

Resisting Eduphobia and Normalizing the Culture of Violence against School Children and Teachers in Nigeria

James Urien¹, Peter Urien², Henrietta Amen Usunobon³

¹Department of Psychology, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

²Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

³Department of Clinical Psychology, Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya

Email: jourien@delsu.edu.ng, peter-urien@delsu.edu.ng, hettyamen@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Urien, J., Urien, P., & Usunobon, H. A. (2026). Resisting Eduphobia and Normalizing the Culture of Violence against School Children and Teachers in Nigeria. *Psychology*, 17, 1054-1071.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2026.1710053>

Received: September 7, 2026

Accepted: October 26, 2026

Published: October 29, 2026

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This study focused on resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria. Two research questions were raised in the study. The research methodology employed a survey design with multiple instruments to examine the relationship between resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence and approaches to curb eduphobia. The population for this study comprised 1000 teachers and 9000 students in public secondary schools in Nigeria. A purposive sampling procedure was used to draw a sample of 500 participants (300 SS1-SS3 students and 200 teachers) from ten (10) states, namely Delta, Edo, Anambra, Ondo, Kaduna, Bornu, Zamfara, Rivers, Ekiti and Kogi. Data were collected using three self-developed questionnaires: Resisting Eduphobia Questionnaire, Normalizing the Culture of Violence Questionnaire and Approaches to Curb Eduphobia Questionnaire and a Rotated Component Matrix using 4 component labels. Questionnaires were administered and retrieved, with ethical protocols for consent and debriefing observed. Letters of introduction and permission were obtained from the school principals and information sheets and consent forms were distributed. The study received institutional ethics approval before it began. Participants completed questionnaires that measured variables such as age, education, ethnicity and state. Data collection utilized online platforms such as Google Forms and Microsoft Forms. Responses were anonymous. Online administration with no direct interpersonal contact further supported anonymity, reduced social pressure, and made withdrawal easy without consequences. Descriptive statistics and stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to analyze data. Conclusively, resisting eduphobia and ending the normalization of violence against schoolchildren and teachers is essential for Ni-

geria's survival and progress. Schools must cease being sites of fear—whether from external attacks by insurgents and bandits or from internal practices such as corporal punishment, bullying, and abuse that society has long accepted as discipline. When violence is treated as routine, it destroys learning, drives children out of school, traumatizes teachers, and perpetuates cycles of aggression across generations. Protecting education requires coordinated action: effective security for schools, strict enforcement of existing laws against violence, a decisive shift away from physical punishment toward positive discipline, and a collective rejection of any ideology that brands education as a threat. Only by making schools truly safe and valued can Nigeria equip its children to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and informed nation.

Keywords

Eduphobia, Normalizing, Violence, School Children, Teachers, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Violence directed at learners and teaching staff in Nigeria constitutes a complex emergency that interweaves ideological rejection of formal schooling (commonly labelled “eduphobia”), systemic insecurity, cultural endorsement of physical correction, and institutional shortcomings. This background places the present study within the historical, socio-political, cultural, and educational conditions that have permitted such aggression to continue and, in numerous respects, to become accepted as ordinary. Eduphobia is a persistent, disproportionate negative affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientation toward formal education, learning processes, educational institutions, or the acquisition of knowledge/skills. It encompasses intense anxiety, aversion, hostility, or avoidance directed at education itself (rather than only at a specific school setting, teacher, or subject) (Chinwuba, 2024).

Since intensifying its campaign around 2009, Boko Haram has deliberately designated formal education as a primary objective. The organisation has regarded schools, teachers, and pupils as embodiments of an illegitimate system shaped by Western influences. Documentation by Human Rights Watch indicates that between 2009 and 2015 the group destroyed more than 910 schools and compelled at least 1500 others to shut down across north-eastern Nigeria. A minimum of 611 teachers were intentionally killed and roughly 19,000 were driven from their posts; over 2000 individuals (many of them female students) were seized, frequently from school compounds (Smiley, Moussa, Ndamobissi, & Menkiti, 2021).

The April 2014 seizure of 276 school girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State, emerged as an international symbol of this assault on learning. Later large-scale abductions—including those at Dapchi (2018), Kankara (2020), Jangebe (2021), Kuriga (2024), and several episodes in 2025 within Kebbi and Niger States—demonstrate the continued utility of the method.

Monitoring organisations such as Amnesty International have catalogued at least 15 mass school kidnappings since the Chibok incident, resulting in the prolonged closure of tens of thousands of schools in affected states and exposing an entire generation of northern Nigerian children to the prospect of permanent educational exclusion (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2025).

