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MITIGATING VIOLENCE AND ALCOHOLISM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CAMEROON: THE CASE OF MBAM AND INOUBOU DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

Violence and drug abuse are pervasive problems in secondary schools in Cameroon, affecting the well-being and academic performance of students. Traditional punitive measures, such as corporal punishment, are ineffective in addressing these problems and can have negative consequences for students. This study investigates the techniques used by educators to address violence and drug abuse in secondary schools in Cameroon and explores the reasons for abolishing corporal punishment. A survey of 200 educators in secondary schools in Cameroon was conducted to gather data on the techniques used to address violence and drug abuse, and the reasons for abolishing corporal punishment. The results show that educators are using various techniques, including student-centred approaches, to address violence and drug abuse. However, the alarming prevalence of corporal punishment is still a problem for the education community. The study also found that most educators support abolishing corporal punishment, citing concerns for student well-being and safety.

KEYWORDS: *Corporal Punishment, Drug Abuse, School Violence, Student-Centered Approaches*

INTRODUCTION

Violence, including physical altercations and verbal abuse, and alcoholism, involving underage drinking and substance abuse, are significant concerns in secondary schools worldwide, with far-reaching consequences for students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being (Buka, Stichick, & Earls, 2001; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Jessor, 1991). In Cameroon, the situation is no different, with reports of these specific types of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools on the rise (Mbuagbo, 2017; Ndzendze, 2015). The Mbam and Inoubou Division, in particular, has been identified as a hotspot for these issues (Kouam, 2018; Nfor, 2019). This paper aims to investigate the causes of these specific types of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in the Mbam and Inoubou Division of Cameroon and to identify effective strategies for mitigating them.

The prevalence of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in Cameroon has been linked to a range of factors, including poverty, family breakdown, and peer pressure (Kouam, 2018; Mbuagbo, 2017; Ndzendze, 2015). Furthermore, the lack of effective policies and programs to address these issues has exacerbated the problem (Nfor, 2019). This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on violence and alcoholism in secondary schools by providing a nuanced understanding of the causes of these problems in the Mbam and Inoubou Division and by identifying effective strategies for mitigating them.

As educators, policymakers, and researchers, your expertise is invaluable in addressing these issues. Agents of socialisation like the school, church, homes, and the mass media continue to educate children about the dangers of violence, alcohol and consumption of drugs in the school milieu, but the rate of alcoholism and violence keeps increasing in schools (Buka, Stichick, & Earls, 2001; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Jessor, 1991). Citizenship education emphasising moral probity and good conduct is generally taught in secondary schools in Cameroon (Kouam, 2018; Mbuagbo, 2017). The academic performances of some students remain poor as they continue to perpetrate violence towards fellow students/teachers and still consume drugs/alcohol (Ndzendze, 2015; Nfor, 2019). Despite sensitisation campaigns against these ills and misconduct in urban and rural schools, the problem still keeps arising, leading to sporadic school fighting (Kouam, 2018; Mbuagbo, 2017). Some teachers and students have lost their lives due to this imbroglio in the secondary school milieu (Nfor, 2019). This study seeks to investigate the effective measures put in place to curb and possibly alleviate violence, drug consumption and alcoholism in secondary schools in Cameroon, especially in the metropolitan cities. What are the strategies that can curb violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in Cameroon?

The study is guided by the social-ecological model of health, which posits that individual behaviour is influenced by a range of factors, including family, peers, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988). This model provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors that contribute to violence and alcoholism in secondary schools. By examining the individual, social, and environmental factors that contribute to these problems, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in the Mbam and Inoubou Division and to identify effective strategies for mitigating them. Specifically,

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the study seeks
• To investigate the reason for increasing violence in the school environment that has negatively affected academic performance.
• To find out why students in secondary schools in metropolitan cities and rural areas consume drugs.
• To find out the measures put in place by the ministry of secondary education to curb the unethical behaviour perpetrated by students in the school milieu in both urban and rural areas.
• To know the techniques guidance counselors and disciplinarians use in orientating and educating students against the increasing violence and drug consumption in secondary schools in Cameroon.
• To evaluate the impact of the abolition of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Cameroon.

