

Emotional/Psychological Abuse and Social Behavior among Secondary School Students in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda

Jean de Dieu Nshimiyimana¹, Dr Mary Kanja¹, Dr Rahab Karanja²

¹Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

²Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100701191>

Received: 26 July 2026; Accepted: 31 July 2026; Published: 24 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Domestic violence remains a significant public health and human rights concern, with emotional and psychological abuse recognized as one of its most pervasive yet under-addressed forms, particularly among adolescents. This study investigated the impact of emotional/psychological abuse exposure on the social behavior of students in two selected secondary schools in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda. Anchored on Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design. A sample of 273 students was drawn from a target population of 853 using stratified random sampling and Yamane's (1967) formula, while 27 students and key informants were purposively selected for qualitative interviews. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and ordinal logistic regression in SPSS version 23, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that 35.8% of respondents were exposed to verbal hostility between family members, 28.3% experienced fear during household conflicts, and 18.9% reported emotional neglect. Regression results showed that emotional neglect was the strongest and most consistent predictor of negative social behavior, significantly increasing the odds of aggression ($OR = 1.51, p = .001$), anger-control difficulties ($OR = 1.46, p < .001$), and school rule-breaking ($OR = 1.50, p < .001$), while sadness and anxiety also significantly predicted these outcomes. Qualitative narratives confirmed that emotionally abused students experienced withdrawal, low self-esteem, poor concentration, and reluctance to engage socially. The null hypothesis that emotional/psychological abuse exposure has no significant effect on social behavior was therefore partially rejected. The study concludes that emotional abuse, especially neglect, substantially undermines adolescents' psychosocial adjustment and recommends strengthened school-based counseling, parental sensitization, and family-centered interventions to mitigate its effects.

Keywords: Emotional abuse; Psychological abuse; Social behavior; Adolescents; Secondary school students; Rwanda

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) is a major global public health and human rights concern that affects individuals across all social, economic, and cultural contexts (Nkadimeng et al., 2025). It is a pattern of behavior used to gain power and control over another person through physical, emotional, sexual, economic, or psychological means, occurring across marital, cohabiting, and family contexts regardless of demographic background (Huecker et al., 2023). Domestic violence affects not only direct victims but also witnesses, particularly children and adolescents who experience indirect exposure through observing parental conflict, and estimates suggest that up to 80% of children witness domestic violence within their households at some point (Nkadimeng et al., 2025). Beyond direct victimization, such repeated exposure to conflict, hostility, and emotional volatility within the home shapes how children come to understand relationships, communication, and conflict resolution more broadly, with effects that often persist well beyond childhood into adolescence and adulthood.

Among the various forms of domestic violence, emotional or psychological abuse is considered one of the most harmful, yet least visible, forms of maltreatment (Mathews & Dube, 2024). Emotional/psychological abuse refers to behaviors that harm a person's self-esteem or emotional well-being, including insults, humiliation, threats, rejection, and neglect. Unlike physical abuse, its wounds leave no visible marks, which often allows it to persist undetected while inflicting deep and lasting psychological harm (Pietrangelo, 2019). Emotional abuse has been consistently associated with aggression, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, social isolation, social anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder among children and adolescents (Chen et al., 2022; Ciren & Ong, 2026). Because it is embedded within ordinary, everyday family communication rather than confined to isolated incidents, emotional abuse can be particularly difficult for outside observers, including teachers and school counselors, to detect, even as it accumulates over time into significant psychological harm.

Adolescence is a critical developmental period during which individuals build their identity, emotional regulation, and social relationships (Mathews & Dube, 2024). Exposure to emotional abuse during this stage can disrupt these developmental processes, producing behavioral problems that manifest as withdrawal, poor peer relationships, aggression, and reduced participation in academic and social life. Despite the global evidence linking emotional abuse to maladaptive social behavior, limited empirical research has examined this relationship among secondary school students in the Rwandan context, and specifically within Rutongo Parish, where socio-economic pressures and family instability are common.

