, and pushing. In schools, corporal punishment remains a common method of disciplining students, yet it is a form of physical violence that can cause lasting emotional and psychological harm. Bullying, particularly physical bullying, is also rampant in schools and contributes significantly to the negative academic and emotional outcomes for students<sup>8</sup>.

Emotional violence involves verbal abuse, name-calling, intimidation, and other forms of psychological harm. This type of violence can significantly lower a student's self-esteem and cause anxiety, depression, and withdrawal from school activities. Emotional violence can take many forms, such as belittling a student's abilities, threatening them with harm, or isolating them from their peers. According to UNIFEM<sup>9</sup>, emotional violence can have lasting effects on students' mental health, making it difficult for them to engage with their studies or participate meaningfully in school life.

Sexual violence, including rape, molestation, and sexual harassment, is another prevalent form of GCA. Sexual violence in schools not only affects the victims' emotional and physical health but also their academic performance. The psychological trauma caused by sexual violence often leads to a decline in school attendance and engagement, as well as poor academic outcomes<sup>10</sup>. Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, and in many regions, sexual harassment is normalized within educational settings, further complicating efforts to address the issue.

Economic violence includes the use of financial means to control or manipulate others. In the context of GCA, this can take the form of forced labor or coercion in exchange for educational opportunities. Although less often discussed, economic violence is a significant form of GCA,

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey E McGee et al., "Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy: Refining the Measure," *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 33, no. 4 (2009): 965–988, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00304.x>.

<sup>8</sup> Shuang Yu and Xiaojun Zhao, "The Negative Impact of Bullying Victimization on Academic Literacy and Social Integration: Evidence from 51 Countries in PISA," *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* (2021); Nieves Moyano and María del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, "Homophobic Bullying at Schools: A Systematic Review of Research, Prevalence, School-Related Predictors and Consequences," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 2020; Robin M. Kowalski and Susan P. Limber, "Psychological, Physical, and Academic Correlates of Cyberbullying and Traditional Bullying," *Journal of Adolescent Health* (2013); Tauben Averbuch, Yousif Eliya, and Harriette Gillian Christine Van Spall, "Systematic Review of Academic Bullying in Medical Settings: Dynamics and Consequences," *BMJ Open*, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Sintayehu Wolka S Tantu T. Gunta M., Teshome M., Mohammed H. and Duko B., "Prevalence and Determinants of Gender Centred Aggression among High School Female Students in Wolaita Sodo, Ethiopia: An Institutionally Based Cross-Sectional Study," *UNIFEM* (n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Riana Elyse Anderson, Farzana T. Saleem, and James P. Huguley, "Choosing to See the Racial Stress That Afflicts Our Black Students," *Phi Delta Kappan* (2019); S. Megan Berthold, "War Traumas and Community Violence: Psychological, Behavioral, and Academic Outcomes Among Khmer Refugee Adolescents," *Journal of Multicultural Social Work* (2000); Shantel D. Crosby, "An Ecological Perspective on Emerging Trauma-Informed Teaching Practices," *Children and Schools* (2015).

particularly in situations where children are pressured to trade sexual favors for educational benefits, such as passing exams or securing school promotions .

The impact of GCA on academic performance is multifaceted and detrimental. Studies consistently show that students who are victims of GCA experience lower academic achievement, higher absenteeism, and increased dropout rates. A study by Leach and Machakanja (2003) revealed that students subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual intimidation and verbal abuse, had higher rates of irregular school attendance and underachievement in school. GCA has a direct impact on students' emotional and psychological well-being, leading to decreased motivation to engage with their studies and reduced concentration in class. Furthermore, victims of sexual violence often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, which further interfere with their ability to focus on their education <sup>11</sup>.

GCA also leads to significant developmental delays in children, particularly in terms of emotional and social growth. Children exposed to violence often develop feelings of fear and aggression, which can lead to disruptive behavior in the classroom and difficulties in establishing positive peer relationships <sup>12</sup>. These emotional and behavioral issues directly affect students' ability to learn, resulting in poor academic performance. In cases where sexual violence leads to pregnancy, students are often forced to leave school, resulting in a permanent disruption of their educational progress <sup>13</sup>.

The long-term consequences of GCA on students' academic performance are significant, affecting their future educational opportunities and career prospects. According to the United Nations (2006), the effects of GCA in schools are a major barrier to achieving the goal of Education for All (EFA). If not addressed, GCA will continue to prevent students from reaching their full academic potential and hinder their ability to succeed in life.

