EdinBurg Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

Relationship Between Gender-Based Violence and School Attendance Among Students in Selected Public Mixed-Day Secondary Schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya

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Accepted: 12 May 2026 || Published: 06 June 2026

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence of gender-based violence and its relationship with school attendance among both female and male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Using simple random sampling, 115 students participated in the research. Ethical approvals were obtained from the Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee at Africa International University, the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation, the Sub-County Director of Education, the respective school principals, and students. Data were analyzed using a statistical software package, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, t-tests, and simple linear regression. The findings revealed a high prevalence of gender-based violence across multiple forms: psychological violence at 59%, physical violence at 56%, and sexual violence at 54%. Psychological distress emerged as strongly associated with increased absenteeism. Although no significant gender differences in attendance patterns were observed, male students reported higher overall experiences of gender-based violence compared to their female counterparts. Contrary to expectations, the study found no direct significant relationship between exposure to gender-based violence and attendance outcomes. Based on these findings, the study recommends comprehensive, gender-sensitive school-based interventions that simultaneously address gender-based violence and the accompanying psychological distress. Key beneficiaries of these recommendations include students, school counselors, administrators, policymakers, and child support organizations working to create safer educational environments.

Keywords: *Gender-based violence, school attendance, psychological distress*

How to Cite: Wafula, C. N., Ireri, N., & Munda, P. O. (2026). Relationship Between Gender-Based Violence and School Attendance Among Students in Selected Public Mixed-Day Secondary Schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Religious Studies, 6*(3), 72-90.

1. Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, school-related gender-based violence remains a pervasive challenge that significantly disrupts educational access and retention for both girls and boys, though in different ways. Recent studies highlight that deeply rooted patriarchal norms, weak enforcement of child protection policies, and socio-economic vulnerabilities continue to fuel

GBV within and around schools (UNGEI & UNESCO, 2021; Plan International, 2022). While structural interventions such as policy frameworks and awareness campaigns exist, their impact is often undermined by cultural resistance, limited financial resources, and inadequate implementation capacity at local levels.

According to UNESCO (2021), approximately one in three girls in Sub-Saharan Africa experiences some form of GBV before the age of 18, while a study by the African Child Policy Forum (2022) found that one in four boys (25%) in the region experience physical or psychological violence in school settings, often in the form of corporal punishment, caning, and peer bullying. Schools are no exception for either gender, with common manifestations for girls including sexual harassment by teachers and peers, early pregnancy, and transactional sex, while boys commonly face severe corporal punishment, humiliation by teachers, and physical aggression from peers (Girls Not Brides, 2023; UNICEF, 2022; Plan International, 2022). In countries such as South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria, recent reports document high incidences of sexual exploitation of girls by educators, as well as widespread caning and physical abuse of boys, both of which contribute to absenteeism, psychological distress, and dropout (Plan International, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

In Kenya, schools have been significantly affected by GBV, with both female and male students experiencing various forms of abuse, though the patterns differ. Reports by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR, 2022) indicate that sexual harassment, corporal punishment, and psychological abuse are rampant in both urban and rural schools. Sexual violence, particularly against girls, is a critical issue, with cases of defilement and harassment by teachers, fellow students, and community members leading to high dropout rates (Ministry of Education, 2022). However, boys are not immune: a national survey by the Ministry of Education (2021) found that 18% of male secondary school students reported experiencing severe physical violence (including caning that caused injury) and 12% reported psychological abuse (constant humiliation, threats) from teachers or peers. A study by ActionAid (2021) revealed that 40% of schoolgirls in Kenya have faced some form of sexual violence before completing secondary education, while a concurrent study by Equality Now (2022) found that 27% of schoolboys reported being hit, kicked, or beaten at school by either teachers or older students. Many of these cases for both genders go unreported due to fear of stigma, retaliation, or, in the case of boys, fear of being perceived as weak or unmasculine.

Despite numerous policies and interventions, GBV continues to impede school attendance in Kiambu County and beyond for students of all genders. While previous studies have focused on broad aspects of GBV in schools, with an understandable emphasis on girls who experience high rates of sexual violence, there remains a specific gap in research analyzing how GBV affects mixed-day secondary school students' attendance disaggregated by gender in Kikuyu Sub-County. Three schools, Muhu Mixed Secondary, HGM Mixed Secondary, and Mama Ngina Mixed Secondary, were selected for inclusion in this study due to the high prevalence of students experiencing GBV, an aspect linked to their geographical location. These schools are reported to have a significant number of both female and male students who have experienced GBV. The schools are located in areas with high crime rates, poverty, and other socio-economic challenges known to increase the risk of GBV for both genders. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge the identified gap by examining the specific barriers posed by GBV to school attendance among all students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-

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County, Kiambu County, with attention to gender differences in both experiences and outcomes.