In Rwanda, domestic violence among adolescents under 18 remains a major concern. The 2015–2016 National Survey on Violence found that a majority of adolescents aged 13–17 had experienced physical violence, often alongside emotional abuse such as humiliation and threats, with parents frequently identified as the primary perpetrators (Nyandwi et al., 2022). These experiences significantly affect emotional stability, social behavior, peer relationships, and emotion regulation during secondary school. Despite Rwanda's strong legal and policy frameworks protecting children, there remains limited localized research on how emotional/psychological abuse specifically shapes the social behavior of secondary school students in Rutongo Parish. This gap restricts the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions for schools, families, and policymakers.

Understanding the specific pathways through which emotional/psychological abuse shapes social behavior is of practical significance to multiple stakeholders. For the Ministry of Education, the findings can inform the strengthening of school-based psychosocial support systems. For school administrations, teachers, and counselors, the findings can guide early identification of emotionally abused students and appropriate intervention. For parents, guardians, and religious leaders, the study underscores the importance of emotionally supportive home environments in shaping adolescents' social adjustment. It is against this background that the present study sought to investigate the impact of emotional/psychological abuse exposure on social behavior among students in selected secondary schools in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda. Specifically, the study was guided by the research question: How does emotional/psychological abuse exposure influence social behavior among students in selected secondary schools in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda? The corresponding hypothesis tested was that emotional/psychological abuse exposure has no significant effect on social behavior among students in selected secondary schools in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda (H0).

This article contributes to the broader literature in two specific ways. First, by isolating emotional/psychological abuse as a distinct objective, rather than treating it as one component within a composite measure of domestic violence, it allows for a more precise understanding of how this particular form of maltreatment, as opposed to physical or sexual abuse, uniquely shapes adolescent social behavior. Second, by disaggregating the individual dimensions of emotional abuse (insults, threats, fear, and neglect) rather than treating them as a single undifferentiated construct, the study is able to identify which specific dimension carries the greatest behavioral risk, a level of specificity that is often missing from broader domestic violence research and that has direct implications for how schools and families should target their interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to emotional/psychological abuse and social behavior. It first outlines the theories that underpinned the study before reviewing empirical studies conducted globally, regionally, and locally.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the central role of observation, imitation, and modeling in shaping human behavior. According to Bandura, children acquire new behaviors by observing others and reproducing actions that are reinforced or rewarded within their environment (Sutton, 2021). Through social interaction, learners internalize behavioral patterns, making peer influence and environmental context powerful determinants of conduct. In the context of domestic violence, SLT offers a robust explanation for how children who witness or experience insults, humiliation, and hostile communication at home may internalize these patterns and later reproduce comparable behaviors, such as aggression, withdrawal, or difficulty regulating emotions, in school and social environments. A key strength of SLT is its flexibility across learning environments, since it applies equally to behaviors learned through direct experience and through observation of others, making it useful for designing interventions in both family and school settings. However, the theory has been criticized for paying limited attention to the cognitive, biological, and cultural factors that also shape behavior, and for offering less explanatory power for behaviors that emerge without an identifiable observable model. Despite these limitations, SLT was considered useful for this study because it plausibly explains how the intergenerational transmission of emotionally abusive interaction patterns shapes students' social and academic experiences.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory (EST), developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, examines how an individual's development is shaped by interacting layers of the surrounding environment, namely the microsystem (immediate settings such as home and school), mesosystem (connections between these settings), exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Guy-Evans, 2024). EST was relevant to this study because it situates emotional abuse experienced within the family (microsystem) as a factor that reverberates into the school environment (another microsystem) through the mesosystem connecting home and school, ultimately shaping the adolescent's broader social behavior and adjustment. EST's central strength lies in its holistic, ecologically valid perspective, which has been widely adopted across psychology, education, and social work to understand how interconnected environments jointly shape development. Nevertheless, the theory has been criticized for its limited empirical measurability, given the difficulty of isolating and testing the effects of specific interacting systems, and for risking an unintended assumption that children lacking strong support systems are inevitably disadvantaged, even though many such children still develop resiliently. Despite these limitations, EST remained valuable for this study in explaining how disturbances within the family, such as emotional neglect, influence children's behavior and relationships at school.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse and Social Behavior: Empirical Review

