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Students' willingness to report weapons and violence in Cameroon secondary schools: Implications for students' well-being and school safety

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Abstract

When weapons carrying and violence becomes a norm in schools, students stand at the crossroads of safety and risk. The decision to report weapons or violence in schools can prevent or perpetuate violence which disrupts education. This study investigated students' willingness to report violent acts or weapons brought to school. The survey research design was used. The population consisted of all students in the Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon, with a sample of 581 students from Form Four, Form Five, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth of six targeted public secondary schools. Data collection were using questionnaires designed for secondary school students. The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through content-wise, construct-wise, and face-wise tests, and its reliability was confirmed through a pilot test on 20 students using the Cronbach Alpha test, indicating consistent responses, thereby confirming its reliability. The field data was processed using Epi-Data 3.0 and then exported to SPSS version 27 for consistency and validation checks. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, with hypotheses tested using t-tests and ANOVA tests for comparisons

between groups like class, age, and socioeconomic status. Findings were presented at 95% confidence interval. The study identified several factors influencing students' willingness to report school violence or weapons on campus. Key differences emerged based on class, socioeconomic status, age, and knowledge of available resources, while gender showed no significant impact. Students with a positive perception of school climate and those educated in community or home values were likelier to report incidents. Reporting willingness also varied when the perpetrator was a friend, influenced by class, gender, or socioeconomic status. The study also revealed a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons, with those fearing personal consequences reporting more. These findings emphasize the need to address educational, social, and environmental factors to encourage reporting and improve school safety. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

Keywords: School Violence; Willingness To Report Weapons and Violence; Cameroon Secondary Schools; Students Well-Being; School Safety

Introduction

Children spend a larger proportion of their time in school than in any other formal institutional structure. Educators and school officials often create policies assuming parents and students have complete trust in protecting them (Barrett et al., 2012), and based on such trust, parents, and guardians turn their most precious asset over to educators and the schooling system with the vision of getting their children ready for college, a career, and becoming productive citizens toward a promising future (Poole, 2023; Orok, 2023) yet this trust is undermined when students are bullied (Budirahayu & Susan, 2018) or skip school on their own accord to avoid violence (Barrett et al., 2012) as some individuals exploit this environment to victimize or harm others (Orok, 2023). This reveals the flaws in school safety measures. School violence and safety is a global concern and vital topic in education (Poole, 2023; Pina et al., 2022; Crichlow-Ball et al., 2022; Orok, 2023; Achuo & Dinga, 2024). Whether inside the classroom, inside the school, its surrounding, online, or even at home, children ought to feel safe yet school violence remains a global problem of difficult solution (UNESCO, 2017; Pina et al. 2022; UNICEF, 2019). Today's aggressive school climate in Cameroon resulting in the loss of teachers and students' lives has raised debates and left scholars to question if schools are a refuge for antisocial behaviors (evil) or a refuge to foster good behaviors given that education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of a nation (MINESEC, 2022), recalling that Part I of Cameroon's law N°98/004 of 14th April 1998 to Lay down guidelines for Education in Cameroon specifies in section 4 that: "the general purpose of education shall be to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and their smooth integration into society bearing in mind prevailing economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors" (Cameroon 1998, Atemnkeng & Azefack, 2020). Unfortunately, violence has become a pressing issue within these institutions, disrupting the education system and jeopardizing the well-being of students. Thereby identifying a big gap between educational policies and practices in Cameroon secondary schools. This means that schools no longer provide a safe and conducive environment for effective teaching-learning and personal development as expected.

Contextual Background

The phenomenon of school violence has become rampant in several metropolises in Cameroon, with several acts of violence being recorded in public schools across Cameroonian cities like Yaounde, Bafoussam, Douala, Ebolowa, Buea, Kumba, Bamenda, and Kribi (Achuo & Dinga, 2024). Cameroon secondary schools have witnessed an extraordinary and extreme increase in school violence, victimization, and bullying cases with some leading to injuries and deaths of teachers and students (Zinkeng & Etta, 2017; MINESEC, 2022; African Springer 2022; Nfon, 2022, Tamukum, 2022; Takang 2023; Achuo & Dinga, 2024). Recently, the Cameroon Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) has recorded at least 40 violent attacks by students on their peers, 22 attacks on teachers, and 15 attacks by parents on teachers within a short period (VOA News, 2020).

In March 2019, a form four (4) student of Government Bilingual High School Deido-Douala, murdered his fellow form four (4) student with a knife because he was mocked after performing poorly in an exam (Takang, 2023). On the 17th of November 2020, a student in Mouko High School in the center region of Cameroon stabbed his fellow student to death (Takang, 2023), on 14th of January 2020, a 15-year-old student stabbed his mathematics teacher (Djomi Tchakounte Maurice) to death at Government High School Nkolbisson, Yaoundé. In 2021, another student stabbed his principal in a secondary school in the Nkolbisson district, Yaoundé. In addition, on Wednesday, 6th April 2022, a student stabbed the principal of the Yona School Complex located in the Nkolbisson district. It is recalled that this is at least the second time in two years that a student has stabbed a teacher in the same neighborhood of Yaoundé VI (the political capital of Cameroon). As if that is not enough, on 15th September 2022, a teacher kicked and injured his first-year form three (F3) student at Government Technical High School Ambam, Ebolowa causing the latter's spleen to rupture (MINESEC, 2022). Other examples of the numerous cases of school violence include but are not limited to; Ghoba Francois Xavier, a lower sixth student of Government Bilingual High School Bafoussam stabbed by his classmate; Junior Atangana Eba'a, a fourth (4th) year electricity student at Government Technical High School Ebolowa stabbed by his school mate; in Douala student murder's classmate with scissors and much more of such juvenile delinquency instances and deviant behavior cases reported in many urban cities of Cameroon on daily and weekly bases. These severe cases, acts of contempt, bullying, fighting, brutality, insults, mockery or pushing and shoving which escalated leading to the lost of lives are frequently recorded in Cameroon schools in recent years (MINESEC 2022; Journal du Cameroun, 2022; African in News, 2022; Journal du Cameroun TV, 2022; African springer 2022; Takang, 2023; VOA News, 2020). In another incident, a student used a machete to chop off another student's finger in Obala after a fight during a soccer match (VOA News, 2020). Another teacher was battered by students in Douala for questioning why they were late to school, and yet another teacher in Douala was beaten by a parent and fell into a coma. The parent was said to be angry with the teacher's decision to use corporal punishment on his son as punishment for making noise in class (VOA News, 2020). In another incident, a student used a machete to chop off another student's finger in Obala after a fight during a soccer match (VOA News, 2020). Poverty, parental unconsciousness, and especially drug consumption are presented as causes of juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior in Cameroon secondary and high schools (Journal du Cameroun.com, 2022)

