

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE GRASSFIELDS: A DETERRENT TO VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF CAMEROON 2015-2022



Atlee Dzeawoni ^{(a)1}

^(a)Department of History, Heritage and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon; E-mail: dzeawoni@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Violence in the school environment involves behavior that is anti-social and is evidenced by undesirable tension, chaos, insults, bullying, sexual harassment, mockery, jostling, and fighting. Studies reveal that a higher percentage of these acts occur amongst learners. The problem is that scholars disagree on the definition of a violent act in school, specifically, when and how such an act is considered to begin. This study examines the socio-cultural and historical context of the Grassfields of Cameroon. It singles out elements that deter learners from committing violent acts against their mates, teachers, parents, and older people. It employs a Qualitative approach. Its findings are based on survey data on cases of violence in Cameroonian schools from 2015 to 2022. It argues that the historical and cultural context of the Grassfields region favors peace, respect, and restraint, which accounts for the limited cases of violence by learners against their peers, school authorities, parents, and guardians. Its significant findings suggest that instances of spectacular violence seldom occur in the Grassfields. It also reveals that violence against parents and teachers increased during seasons of income-generating activities in rural areas. It concludes that the historical and cultural context of the Grassfields of Cameroon deters violence, promotes harmony, and respect for constituted authority. The paper recommends that national cultures, categorized by various cultural zones, be taught in Cameroonian schools, with an emphasis on the positive elements that promote non-violence.

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INTRODUCTION

Most modern states consider the development of their human capital through formal education to be a priority. In this process, violent acts amongst learners pose a challenge, whether they are daily or spectacular in nature. Therefore, this has remained a significant concern for stakeholders in education worldwide. It has become a sensitive political issue and a fashionable media subject each time it occurs. Violence occurs in the family, industry, on the streets, at public gatherings, and, in this case study, in schools. Reasons for any violent act are attributed to a variety of factors, including politics, economic pressures, the perpetrator's psychology, cultural context, and many others. Violence, as conceived in this paper, involves behavior that is anti-social and is evidenced by undesirable tension, chaos, insults, bullying, mockery, jostling, fighting, and sexual harassment. Studies reveal that a higher percentage of these acts occur amongst learners. School authorities and parents hardly perceive violence until it reaches the level of a fight, torture resulting in wounds, humiliation, depression, incapacitation, mal-development, deprivation, and sometimes death. Generally, preceding situations to these events are often ignored because they are not visible and develop at a very slow pace (Thaçi, 2018).

Violence has many forms and varies in intensity, depending on the context and environment. It is very much linked to the use of force or power. Its boundaries are fluid because, in some cases, threats that compel an individual, especially competitors or adversaries, to succumb, also fall in the category of violence. The underlying characteristic is that there is resultant destruction, emotional/ Psychological harm, and injury. These acts are perpetuated by humans against others, animals, and nature (Göçmen, 2007).

¹Corresponding author: ORCID ID: 0009-0001-9846-4342

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The problem is that there has been a surge of attacks on class and school prefects, teaching and administrative staff, and authorities of the school partnership structures, such as the Parent-Teachers' Association (PTA) and School Management Council. Scholars and authorities in secondary education in Cameroon have made efforts to curb this ill, but more complicated forms continue to emerge, which are highly mediated. This means that an appropriate diagnosis has not been made so far. Moreover, Scholars differ in their definitions, and precisely when and how a violent act is considered to begin.

As a methodology, this research work based its findings on a random collection and processing of data using questionnaires administered to school heads in the Divisions of the North-West Region and the Noun Division of the West Region of Cameroon, commonly referred to as the Western Grassfields. It also utilized interviews and discussions with community actors to explore historical and cultural phenomena.

This research aims to examine the cultural context of the Grassfields and assess whether it promotes or frustrates violence among learners in the region. In so doing, propose transformational solutions in the domain of culture in this geographical area. The main research question, therefore, is: How has the historical and cultural environment of the Grassfields of Cameroon fostered a culture of respect for peers, hierarchy, and elders?