Existing Literature Mitigating Violence and Alcoholism in Secondary Schools

Violence and alcoholism, pervasive issues in secondary schools globally, are urgently demanding our attention due to their profound impact on students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being (Buka, Stichick, & Earls, 2001; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Jessor, 1991). In Cameroon, these concerns are escalating, with reports of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools on the rise (Kouam, 2018; Mbuagbo, 2017). The Mbam and Inoubou Division, in particular, has been identified as a hotspot for these issues (Nfor, 2019).

Research has shown that violence and alcoholism in secondary schools are often linked to a range of factors, including poverty, family breakdown, and peer pressure (Kouam, 2018; Mbuagbo, 2017; Ndzendze, 2015). Furthermore, the lack of effective policies and programs to address these issues has exacerbated the problem (Nfor, 2019). For instance, a study by Kouam (2018) found that the lack of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Cameroon contributed to the high rates of violence and alcoholism.

Several strategies have been proposed to mitigate violence and alcoholism in secondary schools, offering a beacon of hope for positive change. These strategies include the implementation of evidence-based prevention programs, the provision of guidance and counselling services, and the promotion of positive relationships between students, teachers, and parents (Buka, Stichick, & Earls, 2001; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Jessor, 1991). For example, a study by Hawkins et al. (2001) found that the Seattle Social Development Project, a comprehensive prevention program, was effective in reducing violence and substance abuse among adolescents.

As educators, policymakers, and researchers, your role is crucial in addressing the unique challenges faced by secondary schools in the Mbam and Inoubou Division. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the causes of violence and alcoholism in these schools and identifying effective strategies for mitigating these problems. Your involvement and commitment are key to the success of these efforts.

Methodology

- ***Research Design***

This study employed ~~qualitative and~~ a quantitative research design. The qualitative approach involved in-depth interviews with a subset of students, teachers, and administrators to gather more detailed and nuanced information about their experiences and perceptions of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools.

- ***Survey Instrument and Data Collection Process***

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect data on the prevalence, causes, and consequences of violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in the Mbam and Inoubou Division. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice, Likert scale, and dichotomous questions. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: (1) demographic information, (2) experiences of violence and alcoholism, (3) attitudes and perceptions towards violence and alcoholism, and (4) suggestions for mitigating violence and alcoholism in secondary schools.

- ***Sample Size, Population, and Sampling Strategy***

The target population for this study consisted of secondary school students, teachers, and administrators in the Mbam and Inoubou Division of Cameroon. The sample size was determined using a combination of convenience sampling and stratified random sampling. The sample consisted of 150 secondary school students, 40 teachers, and 10 administrators, representing a total of 200 participants. The sampling strategy involved the following steps:

- ***Data Analysis Procedures***

The data collected from the survey questionnaire was analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis involved the following steps:
1. Data cleaning and coding: The data was cleaned and coded to ensure accuracy and consistency.
2. Descriptive statistics: Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data.
3. Inferential statistics: Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests, t-tests, and ANOVA, were used to test hypotheses and identify significant relationships between variables.
4. Thematic analysis: Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews.

Presentation of Findings

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 offer a comprehensive view of the respondents' characteristics and their perceptions of the causes of violence and drug consumption in schools. The sample, comprising 200 respondents, is slightly skewed towards females, who make up 58.5% of the total, compared to 41.5% males. This is evident from the mean value of 1.415 for the gender variable, which is likely coded as 1 for males and 2 for females.

The respondents primarily teach secondary school classes, as indicated by the mean value of 2.805 for the classes taught variable. This variable likely represents the level of classes taught by the respondents, with higher values indicating higher levels of classes. The respondents also have a remarkably high level of education, with a mean value of 2.57 for the level of education variable. This suggests that most respondents have a secondary or high school level of education, ensuring the

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quality and reliability of the data.
The respondents' teaching qualifications are also relatively high, with a mean value of 2.78 for the qualification variable. This suggests that most respondents have a secondary or high school teaching qualification. The respondents have an average of around 3 years of teaching experience, as indicated by the mean value of 3.065 for the years of experience variable. This suggests that the respondents are relatively experienced teachers.

