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Preprint

'This is a Competition': The Relationship Between Examination Pressure and Gender Violence in Primary Schools in Kenya

Catherine Vanner

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between gender violence in schools and teaching and learning processes in two case study primary schools in Kirinyaga County, Kenya. For seven months in 2015, the following qualitative methods were used: participant observation, individual teacher interviews, individual art-based student interviews and member-check interviews with teachers and students. Findings indicate that examination pressure can directly and indirectly perpetuate gender violence in schools by using corporal punishment and public humiliation as motivational tools and diverting resources from efforts to enhance safety and equality to ever more time for exam preparation.

Highlights

- Examination pressure can contribute to a perpetuation of gender violence in schools;
- Corporal punishment and public humiliation were used as motivational tools to try to enhance students' examination performance;
- Efforts to promote gender equality and protect students from risks of sexual violence were undermined in favour of more time for examination preparation;
- Peer victimization was enhanced by the culture of competition encouraged through the focus on examination performance.

Abbreviations
Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE)
Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE)
Gender Violence in Schools (GVS)
Ministry of Education (MoE)
Net Enrolment Rate (NER)

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, substantial evidence has illustrated the widespread prevalence of gender violence in schools (GVS) in a variety of country and cultural contexts (Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, Westerveld, & Unterhalter, 2016). This research has been most widespread across Sub-Saharan Africa and North America (Leach, 2015). The emerging literature from Sub-Saharan Africa shows that girls and boys in primary and secondary school are often subject to sexual violence and harassment, corporal punishment, and physical and psychological victimization from their teachers and their peers. These forms of GVS are usually accompanied by a reinforcement of traditional gender expectations with the projection of sex-specific roles and behaviour for girls and boys within the overt and hidden curriculum (Dunne, Humphreys, & Leach, 2006). The term 'gender violence' is defined as "physical, verbal, psychological and emotional as well as sexual violence; it also includes the *fear* of violence, both *between* females and males and *among* females or *among* males" (Leach & Humphreys, 2007, p. 53, emphasis in original). There are currently several coexisting movements in international development research and practice: there is a growing recognition of GVS, particularly in Sub-Saharan African, and efforts to eradicate it; there is also a growing devotion to improving learning outcomes. In spite of the developing understanding of GVS, its relationship to teaching and learning processes has mostly been understood in terms of the negative impact of violence on learning. This study takes this body of research further by exploring the two-way relationship between GVS and teaching and learning processes, the latter defined as the teacher and student practices, behaviour and support systems that facilitate curriculum delivery, knowledge acquisition and the development of academic and social skills. A multiple qualitative case study was conducted of two primary schools in Kirinyaga County, Kenya. For seven months in 2015, the following qualitative methods were used: participant observation, individual teacher interviews, individual art-based student interviews and member-check interviews with teachers and students. Using a Foucauldian analysis of power and institutions, this research explores the influence that learning processes can have on the perpetuation of GVS, finding that examination pressure can directly and indirectly perpetuate GVS by using corporal punishment and public humiliation of low performers as motivational tools and diverting resources from efforts to enhance safety and equality to ever more time for exam preparation. While GVS is rooted in interconnected structural factors such as poverty, patriarchy, power discrepancies and other

forms of discrimination, marginalization and vulnerability, examination pressure emerged as an element enhancing its prevalence in the two case study schools.

2. Literature Review

Gender violence is increasingly recognized as prevalent in schools around the world, leading to a proliferation of projects and tools seeking to reduce its pervasiveness. While more implicitly gendered than sexual violence, physical and psychological violence are gendered forms of violence because they reinforce gender regimes in schools by influencing what are acceptable norms of behaviour for boys and girls and determining how teachers and students perform gender roles and exercise power and authority (Humphreys, 2008). Gender violence in schools can be perpetrated by and against a range of individuals. Female teachers, and male and female students can all be both victims and perpetrators (Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Saito, 2013), demonstrating that these categories are not mutually exclusive. While certain forms of gender violence, such as sexual violence, target primarily girls and are most frequently perpetrated by male teachers and students (Bisika, Ntata, & Konyani, 2009), other forms of violence, such as corporal punishment, are more frequently and severely inflicted upon boys by both male and female teachers (Dunne, 2007). GVS is a phenomenon that is made possible through structural social and cultural forces including poverty and gender. Gender norms and expectations are socially constructed and learned. Leach (2003) writes that schools are key sites where boys and girls "are learning about and adopting what they see as conventional male and female behaviour. Boys may learn that the violence they witness in the wider world is acceptable within institutions, even in those where they are supposed to acquire social responsibility, tolerance and respect for others, and girls may learn to accept it" (p. 389). Students may internalize violence as normal or even expected, particularly when they see teachers participating in, condoning or ignoring instances of violence in school. Social expectations or acceptance of violence also interacts with broader structural norms of masculinity and femininity and forms of systemic violence such as poverty, which may constrain students' ability to respond effectively and appropriately to violence they experience. For example, Kenway and Fitzclarence (2006) assert that for marginalized boys living in poverty, risky and violent behaviour often provides one of the only ways of obtaining status and cultural resources, particularly in contexts where aggressive and violent acts are often used to gain and maintain status, reputations and resources, such as through practices that include corporal punishment. As learned and practiced behaviours,

constructs and expectations of femininity and masculinity are fluid, susceptible to change and fluctuation based on external influences, social trends and individual agency.

Connell (1996) posits that multiple masculinities exist within any given social setting. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant male role normally associated with the term 'masculinity,' where a man's strength is equated with power, control and superiority. Hegemonic masculinity often exercises power and dominance over the other forms of masculinity, in addition to different forms of femininity. Masculinity is a means of exercising power relations that, Foucault indicates, operate at the micro levels of society and by so doing make possible power structures such as patriarchy (Sawicki, 1991). While hegemonic masculinity may not be inherently violent, the emphasis on dominance and superiority legitimizes violence by giving the boy or man the authority – at least in his mind and often socially supported - to act however he wants (Jakobsen, 2014). Physical aggression exercised in response to a minor insult or disturbance enables boys to maintain and reinforce their expression and position of hegemonic masculinity in the school in relation to other boys and girls. In contrast, as Leach and Humphreys write, girls' exercise of violence is often unrecognized "because girls are generally perceived as victims, and dominant understandings of femininity do not associate girls with violence" (2007, p. 56). Different forms of femininity also interact with violence, perhaps most obviously through relational aggression and peer victimization, where girls establish dominance and power among themselves through the creation and perpetuation of hierarchies among peer groups within the school system.

The first national survey of violence against female and male children in Kenya concluded violence against children is a serious problem (UNICEF, 2012). It was reported that, among respondents 13 to 17 years old, 11% of females and 4% of males experienced sexual violence and 49% of females and 48% of males experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Among females and males who reported being physically assaulted by an authority figure prior to age 18, teachers were the most common perpetrators of physical violence by a public authority figure. Friends/classmates comprised 20% of perpetrators of sexual violence reported by females and 35% of sexual violence reported by males (Ibid.). These findings are supported by other reports of violence in Kenyan schools that have appeared during the past decade (Chege, 2006; Parkes et al., 2013; Saito, 2013). In the literature, gender violence in schools is often classified into three types: corporal punishment, sexual violence and

harassment and peer victimization and bullying (Leach, Dunne, & Salvi, 2014; RTI International, 2016). Many recent studies in Kenya have concentrated on documenting the widespread sexual violence and harassment in schools (Abuya, Onsomu, Moore, & Sagwe, 2012; Ruto, 2009; Wane, 2009). While other forms of violence in schools in Kenya have not received as much attention, in a study of 45 Kenyan schools by Parkes et al. (2013) found that 86% of girls had experienced some form of violence in the past year and that physical and psychological violence were more prominently reported than sexual violence, particularly as forms of punishment.