Gender-Centered Aggressiveness in schools is a major issue that directly affects the academic performance and overall well-being of students. The various forms of GCA—physical, emotional, sexual, and economic violence—create an unsafe and toxic learning environment that impedes students' ability to engage with their education. The impact of GCA on students is both immediate and long-lasting, affecting their emotional health, academic performance, and future opportunities. Addressing GCA in educational settings requires comprehensive strategies, including policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and interventions to create safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative research paradigm to explore the influence of gender-centered aggressiveness on the academic performance of learners at Chishakwe Primary School.

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<sup>11</sup> J & Chege Ruto R., "Violence against Girls as a Structural Barrier to Her Right to and Education.," *UNFPA* (n.d.); Ruto J., "Sexual Abuse of School Age Children: Evidence from Kenya.," *Wolaita Sodo University* (n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Greg Strimel, Scott Bartholomew, and Eunhye Kim, "Engaging Children in Engineering Design Through the World of Quadcopters," *Children's Technology and Engineering Journal* (2017).

<sup>13</sup> P Githinji, "Sexual Abuse of Children: A Study of Primary School Pupils in Nakuru Municipality, Kenya.," *Kenyatta University* (n.d.).

Qualitative research is particularly suited for investigating complex social phenomena such as GCA, as it allows for in-depth exploration of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. By focusing on understanding the "why" and "how" behind the effects of GCA, this approach provided rich, contextual insights into the issue, capturing the perspectives of victims and key stakeholders, including students, teachers, and school administrators. The qualitative approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how gender-based violence impacts students' academic outcomes and personal development.

### **Research Design**

A case study design was used to focus on the specific context of Chishakwe Primary School. This design was selected because it provides a detailed examination of the issue within its real-life context, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The case study approach is well-suited for exploring complex issues in specific settings, enabling the researcher to capture nuanced data about the experiences of participants. Data were collected through multiple methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. This triangulation of data sources enriched the findings, offering a comprehensive view of the problem from multiple perspectives. The research was delimited to this particular school, ensuring a detailed analysis of the effects of GCA on the academic performance of students within this specific educational environment.

### **Participants**

The study involved a purposive sample of twenty participants. The sample included 20 learners, 15 of whom were girls and 5 were boys. In addition, three teachers from the school participated, including one male and two female teachers. The study also included two members of the School Development Committee (SDC), one male and one female, who represented the parents' perspectives. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows for the selection of participants who are most likely to provide valuable insights into the research question. This sampling technique ensured that the participants had relevant experiences and knowledge to contribute to the study, particularly in relation to their direct involvement with the issue of gender-centered aggressiveness in the school environment.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through a combination of interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Semi-structured interview questions were designed to guide conversations with the students, teachers, and parents. These interviews were conducted individually with the learners and teachers, while focus group discussions were held with the parents and teachers to allow for the sharing of ideas and experiences within a group setting. The focus groups encouraged participants to discuss their perceptions of GCA and its effects on academic performance in a collective setting, which provided additional insights into the issue.

Interviews and focus group discussions were scheduled at times convenient for the participants, and the researchers made appointments to ensure that participants could freely

express their views without time constraints. Prior to data collection, the researchers explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the start of data collection. The data collection process took approximately two weeks, during which time the researchers engaged with the participants to gather comprehensive data about their experiences with GCA and its effects on their academic performance.

## Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive approach. This approach involved organizing the data into categories based on themes that emerged during the data collection process. The data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analyzed to identify recurring patterns and insights related to the impact of gender-centered aggressiveness on students' academic outcomes. Document analysis was also used to review any relevant school records and reports that could provide additional context about the prevalence and impact of GCA in the school environment. The findings were then synthesized to draw conclusions about the ways in which GCA affects students' academic performance and to identify potential interventions or recommendations for addressing the issue in schools.

## Results and Discussion

### *Biographic Data of Participants*

The demographic data collected during this study provides an overview of the age and gender distribution of participants, as outlined in Table 4.1. The study included 25 participants, consisting of teachers, students, and School Development Committee (SDC) members. The majority of the teachers were in the 40-49 age range, with only one teacher in the 30-39 age group. The SDC members were balanced in terms of gender, with one male and one female. All the students were between the ages of 10 and 19 years, with a higher proportion of female students, as they represent the majority at the school. This age and gender breakdown reflects the reality that girls are the primary victims of gender-centered aggressiveness at the school.