Globally, Bueso-Izquierdo et al. (2025), in a systematic review of 32 quantitative studies, found that emotional abuse leads to anxiety, depression, aggression, and social maladjustment, concluding that psychological violence disrupts emotional and social development and recommending early identification and psychological support. Castro and Valle (2025), in a quantitative study among Latino adults, anticipated that higher levels of emotional abuse would predict greater depression, anxiety, and stress, although their focus on adults left a gap regarding adolescents' social behavior specifically. Mathews and Dube (2024) similarly argued, drawing on a wide body of public health evidence, that childhood emotional abuse has historically received disproportionately little research and policy attention relative to physical and sexual abuse, despite converging evidence that its long-term consequences for mental health and social functioning are comparably severe, a paradigm shift the authors describe as overdue.

In the United States, Sianko et al. (2016), in a study of rural adolescents exposed to family violence, found that emotional violence negatively affects help-seeking behavior, trust, peer communication, and social interactions, recommending strengthened supportive school environments. In China, Chen et al. (2022),

studying adolescents, found a 25.66% prevalence of psychological abuse that reduced self-esteem and social support, with self-esteem mediating the relationship between abuse and social support; the authors recommended self-esteem enhancement interventions. These two studies, though conducted in very different cultural and economic settings, converge on a common insight: that emotional abuse damages adolescents' capacity for trust and connection with others, an effect that operates through internal psychological resources such as self-esteem, rather than only through direct behavioral imitation, suggesting that interventions targeting self-esteem and trust-building may have cross-cultural relevance.

In Europe, Ciren and Ong (2026), in the United Kingdom, examined childhood emotional abuse and adult social anxiety and found emotional abuse to be the strongest predictor of social anxiety ($\beta = .32, p < .001$), with self-compassion acting as a mediator. In Portugal, Margarida Simões et al. (2024), studying adolescents, found that witnessing emotional and physical interparental violence increased antisocial behavior and conduct problems, concluding that domestic violence raises delinquency risk and recommending prevention programs. Notably, both European studies examined emotional abuse in relation to internalizing outcomes, social anxiety and conduct problems respectively, that share conceptual overlap with the anxiety, sadness, and anger-regulation difficulties measured in the present study, lending further cross-context support to the view that emotional abuse produces a recognizable cluster of psychosocial consequences regardless of the specific measurement approach used.

In Nigeria, Daramola (2025) found a high prevalence of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse among secondary school students in Ikere-Ekiti State, revealing that domestic violence significantly reduced grades, attendance, participation, and cognitive functioning due to trauma and stress. Similarly, Williams et al. (2024), in Ogun State, reported that a large majority of students experienced domestic violence, which negatively affected academic performance, attendance, classroom participation, behavior, and discipline, with emotional abuse among the most impactful forms; the study recommended school- and community-based interventions. In South Africa, Ugwu et al. (2024) found that emotional abuse contributed to bullying, peer aggression, and antisocial behavior, recommending anti-bullying and psychosocial support programs. Notably, all three West and Southern African studies identified school discipline and peer relations, precisely the behavioral domains examined in the present study through indicators of rule-breaking, aggression, and anger control, as the outcomes most consistently affected by emotional abuse, suggesting a recurring pattern across diverse African schooling contexts in which the classroom becomes the visible site where the consequences of an otherwise hidden home-based harm surface.