The persistent and horrendous scenes that the educational community continues to witness show the gravity of the issue. If proper measures are not put in place, the situation will continue to intensify, making Cameroon schools

very hostile and unaccommodating for teaching and learning. Cameroonian education communities, including teachers, have expressed outrage over school violence incidents, arguing that the absence of corporal punishment in the 1998 orientation law on education is the root cause and have called for its reinstatement to reduce the likelihood of such incidents (Takang, 2023). At the same time, the global priority is to end corporal punishment, as it violates human rights principles for children and has both short- and long-term consequences (Gershoff, & Bitensky, 2007; WHO, 2021; Kalolo & Kapinga 2023; Ma et al. 2012; Mahlangu et al. 2021). Atemnkeng and Azefack (2020) noted that the Law of Cameroon National Educational Guidelines No. 98/004 1998 specifically in article 35 prohibits corporal punishment and all forms of violence and discrimination, stating that “the physical and moral integrity of the student is guaranteed in the educational system. Therefore corporal punishment and all other forms of violence, discrimination of any kind are prohibited”. This resonates with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which targets the elimination of violence against children, specifically in Target 16.2, aiming to eradicate abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of child-related violence and torture (WHO, 2021). So as educators, the request for re-institution or application of corporal punishment can just serve as a distraction which can’t solve the problem of school violence in Cameroon secondary schools yet fuels violence.

Statement of the Problem

School violence in Cameroon has become a call for concern to the extent that in September 2022, Cameroon’s Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) called for a national conference (20th to the 23rd December 2022) to eradicate violence in schools. This prominent idea was supported by the United Nations due to the significance of the issue (Takang, 2022, MINESEC, 2022). However, the interventions put in place seem to be less effective as school violence keeps on prevailing, thereby calling for urgent implementation of alternative and sustainable solutions. At the time of this study, there is no knowledge of previous studies that explore student willingness to report weapons or violence in Cameroon secondary schools. However, several studies have delved into the causes of school violence and its consequences on students learning and development in Cameroon (e.g. Ngoran, 2016; Orok, 2023; Zinkeng & Etta, 2017; Nfon, 2022; Tangwe, 2021, 2022, 2023a, 2023b; Achuo & Dinga, 2024). Lacking from these researches is the examination of students' willingness to report or not to report, to whom students are willing to report weapons or violence and what types of situations will encourage them to do so, etc. The absence of research on Cameroon students' perspectives on reporting violent incidents creates a gap in scholarly literature, which is crucial for preventing violence and ensuring school safety. Current measures to curb violence will likely remain ineffective without addressing this gap in students' willingness to report such incidents. Addressing this gap is essential because students as primary witnesses and potential victims, play a key role in preventing violence. Understanding these motivations could lead to more targeted interventions that empower students to maintain a safe school environment, student well-being, and an improved teaching-learning process void of potential disruption.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study was to examine the behavior associated with reporting or not reporting incidents of violence to adults or staff. The characteristics of the students were analyzed to see if there were trends

among reporters and non-reporters. Hence, the study aimed to investigate students' willingness to report violent acts or weapons brought to school.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status?
2. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have a positive perception of school climate compared to those who do not?
3. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus perpetrated by a friend between students who would report their friend compared to those who do not, considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status?
4. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who fear the likelihood of personal consequences compared to those who do not?
5. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are older in school compared to those who are not?
6. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are knowledgeable about the resources available to them at school compared to students who are not?
7. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have been taught Community /Home Values compared those who are not?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus considering factors of grade/class, gender, or socioeconomic status.
2. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have a positive perception of school climate compared to those who do not.
3. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus perpetrated by a friend between students who would report their friend compared to those who do not, considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status
4. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who fear the likelihood of personal consequences compared to those who do not.
5. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between older students in school compared to younger students.
6. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are knowledgeable about the resources available to them at school compared to students who are not.
7. There is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have been taught Community /Home Values compared those who are not.

Methodology

Research Design

The study made use of the survey research design to enable the researcher to collect data from several secondary schools in the Buea municipality in the Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon. As a reminder, the study aimed at investigating students' willingness to report violent acts or weapons brought to school. In this study, both the descriptive and correlational survey research types were adopted. Descriptive in the sense that the researcher had to describe the situation of willingness to report violent acts in schools and correlational because willingness to report violent acts or presence of weapons in school was correlated against other variables like school climate, age, socioeconomic status, gender, and home/community values.

Population and Sample Selection

The population of the study comprises all students in public secondary schools in the Buea municipality in the Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon. However, the sample selected are students in Form Four, Form Five, Lower Sixth, and Upper Sixth of six public/government secondary schools in the Buea municipality. In other words, the sample selected consists of students in the last classes in lower secondary and all two classes in upper secondary. The students of these classes were selected first because of their ability to better respond to the test questions than those in form one, two, and three and second because of their possible longevity in the school. Therefore, it is believed that students in form four, five, lower sixth and Upper sixth have had lots of experience about violence in the school. The sample size of the study consists of 581 students out of 2000 students in form four, five, lower sixth and upper sixth in the six targeted public secondary schools. The sample size was estimated using Z value corresponding to the confidence level of 1.96, design effect of 1.8, expected prevalence of 50%, and confidence interval of 95%. The sample size was calculated with the support of EPI-Info 7.0.

Instrumentation

The current study adapted the instrument from a survey of a similar study by Poole (2023), entitled "Student Willingness to Report Weapons and School Violence at a Rural Secondary School in Arkansas: A Quantitative Study". Some of the items were modified to fit the content and context of the current study. The questionnaire was the only instrument used in the study and was administered using the face-to-face method by meeting with students in their respective schools. The questionnaires were accompanied by a cover letter to explain the purpose and significance of the study as well as assurance of anonymity, confidentiality, and no risk of harm as a result of participation. The questionnaire was designed as follows. The first part consists of demographic information such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and class/grade. The second part consists of seven items on school climate. The third consists of two items on home/community values. The fourth has six items on personal incidents/experiences of school violence. The last part has 19 items on reporting of school violence. In total, the questionnaire has 38 items. The items were measured using a yes or no and dominantly the four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree).