1.1 Problem Statement

In Kenya, the problem is equally pressing, but gender patterns differ. Data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019) indicate that 32% of women aged 15–49 years have experienced physical violence, with educational institutions identified as significant settings for such abuse. For men, the same survey found that 27% reported experiencing physical violence during their school years, mostly from teachers administering corporal punishment. Nationally, policies exist, but their implementation is uneven, and boys' victimization is often normalized as "discipline" rather than recognized as GBV. In Kiambu County, the National Syndemic Disease Control Council (NSDCC) reported that the county accounts for 34% of all GBV cases reported nationally, with approximately 30% of reported cases involving male victims, though this is likely a gross underestimate due to severe underreporting by boys. However, even these figures are likely underestimates due to chronic underreporting driven by stigma, fear of retaliation, inadequate reporting mechanisms, and, for boys, additional fear of being labeled weak or unmasculine (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Focusing further, Kikuyu Sub-County presents a paradox: localized reports and anecdotal evidence from community leaders and NGOs (e.g., Women Empowerment Network, 2022) suggest that learners of both genders are highly vulnerable to GBV, with 60% of adolescent girls and 35% of adolescent boys reporting experiences that disrupt schooling. Yet, comprehensive, empirical data specifically linking SRGBV to school attendance for both girls and boys in mixed-day secondary schools in this sub-county remain virtually absent. Research conducted by the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW, 2022) highlights that nearly 30% of school-going girls in Kiambu County have experienced GBV, but no comparable study exists for boys in the same context. This study, like others, does not provide an in-depth analysis of how different types of GBV (physical, sexual, psychological) affect daily attendance patterns separately for male and female students, especially in day schools where students return to high-risk community environments each evening.

This gap is compounded by four interrelated factors: (1) chronic underreporting of GBV cases due to stigma, insufficient reporting structures, and cultural norms that discourage disclosure for both genders, but especially for boys who face additional masculinity-related barriers; (2) a research focus on girls and sexual violence, with relative neglect of boys' experiences of physical and psychological violence; (3) a lack of studies that disaggregate the effects of different types of GBV on attendance by gender; and (4) the mistaken assumption that boys are less affected by GBV or that physical punishment is an acceptable form of discipline rather than a form of violence. Consequently, survivors of both genders remain marginalized, many without psychosocial support and at a significant educational disadvantage, but boys are particularly invisible in both research and intervention programming.

Therefore, this study sought to address this critical knowledge gap by systematically investigating the prevalence of GBV among both female and male students and its specific influence on school attendance in public mixed-day secondary schools within Kikuyu Sub-County. By disaggregating data by gender, the study aims to inform data-driven, gender-sensitive policies and targeted interventions that foster safe, inclusive, and supportive school

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Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
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environments for all learners, girls and boys alike, ultimately improving educational outcomes for all students, particularly those most at risk.

1.2 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between gender-based violence and school attendance among students (both girls and boys) in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

The specific objectives of this study were:

i. To determine the prevalence of GBV (physical, sexual, and psychological) among female and male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.
ii. To establish the influence of psychological distress resulting from GBV on school attendance for both girls and boys in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.
iii. To determine the gender differences in the effects of GBV on school attendance in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.
iv. To explore the relationship between students' experiences of GBV and their school attendance patterns in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Bronfenbrenner's theory underscores that SRGBV is not confined to individual schools or students but is influenced by interconnected systemic factors. Addressing SRGBV thus requires multi-layered interventions, including: (a) school-based strategies: implementation of safe spaces, teacher sensitization, and survivor-centered reporting mechanisms (UNGEI, 2023); (b) community-level engagement: strengthening parental involvement and awareness-raising initiatives to shift harmful norms (UN Women, 2022); and (c) policy reforms: enforcing GBV laws, improving inter-sectoral coordination, and promoting gender-transformative education systems (Girls Not Brides, 2023). By applying this ecological lens, education stakeholders can develop contextually relevant, holistic strategies that ensure safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments for all students, both female and male.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) offers a vital lens for understanding how gender-based violence (GBV) in schools is learned, perpetuated, and normalized through observation and social reinforcement. According to the theory, both prosocial and antisocial behavior is learned by observing others, particularly authority figures and peers, and is maintained through reinforcement (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986). In school settings where GBV is prevalent, students may internalize harmful behaviors or develop coping mechanisms such as school avoidance, leading to diminished participation and attendance (UNESCO, 2021).