Table 1: Description of Age along Gender Lines (N=25)

Age & Gender	Teachers	Pupils	SDC	TOTAL
	F	M	F	M
10-19 years			15	5
20-29 years				
30-39 years	1			
40-49 years	1	1		
50-59 years				
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>

### Forms of Gender-Centered Aggressiveness Among Learners

The study found that gender-centered aggressiveness at Chishakwe Primary School manifests in four primary forms: physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, and

economic violence. Each of these forms was further elaborated by the participants, providing clear examples and explanations for each type of aggressiveness.

1. **Physical Violence:** The participants identified various forms of physical violence, such as scratching, pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, biting, choking, shaking, burning, and assault with weapons. These forms of violence are consistent with definitions by McGee (2000) and UNIFEM (2011), who describe physical violence as the use of force with potential to cause harm or injury. The impact of physical violence includes truancy, as students may miss school to recover from injuries or avoid further harm, which contributes to academic underachievement.
2. **Emotional Violence:** Participants described emotional violence as mistreatment that undermines a person's self-worth, which involves verbal abuse, belittling, and intimidation. Examples provided included criticism, insults, manipulation, and shouting. Emotional violence leads to reduced self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, negatively impacting students' academic performance by causing them to lose interest in school and struggle with concentration.
3. **Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence was identified as one of the most pervasive forms of gender-centered aggression at the school. This includes sexual harassment, rape, and coercion. Participants confirmed that sexual violence, particularly against girls, leads to absenteeism, emotional trauma, and school disengagement, significantly affecting their academic performance. Sexual violence is not only harmful to students' physical health but also their mental and emotional well-being.
4. **Economic Violence:** Economic violence was described as any behavior that causes economic harm to an individual, such as restricting access to educational resources or not fulfilling financial responsibilities. This form of violence can impact students' ability to pay for school fees, buy necessary materials, or participate in school-related activities. This deprivation leads to academic struggles, as students are unable to access essential learning tools.

### **Impact of Gender-Centered Aggressiveness on Academic Performance**

The research findings revealed a clear link between gender-centered aggressiveness and academic underperformance among learners. The collected data from school records and participant interviews showed that students affected by GCA faced significant barriers to their academic success. These barriers include:

1. **Retarded Intellectual and Personal Growth:** Gender-centered aggression has a direct impact on both the intellectual and personal growth of learners. Students subjected to physical violence or sexual abuse exhibited difficulty concentrating, frequent absenteeism, and emotional distress, which led to poor academic performance.
2. **Emotional and Psychological Distress:** Victims of GCA, particularly girls, reported symptoms such as sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, social isolation, and suicidal ideation. These emotional challenges significantly impacted their ability to focus on studies, resulting in lower academic achievement.
3. **Health Consequences:** Victims of sexual violence, especially girls, are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, and may experience unplanned

pregnancies. These health consequences often prevent students from attending school regularly, leading to further academic challenges and, in some cases, school dropout.

4. Negative Effects on Academic Engagement: Students who experience emotional or physical violence often lose interest in school and disengage from academic activities. This disengagement results in lower academic performance and reduced participation in school events and class discussions.

The findings align with the work of Leach and Machakanja <sup>14</sup>, who found that sexual intimidation, verbal abuse, and physical assault significantly contribute to irregular school attendance and underachievement. In addition, Ruto <sup>15</sup> emphasized that gender-based violence in schools is a major barrier to girls' education, with severe consequences for their academic success.

### Qualitative Evidence of Academic Impact

In interviews, teachers confirmed that students subjected to GCA often exhibited behavioral problems such as aggression, defiance, and withdrawal. These students were less likely to participate in class, and their performance in subjects such as mathematics and reading was noticeably lower. As noted by one guidance counselor, "The result of violence shows adverse impacts indirectly and directly on the health of students and their education and their organization. Their academic performance is affected badly, and they remain mentally disturbed."

### Discussion

The findings from this study provide important insights into the influence of gender-centered aggressiveness (GCA) on the academic performance of learners at Chishakwe Primary School in Mutare District. The results confirmed that GCA significantly impairs students' intellectual, emotional, and social development, with clear implications for their academic outcomes. This discussion aims to place the study's results in the context of the theoretical framework, compare them to existing research, and identify the contributions of this study to the broader field of educational research on gender-based violence.

The study's results are consistent with theoretical frameworks that emphasize the impact of emotional and physical violence on children's cognitive and academic functioning. The findings support the ecological systems theory, which posits that a child's development is influenced by interactions at multiple levels, including the family, school, and broader community <sup>16</sup>. In this study, gender-centered aggression within the school environment disrupted students' social and emotional well-being, leading to academic difficulties. The results underscore how violence in the immediate environment, particularly in school settings, can negatively affect students' ability to concentrate, engage in learning, and participate in academic activities.

