



ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST PRE-PRIMARY II SCHOOL CHILDREN ON ATTAINMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN KITUI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Violence against young children remains a persistent yet insufficiently interrogated barrier to effective early childhood learning, particularly within rural and resource-constrained contexts. This study assessed the influence of violence against pre-primary II school children on attainment of learning outcomes in Kitui County. Anchored in the Culture of Violence Theory and Family Systems Theory, the study employed an analytical cross-sectional design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study population comprised PP2 learners, teachers, parents or caregivers, and Sub-County Children's Officers drawn from public pre-primary schools across the county. The target population comprised 34,526 pre-primary two children, 3,006 teachers, and an equal number of parents or caregivers drawn from 1,874 public pre-primary schools in Kitui County. From this population, 50 schools (10%) were selected using simple random sampling. The total sample size for the study was 658 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires, observation checklists, a standardized violence exposure screening tool, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were

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analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and analysis of variance, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that violence greatly harms children's academic, social, and emotional well-being. Quantitative results indicated that 90% of teachers saw very low participation in class among affected children. Additionally, 84% noted poor concentration, 80% reported strained peer relationships, 76% observed incomplete assignments, and 70% mentioned frequent absenteeism. The three-way ANOVA results confirmed that child ($p = .014$), family ($p = .001$), and school ($p = .000$) factors significantly affected learning outcomes, with school and family issues having the most impact. Teachers shared that affected children appeared withdrawn, inattentive, and emotionally troubled, showing little energy or enthusiasm in class. The study concluded that exposure to violence seriously impairs behavioural, socio-emotional, and cognitive learning outcomes. Children who were exposed to violence showed damaged peer relationships, risky behaviour, low task completion, poor concentration, and absenteeism. The study provides strong empirical evidence that links exposure to multidimensional violence to quantifiable deficiencies in early learning outcomes, emphasizing the interconnected influence of child, family, and school factors. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should ensure the full implementation and monitoring of existing child protection and discipline guidelines that prohibit corporal punishment in schools. The establishment of clear, enforceable codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms will promote accountability among teachers and administrators while fostering safe learning environments consistent with children's rights frameworks. School administrators and Boards of Management should prioritize physical safety through adequate fencing, teacher recruitment to reduce class sizes, and dedicated supervision during play and transitions. Strengthening the physical and supervisory environment will directly minimize opportunities for peer violence and injury.

Keywords: child abuse, child protection, forms of violence, learning outcome, pre-primary ii children, violence against children

1. Introduction

Globally, special access to high-quality education is required for kids with visual impairments (Mugo, 2013). Despite the revolution in social and legislative policies regarding the provision of equal opportunities for high-quality education and good employment for these individuals, students with visual impairments still lag behind their sighted peers in school (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; UNCRPD, 2018). Research from throughout the world has shown that one of the greatest approaches to solving the problem of these students' lack of access to high-quality education is to incorporate Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) into teaching.

1.1 Background to the Study

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines violence against children as "all forms of physical or mental violence, including sexual abuse," against a child (UNICEF, 200). Child maltreatment, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect committed by parents and other adults in positions of authority, is the most common form of violence against infants and younger children. Preventing violence against children is critical for children's development and academic achievement because violence can be traumatic. The trauma that it inflicts on children can be severe, with long-lasting effects. Therefore, preventing violence is crucial in ensuring children are learning and acquiring the skills, knowledge, and values required to attain expected learning outcomes and realize their optimal development. In certain circumstances, levels of abuse or the prospect of violent action are sufficient to keep children out of the classroom, limiting or eliminating development opportunities, with all its advantages for society and the individual (Chufamo *et al.*, 2020).

Physical abuse of children was linked in Germany to greater levels of stress among parents (Geprags *et al.*, 2023). Female sex, the use of physical force against children, and parental awareness of child abuse were all associated with increased parental stress during the epidemic. Violence in the home, school, and community is a cycle that spreads from one location to the next (Englander *et al.*, 2017). The first is ensuring that every child has full access to their human rights. Secondly, evaluating the predisposing factors that are more likely to expose children to violence (Trickey *et al.*, 2021) is critical. Once the child is victimized and exposed to violence, there is a need for action and measures for the aftermath. For example, children who have experienced violence may isolate themselves from other children and lose interest in hobbies and after-school activities, jeopardizing their right to leisure, play, and relaxation.

In Africa, every school has pupils who have been victims of violence (Katsiyannis *et al.*, 2018). This violence includes, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, and neglect, most of which occur in the home. According to a UNICEF-funded survey conducted in Congo in 2020, seven out of ten teenagers between the ages of 12 and 18 experienced verbal or psychological abuse at school or online. Three out of ten pupils and four out of ten students, respectively, experienced physical and sexual abuse. In South Africa, the Safe to Learn Call to Action has been implemented to solve the issues of violence against children (Hillis, Mercy & Saul, 2017). According to research by Richter *et al.* (2018), more than half of all children and two-thirds of school-age children reported experiencing violence in their homes. All types of violence were more common among poorer and more disadvantaged populations, and there were clear disparities in how young and old people were exposed to, experienced, and perpetrated violence.

