The Conundrum of Violence in Primary Schools: Mediation and Restorative Justice

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Abstract. Violence in schools is an increasing phenomenon at the primary school level in Trinidad and Tobago. This study identified the issue of violence at primary schools and intervention strategies that may be adopted to minimize the problem. A mixed method approach was employed to glean the challenges students and teachers face, as well as possible solutions via mediation and restorative justice to mitigate the conundrum. The sample comprised 6 teachers and 63 primary school students between the ages 10 to 12 years, from 6 primary schools. Data were collected through questionnaires. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly adhered to, and analysis of data was conducted using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that 74.6 percent of the students were victims of physical violence. Some experienced psychological violence by small groups and cliques, through threats and fearfulness, while others were emotionally traumatized with feelings of unworthiness and helplessness. However, there were a few students who indicated that they were not victims of violence but witnessed incidents of violence. The study concluded that violence is prevalent in primary schools. It is expected that interventions such as the adoption of mediation and principles of restorative justice can minimize the occurrences.
Keywords: violence, primary schools, mediation, restorative justice

Introduction
Violence is a multi-faceted issue that has plagued the society for a long time at the secondary school level, as reported in the media. It has filtered more significantly into the primary school system within recent times so students and teachers are forced to grapple with the issue on a continuous basis. Violence can manifest in many ways including physically, emotionally and psychologically through various acts such as bullying, intimidation and cyberbullying. Proper interventions must be taken in a timely manner to minimize violence so that schools retain an unthreatening climate for effective teaching, learning, socialization and the promotion of good citizenship.

Significance of the Study
This study fills a gap in the current research about school violence in Trinidad at the primary level in particular. It adds as well as clarifies existing information which relate primarily to the secondary levels, at-risk youths and adults. Also the research involves both students and teachers as participants, adding to the authenticity of the study. In addition, the findings are not only quantifiable but also experiential thereby making the study more robust.

Review of Literature

School Violence
School violence ensues when students fail to observe the rules and regulations of the school and class. This phenomenon has become very prevalent at secondary schools particularly, but it is increasing at an alarming rate at the primary level. In her contribution to the psychology of violence, Hamby (2017) proffers that school violence should be clearly defined in order to identify possible causes, their consequences, as well as make suggestions to create programmes to curb such violence.

Apart from their homes, students spend most of their time at schools, which are institutions of learning, under the watchful eyes of teachers and principals. But globally, it has been shown that school violence is rampant in schools. This is in direction violation of the rights of the child and it impacts the health of children (World Health Organization, 2002; Le Franc, 2002). In their research, Jan and Hussain (2015) identify several forms of school violence such as name calling, hitting, threatening others, and even spreading false rumours. The latter has been identified as a major form of bullying as it is prevalent via social media and the internet (Espelage, 2018).

In Trinidad and Tobago, La Rose (2018) affirmed that many instances of physical violence stem from the cyberbullying that starts months before in the home and after school hours when teachers have no control over children. The cell phone policy implemented by the Ministry of Education outlines guidelines for teachers and students. But, while this policy endorses a zero-tolerance approach for breach of the law, schools are given the authority to decide on students' usage of cell phones. Afroz and Husain (2015) underscored that cyber bullying continues to be a major problem.

Aggression

Violence may be physical, verbal, psychological/ emotional, social, technological and it may be manifested directly or indirectly, subtly, overtly or covertly. Archer and Coyne (2005) suggest that both males and females display aggressive behaviour, which they classify into three groups: indirect aggression, that is, behaviour intended to cause harm to others such as spreading rumours, gossiping and social exclusion; relational aggression which though non-physical, can cause great damage to the victim's self-esteem since it involves degrading a person; and social aggression which involves both emotional and physical harm.

