



## Examining Student Conflicts at School from a Psychosocial Perspective: The Case of Elementary and Secondary Students at Mont-Amba School, Kinshasa: DRC

### Article Record

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### Abstract

At the 1960s, 1970s, or even 1980s, fighting among students at school was unusual, particularly in Catholic institutions. Peer conflicts have become more common in schools today, including the best ones in Kinshasa and the entire DR Congo. Fighting violence in schools is a growing worry as the study questions the root causes of this crime's emergence, which is disrupting school public order and obstructing academic instruction. This research attempts to further elucidate this topic based on the findings of a survey done among 38 students from the first to fourth year of secondary levels of Mont-Amba school inside the University of Kinshasa who were involved in student conflicts between 2016 and 2020. The statistics provided demonstrate how the Congolese school system has deteriorated and is no longer entirely capable of assisting the individual in restraining any violent tendencies that may push him or her to commit barbaric and awful crimes. Providing protection for children attending schools is the goal of this project.

fight school student security protection

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# Examining Student Conflicts at School from a Psychosocial Perspective: The Case of Elementary and Secondary Students at Mont-Amba School, Kinshasa: DRC

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## Abstract

At the 1960s, 1970s, or even 1980s, fighting among students at school was unusual, particularly in Catholic institutions. Peer conflicts have become more common in schools today, including the best ones in Kinshasa and the entire DR Congo. Fighting violence in schools is a growing worry as the study questions the root causes of this crime's emergence, which is disrupting school public order and obstructing academic instruction. This research attempts to further elucidate this topic based on the findings of a survey done among 38 students from the first to fourth year of secondary levels of Mont-Amba school inside the University of Kinshasa who were involved in student conflicts between 2016 and 2020. The statistics provided demonstrate how the Congolese school system has deteriorated and is no longer entirely capable of assisting the individual in restraining any violent tendencies that may push him or her to commit barbaric and awful crimes. Providing protection for children attending schools is the goal of this project.

**Keywords:** *fight, school, student, security, protection*

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## 1. Introduction

Today, violence in schools is less frequently reported than violence against women, which is exactly as worrying as we think. Children and teenagers are unable to escape this reality.

However, there is frequently a tendency to minimise this dangerous and deadly crime, which puts school operations in danger since it undermines public order, adds to the school's atmosphere, interferes with studying, etc.

Even though there has always been violence in schools, it is critical to acknowledge that it has recently escalated in both frequency and danger.

However, fighting between pupils at school were incredibly rare in the 1960s and 1970s. The Congolese educational system was regarded as effective when the fat cows were in full swing.

It was a huge and magnificent structure that was essentially the outcome of the reform movement of the 1960s, according to Ekwa Bis Isal, M. (1992).

But now, he says, we are no longer taught the meaning of respect for others, property, and silence; these rules from these schools are no longer educational. Indiscipline has taken over even the nation's most elite schools.

In fact, when passing by a school, one frequently witnesses egregious and upsetting acts of violence.

Even the older students yell and, at best, threaten one another. If not, they begin to fight.

Intense fighting among students can lead to serious consequences like damage, breakage, swelling, destruction, or loss

of property. The behaviour that students participate in most commonly is teasing someone in an effort to annoy them.

Fighting and hitting are more dangerous and serious physical acts of violence that may seem little but can harm one or both people. This is less serious than those.

There may be fights between students from two close schools, two members of the same class, two student groups from the same class, or even two students from other courses.

There have been known disputes between students from surrounding schools affiliated with various institutions. Students from the Technical Industrial Institute of Gombe and Saint Esprit of the village of Lemba are two instances, respectively, of Mont Amba School students.

For instance, on November 26, 2020, a violent incident between two schools in Binza Ma-Campagne, Kinshasa, was covered by Radio Okapi, much to the annoyance of the parents of these two schools.

Sometimes after a fight, one or both students choose to skip class the next day out of concern for further assault or attack. Parents are concerned that threats or abuse may be repeated against their child.

According to Bellamy, C. (1999), school is a place of safety and protection for students, thus students shouldn't normally be afraid to attend, and parents shouldn't worry about something occurring to their child at school either.

In addition, Olweus, D. (1994), claims that among children's fundamental rights are the right to a secure learning environment and the right to be free from ongoing discrimination and humiliation.

The worst thing is that in our country, fighting at schools are becoming more frequent, which undermines the institution's holiness and causes it to lose not only its aura but, more crucially, its legitimacy. It is incomprehensible to watch children return home unyielding, ignorant, and, worst of all, involved in violent crime when parents send their kids to school so they might learn.