The situation in Secondary schools of Cameroon from 2015 to 2022 is under review. This choice, however, avoids the complications of violence linked to the context of war, which has affected the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon and neighboring Divisions since 2016. The paper begins with a literature review, proceeds to a discussion on contextual issues, and examines the cultural/ historical character of the Grassfields. It ends with an analysis of data, findings, and a recommendation for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tangwe (2022), writing on school-based violence and open spaces in Cameroon, argues that there is a lack of conducive spaces for effective learning, thus necessitating the creation of what he calls "open spaces for learning." He opines that, for quality education to be achieved, the school environment must be conducive and serene. He estimates that 87% of learners aged 2-14 are victims of daily insults, violent language, and yelling. This study delves more into forms of violence, their frequency, and valid percentages amongst adolescents in Cameroon. In this process, the paper signals and, with no in-depth review, the looming dangers of culturally based violence, which he indicates condones exploitation and repression (Tangwe, 2022).

Mouafo and Ngamaleu (2024) focus on violence within educational establishments, specifically that which affects learners and staff, thereby compromising the teaching and learning process. The study draws inspiration from highly mediatized episodes of school violence in Cameroon, with case studies in two public schools in the central urban metropolitan city of Yaoundé. It also examines the causes and forms of this phenomenon and proposes improved managerial practices. The role of the family and community is integrated into this study, which depicts the link between school violence and societal vices; more so because some societal norms facilitate or deter violence in schools. They conclude that these three poles must collaborate to avert school-based violence (Mouafo & Ngamaleu, 2024). This element is vital for this research because it considers external pressures that may lead to violent acts.

Achuo and Dinga (2024) explore the nature, causes, and consequences of school-based violence. They argue that these factors have a significant impact on academic performance and a substantial financial impact on parents, schools, administrators, and policymakers. As a solution, the study recommends the creation of a national violence prevention Council to handle issues of school-based violence. This study projects the notion of "informal School" based on the finding that learners spend less than 40% of their day in school. It is within this time limit that there is the inculcation of civility, moral, and social values (Achuo & Dinga, 2024). The rest of the time is spent with family, social and peer groups, and society, and therefore accounts for part of the problem.

This takes us once more to the influence of external forces. A gap exists that this research attributes to cultural and historical phenomena, which are often overlooked. On this note, and in response to this gap, this research explores another aspect, namely the historical trajectory of the community under review in relation to the diagnosis of the causes of violence. Through this work, it is hoped that considerations of the cultural and historical context of a people will widen the scope in the process of developing transformational solutions to violence in schools.

Takang (2023), like many other narratives, aims to provide an understanding of the nature and causes of violence in Secondary Schools in Cameroon. Violence in his work is viewed from the perspective of school administrators. He catalogues several highly mediatized cases of violent acts in the schools in the Republic of Cameroon. Similar to other studies, a substantial body of literature exists on proposed solutions. For him, as a solution, emphasis should be placed on moral and civic education in Cameroon's secondary schools (Takang, 2023). This element on new subject areas and curriculum is of interest for this paper.

Tombe (2023), writing on Students and Violence in Cameroon, indicates that addressing this issue and devising strategies to combat it cannot be the sole responsibility of school authorities. He subscribes to the view that society is partly to blame because it facilitates the vulnerability of learners. He gives details on violent acts in Cameroon caused by male learners, which stand at 62%, girls 3%, teachers 1%, and the rest of the 34 % goes to society. For this reason, he suggests that researchers need to change the narrative. He concludes that violence needs to be redefined, as the school is a "microscope of the society". He thus recommends that more stakeholders be integrated in the fight against violence in schools (Tombe, 2023).

This research builds upon Tombe (2023) and aligns with his perspective on changing the narrative. As an emerging trend, Scholars therefore focus on pathways to resolve violence using evidential and theoretical approaches. This research thus suggests a fifth pole in the shared influence model. It is held that the historical trajectory/cultural context of the Grassfields has influenced the attitudes of learners and school authorities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the frequency of violence in sixteen selected schools located in urban/rural areas of the Grassfields region in Cameroon. Participants included school heads, Discipline masters, and parents of learners. Data was collected through semi-structured interview guides for school authorities and an interview guide for fourteen parents. Focused discussions were done with community actors and oral sources on the historical phenomenon. The interdisciplinary approach was thus vital for this discussion. Ethical considerations were necessary for highly mediated cases of violence as concerns the victims and institutions affected. Codes were therefore used to identify these institutions. The data was finally processed and analyzed. The results obtained were presented and discussed to formulate an opinion, draw findings, and provide recommendations.