The respondents' age distribution is relatively skewed, with a mean value of 3.915 for the age group variable. This suggests that most respondents fall within the 30-40 age range. The respondents are also more likely to teach in public schools, as indicated by the mean value of 1.415 for the type of school variable.

The respondents' perceptions of the causes of violence and drug consumption in schools are also noteworthy. The mean value of 3.195 for the cause of violence variable suggests that most respondents attribute violence to multiple factors. Similarly, the mean value of 4.11 for the cause of drug consumption variable suggests that most respondents attribute drug consumption to a variety of factors. These findings not only highlight the complexity of the issues but also suggest that the respondents recognize this complexity, offering hope for the potential of multifaceted solutions.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
gender	200	1.415	.494	1	2
classestaught	200	2.805	.872	1	4
levelofeducation	200	2.57	.786	1	4
qualification	200	2.78	.71	1	4
yearsofexperience	200	3.065	1.364	1	5
agegroup	200	3.915	2.117	1	7
typeofschool	200	1.415	.704	1	3
causeofvoilence	200	3.195	1.609	1	7
causeofdrugconsump~n	200	4.11	2.814	1	10

Source: Author (2025)

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.747 presented in Table 2, which indicates a relatively high level of internal consistency among the 12 items in the research instrument. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was given and the individual ones was not given to minimise volume of manuscript.

This suggests that the items are measuring a single underlying construct, which is likely related to mitigating violence and alcoholism in secondary schools. With a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher, the research instrument is reliable and can be used to collect data for the study, instilling confidence in its reliability.

Within the context of the topic, the reliability of the research instrument plays a crucial role. It ensures that the data collected is a true reflection of the respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding violence and alcoholism in secondary schools in the Mbam and Inoubou Division of Cameroon.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.747	12

Source: Author (2025)

- ***Demographic Information***

Figure 1 below presents the frequency distribution of the respondents by gender. The results show that Males (coded as 1) constitute 58.5% of the sample, with a frequency of 117 and Females (coded as 2) make up 41.5% of the sample, with a frequency of 83. The cumulative percentage shows that the total sample size is 200, with 100% of the respondents accounted for. In the context of the study, the gender distribution of the respondents suggests that the sample is not evenly split between males and females. However, the sample size is still sufficient to provide a representative view of the perceptions and experiences of secondary school teachers and administrators regarding violence and alcoholism in schools. The gender distribution may also have implications for the analysis and interpretation of the results, particularly if there are significant differences in the responses of males and females.
It also presents the frequency distribution of the classes taught by the respondents. The results show that the respondents teach various classes, from Forms 1-3 to Upper Sixth Science. However, most respondents, 59.5%, teach Lower Sixth Science, with a frequency of 119. This suggests that the sample predominantly comprises science teachers, particularly those teaching at the lower sixth level.

In contrast, the respondents who teach Forms 1-3 and Forms 4-5 are relatively fewer, with frequencies of 26 and 21, respectively. These groups account for 13.0% and 10.5% of respondents. The respondents who teach Upper Sixth Science also form a significant group, with a frequency of 34 and accounting for 17.0% of the respondents.

The cumulative percentage shows that the total sample size is 200, with 100% of the respondents accounted for. This suggests that the sample is representative of the population of teachers in the Mbam and Inoubou Divisions of Cameroon. The distribution of classes taught by the respondents has implications for the analysis and interpretation of the results, particularly if there are differences in the perceptions and

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experiences of science and non-science teachers regarding violence and alcoholism in schools.