In addition to taking into account the child's inalienable rights, some decisions are taken to safeguard their security and safety.

The law n° 09/001/ of January 10, 2009 on the protection of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which forbids child torture and other cruel, brutal, or humiliating treatment or punishment in accordance with its fundamental principles, can be brought up in this case.

In order to nurture, protect, and stabilise the child, it is advised that the school play a key role. According to Bellamy, C. (1999), schools must be real safe places where teachers are expected to protect kids' rights, particularly the right to a violent-free environment.

Fighting is destructive and is prohibited in schools since it is a serious disciplinary crime that carries severe punishments. This physical act of violence is sanctioned and punished in Congolese primary and secondary education by an immediate and permanent exclusion from school, without calling the school's Disciplinary Council, in accordance with Ministerial Order N° MINEPSP / CABMIN / 00100940 / 90 of 01/09/1990 on the internal regulations for students in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Every school has internal rules that specify that students who fight with one another will be permanently expelled from the institution.

The school rules are often included in the student's communication book.

All students do not consciously violate the rules against engaging in violent behaviour, such as fighting in public areas, despite the fact that these preventive measures are intended to discourage it.

Therefore, even in the most renowned institutions, fights between students have become more common over the past several decades, despite the fact that it is believed that students are of the highest calibre, well-behaved, and respectful of all societal values and customs.

People in positions of power are frequently shocked by how often arguments can escalate into violence or even death. For instance, on March 6, 2021, a student was killed during a fight at the Mayanga Institute of Kalemie in the Province of Katanga.

Due to these frequent acts of violence, we have started to study the psychosocial causes and consequences of confrontations between students from Institutes I and III of the Mont-Amba School at the University of Kinshasa.

The main thesis of our study is that the behaviour of violent fights between students can be attributed to the Congolese educational system's partial failure to fulfil its responsibility of aiding the individual in avoiding all aggressive tendencies that could lead him to commit acts of barbarism and inhumanity.

## 2. Methods

The protracted procedure that resulted in the writing of this paper required the following steps.

- a survey of students at the Mont-Amba School of the University of Kinshasa who were involved in conflicts between 2016 and 2020;
- study population and sample;
- consultation with resource personnel at the selected schools;
- analysis of documents from various sources linked to our study's issue;

The majority of the

data for our study was acquired through a survey that was given to Humanities students in their first through fourth years at primary and secondary levels of Mont-Amba School of the University of Kinshasa.

These children were chosen because they participated in at least one peer fight between 2016 and 2020. The questionnaire was distributed directly and one-on-one, taking into account the respondents' educational background and language comprehension abilities. Some people received the questionnaire, completed it freely at home, and returned it the next day.

Throughout the session, we invited anyone else who had some free time to come fill out the forms. The forms contained a wide range of information regarding the concept, reasons why student fighting occurs in schools, as well as its impacts.

## 3. Population and sample under study.

Using penalty records and disciplinary council minutes from two schools, we identified 86 incidents of student-on-student fighting overall, year by year, from 2016 to 2020.

45 of the 86 combatants that were officially acknowledged left school for a variety of reasons, such as getting kicked out for fighting, failing a class, or finishing high school.

During the 2019–2020 academic year, we looked specifically at the remaining 41 students who were spotted in class.

However, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, three more students did not return to class after containment. Since all of the aggressive pupils are included in our study, there are a total of 38 students, both boys and girls, aged 15 to 18.

The use of people participating in the daily disciplinary administration in the school proved to be equally important in putting together the necessary pieces for completing this task.

Researchers were able to acquire more interesting data regarding the prevalence of fighting, its origins and effects, as well as the sanctions enforced for it, through contacts with school officials such as administrators, disciplinary officers, and pedagogical advisers.

We were able to better comprehend the problem of striking a balance between instruction and punishment in the school through our discussions with the school administration, which were very beneficial.

Documents relating to physical violence in general and fights between students at school underwent a detailed investigation. We were able to complete and improve the data we had already gathered from the survey of the pertinent pupils and resource personnel thanks to this research.

Books, journals (printed or electronic), discipline registers, disciplinary council minutes, etc. are a few examples of these documents.

The major objective of employing documentary approaches was to locate some of the few currently available documentation on fighting on the Internet.

Because the literature on fighting among Africans has not advanced enough, the Western conceptions of warfare served as our starting point as well.