DISCUSSIONS

Concepts on Violence

Western notions of violence separate liberal and conservative theories from Marxist and Anarchist viewpoints. They all nevertheless agree that contradiction and conflict of interest are the basis of potential and real violence. They differ more on how the contradiction should be handled (Göçmen, 2007). Monowar sees violence as a product of human living conditions and a consequence of class stratification. To him, it is also a form of defense against a hostile environment. He opines that violence emanates from interpersonal conflict and differences in interpersonal subjectivity, which all depend on the cultural environment, and is linked up like a chain. He also holds that violence emanates from the beliefs and thoughts of an individual. These thoughts depend on his mindset, the belief structure, and the dominant ideology in that surrounding, which can be summarized as values, norms, the influence of the media, and the culture in question (Thaçi, 2018).

Some scholars attribute the importance of inherited traits in explaining susceptibility to violence in individuals who possess the monoamine oxidase A (MAOA) gene (Meyer-Lindenberg et al., 2006). Other scholars argue that it takes significant surrounding factors to ignite this gene, considering that violence is a learned behavior. These scholars, however, converge on the view that the individual is the basis of violence, whether in society or the school milieu. They also agree that an individual's beliefs and thoughts shape their daily attitude, which can accommodate positive traits such as appreciation, courtesy, concern, and mediation, as well as negative traits like contempt, insult, insolence, aggressiveness, and fighting.

They also agree on the chain action of violence from minor incidents to a situation of crisis, generalized indiscipline, gang violence, mass murder, and sectarian violence. In this light, Monowar avers that "We must negotiate interpersonally to identify interpersonal conflicts and prevent violent influences; otherwise they become catalysts of different kinds of violence (Thaçi, 2018). In the school milieu, the chain effect is seen in acts of violence, wherein flogging, corporal punishment, and bullying gradually slow down the development of skills in learners, and ignite aggressiveness, depression, and anxiety. Victims of such violence are thought to develop tendencies to do the same in the future (Muhangi, 2017).

This paper is based on the view that the historical and cultural environment in which an individual resides, among others, shapes their thoughts and beliefs. It is inspired by Bronfenbrenner, who developed the ecological model to explain human development. Epstein tapped into this concept to identify the three poles that constantly interact: school, family, and community. To him, these shape the mind of adolescence and are described as the shared influence model. From this, the WHO developed the Ecological model in 2002, which encompasses four levels: personal characteristics, which are either inherited or learned; proximity to social relationships; the community; and the global level (Bouchamma et al., 2004).

To develop transformational solutions for addressing violence in the school environment, it is essential to understand the historical/cultural context that shapes attitudes within the school milieu. This will enable us to determine whether this context supports or opposes violence. Muhangi (2017) holds that cultural beliefs in Uganda encourage gender based violence, including in the school milieu, as it was held that women were only good for the kitchen and unequal to men. Discrimination against women was also prevalent in many communities of Uganda. He adds that whatever occurred in schools was determined by the social context; in other words, what students had learnt from the community (Muhangi, 2017).

The relevance of this study on violence in schools lies in the fact that it is necessary to understand how to mitigate its causes, manifestations, and effects, wherever and whenever they occur. Key actors and researchers must address this issue. As a worldwide phenomenon, some specifics do occur. The context of violence in Kosovo from 1997 to 1999 had to do with ethnic cleansing, and thus the circulation of arms, summary executions, and deportations in a post-war scenario (Thaçi, 2018). In Uganda, after 1962, she experienced successive wars, oppressive regimes, and frequent regime changes, marked by terror and consequential killings, which extended into the school milieu. Violence became a way to sort out differences, and victims experienced trauma, depression, and psychological effects (Muhangi, 2017). Violence in the context mentioned above is also externally triggered and complex. For this reason, the study avoids violence in schools linked to the socio-political crisis and war in the Grassfields of Cameroon in the years under review.