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the questionnaire was ascertained content-wise, construct-wise, and face-wise. To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, an adapted version from another study (Poole, 2023) was used with little modifications done to better reflect the current study and study context. Also, the test items were designed taking into account relevant literature on the subject matter. For the construct validity, the test items were assessed by giving the questionnaire to five experts in the field of education for rating of the test items. During this process, the questionnaire was well examined to ensure that all questions stated are relevant and appropriate in the study context. Consequently, the construct validity index of the questionnaire was calculated which ranges from 0.9 to 1. The construct validity index was calculated by taking the number of time that an item was declared valid and divided by the total number of persons who rated the test item. On the other hand, the reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained through a pilot test on 20 students using the Cronbach Alpha test.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Variance	N of Items
.883	.886	.114	32

The high Cronbach Alpha coefficient value of 0.886 based on standardized items above 0.7 indicates that the students were consistent in their responses. Thus, the questionnaire was reliable in the study.

Data Collection

A survey was created to study violence and weapons in school and determine the personal and social characteristics of the students involved in these activities to prevent these occurrences. Permission was obtained from the Ethical Committee of Faculty of Psychology of “our” University (IRB No.H24103) prior to the administration of the survey to schools and students. After reaching an agreement with principals of public schools in the Buea municipality, they also approved and agreed that the survey can be administered to students who students are willing to participate. In June of 2024, students received a class announcement detailing the research information as well as a parental permission / consents forms to take home to their parents. The students who wished to participate in the survey brought the completed survey forms back to the school and handed them to their school principal sealed in an envelope, only to be opened by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the field were first processed using Epi-Data 3.0 whereby, all the participants’ responses were keyed for all test items. During this process of data entering, the demographic information and the test items were coded with numbers to facilitate the data entering process. The questionnaires were also assigned with serial numbers. The reason for coding and assigning each questionnaire a serial number was to ensure easy verification for doubtful entries if it occurs. After the data were completely entered for all the participants, they were analysed

using both descriptive and inferential statistics on SPSS 27. The descriptive statistical tools were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation while the t-test for comparing means between two groups and Anova test for comparing means between more than two groups as in the case with class, age, and socioeconomic status were the inferential statistical tools used to test the hypotheses. Finally, the findings were presented at 95% confidence interval. More so, to get the overall findings on students' willingness to report violence/crime in school, the Multiple Response Set (MRS) was used which is an additional statistical tools to permit the calculation of aggregate score for a group of test items that measure the same attributes and that uses the same measuring scale / responses option. To calculate this, all individual frequency for a particular response option for all the tests are sum and then divided by the total responses gotten from the summation of all response options for all the test items which is then multiply by 100. Finally, all findings were presented at 95% confidence interval.

FINDINGS

Table 2

Demographic Information

Demographic information		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	327	62.2
	Male	199	37.8
Class	Form four	250	47.5
	Form five	43	8.2
	Lower sixth	186	35.4
	Upper sixth	47	8.9
Socio-economic status	Rich	130	24.7
	Average	365	69.4
	Poor	31	5.9
Age range	13-15	172	32.7
	16-18	247	47.0
	19-21	66	12.5
	Above 21	41	7.8

n=526

Among the 526 students sampled, majority 62.2% (327) are female and 37.8% (199) are male. Also, close to half of the students 47.5% (250) are in form four, 35.4% (186) in lower sixth, 8.9% (47) in upper sixth and 7.8% (41) form five. Furthermore, more of the students 69.4% (365) are from average socio-economic status, 24.7% (130) are from rich home and 5.9% (31) from poor background. Lastly age wise, 47.0% (247) of the students fall within the age range of 16-18 years, 32.7% (172) fall within the age range of 13-15 years, 12.5% (66) 19-21 years and 7.8% (41) are above 21 years.

Research Question One: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status?

Table 3

Weapon Brought to School and Reporting

Question	Responses	Frequency (%)
I know of someone who has brought a weapon (e.g knife) to school in the past 12 months.	Yes	227 (43.2%)
	No	299 (56.8%)
Did you report this to anyone?	Yes	102 (44.9%)
	No	125 (55.1%)
I have heard a student threaten to hurt someone else in the past 12 months.	Yes	320 (60.8%)
	No	206 (39.2%)
During the last 12 months, has anyone intentionally assaulted, hurt, or injured you at school (e.g., caning, kicking, flogging, slapping, boxing, hitting, spanking, choking, punching, or correcting you in hostile and an unfriendly way)	Yes	315 (59.9%)
	No	211 (40.1%)
How many times has this happened in the last 12 months?	One	84 (26.7%)
	Two	101 (32.1%)
	Three or more	130 (41.3%)
If you were a victim of violent incidents at school, witness violent incidents, or knew about weapons being on campus, who would you most likely report this to	My close friends or classmate	133 (25.3%)
	My parents or family member	99 (18.8%)
	Teacher or school counselor	181 (34.4%)
	School principal	58 (11.0%)
	None of the above	55 (10.5%)

Based on personal incidents, 227 of the students accepted to know someone who has brought weapon to school in the past 12 months while 299 do not. Among the 227 that knows, 44.9% (102) reported the students who brought weapon to school while 55.1% (125) did not report. Furthermore, many of the students 60.8% (320) accepted that they have heard a student threaten to hurt another student in the past 12 months while 39.2% (206) denied. Deception. On a personal level, more of the students 59.9% (315) accepted to have been assaulted, hurt, or injured at school while 40.1% (211) haven't been assaulted. Among the 315 students accepted to have been assaulted, 40% (126) reported the assault while 60.0% (189) did not. In terms of number of times assaulted by the 315 students, 26.7% (84) said once, 32.1% (101) said twice and 41.3% (130) mentioned three times and more. More so, based

on the persons the students are likely to report incidence of violence to, more of them 34.4% (181) prefer a teacher or school counsellor, followed by close friend/classmate 25.3% (133), while 18.8% (99) prefer parents/family member and lastly school principal 11.0% (58).

Table 4

Table: *Students' Gender Preference to Report Violence*

			If you were to make a report at school about a dangerous situation, who would you prefer to report this to?			Total
			Male	Female	It doesn't matter	
Gender	Female	n	80	83	164	327
		%	24.5%	25.4%	50.2%	
	Male	n	64	48	87	199
		%	32.2%	24.1%	43.7%	
Total		n	144	131	251	526
		%	27.4%	24.9%	47.7%	

Based on the students' gender preference to report violence, more of them 47.7% (251) do not have any gender preference, while 27.4% (144) prefer male and 24.9% (131) female. And male students prefer to report more to male 32.2% than female 24.1% while an almost equal proportion of female prefer female 25.4% and male 24.5%.