Globally, there is significant evidence from a variety of contexts that school violence is negatively correlated with students' learning outcomes at both primary and secondary levels, among other detrimental social and developmental implications for affected students. Studies of mathematics performance on TIMSS data in over 47 different countries found that, while the extent to which school violence relates to achievement varies in different educational systems, it is consistent that school violence is associated with poor student achievement (Engel, Rutkowski, & Rutkowski, 2009; Rutkowski, Rutkowski, & Engel, 2013). Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, literacy and numeracy scores from 2007 Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) data found that schools with higher rates of reported violence were correlated with lower test scores across eight SACMEQ education systems. The SACMEQ study included an analysis of Kenyan schools, where performance in both mathematics and reading was lower among girls and boys in high violence schools than their peers in low violence schools (Saito, 2013). Country-specific studies from Kenya, Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania demonstrate that GVS leads to increased student disengagement, absenteeism and risk of dropout (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Abuya, Onsomu, & Moore, 2012; Bisika, Ntata, & Konyani, 2009; Dunne, Sabates, Bosumtwi-sam, & Owusu, 2013; Kuleana Children's Rights Centre, 1999). It is therefore problematic not only because of its negative effect on students' well-being and development, but also because it hampers academic learning and performance and increases rates of absenteeism and dropout.

2.1 High-Stakes Testing

'High-stakes testing' is a term used to describe standardized tests that determine students' options to proceed to higher levels of education. The practice of high stakes testing contains a paradox; the purpose is to provide a measurement that can be used to assess and enhance learning and that serious consequences will provide motivation for teachers and students, but the

process can lead to "activities that are educationally unproductive and may actually undermine the integrity of the system" (Braun, Kanjee, Bettinger, Kremer, 2006, p. 3). As test anxiety has been shown to have a negative effect on achievement, the anxiety that results from pressure for increased examination results can lead to reduced educational outcomes (Ocak & Yamac, 2013). A core component of the Kenyan education system and a determinant of school climate and learning processes is the emphasis on examinations as the primary mechanism for measuring learning and determining student advancement from one level of education to the next (Buchmann, 1999; Mwaka, Kegode, & Kyalo, 2010). These examinations operate on the basis of comparison and competition that can negatively effect on intrinsic motivation, particularly in students who are struggling academically (Perry, Turner, & Meyer, 2006).

There is an extensive literature on the negative effects of high stakes testing, much of it emerging from the United States in response to the *No Child Left Behind* policy (Von der Embse, Schultz, & Draughn, 2015; Tanner, 2013). The practice is increasingly critically examined in Sub-Saharan African contexts as well, where it is commonplace and found to often have a negative effect on teaching and learning processes. Roberts (2015) analyzed the relationship between the new curricular emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy in Tanzania in two schools with consistently high examination scores in rural Tanzania. The research demonstrated that teachers consistently used teacher-centered pedagogical approaches in contradiction to the government policy promoting learner-centered pedagogy. Lesson plans revolved around preparing students for national examinations and mock examinations with publicly posted results. Teachers finished covering the curriculum content early so that the entire final month of the school year could be used exclusively for preparations for final exams. Teacher absenteeism and neglect of the learner-centered pedagogical approach were overlooked as measurements of quality education by the school community and government inspectors as the value of examination scores outweighed opposition to the teaching practices. Depending on the examination, extensive preparation does not necessarily mean teachers are effectively teaching the required material, and can result in scores that falsely represent students' knowledge and ability (Chapman & Snyder, 2000). As Goldstein states, "… any rise in test scores should not be confused with a rise in learning achievement as opposed to test-taking performance" (2004, p. 10). The practice of 'teaching to the test' often involves a focus on memorization, repetition and excessive time used on practice tests, leading to student disengagement (Mora, 2011). The

current global emphasis toward measuring learning outcomes could have a negative effect of tying international assistance more directly to performance on national examinations if learning measurement and the discourse surrounding if it is not carefully managed to avoid propagating and promoting cultures of high stakes testing (Barrett, 2011; Goldstein, 2004).

2.2 Primary Education in Kenya

The Kenyan education system is an 8-4-4 system: eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school and four years of higher education.[1] There are also two years of pre-primary education offered in many primary schools. As of 2012, primary net enrolment rates (NER) were 86.6% for girls, 83.17% for boys and 84.87% total and the secondary NER for the same year were 66.62% for boys, 57.39% for girls and 56.51% total (UNESCO, 2012). Kirinyaga County is a predominantly rural area located within central Kenya to the north of Nairobi. With a low rate of urbanization at 15.9% (half that of the national average), its poverty rate is among the lowest in the country at 25.2% in 2006 (Open Data, 2014). Agriculture is the main economic activity, and over 70% of residents are small scale farmers (Kenya Information Guide, 2015). Its education indicators are generally higher than the national average, with nearly universal enrolment and literacy and numeracy learning levels that are approximately double that of the national average (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Despite this relative attainment, serious concerns remain about student learning and school quality in the county. A national study found that only 47% of Kirinyaga Standard 3 children tested can read a Standard 2 story and only 55% can conduct basic division (Mugo, Kaburu, & Kimutai, 2011). The same study found high rates of absenteeism in Kirinyaga among students and teachers, with 4 out of 10 enrolled children and 1 out of 10 teachers missing school on a daily basis.

In the past ten years, a series of policies have been developed which collectively provide a policy environment to enhance gender equality and school safety. Following the 2007 – 2008 election violence, the Kenyan people voted in a new constitution, which was followed by the 2013 *Basic Education Act* that reformed the education system to reflect the new constitution, including guiding principles such as the promotion of peace, the elimination of hate speech and tribalism, ensuring human dignity and integrity and the elimination of gender discrimination and corporal punishment (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The Ministry of Education's (MoE) 2007

Gender Policy in Education reflects a comprehensive understanding of gender equality in education, recognizing that the following factors inhibit girls' access to education and are not conducive to learning: negative socio-cultural practices and attitudes, sexual harassment and discrimination, stereotyping in learning materials and pedagogy (Wango, Mysomi, & Akinyi, 2012). While not maintaining the same gender focus, the MoE emphasizes the importance of school safety in its 2008 *Safety in Schools Manual for Schools in Kenya*, which states that "safe and secure school environments foster quality teaching and learning" (p. 2) and that the government's commitment to improving access, equity, participation, retention, completion and quality will be compromised if school safety is not fully addressed (p.3). From a child protection perspective, the *Children Act*, established in 2001 and amended in 2014, is designed to strengthen Kenya's child welfare and protection services, policies and practices. It prohibits all forms of discrimination, torture, cruel treatment, sexual exploitation and physical punishment against children, and highlights children's right to protection from physical and psychological abuse, neglect and all forms of violence. In practice the systems established through the *Children Act* and the *Basic Education Act* often operate in silos without significant interaction or interlinkages that provide a space to practically address gender violence in schools (Vanner, 2015). A recent positive initiative has been the attempt to operationalize the prohibition of corporal punishment through the development of a *Positive Discipline Handbook* (Republic of Kenya, in press) which offers guidance for teachers on how to use non-violent disciplinary practices. This builds upon the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* (Republic of Kenya, 2015)*,* which expressly prohibits sexual activity between teachers and students and requires teachers to report a breach of the code to the proper authorities. When taken collectively, these documents recognize the importance of safe schools, challenge discriminatory gender norms and promote empowering spaces for girls and boys. Unfortunately, despite the policy initiatives aiming to enhance gender safety, the lack of cohesive and effective reporting structures, the low priority assigned to eradicating GVS and a disconnect between education and child welfare systems often prevent the implementation of these policies. Many of them are unfamiliar to or even unheard of by teachers and administrators at the school level (Vanner, 2015) and thus have low levels of influence over schools and education stakeholders.