On the pathways to resolving violence, Thaçi (2018) proposes the evidential and theoretical approaches. First, on the evidence, he advocates that in cases of inter-personal violence, coalition violence, and communal violence, the solution is to build tolerance (by means of social justice and communication) and preventive enforcement. For the theoretical approach, he proposes focusing on emerging trends in violence studies, which include: the deconstruction of cultural norms that promote violence; the propagation of anti-violence writings that target specific groups; the projection of social awareness rhetoric and campaigns; and finally, the introduction and enforcement of Anti-violence legislation. The following pages present the historical and cultural context of the Grassfields of Cameroon, laying the groundwork for a new perspective on how violence can be perceived as a source for transformational solutions.

Historical and Cultural Context of the Grassfields of Cameroon

The Grassfields of Cameroon lie between latitudes 5° and 7° north of the equator. It is fairly circular in form and covers the area north of the Cross River basin, extending to the Mungo basin to the southeast. It extends to the Bamboutous highlands in the west, and the Noun river valley to the north east. It is bordered in the north by the Adamawa plateau, to the north-west by the Mambila highlands, and to the west by the Katsina basin. The Grassfields are further divided into the Western Grassfields, commonly referred to as the Bamenda Highlands, and the Eastern Grassfields, which encompass Bamun and Bamileke lands. The region specializes in the production of iron, pottery, cereal-based foodstuffs, palm oil in the hot plains, Coconuts, and handicrafts.

Ethnic groups of the Grassfields occupied the region in successive waves. There are generally three origins ascribed to the ethnic groups in this region. Many claimed that the Ndobu-Tikari originated from the northeast; others contended that the Widikum originated from the west, and the last group, the Munchi, was located in the northwestern part of Nigeria. While settled, these ethnic groups faced aggression from expansionist neighbors, Chamba raids, and the Fulani in the 18th and 19th Centuries. As a result of this violence, many ethnic groups resorted to congregated settlements or moved to areas protected by natural barriers such as mountains, swamps, and rivers. In 1979, an archaeological conference was held in Garoua, and following a comparison of notes, three cultural areas were delineated due to ancestral linkages and common cultural traits within which archaeological research had to be situated. These were: the north, north-west, centre, and southern geographical entities. Our case study, which is the Grassfields (North-West entity), is a cultural sphere. It will therefore be x-rayed for elements that deter and promote violence in schools. The following socio-cultural practices militate for non-violence in the Grassfields of Cameroon:

Masked Dancers

Masquerades (masked dancers) remained a vital part of Grassfield cultures. Masks are believed to instill respect in young people as they grow up. Argenti, in a Chapter of his Ph.D. thesis titled "Masks of Terror and the Subjection of Cadets in Oku", describes masks as dark, with impressions of fearsome animals or humans. He adds that they are generally not beautiful, with their dancers prone to violence (Göçmen, 2007). Amongst thousands of onlookers, he says cadets form a greater majority. While scared by its constant charge on stooped persons, they whale in pleasure at masquerade displays. Each cadet usually prepares to recount the scenes as they unfolded. Elaborating on the aspect of horror in the masks, he says, "... is tinged with a sense of awe, grudging admiration, and bewildered amusement" (Göçmen, 2007). Similar to Oku, this tradition is observed among the ethnic groups of the Grassfields, where many youths develop a spirit of respect by stooping when these masquerades perform, thereby avoiding being a target of their violent displays. Mutual respect, therefore, serves as a deterrent to violence in the school environment.

The Gun Culture

In the early 19th Century, guns and gunpowder from the coast of Nigeria, specifically from Calabar and Benue through Takum in the northeastern part of Nigeria, reached the Grassfields of Cameroon. In 1835, the Bafu-Fundong people achieved a victory over the Ba'ni warriors, who were on horseback from the northern parts of Cameroon. The latter used den guns, and this episode is symbolized by the war tool called Tafang (den gun). These guns were generally of poor quality and ineffective, but had a greater impact on ethnic groups that acquired them (Nkwi & Warner, 1982). In times of peace, they were fired during death celebrations, as their loud noise was believed to "scare death". With European colonization and a reduction in deadly inter-ethnic conflict, it is rather the second and later function of the 11-12 inches gauge smoothbore flintlock den gun that became primordial. It was seldom used in war and gradually geared toward non-violence and harmony, until 2017 in the Grassfields of Cameroon. This notion persists in this region, where the possession of guns even for self-defense is not common.