Armed bandit formations active mainly in the north-west and north-central zones have employed comparable tactics, although their motives are predominantly economic rather than strictly ideological. Schools present soft targets: concentrated groups of children whose relatives or communities can be coerced into paying ransoms. Research records hundreds of school assaults and thousands of abductions of students and teachers between 2012 and the mid-2020s, with Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, and Sokoto among the most severely affected states (Sola, Chen, & Subrahmanian, 2025).

Nigeria already contains one of the largest cohorts of out-of-school children globally. Insecurity has markedly intensified this predicament. Attacks generate direct fatalities and injuries, psychological harm, large-scale displacement of both teachers and learners, extended school shutdowns, and parental decisions to withdraw children—particularly girls—from formal education. Anxiety over abduction has even prompted early marriage for some girls as a supposed protective measure. The cumulative outcome is the emergence of a “lost generation” in conflict zones, carrying long-term consequences for human capital formation, social cohesion, and national security. Resisting eduphobia is the active cognitive, emotional, and behavioural efforts to counteract, reduce, or overcome eduphobic responses in oneself or others. It is a volitional or adaptive process of engagement with education despite aversive reactions, involving reappraisal, exposure, and skill-building. (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2025).

Government responses have encompassed endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration (2015), initiation of the Safe Schools Initiative following the Chibok abduction, subsequent multi-year financing frameworks (including a N144.8 billion programme), creation of coordination centres, and formulation of Minimum Standards for Safe Schools. Execution has remained uneven, with limited application of vulnerability assessments, perimeter fencing, early-warning mechanisms, and trained security personnel, especially in rural and high-risk localities. Parallel to external armed assaults, an internal culture of violence operates inside numerous Nigerian schools through the broad acceptance of corporal punishment and peer bullying. Physical measures such as caning, flogging, and enforced kneeling continue despite the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 (VAPPA) and relevant provisions of the Child Rights Act. Empirical studies consistently reveal high prevalence—frequently between 70 and 85 percent depending on region—with northern states recording particularly elevated figures. Teachers and parents commonly defend these practices as essential for preserving order, instilling respect, and conveying cultural or religious norms of obedience. UNICEF-supported research conducted in northern Nigeria found that approximately 58

percent of adolescents aged 13 - 18 had encountered some form of violence, physical violence being the most frequent (Fakunmoju, 2020).

Young people who had suffered violence proved more inclined to regard physical, domestic, or gender-based aggression as normal, to display weaker academic performance, and to leave school prematurely. Qualitative evidence connects school-based violence to wider societal patterns: aggression experienced at home and in the community is replicated and reinforced within classrooms. Bullying, gang-related clashes among students, and occasional student assaults on teachers further illustrate the normalisation of hostility. High-profile cases of severe peer violence have exposed institutional silence, fear of reprisals, fragile reporting systems, and the influence of seniority hierarchies in boarding institutions (Chinwuba, 2024).

Consequently, behaviour once considered unthinkable has gradually receded into the backdrop of everyday existence: recurrent attacks on students are now regarded as expected. Public reaction no longer consists solely of pure astonishment when reports of school violence surface. Instead, a sombre anticipation has taken root in collective awareness: an expectation that schools can and may be targeted. Repeated exposure has blunted the sense of horror until such events register more as grim confirmation than as exceptional aberrations. This process of normalisation exacts a substantial toll. For parents, the routine act of sending a child to school is now accompanied by anxiety. Drop-off becomes an occasion for quiet risk calculation rather than simple habit; every delayed message or unusual alert produces a surge of dread. For learners, the classroom itself begins to feel provisional—a space in which academic work competes with the recognition that safety can no longer be taken for granted. For teachers, the professional calling of education is overshadowed by an unspoken secondary obligation: constant vigilance (Oyekola & Ichukwu, 2026).

The emotional and cognitive demands of teaching expand to encompass continuous low-level threat monitoring, thereby diminishing the concentration and energy necessary for effective instruction. Should this pattern persist without intervention, the harm will not remain limited to heightened apprehension surrounding schooling. Normalisation reduces the psychological threshold for extreme action (Fakunmoju, 2020). Normalising violence is refer to the socio-cognitive and cultural process (or resulting state) by which acts, threats, or structures of violence come to be perceived, narrated, or treated as ordinary, expected, justifiable, or unremarkable rather than exceptional or morally unacceptable. It operates through beliefs, narratives, discourses, and practices that minimize harm, shift responsibility, or embed violence in identity, culture, or “the way things are”.

Once school attacks become part of the anticipated landscape rather than rare extremes, the mental barrier that formerly restrained drastic responses weakens. Individuals already harbouring private grievances—whether minor or serious—may begin to view the school as a convenient stage on which to express them. Conduct that once demanded extraordinary rage or ideological commitment

could, over time, be triggered by more ordinary frustrations, perceived insults, or personal crises. The school, previously a protected civic space, risks becoming merely another available venue for the settlement of scores (Chinwuba, 2024).