In nearly half (47%) of primary school students in Lower, Uganda, reported having been the victims of peer violence (physical, emotional, or sexual) at some point in their lives (Wandera *et al.*, 2017). There were similar and overlapping factors that were strongly associated with both physical and emotional aggression. These included not living with one's biological parents, working for money, experiencing inter-parental violence, and

having supportive school staff. According to the 2019 Violence against Children (VAC) Survey Report, nearly half of both males and females witnessed physical violence in their households as children. However, these studies have not established how violence against children relates to learning outcomes in terms of performance and socio-emotional skills among children at the preschool level. Notwithstanding, the studies targeted older children of primary and secondary school age. To provide chances for everyone to have a quality, inclusive, and equitable lifelong education, Kenya is trying to accomplish Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 (McGreal, 2017). However, despite the passing of the legislation and the initiatives taken to prevent, curtail, and end violence against children, violence is still on the rise and pervasive in many areas of Kenya.

Children in Kitui County are sexually, physically, and emotionally mistreated; some are abandoned, neglected, abducted, placed on the streets, or made to work as children (Miriti, 2021). A study examined the function of informal community-based approaches for Mwingi Central Sub-County's child protection (Kithome *et al.*, 2021). The number of children in need of security in the study area was high. Nonetheless, this study only focused on child protection linked to the community approach. Most studies and research that have been carried out locally mostly focused on primary schools and failed to specifically cover children in preschool. However, little is known regarding the prevalence and predisposing factors leading to violence against children, particularly in Kitui County, where violence against children is prevalent (Kithome *et al.*, 2021). According to this study, physical harm to a child includes beating, punching, shaking, spanking, biting, burning, suffocating, and other forms of intentional physical abuse.

2. Statement of the Problem

Violence against young children within school, family, and community settings remains a persistent global and national concern, despite the existence of extensive child protection frameworks. UNICEF's worldwide campaign to eradicate violence in and around schools and Kenya's strong legal and policy tools, such as the Children Act, the Children Bill (2021), the Sexual Offences Act (2006), and the National Children Policy (2010), are just two examples of the national and international stakeholders that continue to fund child protection initiatives. Evidence, however, shows that violence against children is nevertheless pervasive and, in certain situations, growing, especially among vulnerable age groups. While regional studies have focused on teenagers, longitudinal patterns, or secondary school populations, international research has typically focused on single domains such as community sports, parental stress, or peer interactions. At the local level, records from Kitui County that are currently accessible show that a sizable percentage of people in need of protection from sexual, emotional, and physical abuse are young children. These studies, however, are primarily descriptive and policy-focused, providing little scientific research on the particular characteristics that make pre-primary children more vulnerable to violence or the degree to which such violence affects learning outcomes during early childhood education. A crucial knowledge gap is the

lack of context-specific, empirical data connecting characteristics that predispose preschoolers to violence with their academic performance. Efforts to improve early learning outcomes and bolster child protection measures remain dispersed and inadequately targeted in the absence of such evidence.

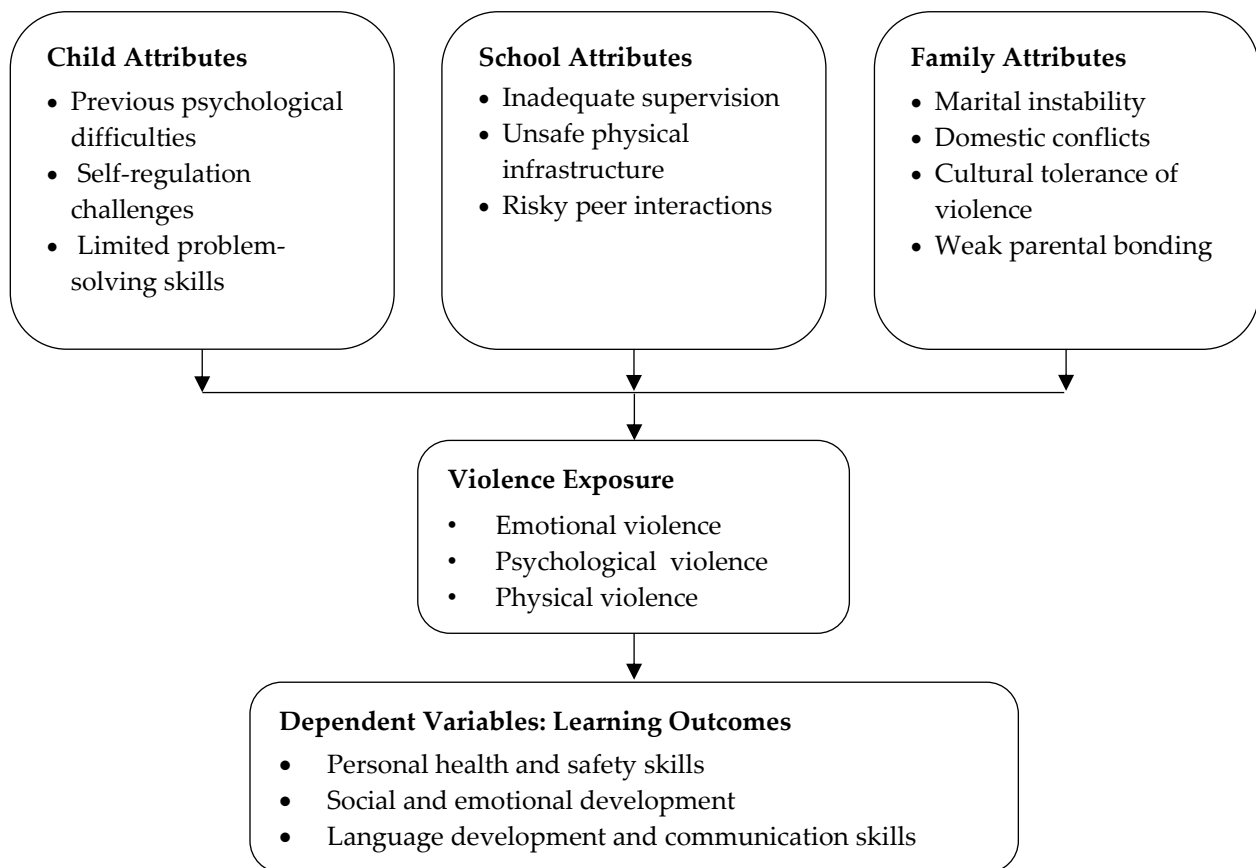
2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of violence against pre-primary II school children on attainment of learning outcomes in Kitui County.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework that demonstrates the interconnection of variables of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical traditions: Culture of Violence Theory (CVT) and Family Systems Theory (FST). The integration of these frameworks provides a multi-level explanatory lens for understanding how structural, relational, and

developmental processes interact to shape children's exposure to violence and subsequent learning outcomes.