Table 5

Willingness to Report to Violence or Weapons on Campus

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I would report a student even if he/she was my friend.	154 (29.3%)	188 (35.7%)	114 (21.7%)	70 (13.3%)	2.81	1.004
I would report a student who was my friend if I could do so without giving my name.	112 (21.3%)	214 (40.7%)	126 (24.0%)	74 (14.1%)	2.69	.960
I would be more likely to report violent activities or weapons on campus if I could do so anonymously	135 (25.7%)	233 (44.3%)	97 (18.4%)	61 (11.6%)	2.84	.939

If I heard a student threaten to hurt someone else with a weapon, I would tell an adult.	161 (30.6%)	204 (38.8%)	103 (19.6%)	58 (11.0%)	2.89	.966
If I heard about or saw a violent act or someone bringing weapons to school being committed at school, I would report it to a school adult staff member	136 (25.9%)	220 (41.8%)	116 (22.1%)	54 (10.3%)	2.83	.929
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing weapons to school even if I believed that the student who carried the weapon would probably not use it	110 (20.9%)	215 (40.9%)	133 (25.3%)	68 (12.9%)	2.70	.943
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing weapons to school even if the student might get arrested or punished	133 (25.3%)	215 (40.9%)	121 (23.0%)	57 (10.8%)	2.81	.938
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing weapons to school even if the student who carried the weapon would get in trouble	138 (26.2%)	214 (40.7%)	120 (22.8%)	54 (10.3%)	2.83	.935
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing weapons to school even if the student who carried the weapon might hurt me	141 (26.8%)	189 (35.9%)	107 (20.3%)	89 (16.9%)	2.73	1.037
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing weapons to school even if people might think that I am a snitch or informer	116 (22.1%)	219 (41.6%)	119 (22.6%)	72 (13.7%)	2.72	.958
I would report a student exhibiting violent behavior or bringing	97 (18.4%)	195 (37.1%)	145 (27.6%)	89 (16.9%)	2.57	.977

weapons to school even if the student who carried the weapon might find out I reported

I would not tell an adult about a violent incident on campus because the adults cannot protect me from retaliation from other students.	102 (19.4%)	172 (32.7%)	150 (28.5%)	102 (19.4%)	2.48	1.013
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I would not report violent incidences in my school because I feel that telling an adult is a betrayal to my schoolmates	79 (15.0%)	108 (20.5%)	175 (33.3%)	164 (31.2%)	2.81	1.040
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I would not tell other adults in my school about violent acts because I would feel shameful about it.	86 (16.3%)	112 (21.3%)	174 (33.1%)	154 (29.3%)	2.75	1.049
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Multiple Response Set (MRS)	2291 (25.6%)	3410 (38.1%)	1975 (22.1%)	1263 (14.1%)	2.75	.985
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In aggregate, 63.7% of students are willing to report violence perpetuated in school while 26.3% are not. The overall mean of 2.75 on a mean scale of 1-4 below 3.0 infers that willingness to report violence is not that high. Specifically, 65.0% (342) of students agreed to report a student even if he/she is a friend while 35.0% (184) disagreed. Also, 62.0% (326) of students agreed to report even a friend but without given his/her name while 38.0% (200) disagreed. Furthermore, 70.0% (368) of students agreed to report violent activities more likely if it occurs frequently while 30.0% (158) disagreed. Similarly, 69.4% (365) agreed to report to an adult if they heard someone been threatened to be hurt while 30.6% (161) disagreed. Again, 67.7% (356) of students agreed to report to school staff if they heard or saw violent act in school while 32.3% (170) disagreed. Furthermore, 61.8% (325) of students agreed to report students who carried weapons to school even not sure to be used while 38.2% (201) disagreed.

Similarly, 66.2% (348) of students agreed to report a violent act even if the perpetrator might get arrested or punished while 33.8% (178) disagreed. On a similar weight, 66.9% (352) of students agreed to report a student for violent act even if the perpetrator gets into trouble while 33.1% (174) disagreed. Also, 62.7% (330) of students agreed to report a student for violent act for fear of been hurt while 37.3% (196) disagreed. In addition, 63.7% (335) of students agreed to report violent act even if they seem them as informer while 36.3% (191) disagreed. Finally, 55.5% (292) of students agreed to report violent student even if they perpetrator will find out while 44.5% (234) disagreed.

Table 6

Comparing Willingness to Report Violence by Gender, Class, and Socio-economic Status

	Demographic data		N	Percentage of interest (willingness to report only)	Mean	Test statistics
Willingness to report school violence	Gender	Female	326	65.8%	2.71	<i>p</i> -value
		Male	198	60.5%	2.66	0.135
	Class	Form four	249	64.1%	2.69	<i>p</i> -value
		Form five	43	64.8%	2.66	0.008
		Lower sixth	185	65.3%	2.71	
		Upper sixth	47	54.8%	2.46	
	Socio-economic status	Rich	130	65.8%	2.73	<i>p</i> -value
		Average	363	59.6%	2.54	0.003
		Poor	31	57.5%	2.48	

Statistically, although students' willingness to report school violence was not significantly different based on gender (t -value = 0.863, p -value 0.135 > 0.05), female (65.8%, mean 2.71) although, it appears that female report violence slightly more than male (60.5%, mean 2.66). Aside gender, willingness to report school violence significantly different based on students class (p -value 0.008 < 0.05) with students in form four (64.1%, mean 2.69), form five (64.8%, mean 2.66), and lower sixth (65.3%, mean 2.71) appear to willingly report violence more than those in upper sixth (54.8%, mean 2.46). Furthermore, willingness to report school violence also significantly differ based on students socio-economic status (p -value 0.003 < 0.05) with students from rich background (65.8%, mean 2.73), more likely to report violent acts in school than those from average background (59.6%, mean 2.54) and lowest been those from poor background (57.5% mean 2.48). Therefore, the hypotheses that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus considering factors of grade/class, gender, or socioeconomic status was rejected for class/grade and socioeconomic status and accepted only for gender.

Research Question Two: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have a positive perception of school climate compared to those who do not?