Social Learning Theory posits that children imitate the behaviors of individuals they view as role models, such as teachers, older students, or parents. In GBV-affected schools, boys may witness male teachers or peers engaging in harassment, bullying, or physical violence against girls and come to perceive such actions as acceptable or expected expressions of masculinity (UNGEI, 2023; Plan International, 2022). Girls, on the other hand, may respond by withdrawing from certain spaces or relationships at school, avoiding participation in class or

extracurricular activities, and in severe cases, dropping out altogether (Save the Children, 2020).

Moreover, repeated exposure to GBV without accountability reinforces the behavior. If school authorities fail to discipline perpetrators or, worse, blame victims, it sends a message that violence is tolerated and even normalized (Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021). For example, when a girl reports sexual harassment and is disbelieved or shamed, it reinforces silence and withdrawal rather than justice and protection (Equality Now, 2022). Bandura (1986) emphasized that behaviors are reinforced when they receive social rewards such as peer approval or institutional indifference, thus encouraging repetition.

In many school contexts, boys who engage in harassment may be socially rewarded through peer validation or unchecked behavior, reinforcing a toxic model of masculinity (UN Women, 2022). At the same time, girls may learn that compliance, silence, and avoidance are necessary strategies for safety, which further diminishes their confidence, engagement, and academic performance (Plan International, 2022). This modeling of gendered behavior contributes to the cyclical nature of SRGBV, as each generation of students learns and reproduces these harmful norms (UNGEI, 2023).

The psychological effects of SRGBV also align with Social Learning Theory, as emotional and cognitive responses like fear, anxiety, or trauma shape future behavior. Victims of GBV often experience mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress, which in turn lead to chronic absenteeism, poor academic outcomes, and school dropout (UNICEF, 2021; WHO, 2021). Students may also engage in avoidance strategies, like skipping specific classes or avoiding teachers associated with abuse, further affecting their learning (Girls Not Brides, 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

Gender based violence (GBV) in schools is a global phenomenon that affects students' well-being and academic success. The issue manifests in various forms, including sexual harassment, physical violence, emotional abuse, and coercion, all of which contribute to disrupted learning experiences and increased dropout rates. The impact of GBV on students' school attendance has been widely documented across different regions, highlighting the urgent need for interventions that address the root causes and consequences of this crisis.

Globally, cases of GBV are often linked to peer violence, sexual harassment, and online bullying. A report by the European Commission (2021) indicated that over 50% of female students in European secondary schools had faced some form of gender-based violence, including verbal abuse, physical assault, and sexual harassment. Similarly, in North America, research by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020) found that nearly 23% of students in public schools reported experiencing gender-based violence, including sexual coercion and physical aggression, with significant consequences on their attendance and mental health. Despite the presence of stringent laws and policies aimed at addressing GBV in developed nations, enforcement gaps and underreporting continue to pose challenges.

In South Asia, GBV remains prevalent in school settings, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. A study conducted by Jha and Kelleher (2021) found that approximately 35% of female students in public schools had reported harassment from either teachers or peers, leading to school dropouts. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, GBV prevalence is further exacerbated by

gender norms that limit girls' access to secondary education (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Many girls are forced to discontinue their education due to fears of harassment during their commute or within school premises.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of GBV in schools is alarmingly high. UNESCO (2021) highlights that nearly 40% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa experience some form of GBV before completing secondary education. In Nigeria, Plan International (2022) reported that 31% of female secondary school students had been sexually harassed or assaulted within school premises. Similar findings were observed in Ghana, where sexual exploitation by educators and peers significantly contributed to high dropout rates among female students (World Bank, 2020). These statistics illustrate the need for policy interventions and community engagement to protect students from gender-based violence.

In South Africa, a study by Mlambo and Kanyane (2020) found that GBV is prevalent in both urban and rural schools, with 26% of secondary school girls reporting experiences of sexual harassment. The report further established that male students were also victims of bullying and physical violence, often perpetrated by older students or school staff. Despite stringent laws such as the Sexual Offenses Act, enforcement remains weak, leading to continued victimization of students.

East African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, also report high rates of school-related gender-based violence. In Uganda, studies indicate that 30% of girls in secondary schools have been victims of sexual abuse, with perpetrators often being male teachers, older students, and community members (UNICEF, 2021).

A survey conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2021) reported that 15,000 girls drop out of school annually due to teenage pregnancies, many of which are linked to sexual violence. Additionally, a study by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR, 2022) found that 40% of secondary school girls had experienced some form of GBV, with cases ranging from sexual harassment to corporal punishment and psychological abuse. The study further revealed that while government policies such as the National Policy on Gender and Development (2020) exist, implementation remains weak, resulting in continued exposure of students to GBV.