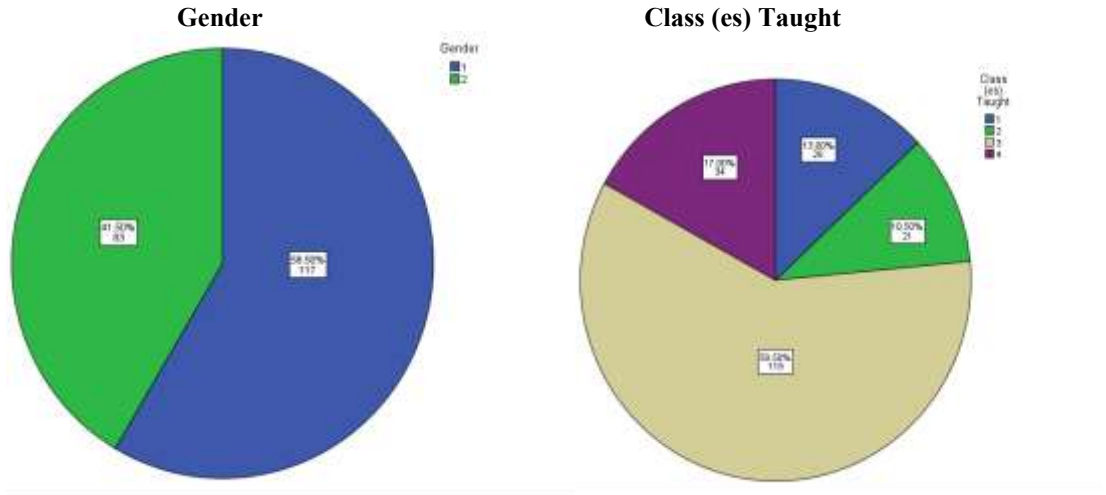


Figure 1: Pie Charts for Gender and Classes Taught

Source: Author (2025)

The respondents' education levels exhibit a wide spectrum, showcasing the diversity in qualifications. The majority, 45.5%, boast a Master's degree, while 36.0% hold a First Degree. A smaller yet significant proportion, 8.5%, have an advanced level qualification, and 10.0% have achieved the highest academic qualification, a PhD.

When it comes to qualification, a substantial majority, 75.0%, express uncertainty or indecision about their qualification. This prevalent lack of clarity or confidence among the respondents regarding their qualifications is a significant finding. A smaller proportion, 10.0%, hold a PCEG qualification, while 8.5% hold a PLEG qualification. Only 6.5% prefer not to disclose their qualifications or have other qualifications.

Overall, the results indicate that the respondents have a relatively high level of education, with a majority holding a Master's degree or higher. However, the prevalent lack of clarity or confidence regarding their qualifications among the respondents is a significant finding. This finding may have implications for their teaching practices and professional development, underscoring the importance of this research.

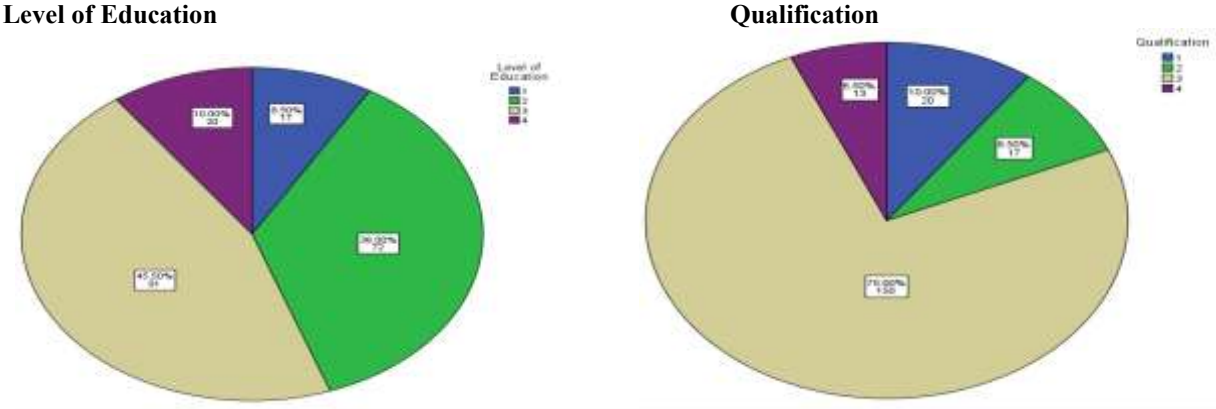


Figure 2: Pie Charts for Level of Education and Qualification

Source: Author (2025)