Studies conducted in Kenya consistently show comparable patterns. Karanja (2019) found that a majority of students were aware of, or had experienced, domestic violence, with psychological abuse being among the most prevalent forms and significantly undermining educational outcomes; the study recommended strengthened counseling services. Nyagwencha et al. (n.d.) reported high levels of emotional abuse among adolescents in charitable institutions in Nairobi County, establishing a strong association with anxiety, while Gedi and Osman (2024) found a high prevalence of emotional and other forms of abuse among adolescents in Garissa, significantly associated with adverse childhood experiences and risky behaviors such as substance use. Taken together, these Kenyan studies suggest that the association between emotional abuse and negative psychosocial outcomes documented in higher-income countries is not an artifact of particular cultural or economic contexts, but replicates consistently across a range of East African settings that share more comparable socio-economic conditions with Rwanda than do the higher-income countries where much of the foundational literature originates, lending stronger contextual credibility to the applicability of these findings to Rutongo Parish specifically.

In Rwanda, Mukasano and Faustin (2023) found that emotional, physical, sexual, and economic abuse negatively affected children's communication, literacy, numeracy, and pro-social behavior in Gasabo District, recommending stronger collaboration between schools and families. At the national level, Nyandwi et al. (2022) reported widespread emotional violence among children, with parents identified as primary perpetrators and poor parental relationships increasing vulnerability. Similarly, Bahati et al. (2024) found that parental violence, particularly emotional abuse, was associated with mental health challenges, social difficulties, and emotional instability among children and adolescents, concluding that emotional violence

negatively affects psychosocial functioning and emphasizing the need for strengthened mental health services and family-based interventions.

Collectively, these Rwandan studies establish that emotional violence within the family is neither isolated nor rare within the national context, and that parents, rather than more distant relatives or non-family members, are consistently identified as the primary source of such abuse. This pattern reinforces the importance of family-centered interventions rather than school-based interventions alone, since the source of emotional harm typically originates outside the school's direct sphere of influence, requiring partnership between schools, families, and community or religious structures for effective mitigation.

Overall, the reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that emotional and psychological abuse significantly affects adolescents' mental health, social relationships, aggression, self-esteem, academic performance, and behavioral adjustment across diverse contexts. However, most existing studies focus on single outcomes or adult populations, leaving a gap in the specific understanding of how emotional/psychological abuse shapes the social behavior of secondary school adolescents within the Rwandan context, a gap which the present study sought to address.

A recurring theme across the reviewed literature is the mediating or moderating role of internal psychological resources, such as self-esteem and self-compassion, in the pathway between emotional abuse and negative outcomes. Chen et al. (2022) demonstrated that self-esteem mediated the relationship between psychological abuse and social support, while Ciren and Ong (2026) found that self-compassion moderated the link between childhood emotional abuse and adult social anxiety. These findings suggest that interventions strengthening students' internal psychological resources, rather than addressing family-level abuse alone, may offer a practical entry point for schools that cannot directly intervene in the home environment.

Another consistent theme is the comparatively limited attention paid to emotional neglect, as distinct from active emotional hostility, within the reviewed literature. Most studies, including those reviewed above, tend to group insults, threats, and neglect together under the broad umbrella of "emotional abuse," without disaggregating their distinct behavioral consequences. This is a notable gap, since neglect (the absence of emotional support) and hostility (its active violation) may operate through different psychological mechanisms, a distinction that the present study's disaggregated analysis sought to examine directly.

A further gap concerns the relative scarcity of mixed-methods research on this topic within the East African region specifically. While quantitative surveys such as Karanja (2019) and qualitative or descriptive studies such as Nyagwencha et al. (n.d.) have each documented the prevalence of emotional abuse among Kenyan adolescents, few studies in the region have combined statistical modeling of specific abuse dimensions with in-depth qualitative narratives capable of explaining why particular dimensions, such as neglect, might carry greater behavioral weight than others. The present study's explanatory sequential design was selected specifically to address this methodological gap within the Rwandan and broader East African literature.