A study by Mwangi and Muthaa (2020) found that 35% of female students in Kenyan day secondary schools had encountered some form of GBV, with common cases involving inappropriate touching, verbal abuse, and sexual exploitation by teachers and *boda boda* (motorcycle taxi) operators. Wambua et al. (2019) highlighted that GBV in day secondary schools is a key factor contributing to absenteeism and school dropout, as many students fear reporting such cases due to stigma or victimization. Their research also noted that girls from low-income backgrounds were particularly vulnerable, as some engaged in transactional relationships to afford basic school needs, thereby increasing their risk of sexual exploitation. In addition, a study by the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW, 2021) indicated that nearly 28% of students in Nairobi and Kiambu counties had experienced GBV, leading to psychological trauma and poor academic performance. The report also highlighted the lack of effective reporting mechanisms in many schools, resulting in underreporting and continued victimization.

EdinBurg Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

To effectively address GBV in day secondary schools, a multi-stakeholder approach involving educators, parents, community leaders, and policymakers is needed. Schools must implement strict anti-GBV policies, provide counseling services, and establish safe reporting mechanisms to protect students from violence and its adverse effects on their education. Additionally, community-based awareness programs should be enhanced to challenge cultural norms that perpetuate GBV and create safe spaces for victims to seek justice. By strengthening legal frameworks and promoting a culture of zero tolerance for GBV, stakeholders can significantly reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence in day secondary schools and improve student retention and academic performance.

In Kenya, the impact of GBV on psychological well-being and school attendance has been extensively documented. Mwangi et al. (2021) found that exposure to violence at home or in school increases psychological distress among adolescents, negatively affecting their academic performance and attendance. The study emphasized the importance of school-based mental health programs in addressing these issues. Similarly, a survey by Mutiso et al. (2021) linked experiences of GBV to increased mental health challenges among Kenyan adolescents, particularly anxiety, depression, and stress. Victims often develop avoidance behaviors, fearing further victimization, which leads to chronic absenteeism and school disengagement.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

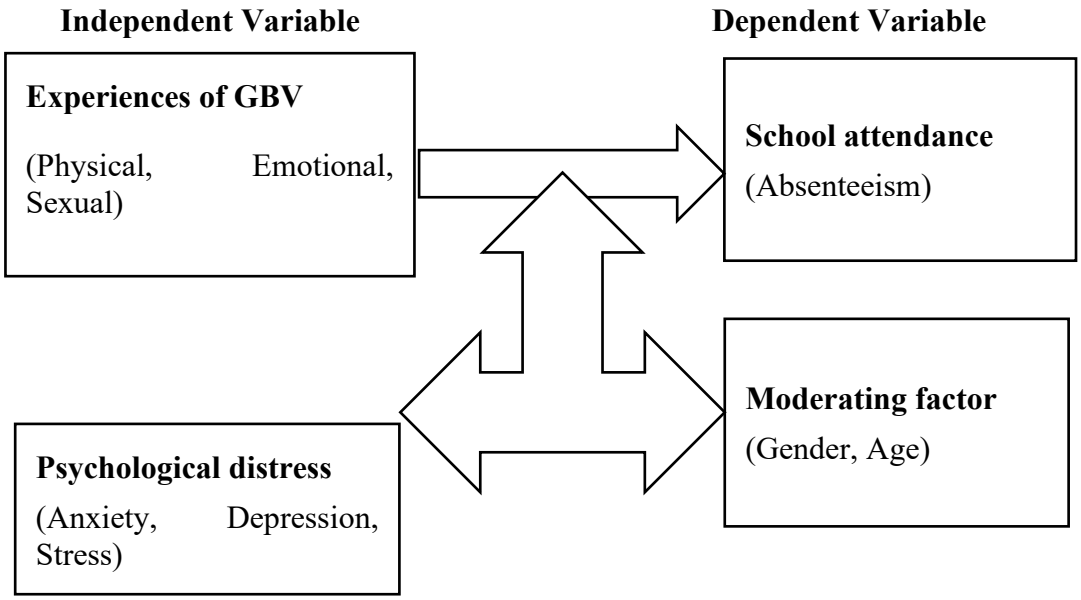

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design using a quantitative approach. The target population for this study comprised all Form 2 boys and girls aged 14 to 17 years enrolled at Muhu Secondary, Mama Ngina Secondary, and Kinoo HGM Secondary schools. Form 2 was purposively selected because research indicates that students at this level often experience increased academic pressure and disengagement, making them more vulnerable to dropout. From the total population of 579 Form 2 students across these schools, a sample of 115 students was selected using stratified simple random sampling, stratified by gender. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 23.