## 4. Analysis of data

In the tables below, we first show the results about how the subjects surveyed conceptualised fighting. The second part of our analysis looks at the psychosocial elements that affect student fighting and the consequences of this crime.

**Table 1: Details the perceptions of social representations of student fights among the survey's respondents**

Responses of the respondents	F	%
Inadequate education	21	55
Barbarity	9	24
Psychiatric disorders(madness)	7	18
Extreme violence	1	3
Total	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

More over half of those polled (55%), believed that fighting among students was a sign of either a lack of education or a poor education. Others, however, believe it to be proof of barbarism (24%), mental illness or insanity (18%), or even both.

Lack of civilization is equated with barbarism and illiteracy. Less educated individuals frequently behave bizarrely or are thought to be insane.

**Table 2: Violence Factors among Students in School**

Participants' responses	F	%
Friends' influence	20	53
Lack of education	7	18
Violation of school regulations	5	13
Practice of martial arts	4	11
Living environment impact	2	5
Total	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

More over half of the subjects polled (53%) believed that fighting among students was a common occurrence. This aspect is related to the impact of friends.

Second on the list (21%) is a lack of knowledge, followed by breaking rules at school (21%), martial arts training (18%), and the influence of the home environment (13%).

However, a causal relationship between these responses can be shown. In addition to the influence of peers, the environment, and disregard for school expectations, a bad education predisposes the young person to a range of uncontrollable influences that lead him to violate social norms.

In addition to practising martial arts, the other reactions go hand in hand.

As a result, it would appear that student conflicts at school are primarily caused by a lack of education.

#### 4.1. Consequences of schoolyard violence among students

Student fighting at school has an impact on the participant as well as the social groupings embodied by the family, the school, and the state.

**Table 3: Individual consequences of classroom fighting among students**

Participants' responses	Indication of statistics		
	N	F	%
Damage to the body	38	25	66
Uncertainty,loneliness and fear	38	10	26
Conflicts between people	38	7	18
Delinquency -dropping out	38	6	16
Issues in the family	38	5	13

Fighting among classmates increases the likelihood of physical (injury, breakage, swelling - 66%), psychological (trauma, insecurity, fear, isolation - 26%), educational (school failure, dropping

out, delinquency - 16%), and social (interpersonal conflicts, family issues with parents - 18% - 13%) consequences.

Let's shift our attention from evaluating the consequences at the individual level to the impacts at the community level.

**Table 4: The overall effects of student fighting in the classroom**

Participants' responses	Indicators of statistics		
	N	F	%
Interpersonal connection disorder	38	15	39
Activities related to education being disrupted	38	11	29
Emotional climate deterioration	38	9	24
Conflict within families	38	8	21
Impairment of development	38	4	11

At the community level, conflicts among schoolmates first harm interpersonal connections (39%), which subsequently disrupt educational activities (29%) and affect the emotional climate (24%); second, they lead to issues within families (21%) and obstruct progress (11%).

## 5. Discussion

Remember that the purpose of this study was to undertake a psycho-social analysis of the phenomenon of student fights in order to determine the reasons behind and consequences of this crime. To do this, we carried out research that originally helped us recognise that fighting among students at school is a result of insufficient education and a lack of civilization.

It is a brutal, heartless act motivated by insanity.

In fact, more than half of the investigated topics indicate that a lack of education is the primary cause of conflicts between students at school.

This statement of the interviewed subjects supports our main hypothesis, which states that the behaviour of violent fights between students at school would be caused by the deterioration of our educational system. Our educational system has lost the ability to play its role fully by assisting the individual to take precautions against the aggressive impulses that can cause him to pose wild and inhuman acts.

These results are even more significant because they corroborate the results of other studies: Poor family education, according to L. Mbadu Khonde (2018), prevented the child from learning to control his aggression and led him to act irritably or allow himself to be led outside of social norms to the point of committing crimes; according to Jousselme and Louessard (2019), everyone has an innate tendency toward aggression and violence. Everyone is prone to acting violently if these tendencies are not reined in and directed.

The lack of self-control, impatience, ignorance, and prejudice are what can motivate anyone to perpetrate this high-risk crime if education hasn't been able to entirely stop it.

In order to protect oneself against any violent tendencies that would tempt him to act cruelly and inhumanely, the person must use force.

In fact, a lack of parental participation or pathogenic parental presence results in a diffuse education that leaves children susceptible to the influence of the media, the street, and their surrounding social environment, all of which impose a variety of uncontrollable detrimental effects on them.