Table 7

Students' Perception of School Climate

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel safe at my school	94 (17.9%)	223 (42.4%)	112 (21.3%)	97 (18.4%)	2.60	.984

I believe that my school provides a safe environment for me to report violent behavior or weapons being brought to campus.	75 (14.3%)	224 (42.6%)	123 (23.4%)	104 (19.8%)	2.51	.966
Most of the students in this school have respect for other students	43 (8.2%)	109 (20.7%)	184 (35.0%)	190 (36.1%)	2.01	.947
When I am having problems, my teachers are supportive.	62 (11.8%)	223 (42.1%)	148 (28.1%)	93 (17.7%)	2.48	.917
Most of the students show respect for their teachers.	76 (14.4%)	196 (37.3%)	145 (27.6%)	109 (20.7%)	2.45	.976
I feel there is at least one teacher or adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem	134 (25.5%)	221 (42.0%)	103 (19.6%)	68 (12.9%)	2.80	.964
Teachers develop caring relationships with students in my school.	83 (15.8%)	223 (42.4%)	112 (21.3%)	108 (20.5%)	2.53	.988
Multiple Response Set (MRS)	567 (15.4%)	1419 (38.5%)	927 (25.2%)	769 (20.9%)	2.48	.963

In aggregate, 53.9% of students reported positive climate while 46.1% did not and the mean value of 2.48 below 3.0 on a mean scale of 1-4 indicates that the school climate is not that very positive. Specifically, 60.3% (317) of students agreed that to feel safe in school while 39.7% (209) do not. Also, 56.9% (299) of students agreed to believe that their school provide safe environment for reporting violent behaviours while 43.1% (227) disagreed. Again, 28.9% (152) of students agreed that most students have respect for others in their school while 71.1% (374) disagreed. Furthermore, 53.9% (283) of students agreed to have a supportive teacher during problems while 46.1% (241) disagreed. Similarly, 51.7% (272) agreed that students have respect for teachers in their school while 48.3% (254) disagreed. Finally, 58.2% (306) of students agreed that teachers develop caring relationship with students in school while 41.8% (220) disagreed.

Table 8

Students Willingness to Report School Violence by School Climate

School climate	N	% of report only	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
Positive	322	67.1%	2.77	8.288	.58312	

Willingness to report school violence	Negative	202	59.8%	2.52	7.011	.39070	t=5.435, p = 000
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Statistically, students' willingness to report school violence is significantly depended on school climate (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$) with students with positive perception of school climate (67.1% mean 2.77) more willing to report violence than those with perception of negative school climate (59.8%, mean 2.52). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have a positive perception of school climate compared to those who do not was rejected.

Research Question Three. Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus perpetrated by a friend between students who would report their friend compared to those who do not, considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status?

Table 9

Students' Willingness to Report School Violence based on Friendship

I would report a student even if he/she was my friend.		N	% of report only	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
Willingness to report school violence	Strongly Agree/ Agree	34	67.0%	2.85	7.607	.56082	t =7.899, p= 000
	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	18	57.6%	2.50	7.149	.38776	

Findings showed that students' willingness to report school violence is significantly differ on friendship (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$) with more students (67.0%, mean 2.85) agreed to even report a friend than those who would not report their friends (57.6% mean 2.50).

Table 10

Students' Willingness to Report School Violence by Gender, Class, and Socio-economic Status based on Friendship

I would report a student even if he/she was my friend.		N	% of report only	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
Willingness to report	Female	219	69.0%	2.84	6.518	.63013	t =6.425,
	Male	121	57.3%	2.51	7.180	.65274	p =.000
	Form four	162	66.7	2.67	7.264	.57075	t =3.221,

school violence	Form five	31	68.1	2.78	6.899	1.23903	$p = .002$
	Lower sixth	118	68.6	2.79	6.933	.63823	
	Upper sixth	29	60.8	2.62	7.707	1.43117	
	Rich	76	62.1	2.59	7.026	.80597	$t = 3.946,$ $p = .001$
	Average	254	69.0	2.77	10.574	2.42582	
	Poor	19	60.2	2.56	6.837	.43680	

Findings also showed that students' willingness to report school violence by gender is significantly differ based on friendship (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$) with more female students (69.0%, mean 2.84) agreed to even report a friend than male (57.3% mean 2.51). More so, willingness to report school violence by class/grade significantly differ based on friendship (p -value $0.002 < 0.05$) with more students in form four (66.7%, mean 2.67), form five (68.1% mean 2.78), and lower sixth (68.6% mean 2.79) agreed to even report a friend than those in upper sixth (60.8% mean 2.62). Finally, willingness to report school violence by socioeconomic status significantly differ based on friendship (p -value $0.001 < 0.05$) with more students average socioeconomic background (69.0% mean 2.77) agreed to report a friend more than those in rich socioeconomic background (62.1% mean 2.59) and lastly poor background (60.2% mean 2.56). With all these, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus perpetrated by a friend between students who would report their friend compared to those who do not, considering factors of class, gender, or socioeconomic status was rejected.

Research Question Four: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who fear the likelihood of personal consequences compared to those who do not?

Table 11

Students' Willingness to Report School Violence by Fear of Personal Consequence

	Fear of personal consequenc es	N	% of report only	Mea n	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
Willingness to report school violence	Yes	225	70.7	2.98	8.79399	.58627	t=3.047,
	No	299	54.5	2.51	6.79328	.39287	p=.003

The findings also showed that students' willingness to report school violence significantly differ based on fear of personal consequence (p -value $0.003 < 0.05$) with more students who fear personal consequences (70.7%, mean 2.98) accepted of being willing to report violence in school than those who are not afraid of personal consequences (54.5%, mean 2.51). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who fear the likelihood of personal consequences compared to those who do not was rejected.

Research Question Five: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are older in school compared to those who do not?

Table 12

Students' Willingness to Report School Violence by Age Range

	Age range	N	% of report only	Mean
Willingness to report school violence	13-15	172	66.5	2.82
	16-18	245	65.7	2.61
	19-21	66	63.0	2.59
	Above 21	41	52.4	2.33
		p -value		.006

The findings also showed that students' willingness to report school violence is significantly depended on age (p -value $0.006 < 0.05$). More of the younger students, aged 13-15 years (66.5%, mean 2.82), 16-18 years (65.7%, mean 2.61), and 19-21 years (63.0, mean 2.59) were found willing to report school violence more than older students even aged above 21 (52.4%, mean 2.33). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between older students in school compared to younger students was rejected.