In essence, the progressive acceptance of these attacks does more than alarm parents, students, and teachers. It rewrites the social compact surrounding education itself, transforming a site of formation into a site of latent danger and opening the hazardous possibility that grievance, no longer shocked by the notion of school violence, may eventually select that path for reasons that once would have been dismissed as far too trivial (Oyekola & Ichukwu, 2026).

2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria continues to confront eduphobia—ideological antagonism toward formal or Western-style education—alongside the profound cultural normalisation of violence against schoolchildren and teachers. This violence manifests through insurgent attacks and abductions, routine corporal punishment, bullying, and increasing assaults, all of which compromise school safety, educational access, and the intrinsic value of learning. Contributing factors include eduphobia among extremist organisations and the financial attractiveness of kidnapping for bandit groups; weak state presence in rural zones; inadequate intelligence and rapid-response capacity; insufficiently protected school infrastructure; and inconsistent enforcement of protective legislation. Traditional and religious doctrines that sanction physical correction, together with hierarchical authority structures that discourage challenges to teachers or elders, further sustain the problem. Consequently, deliberate efforts are required to address emerging resistance to education and the cultural acceptance of violence directed at learners and educators in Nigeria.

3. Research Questions

- 1) In what ways does resistance to eduphobia shape the normalisation of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria?
- 2) What approaches can effectively curb both eduphobia and the cultural acceptance of violence directed at schoolchildren and teachers in Nigeria?

4. Literature Review

Nigeria's educational environment confronts interlocking crises of eduphobia—ideological hostility or aversion to formal (especially Western-oriented) schooling—and the extensive normalisation of violence targeting learners and teachers. Eduphobia appears most starkly in the ideology of organisations such as Boko Haram (whose name approximately translates as “Western education is forbidden”), while the culture of violence encompasses both external assaults by insurgents and bandits and internal practices including corporal punishment, bullying, and attacks inside schools (Oladosu, Abiodun, & Tunde-Ayinmode, 2021).

Boko Haram's explicit repudiation of Western education constitutes a central

driver of violence against educational institutions. [Human Rights Watch \(2016\)](#) recorded systematic targeting of teachers, students, and infrastructure in north-eastern Nigeria from 2009 onward, noting that the group deliberately killed at least 611 teachers and forced approximately 19,000 to flee by early 2016. Between 2009 and 2015 more than 910 schools were destroyed and at least 1500 closed, displacing nearly one million school-age children. The 2014 abduction of 276 girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok became a worldwide emblem of this campaign, framed by the organisation as retribution for participation in Western education ([Isah, Sabo, & Hamma, 2024](#)).

[Bertoni et al. \(2019\)](#), employing panel data, demonstrated that proximity to Boko Haram conflict intensity markedly reduced school enrolment and years of education completed in the North-East. [Østby et al. \(2026\)](#) similarly observed that attacks on education depress primary enrolment and overall attainment, with stronger effects for boys, children from less-educated households, and northern regions. Analyses by [Ofoha \(2019\)](#) emphasise that repeated kidnappings and infrastructure destruction deepen educational inequality, erode teacher morale, and enlarge Nigeria's out-of-school population. Banditry in the North-West has extended these patterns, with schools selected for ransom and as soft targets ([UNICEF, 2023](#)).

However, such attacks embody eduphobia by treating formal schooling itself as illegitimate or corrupting. The resulting atmosphere of fear prompts parents to withdraw children (especially girls), generates teacher shortages, and normalises school closures as a security response, thereby further entrenching educational exclusion ([Oladosu, Abiodun, & Tunde-Ayinmode, 2021](#)). Running parallel to external threats is the cultural endorsement of violence within schools. Corporal punishment remains widespread and is commonly regarded as legitimate discipline rather than abuse. UNICEF studies and related analyses report that physical violence constitutes “a normal part of life” for many children in northern Nigeria, primarily through corporal punishment at school and home ([UNICEF, 2023](#)). Prevalence estimates reach 85 percent in northern regions and approximately 70 percent in the South for violent discipline among children aged 1 - 14 ([Bejide, 2025](#)).

Scholarly evaluations underscore the gap between legal provisions and actual practice. Bejide's legal and criminological review notes that although international and national instruments protect children's dignity, Nigerian schools continue to normalise caning, flogging, and other physical measures. Cultural and religious doctrines emphasising obedience, combined with weak enforcement of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 (VAPPA) and incomplete adoption of the Child Rights Act, perpetuate the practice. Teachers frequently justify it as necessary for order; parents often endorse it. Consequences encompass psychological trauma, heightened aggression, impaired academic performance, and intergenerational transmission of violence ([Ighaede-Edwards et al., 2023](#)).