Most respondents, 32.0%, have 3-5 years of teaching experience. This is followed by 23.0% who have 5-10 years of experience (assuming the missing code 5 corresponds to 5-10 years). The remaining respondents are distributed across the other categories, with 11.5% having below 3 years of experience, 18.0% having 6-10 years of experience, and 15.5% having 15 years and above of experience.

The age distribution of the respondents is comprehensive, showing a relatively even spread across the different age groups. The most significant proportion, 20.0%, falls under the age group below 21. This is followed by 17.0% in the 51-60 age group and 17.0% in the 60- and above age group. The remaining respondents are distributed across the other age groups, with 11.5% in the 21-25 years age group, 11.0% in the 41-50 years age group, 12.5% in the 26-30 years age group, and 11.0% in the 31-40 years age group.

Overall, the results suggest that the respondents have a relatively diverse range of teaching experiences and age profiles. However, a notable proportion of younger respondents could potentially have significant implications for the teaching

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profession and professional development, underscoring the urgency of addressing these implications.

Years of Experience **Age Group**

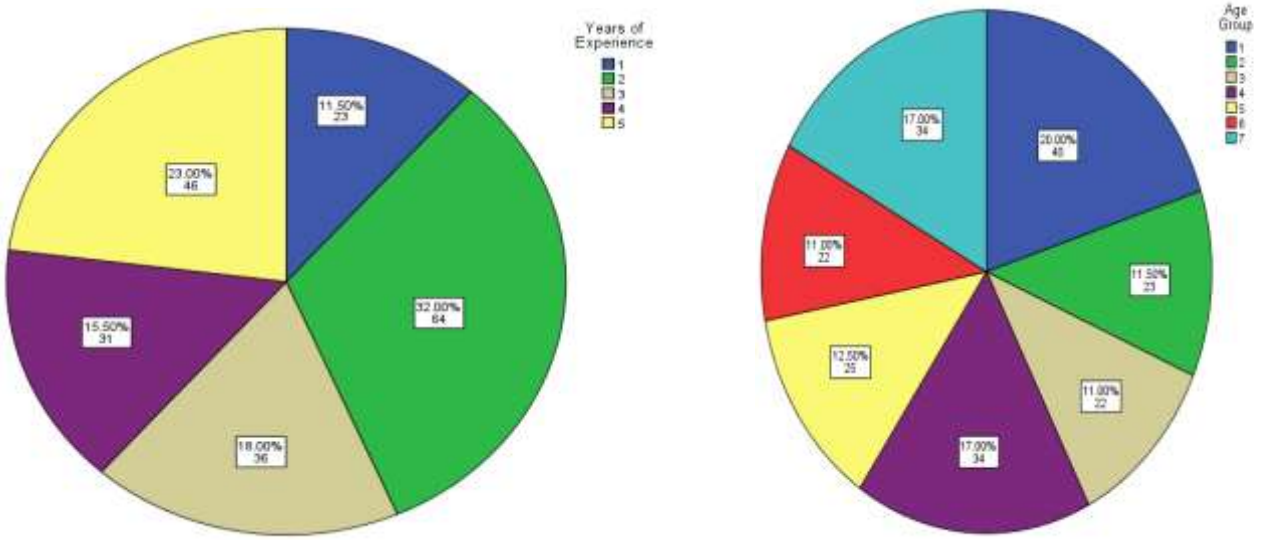


Figure 3: Pie Charts for Years of Experience and Age Group
Source: Author (2025)

The research findings are particularly relevant to the majority of the respondents, 71.0%, who work in public schools. This is followed by 16.5% who work in private schools and 12.5% who work in denominational schools.