2.2 Culture of Violence Theory

Culture of Violence Theory, advanced by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967), posits that violence is not merely an individual behavioural anomaly but may be embedded within social norms, instructional practices, and value systems that legitimize aggressive conduct under certain circumstances. Within sub-cultures where violence is normalized as discipline, control, or conflict resolution, individuals learn and internalize such behaviour as acceptable responses. The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its capacity to explain how macro-level cultural norms and institutional practices may indirectly predispose pre-primary children to violence. In contexts where corporal punishment, harsh discipline or gendered power hierarchies are socially tolerated, children may experience violence as part of everyday socialization. These normative structures may operate within both family and school environments. However, while Culture of Violence Theory explains structural normalization of aggression, it does not sufficiently account for micro-level relational dynamics within households. It also does not directly address developmental consequences for early learners.

2.3 Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory, developed by Bowen (1974), conceptualizes the family as an interdependent emotional unit in which changes affecting one member reverberate across the entire system. The theory emphasizes relational patterns, emotional regulation, communication structures, and intergenerational transmission of behaviour. Within this framework, violence is understood not as an isolated act but as an outcome of dysfunctional relational processes within the family system. Exposure to domestic conflicts, instability, neglect, or inconsistent caregiving may disrupt a child's emotional security, regulatory capacity, and cognitive engagement. For the pre-primary children, whose socio-emotional and cognitive systems are still developing, such disturbances may impair classroom participation, language acquisition, and problem-solving abilities. Family Systems Theory, therefore, provides a developmental bridge linking exposure to violence with observable learning outcomes. Nonetheless, FST focuses primarily on intra-family processes and may underemphasize broader cultural and institutional forces shaping family behaviour.

2.4 Influence of Violence against Pre-primary School Children on Attainment of Learning Outcomes

The general school climate is harmed by the uncertainty and anxiety that violence in schools fosters, and students' rights to learn in a secure, non-threatening environment are violated. If children do not grow up in a violent-free environment, schools will not be effective as centres of learning and socialization (UNESCO, 2017). Bullying can have severe consequences for both the victim and the offender. Both the bully and the

victimized student experience aggravated interpersonal issues and inadequate academic performance as a result of the cycle of hostility and intimidation. Bullying is viewed by the UN Study on Violence against Children (2018) as a pattern of behaviour rather than a singular incident. Bullying that is verbal in nature is the most prevalent and, if uncontrolled, can progress to physical violence. According to the study, almost all bullying is sexual or gender-based and is intended to force kids to comply with societal norms, especially those that are thought to define traditional roles for men and women.

A meta-analysis by Devries *et al.* (2018) established that exposure to physical, sexual, or emotional violence during childhood significantly affects various educational outcomes, including school attendance, grade repetition, and academic performance. The findings demonstrated a clear correlation between experiences of violence and poor learning achievements. However, the study did not disaggregate findings by specific early childhood age groups, leaving a critical gap regarding the effect of violence on pre-primary learners. Furthermore, the review did not address school-specific factors such as teacher behavior, peer interaction, and institutional responses that may mediate learning outcomes in younger children.

Lumadi (2024) investigated the impact of school violence on learner participation in South African secondary schools. The study revealed that violence, particularly bullying and corporal punishment, adversely affected learners' concentration, attendance, and classroom engagement. These findings underscore how violent school environments hinder effective learning. Nevertheless, the study focused on secondary schools, overlooking the unique developmental vulnerabilities of pre-primary learners. Thus, there remains a need to understand how similar school-based violence influences foundational learning skills among younger children in early learning centers.

Clarke *et al.* (2023) analyzed how violence disrupts educational institutions and diminishes learning attainment. The study, conducted in conflict-affected regions, established that violence leads to school dropouts, absenteeism, and poor academic performance. While relevant in demonstrating the destructive role of violence on learning, the study's focus on large-scale armed violence differs from the daily experiences of school-based or domestic violence faced by children in non-conflict settings such as Kitui County. Moreover, it did not address developmental outcomes in early childhood education.

In the Kenyan context, Njoroge *et al.* (2023) explored the correlation between exposure to domestic violence and the academic performance of pupils in public primary schools within informal settlements in Nairobi County. The study concluded that children exposed to domestic violence performed poorly in school compared to their peers from stable homes. Although this study highlighted the connection between violence and learning outcomes, it concentrated on primary school pupils rather than pre-primary learners. Additionally, it did not investigate school-level factors or consider early childhood learning domains such as social-emotional development or communication abilities.

According to Gichuba (2017), exposure to domestic violence has a considerable damaging effect on learning environments. Children who are exposed to these behaviours at home are likely to imitate them in the classroom, especially when peers are present. Teachers must therefore address how young children who see domestic violence exhibit appropriate imitation. Early exposure to violence can affect a child's ability to concentrate, complete their schooling, and perform poorly on tests of their linguistic, social, and physical abilities. Some kids may choose to stay home out of fear for what might happen if they leave home and go to school, while others may choose to do so to protect their parents, particularly the victim.