Bullying and violence perpetrated by students or parents against teachers fur-

ther illustrate normalisation. [UNESCO \(2023\)](#) data cited in Nigerian media indicate that nearly one-third of adolescents experience bullying. Recent reports document rising physical assaults on teachers by students or parents arising from disciplinary incidents, reflecting diminished authority and reciprocal aggression ([Oladosu, Abiodun, & Tunde-Ayinmode, 2021](#)). Bullying is conventionally defined as repeated exposure to intentionally negative actions by one or more individuals where a power imbalance exists ([Olweus, 2023](#)). These actions may take the form of verbal abuse, physical abuse (or attempted physical abuse), or indirect abuse through gestures, facial expressions, or systematic exclusion ([Olweus, 2023](#)). Research focused on individual characteristics concludes that victims of bullying tend to be physically smaller, more sensitive, quieter, and more withdrawn than their peers.

Gender-based school violence, including sexual harassment and assault, disproportionately affects girls and remains underreported. Social learning and social disorganisation perspectives account for these patterns: children exposed to domestic and community violence reproduce aggression in school settings. Corruption and weak institutional accountability also contribute by modelling unethical power relations that students may internalise as justifying aggression ([Osiesi et al., 2026](#)).

School contexts in which bullying and aggression occur can be understood through sociological approaches to culture. [Swidler \(2020\)](#) contends that culture influences action by furnishing a “tool kit” of habits, skills, and styles from which individuals construct “strategies of action” or “cultured capacities”. [Calarco \(2024\)](#) has extended Swidler’s tool-kit framework to demonstrate the role of “interpretive moments” in activating tool-kit resources. In these interpretive moments, inconsistent teacher expectations prompt conscious interpretations by students, suggesting that activation of these resources can be both interpretive and situational.

School violence has penetrated deeply into the education system, particularly the secondary-education sub-sector. According to [McMahon et al. \(2024\)](#), secondary school constitutes the educational level situated between primary and higher education. It encompasses middle and high schools and functions as a transitional space for students entering the workforce or pursuing further studies. This stage marks a critical phase in national manpower development, necessitating that the school environment preparing that manpower remain as orderly as possible, with minimal incidence of violence.

The combined repercussions of eduphobia-driven attacks and normalised internal violence are profound. Teachers confront death, abduction, displacement, stress, and attrition. Students experience trauma, interrupted learning, elevated dropout rates (especially among girls), early marriage, and reduced educational attainment. School closures and the climate of fear expand the out-of-school population and undermine national human-capital objectives. Violence operates simultaneously as a cause and a consequence of broader societal insecurity, generating cycles that prove difficult to interrupt ([UNICEF, 2023](#)).

Strategy as an organisation's long-term objectives together with its approach to realising them. In other words, it delineates the pathway for achieving a stated goal. [Joyce and Weil \(2019\)](#) employ the term "strategies" to denote plans or approaches designed to attain a specific goal or objective. Management of school violence refers to the strategies, policies, and practices implemented to prevent, reduce, and respond to violent behaviour in schools ([Osher et al., 2020](#)). In the present study, management of school violence denotes the strategies adopted by educators to prevent, reduce, and respond to student violent behaviour, encompassing disciplinary practices and school connectedness.

Disciplinary practices comprise the methods and strategies employed by educators to prevent and address student misbehaviour in order to establish a safe, supportive, and productive learning environment ([Bear, 2023](#)). [Emmer and Stough \(2001\)](#) define disciplinary practices as the actions teachers and other school staff undertake to control student behaviour, enforce rules, and maintain order in the classroom and school. [Osher et al. \(2020\)](#) characterise disciplinary practices as the variety of proactive and reactive approaches that schools utilise to manage student behaviour. Disciplinary actions are taken by teachers or school organisations against students who violate school rules. Some scholars equate discipline with punishment, while others emphasise its function in establishing boundaries and preventing unacceptable behaviours. Discipline supplies direction and support that enable children to uphold human values and adhere to school policies ([Lumadi, 2020](#)).

School connectedness denotes the degree to which children feel that their classmates respect, value, and accept them as individuals and encourage them within the school social setting. Scholars regard school connectedness, also termed school belonging, as a multifaceted construct that encompasses a person's sense of participation in learning, belonging, and connection to peers and adults, even though the terms are frequently used interchangeably. A common definition of school connectedness is the belief held by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as persons—the feeling of belonging, support, and care fostered by a caring and supportive educational environment ([Moliki-Salman & Kopczak-Wirga, 2023](#)).