The causes of violence identified by the respondents are diverse, reflecting the complex nature of the issue. However, the most significant factor, identified by 38.0% of the respondents, is the lack of teacher training regarding child development. This suggests that the respondents believe that inadequate teacher training is a major contributor to violence in schools.

The second most significant factor, identified by 21.0% of the respondents, is related to components of teachers and administrators, school policies, and administration. This suggests that the respondents believe that issues with school leadership and policies also play a significant role in violence in schools.

Other factors, such as school facilities [examples of school facilities], mental health issues, substance use, and history of violent victimization [examples of violent victimization], were also identified as contributing to violence in schools, but to a lesser extent.

Overall, the results suggest that the respondents believe that a combination of factors, including [specific factors], contributes to violence in schools, with a lack of teacher training and issues with school leadership and policies being the most significant.

Type of School **External Factors Influencing Violence in Schools**

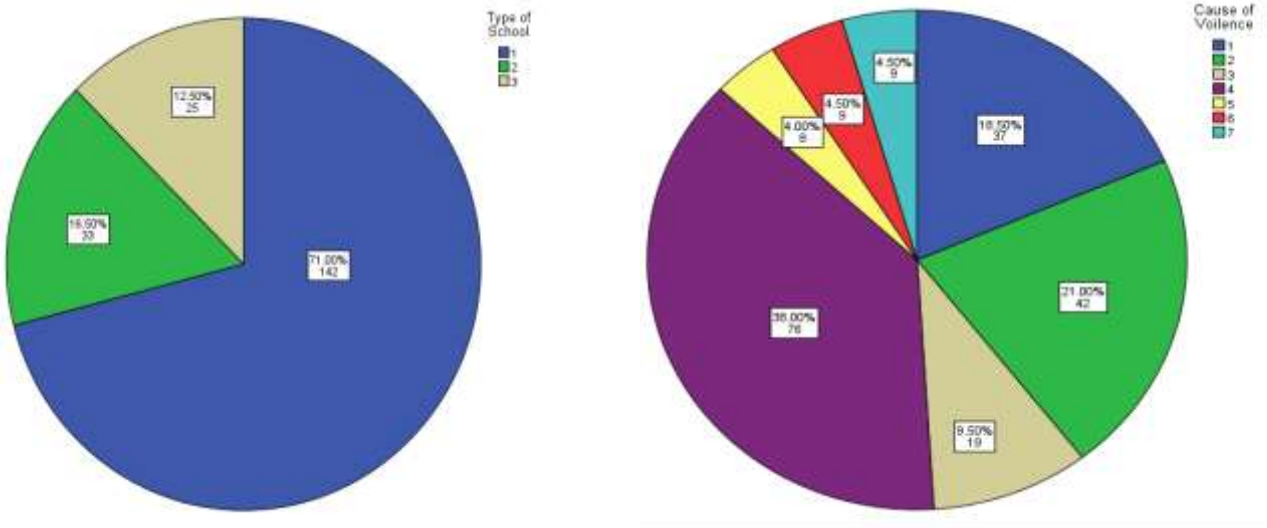


Figure 4: Pie Charts for Gender and Classes Taught
Source: Author (2025)

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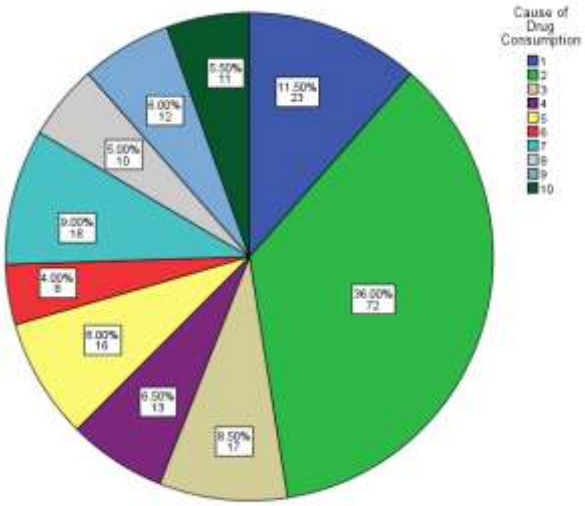
The findings underscore the urgency of the issue, revealing that mental health disorders, accounting for a significant 36.0%, are the primary cause of drug consumption among students. This high prevalence suggests that a considerable number of students may be resorting to drugs as a coping mechanism for their underlying mental health issues. The second most common cause is a family history of addiction (11.5%), followed by peer pressure (8.5%), curiosity (9.0%), and other factors.