Research Question Six: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are knowledgeable about the resources available to them at school compared to students who are not?

Table 13*Availability of Resources*

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
I know who to report a potential problem, violent act, or threat	136 (25.9%)	193 (36.7%)	106 (20.2%)	91 (17.3%)	2.71	1.035
I know where to report if I hear about or see a violent act or someone bringing weapons to school.	150 (28.6%)	219 (41.7%)	94 (17.9%)	62 (11.8%)	2.87	.960
The school has made it clear about who at school I should report these activities to.	152 (29.0%)	193 (36.8%)	82 (15.6%)	97 (18.5%)	2.76	1.065
Multiple Response Set (MRS)	438 (27.8%)	605 (38.4%)	1975 (17.9%)	250 (15.9%)	2.78	1.02

Overall, 66.2% of students have persons to report act of school violence while 33.8 did not. Specifically, 62.6% (329) of students agreed to know who to report violent or threat act while 37.4% (197) do not. Also, 70.3% (369) of students agreed to know where to report act of violent while 29.7% (157) do not. Finally, 65.8% (345) of students agreed that the school had clearly stated who violent acts should be reported while 34.2% (181) disagreed.

Table 14*Students' Willingness to Report School Violence Available of Resources*

Willingness to report school violence		N	% of report only	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
I know who to report a potential violent act, or threat	Strongly Agree/Agree	328	71.7	3.15	6.43602	.3553	t
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	196	53.2	2.60	7.37012	.5264	=11.994 p =.000
I know where to report violent act or someone bringing	Strongly Agree/Agree	368	73.4	3.21	6.33282	.3301	t
	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	156	54.7	2.64	7.83949	.6276	=11.282 p =.000

weapons to
school.

The school	Strongly	345	70.8	3.12	6.51289	.3506	t =9.558 p =.000
has made it	Agree/Agree					4	
clear about	Disagree/	179	54.5	2.64	8.02648	.5999	
who at school	Strongly					3	
I should report	Disagree						
these activities							
to.							

The findings also showed that students' willingness to report school violence significantly differ based on availability on school resources such as knowing who to report potential violent act or threat (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$), where to report violent (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$), and school making it clear about who violent activities are reported to (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$). More of students agreed to know who to report a potential violent act (71.7%, mean 3.15), where to report a violent act (73.4%, mean 3.12) and school making it clear on who to report violent activities (70.8%, mean 3.12) accepted of been willing to report violence in school than those who do not know who to report (53.2%, mean 2.60), where to report (54.7%, mean 2.64) and school not making it clear on who violent activities be reported to (54.5%, mean 2.64). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who are knowledgeable about the resources available to them at school compared to students who are not was rejected.

Research Question Seven: Is there a significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have been taught Community /Home Values compared those who are not?

Table 15

Community/Home Values

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
In my home, I am taught that if I am being bullied or picked on in school, I must fight back rather than tell an adult.	99 (18.8%)	69 (13.1%)	91 (17.3%)	267 (50.8%)	2.00	1.181
In my community, I am taught to trust authority figures (adults, police, teachers etc.)	123 (23.4%)	212 (40.3%)	93 (17.7%)	98 (18.6%)	2.68	1.029

Based on community/home values, 31.9% (168) of students agreed that they were taught how to fight back at school rather reporting to an adult while 68.1% (358) disagreed. And 63.7% (335) agreed that they were taught to trust authority figures like adult, police, teachers, etc. while 36.3% (191) disagreed.

Table 16

Willingness to Report School Violence by Home/Community Values

Taught community/home values (trusting authorities like police, teacher, adults and not to fight back in school rather report to an adult)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Test statistics
Willingness to report school violence	Strongly	333	2.77	8.80298	.63696	t =4.599, p =.000
	Agree/Agree					
	Disagree/Strongly	191	2.51	6.79679	.37246	
	Disagree					

Finally, the findings also showed that students' willingness to report school violence significantly differ based on been taught home/community values (p -value $0.000 < 0.05$) with students agreed to have been taught home/community value to trust authorities like police, teacher, adults and not to fight back in school rather report to an adult when bullied have a higher mean score (2.77) of willingness to report violence in school than those disagreed not to have been taught above mentioned home/community value (2.51). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus between students who have been thought Community /Home Values compared those who are not was rejected.

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

The study found students' willingness to report school violence significant differ based on class and socioeconomic status but not gender. That is to say, the study reveals that students' willingness to report violence significantly depends on class and socioeconomic status but not gender. Our findings align with prior studies like Poole, (2023) who also found no statistical difference in students' willingness to report violence or weapons on campus based on gender. At the same time, other studies e.g Connell, et al. (2015) found that female students were consistently more likely to report either weapon as well as report higher knowledge of school safety measures. This align with the suggestions that, research on race and gender's influence on the probability of students reporting weapons or violence to school officials or other adults is inconclusive, with some studies showing males report less, while others find no correlation (Wylie et al., 2010), yet the prevalence and impact of violence on both genders remains the same. For instance, prior studies in Cameroon show high levels of sexual violence against both genders, with the males, more affected, by high levels of different forms of violence which compromises the learning and social justice for the students (Tangwe, 2023b). This raises concern and opportunity for further future research on the influence of gender on the reporting behavior of students concerning violence in schools.

The findings also suggest that students from higher socioeconomic or wealthier backgrounds and those in middle grades (Form 4, Form 5, Lower Sixth) are more willing and likely to report violent acts than their peers from poorer backgrounds or higher grades like Upper Sixth. This might be linked to several factors. Wealthier students often enjoy better home/ parental uprisings, and stronger support networks and may perceive a safer environment for reporting, including “aporophobia” or attitudes toward violence directed toward those who are perceived as members of a lower status (Pina et al. 2022). On the contrary, students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds may have poor upbringing, fear retaliation, and social alienation, or feel that reporting will not result in meaningful action. A study by Sewoyehbaa and Nyounibe (2023) found that poor parental upbringing is a main source of school violence, linking home and school aggression in Cameroon. Similarly, Tangwe (2022 2023a) found that a very compromised and challenging socioeconomic background accounts for factors influencing violence in Cameroon schools. Suggesting that most violent acts may be perpetrated by those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, which reduces the likelihood of reporting violence since a majority of students in schools come from this background. Furthermore, the observed decline in reporting among Upper Sixth students which are the older students suggests that age and maturity could play a role in the reporting behavior of students. As students grow older and more entrenched in social dynamics, they may become more reluctant to report violence. Perkins et al., (2019) revealed that as the students get older, they students perceive that the school won't take specific threats seriously, so they don't bother reporting issues to the authorities. Brank et al. (2007) also found age to be a predictor of reporting likelihood. The indicators of school crime and safety also report that as both male and female students get older or as students' age increases, the probability of reporting decreases. Older students often feel disconnected from school and no longer view teachers as allies or friends (Crichlow-Ball & Cornell, 2021). Such detachment contributes to a decline in trust and willingness to report potential threats or weapons impacting overall school safety. By implications, the findings suggest a need for targeted interventions to support and equip students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and older students to develop the confidence and knowledge to report violence. Programs focusing on fostering positive role models within these groups, such as peer mentoring initiatives, could enhance students' willingness to report violence, encouraging them to see reporting as a means to foster safer school environments. Additionally, schools should ensure equitable access to support resources, addressing economic disparities that may discourage reporting.