Conceptual Framework

Building on this literature, the study conceptualized emotional/psychological abuse exposure, comprising insults or shouting between family members, threats or humiliation, fear during household conflict, and emotional neglect, as the independent variable, and social behavior, comprising aggression, anger regulation, rule-following, and social engagement, as the dependent variable. This relationship was conceptualized as being mediated by psychological factors such as sadness, anxiety, and low self-esteem, and shaped by the availability of supportive relationships at home and school. The framework assumed that increased exposure to emotional/psychological abuse negatively influences students' social behavior, with the specific dimension of emotional neglect expected, based on the reviewed literature, to carry particular predictive weight.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data collection to explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design allowed the integration of measurable patterns of emotional abuse exposure with rich, contextualized narratives of students' lived experiences, thereby producing findings that were both statistically grounded and contextually meaningful. The explanatory sequential design was considered particularly appropriate for this study because emotional/psychological abuse, unlike physical abuse, often produces effects that are not immediately visible or easily quantified; the qualitative phase therefore played a critical explanatory role in illuminating why certain statistical patterns, such as the strong predictive effect of emotional neglect, emerged as they did, allowing the study to move beyond simply establishing that a relationship existed toward understanding the mechanisms through which it operated.

Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Rutongo Parish, located in Rulindo District in the Northern Province of Rwanda, with a small portion extending into Gasabo District in Kigali. Two secondary schools, ES Rutongo (410 students) and G.S. Rwanyanza (443 students), were purposively selected, giving a target population of 853 students. The area's predominantly rural character, combined with socio-economic pressures linked to limited arable land, made it particularly relevant for investigating family-related challenges affecting adolescents' social behavior.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across school, educational level, and gender (Hayes, 2024; Makwana et al., 2023). Using the Yamane (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 273 students was drawn from the target population of 853 (Oluigbo et al., 2024). Within each stratum, simple random sampling was applied to select individual respondents. For the qualitative phase, a purposive sample of 27 participants, comprising students, teachers, and other key informants with direct experience or exposure to domestic violence, was selected to provide in-depth insights, bringing the overall study sample to 300 participants.

Data Collection Process

Data collection proceeded in two sequential phases consistent with the explanatory sequential design. In the first phase, research assistants administered the structured questionnaire to sampled students within school premises, following authorization from school administrations and parental or guardian consent. Questionnaires were self-administered under the supervision of the researcher to ensure clarity and confidentiality, and completed instruments were checked for completeness before respondents left the data collection venue. In the second phase, following preliminary analysis of the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected subset of students and key informants, including teachers, school staff, and parents, in private and confidential settings to encourage open disclosure. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated from Kinyarwanda into English prior to thematic analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring emotional/psychological abuse exposure and its associated social behavior indicators on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). The questionnaire drew on items adapted from the Child Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, covering exposure to insults or shouting between family members, threats or humiliation, fear during household conflict, and emotional neglect, alongside associated social-emotional indicators including sadness, anxiety, social avoidance, and concentration difficulties. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students and key informants (teachers, staff, and parents), allowing for deeper exploration of personal experiences that helped explain the statistical patterns observed in the quantitative phase. Interview questions probed how students' home experiences of