In the Mbooni East sub-county, a study on the impact of child abuse on academic achievement was done by Mutheu (2014). A descriptive survey was utilized in the study to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys with structured closed-ended and open-ended questions were among the research tools utilized in the study; they had a 100% return rate. The results showed that 50 teachers (66%) identified abused children as those who showed up to school hungry, dirty, wearing inadequate clothing, persistently missing class, failing to finish or perform their homework, and acting aggressively. The data also showed that orphanhood, neglect, and verbal abuse are all included in the definition of child abuse. The study's findings showed that the cognitive effects of child abuse lead to learning challenges and subpar academic performance. Learners who had been subjected to abuse had poor cognitive scores and showed less academic progress. The current study is also looking for a duplicate study in a different local area, Kitui County.

Kimeto (2022) investigated the relationship between domestic abuse and standard one students' academic achievement in Sotik, Bomet County. The study looked at the academic achievement of both domestic violence-affected and non-violent households' children, as well as the factors that contribute to domestic violence, before examining the frequency of domestic violence in school attendance. The investigation applied a descriptive survey research design. The sample consisted of 38 parents, 10 local officials, 38 first-graders, and 17 first-graders' instructors from public primary schools in Sotik Sub-County. According to the survey, 64.7% of students reported domestic abuse to their teachers every day, which had an impact on students' attendance at school and academic performance.

3. Methods

3.1 Study Locale

This study was conducted in Kitui County, made up of eight sub-counties that make up the region: Kitui West, Kitui Central, Kitui Rural, Kitui South, Kitui East, Mwingi North, Mwingi West, and Mwingi Central. The population is estimated to be 1,136,187 (KBS Census Report, 2019). The choice to conduct the research in this Sub-County was made in response to the alarm raised by the Kenya News Agency article for Information for Development (2022) that shows that half of the Kenyan children suffer violence. The

violence children experience in the home indicates that children are exposed to physical violence, emotional violence, and physical assaults by their parents, caregivers, or other adult relatives (Kenya News Agency, 2022). In Kitui County, it was documented that land disputes and poverty, leading to violence, are frequent (Center for Rights Education and Awareness, CREAW, 2019). Such forms of violence as defilement, neglect and physical abuse, which are also associated with violence against children, were recently reported in Kitui County in the year 2019 (CREAW, 2019).

3.2 Study Design

The study adopted an analytical cross-sectional research design. This design enabled the systematic examination of statistical associations among child, family, and school attributes, exposure to violence, and learning outcomes among pre-primary II children in Kitui County at a single point in time. An analytical cross-sectional design is appropriate where the objective is to determine relationships among variables as they naturally occur without manipulation (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Unlike experimental or longitudinal designs, this approach does not establish causal directionality but permits the identification of statistically significant associations between independent and dependent variables.

3.3 Study Population, Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.3.1 Study Population

The study's target population was 34,526 pre-primary II children and 3006 pre-primary schoolteachers in 1,874 public pre-primary schools, and 34,526 parents/caregivers of these children in Kitui County. According to the Ministry of Education, there are 2,219 pre-primary schools (1,874 public, 345 private) in Kitui County, with a total enrolment of 63,045 children (28,519 - PP1, 34,526 - PP2), and 3,724 teachers (3006 in public schools, 718 in private schools) (Basic Education Statistical Booklet, 2019). The study focused only on the public schools (Table 1).

Table 1: Target Population

Pre-primary schools			Total
	Private	Public	
	345	1,874	2,219
Pre-primary school children aged between 4-6 years both in public and private schools			
	Female	Male	Total
PP1	15300	15,691	30991
PP2	17,512	19,074	36,586
Grand Total			67,577
Pre-primary school children aged between 4-6 years in public centres			
PP1	14,175	14,344	28,272
PP2	16,514	18,012	34,526
Total			63,045
Pre-primary school Teachers by category of centres			
	Private centres	Public centres	

	3,006	718	3,724
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Source: Basic Education Statistical Booklet, 2019.

3.3.2 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size.

Stratified sampling was used, in which the population was stratified into three groups: schools, students, and teachers. Kitui County was identified based on several factors, including existing reports and data highlighting the prevalence of violence against children in the region, as well as the availability of resources and infrastructure for conducting the study. Stratified sampling boosts the sample's chances of being informative. There are a total of 1,874 public pre-primary schools in Kitui. However, a sample of 50 pre-primary schools was chosen using the simple random method for the study. The 50 schools were selected proportionately from each and every sub-county in Kitui County. Children were randomly selected from lists provided by class instructors in each designated pre-primary school. Random sampling was used to ensure that all eligible students had an equal chance of participation. After selecting 50 pre-primary schools, a total of 300 pre-primary II children aged 4–6 years were chosen. Teachers first identified children who met the inclusion criteria, considering age, class, and parental consent. Parents or guardians were informed about the study and provided written consent for their child's participation. When the number of eligible children exceeded the required sample, teachers implemented random selection using the drawing lots method to ensure unbiased participation. Teachers documented the selected children and shared their information with the researcher for coordination. A total of 300 parents were recruited through snowball sampling to participate in the study.