In Trinidad and Tobago, violence in its various forms, occurs in the nation's schools. These incidents are sometimes reported in the daily newspapers and are filed and documented by the Ministry of Education to be retrieved later for specific reference. In the Trinidad Guardian newspaper, Dowlat (2016) reported on an incident at a school in east Trinidad, where an 11-year-old male student slapped a 10-year-old female classmate. In another recent attack at a primary school, also in east Trinidad, a ten-year-old boy was beaten up by another pupil and the victim's mother was physically attacked by the bully when she visited the school to investigate what happened (Douglas, 2019).

Academic Frustration

In a study, Allen (2010) explores the relationship between classroom management and bullying. He argues that there are several factors that cause bullying which involve administrative weaknesses such as disorganised school settings, harsh and punitive discipline methods, a poor quality of classroom instruction and classroom management. Another study by Mayer (2002) indicates that there is a lack of critical skills related to learning in the school setting, which result in academic frustration. He found that not all teachers were able to manage their classes effectively or create an environment conducive to learning.

In its 2002 report, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged member states to do an assessment of the problem of violence in their respective countries and report to them on their assessment. In Trinidad and Tobago, a Joint Select Committee (JSC, 2016) was established to address violence and other related issues. After a series of meetings, the JSC (2016), which tabled a motion in the Lower House of Parliament, suggested the training of teachers to identify a strategy to be implemented in schools to deal with children who seemed not to be coping with their academic studies and then subsequently act out in violent ways on the playground (JSC, 2016, p. 47).

Absenteeism, Regularity and Punctuality

Based on a report on school violence by the JSC, a parliamentary committee questioned whether there was a relationship between teacher absenteeism, regularity and punctuality and violence among students. Doodhai (2019), who was president of the teachers' union at the time, opined that more could be done to curb school violence and he cited the filling of hundreds of vacant posts among teachers as one of the critical bits of action that needed to be pursued. He suggested that if these vacant positions were addressed, then schools would be able to exercise more control with respect to monitoring and supervision of students to possibly prevent the scourge of school violence.

Peer Mediation

The Student Support Services Division (SSSD), which is a unit within the Ministry of Education to offer guidance and counselling, is currently understaffed. Within the unit, there exists a shortage of counsellors who feel overwhelmed to offer support to the many schools and students in an educational district. In 2019, however, an attempt was made to train one hundred and forty (140) secondary school students, from across Trinidad, as peer mediators. The school based initiative incorporated the training of selected teachers and / or guidance counsellors to support the implementation of the programme and to assist in its management. The project was geared towards promoting behaviour change and empowerment of youths to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner. But, the programme was never implemented at the primary level.

Doodhai (2019), in commenting on peer mediation as a school-based initiative, suggested that training should be given to teachers with respect to restorative justice, because they are the first line persons in contact with the students. Restorative justice is an approach to controlling violence which has gained popularity worldwide. The implementation of restorative justice practices focuses on a process of rehabilitating the offenders and involves efforts at reconciliation with victims and the offenders. Morrison (2006) proposes the use of restorative justice as a strategy to address the issue of school bullying.

Of significance is the revelation of the far-reaching effects of school violence. Some have been identified as depression, post-traumatic stress, thoughts of suicide, and a hindrance to positive youth development (Ferrara, Franceschini, Villani, & Corsello, 2019). According to Pechtel and Pizzagalli (2011), stresses and trauma during the childhood years can have a negative impact on cognition and academic achievement. Although different programmes have been employed to minimise violence, these were instituted at the secondary level. This study therefore addresses this gap as the research explores violence among primary school students.

Theoretical Underpinnings

There are many theories such as sociological, genetic, personality, frustration, psychoanalytic, ethological and social learning that explain violence. However, the primary theoretical framework that underpins this study includes Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). It encompasses different levels of influences in the development of the child. These include: the microsystem (the immediate setting of the developing child e.g. the family, the schools; the mesosystem (the relationships and interactions experienced between the family and school which impact the development of the child); the exosystem (the interconnections between the environment outside the immediate setting e.g. neighbourhood, influential people and media); the macrosystem (the educational, social and political networks that influence culture and beliefs); and the chronosystem which takes into account changes as well as the environmental impact on children. The assumption is that children may be influenced by individual factors, the context of the environment, the cultural situation and the transactional

nature of the different ecological levels. Heleniak & McLaughlin, (2020) posit that there is a relationship between violence and development of students and their cognitive abilities.