The measures taken by schools to address unethical behaviour among students show that suspension (33.5%) is the most common measure, followed by expulsion with police assistance (20.5%) and dismissal (17.0%).

Other measures, such as convocation to the regional council (5.0%), asking students to bring parents (7.0%), and building classrooms inside fences (12.5%), are less common.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of addressing the root causes of drug consumption and unethical behaviour among students. Particularly, the focus should be on mental health disorders and family history of addiction. The measures taken by schools should be geared towards providing support and resources for students, rather than solely relying on punitive measures.

Reasons for Student Drug Consumption



Measures to Curb Violence and Drug Consumption

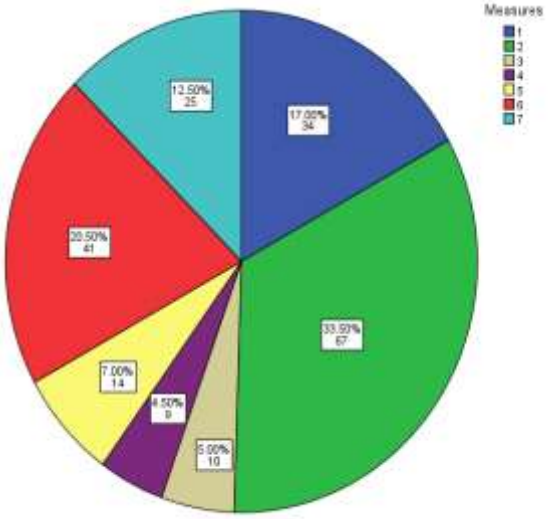


Figure 5: Pie Charts for *Reasons for Student Drug Consumption and Measures to Curb Violence and Drug Consumption*
Source: Author (2025)

The most common technique used by guidance counsellors and teachers to address violence and drug abuse in secondary schools is "differentiation" (46.5%). This data underscores the crucial role that educators play in addressing these issues, as they often use tailored approaches to meet individual students' needs.

Notably, 'handing students to the police' is the least used technique, with only 3.0% of educators resorting to this method. This underscores the prevailing preference for non-punitive approaches.

The most common reason for abolishing corporal punishment is "protecting students' rights and dignity" (43.0%). This significant figure reaffirms the high ethical standards in education, where educators consistently prioritize students' well-being and safety.

The second most common reason is "preventing physical harm" (26%), followed by "promoting alternative discipline methods" (16%) and "addressing the root causes of misbehaviour" (9%). Other reasons, such as "reducing teacher stress" (5.5%) and "improving teacher-student relationships" (13.5%), are less common.

Overall, the results suggest that educators are using a variety of techniques to address violence and drug abuse, with a strong emphasis on student-centered approaches. This shift towards more personalized methods is a positive sign for the future of student welfare. The abolition of corporal punishment is a clear demonstration of educators' commitment to students' well-being, safety, and rights.