Further, the study involved 50 pre-primary schools and 300 children chosen by teachers using simple random sampling. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select a total of 50 teachers from the sampled schools. Purposive sampling was employed to select all the 8 Childrens' officers from each of the 8 sub-counties (Kitui West, Kitui Central, Kitui Rural, Kitui South, Kitui East, Mwingi North, Mwingi West and Mwingi Central) in Kitui. Purposive sampling, as per Merriam and Tisdell (2015), is when a researcher selects a dedicated group of people who can supply the data needed for the study. Table 2 gives a summary of the sample size.

Table 2: Sample Size

Participants	Target population	Sample	Percentage
Pre-primary II teachers	500	50	10.0%
Pre-primary II children	3,000	300	10.0%
Caregivers/parents	3,000	300	10.0%
Children officers	8	8	100.0%
Total	3,508	658	18.75%

From Table 2, at least 10% of the target population was chosen from each strata. Gay (2006) recommends a sample size of 10%-30% of the population for descriptive investigations. The final sample translated to a total of 658 participants (50 pre-primary

school teachers, 300 pre-primary school children aged between 4-6 years, 300 parents/caregivers and 8 children's officers).

3.4 Research instruments

Data were gathered using a child learning outcome checklist, questionnaire for teachers and children's officers, screening tool for violence exposure and Focus Group Discussion for parents/caregivers. A child was observed for 30 minutes in order to evaluate their socio-emotional development, language development, personal health and safety, and communication abilities. Scores were given on a scale of learning outcomes. The researcher prepared the observation environment, ensuring it was conducive to unbiased assessment. Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were administered to the parents or caregivers of the children who were identified and selected with the help of teachers. For this study, the FDGs helped to capture in-depth information about the nature of violence children experience at home. Using FDGs was ideal for gathering in-depth knowledge that could not be collected using questionnaires alone.

3.5 Piloting

In order to pre-test a set of questionnaires and determine whether they are appropriate for the respondent, as well as to improve the validity and reliability of the instruments, a pilot test was carried out in two public primary schools in Kitui County with the participation of two teachers, four pre-primary students, and four parents. The schools were carefully chosen to guarantee that they are comparable to the schools where the real study occurred. The pilot test was used by the researcher to ascertain whether survey respondents have any reservations about adhering to the study's criteria throughout the survey, the length of time required for completion, or the confirmation of any other unforeseen issues, such as advantages and harm. The final report did not contain any information about the pilot project's participating schools.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Research Tools

Content validity was established through expert review by two senior scholars in early childhood education and one child protection specialized. Feedback informed refinement to item clarity, cultural appropriateness, and construct alignment. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient during the pilot phase. All multi-item scales demonstrated acceptable reliability thresholds ($\alpha \geq .70$). Triangulation across teachers, parents, and children's officers strengthened construct validity by reducing single-source bias. The reliability of the questionnaires for teachers and the violence exposure screening checklist was determined using the test-retest procedure. At two different times, the researcher conducted the same study with the same respondents, using the same instrument, over two weeks. The findings of the two tests were compared using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to determine whether the contents of the questionnaire consistently elicited the same responses when delivered to the same group at various periods. Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each of the instruments using

the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25). The obtained reliability coefficients were as follows: Teachers' questionnaire: $\alpha = 0.83$, and Violence exposure screening checklist: $\alpha = 0.79$. All the coefficients were above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, as recommended by Cohen and Marion (2000), indicating that the instruments were internally consistent and reliable for data collection. Instruments with slightly lower coefficients were revised by rewording ambiguous items before final administration to the full sample.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher visited the chosen schools during the first week of the study and requested permission from the principals to carry out research there. The researcher also provided the participants with a permission document that explains their rights and privacy. During the second week of the study, the researcher returned to the selected schools to distribute questionnaires and collect data from the parents of selected students and preschool teachers. The researcher travelled to other schools to interview instructors and parents of selected students, a procedure that took at least one month. The researcher administered cognitive and socio-emotional tests to identified children.

3.8 Data Preparation and Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) to determine prevalence patterns. Chi-square tests were used to examine associations between categorical independent variables and violence exposure. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to assess mean differences in learning outcomes across categories of violence exposure and attribute groupings. All tests were conducted at a 95% confidence level ($P=0.05$). Qualitative data from focus group discussions and interviews were analysed thematically using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns related to child protection mechanisms. Upon collection of data, editing, coding and classification were done as guided by the study objectives. Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. In order to answer the following research questions, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviation, and means were calculated from the 5-point Likert scale. The analysis also focused on the following null hypothesis: *H0: There is no statistically significant mean difference among child, family, and school attributes predisposing children to violence with respect to pre-primary II children's attainment of learning outcomes.* The hypothesis was tested using a three-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to test whether there was a statistical mean difference between groups of variables (child attributes, family attributes, and school attributes predisposing children to violence) with respect to the outcome (attainment of learning outcomes) in Kitui County. Additionally, qualitative analysis techniques such as thematic analysis were used to identify common themes or patterns in the narratives provided by caregivers about the violence experienced by the children. Finally, the qualitative data were presented using in-text

narratives and verbatim quotations and were organised according to the study objectives. The data from the screening tool were also cross-referenced with other data collected in the study, such as demographic information, family attributes, and school characteristics, to explore potential correlations or associations. Table 3.4 shows the summary of data analysis as per the objectives of the study.