A significant relationship was found between students' perception of a positive school climate and their willingness to report violence. The results show that students with a positive perception of school climate are significantly more willing to report violence than those with a negative perception. A positive school climate includes factors such as students feeling safe, having supportive teachers, and perceiving respect among peers and staff. Students who feel safe and believe their school provides a conducive environment for addressing violence are far more likely to report incidents. Interestingly, while 53.9% of students viewed their school climate positively, this still leaves a large proportion who do not, and this negativity correlates with a reluctance to report violence. This finding aligns with previous research which also found that perception of school climate is a strong predictor of students' willingness to report violence, (Madifs, 2014; Connell, et al., 2015; Sulkowski, 2011; Crichlow-Ball & Cornell, 2021; Poole, 2023). It is also important to mention that schools with positive school climate have a lower chance or incidence of violence than those with negative school climate. A positive school climate encourages

students to trust school officials and report threatening behaviors, fostering safer environments with lower rates of bullying and violence. Schools that support a positive culture see improved student cooperation, however, in school climates that support and encourage aggressive behavior, discourage reporting bullying to staff, as students are less willing to seek help in these environments (Crichlow-Ball & Cornell, 2021). By implication, schools should prioritize creating a supportive climate where students feel protected and safe all the time. This can be achieved by fostering stronger student-teacher relationships, developing trust in school authority figures, and instituting transparent mechanisms for reporting violence. Schools must focus on improving the overall climate by ensuring the consistent presence of caring and supportive teachers, fostering mutual respect, and creating safe spaces for dialogue. Teacher training on building supportive relationships and transparent communication can improve students' confidence in the school's reporting mechanisms. The establishment of reward systems for positive behavior, including the reporting of violence, can further reinforce this behavior. School administrators and staff should also be held accountable for maintaining a safe, respectful environment where students feel their concerns will be taken seriously.

The findings indicate that students' willingness to report violence significantly differ on friendship, with 67% of students who were still willing to report a friend's violent act. Female students, those from middle socioeconomic backgrounds, and those in middle grades (Form 4, 5) and lower six were particularly more likely to report violence even when the perpetrator or offender was a friend. Our finding is contrary to prior research which found statistical differences in students' willingness to report their friends and those who would not, where there was a code of silence among friends in reference to their willingness to report (Poole, 2023). In both cases, these findings highlight the influence of social and peer relationships on reporting behaviors, where loyalty to friends can suppress the urge to report, where some students may not want to get their friends into trouble (Madifs, 2014) or being perceived as traitors reporting after reporting friends violent act, eventually leading to their rejection from peer groups (Brinkley et al., 2006). The reluctance to report friends may stem from the fact that students see others refrain from reporting to maintain social bonds. However, it also suggests that with appropriate guidance, many students recognize the value of reporting violence, even when social ties complicate the situation. The fact that the current results show that students are willing to report violence even when the perpetrator is a friend shows that some students in Cameroon schools are beginning to notice the negative impact of weapon carrying and violence in schools. Such awareness is a positive step towards eradication of school violence, at the same time since a significant number of students such as those in the upper six and those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds would potentially not report violence it's a call for concern that needs to be addressed because it stand a barrier to archiving school safety. Consequently, schools should address the role of friendships in reporting behavior through peer education programs that stress the importance of prioritizing safety over peer loyalty. Creating a culture where reporting is seen as a responsibility to the community, rather than betrayal, is essential. Encouraging open discussions about difficult situations and offering scenarios where reporting is portrayed as an act of care can help shift perceptions in students. Emphasizing how reporting can ultimately protect friends from harm can lead to a greater willingness to come forward. Social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives should focus on developing students' ability to discern between protecting a friend and preventing harm.

The study found that students' willingness to report school violence significantly differ based on fear of personal consequence, with more students willing to report violence regardless of personal consequences. This is a good and positive step toward reducing school violence, at the same time, some students might endanger themselves by reporting violence unguided and unanimously which may invite perpetrators to retaliate. A study by Poole, (2023) revealed that the fear of retaliation was statistically significant variable in students' willingness to report violence. Such findings match with the idea that students often perceive reporting as carrying inherent risks, such as becoming targets themselves or being labeled as informers. This fear is heightened in schools where administrative responses to violence are either inadequate or punitive, reinforcing a culture of silence. Consequently, to address this barrier of fear, schools must ensure that mechanisms for reporting are confidential and protect the students who report the violence from retaliation. The establishment of anonymous reporting systems, as well as clear and strong disciplinary measures for acts of revenge or actions against those who retaliate, will reinforce a culture of safety and encourage more students to report violence in schools. Educating students on the processes and outcomes of reporting can also reduce fears related to personal consequences. By positively reinforcing the act of reporting and showcasing successful outcomes of past reports, schools can enhance students' sense of self-efficacy in reporting without fear of negative consequences.