The principal national response to edophobia-driven attacks has been the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI), launched in 2014 after the Chibok abduction. The SSI concentrates on relocating vulnerable learners to safer sites, reinforcing physical security (perimeter fencing, access control), improving intelligence and rapid response, and delivering psychosocial support ([Bejide, 2025](#)). A core strategy against the normalisation of internal violence is the transition from corporal punishment to positive, non-violent discipline. Cultural acceptance of physical correction remains high, yet evidence links it to trauma, aggression, and poorer educational outcomes. The NPSSVFS and the Federal Ministry of Education/UNICEF Managing Violence in Schools handbook (2025) supply practical strategies for preventing and responding to bullying as well as physical, emotional, and sexual vio-

lence. Key elements include the establishment of clear anti-bullying and anti-violence policies; empowerment of bystanders; teacher training on identification, non-violent classroom management, and reporting; creation of safe reporting pathways; and cultivation of inclusive, respectful school climates. Whole-school approaches that engage students, staff, parents, and communities in shifting social and gender norms are emphasised in global frameworks adapted to local contexts (Ofoha, 2019).

Strengthening legal frameworks and accountability is repeatedly recommended. This encompasses fuller domestication and enforcement of the Child Rights Act (which prohibits corporal punishment in certain interpretations), the VAPP Act, and alignment with the Safe Schools Declaration. Institutional measures involve establishing dedicated Safe Schools departments or coordination centres, capacity building for education and security personnel, and transparent monitoring and evaluation systems (Dimmock, Tan, Nguyen, Tran & Dinh, 2021). Multi-sectoral collaboration linking education, security agencies, justice, social welfare, traditional and religious leaders, and civil society is regarded as essential for both external protection against eduphobia-driven attacks and internal norm change. Psychosocial support for survivors of attacks and chronic school violence, temporary learning centres, and community sensitisation campaigns constitute additional complementary approaches. Certain evaluations of SSI components report positive behavioural and academic effects among affected students.

5. Materials and Methods

The research methodology employed a survey design with multiple instruments to examine the relationship between resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence and approaches to curb eduphobia. The population for this study comprised 1000 teachers and 9000 students in public secondary schools in Nigeria. A purposive sampling procedure was used to draw a sample of 500 participants (300 SS1-SS3 students and 200 teachers) from ten (10) states namely Delta, Edo, Anambra, Ondo, Kaduna, Bornu, Zamfara, Rivers, Ekiti and Kogi. Data were collected using three self-developed questionnaire Resisting Eduphobia Questionnaire, Normalizing the Culture of Violence Questionnaire and Approaches to Curb Eduphobia Questionnaire and a Rotated Component Matrix using 4 component label. Questionnaires were administered and retrieved, with ethical protocols for consent and debriefing observed. Letters of introduction and permission obtained from the school principals and the distribution of information sheets and consent forms. The study received institutional ethics approval before it began. Participants completed questionnaires that measured variables such as age, education, ethnicity and state. Data collection utilized online platforms such as Google Forms and Microsoft Forms. Responses were anonymous (emphasised in the consent questions and information materials). Online administration with no direct interpersonal contact further supported anonymity, reduced social pres-

sure, and made withdrawal easy without consequences. Descriptive statistics and stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to analyzed data.

6. Results

Table 1 shows the age of students from 15 - 30 years.

Table 2 shows the age of teachers from 20 - 51 and above years.

Table 3 shows State of residence of respondents.

Table 4 shows the ethnicity of respondents.

Table 5 shows the rotated component matrix of resisting eduphobia. A principal

Table 1. Age of respondents (students).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15 - 20	120	40
21 - 25	110	36.7
26 - 30	70	23.3
Total	300	100

Table 2. Age of respondents (teachers).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20 - 30	11	5.5
31 - 40	45	22.5
41 - 50	80	40
51 and above	64	32
Total	200	100

Table 3. State of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bornu	64	12.8
Delta	45	9
Edo	60	12
Ekiti	53	10.6
Kaduna	71	14.2
Kwara	42	8.4
Lagos	10	2
Niger	68	13.6
Osun	51	10.2
Rivers	36	7.2
Total	500	100

Table 4. Ethnicity of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bini	37	7.4
Delta Igbo	10	2
Esan	15	3
Funlani	95	19
Hausa	116	23.2
Idoma	89	17.8
Ijaws	11	2.2
Itsekeri	9	1.8
Urhobo	27	5.4
Yoruba	91	18.2
Total	500	100

Table 5. Rotated component matrix of resisting eduphobia.