EdinBurg Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

Before analysis, data were screened for missing values, outliers, and normality. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) were used to summarize GBV prevalence, school absenteeism, and psychological distress scores. Prevalence of GBV was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), whereas the mean and standard deviation were used for school absenteeism and psychological distress scores. Inferential statistics were also utilized. Correlation analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between GBV and absenteeism. An independent t-test was used to compare gender differences in the effects of GBV. Simple regression was employed to analyze the effects of GBV on absenteeism. The results were presented in tables and charts. The analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with the latter based on the multiple regression model.

4. Results

4.1 Prevalence of Gender Based Violence among Students

The first objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of gender-based violence among students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County. A descriptive analysis was conducted to calculate the proportion of students reporting each type of gender-based violence. Table 1 presents the prevalence rates for eight distinct types of gender-based violence: humiliation, threats of violence, pressure or coercion, physical punishment, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, coerced sexual acts, and demands for sexual favors. For each type, the table reports the proportion of students who experienced that form of violence, the standard error, and the 95% confidence interval, based on data from 114 respondents.

Table 1: Prevalence of Gender Based Violence among day secondary school students(N=114)

Variable	Obs	Proportion%	Std. err.	Binomial exact [95% conf. interval]	
Humiliated	114	59	0.05	0.49	0.68
Threatened	114	33	0.04	0.25	0.43
Pressured	114	25	0.04	0.17	0.34
Physically punished	114	56	0.05	0.47	0.65
Sexually harassed	114	54	0.05	0.45	0.64
Touched inappropriately	114	33	0.04	0.25	0.43
Coerced sexually	114	11	0.03	0.06	0.19
Sexual favor	114	11	0.03	0.06	0.18

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Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

The results revealed that more than half of the students interviewed (59%) had experienced humiliating treatment, including verbal abuse, bullying, or public shaming within the school environment. Physical punishment was the second most common form at 56%, indicating that corporal punishment or physical assault remains a widespread issue within the student population. Over half of the participants (54%) had been subjected to unwanted sexual attention, comments, or advances, suggesting a deeply ingrained culture of sexual misconduct in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County. One-third of the participants (33%) lived with the fear of threats of violence or harm, and a similar proportion (33%) had experienced a violation of their physical boundaries through inappropriate touching, which constitutes a form of sexual assault. Approximately one quarter of the participants (25%) faced coercion, likely in the form of emotional blackmail or intimidation to do things against their will. While less common, coerced sex and demands for sexual favors both affected 11% of participants, representing the most severe forms of gender-based violence. These figures indicate that roughly 1 in every 9 participants had been forced into sexual acts or transactional sex.

Figure 1 shows that most students have experienced multiple types of GBV with a right-skewed distribution centered around the total mean of 3.66, but with few students reporting zero exposures. This visually reinforces the high prevalence of GBV.

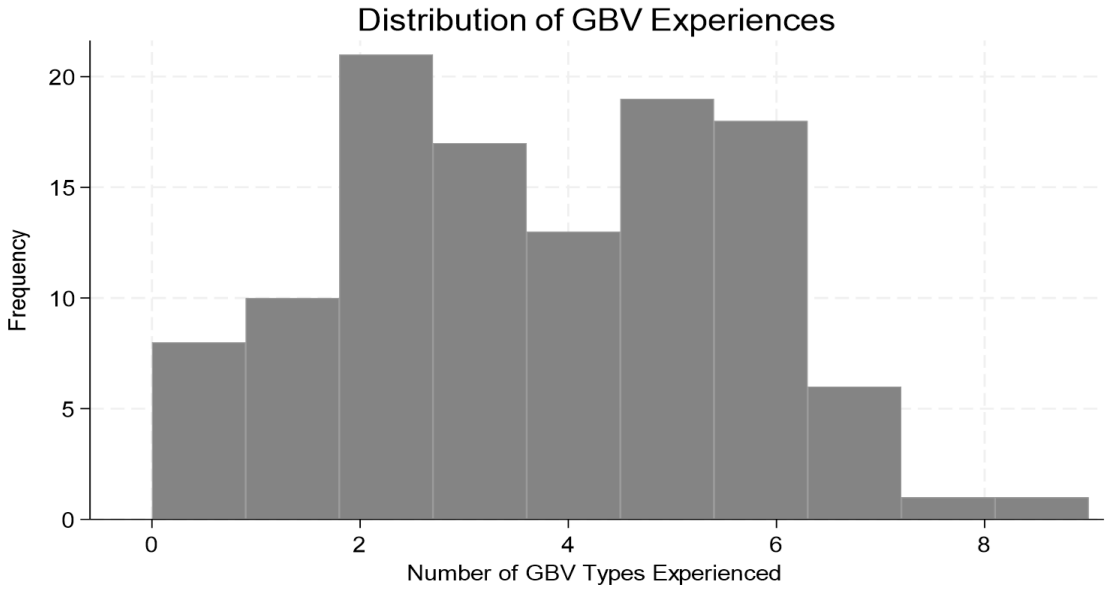

Figure 1: Histogram of GBV burden

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Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