4. Results

4.1 General Characteristics of the Sample

This section presents the response rate and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age and highest level of education. The purpose of analysing this background information is to provide context for interpreting the main findings of the study. The demographic data were collected using Section A of the questionnaire and analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in tables and explained narratively. Table 4.1 presents the response rate for all categories of participants involved in the study, namely teachers, pre-primary II children, caregivers/parents, and children officers. The study achieved a final sample of 628 respondents after 15 caregivers/parents were unreachable, leading to the subsequent exclusion of 15 pre-primary II children from the study, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Response Rate

Participants	Target population	Initial sample	Final number of participants	Percentage
Pre-primary II teachers	500	50	50	100.0%
Pre-primary II children	3,000	300	285	95.0%
Caregivers/parents	3,000	300	285	95.0%
Children officers	8	8	8	100.0%
Total	3,508	658	628	95.4%

Table 3 indicates that the study attained a notably high response rate, with a total return rate of 628 (95.4%). All targeted pre-primary II teachers (50, 100.0%) and children officers (8, 100.0%) fully participated in the study. The response rate among pre-primary II children was 285 (95.0%), as was the rate among their caregivers/parents, also at 285 (95.0%). These finding highlights that the consistently high participation across groups reflects strong cooperation from respondents, thereby enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the collected data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) indicate that a response rate exceeding 70% is adequate for analysis; therefore, the 95.4% achieved in this study is more than sufficient. A minor limitation was that 15 (5.0%) of the targeted children and parents did not participate, potentially due to absenteeism or refusal to consent. However, this minor shortfall did not substantially impact the validity of the

results. Similar studies corroborate this finding. Wamahiu (2015) highlighted that elevated response rates in educational surveys improve result accuracy and reduce sampling bias. Orodho (2016) noted that robust involvement from both teachers and parents in child-centered research indicates a significant commitment to children's welfare issues. The response rate in this study aligns with prior research and reinforces the validity of subsequent analyses.

Table 4 presents the demographic profile of the children's officers who participated in the study.

Table 4: Demographic Information of Children Officers

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 yrs	0	0.0%
26–30 yrs	0	0.0%
31–35 yrs	4	50.0%
36–40 yrs	1	12.5%
41–45 yrs	0	0.0%
46–50 yrs	3	37.5%
Total	8	100.0%
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	6	75.0%
Female	2	25.0%
Total	8	100.0%
Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	8	100%

As shown in Table 4, the majority of officers were aged between 31–35 years 4(50.0%), followed by those aged 46–50 years 3(37.5%). Only 1(12.5%) was in the 36–40 age bracket, while no officer fell below 31 years. Positively, this distribution shows that most officers were mature adults, likely with considerable professional and life experience, which could enrich the insights they provided. On the negative side, the absence of younger officers under 30 years suggests limited generational diversity in perspectives, which may affect the integration of newer approaches to child protection. In terms of gender, 6(75.0%) were male while only 2(25.0%) were female, indicating a gender imbalance. This imbalance could limit female perspectives in handling sensitive child welfare cases, particularly those involving gender-based violence. In terms of qualifications, all officers 8(100.0%) held at least a Bachelor's degree, which is a strong positive outcome as it reflects adequate professional training and capacity to deal with child protection issues. These findings are consistent with Mweru (2010), who noted that educational qualifications among child welfare professionals are critical for effective service delivery. However, the gender imbalance mirrors findings by Njenga (2018), who observed that social protection services in Kenya remain male-dominated, thereby risking underrepresentation of female voices in child welfare interventions.

Table 5: Demographic Information of Pre-primary II School Children under Study

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage	Age Bracket
5 years	171	60.0%	5 years
6 years	114	40.0%	6 years
Total	285	100.0%	Total
Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Gender
Male	138	48.42%	Male
Female	147	51.58%	Female
Total	285	100.0%	Total

Table 5 indicates that the majority of children were aged 5 years, comprising 171 (60.0%) of the sample, while those aged 6 years accounted for 114 (40.0%). This distribution is anticipated, as PP2 generally enrolls students aged 5 to 6 years. This age distribution validates that the study appropriately targeted the intended demographic. A total of 147 participants (51.58%) identified as female, while 138 participants (48.42%) identified as male. This suggests a minor over-representation of females relative to males. Although this distribution remains balanced, the increased female participation may suggest that findings on vulnerability could be more reflective of experiences reported by or concerning girls. The findings align with UNESCO (2019), which observed an improvement in gender parity in early childhood education in Kenya, with certain regions reporting higher female enrolment than male.

4.2 Distribution of Children by Learning Outcome from the Checklist

The Distribution of Children by Learning Outcome from the Checklist is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Children's Learning Outcome

Indicator (abbreviated)	1 Very low	2 Low	3 Some extent	4 Great extent	5 Greatest extent	Mean	SD
Manages personal activities	0 (0.0%)	86 (30.2%)	114 (40.0%)	57 (20.0%)	29 (10.2%)	3.10	0.94
Demonstrates caution (stairs, sharp objects)	0 (0.0%)	57 (20.0%)	114 (40.0%)	86 (30.2%)	29 (10.2%)	3.30	0.93
Knows/adheres to basic safety (strangers)	114 (40.0%)	86 (30.2%)	57 (20.0%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.00	0.95
Responds verbally to greetings	29 (10.2%)	29 (10.2%)	171 (60.0%)	57 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.90	0.81
Completes tasks assigned by teachers	29 (10.2%)	171 (60.0%)	57 (20.0%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.30	0.80
Demonstrates responsibility by taking pride in assigned duties	0 (0.0%)	86 (30.2%)	29 (10.2%)	114 (40.0%)	57 (20.0%)	3.50	0.97
Sits quietly, listens, collaborates	29 (10.2%)	29 (10.2%)	143 (50.2%)	86 (30.2%)	0 (0.0%)	3.00	0.85
Concentrates in group/independent tasks	29 (10.2%)	171 (60.0%)	57 (20.0%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.30	0.80