Item	1	2	3	4
Violence against school children is a common occurrence in many Nigerian schools.	.785			
Physical punishment of students is widely accepted as a normal part of discipline in Nigerian schools			.882	
Teachers in Nigeria frequently experience verbal or physical aggression		.680		
School authorities often fail to take firm action against students who assault or threaten teachers or vis-a-vis	.864			
Resistance to formal education (eduphobia) is prevalent among some communities in Nigeria		.890		
Fear or negative attitudes toward schooling contribute to high rates of student absenteeism and dropout in Nigeria	.914			
Some parents actively discourage their children from attending school due to fear of abduction			.659	
Cultural or traditional beliefs that undervalue Western-style education are still strong in parts of Nigeria				.790
Normalizing violence in schools makes it harder to effectively combat resistance to education	.930			
Students and teachers who witness or experience violence at school are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward learning		.785		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method.

component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted to explore the underlying factor the prevalence of resisting eduphobia, normalizing the culture of violence against teachers and students. The analysis aimed to identify latent components that explain the relationships among 10 survey items. The suitability of the data for PCA was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) with >0.8 measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity, indicating the data were appropriate for factor analysis. Reliability was established using Cronbach's

alpha, resulting in a coefficient (α) of 0.89.

The varimax rotation produced a clear factor structure. Component 1, labeled; Violence against school children is a common occurrence in many Nigerian schools, .785. School authorities often fail to take firm action against students who assault or threaten teachers or vis-à-vis, .864. Fear or negative attitudes toward schooling contribute to high rates of student absenteeism and dropout in Nigeria, .914. Normalizing violence in schools makes it harder to effectively combat resistance to education, .930. Component 2, labeled; Teachers in Nigeria frequently experience verbal or physical aggression, .680. Resistance to formal education (eduphobia) is prevalent among some communities in Nigeria, .890. Students and teachers who witness or experience violence at school are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward learning, .785. Component 3, labeled; Physical punishment of students is widely accepted as a normal part of discipline in Nigerian schools, .882. Some parents actively discourage their children from attending school due to fear of abduction, .659. Component 4, labeled; Cultural or traditional beliefs that undervalue Western-style education are still strong in parts of Nigeria, .790.

Table 6 shows the rotated component matrix of approaches, the analysis aimed

Table 6. Rotated component matrix of approaches.

Item	1	2	3	4
Strict enforcement of anti-corporal punishment policies in schools can significantly reduce violence against children		.850		
Regular training of teachers on non-violent classroom management techniques is an effective way to curb the culture of violence	.872			
Involving parents and community leaders in school discipline policies can reduce the normalization of violence			.880	
Establishing functional guidance and counselling units in schools can help address both student aggression and resistance to education				.780
Public awareness campaigns against school violence can change societal attitudes that currently tolerate it.		.892		
Providing adequate security personnel in schools will reduce physical attacks on teachers and students.	.680			
Introducing peace education and conflict-resolution programmes into the school curriculum can curb violent behaviour.			.859	
Community dialogues that promote the value of formal education can help reduce resistance to schooling				.790
Engaging traditional and religious leaders to publicly support education can weaken cultural barriers to schooling		.988		
Scholarships and incentive schemes for children from communities with high resistance to education can increase school enrolment and retention.	.778			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method.

to identify latent components that explain the relationships among 10 survey items. Component 1, labeled; Regular training of teachers on non-violent classroom management techniques is an effective way to curb the culture of violence, .872. Providing adequate security personnel in schools will reduce physical attacks on teachers and students, .680. Scholarships and incentive schemes for children from communities with high resistance to education can increase school enrolment and retention, .778. Component 2, labeled; Strict enforcement of anti-corporal punishment policies in schools can significantly reduce violence against children, .850. Public awareness campaigns against school violence can change societal attitudes that currently tolerate it, .892. Engaging traditional and religious leaders to publicly support education can weaken cultural barriers to schooling, .988. Component 3, labeled; Involving parents and community leaders in school discipline policies can reduce the normalization of violence, .880. Introducing peace education and conflict-resolution programmes into the school curriculum can curb violent behaviour, .859. Component 4, labeled; Establishing functional guidance and counselling units in schools can help address both student aggression and resistance to education, .780. Community dialogues that promote the value of formal education can help reduce resistance to schooling, .790.

Table 7. Regression Analysis on resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
4	.783 ^d	.711	.710	.11012

The regression model in **Table 7** shows a high level of predictive accuracy for resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria with an (R^2) value of .711, indicating that approximately 85.7% of the variance explained by the predictors included in this model. This strong model fit suggests that prevalence of resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria is high.

Table 8. Coefficients of resisting eduphobia.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	Beta	Sig.
Violence against students	1.102	.000
Violence against teachers	2.112	.000
Fear of formal education	1.103	.000

Table 8 shows a multiple stepwise regression was run to examine resisting eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and

teachers in Nigeria. The model included 3 variables: Violence against students, Violence against teachers and Fear of formal education.

Table 9. Regression analysis on approaches to curb eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
4	.881 ^d	.813	.812	.11013

The regression model in **Table 9** shows a high level of approaches to curb eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria with an (R^2) value of 0.813, indicating that approximately 88.3% of the variance explained by the approaches included in this model. This strong model fit suggests that the approaches if well implemented will ensure students and teachers safety and better school environment in Nigeria.