Table 2: **GBV Experiences and Psychological Distress Scores by Gender(N=114)**

		mean	sd	count
Female	Number of GBV types experienced	2.90	1.96	59
	Psychological Distress Score	26.66	14.26	59
	Age	15.44	0.75	59
Male	Number of GBV types experienced	4.47	1.91	55
	Psychological Distress Score	28.25	12.30	55
	Age	15.93	0.60	55
Total	Number of GBV types experienced	3.66	2.09	114
	Psychological Distress Score	27.43	13.32	114
	Age	15.68	0.72	114
	Observations	114		

When disaggregated by gender, male students reported having experienced a significantly higher number of different gender-based violence types (mean of 4.47) compared to female students (mean of 2.90). Both genders reported high levels of psychological distress. The slightly higher distress score for males (28.25) is consistent with their higher exposure to multiple types of gender-based violence. This indicates that the school environment is psychologically damaging for all students, regardless of gender.

4.2 Psychological distress and school attendance

The second objective of the study was to assess the influence of psychological distress on school attendance. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict psychological distress scores from attendance patterns (categorized as never absent, rarely, occasionally, frequently, and very frequently), while controlling for gender, age, and illness or disability. Table 3 presents the overall model fit statistics, including the sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean square, F-statistic, p-value, R-squared, adjusted R-squared, and root mean square error.

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Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

Table 3: Linear regression of attendance and distress score, controlling for potential confounders

Source	SS	Df	MS	Number of obs	=	113
				F(7, 105)	=	2.410
Model	2774.905	7	396.415	Prob > F	=	0.025
Residual	17256.175	105	164.345	R-squared	=	0.139
				Adj R-squared	=	0.081
Total	20031.080	112	178.849	Root MSE	=	12.820
Distress score	**Coefficient**	**Std. err.**	**t**	**P>t**	**[95% conf. interval]**	
Attendance						
Rarely	-3.350	2.994	-1.120	0.266	-9.287	2.588
Occasionally	6.019	3.521	1.710	0.090	-0.963	13.001
Frequently	6.881	8.049	0.850	0.395	-9.079	22.841
Very Frequently	10.336	4.554	2.270	0.025	1.306	19.366
Gender	1.296	2.587	0.500	0.617	-3.833	6.426
Age	0.907	1.914	0.470	0.636	-2.887	4.702
Illness/Disability	-2.975	3.036	-0.980	0.329	-8.994	3.044
Cons.	12.492	29.221	0.430	0.670	-45.448	70.432

Overall, the regression model was statistically significant ($F(7, 105) = 2.410$, $p = 0.0249$), meaning that the combination of attendance patterns, gender, age, and illness or disability collectively explains a meaningful portion of the variation in psychological distress scores. The model explained 13.9% of the variation in distress scores (R-squared = 0.1385). This is a relatively low R-squared value, indicating that while attendance is a significant factor, many other important drivers of student distress (such as academic pressure, financial stress, family issues, and social life) are not captured by this model.

The coefficients indicate the relationship between each variable and the psychological distress score, holding all other variables constant. The reference group for attendance was "Never Absent." Students who were absent "Rarely" had a distress score approximately 3.35 points lower than students who were never absent, but this difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.266$). Students who were absent "Occasionally" had distress scores approximately 6.02 points higher than those of never-absent students, approaching statistical significance at the 90% confidence level ($p = 0.090$). Students who were absent "Frequently" had distress scores approximately 6.88 points higher than never-absent students, but this difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.395$). Students who were absent "Very Frequently" had distress scores approximately 10.34 points higher than never-absent students, and this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.025$).

A clear dose-response pattern was observed: as the frequency of absenteeism increased, psychological distress scores also increased. The relationship became statistically significant only at the highest level of absenteeism ("Very Frequently"). Gender did not differ significantly in distress scores ($p = 0.617$). Age showed no significant relationship with distress ($p = 0.636$). Having an illness or disability showed no significant association with distress after controlling

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Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
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for other factors (p = 0.329). The most robust finding from this analysis is that attendance patterns are a strong predictor of psychological distress.

This analysis strongly supports the conclusion that frequent school absence, particularly at the highest frequency, is a significant marker of psychological distress that warrants systematic attention from educators and mental health professionals.