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<sup>14</sup> Leach P., "An Investigative Study into the Abuse of Girls in African Schools."

<sup>15</sup> Ruto J., "Sexual Abuse of School Age Children: Evidence from Kenya," *UN Women* (n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> Steven C Hertler et al., "Urie Bronfenbrenner: Toward an Evolutionary Ecological Systems Theory," *Life History Evolution: A Biological Meta-Theory for the Social Sciences* (2018): 323–339; Samuel L. Odom et al., "Preschool Inclusion in the United States: A Review of Research from an Ecological Systems Perspective," *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* (2004); Rob Jones, "The Student Experience of Undergraduate Students: Towards a Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* (2018).



Additionally, the study's findings align with the social-ecological model, which examines how societal norms, such as gender inequality, shape behaviors and create an environment conducive to violence. In this study, the gender imbalance within the school, with more female than male teachers and a higher proportion of female students, reflects broader societal dynamics where girls are often more vulnerable to gender-based violence. These societal norms were evident in the types of GCA reported, particularly sexual and emotional violence, which disproportionately affected female students.

The results of this study are consistent with existing research on the impact of gender-based violence in schools. Previous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of physical, emotional, and sexual violence on academic performance and overall well-being. For instance, Leach and Machakanja<sup>17</sup> found that sexual violence, verbal abuse, and physical assault significantly contributed to poor academic performance and high absenteeism, particularly among female students. The current study echoes these findings, particularly in the case of sexual violence, which was identified as one of the most pervasive forms of GCA at Chishakwe Primary School.

In terms of emotional violence, this study's findings are similar to those of UNIFEM<sup>18</sup>, which reported that emotional abuse, such as belittling, name-calling, and humiliation, leads to a loss of self-esteem and motivation, which ultimately affects academic performance. The impact of emotional violence was found to be particularly pronounced in students' lack of interest in school and academic disengagement, which was also noted by Ruto<sup>19</sup>, who found that emotional violence is a major barrier to girls' education.

Moreover, this study's findings regarding the role of economic violence align with the work of researchers like<sup>20</sup>, who highlighted the negative effects of restricted access to financial resources on students' ability to participate fully in education. The restriction of resources, such as school fees or educational materials, was found to significantly hinder students' academic performance in this study, particularly in cases where learners were denied the financial support needed for their education.

While previous research has identified the various forms of GCA and their impact on academic performance, this study contributes to the field by focusing specifically on the school setting in Mutare District, Zimbabwe. This geographical context adds a unique perspective, as the cultural, social, and economic dynamics of this region may influence the prevalence and forms of gender-based violence. By specifically examining Chishakwe Primary School, the study provides

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<sup>17</sup> Leach P., "An Investigative Study into the Abuse of Girls in African Schools."

<sup>18</sup> Tantu T. Gunta M., Teshome M., Mohamme H. and Duko B., "Prevalence and Determinants of Gender Centred Aggression among High School Female Students in Wolaita Sodo, Ethiopia: An Institutionally Based Cross-Sectional Study."; UNIFEM, "Millions More Cases of Violence: Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Unintended Pregnancies,," *None* (n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> J., "Sexual Abuse of School Age Children: Evidence from Kenya."; J., "Sexual Abuse of School Age Children: Evidence from Kenya."; Ruto R., "Violence against Girls as a Structural Barrier to Her Right to and Education."

<sup>20</sup> Rui Zhang et al., "Why Is My World so Dark? Effects of Child Physical and Emotional Abuse on Child Depression: The Mediating Role of Self-Compassion and Negative Automatic Thoughts," *Child Abuse and Neglect* (2022); Zaidi Yob et al., "The Impacts of Poverty, Unemployment, and Divorce on Child Abuse in Malaysia: ARDL Approach," *Economics* (2022).

valuable insights into how gender-centered aggression manifests in a rural Zimbabwean school setting and its effects on the academic performance of both male and female students.

One key contribution of this research is its identification of the interaction between different forms of aggression. The study found that physical, emotional, sexual, and economic violence often overlap, with students subjected to multiple forms of GCA. This overlap creates a compounded effect on students' academic performance, which has been less explored in existing literature. For instance, while previous studies have primarily focused on the impact of one type of aggression (such as sexual violence), this study demonstrates how students who experience multiple forms of GCA are at even greater risk of poor academic performance.