Table 10. Coefficients of approaches.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	Beta	Sig.
Anti-corporal punishment policies	.101	.000
Public awareness campaigns against school violence	1.211	.000
Providing adequate security personnel in schools	2.113	.000

In **Table 10**, a multiple stepwise regression was run to examine approaches to curb eduphobia and normalizing the culture of violence against school children and teachers in Nigeria. The model included 3 variables: Anti-corporal punishment policies, Public awareness campaigns against school violence and Providing adequate security personnel in schools.

7. Discussion of Findings

Survey findings illuminate the intertwined challenges of resisting eduphobia and confronting the normalisation of violence against schoolchildren and teachers in Nigeria. Results indicate a high perceived prevalence of both the cultural acceptance of violence and resistance to formal education within Nigerian schools. 78% of participants selected agree and strongly agree that physical punishment of students is widely regarded as normal discipline, that violence against schoolchildren remains common, and that teachers frequently encounter verbal or physical aggression from students or parents. 82% of participants selected agree and strongly agree that cultural and parental attitudes undervaluing formal schooling persist in many communities, contributing to absenteeism and dropout, and that the culture of school violence itself reinforces negative attitudes toward learning and discourages entry into the teaching profession. Collectively, these results sug-

gest that acceptance of aggressive disciplinary practices and residual eduphobia continue to undermine safe and effective education in Nigeria.

Findings concerning approaches to curb eduphobia and the normalisation of violence reveal strong support among respondents for multi-faceted interventions. 85% of participants selected agree and strongly agree that strict enforcement of anti-corporal-punishment policies, regular teacher training in non-violent classroom management, stronger legal sanctions against assaults on teachers, and functional guidance and counselling units constitute effective strategies. 80% of participants selected agree and strongly agree on community engagement, public awareness campaigns, involvement of traditional and religious leaders, and the integration of peace education and life-skills training into the curriculum as important measures for reducing eduphobia and fostering safer school environments. Overall, the results indicate broad consensus that a combination of policy enforcement, capacity building, community participation, and curriculum reform is required to address these challenges effectively.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, resisting eduphobia and terminating the normalisation of violence against schoolchildren and teachers is indispensable for Nigeria's survival and progress. Schools must cease functioning as sites of fear—whether arising from external attacks by insurgents and bandits or from internal practices such as corporal punishment, bullying, and abuse that society has long accepted as discipline. When violence is treated as routine, it destroys learning, drives children out of school, traumatises teachers, and perpetuates cycles of aggression across generations. Protecting education requires coordinated action: effective security for schools, strict enforcement of existing laws against violence, a decisive shift away from physical punishment toward positive discipline, and a collective rejection of any ideology that brands education as a threat. Only by rendering schools truly safe and valued can Nigeria equip its children to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and informed nation.

9. Recommendations

The study recommends that educational stakeholders should:

- 1) Fully implement and adequately fund the Safe Schools Initiative nationwide, prioritising security infrastructure (fencing, surveillance, rapid-response units) in high-risk areas, and hold governments accountable for protecting schools as soft targets.
- 2) Enforce a complete ban on corporal punishment in all schools, replacing it with evidence-based positive discipline approaches through mandatory teacher retraining and rigorous monitoring of compliance.
- 3) Strengthen community and parental engagement by launching sustained public campaigns that challenge cultural acceptance of violence as “discipline” and promote education as a collective national value rather than a threat.

4) Improve reporting, investigation, and accountability mechanisms for all forms of school-based violence (physical, sexual, emotional, and bullying), ensuring swift justice for perpetrators—whether teachers, students, or external attackers—and protection for victims and whistleblowers.

5) Expand psychosocial support services in schools, including trained counselors, trauma-informed care for students and teachers affected by attacks or chronic violence, and early intervention programmes to interrupt cycles of aggression.