To determine whether psychological distress differed significantly across attendance groups, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed. Table 4 presents the mean distress scores for each attendance category with their standard deviations and frequencies, followed by the ANOVA summary table showing the between-groups and within-groups sums of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, F-statistic, and p-value. Bartlett's test for equal variances is also reported.

Table 4: ANOVA-Testing Mean Distress Differences Across Attendance Groups

Summary of Psychological Distress Score			
Attendance	Mean	Std. dev.	Freq.
Never Absent	26.371	12.485	35
Rarely	22.952	12.714	42
Occasionally	31.783	13.031	23
Frequently	31.000	16.093	3
Very Frequently	37.818	11.488	11
Total	27.430	13.318	114

Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**Prob > F**
Between groups	2542.313	4	635.578	3.960	0.005
Within groups	17501.626	109	160.565		
Total	20043.939	113	177.380		

Bartlett's equal-variances test: chi2(4) = 0.4738 Prob>chi2 = 0.976

Comparison of Psychological Distress Score by Attendance (Scheffe)

Row Mean- Col Mean	**Never Absent**	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Frequent**
Rarely	-3.419			
	0.845			
Occasionally	5.411	8.830		
	0.640	0.133		
Frequently	4.629	8.048	-0.783	
	0.985	0.889	1.000	
Very Frequently	11.447	14.866	6.036	6.818
	0.154	0.022	0.792	0.953

The overall F-statistic was 3.960, with a p-value of 0.005, indicating statistical significance. This indicates that there are real differences in mean psychological distress scores between at least some of the attendance groups. Bartlett's test for equal variances yielded a p-value of 0.976, indicating no evidence against equal variances across groups and thus validating the

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Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies
Vol. 6||Issue 3||pp 72-90||June||2026
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2790-0118

ANOVA assumption. The data reveal a clear pattern: students with more frequent absences experienced higher average psychological distress levels, with the "Very Frequently" absent group showing dramatically elevated distress scores (mean of 37.8 compared to 23.0 for the "Rarely" absent group). The Scheffe post-hoc comparisons revealed only one statistically significant pairwise difference: the "Very Frequently" absent group had distress scores approximately 14.87 points higher than the "Rarely" absent group ($p = 0.022$). This finding is consistent with the regression results. Both analyses identified the "Very Frequently" absent group as having notably elevated distress. An interesting finding is that the "Rarely" absent group showed the lowest distress levels (mean of 22.95), which is consistent across analyses.

4.3 Gender differences in GBV and school attendance

To examine whether school attendance patterns differed by gender, a chi-square test of independence was performed. Table 5 presents the cross-tabulation of observed frequencies and row percentages for attendance categories by gender, followed by the chi-square statistic, degrees of freedom, and p-value.

Table 5: School Attendance patterns by gender

		RECODE of attendance						
Gender		Never Absent	Rarely	9	10	11	12	Total
Female	Obs	21	1	3	18	13	3	59
	%	35.59	1.69	5.08	30.51	22.03	5.08	100
Male	Obs	21	0	0	17	10	7	55
	%	38.18	0	0	30.91	18.18	12.73	100
Total	Obs	42	1	3	35	23	10	114
	%	36.84	0.88	2.63	30.7	20.18	8.77	100

Pearson chi2(5) = 5.8868 Pr = 0.317

The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in school attendance patterns between male and female students ($p = 0.317$). The distribution across the various attendance categories is very similar for both genders, and any observed differences are likely due to random chance. The largest group for both genders fell into the "Rarely" absent category (female at 35.59% and male at 38.18%). The chi-square test of independence examined whether there is a relationship between gender and attendance patterns. The null hypothesis (that gender and attendance are independent, meaning attendance patterns are the same for males and females) could not be rejected. The p-value of 0.317 is much greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no statistically significant evidence of an association between gender and attendance patterns in this study. The core finding is that gender does not appear to be a driver of how often students are absent.

EdinBurg Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
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To compare the number of gender-based violence types experienced by female and male students, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Table 6 presents the mean number of GBV types for female and male students, along with the standard errors, standard deviations, 95% confidence intervals, t-statistic, degrees of freedom, and p-value.