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Techniques *Reasons for Abolition of Corporal Punishment*

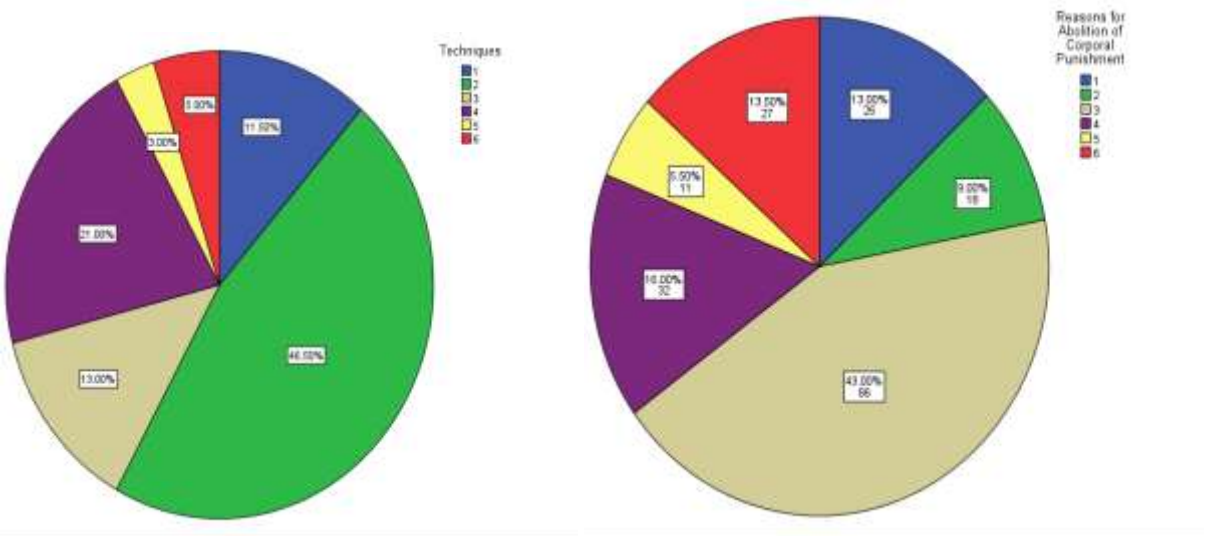


Figure 5: Pie Charts for *Techniques and Reasons for Abolition of Corporal Punishment*
Source: Author (2025)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the complexities of addressing violence and drug abuse in secondary schools in Cameroon. The findings suggest that educators use various techniques to address these issues, such as differentiation and counselling, which are specific examples of student-centred approaches. However, the results also reveal that corporal punishment is still prevalent, with many educators relying on punitive measures to discipline students.

The results of this study are in harmony with the existing literature on school violence and drug abuse. According to UNICEF (2018), violence in schools is a pervasive problem that affects millions of children worldwide. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2017) reports that substance abuse is a significant public health concern among adolescents. The findings of this study also resonate with the work of authors such as Skinner and Belmont (1993), who argue that punitive measures such as corporal punishment are ineffective in reducing problem behaviour in schools.

Furthermore, the results of this study support the notion that student-centred approaches are more effective in addressing violence and drug abuse in schools. As noted by Glasser (1998), student-centred approaches focus on building positive relationships between educators and students, which is critical in preventing problem behaviour. Similarly, Marzano's work (2003) suggests that student-centred approaches, such as differentiation, can improve academic achievement and reduce problem behaviour.

The abolition of corporal punishment is also consistent with the literature. According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011), corporal punishment violates children's rights and can negatively affect their physical, emotional, and educational well-being. In contrast, student-centered approaches have been shown to foster positive relationships, improve academic achievement, and reduce problem behavior. This study's findings support the need for educators to adopt alternative discipline methods that prioritize student well-being and safety.

Regarding implications, the results of this study underscore the urgent need for educators to be trained on alternative discipline methods that prioritize student-centred approaches. This can involve providing educators professional development opportunities on differentiation, counselling, and restorative justice. Additionally, policymakers must act swiftly to abolish corporal punishment in schools and promote alternative discipline methods prioritising student well-being and safety.

Overall, this study's results underscore the need for educators and policymakers to prioritize student-centered approaches to addressing violence and drug abuse in secondary schools. By creating a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes academic achievement and reduces problem behaviour through the adoption of alternative discipline methods and prioritising student well-being and safety, we can inspire positive change in our schools.

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