Research Questions
1. What is the nature of violence at primary schools?
2. How do students and teachers deal with the problems encountered regarding violence?
3. What are possible solutions to mitigate violence at primary schools?
4. What are the experiences of students and teachers with respect to violence in primary schools?

Methodological Considerations

A mixed method approach was adopted to determine the phenomenon of violence faced by students and teachers. According to Creswell (2012) a mixed method study involves an integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The approach was deemed appropriate as it allowed for a more robust study. It facilitated a more in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the subject-matter. Mixed method facilitates an expansion of the richness, breadth and depth of the research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

A concurrent method was utilized, thereby giving equal credit to both the quantitative and qualitative data. An amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data analysis allowed for the inclusion of subjective factors, based on experiences, to be integrated in the study so that the complex social phenomenon of school violence could be effectively elucidated. Results were compared and merged for commonalities which strengthened and optimized the findings.
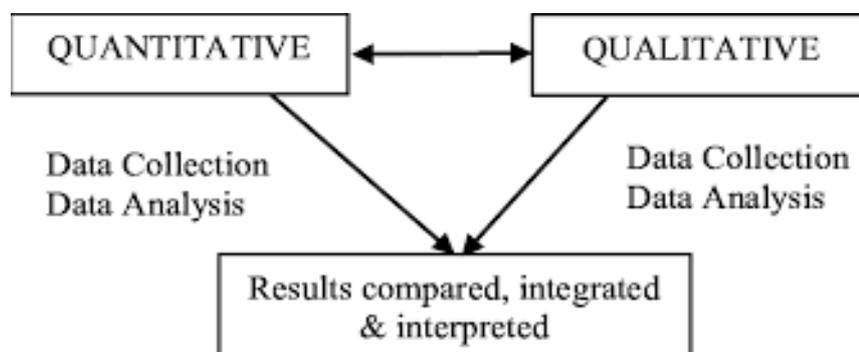

Figure 1. (researchgate.net)

The Sample

The sample consisted of 63 students at the standard four level and 6 teachers from 6 primary schools in one educational district in south Trinidad. There were 20 male and 43 female students between the ages 10 to 12 years, as well as 1 male and 5 female teachers. It must be noted that the environmental contexts, influences or circumstances of students may be significantly different. The inclusion of teachers added another dimension to the research as they were privy to reports students made, investigated incidents, resolved the conflicts where possible or would have witnessed violent student behaviours.

There were gender differences as some schools were all boys, all girls or co-educational. In addition, there was variability in religious denomination as three schools are governed by denominational boards and the others by the government. The socio-economic status and background of students were also different based on parental occupations.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires which consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed ended questions allowed for a high degree of accurate representations, as well as objectivity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Open ended questions enabled participants to include more information, express their views as well as outline their experiences and emotions. Anonymity and confidentiality (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) were strictly adhered to by using a numerical format for questionnaires. A set of symbols and symbolic representations were utilized to ensure that participants remained anonymous and data confidential.

After due consultation with the principals and teachers of the 6 primary schools, the questionnaires were administered to the students by the respective teachers. They explained and assisted some students to mitigate reading concerns. In three instances students omitted answers but the class teachers helped the students to complete their responses.