Additionally, the findings contribute to the growing body of research on the importance of teacher engagement in addressing GCA. By emphasizing the central role that teachers play in identifying and responding to GCA, this study provides practical recommendations for teacher training and school policies. Teachers, who spend significant time with students, can be instrumental in identifying early signs of abuse and providing support for affected students. This insight is consistent with recommendations from the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, which calls for a whole-school approach to tackling GCA, involving teachers, administrators, parents, and the community.

The findings of this study have several important implications for practice and policy in schools. First, there is a need for comprehensive training for teachers to recognize and respond to the various forms of GCA. As the study found, teachers are often in the best position to identify the signs of aggression, particularly emotional and physical violence, as they interact closely with students on a daily basis. Providing teachers with the tools to identify and address these issues can lead to early intervention, which can mitigate the long-term effects of GCA on students' academic performance.

Second, the study highlights the importance of a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach to addressing GCA in schools. This includes not only teachers and school administrators but also parents, local authorities, and NGOs. The involvement of the broader community, as suggested by UNESCO (2016), can provide the necessary support systems for students and create a safer, more supportive learning environment. Collaboration between the education sector, child protection authorities, and healthcare providers is essential in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of GCA.

Finally, this study underscores the need for stronger national policies and school-level interventions to address gender-based violence. The findings point to the importance of creating and enforcing school policies that specifically address GCA and its impact on academic performance. Schools should develop clear procedures for reporting and addressing incidents of violence, as well as providing support for affected students.

This study provides valuable insights into the impact of gender-centered aggressiveness on academic performance in a Zimbabwean school setting. The findings confirm that GCA negatively affects students' intellectual, emotional, and social development, leading to poor academic performance and higher dropout rates, particularly among girls. The study also contributes to the broader field of research on gender-based violence in schools, offering a detailed account of the

various forms of aggression and their compounded effects. By emphasizing the role of teachers and the importance of a coordinated approach, this study offers practical recommendations for improving the response to GCA in schools and supporting the academic success of all students.

## **Conclusion**

This study underscores the significant impact of gender-centered aggressiveness (GCA) on the physical, emotional, and psychological development of learners, with far-reaching implications for their academic success. The findings clearly demonstrate that GCA, in its various forms—whether physical, emotional, sexual, or economic—disrupts not only the immediate academic performance of students but also their long-term personal development and mental health. The study also highlights that while GCA affects all students, girls are particularly vulnerable, with higher rates of victimization leading to more severe consequences for their educational engagement and future prospects.

The results emphasize the need for a multi-pronged approach to address GCA in schools, with teachers and other stakeholders playing a crucial role. Teachers are in a unique position to identify signs of aggression and intervene, but they require adequate training, motivation, and support to effectively respond to these issues. The study suggests that collaboration between schools, families, local authorities, and NGOs is essential to create a safer learning environment and prevent further incidents of GCA. Furthermore, this research calls attention to the necessity of creating policies that not only protect students from violence but also actively promote a culture of respect, inclusion, and gender equality within the educational system.

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection of gender-based violence and education by emphasizing the compounded effects of multiple forms of violence on students' well-being and academic outcomes. It also provides practical insights into the importance of school-based strategies and community involvement in combating GCA. Future research should further explore the long-term effects of gender-centered aggression on academic achievement and examine the efficacy of various interventions in reducing violence in schools.

The findings of this study have significant implications for the field of education and the broader societal efforts to address gender-based violence. First, they highlight the urgent need for schools to integrate comprehensive strategies that tackle GCA at all levels, from prevention and awareness-raising to direct intervention and support for victims. Teachers, as primary figures in the school system, must be equipped with the knowledge and resources to address gender-centered aggression effectively. In addition, schools should foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, particularly those who are at greater risk of violence.

At the policy level, the study calls for stronger commitments from governments and education ministries to enact and enforce laws that protect students from violence in all forms. National and local policies should ensure that schools have clear guidelines for preventing and responding to GCA. Additionally, the involvement of families and communities is essential in creating a protective ecosystem around students. Campaigns aimed at raising awareness about children's rights to a safe education and the harmful effects of GCA can play a key role in reducing the occurrence of violence in schools.

Finally, the study suggests that future efforts to eliminate GCA in schools should be integrated into broader educational initiatives that promote peace, gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls. By embedding these values into curricula, textbooks, and classroom practices, educators can foster a culture of respect and equity that prevents the occurrence of gender-centered violence and encourages positive academic outcomes for all students.

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