Education quality and school culture are primarily influenced by the Kenya Certificate for Primary Education (KCPE) examination, which determines the type and quality of secondary

school the student can attend. KCPE creates immense pressure on students and teachers, often at the expense of other considerations such as the development of critical thinking, morality, problem-solving and mutual respect (Boit, Njoki, & Chang'ach, 2012). Buchmann (1999) writes that the inability to manage education supply and demand has led to a highly competitive education system moderated by 'contests' in the form of KCPE and the Kenya Certificate for Secondary Education (KCSE) to filter access to higher education. Strong KCPE scores are highly influential in determining the outcomes of students' future academic careers. The quality of the different tiers of secondary school differs greatly and entrance to each category of school is determined exclusively by KCPE scores. The stakes are so high that parents select the schools their children will attend based on the schools' test scores, although the emphasis on testing often reduces and narrows the curriculum content to only that which is reflected on the tests (Mwaka, Kegode, & Kyalo, 2010). Stress and anxiety resulting from exam pressure has led to spikes in school-based arson preceding final exams and mock exams (Cooper, 2014). The pressure to perform well has also led to rampant cheating on examinations; in 2015, 5 101 cases of cheating were uncovered in KCSE and 2 709 in KCPE (Wanzala, 2015; 2016). Notwithstanding the existence of numerous policies addressing various aspects of gender equality and safety in Kenyan schools, on a daily basis the priority of the education system and daily school life is biased toward success on examinations, which could contribute to the marginalization of concerns such as gender equality and child protection in schools.

3. Theoretical Framework

The school is an institution which channels power through disciplinary regimes. Power, according to Foucault, is not tangible and cannot be possessed, but nonetheless infuses behaviours and processes that govern any social institution including the school. "[P]ower is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised and … only exists in action" (Foucault, 1980, p. 89). While power is not something that anybody 'has' it nonetheless governs different behaviours and responses, infusing the system by which individuals' behaviours are influenced and manipulated. "The individual is an effect of power and at the same time… it is the element of its articulation" (Ibid., p. 98). In the school, hierarchy governs the daily practices of the school and discipline is the function by which this hierarchy is established and maintained. Foucault writes that the educational space functions "like a learning machine, but also a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding… the classroom would form a single great table, with

many different entries, under the scrupulously 'classifactory' eye of the master…" (1975, p. 147). Foucault's explanatory framework explicitly problematizes the school environment and the hierarchical structure and expectations of discipline that entrench the authority to rank students against each other. The power to assign value to children based on their ability to produce the desired results becomes privileged, prioritized and accepted through the school's daily operations and administration.

The centre of Foucault's analysis are power structures that control the practices of individuals through the twin conditions of discipline and normalisation constituted by a regime of truth (Foucault, 1980). Foucault writes,

> Each society has its regime of truth… the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (1980, p. 131).

Discourses are infused with different statuses; those that are accepted as true become more powerful than those that are considered subversive, marginalized or problematic. But the relative status of discourses is always in flux, competing for dominance and acceptance as truth (Heller, 1996). Foucault identifies numerous techniques of 'disciplinary power,' many of which are enacted in schools, that collectively create a form of control, manipulating people to act in line with the values and authorities established by the regime of truth in a given society that is composed of multiple dominant discourses (Hoskin, 1979). These new techniques were primarily established in Europe during the era of colonial expansion and many of them, including those infused in European education systems, were then exported to European colonies around the world (Morrow & Singh, 2015). The examination controls students by standardizing narrow expectations for academic success, regulating educational opportunities determined by examination performance and providing a mechanism to easily categorize students and establish a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority among them. Foucault writes that the examination is a mechanism that "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment… a surveillance that makes it possible to quality, to classify and to punish" (1975, p. 184). As examination performance usually corresponds to socioeconomic status (Popham, 1999), the hierarchical categories established through the examination system reflect and reproduces the hierarchy established by economic structures of poverty and wealth. It is a measure to understand

learning, but when it operates as the sole system of measurement, can prohibit the demonstration and assessment of knowledge, capability and progress in other forms. The use of the examination as the exclusive evaluation of student learning reinforces the power of knowledge that can be measured through the written examination and diminishes the value and power of knowledge in other forms. The numerical score serves to classify students according to their ability, a process that is considered to motivate students to try to study and succeed to defeat each other, distorting the primary stated objective of education: to learn. Foucault observes that the school is "…a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching. It became less and less a question of jousts in which pupils pitch their forces against one another and increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible to measure and to judge" (1975, p. 186). Examinations, particularly high stakes ones, are designed as a form of extrinsic motivation in which teachers and students assess individual worth in comparison to other students. They are identified as a technique of the larger disciplinary power that controls individuals by determining what is valued, who has authority and the type of behaviour that is expected and rewarded.

Foucault observes that discipline characterizes individuals to strive to achieve the goals that the structure espouses as desirable while simultaneously decreasing their ability and motivation to oppose that structure. "Discipline increases the force of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in terms of political obedience)" (1995, p. 138 as cited in Pitsoe & Letseka 2014). Individual agency in the face of disciplinary power becomes minimized as desirable behaviour in line with established structures and expectations is rewarded and undesirable behaviour that counters these expectations is punished. Individuals are primarily manipulated not through direct domination but rather through the discourses of truth that permeate our society, influencing our behaviour in relation to what is the 'right' and valued behaviour, values and norms (Foucault, 1980). Schools and other social institutions then train individuals, including teachers and students, to behave in the ways that are valued and promoted by the regime of truth that dictates societal norms and values. Students and teachers become what Foucault refers to as 'docile bodies' that become "a relation of strict subjection" (1975, p. 138). These docile bodies are trained and conditioned to become productive and efficient through the exercise of power relations: "…they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in

accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination" (p.136). Individuals' internalization of expectations through a system of rewards and punishment causes the self-regulation of behaviour in line with the desired behaviour of the institution.

4. Methodology

A multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006) was used to study the relationships between gender violence and learning processes in two schools. The main school selection criteria were to identify two nearby mid-sized rural or semi-urban area Standards 1-8 primary schools that are not in areas with a recent history of conflict and have a Head Teacher and Board of Management who support the research project. The criteria were provided to the District Education Office (DEO), who selected a town school situated in close proximity to the DEO office and a nearby rural school. Throughout this article, the rural school is referred to as 'rural' when quoting participants from that school and the town school is referred to as 'town'. There was a relatively higher socioeconomic status observed in the town school and surrounding community as compared to the rural school community, however viable statistics documenting these differences were not available. During the seven months of data collection, I lived in the town school community and participated in many social activities. I did not achieve the same level of comfort and familiarity with the rural school community, potentially influencing my analysis of the context and the openness of participants. While I initially thought this was a limitation, the student participants at the rural school were ultimately more open in their discussions of school violence than the student participants at the town school were, possibly due to the comparatively lower level of familiarity they had with me.

Data collection was divided in two phases lasting from January – July 2015. Phase 1 consisted of participant observation and lasted for one school term, from January - April. During this time, I observed 52 classroom lessons in English, Social Sciences, Science, Mathematics, Kiswahili, Physical Education, and Christian Religious Education in Standards 4 – 8 (30 taught by female teachers and 22 by male teachers). I also observed classroom assemblies and teacher staff meetings, spent time with teachers during their school breaks and lunch time in the staff room, played with students on the playground, accompanied them while they completed school chores, and attended extracurricular school trips. During this time, I engaged in informal

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interviews with students and teachers, taking notes to record my observations on a daily basis. Informal observation was also conducted outside of school hours based on my interactions with community members, however no formal data collection took place outside of the school. In each school, I volunteered as a means of giving back to the school community as well as providing me with a membership role in the school (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). After volunteering to work in whatever capacity they most needed, both schools assigned me several classes to teach. I also helped marking examinations and occasionally acted as a substitute teacher when a teacher was absent. Finally, I taught interested teachers basic computer classes, as both schools had recently received computers that few teachers were able to use.