emotional treatment related to their behavior, concentration, and relationships at school, and were conducted in Kinyarwanda before being transcribed and translated into English.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, cleaned, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) summarized the prevalence of emotional abuse indicators, while ordinal logistic regression was used to examine the predictive effect of emotional abuse indicators on social behavior outcomes. Four separate regression models were estimated, one for each social behavior outcome (getting into fights, aggressive behavior, difficulty controlling anger, and breaking school rules), with the four emotional/psychological abuse indicators entered as predictors in each model. Parameter estimates (B), odds ratios (OR), standard errors, Wald statistics, and 95% confidence intervals were computed for each predictor, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis involving transcription, familiarization, and systematic coding, with the constant comparison method used to refine themes until saturation was reached (Caulfield, 2023; Saunders et al., 2018). Quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the results.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Validity was strengthened through the use of standardized instruments with previously demonstrated psychometric properties, with particular attention to face and content validity to ensure that items appropriately represented the constructs of emotional/psychological abuse and social behavior. Instruments were reviewed by experts in psychology and education, whose recommendations informed minor language simplifications without altering the meaning of individual items. Reliability was assessed through a pilot test prior to main data collection and re-examined during the main analysis; all instruments met the generally accepted threshold of a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of at least 0.70. For the qualitative strand, trustworthiness was strengthened through member checking, whereby transcribed data and emerging themes were shared with selected participants to confirm accuracy, and through independent thematic coding by two researchers to enhance credibility. These combined procedures were intended to ensure that both the quantitative measurement of emotional abuse exposure and the qualitative interpretation of students' lived experiences could be relied upon with reasonable confidence when drawing the conclusions presented in this article.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the study. Informed consent (and parental/guardian consent for minors) was obtained from all participants, who were assured of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Students who disclosed distressing experiences were referred, where necessary, to available school counseling support. Given the sensitive nature of emotional abuse as a research topic, particular care was taken to conduct interviews in private settings, to avoid probing beyond what participants were willing to share, and to ensure that participation carried no risk of exposure to family members or school authorities that could result in retaliation or further harm. Approval for the broader study was obtained from the relevant university ethics review structures, and permission was secured from school administrations prior to any data collection activity.

RESULTS

This section presents the demographic profile of respondents followed by the descriptive and inferential findings on emotional/psychological abuse and social behavior, integrated with supporting qualitative evidence.

Demographic Overview

Of the 273 students sampled, 254 fully completed questionnaires were returned and analyzed, representing a 93% response rate. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The sample was

predominantly composed of older adolescents, slightly more male than female, mainly enrolled at the Ordinary Level, mostly living with both parents, and largely residing in urban areas, providing a broadly representative basis for examining emotional abuse and social behavior among secondary school adolescents in this context.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 254)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	11–13 years	40	15.7%
	14–15 years	100	39.4%
	16–18 years	114	44.9%
Gender	Male	138	54.3%
	Female	116	45.7%
School	GS Rwanyanza	135	53.1%
	ES Rutongo	119	46.9%
Educational level	O-Level	192	75.6%
	A-Level	62	24.4%
Living arrangement	Both parents	195	76.8%
	Single parent	43	16.9%
	Guardian/relatives	16	6.3%
Residence	Urban	193	76.0%
	Rural	61	24.0%

As shown in Table 1, the sample was predominantly composed of older adolescents aged 16–18 years (44.9%), with a fairly balanced gender split slightly favoring male respondents (54.3%). Most respondents attended the O-Level (75.6%) and lived with both parents (76.8%), while approximately three-quarters resided in urban areas. This demographic composition is broadly consistent with the general secondary-school population of Rutongo Parish and supports the generalizability of the findings to comparable school settings within the district.

Descriptive Findings on Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Students rated their exposure to specific forms of emotional/psychological abuse and related social-emotional experiences on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). This approach allowed the study to move beyond a simple binary measure of abuse (present or absent) and instead capture the frequency and intensity with which students experienced each form of emotional mistreatment, providing a more nuanced picture of exposure than prevalence figures alone could offer. Table 1 presents the descriptive results.

Table 1: Emotional/Psychological Abuse and Associated Social-Emotional Experiences

Item	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Family members insult or shout at each other	163 (64.2%)	38 (15.0%)	34 (13.4%)	6 (2.4%)	13 (5.1%)
Someone at home is threatened or humiliated	218 (85.8%)	13 (5.1%)	8 (3.1%)	7 (2.8%)	8 (3.1%)
I feel afraid during conflicts at home	182 (71.7%)	21 (8.3%)	13 (5.1%)	6 (2.4%)	32 (12.6%)
I am ignored or emotionally neglected at home	206 (81.1%)	13 (5.1%)	17 (6.7%)	4 (1.6%)	14 (5.5%)
I feel sad or unhappy	175 (68.9%)	27 (10.6%)	24 (9.4%)	8 (3.1%)	20 (7.9%)
I feel anxious or worried	178 (70.1%)	35 (13.8%)	16 (6.3%)	8 (3.1%)	17 (6.7%)
I avoid interacting with others	206 (81.1%)	21 (8.3%)	14 (5.5%)	6 (2.4%)	7 (2.8%)
I have difficulty concentrating in class	173 (68.1%)	44 (17.3%)	11 (4.3%)	11 (4.3%)	15 (5.9%)