The findings showed that students' willingness to report school violence and weapons in schools is significantly dependent on age. Contrary to expectations, younger students were found to be more willing to report school violence than older students. The findings align with prior research which found age as a predictor of reporting likelihood, older students often feel disconnected from school and no longer view teachers as allies or friends (Brank et al., 2007; Crichlow-Ball & Cornell, 2021; Perkins et al., 2019). Such detachment contributes to a decline in trust and willingness to report potential threats or weapons impacting overall school safety. This trend may suggest that as students advance through school, their willingness to report decreases, possibly due to increased peer influence and pressures, pessimism about the potential consequences of reporting, or a stronger sense of independence. Younger students feel more vulnerable or may still hold idealistic views of fairness and safety, making them more open to engaging with authority figures when faced with violence. Consequently, age-appropriate interventions are needed to sustain reporting behavior as students progress through their schooling. Younger students should be encouraged through continuous reinforcement of reporting protocols, while older students might benefit from peer-led reporting initiatives, helping them see the value of taking an active role in promoting school safety. Interventions targeting older students should focus on promoting positive peer influences and reinforcing the benefits of proactive reporting. Peer-led initiatives, where older students model appropriate behaviors, can help counteract negative influences and increase reporting behaviors among their peers.

Furthermore, the results revealed that students who knew the available resources were significantly more likely to report violent incidents. This finding aligns with prior studies suggesting that students who are well-informed about the resources and processes for reporting are likely to successfully use these resources, revealing that students who were knowledgeable of at least two security measures put in place, were significantly more likely to report both a gun or knife (Connell, et al. 2015; Poole, 2023), reinforcing their belief in the system's efficacy. This finding underscores the importance of clarity and communication regarding reporting channels. Students who know where, how, and to whom to report violent acts have greater confidence in the school system and are more

inclined and willing to report any violent acts. At the same time, the fact that many students are still unaware of these resources indicates a gap in the school's violence prevention infrastructure. To encourage more students in reporting violence, schools should prioritize and ensure regular information and ongoing communication regarding reporting resources, ensuring that students know the appropriate procedures for reporting violence such as; whom to report to, how to report, and what outcomes to expect. Orientation programs, visual aids, regular assemblies, and inclusion of reporting protocols in student handbooks should prominently feature this information to increase awareness. Moreover, training sessions in schools that clarify students' roles and rights within the reporting process will empower and enhance the effectiveness of these resources. Empowering students by involving them in safety committees can also foster a sense of ownership and increase their willingness to report.

The findings demonstrate that community and home values significantly influence students' willingness to report violence. Students who were taught to trust authority figures and not to retaliate were more likely to report violence. In contrast, those who were raised with the belief that they should handle issues on their own, or independently were less inclined to report incidents of school violence. This shows that students' behavior is shaped by the values modeled at home and in the community. Those who are taught to trust authorities learn from these experiences and are more likely to exhibit similar behaviors in school settings, thereby increasing their willingness and likeliness to report violence. This finding reveals that students understand the extent of the threat that a weapon (e.g knife, gun, etc) or violent acts can pose to them and are willing to inform authorities figures to keep themselves and their schools safe. This finding aligns with past research of Poole, (2023) who found that the knowledge of available resources at school to report and whom to report to was statistically significant in comparing the groups of students who were willing to report versus those who were not. At the same time, we would like to point to the fact that, in events or situations where students are unfortunately less drilled on this and may wait too long to contact authorities figures and adults (e.g waiting to arrive home to report it to their parent instead immediately to a teacher) or decides to retaliate themselves, may end up bringing fatal harm to themselves or others around them including injuries or death, as it may be already be too late for authority figures to intervene. For instance, Connell et al.'s 2015 study revealed that while most students are willing to report weapons to all available authority figures, school counselors were less likely to be informed, while parents and family members are more frequently informed, indicating a difference in reporting preferences. This confirms that students significantly differ in their reporting behaviors. Enchanting students' trust in all adults in and out of schools is very essential for child and school safety. Schools should also engage parents and community leaders to foster a shared understanding of the importance of reporting school violence, thereby promoting values that support violence prevention. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and community outreach programs can serve as a platform to reinforce the message that reporting is a protective, rather than punitive, action, hence aligning school safety messages with community values. Schools can also provide workshops and resources to parents, emphasizing the importance of supporting their children in seeking help from authorities when faced with violence. Moreover, regularly encouraging discussions at home about the value and importance of seeking help from authorities and adults when facing violence will further strengthen students' willingness to report acts of violence.

Conclusion

School violence negatively affects students' well-being by causing physical harm, psychological and emotional distress, fear, reduced academic performance, and a diminished sense of safety and belonging. It can translate to an uncontrollably bigger societal problem, especially school drop outs, leading to terrorism and high crime rates, such as the unresolved anglophone crisis in Cameroon (2017 - present) which has frequently disrupted the teaching and learning process through school attacks which claimed thousands of lives in and out of schools (e.g Ketzmerick, 2022; Bang & Balgah, 2022). Willingness to report weapons and violence is an important step towards school safety. The findings of this study emphasize the influence of multiple factors including; class, socioeconomic status, school climate, friendship, fear of consequences, age, and community and home values on students' willingness to report violence in schools. Interventions should be holistic, as such schools must address both internal factors, such as climate and resources, and external factors, such as community and home values, to create a supportive environment where students feel empowered to report weapons and violence. By focusing, developing, and fostering a culture of safety, responsibility, accountability, support, and clear reporting structures, schools can significantly empower, enhance, and increase students' willingness to report violence, ultimately contributing to a safer learning school environment for all students and teachers. Specifically, a positive school climate fosters reporting behavior, emphasizing the need for anti-bullying programs and strong teacher-student relationships. Empowering students through education on values and reporting resources, coupled with awareness campaigns, is critical for proactive engagement. Targeted support for vulnerable groups, including younger or socioeconomically disadvantaged students, ensures equitable access to safety mechanisms. Addressing fear of retaliation through robust whistle-blower protection policies builds trust in the reporting process. Schools should promote ethical decision-making and peer accountability to navigate loyalty conflicts. Accessible anonymous reporting channels, collaboration with families and communities, and ongoing educators training further strengthen safety initiatives. Lastly, although we mainly draw on our experiences in Cameroon following the contextual evidence on school violence and students' behavior towards reporting, we would argue that the problems outlined here are not unique or restricted to the Cameroon context. The broader issues it raises resonate more globally and could open up educational policy interventions and new research opportunities for education, school safety, and student well-being. Therefore this paper contributes meaningfully to emerging knowledge in literature and debates raised within this paper, to improve awareness of educational scholarship and beyond.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by Ethical Committee of Faculty of Psychology of “our” University (IRB No.H24103). The procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Concern

Written informed concern was obtained from all subjects involved in the study

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to drafting, data collection, analysis, or revising the article, and have agreed on the journal to which the article should be submitted, gave final approval of the version to be published, and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Availability of data and materials

Data will be made available upon reasonable and valid request from the authors

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