Phase 2 (April – July) consisted of individual interviews with students and teachers. All quotations provided use pseudonyms, which were self-selected by the students and assigned for the teachers. Open-ended art-based individual interviews were conducted with 31 students (18f/13m). To enable the students to speak in the language of their choice, I hired a research assistant, hereafter referred to as Mary or 'Translator', to conduct translation during the interviews and to subsequently transcribe and translate interviews into English. Mary also contributed significantly to data analysis and helped me better understand the cultural background that shapes and influences the data. The individual interviews with children used the Draw-Write-Narrate method (Ogina & Nieuwenhuis, 2010) that enables students to express themselves through drawing and set the direction for the subsequent conversation. This method, developed to examine the experiences and needs of orphaned learners in South Africa (Ogina, 2008), is considered appropriate for discussing children's lived experience in sensitive situations (Ogina & Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The method gives children the opportunity to draw their own personal narrative and write a description about the drawing. The child then describes orally to the researcher what is going on in the picture. As they do so, the researcher asks them to elaborate and probe for greater clarity and depth in certain areas. The method is designed to be more relaxing and fun and allow the child to set the parameters of what he or she wishes to discuss, engaging in the research process using their talents (Backett-Milburn & MicKie, 1999).

Students were asked to draw a picture showing how they feel when they are at school and encouraged to illustrate what they like and do not like about school. The preference had been for Standard 8 students due to the sensitive subject matter, however in the town school the administration advised that the Standard 7 students be consulted because the Standard 8 students

should not lose class time and have distractions that could impact their final examination results. During the introductory sessions, we explained to each class the objective of the research project, consent and participation, and the process. We showed them two examples of our own drawings in response to this question (see Figure 1 for my example drawing). Once the whole class finished their drawings, we asked them to write their names on slips of paper and indicate if they wanted to do an interview, providing a confidential first step of the consent process.

Each interview began by asking the student to describe her/his drawing. We then asked follow up questions and used this discussion to broach other subjects of GVS. Interview duration ranged from 12 to 48 minutes. Once the interviews were completed we photographed the drawings and gave the originals back to the students. At this point we presented the results of the research back to the whole class in child-friendly language and asked the students to work in small groups to identify how they could address the results of the research to make their school a safer place. We also invited them to elaborate on any of the issues raised and provide feedback on those

missed, misunderstood or over or under-represented. The students discussed in small groups and then read their ideas aloud and we discussed them as a class. In sharing initial results, we did not raise elements of teacher misconduct. This choice was made in the interest of child protection as there were teachers present when we shared the findings. We also stressed that the

Figure 1: Example drawing. I drew and explained this to participating students to illustrate the draw-write-narrate process.

results were gathered from both schools, did not reflect the actions and beliefs of all students, and were not necessarily a reflection of any of the students that had participated at their school. These messages were delivered to avoid giving teachers a reason to punish the students.
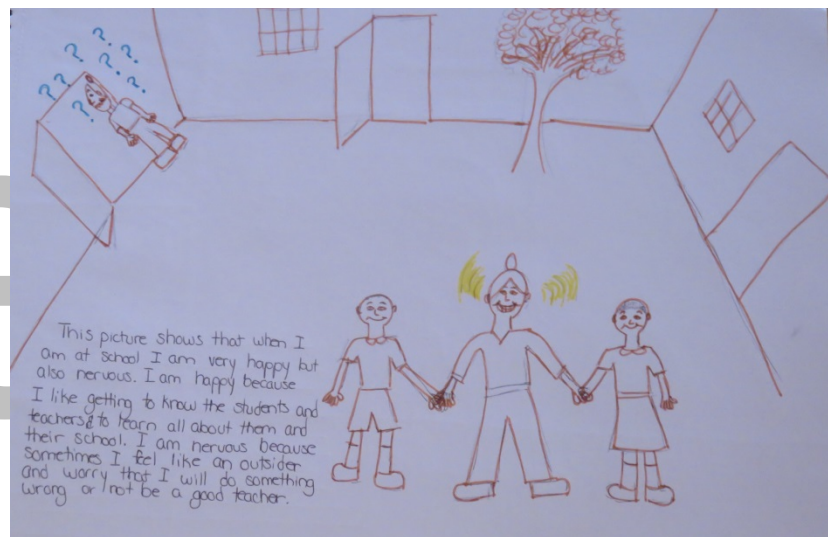
Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven teachers (6m/1f) in the rural school and six teachers (2m/4f) in the town school. The teacher interviews lasted between 25 and 55 minutes in duration and took place in English without a translator, as recommended by the teachers consulted. Following the completion of the teacher and student interviews, we conducted follow up or member check interviews with three teachers (1f/1m at the rural school and 1f at the town school) and six students (2f/2m at the rural school and 1f/1m at the town school). These interviews held a dual purpose. First, they sought to affirm the accuracy of the emergent themes and their relevance for students and teachers in the school. They were also a form of theoretical sampling, which is the process of "seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emergent theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96), a key tenant of constructivist grounded theory analysis. Students and teachers generally affirmed the relevance of the emergent themes and expanded to clarify concepts, practices and provide more detail as to their importance and context.

Constructivist grounded theory analysis was used to develop an emergent theory as to the relationship between GVS and student learning processes. Grounded theory is an analytical method with which to determine the essential themes and theory that emerge from a research project. Its defining components include: simultaneous data collection and analysis; analytic codes constructed from the data; constant comparison across data sources; the development of theory at each stage of the research process; memo-writing; and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). *Constructivist* grounded theory maintains most of these components, but rejects the idea that theory emerges from the data independently, recognizing instead the role of the researcher in shaping the narrative by drawing on her own experiences and beliefs and through her interactions with participants and the data (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory was designed "to demonstrate relations between conceptual categories and to specify the conditions under which theoretical relationships emerge, change, or are maintained" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 311). It is thus ideal for understanding connections, interactions and influences that characterize school cultures within the case studies.

5. Results

5.1 Corporal Punishment

Despite the legal prohibition against it, corporal punishment was by far the most prominent form of GVS that I observed and was reported in both schools. It was depicted in

numerous student drawings, including Figure 2. Both girls and boys described being beaten by male and female teachers for a variety of reasons including being late, incomplete assignments, fighting among themselves, doing poorly on examinations and losing textbooks. Some teachers at both schools proclaimed that corporal punishment has been completely eradicated in favour of alternative disciplinary mechanisms and some students also stated that there had been no beating or caning in the school during their time as a student there. In contradiction to these statements, I observed corporal punishment being administered and other teachers and students confirmed its ongoing use in both schools. Besides caning, students reported the use of forced manual labour, which is also classified as a form of corporal punishment (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010; Dunne, Humphreys, & Leach, 2006).

Corporal punishment was used as a tool to drive success on examinations. Mr. Choge (teacher, rural) explained that, "Many people, they see the exam as the gateway to everything... Because everybody in this life is results oriented." This 'results-oriented' mindset informed teacher decision-making and treatment of students, including through the threat of corporal punishment. Although the formal examinations at the end of the third term are the ones that determine students' progression to the next grade, teachers assess students' progress throughout the year through practice examinations multiple times per term, each of which take at least two days to write. Some mock exams are taken by all schools in the counties and ranked in comparison to each other and sometimes the school undertakes them independently. The town school completed three practice

examinations each term and the rural school completed two during each of the two terms I was conducting research in the schools. Since each one took three days, students spent between six and nine days during each of the school terms doing practice examinations, and a teacher informed me that they happen even more frequently in the third term leading up to the formal end of year examinations.

Figure 2: Boy being hit in the staff room. Student drawing.