Grassland Cultural Formation, Myths and Folklore

It was customary in the Grassfields for a family to gather around a fireside to receive training on facing life's challenges and be entertained. Stories and folklore songs attributed to mythical beings, such as *kimaleng* in Nso', abound. Animals such as the tortoise, elephant, bush pig, and antelope found in the Savannah environment, with perceived virtues of intelligence, courage, fame, and wit, were used in folklore and the generation of myths in their cultures. These were also taught to cadets in storytelling, riddles, and jokes. The nature of wild animals, such as the bush dog, lion, and elephant, was used similarly to instill in cadets qualities like respect for nature, resilience, caution, and prudence in their lifestyle. This resulted in harmony in society.

The custom that only male elders could break open an egg to make omelets and eat the gizzard of a rooster inculcates restraint in youths and limits stealing. In the Bui and Donga-Mantung Divisions of the Grassfields, customs related to gender roles and prerogatives are evident in the respect women show to a convoy transporting wine, where they stoop slightly as it passes, because palm wine is used to pay her bride price. It is customary for all males in these upper Grassfields communities to yield to requests from strangers and pregnant women, such as providing portable water and guiding a person who has lost their way during a journey. These pregnant women have the prerogative to stop a convoy carrying the Fons (king) wine and taste it. In this way, as cadets grow up, it becomes a taboo to be violent towards women.

The Culture of Respect for Age and the Elderly

In the ethnic groups of the Grassfields, it is customary for tasks such as washing hands, breaking bread, collecting and sharing food, and leading a convoy to be performed in accordance with seniority. In the same manner, the care for junior relations requires the elder brother or sister to share food in case of scarcity and protect their junior ones in public. In the

event of sharing a standard bed, the senior is required to lie on the side closest to the door, facing any potential threats that may arise. It is unusual for cadets to argue with older people or talk less to challenge them publicly. These values instill in cadets respect for their peers, elders, hierarchy, and institutions, and thus serve as a deterrent to violence.

The Fear of Spilling Blood and Traditional Diplomacy

In the 18th and 19th Centuries, between kin and unrelated ethnic groups of the Grassfields, blood pacts and oaths were used as a means to maintain peace as neighbors. Various methods were thus put in place to avoid war, so that blood would not be spilled. Mystical warfare, involving forces of nature and magic, was often employed when conflict became inevitable. Similar tactics were also used to prevent the outbreak of war, which Funteh describes as “diplo-magic prevention” (Funteh, 2015). This culture of peace persists in the Grassfields of Cameroon.

Despite the presence of violence control mechanisms in the culture of the Grassfields, certain elements remain lacking. Firstly, many mask dancers exhibit violence in their displays during cultural festivals. Considering that some violent acts emanate from experiences or imitation, some youths adopt this attitude as participants, and sometimes mask themselves during these festivals.

Secondly, the Grassfield ethnic groups practiced slavery and the slave trade until it was banned in the 1830s. This trade continued in more subtle forms and has evolved into the Grassfields being reputed for the non-procedural provision of nannies to the cities of Douala and Yaoundé. Similarly, youths from this region are exploited as laborers in plantations and mines throughout the country. This makes such youths vulnerable and prone to violence wherever they find themselves.

Thirdly, the major groups of the Grassfields, such as the Bum, Bafut, Kom, Nso', and Bamun, entered the region circa the 14th Century onwards. They subdued aboriginal groups, assimilated others peacefully, integrated immigrants, and by force took control of a large expanse of territory in the areas they now occupy (Nkwi & Warner, 1982). The warrior tendency in these ethnic groups has persisted. This has manifested itself repeatedly during the reintroduction of multi-party politics in the 1990s in Cameroon, the food riots of 2008, and the "Anglophone" crisis of 2016 to date. These ethnic groups have taken a frontline role to challenge existing institutions and constituted authority, with attendant consequences replicated in the violence experienced in the schools of these areas. This has been complicated by the influx of Fulani, Hausa, and Aku immigrants, reputed for their cattle rearing, into the region over the centuries. This has resulted in numerous and recurrent farmer-grazer conflicts in which youths are engaged as combatants.