Following this main element of student conflicts and the failure of education are the secondary causes that are intrinsic to the

student (endogenous factors), as well as his family, school, and social environment (exogenous factors).

Our study shed light on underlying psychological problems of the individual, bringing to the surface attitudes of ignorance, immaturity, intolerance, and impatience that the subjects surveyed believed to be the real causes of fights between students at school. This is what we refer to as endogenous secondary factors.

Lack of comprehension was chosen as the attitude that was most common, receiving 53% of the votes.

Instead, the psychological problem that is unique to each person—which is a result of a variety of factors—might be said to be dominant. In reality, a child who struggles with psycho-emotional issues, such as aggression, may exhibit poor comprehension, intolerance, lack of patience, or other actions.

These findings are in line with those of Portelance, C. (1992), who claimed, for instance, that complexed individuals always have significant reactions to items that appear harmless to others.

Their uncontrolled and unrestrained emotional reactions frequently lead to others misinterpreting and rejecting them. According to psychological theories, a young child's anger, for example, frequently reflects an uncomfortableness that the infant is unable to express in any other way.

The majority of the time, children's aggressive behaviour at school is a sign of a condition that keeps it from showing up as conflict at home, such as conflicts, pathologic situations like jealousy, etc.

Yzerbyt, V. & Klein, O. (2019) assert that an aggressive young child finds it difficult to adopt realistic attitudes due to constraints that are perceived as being restrictive or not being made explicit enough (of understanding). The study also found that violent acts emulated in the media and by criminal gangs are a significant contributor to this issue in terms of endogenous secondary factors that contribute to fighting among students. This was the opinion of 11% of study participants.

The research of Dewey, J. (1983), which shows that children and teenagers always have a propensity to repeat what they see and hear since at that age, they are seeking sensationalism, is entirely congruent with our findings. A child is actually rejected from his group if he doesn't perform in accordance with how his group expects him to. He must behave similarly to them if he is to communicate with them personally and on an equal footing. Bandura (1973) asserts that social learning theories are strictly applied to violent behaviour. That is to say, violent behaviours are picked up through imitation of positive role models.

And in his writings, Bayombo Mbokoliabwe (2002) shows how children who witness or experience violent crimes or negative behaviour often imitate similar behaviours on their classmates.

The media does indeed have a very powerful capacity for implication. Images of criminality, banditry, brutality, cruelty, bestiality, vampirism, and supermen are frequently seen.

Young toddlers tend to imitate what they see or hear of the uncommon, fantastic, and fabulous because they are still actively seeking information.

The risk that kids will end up as either aggressors or victims is increased by all of these unpleasant interactions. The child's home and social environment came first in our study because these are external secondary factors, followed by the school environment. Peer pressure and a lack of family education in some of the subjects assessed both contribute to fights amongst students at school.

In the Congolese context, when child supervision is a challenge, many kids are actually led, directed, guided, and oriented more by their peers than by their parents or other leaders.

Writings by Bayombo Mbokoliabwe from 2002, who claims that the mutation afflicting modern Congolese society is uprooting countless households across all social strata, lend confirmation to these conclusions.

The vital, natural, and indispensable role of teaching being played by these houses is worse or nonexistent. Because of this, sometimes the emotional presence of the companions of the same difficult situations marked by bullying and deprivation, source of frustration, and aggression, can make up for the irresponsibility, presence, or destructive absence of the parents.

Although the influence of friends or the neighbourhood tends to be more harmful because it pushes children to adopt a specific code of bad behaviour and act in ways that aren't always appropriate.

They frequently act disrespectfully or rudely and are more easily influenced by others, who can also encourage them to engage in aggressive conduct such as using drugs, being hostile toward others, or other violent activities. Some respondents believed that confrontations between students were caused by the school environment. Numerous students (on average 27%) mentioned a poorly run school with large class sizes, subpar discipline emphasised by impunity, and academic failure.

Research by Defrance (2016) and Wilson, J.Q. & Ketting, G. concur with these findings (1982).

According to Defrance, when a student fails, they become angry and occasionally have a propensity to lash out violently at people who make fun of them.

In fact, it has been found that the practise of school systems making academic results public has contributed to an increase in school violence.

Students who are perceived as failing in front of others will rebel against the school's values and look for fulfilment in confrontation. The third outcome is that, in contrast to schools with modest class sizes and enrollment, those with big class sizes and students have a high rate of disturbance that fosters hatred and violence. While Wilson et al. show that a lack of discipline is frequently the root of conflict and violence in schools.