Attempts to solve problems; asks for help if needed	57 (20.0%)	114 (40.0%)	86 (30.2%)	0 (0.0%)	29 (10.2%)	2.40	1.00
Perseveres in challenging activities	29 (10.2%)	143 (50.2%)	29 (10.2%)	86 (30.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.60	0.93
Plays with other children	29 (10.2%)	114 (40.0%)	114 (40.0%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.50	0.84
Takes part in group work; shares materials	0 (0.0%)	57 (20.0%)	171 (60.0%)	29 (10.2%)	29 (10.2%)	3.10	0.80
Offers help to peers	57 (20.0%)	143 (50.2%)	57 (20.0%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.20	0.89
Understands/responds to stories & discussions	86 (30.2%)	143 (50.2%)	57 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1.90	0.75
Uses gestures, facial expressions, eye contact	114 (40.0%)	114 (40.0%)	29 (10.2%)	29 (10.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2.00	0.96

The results presented in Table 6 reveal that children exhibited moderate achievement in terms of learning outcomes, with the majority of items scoring slightly below the midpoint ($\approx 2.8/5$). Some indicators, such as “demonstrates responsibility by taking pride in assigned duties, such as organizing and putting away toys independently” (mean = 3.50, SD = 0.97) and “demonstrates caution in surroundings” (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.93), exhibited relatively stronger performance. Several indicators exhibited low scores, specifically “understands/responds to stories and discussions” (mean = 1.90, SD = 0.75), “knows basic safety regarding strangers” (mean = 2.00, SD = 0.95), and “offers help to peers” (mean = 2.20, SD = 0.89). These findings indicate deficiencies in language and communication, social cooperation, and safety awareness, which are essential areas for comprehensive development. The findings imply that pre-primary children demonstrated moderate learning outcomes, with relative strengths in responsibility and personal safety behaviours, but notable weaknesses in language development, social cooperation, problem-solving, and safety awareness. These results corroborate findings by UNICEF (2021), which showed that exposure to violence hampers children’s socio-emotional growth and language acquisition.

4.3 Influence of Violence Against Pre-primary II School Children on Attainment of Learning Outcomes

Data were analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data on learning outcomes such as literacy, numeracy, and classroom participation were measured on scale and ratio levels. The data were chronologically analyzed based on two phases: univariate and multivariate analysis under the following sub-sections:

4.3.1 Univariate Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were first computed to summarize the children’s Learning Outcomes as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Children's Learning Outcomes

Indicator	Mean	SD	Rank
Manages personal activities	3.10	0.94	3
Demonstrates caution (stairs/objects)	3.30	0.93	2
Knows basic safety (strangers)	2.00	0.95	9
Responds verbally to greetings	2.90	0.81	5
Finishes responsibilities	2.30	0.80	7
Takes pride in duties	3.50	0.97	1
Listens and collaborates	3.00	0.85	4
Concentrates on tasks	2.30	0.80	8
Problem solving/asks for help	2.40	1.00	6

Table 7 presents teachers' ratings indicating that children's ability to take pride in their duties received the highest score (mean = 3.50, SD = 0.97), followed by their demonstration of caution with stairs and objects (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.93). This study indicates that, despite experiencing violence, some children maintain functional skills and a sense of responsibility, potentially reflecting resilience or protective factors present in supportive households and educational environments. Weaknesses were observable in domains directly associated with socio-emotional and cognitive functioning. Children exhibited the lowest scores in safety awareness regarding strangers (mean = 2.00, SD = 0.95), task concentration (mean = 2.30, SD = 0.80), and completion of responsibilities (mean = 2.30, SD = 0.80). This indicates that children exposed to violence face difficulties with sustained attention, task completion, and awareness of personal safety, which are essential foundations for early learning. The findings support UNICEF (2014), which indicated that children exposed to violence frequently experience delays in verbal and motor development as a result of impaired concentration and high rates of absenteeism. Gichuba (2017) noted that domestic violence reduces classroom engagement, as children tend to replicate the aggression or withdrawal they witness at home. The present study thus corroborates previous findings regarding cognitive development in children exposed to violence. Teachers were asked to give their views on the effect of violence against children, and the results were analysed descriptively as presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Teachers' Assessment of Learning Impacts (n = 50)

Learning Aspect	Reported Effect	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Participation in class	Very low; children dull and unhappy	45	90.0%
Relationship with peers	Poor social interaction	40	80.0%
Concentration in class	Low; easily distracted; "on and off"	42	84.0%
Completion of assignments	Incomplete or poorly done work	38	76.0%
School attendance	Frequent absenteeism	35	70.0%

The data presented in Table 8 reveal that a significant majority of teachers reported that violence adversely affects learning participation: 45 (90%) observed very low participation, 42 (84%) noted poor concentration, and 40 (80%) indicated strained peer interactions. A total of 38 participants (76%) indicated incomplete assignments, whereas

35 participants (70%) noted frequent absenteeism. Teachers characterise the impacted children as exhibiting dullness and unhappiness, demonstrating a propensity for distraction, and displaying social withdrawal. The implication is that violence results in cumulative learning disadvantages: absenteeism diminishes classroom exposure, poor concentration hinders cognitive processing, and weak peer relationships limit opportunities for social learning. This finding is consistent with Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008), who reported that children exposed to violence frequently suffer from anxiety, sleep disturbances, and attention difficulties, which adversely affect their academic performance. Mutheu (2014) similarly observed that learners who experienced abuse in Mbooni East sub-county often did not complete homework and exhibited diminished academic progress. Such challenges highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to support affected students. By addressing the root causes of these issues, teachers can create a more inclusive environment that fosters both academic and emotional growth.