Lastly, limitations on the freedom of expression of youths in the presence of adults in the Grassfields of Cameroon are tantamount to disrespect for human rights. This creates frustration and consequently emotional and psychological pressure, which usually manifests in outbursts later and is expressed in the form of violence. To better capture the image of violence in schools of the Grassfields, a general picture of cases that received media attention in Cameroon appears as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. A Survey of Recent Spectacular Cases of Violence in Cameroon

SN	YEAR	REGION	SCHOOL	NATURE OF VIOLENCE
1	2018	South Region	Lycee Classique de SM	A student was raped and killed after a night party.
2	2019	Littoral Region	Government Bilingual. High School DD	A classmate murdered a Form 4 student.
3	2019	Littoral Region	Government High School BB	A student was assaulted on the head with a piece of plank with a rusted nail.
4	2019	South-West Region	SBC Buea	Gang violence on Campus involving 10 students.
5	2020	Centre Region	Lycee de KK	A classmate murdered a studeclassmate
	0	Centre Region	Government High School NK	A teacher was stabbed to death by his Form 3 student.
7	2020	Centre Region	Lycee de MK	A student stabbed a Young Teacher of Mathematics
8	2022	Centre Region	YSCS Nkolbisson	A student stabbed the Principal of the College.
9	2022	West Region	Government Bilingual High School BF	A student murdered his class-m
	classmate20	Centre Region	Lycee de KB	20 Female students were guilty of an orgy and summarily dismissed from school.
11	2022	Littoral region	Government Bilingual High School YS	A teacher raped a 2-year-old pupil.
12	2022	West region	C V Bafoussam	A classmate murdered a student.

Sources: David Jaspa Takang, Violence in Secondary Schools in Cameroon: School Administrators' Perspectives and Envisaged Solutions. *Universal Journal of Innovative Education*, Vol. 2, Issue 4, 2023: 217; Louvier Kindo Tombe, Students and Violence in Cameroon: Changing the Narrative in Cameroon, www.newsupfront.com, accessed 25th January 2023.

The above-cited cases (coded for ethical reasons) of violence in the schools of Cameroon from 2018 to 2022 became highly mediatized. These were particularly highlighted by the Assistant Director of School Life Guidance and Counseling in the Ministry of Secondary Education during the International Symposium on Violence in the School Milieu, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from December 20 to 21, 2022.

Table 1 reveals that the North West Region of Cameroon, conterminous with the Grassfields, did not experience cases of highly mediatized violence in Cameroon from 2018 to 2022. It also reveals that Public schools experienced a larger number of reported cases of highly mediatized violence, as opposed to Lay Private and Confessional schools in Cameroon. The situation in public schools is attributed to the high enrolment figures in these cities and an insufficient number of Masters in charge of discipline. Regarding the situation in selected institutions of the Grassfields, the survey is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Specific Survey of Violence against Students and constituted School Authorities of the Grassfields of Cameroon from 2015 – 2022

Cases of assault on prefects/teachers/elderly, etc							
SN	School	Class prefect	School prefect	Teachers	Administrators	PTA	Parents
Selected High schools of the Grassfields in Urban centers							
1	GBHS KUMBO	14	12	4	1	0	0
2	GBHS NDOP	18	6	3	1	0	0
3	GHS KIYAN	6	5	2	0	0	0
4	GBHS KUTABA	30	10	20	8	0	0
5	GBHS FUNDONG	9	7	2	0	0	0
6	CCAST BAMBILI	14	8	3	2	0	0
7	M.B.A. WUM	12	6	4	1	0	0
	TOTAL	103	54	38	13	0	0
Selected schools of the Grassfields in Rural areas							
7	GSS GOM	3	2	2	0	0	1
8	GHS BELO	2	1	1	0	0	0
9	GHS BABESSSI	4	2	1	0	0	1
10	LYCEE MAGBWA	DE6	4	0	0	0	1
11	GHS KITIWUM	3	2	1	0	0	0
12	GSS WEH	4	3	0	0	0	0
13	GTC NTIGI	2	1	1	0	0	0
	TOTAL	24	15	6	0	0	3