Following the first practice examination at the town school during the time that I was there, the teachers found that their results were much lower than anticipated. At the staff meeting, the administration talked to the teachers about the needs for teachers to step up their pressure on the students and "show that they [the teachers] are serious." The Deputy Head Teacher at the town school also encouraged the teachers to verbally abuse the students: "even if you don't beat them, you can still attack them with words." Different forms of violence were the most prominent methods of motivation that the teachers had at their disposal and these aggressive tactics were encouraged by the school administration to enhance examination performance. Immediately after the staff meeting where teachers were counselled to demonstrate that they are serious, I observed a more overt and blatant use of the cane on students at the town school than I had previously, for the first time witnessing teachers openly retrieving sticks from their desk in the classroom and caning students on the heads and hands during class time.

Students interviewed spoke of being beaten for performing poorly on examinations and said that this was used to incentivize them to perform better in future. Sometimes this was performed in a highly organized and systematic way. For example, Caroline (Standard 8, female, rural) and Afora (Standard 8, male, rural) described being asked to identify a target mark for their exam and then beaten the number of times that make up the difference between their actual mark and the target mark:

> **Caroline**: …we write our target marks on a foolscap and give it to the teacher before the exam, so if you fail and don't achieve the target mark, the teacher will ask you why you have not achieved your target and yet you are the one who set it? You are going to beaten for that.

> **Afora**: … it is obvious here that you are beaten when you fail exams. When I fail exams, I feel bad. Like in this recent exam, I did not perform very well. This time it was bad because the number of canes depended on the difference between the target mark and what you scored. I feel bad because it is not my wish to fail exams. At times the exams are hard and not that I had not revised.

The practice Afora describes of caning students the number of times that makes up the difference between their target mark - they are encouraged to set high target marks - and their exam result directly links incidences of corporal punishment to examination performance. At the town school, the practice of caning the number of times that made up the difference between the examination result and the target mark was not mentioned in student interviews. Although

Standard 7 and 8 students were asked to set target marks for themselves before each practice examination, a different caning practice was described by a student at the town school following poor examination performance. Nyambura (Standard 7, female, town) explains:

> **Nyambura**: … during first term, when we failed the exam very much, all the class seven and eight were brought here and they started beating us, they beat us a lot… The class seven was made to line up here and class eight on that side. The teachers divided themselves into two and some went to class seven students and the others to class eight students and they started beating us. When one group of teachers was done beating one class, they exchanged and those who were beating class eight came to beat us.
> **Translator**: All of them?
> **Nyambura**: Yes.
> **Translator**: How many strokes did one teacher beat?
> **Nyambura**: One teacher would beat us around six.
> **Translator**: So how many strokes had you been beaten by the end of that day?
> **Nyambura**: Very many.

The student interviews demonstrated that each school had developed slightly different tactics to punish students for poor performance in order to try and motivate them to study harder to prepare for the next set of examinations. Both tried to induce desirable examination performance by creating fear of violent, painful repercussions for doing badly.

Another tactic regularly used at the town school and occasionally at the rural school to encourage students' academic success on examinations was a public announcement of examination results that rewarded high performing students and humiliated low performing students. This usually took place at school assemblies where all students and teachers in the school were present. At the beginning of the year, all Standard 7 and 8 students at the town school created placards with spaces to fill in their target mark and actual result for each practice and actual examination throughout the year. On the day of the examination and during the assembly following the collection and analysis of results, students wore their placards around their necks to the assembly with the results filled in. Examination results for each class were announced to the school, making comparisons to other local schools if the information was available. Classes who performed badly were reprimanded and those who did well were told they still had not achieved their target mark so they also needed to work harder. Then the Standard 7 and 8 students' marks were announced one by one. Each student was called to the front of the assembly on an individual basis to stand in order of their marks, from highest to lowest in the class. Once all were lined up, the teachers walked up and down reprimanding the students in the

middle and at the bottom for their poor performances. Students in the middle were called to step forward to look to the top of the class to where they should be, and students at the bottom were repeatedly scolded with statements including, "You have done nothing!" and "You should go back down to the lower class." One boy was told, "you should study eating, since that is the only thing you are good at." The comparisons sometimes had an explicitly gendered dimension, with teachers asking a group of girls in the middle why they could not score as high as the boys at the front, or vice versa.

When I asked Mr. Ngugi, a teacher at the rural school, if they used the same practice I witnessed repeatedly at the town school, he said they do and occasionally they invite parents to watch, which makes it particularly embarrassing for students who have performed poorly. Mr. Ngugi also told me that students often skip school on days where they know this type of assembly will take place, in order to avoid humiliation if they have performed poorly. These practices were applied to encourage students' higher performance on upcoming examinations. While there was often some movement between the students positioned in the middle and upper ends of the line-up, the same handful of students were consistently situated at the bottom of the line-up each of the three times I observed this practice at the town school. Some of these children included Special Needs students. Special Needs students could be exempt from an examination or receive accommodations, but in order to do so their parents have to agree to have them tested for a disability. Since there is a high stigma associated with disability, many parents did not want to have their children tested and so they write the examinations and many ended up standing at the end of the line, receiving criticism from teachers for their inability to perform. Other students I observed at the end of the line included students who were known to have been sexually abused and some who cannot be supported by their family and live in the Children's Home.

5.2 Sexual Violence and Harassment

Primary school age girls in Kirinyaga remain highly susceptible to sexual harassment and violence at school, on the way to school, and in their broader communities. Harassment was perpetrated by men and boys from every corner of their lives: family, friends, classmates, strangers, and teachers. Most frequently, girls mentioned forms of sexual harassment and discrimination at school coming from their male classmates in the forms of pressure for relationships, nonconsensual sexual touching, and physical violence in response to sexual

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rejection. Girls are strongly encouraged by their teachers to maintain their virginity and abstain from sex; they receive clear messages from many avenues that their education depends on their chastity. This is confirmed to them when they see their peers drop out of school and never return after getting pregnant. Yet while the promotion of abstinence bombards them from adults, girls constantly face sexual pressure from boys who touch them, tell them that they love them and try to get the girl to engage in 'relationships,' sometimes with violent consequences for refusing. Lily (Standard 8, female, rural) told us that for this reason girls try to avoid sitting next to boys in class, where these advances are often made. When we asked Agape (Standard 8, female, rural) how often girls experience unwanted sexual touching from boys at school, she replied, "You cannot miss one day." The exchange where boys constantly pursue girls, who ward off sexual touching, continuously characterizes the classroom experience, so that not only the school compound but classrooms themselves become spaces where sexual pressure is experienced and thwarted on a daily basis, making learning a highly vulnerable process for girls.

Teachers and students openly acknowledged the risks of kidnapping or sexual violence including rape that students – especially girls – faced on the way to school. Teachers at both schools identified girls as particularly vulnerable to attacks and harassment on the way to school, acknowledging that this has happened in Kirinyaga and other areas in Kenya. Mr Wangui (teacher, rural) explains that, while teachers acknowledge this risk, they feel unable to address the problem:

> This is next to impossible to regulate. When they come to and from school they are all alone. Teachers have not yet come. It is very dangerous. Incidents have happened – abductions going home and coming to school. These are kidnappings for ransom… Girls are also at risk because of rape cases. Fortunately, we have not had any cases in [this school] but they have happened elsewhere in Kirinyaga.

He goes on to say that the route to and from school "is the unsafest part of school". Female students also describe fearing the way to and from school, including Agape (Standard 8, female, rural):

> **Agape**: Sometimes as we walk through maize plantations, we fear.
> **Translator**: What do you fear?
> **Agape**: Danger.
> **Translator**: What sort of danger?
> **Agape**: There are times when people used to hide in maize plantations and they would catch people.
> **Translator**: What do they do once they catch you?