Certain questions on the questionnaire were pertinent to teachers only. They were the only participants who were interviewed, as the students were minors. Parental consent was sought for the completion of questionnaires to ensure credibility of the study. In fact, parents were privy to the questions on the questionnaires. Teachers also wrote reflections and memos as well as sent emails and WhatsApp messages. These methods allowed for clarity and unravelling any misunderstanding. Collectively, these methods facilitated triangulation, corroboration of data and comparability of findings (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008).
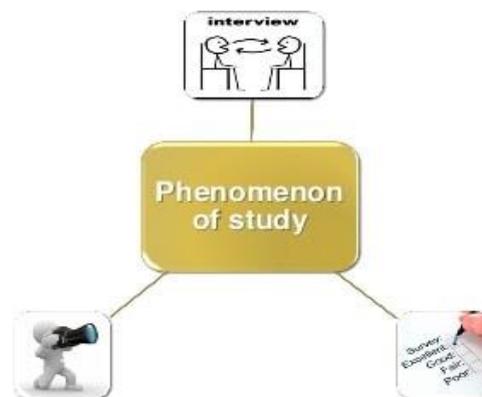

(Plano Clark, & Creswell, 2008, p. 127)

Figure 2

Data Analysis

The data were placed into groups by counting responses numerically and constructing statistical templates with percentages. All interviews were transcribed verbatim then read repeatedly for coding. Data from memos, emails and WhatsApp messages were perused and relevant ideas collated to substantiate results. The data were therefore represented in both textual and non-textual format such as charts and tables to provide exact values, in tandem with the requirements of a mixed method study.

The quantitative phase was analysed first using descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were categorized using commonalities based on reiterative readings. According to Creswell and Tashakkori (2009), at least one qualitative analysis and one quantitative analysis are required for mixed analyses. Common ideas were combined by coding (Creswell, 2012) into sub-categories, then merged into categories and finally into themes. For example, information on physical abuse such as hitting, slapping and pinching were categorized under the heading 'physical abuse' Themes were then generated through repeated readings for formulation and reformulation of categories through a coding process.

The information allowed for making comparisons, seeing linkages and discerning similarities as well as outliers. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) refer to this as complementarity, that is the results from one method are used to enhance, elaborate or clarify results from another method. The categories formed were then integrated, coalesced, and consolidated to determine results. The approach provided for deeper understanding which strengthened the authenticity of the study. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) proffer, "Although the two sets of analyses are independent, each provides an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. These understandings are linked, combined, or integrated into meta-inferences" (p. 266). This study can be replicated ensuring not only reliability and validity, but also credibility and dependability based on instruments used for data collection and the rigorous data analysis.

Results and Discussion

As demonstrated in Table 1 below, the data revealed that many different types of violence are prevalent at primary schools. Forty-seven (47) or 74.6% of the students have been exposed to physical violence which included punching/hitting/ slapping, pinching, stamping on foot and pulling hair. Also, 41 or 65% of the participants indicated that they were verbally abused by peers, for instance teasing, harassment, name-calling, sneering when passing and making derogatory remarks not only by individuals but by cliques. Psychological violence included threats, fear, anxiety, being suppressed and oppressed by peers while emotional violence involved abusive statements made by classmates. Some students were emotionally traumatized by small groups or cliques which resulted in feelings of unworthiness and helplessness. Negative comments, especially name calling and denigrating remarks by the teacher had a subsequent ripple effect by the rest of the class. Altogether, psychological/ emotional violence amounted to 34 students or 53.9% of the sample. Financial violence involved extortion of money for protection from bullies. It was significant that 9 or 14% of the respondents declared that they had to pay 'tax' to be protected.

Table 1

Nature of violence	Yes Responses N= 63	Out of 100%
Physical violence	47	74.6
Verbal	41	65
Psychological/Emotional	34	53.9
Financial – extortion of money	9	14
Technological – cyberbullying	3	4.7

One student said that she was slapped in the face after school when she told a fellow extortionist classmate that her parents do not give her money for school. Others said their snacks were forcefully taken away from them. Although the issue of technology was not explored fully in this study, the data showed that 3 students or 4.7% of the participants were subjected to cyberbullying. Many investigations suggest that cyberbullying is becoming more rampant among young children but parents are constrained as they have limited technological

competencies. For instance, in their study, Martin-Criado, Casas, & Ortega-Ruiz (2021) agree that parents lack technological know-how and consequently knowledge of cyberbullying, the risks involved and preventative measures.