The percentage of respondents stood at 92%. This survey randomly selected two schools in each Division; one in the urban center and the other in the rural area in the Grassfields. The data portrays that a larger proportion of violent acts occur in the school environment. This aligns with Bujar's view that violence occurs more frequently among learners (Thaçi, 2018). Violence by learners against teachers remains minimal, especially in rural schools, which are still primarily within a less contaminated social and cultural context that fosters respect for teachers and elderly persons, in contrast to the prevailing situation in towns, as previously discussed.

The near absence of violence in some schools, according to the authorities, was due to their personal tact and regular pre-emptive measures. The increased incidence of violence in Lycee de Koutaba and Lycee de Magbwa is attributed to the spillover effects of the mixture of students during long vacations between the towns of the West region and the violent-prone metropolitan economic metropolis of Douala. The increased number of violent acts against school and class prefects is in part explained by ignorance of internal rules and regulations.

The incidence of attacks on parents in rural areas is on the rise. Findings attributed these occurrences to polygamous homes, and secondly, to the season for harvesting palm nuts, the exploitation of river sand, and the fishing season. This phenomenon was observed at Lycee de Magbwa and GHS Babesssi, during the peak of the fish and river sand harvesting season, when youths generate a substantial income from these activities. They tend to purchase hard drugs and alcohol and mix with gang groups. The same traits are discerned amongst youths in GSS Gom during the palm harvesting season. At this time, cadets in rural areas who earn a considerable income from these activities become prone to challenging their class prefects, teachers, school administrators, parents, and guardians.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examines the concepts of violence in schools, including its causes, manifestations, and effects. It looked at the socio-cultural and historical context of the Grassfields. It brought out those elements that deter learners from committing violent acts against their mates, teachers, parents, and older people. It also surveyed a select group of schools in the region. It argued that the historical and cultural context of the Grassfields militated in favor of peace, respect, and restraint, and thus was responsible for the reduced number of cases of violence by learners on various school authorities and their guardians.

Its findings reveal that violence against parents increased during seasons of income-generating activities in rural areas. The paper also shows that the historiography and cultures of the Grassfields promote harmony and respect for older people and constituted authority. These traits transcend into the school milieu. This finding, therefore, supports the inclusion of a fifth pole of action in the shared influence model, which researchers should explore to combat school-based violence.

In perspective, the dismissal of learners from school due to deviant behavior and violent acts has been applied in many institutions of the Grassfields and other parts of Cameroon. This is considered by scholars as a "quick-fix solution" because the problem has merely been transferred to another school environment. Violence in school will always be there, and authorities should not be over taken by the spectacular cases that come up and are highly mediatized. What matters is that appropriate diagnoses be adopted every time these issues arise, and pre-emptive measures be instituted to combat this illness.

To obtain transformational solutions, the theory for resolving violence should be formulated based on that used to combat epidemics. To cure epidemics, researchers look for antibiotics in germs. They infect these germs; culture them to create a new kind of germ, and then the germs eliminate themselves. Drawing from this, the paper recommends the exploitation of Heritage Studies, specifically in the case of Cameroon, in junior classes, by teaching national cultures according to various cultural regions. Emphasis in this trajectory should be laid on morality courses and on positive elements that promote non-violence in the school milieu. Civic education, and the internal school rules and regulations of each

institution, should be taught as lessons in the junior classes. The Penal Code and emergent themes in Cameroon, such as inclusion, gender, human rights, and freedoms, should be integrated into the curricula of senior classes.

This paper is limited in that two Divisions of the Grassfields could not be reached throughout this research due to security challenges. Additionally, it examined violence in the school environment from the perspective of school authorities, rather than that of the learners. Finally, cases of highly mediatized violence from 2015-2017 could not be catalogued. It also cautiously avoided violence in the Grassfields linked to armed conflict raging in the area since 2017 to date. Future researchers should next examine the northern and southeastern parts of the Republic of Cameroon to identify elements in these cultural and historical settings that support the culture of non-violence.

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