Regarding verbal hostility between family members, 35.8% of respondents reported some level of exposure to insults or shouting at home, indicating that more than one-third of students witnessed emotionally negative family interactions. One respondent explained: "Emotional and psychological difficulties originating from home can significantly affect students' motivation and participation in school activities. When a student is repeatedly told that they are worthless... they may lose interest in attending school altogether" (M003). Another shared that after losing a parent and being abandoned by the surviving parent, "I felt as though I no longer had a place or purpose in life, and I lost interest in interacting with other students" (M008).

On threats or humiliation at home, 14.2% of respondents reported some level of exposure. Although comparatively small, this proportion remains significant given the severity of its psychological consequences. Respondent F002 recounted that repeated parental conflict fuelled by a parent's alcohol use left her "constantly preoccupied with thoughts about what was happening at home," impairing concentration at school. Respondent F004 added that being insulted at home before school left her feeling "worthless both among my peers and within my family," with the negative emotions persisting through the entire school day and affecting both her concentration and her interactions with peers.

Fear during household conflict was reported by 28.3% of respondents, with 12.6% experiencing it very often, the highest frequency among all indicators. Respondent F005 observed that such students "may arrive late to school, appear preoccupied with personal concerns, and prefer to remain alone rather than participate in activities with their peers." Respondent F007 added that such experiences "create emotional confusion and cognitive distress," leading to a state of being "physically present but mentally absent" in class, which can also contribute to truancy and school avoidance.

Emotional neglect, being ignored or emotionally unsupported at home, was reported by 18.9% of respondents. As one participant (F015) explained, "Being repeatedly confronted with harsh and emotionally hurtful words, subjected to mistreatment, and marginalized within one's own family can have significant psychological consequences," extending into difficulty relating to peers at school. Another participant (F002) added that "students may become reluctant to collaborate with peers because they feel neglected and unsupported by their own families," sometimes avoiding group discussions altogether when topics trigger painful memories, a

pattern that helps explain why emotional neglect emerged as the strongest predictor of negative social behavior in the regression analysis reported below.

Feelings of sadness or unhappiness were reported by 31.1% of respondents, while 29.9% reported some level of anxiety or worry. Respondent F004 shared that "there are times when I become socially withdrawn, unhappy, and excessively angry... I may avoid responding to others even when they speak to me." Respondent F017 recounted a particularly poignant experience: after losing a parent, a caregiver's harsh remarks left her feeling "profound emotional pain and rejection," and classroom conversations about mothers became so distressing that she would leave discussions until the topic changed, illustrating how unresolved grief and emotional neglect can interfere directly with social participation. A key informant summarized the pattern observed across many students: "Students experiencing psychological violence often show noticeable emotional instability... Many avoid communicating with peers or teachers and choose isolation instead" (KI010).

Avoidance of social interaction was reported by 18.9% of respondents. Respondent M008 explained that after emotionally distressing exchanges at home, "I lose interest in social interaction and prefer to isolate myself from others, which negatively affects my participation in both academic and social activities at school." A key informant (KI005) described the broader pattern observed among emotionally abused students: "Continuous exposure to criticism, humiliation, and hurtful words from family members negatively affects their emotional development... Many find it difficult to express themselves confidently, participate in discussions, or engage in meaningful social interactions."

Finally, 31.9% of respondents reported some level of difficulty concentrating in class. Respondent F016 testified that emotional abuse and neglect at home coincided with a dramatic decline in her academic performance, "dropping from approximately 95% to about 60%," illustrating the tangible academic cost of unresolved emotional distress. Respondent M006 explained that "when memories of the emotional abuse I suffer at home arise while I am at school, they make it difficult for me to concentrate on my studies," while a key informant (KI003) observed that affected students often adopt "a day-to-day survival mentality, focusing primarily on coping with immediate emotional challenges rather than pursuing long-term academic and personal goals."