Agape: They rape you... It has happened recently, but not this year.

Risk of severe violence such as abduction and rape on the way to school was a larger issue for students and teachers at the rural school where many children walked for an hour or more to get to school, often for long distances by themselves, than the town school where students reported usually walking for less than a half hour each way. Students at the town school did not fear rape or abduction to the same degree as those from the rural school, but they did regularly experienced harassment from locals they passed on their way through town. Mrs. Macharia (teacher, rural) described this risk:

> Girls are usually at risk in most areas… the boys usually - or even other people…
> will admire the girls or desire to have relationships with them. They are quite at
> risk and you find that since the school is in the town, there are even in the town
> those who deal with the [buses] there. When the girls go they want to speak to
> them and… to have sex with them. And maybe to have relationships with them, so
> that they can buy tokens or sweets, sodas, chips, whatever.

Girls are likely to be harassed on their way to school by men calling out to them, propositioning them and offering them transactional sex or relationships. Incidences of harassment as well as rape were heightened when students were walking to or from school either very early or very late when it is dark outside and most people are in their homes. Nyambura (Standard 7, female, town) and Mr. Wangui (teacher, rural) explained:

> **Translator**: And are you ever afraid as you walk alone?
> **Nyambura**: Yes.
> **Translator**: When coming to school or when going home?
> **Nyambura**: When going home because we leave school very late.
> **Translator**: What are you afraid of?
> **Nyambura**: I pass by an open field, some men who sit there start calling me but I
> just ignore them.
>
> **Wangui**: Pupils are supposed to be at school at 6:30 [in the morning]. For them to
> be here for that time some have to travel for an hour and leave at 5:30, which is
> still at night. In one of the previous schools I worked at… it happened that men
> would wait for girls in the dawn to rape them.

According to official regulations, students are supposed to arrive at school at 7:00 am with classes to start after 8:00 am. In contradiction to this regulation, in all the schools in the area, students arrived at school before 6:30 am to complete chores before additional classes that are often scheduled to start right at 7:00 am. Similarly, classes are supposed to finish for the day at

4:00 pm, but upper year students are often kept until 6:00 pm or later for additional classes or study time. For students who come from far away, this means having to walk to or from school in the dark, when risks are higher. While girls were particularly susceptible to these risks, there were reported incidences of boys being sexually abused on their way home from school. Teachers at the town school told me about two male students from the town school who had been abused on their way home. One was a small Standard 6 boy who was raped by a group of older boys by the side of the road and the other was a Special Needs boy who was repeatedly abused at a football field in town. Both cases were reportedly by groups of young men and boys using alcohol and drugs. While girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment on the way to and from school, boys are not immune, particularly vulnerable boys including young boys and those with Special Needs.

While teachers expressed concern for student safety – especially girls' – this concern was pushed aside in favour of devoting additional attention to securing strong examination performance. Despite teachers' recognition that students face heightened risks of sexual violence and harassment when coming to and returning from school in the dark, schools often extend teaching hours into the early morning and late evening with the idea that maximizing students' class time will enhance their examination results. Mr. Ngugi (teacher, rural), raised the dilemma when I asked how schools help students avoid risks on the way to and from school:

> We show them how you're not supposed to walk late… But unfortunately for our case, that has lingered on here for some time. Children come to school very early… the parents all the time complain that the children are coming to school so early. But what do we do? This is a competition, we try to create more time... Competition is very stiff! We want results. We want to ensure that we are also leading, we want to polish up, before anything else.

Mr. Ngugi illustrates how schools often contradict their own advice to avoid walking to and from school in the dark to avoid risks of sexual violence. He describes the belief that the schools have no alternative, as the importance of competition and wanting results takes priority 'before anything else,' in this case before student safety.

The extension of the school day into the evening and early morning also undermined extracurricular activities designed to empower girls and prevent gender violence, such as Girl Guides. The Kenya Girl Guides Association curriculum includes discussion of gender equality and non-violence and explicitly tackles prevention of sexual violence, providing girls with

guidance on how to prevent sexual violence and respond if it occurs. The town school had a Girl Guides club that was supposed to meet once per month, however during the two terms that I was present in the school they only met once. I was told by the club leader that the club gets pushed off due to other demands on teachers' and students' time, and that the club never meets during Term 3 because all spare time is dedicated to examination preparation. Standard 8 students at the town school did not participate in Girl Guides or other extracurricular activities such as sports or music festivals during the entire year because they were supposed to focus strictly on studying for exams. Similarly, the life skills class that was a part of the formal school curriculum was rarely taught as teachers opted to teach an examinable subject in its place. A range of protective efforts designed to prevent sexual violence against students, including school days that began and ended during daylight hours, empowering curricular and extracurricular programs and life skills education, were subverted in order to devote as much class time as possible to the preparation of subjects that students would be tested on during their exams.

5.3 Bullying and Peer Victimization

Bullying or peer victimization was not identified as an issue among most teachers consulted at either school even though, following an inspection from the local MoE, one of the criticisms was that the school was not following the official bullying policy. When this was reported at a staff meeting, the teachers looked around in confusion and the HT asked the staff, 'Do we have a bullying problem at this school? I don't think we have a problem." They concluded that the students could come to the teachers if they had a problem with bullying and moved on to the next recommendation. There was no investigation into the bullying policy that they were supposed to follow. In student interviews, physical fighting between boys and between boys and girls was frequently mentioned. Physical abuse among girls was occasionally mentioned but different forms of relational bullying, such as exclusion and verbal abuse, were more commonly reported forms of peer victimization among girls.

Students reported that physical fighting is a common response for boys to an insult of any degree directed to them by a boy or a girl. Brandon (Standard 7, male, rural) explains:

> Sometimes I don't like [my friends] because they bully other boys. Like when a
> boy does a mistake and says sorry, they start beating him… When one does
> something wrong to another and they say sorry, the other one does not listen.
> When you tell them to stop fighting, they continue.

While boys were most often reported to be fighting other boys, they also were known to attack girls over insults including teasing or minor physical wrongs, as described by Immaculate (Standard 7, female, rural):

> **Translator**: Is it mostly boys or girls who fight more often?
> **Immaculate**: Boys.
> **Researcher**: Boys, and why do boys fight?
> **Immaculate**: If you step on them and you apologize, they don't take your apology, they just want to revenge by beating.
> **Translator**: And why do they just want to beat and not take your apology? Why do you think they want to beat after?
> **Immaculate**: Because if you stepped on them and they felt pain, they want to beat you up so that you can feel pain too.

Boys' use of physical force to illustrate their strength and dominance over girls and other boys supports a self-image as physically strong and therefore powerful and feared. Teachers and students agreed that physical aggression was a means for boys to establish their masculinized reputation as strong men, particularly in relation to other boys, showing not only that they are strong but that they are stronger or the strongest, creating a hierarchy based on physical strength and aggression. Mrs. Njenga (teacher, town) comments: "They were fighting down here. And why, just because I want to feel that I am stronger than you. I want to measure myself whether I am stronger than you." Fighting also was seen as the way to show off and attract girls. Mr. Ngugi (teacher, rural) explains:

> **Ngugi**: I realized that they may have been fighting because of the girls. Incidentally, the girls themselves were the spectators. So, I sensed they're interested in seeing who wins…
> **Researcher**: So, do you think that they fight and show off to prove that they're strong?
> **Ngugi**: Yes! Yes. Definitely… That's the main thing. Because their girlfriends or whoever they want to approach is around. Must show that I'm not a weakling.

In both Mrs. Njenga's and Mr. Ngugi's descriptions of fighting, boys are described as using violence to prove themselves to others – either girls or their opponents – but also to themselves. Presenting and maintaining a strong self-image and reputation is perceived by students and teachers to propel boys' use of force on and around the school ground. These practices reinforce expectations and understandings of masculinity as tied to violence and physical dominance.