However, a few students indicated that they were not victims of violence but witnessed incidents at school. Also, all teachers expressed the view that children are influenced by violent behaviours in the home environment, as well as on television, online videos, games and social media. What is noteworthy is that the consequences of violence are severe, deep-rooted and even lifelong. The debilitating effects have been corroborated by many studies. For example, Ferrara, Franceschini, Villani, and Corsello (2019) proffer, "Children who experienced any type of violence at school may develop reactive attachment disorder, modest physical inactivity, overweight or obesity, diabetes, smoking habits, heavy alcohol use, poor self-rated health, cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disease and other negative outcomes (p. 1). In addition, Heleniak and McLaughlin (2020) found that students who experienced many forms of violence demonstrated difficulty with cognition. The implication is that violence at the primary level needs to be curtailed if students are to live a healthy, fulfilling life and develop holistically to their fullest potential.

Table 2 below shows that 31 students or 49.2% prefer to suffer in silence, without complaint and 48 participants or 76.1 percent indicated that they are afraid of the consequences of speaking out. In addition, 35 pupils or 55.5% indicated that they reported incidents to the teacher or principal while only 28 or 44.4% of them informed their parents. Verbal or physical retaliation accounted for 13% or 20.6%. On the other hand, 7 students or 11.1 % advised that they befriended the bully and acceded to the demand for money, lunches or snacks.

Table 2

How Students Address Violence	Yes Responses (n=63)	Out of 100%
Suffer in silence	31	49.2
Fear speak out	48	76.1
Report to teacher/ principal	35	55.5
Report to parent	28	44.4
Retaliate verbally/ physically	13	20.6
Befriend the bully - lunch/ money	7	11.1

Culturally many students are not taught to defend themselves or to retaliate in a verbally aggressive manner, thereby remaining docile. Based on religious teachings also, they may prefer to make peace rather than have situations escalate into more serious issues. Some may be fearful to report incidents because of their small stature, consequently being afraid to challenge the perpetrator, who may be more powerful. Students who have a high degree of confidence and have parental support may be empowered to report to the teacher or principal. It is significant that less than fifty percent of the students revealed that they reported to their parents as there is the perception that children at primary level are closely knitted with the family and hence will have open lines of communication. It can be concluded that this relationship is being eroded. However, based on personality traits, others students may be naturally aggressive, verbally articulate and are unafraid to retaliate. Some may feel a sense of hopelessness and therefore genuflect to the bully by meeting the demands of the individual, for instance, giving him money on a frequent basis.

Regarding the possible solutions to mitigate violence at primary schools, Table 3 below shows that a total of 38 students and 6 teachers found that counselling was the solution to the problem of violence. Interestingly every student (63) and all teachers (6) advocated suspension of culprits. Thirty-five (35) students and 6 teachers believed that parents should be involved in the process. Only 7 students and 2 teachers were in favour of a monitoring system in the school

while 12 pupils and 3 teachers maintained that there should be mentors or advisors. There were 21 students and 6 teachers who advocated anger management support.

Table 3

Possible Solutions Advocated by Teachers and Students	Student Responses (63)	Teacher Responses (6)
Counselling	38	6
Suspension	63	6
Parental Involvement	35	6
Monitoring system at schools	7	2
Mentors - advisors	12	3
Anger Management Support	21	6

Counselling has always been on the agenda but the counsellors' department always seems to be understaffed. In addition, they are mandated to visit too many schools thereby making the impact on students ineffective. Some considerations are the availability of counselling personnel, their dispositions and the frequency and intensity of interactions with students.

As far as suspension and expulsion are concerned, there are procedures outlined in the Code of Conduct (2018) by the Ministry of Education, and particular protocols must be followed. For example, the Ministry of Education recommends, "Student to be removed from school compound at the end of the school day, or during school hours with parent's consent/knowledge" (Code of Conduct, 2018, p. 65). Many teachers believe that suspension/ expulsion do not adequately deal with the issue as students seem to utilize the time in non-beneficial ways, without behavioural reform, resulting in a recurrent, or even worse situation.

