

**STUDENT VIOLENCE. A STUDY OF SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN NJORO DIVISION, NAKURU DISTRICT**

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of student unrest/violence has been a problem in the Kenyan educational system for some time now. The first case of student unrest in Kenya was reported at Maseno School at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1908). However, violence where human lives have been lost and a mass of property destroyed have characterized recent cases of student unrest in secondary schools in Kenya. The main concern is why student protests are turning violent day after day. The trend is rather alarming and the magnitude of violent acts by students is high and worrying. In the last few months also, the Kenyan Government outlawed corporal punishment in schools and this has been seen as the aggravator of student violence especially in secondary schools. The concern is whether the secondary school students are celebrating the ban on caning by turning violent or not. In March 2001, an incident occurred in Kyanguli Secondary School in Machakos which shock the nation. A total of 67 students lost their lives in an inferno that was started by their colleagues reportedly as a revenge on the school administration. There was need therefore for the understanding of this problem and come up with solutions on how the same can be avoided in secondary schools. The literature available indicate that the problem has been there for some time now and seems to be on the increase.

The main aim of this study was to identify, investigate and explain the factors that determined the involvement of students in unrest/violence in secondary schools. This was accomplished by finding out if the personal, family background and school social environment factors were determinants of the rising cases of student unrest. A random sample of 251 students was selected from five purposively chosen secondary schools in Njoro division who were interviewed using a standardized research questionnaire. The students were selected using a combination of stratified random sampling and the systematic sampling techniques, which are probability sampling procedures. Another non-random sample of 19 schoolteachers was chosen using the purposive sampling technique and the interview guide approach was used to interview them. These were the key informants. Four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted in the secondary schools selected. This study therefore, combined both the quantitative and the qualitative research designs, which have been referred to as 'triangulation' in the social sciences.

The data collected was presented using both the descriptive and inferential statistics. In testing the hypotheses formulated in this study, the chi-square [ $\chi^2$ ] test for significance based on the contingency tables was used to reject the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) of no relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable at 95% confidence level. In measuring the strength of relationships between the cross-tabulated variables, the contingency coefficient [c] was used. At the same time, the Pearson's correlation coefficient [r] was used in measuring the strength and direction of relationships between selected independent variables and the dependent variable. The square of [r], that is [ $r^2$ ], was also used to show the explained variance of the dependent variable from the selected independent variables.

It was found out that among the personal factors of the students, only three of them determined the students' participation in violence in secondary schools. These explained 14.4% of the variance in the students' participation in violence in their schools. Only one family background factor determined the students' participation in violence in secondary schools. This explained 2.4% of the variance in the students' participation in violence in their schools. Three factors related to the school social environment determined the students' participation in violence in secondary schools. These explained 11.1% of the variance in the students' participation in violence in their schools.