4.3.2 Multivariate Tests

A three-way ANOVA statistical test was conducted to compare mean differences in learning outcomes across groups categorized by child, family, and school attributes associated with violence based on the following hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant mean difference between child attributes, family attributes and school attributes predisposing children to violence with respect to the pre-primary II children's attainment of learning outcomes.

The ANOVA results in Table 9 indicated exposure to violence significantly affected children's academic performance based on the following hypothesis.

Table 9: ANOVA – Effects of Child, Family, and School Attributes on Learning Outcomes

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Child attributes (A)	12.45	2	6.22	4.35	.014*
Family attributes (B)	20.80	2	10.40	7.25	.001**
School attributes (C)	25.10	1	25.10	17.48	.000***
A × B	9.25	4	2.31	1.61	.172
A × C	11.55	2	5.78	4.02	.019*
B × C	13.75	2	6.88	4.79	.009**
A × B × C	8.10	4	2.03	1.41	.226
Error (Residual)	150.30	120	1.25		
Total	251.30	137			

Key: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

The three-way ANOVA presented in Table 9 indicates that child ($F[2,285]=4.35$, $p = .014$), family ($F[2,285]=7.25$, $p = .001$), and school ($F[2,285]=17.48$, $p = .000$) factors have a significant impact on learning outcomes. School and family attributes exhibited the most substantial effects, whereas the combined effect of the three factors (child, family and school attributes) also demonstrated significance. This affirms that violence is multidimensional, with risks in domestic, educational, and peer environments

interacting to exacerbate harm. Norms such as peer bullying and tolerance for aggression normalise violence within both home and school environments, negatively affecting learning engagement and social behaviours. Children's cognitive attention and socio-emotional development are hampered by dysfunctional family interactions, which include marital instability, strict discipline, and neglect. The cognitive, social, and functional outcomes of pre-primary II children are severely compromised by violence. Attention, work completion, peer cooperation, safety awareness, and school participation are among the main deficiencies. To lessen these effects, protective measures must address both the home and school contexts.

4.3.3 Post ANOVA Effect Size Analysis

Since ANOVA only determines whether mean differences among groups are statistically significant, it was essential to further compute Partial Eta Squared $\{(\eta^2_p = \frac{SS_{Effect}}{SS_{Effect} + SS_{Error}})\}$; where SS Effect =Unexplained variance and SS Error=Unexplained variance} to quantify the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is uniquely explained by each factor, while controlling for each variable in the model and indicating the practical significance of each effect (Table 4.21). The magnitude of the effect was interpreted as 0.01 signifying a small effect, 0.06 showing a moderate effect, and 0.14 as a large effect in line with the guidelines by Cohen (1998).

Table 10: Post ANOVA Effects Size Analysis for Child,
Family, and School Attributes Versus Learning Outcomes

Source	SS	Partial η^2	Effect Size
Child attributes (A)	12.45	0.076	Medium
Family attributes (B)	20.8	0.122	Large
School attributes (C)	25.1	0.143	Large
A × B	9.25	0.058	Medium
A × C	11.55	0.071	Medium
B × C	13.75	0.084	Medium
A × B × C	8.1	0.051	Medium

Table 10 presents results of the computation of partial eta squared, which revealed that school attributes demonstrated the largest magnitude ($\eta^2_p=.143$), followed by family attributes ($\eta^2_p=.122$), also having a large size effect. Nonetheless, child attributes have the medium effect size ($\eta^2_p=.076$) with regard to their association with academic performance. Interestingly, the interaction effects among the three factors and any other interaction between any two of the attributes yielded a moderate effect size. Consistent with the findings from Carlson (2012), this study demonstrated that children experiencing irregular attendance due to family stressors exhibited significantly lower academic performance. This finding supports the work of Kimeto & K'Aol (2018). The study's rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that violence has a significant negative impact on pre-primary learning outcomes, specifically in areas such as concentration, safety skills, and academic responsibility, implying that children from violent

households in Machakos County experienced decreased attendance and lower academic performance, which aligns with the findings from a study by Kimeto and K'Aol (2018). The integration of statistical trends and narrative accounts reveals a distinct pattern: violence negatively impacts various aspects of children's learning. Quantitative data, including ANOVA and descriptive ratings, indicated significant deficits in concentration, task completion, and safety knowledge. In contrast, qualitative data from teachers' reports highlighted issues such as absenteeism, social withdrawal, and language delays. These findings collectively support the conclusion that violence negatively impacts both cognitive and socio-emotional domains. The culture of violence theory elucidates how norms and practices like corporal punishment and bullying normalise violence within educational settings. In contrast, the Family Systems Theory delineates how family instability and harsh disciplinary measures propagate trauma throughout the household, influencing children's educational outcomes. The findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of the study. Table 11 presents a summary of the hypothesis testing and the corresponding conclusions.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that exposure to violence seriously impairs behavioural, socio-emotional, and cognitive learning outcomes. Children who were exposed to violence showed damaged peer relationships, risky behaviour, low task completion, poor concentration, and absenteeism. The study provides strong empirical evidence that links exposure to multidimensional violence to quantifiable deficiencies in early learning outcomes, emphasizing the interconnected influence of child, family, and school factors. The findings support FST by illuminating the relational pathways by which family dysfunction impacts academic achievement and CVT by demonstrating how normalized violent actions impede learning. From a contextual perspective, this shows that pre-primary students in Kitui County are working in settings where violence is a major obstacle to academic success. The creation of trauma-informed curricula, psychological support programmes in schools, and initiatives that target the family and school environments to enhance learning outcomes are all examples of policy implications.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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