Also, parental involvement is always viewed as a panacea to the multifaceted issue of school violence, but some parents may be unable to effectively guide their children or spend quality time with them because of long working hours, individualized circumstances or the multiple challenges of dysfunctional families.

A monitoring system is assumed to be a solution but it must be done effectively and efficiently and every situation must be dealt with contextually. Mentors and advisors are very frequently viewed as not impartial. Also, anger management support has not been afforded to primary students, but it is prudent to begin interventions at an early age if there is to be a positive impact.

One of the most fundamental ways of finding solutions to the problem of violence is building trust between teachers and students and having open lines of communication. In their study, Abigail & Cahn (2011) affirm that communication is fundamental to good relationships. Some students complained that teachers do not care about them and do not take strict measures against intimidation and bullying during class. One student wrote, "When I try to answer a question, they laugh at me". Students feel threatened when teachers do not take a position and adhere consistently to strict rules in the class. Positive relationships between teachers and students can serve as a cushion for students who feel insecure, particularly for those who have attachment issues in the family setting. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2010), teachers can more effectively cater for students' academic, psychological, affective needs when they develop cordial relationships with them.

Students can be empowered to practise life skills, negotiate and resolve conflicts with their peers. Morals and values should be taught across the curriculum regularly so that students may learn responsibility, resilience and self-regulation as well as respect for self and others. Also, there should be a training process with a selection of students who are willing and capable to mentor their peers.

On occasions the principal or teacher may engage in arbitration whereby a final decision on how the conflict should be resolved is made, but it is possible that full investigations may not be accomplished and therefore impartiality is compromised. This later leads to greater conflict with parents, involvement of other parties and further inquiry by officials of the Ministry. Ultimately, a judicious case by case basis can be adopted for the best intervention, taking into account the environment, cultural background and the personality traits of the students on an individualized basis.

There were four themes that emerged in the study, as follows:

Theme 1 – Aggression and Molestation

My brother was always beaten up . . . He did nothing (at first) but he got fed up of it and I remember him standing up for himself . . . He got in trouble instead of the bully.

Theme 2 - Observation and Imitation

When I was nine years old my dad beat my neighbour. . . I started to beat them up in my class. . . . My friends tease(d) a girl and kick(ed) and hit a boy. They force(d) me to hit him to(o).

Theme 3 - Traumatization

Withdrawal . . . Feeling depressed . . . Fear to go to school . . . I feel sad. My mom say(s) I get anxiety attacks.

Theme 4 – Attention Seeking

Parents (are) not paying attention to the children. . . When students (are) not getting attention they look for attention from other people. They (are) abuse(d) in their house.

Theme 1 demonstrates that some students are exposed to unfair treatment, aggression and molestation at school. At times it is evident that the arbitration process is capricious whereby the victim may be accused as the culprit. The situation is compounded as students have a natural tendency to associate with like-minded peers, so there is support for the unwanted behaviours. This increases the complexity of the situation as it can spill over into after-school aggression as well as familial disputes. These may have long term consequences for the victims not only socially and emotionally but also academically. Aggression and molestation can lead to the inability to concentrate in learning activities, fear, lack of focus and confusion in making moral judgements, all of which contribute to low academic performance.

Theme 2 shows that parents and teachers are critically important as role models for behaviour, particularly at the primary level. The findings of this study are supported by many studies which demonstrate that students who have experienced violence, particularly domestic violence, at home and in the community tend to replicate those behaviours and transfer them to the school. In his social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) proffers that children observe, imitate and model behaviours. The implication is that the model effect of observed and imitative violence may be generalized into new manifestations. However, even though positive behaviours may be regulated through observation and interactions, negative behaviours are more impressionable, potent and impactful. In addition, support and encouragement by peers can amplify the incidences.