6) Integrate peace education, conflict resolution, and digital literacy into the national curriculum to equip children with non-violent skills, critical thinking, and resilience against extremist ideologies that promote eduphobia.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Bear, G. G. (2023). *School Discipline and Self-Discipline: A Practical Guide to Promoting Prosocial Student Behavior*. Guilford Press.
- Bejide, F. (2025). Tjelesno kažnjavanje i fizičko nasilje: Pravna i kriminološka procjena disciplinskih praksi u nigerijskim školama. *Dijete i obitelj u suvremenom društvu*, 2, 57-82. <https://doi.org/10.25234/dosd/37518>
- Bertoni, E., Di Maio, M., Molini, V., & Nisticò, R. (2019). Education Is Forbidden: The Effect of the Boko Haram Conflict on Education in North-East Nigeria. *Journal of Development Economics*, 141, Article ID: 102249.
- Calarco, J. M. (2024). The Inconsistent Curriculum: Cultural Tool Kits and Student Interpretations of Ambiguous Expectations. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 77, 185-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272514521438>
- Chinwuba, M. A. (2024). Impact of Safe School Initiative Programme on Behaviour of Victims of Insurgency in Secondary Schools in North-East Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Educational Research*, 2, 233-244.
- Dimmock, C., Tan, C. Y., Nguyen, D., Tran, T. A., & Dinh, T. T. (2021). Implementing Education System Reform: Local Adaptation in School Reform of Teaching and Learning. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 80, Article ID: 102302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102302>
- Emmer, E. T., & Stough, L. M. (2001). Classroom Management: A Critical Part of Educational Psychology, with Implications for Teacher Education. *Educational Psychologist*, 36, 103-112. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3602_5
- Fakunmoju, S. B. (2020). Perception, Use and Abolition of Corporal Punishment among High School Teachers in a District in Southwestern Nigeria. *International Journal of Psychology*, 55, 106-114. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12542>
- Human Rights Watch (2016). *"They Set the Classrooms on Fire": Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/they-set-classrooms-fire-attacks-education-north-east-nigeria>
- Ibrahim, A. L., & Ibrahim, M. S. (2025). An Appraisal of the Safe Schools Initiative and Its Impact on Girl-Child Education and National Development. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences*, 17, 62-74. <https://doi.org/10.20473/ijss.v17i1.55224>

- Ighaede-Edwards, I. G., Liu, X., Olawade, D. B., Ling, J., Odetayo, A., & David-Olawade, A. C. (2023). Prevalence and Predictors of Bullying among In-School Adolescents in Nigeria. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 18, 1329-1341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtumed.2023.05.009>
- Isah, H., Sabo, Y. G., & Hamma, A. M. (2024). Positive Discipline as an Alternative to Corporal Punishment in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe State: Implications for Value Reorientation. *Journal of Professional Counselling*, 7, 43-52.
- Joyce, B., & Weil, M. (2019). *Models of Teaching* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Lumadi, M. W. (2020). School Finance Reform for Curriculum Innovation: An Equity Prospect. *South African Journal of Education*, 40, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n4a2027>
- McMahon, S. D., Worrell, F. C., Reddy, L. A., Martinez, A., Espelage, D. L., Astor, R. A. et al. (2024). Violence and Aggression against Educators and School Personnel, Retention, Stress, and Training Needs: National Survey Results. *American Psychologist*, 79, 903-919. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001348>
- Moliki-Salman, D. A., & Kopczak-Wirga, A. (2023). Gender-Based Violence and Educational Development of Children in Northern Nigeria. *RAIS Journal for Social Sciences*, 7, 67-78. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10161429>
- Ofoha, D., Ogidan, R., & Saidu, R. (2019). Child Discipline and Violence in Nigeria: A Community-Based Intervention Programme to Reduce Violent Discipline and Other Forms of Negative Parenting Practices. *Review of Education*, 7, 455-492. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3128>
- Oladosu, A., Abiodun, O., & Tunde-Ayinmode, M. (2021). Self Reported Experience of Physical Abuse in Schools in Nigeria. *European Psychiatry*, 64, S713. <https://doi.org/10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.1888>
- Olweus, D. (2023). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Blackwell.
- Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L., & Rose, T. (2020). Drivers of Human Development: How Relationships and Context Shape Learning and Development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24, 6-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650>
- Osiesi, M. P., Oriola, B., Awosusi, O. O., Fatai, A. A., Odinko, M. N., Adeoye, B. D. et al. (2026). Impact of Violent Discipline and Parenting Styles on Primary School Learners' Aggressive Behaviour in Southwest, Nigeria. *SN Social Sciences*, 6, Article No. 70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-026-01356-1>
- Østby, G., Haer, R., & Helskog, K. (2026). Children's Schooling in the Context of Attacks on Education: Evidence from Nigeria. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942261444751>
- Oyekola, A. O., & Ichukwu, J. E. (2026). Teacher-Perpetrated Violence, Behavioural Problems, and Prosocial Functioning among In-School Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 10, 1657-1670. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2026.100600124>
- Smiley, A., Moussa, W., Ndamobissi, R., & Menkiti, A. (2021). The Negative Impact of Violence on Children's Education and Well-Being: Evidence from Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 81, Article ID: 102327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102327>
- Sola, L., Chen, Y., & Subrahmanian, V. S. (2025). A Quantitative Geospatial Analysis of the Risk That Boko Haram Will Target a School. *PLOS ONE*, 20, e0320939. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0320939>
- Swidler, A. (2020). *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. University of Chicago Press.

UNESCO (2023). *Violence in and around Schools: Global Status Report*.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375706>

UNICEF (2023). *The Right to Education without Fear: Safe Schools for All Children*.

United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org>