Table 6: T-test for GBV burden by gender(N=114)

Gender	Obs	Mean	Std. err.	Std. dev.	[95% conf. interval]	
Female	59	2.898	0.256	1.963	2.387	3.410
Male	55	4.473	0.258	1.913	3.955	4.990
Combined	114	3.658	0.195	2.086	3.271	4.045
diff		-1.574	0.363		-2.295	-0.854

diff = mean(female) - mean(male) t = 4.3320
H0: diff = 0 Degrees of freedom =112
Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 1.000

On average, female students reported experiencing approximately 2.9 different types of gender-based violence. Male students reported experiencing approximately 4.5 different types of gender-based violence. Therefore, the average gender-based violence burden for male students was 1.57 types of violence higher than that of female students. This is a large and meaningful difference. The t-statistic was -4.33, with a p-value of less than 0.0001, indicating strong statistical significance. This means that the observed difference in means is not due to random chance; it is a statistically significant finding in this sample.

The 95 percent confidence interval for the difference ranged from -2.29 to -0.85. This means that the researcher can be ninety-five percent confident that the true difference in the average gender-based violence count between the entire population of female and male students lies between a reduction of 2.29 and a reduction of 0.85 for females compared to males. Since the entire interval is negative and does not include zero, it reinforces the conclusion that the difference is statistically significant.

This result directly challenges the common assumption that gender-based violence predominantly affects females. In this specific student population, male students reported a broader range of victimization experiences. This does not diminish the experiences of female students but rather highlights that gender-based violence is a serious issue for all students regardless of gender.

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4.4 Relationship between GBV experiences and School Attendance

The fourth objective of the study was to explore the relationship between experiences of gender-based violence and school attendance. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict school attendance from the number of gender-based violence types experienced, while controlling for gender, age, psychological distress, and illness or disability. Table 7 presents the overall model fit statistics, including the sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean square, F-statistic, p-value, R-squared, adjusted R-squared, and root mean square error, followed by the regression coefficients for each predictor variable with their standard errors, t-statistics, p-values, and ninety-five percent confidence intervals.

Table 7: Relationship between GBV Experiences and School Attendance

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs=	113
				F(5, 107)=	2.760
Model	281.427	5	56.285	Prob > F=	0.022
Residual	2184.007	107	20.411	R-squared=	0.114
				Adj R-squared=	0.073
Total	2465.434	112	22.013	Root MSE=	4.518

Attendance	Coefficient	Std. err.	T	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
GBV count	-0.070	0.230	-0.310	0.760	-0.527	0.386
Gender	-0.668	0.960	-0.700	0.488	-2.571	1.235
Age	1.277	0.635	2.010	0.047	0.018	2.536
Distress score	0.086	0.033	2.600	0.011	0.021	0.152
Illness disability	1.390	1.046	1.330	0.187	-0.684	3.464
_cons	-15.299	9.500	-1.610	0.110	-34.132	3.534

The results showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the total number of gender-based violence types a student has experienced and their level of school attendance. The coefficient for GBV count was -0.070 with a p-value of 0.760, which is far above the standard significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the cumulative number of different gender-based violence types a student experiences does not directly predict school attendance when other factors are considered.

In contrast, psychological distress score was a statistically significant predictor of school attendance (coefficient = 0.086, p = 0.011). This means that for every one-point increase in psychological distress score, school absenteeism increased by 0.086 points. In other words, students with higher psychological distress scores were more likely to miss school. Age also showed a positive and statistically significant effect on absenteeism (coefficient = 1.277, p = 0.047). Older students were more likely to be frequently absent, suggesting that increased age

may be associated with additional responsibilities, greater autonomy, or greater disengagement from school, all of which may contribute to higher absenteeism.

This study shows that gender-based violence is highly prevalent in this student population. However, the sheer number of different gender-based violence types a student experiences does not directly predict school attendance. The regression analysis reveals that the true driver of school attendance patterns is psychological distress, which itself is influenced by gender-based violence experiences.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that gender-based violence remains a pervasive and multifaceted problem within public mixed-day secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County. The violence is widespread across all three types (psychological, physical, and sexual) and affects both female and male students, though in different patterns. While gender-based violence does not directly predict absenteeism, its indirect effect through psychological distress is significant. Therefore, addressing gender-based violence in schools requires not only prevention and response mechanisms but also robust mental health support systems to address the psychological consequences of violence. The findings demonstrate that gender-based violence is not only a violation of students' rights but also a significant threat to their mental health and, through that pathway, to their educational participation.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Schools should establish clear reporting mechanisms, awareness campaigns, and peer support systems addressing all forms of GBV.
2. Schools should integrate counseling services and train teachers to identify and support students showing signs of distress.
3. The finding that boys experience higher average GBV exposure underscores the need for gender-balanced GBV prevention approaches.
4. The Ministry of Education should strengthen the enforcement of anti-GBV and child protection policies.
5. Future studies should explore the qualitative dimensions of GBV to understand coping mechanisms, underreporting, and the indirect academic impacts of violence and trauma.

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