While some students and teachers reported that girls occasionally initiate physical fights among themselves or with boys, over all girls were reported to be much less likely to engage in

physical fighting with anyone than boys. Girls appeared to demonstrate their strength and exert their dominance over each other – and to some extent over boys as well – through what students termed 'verbal abuse', which included gossip, name-calling and exclusion. It was generally described as making students unhappy, as in Figure 3, but Faith (Standard 7, female, town) observes that, "Girls are very interesting…" in establishing friendships that are tinged with micro-aggression. She describes wanting to push other girls to test the limits of their tolerance to her teasing, something she does toward girls because she does not fear the same degree of physical repercussions as she would from boys:

> **Researcher**: Why do you first make fun of [other girls] and then you help them?
> **Faith**: I want to see how they will become angry or first push me or knock me there…
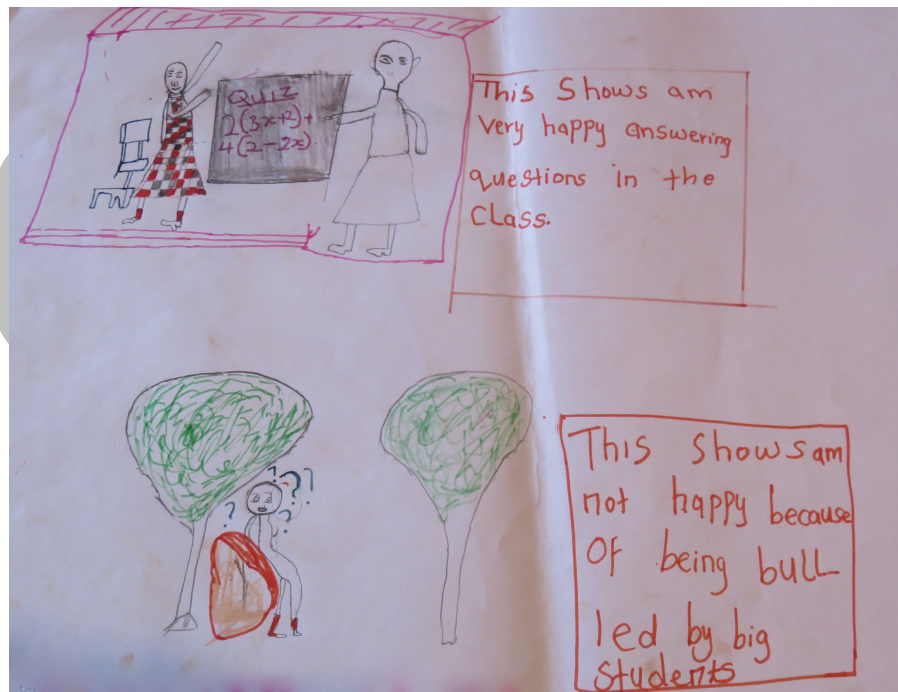> **Translator**: She wants to see how far she can get.
> **Researcher**: Ok, I see and do you ever see that about the boys and see how far they can get?
> **Faith**: No.
> **Researcher**: Why not?
> **Faith**: Boys are very strong, they can knock you very bad.

Faith explores the boundaries of their power by experimenting with how far they can push their peers. While Faith states she would not treat boys the same way because she fears their strength, some students asserted that girls sometimes verbally abuse (give insults or threats) to boys as well. Josephine (Standard 8, female, rural) classified hostile incidents between girls and boys as the following: "Girls verbally abuse boys and the boys physically beat the girls." Josephine clearly delineates between aggressive actions for girls and boys, illustrating that girls often exercise their power among their peers through language and relationships, while boys do

Figure 3: Student unhappy because of bullying. Student drawing.

so through physical strength.

As previously described, the schools used the public announcement of examination results at school assemblies to foster comparisons and competition among students to boost their motivation. This competitiveness interacts with students' previously described manifestations of power establishing status and strength over each other through both physical fighting and verbal abuse. This is illustrated in the drawing in Figure 4, where a student is shown being bullied over failing an examination. Lily, (Standard 8, female, rural) described being beaten by other students for performing well in exams, saying she was targeted by other students out of jealousy: "When my friends have failed the exams and I have beaten them, they feel bad and they start a fight between us." By contrast, other students claimed to having been bullied because of their poor examination performance. Israel (Standard 7, male, town) and Caroline (Standard 8, female, rural), both describe being bullied for failing examinations:

> **Israel**: When I fail Maths exams, I am not happy. I feel sad when my friends beat me in exams because they will keep laughing at me about it.

> **Caroline:** When we do exams and I see my friends have defeated me, I feel very sad. This is one boy laughing at me because I have failed exams.
> **Researcher**: He is laughing at you because you have failed exams?
> **Caroline**: Yes, and I am looking very sad here…
> **Researcher**: … why do some [students] do it?
> **Caroline**: So that you feel bad.

Teachers constantly compare students' examination results as a means of fostering competition and motivation to perform better. As a result, many students are continuously comparing their performance to their peers', resulting in frustration and low self-esteem when they are outperformed. Students referred to their inability to understand why their friends had 'beaten' them at examinations, especially when they felt as if they had not gotten marks that reflected their

Figure 4: Being bullied after failing an exam. Student drawing.

efforts. Afora (Standard 8, male, rural) describes this sense of dejection and subsequently feeling he does not belong in school: "I ask myself why I am failing the exams and others pass yet we are taught the same. I feel like I should not be in school since the others are beating me in exams." These feelings of inadequacy are compounded by bullying that exploits the same insecurity. While students continue to internalize and deal with conventional concepts of masculine and feminine ideals on the playground, these are combined with more academic concepts of superiority linked to high examination marks, providing increased fodder for physical and verbal aggression.

6. Discussion

Despite efforts to enhance school safety and gender equality at the levels of the system, school and individual, GVS continues to be perpetuated by a combination of structural forces manifested in an education system that prioritizes hierarchy, testing and order. Performance on high-stakes tests, which originated in the British colonial education system, remains the overwhelming determinant of what constitutes a 'good' student or school. The three commonly recognized elements of gender violence in schools - corporal punishment, bullying or peer victimization, and sexual violence and harassment – were all prominently identified in the two case study schools. In both schools, the prevalence of gender violence either directly or indirectly related to the prominence of examination pressure. Corporal punishment is not only tolerated and exercised by teachers and school administration but is also used instrumentally to increase students' fear of failing examinations, with the intent of increasing their examination scores. The emphasis on competition and 'beating' other students permeates student peer relationships, resulting in increased victimization of both high and low performing students. Finally, school-level efforts to prevent sexual violence, such as encouraging students to travel during daylight and implementing empowering extracurricular programs, are pushed aside in favour of longer days to study and prepare for examinations. The concrete acts of gender violence experienced by students at the school level are enabled by broader structural violence of the education system as a social screening mechanism in a context where patriarchy, poverty and authority continue to undermine child protection and gender equality efforts. The structural factors driving these priorities are considered here within a discussion of Foucault's concepts of power and discipline to reflect on why GVS continues to dominate the school environment, despite laws and policies that oppose it.