For instance, letting minor everyday violations to go unpunished usually encourages offenders to conduct progressively serious offences that disrupt the learning environment, particularly through violent acts.

Additionally, in a climate of injustice and impunity, people with violent tendencies frequently give free licence to their aggressive impulses, which has a number of harmful consequences.

The following are some findings from our survey addressing the consequences of student fights at school:

Students who are directly involved, their families, the school, and society at large are all victims of student fights. Therefore, everyone who cares for the child is affected by student fights at school.

Thus, it was determined that conflicts amongst students at school had a harmful impact on society, education, the intellect, and the body.

The first secondary hypothesis, which asserts that fighting among kids at school has negative effects on both the individual and the group, is supported by the data from our study. Interpersonal connections, public order, and the learning environment are all negatively impacted by student fights.

These results are in line with those of studies by Blaya (2006) and De Saint Martin (2012), which show that even minor fights at school can have significant personal and social repercussions, including feelings of insecurity, abandonment, helplessness, and

withdrawal for the victims, as well as deterioration of the school climate.

Briefly said, fighting against violence at school has detrimental psychological repercussions that make the impact much more severe. These outcomes include suffering, fear, absenteeism, dropout rates, lowered academic performance, and deterioration of partner relationships in the classroom. It is necessary to consider solutions for this.

## 6. Conclusion

This article looks at student fights as one type of school violence.

This study's goal was to perform a psychological investigation into this phenomenon, which has started to recur even in prestigious academic institutions. The aim is to comprehend what leads to classroom fights and how they affect children's lives and education.

According to a survey of 38 first, second, third, and fourth year humanities students who were involved in fights, fighting among students is a crazy act that denotes a lack of education or a failing education.

As a result, the majority of individuals surveyed thought that students fighting at school was caused by a lack of or bad education.

This result supports our main hypothesis, according to which school fights are brought on by the deterioration of the educational system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its failure to help kids defend themselves against violent tendencies that could cause them to act in a cruel and inhumane manner.

In fact, the term "lack of education" refers to a dispersed education that leaves kids open to the influence of the outside world, such as the media, the street, and other environmental factors.

Lack of education can be linked to secondary endogenous and exogenous causes of conflicts between pupils. The study's conclusions about endogenous secondary causes included: 1) underlying psychological issues that surface attitudes of ignorance, intolerance, immaturity, lack of patience, and lack of self-control that motivate people to 1) to commit violent acts; 2) to imitate violent acts seen in the media; and 3) to act violently themselves, including through delinquent gangs' interactions with and assaults on peaceful civilians.

In addition to the school setting, the study focused on the family and social environments as secondary external factors that influence student fighting.

In fact, every socioeconomic class is being displaced by the crisis affecting modern Congolese society.

Because of this, parents either neglect or poorly fulfil their roles as instructors.

This negligence of the parents, their presence or their absence, are periodically offset by the affective presence of friends in the same trying conditions marked by bullying and deprivation, a cause of frustration and aggression.

Children are influenced by their friends to behave in certain ways and in ways that aren't always acceptable. They frequently act inappropriately or rudely and are further led by friends, who sporadically push them to act aggressively, stammer, use alcohol and drugs, and engage in other violent situations. The probe brought to light the school's lacklustre organisational system, which was characterised by declared academic failure, shoddy discipline marked by impunity, and crammed classes.

First of all, when a student fails, they become tense and may have a propensity to attack people who tease them. Higher rates of school violence are correlated with schools that regularly celebrate students' academic achievements in front of the class.

In an effort to find fulfilment, students who are perceived as failing in public will rebel against authority figures and reject the school's ideologies. Second, weak or nonexistent discipline is likely to contribute to a culture of violence inside the school environment. Leaving little everyday infractions unpunished usually encourages offenders to commit increasingly significant violations that disturb the learning environment through aggressive behaviours. When there is injustice and impunity, aggressive people soon give in to their tendencies.

Finally, schools with a significant number of interruptions that encourage animosity and violence are more frequent than those with fewer courses and students.

Even minor altercations between students can have detrimental effects on the individual and the community. They are more harmful since they alter the fighter's personality and create misery, fear, insecurity, absenteeism, dropping out of school, subpar academic performance, and deteriorating relationships between classmates. Solutions need to be considered for this.

Our study is expected to help efforts being undertaken by educators to reduce violence that jeopardises student safety.

Fighting is a natural tendency, but it can also be restrained, avoided, and discouraged via education. We don't have any ready-made solutions, but we hope that this article has given you some food for thought.

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