Theme 3 illustrates that many teachers believe that students engage in violent behaviours because they do not receive adequate attention at home or may be rejected, neglected or abandoned. Their personal situations make them feel vulnerable and hence they compensate at school. In a study on youth risks in the Caribbean, Braithwaite (2009) agrees that "personal circumstances also engendered specific vulnerability" (p. 8). Parental relationships may be abusive, distressing, uncaring and detached which result in a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Many students are crying out for approval from teachers because of deprivation and family instability (Gopaul & Reddock, 1994). Also, some students cannot skilfully communicate their thought and emotions, therefore, they give expression through violent

behaviours. The suggestion is that teacher-student interrelationships should be caring, nurturing and trusting.

Theme 4 establishes that the students experienced distress, withdrawal, depression, fearfulness, stress and anxiousness. All themes are synchronized with the data, but trauma is corroborated very intensely. Emotional intelligence therefore becomes significant, as the adverse experiences of violence can have long lasting, even lifelong repercussions on individuals socially, emotionally and psychologically. The findings of this research are consistent with that of Ferrara et al. (2019) who posit that school violence can be the basis for "psychological distress" as well as "permanent physical disability and long-term physical or mental ill-health" (p. 1). Relationships among students were also compromised as outlined by a student who indicated, *"My friend . . . doh (does not) play with me again".* This expression demonstrates the gravity of the situation, especially when students at the primary students are isolated and yearning for friendship but are unable to make friends because of the trauma associated with violence. The finding is in tandem with that of Rahimi, Liston, Adkins, & Nourzad (2021) who revealed that children who experience trauma have difficulty in developing friendships and are deficient in brain development. There are also ramifications for students' levels of cognition and academic achievement.

Summary
The findings suggest that many students are vulnerable and are subjected to different forms of violent behaviours by other students at the primary school level. Some suffer the consequences in silence while others retaliate. Suspension as well as counselling have been viewed as fundamental solutions but the problem is structurally and conceptually multifaceted in myriad ways. It can be concluded that there is need for analysis of students' behaviours before interventions, which should be made on an individualized and contextual basis.

Recommendations
In order to have successful interventions, it is recommended that there must be a new discourse and a forum for behaviour analysis at primary schools. In the long term, programmes which can be implemented to mitigate violence include: Sensitization on the value of seeking help without stigmatization; Student voice project to enable amicable conflict resolution; Peace programmes that promote multiculturalism and unity in diversity; Community projects with parents and other stakeholders; Regular talks by resource personnel such as the police; Training in parenting for parents; Workshops for teachers; Restorative justice, that is, organized meetings with the victim and offender, and Mediation/ peer mediation which involves voluntary collaboration with those who have conflicts to identify issues, discern options and consider alternatives.

However, immediate actions are advocated in the interim which may be put into practice at the various schools including: Pedagogical practices involving personal skills development; Teaching self-discipline and self-defence through programmes such as Martial Arts, Karate, Taekwondo and Judo; Extra-curricular and co-curricular involvement in sports, class and school competitions, as well as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Red Cross and a Discipline matrix

Reflection and reflexivity and a more humane approach to discipline by teachers may also contribute to the minimization of the problem. The teaching of life skills which involve responsibility, resilience, self-regulation, perseverance, decision making as well as coping skills and daily sessions on morals and values are strongly recommended.

Conclusion
The study concluded that many forms of violence continue to prevail in primary schools. It makes the learning environment threatening and non-conducive to learning. In addition, it

undermines the principles of democracy, violates the universal rights of the child and may well be associated with the inequalities in society. The implication is that the primary schools, which are fundamental agencies of socialization, cannot fulfil their mandate in an environment in which violence is not dealt with swiftly and effectively. It is expected that interventions such as the promotion of soft skills, the adoption of mediation and the principles of restorative justice can minimize the occurrences. A number of initiatives have been recommended but immediate interventions are also needed urgently. More importantly, life skills, morals, values and soft skills must be infused and taught across the curriculum in all subjects on *a daily basis* to mitigate the conundrum of primary school violence.

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