The most highly ritualized technique of disciplinary power in school is the examination (Foucault, 1975). It serves to categorize and classify students by their success and failure in a narrow form of ability that is a frequently misused and often inaccurate as a measurement of actual learning, application, critical thinking, problem-solving or long-term knowledge retention (Chapman & Snyder, 2000; Goldstein, 2004; Roberts, 2015). In the two case study schools, the high value placed on examinations resulted in the use of violence as a form of punishment for failure and the subordination of concerns of safety in favour of examination preparation. The classification system by which multiple choice questions produce superior and inferior students, teachers and schools had a dramatic influence on all the teaching and learning processes I observed. The school system's orientation toward discipline and order was reflected in the process of measuring learning and achievement that enables the system to compare students easily without considering the larger elements of the person, their development and their ability to apply knowledge outside of the examination context. Students were reduced to their ability to produce examination results that will benefit the school, reinforcing an inequitable system that uses examinations to identify 'good students'– usually from higher socioeconomic backgrounds – to proceed to better quality national secondary schools. The process categorizes student ability and thus determines the future of lower achieving students to either go to public day secondary schools or to leave the school system entirely. In this way, the class structure and system of hegemony are maintained, sorting students into the categories that will determine their future socioeconomic status and conditioning them to accept and expect these outcomes. Students become complicit in the struggle for examination marks and accept their value and worth in relation to these marks. While they express frustration with their inability to achieve high marks despite their efforts, they rarely lash out at teachers, and instead take out their frustration either by retreating from school or by exercising power over each other through forms of violence that are socially acceptable within the school, including bullying, physical fighting and sexual harassment.

Among the various forms of violence enhanced and enabled by the emphasis on examination success, corporal punishment is most directly implicated. Teachers use corporal punishment to motivate students to study and prepare for their examinations and as a response meted out for various forms of disorderly conduct. A fear of being caned is intended to drive students to behave in a fashion that respects the order and hierarchy within the school and

increase their examination results. Examination results are of critical importance to the school in part because of the status associated with high and low performances and the pressure inflicted upon schools to perform well by the district level government authorities, who in turn are pressured to perform well by the higher government system. Teachers' performance on examinations grants them a higher status within the school and the district, and a low performance can prevent promotions or cause them to lose their position in the school. Just as the schools sort 'good' and 'bad' students according to their examination performance, so does the broader community identify a school as 'good' or 'bad' by its examination score, influencing the demand for student enrolment, which in turn determines the amount of funding a school receives as this is allocated on a per student basis. At the same time, teachers' use of corporal punishment is also justified by consideration of the best interests of the students, as the quality of secondary school students have access to is determined by their KCPE scores. Teachers believe that the use of corporal punishment as a motivating factor to influence examination outcomes is not only in the school's best interests but also in the students' by increasing students' motivation to prepare for and subsequently succeed in achieving high KCPE scores.

Most teachers and school administrators wish to provide girls and boys with safe learning environments and ensure safe access to and from school. Teachers described sexual harassment and violation of girls and boys as a tragic reality that should be prevented when possible. With the notable exception of teachers who sexually violate students, many teachers try to intervene and support children who are experiencing or have experienced sexual violence. Prevention of sexual violence does not, however, take precedence over exam preparation and, when the two conflict, exam preparation is privileged. This was observed in several ways in the two case study schools: first, by keeping students late and forcing them to come early for extra examination preparation, requiring students who travel long distances to walk in the dark when the risk of sexual violence is greater. The other way in which efforts to prevent sexual violence and harassment are undermined by the examination orientation is through the cancellation of empowering extracurricular activities, such as Girl Guides, also in favour of providing additional class time for tuition or examination preparation. The gender positive messages in these curricula were never covered, again demonstrating a cultural and educational priority placed on order and discipline over empowerment of girls and schools to take responsibility and control of student safety. As Foucault (1980) notes that each society is governed by a regime of truth, expressed

through the discourse that it accepts and then make function as true, so each school culture is governed by the discourses that it values and prioritizes in daily school life. In the case study schools, the governing regime of truth was the utmost importance of achieving high examination scores. When safety and equality compete with exam preparation for students' and teachers' time, the discourse of examination success resulted in the re-allocation of time to exam preparation, even when it came at the expense of student safety and empowerment. Efforts to prevent sexual violence and harassment are unlikely to take hold while prioritization is given to examinations above addressing the risks of gender violence that students face in and out of school.

The push to classify, rank and order students becomes internalized by the students themselves and expressed in the forms of competition and hostility manifested in bullying and peer victimization. Students are subject to, participate in and validate their own ranking. Foucault writes that "the examination is the technique by which power… holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially by arranging objects. The examination is… the ceremony of its objectification" (1975, p.187). Students in both case study schools illustrated their internalization of the competition via their exercise of power against each other. Both high and low performing students reported being victimized directly because of their examination results – high performing students because they make the others look bad and low performing students because they are identified by the school as inferior. The concept of ranking and comparing students against each other also permits other gendered forms of hierarchy and order to become legitimized, such as physical fighting to express masculine superiority, the temporary exclusion of friends from a group, or physical or verbal harassment to see how far you could 'push' them, thereby exercising power over the other and establishing or re-establishing a hierarchy. Similarly, boys exercise their power over girls in the classroom space, physically and sexually touching them, pressuring them for relationships and sex when the teachers are out of the classroom. Each action is an exercise that establishes dominance and orders the social ranking. It is both permitted by and reinforces the patriarchal structures within the school. The prevailing discourse within the case study schools dictates that examination results, order and discipline are the most important objectives of the primary school system. As a result, the gender violence that permeates the school environment is considered regrettable but ultimately less important and subsequently easily ignored.

7. Conclusion

In 2007, the Kenya government published *Kenya Vision 2030*, their development blueprint for transforming Kenya into a "middle income country providing a high quality for all its citizens by the year 2030" (Republic of Kenya, 2007, p. 1). The *Medium Term Plan for Education and Training* clearly identifies that, within its curriculum review, values including school safety and non-discrimination will be prioritized:

> Reforming education curriculum with emphasis on character formation, imparting values, talent identification and development, and development of knowledge, competences and skills, that are required for economic growth and societal transformation will be undertaken... The proposed curriculum reforms seek to create acceptability of education based on relevant content, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate outcomes. Professionalism and safety of the schools are also critical in curriculum reform (Republic of Kenya, 2013, p.67-68).

The Plan goes on to also identify some of the limitations and shortcomings of the examination system and a willingness to shift toward a new approach:

> ...The current system of summative assessment... dictates the teaching/learning process towards examinations as opposed to learning. In order to improve the education and training, the Government will adopt an approach where there are no mandatory examinations and create a situation where teachers make their own assessment tests and not quoting numeric grades but using descriptive feedback and no longer comparing students with one another. This will help teachers and students focus on learning in a fear free environment... (Ibid, p.69).

A curriculum reform has recently begun to be piloted that places less emphasis on summative assessment. These plans could align closely with the recommendations of this study: to focus more strongly on school safety, equity and support for student learning and move toward a holistic understanding of educational quality that focuses on individual development and minimizes student comparisons. They are limited, however, in their acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality and child protection as important discourses that deserve higher priority and influence over school governance. As discussed in Ramazanoğlu, Foucault's theory of power indicates, "It does not make sense to think of political change… in terms of emancipation from oppression. It does make sense to think of transforming political relations through the production of new discourses and so new forms of power and new forms of the self" 1993, p. 24). To be effective, the curriculum and assessment reform must shift toward an alternative discourse of education that prioritizes students' learning, talents and achievements

within an overarching framework that confronts harmful structural norms that enable and overlook violence and discrimination. Current efforts to revise the Kenyan curriculum and testing system show potential movement in that direction, but the degree to which they will be upheld and prioritized at the local and school level will be determined not only by a diminishing emphasis on examinations but by the increasing power and influence of discourses of safety, protection and equality. Meanwhile, international donors and NGOs should examine the extent to which their efforts to enhance school safety are ignoring factors such as the examination orientation within Kenyan primary schools, and take caution when advancing stronger learning measurements to avoid enhancing GVS by further increasing pressure on examination outcomes. In order to contribute to safer school environments, not only the Kenyan education system but the global actors that influence it must shift toward a more complex understanding of education quality that prioritizes student well-being within a school environment framed explicitly by safety and equality and supported by systems that reflect and enhance the implementation of those priorities.

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