Regression Results: Emotional/Psychological Abuse and Social Behavior

To determine the predictive effect of emotional/psychological abuse exposure on social behavior, ordinal logistic regression was conducted with four behavioral outcomes: getting into fights with other students, behaving aggressively toward others, difficulty controlling anger, and breaking school rules or getting into trouble. Table 2 summarizes the statistically significant predictors ($p < .05$).

Table 2: Significant Parameter Estimates of Emotional/Psychological Abuse on Social Behavior

Outcome	Predictor	B	OR	p-value
Aggressive behavior toward others	Emotional neglect at home	0.413	1.51	.001
Aggressive behavior toward others	Feeling sad or unhappy	0.241	1.27	.038
Difficulty controlling anger	Emotional neglect at home	0.379	1.46	<.001
Difficulty controlling anger	Family insults/shouting	0.208	1.23	.045
Difficulty controlling anger	Feeling sad or unhappy	0.250	1.28	.007

Difficulty controlling anger	Feeling anxious or worried	0.264	1.30	.007
Breaking school rules/trouble	Emotional neglect at home	0.403	1.50	<.001
Breaking school rules/trouble	Feeling sad or unhappy	0.293	1.34	.003
Breaking school rules/trouble	Feeling anxious or worried	0.275	1.32	.008

For getting into fights with other students, none of the emotional/psychological abuse indicators reached statistical significance ($p > .05$), suggesting that emotional abuse exposure alone did not significantly predict peer fighting behavior in this model. This is a notable contrast with the physical abuse dimension examined in the broader thesis, where exposure to family violence significantly predicted peer fighting; it suggests that emotional abuse, unlike physical abuse, may express itself more through internalized or self-directed behavioral difficulties, such as anger dysregulation and rule-breaking, than through direct interpersonal aggression toward peers specifically. However, for aggressive behavior toward others, emotional neglect emerged as a strong predictor ($B = 0.413$, $OR = 1.51$, $p = .001$), meaning emotionally neglected students were about 1.5 times more likely to behave aggressively; feeling sad or unhappy was also significant ($B = 0.241$, $OR = 1.27$, $p = .038$).

Concerning difficulty controlling anger, emotional neglect again emerged as the strongest predictor ($B = 0.379$, $OR = 1.46$, $p < .001$), alongside feeling sad or unhappy ($OR = 1.28$, $p = .007$), feeling anxious or worried ($OR = 1.30$, $p = .007$), and family insults or shouting, which showed a marginal but significant effect ($OR = 1.23$, $p = .045$).

For breaking school rules or getting into trouble, emotional neglect was once more the most consistent predictor ($B = 0.403$, $OR = 1.50$, $p < .001$), together with sadness ($OR = 1.34$, $p = .003$) and anxiety ($OR = 1.32$, $p = .008$).

Overall, odds ratios ranged from approximately 1.02 to 1.51, indicating a modest but meaningful increase in the likelihood of negative social behaviors among students exposed to certain dimensions of emotional/psychological abuse, particularly emotional neglect, sadness, and anxiety. Emotional neglect consistently emerged as the strongest and most significant predictor across behavioral outcomes. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H_0), that emotional/psychological abuse exposure has no significant effect on social behavior, is partially rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is partially supported, as specific dimensions of emotional abuse, rather than all indicators uniformly, significantly influence particular aspects of students' social behavior.

A closer comparison across the three outcomes for which significant predictors emerged reveals a consistent hierarchy: emotional neglect exerted the largest effect in every model (OR ranging from 1.46 to 1.51), followed by feelings of sadness (OR ranging from 1.27 to 1.34) and anxiety (OR ranging from 1.30 to 1.32), while overt family insults or shouting reached significance only for anger-control difficulties, and at a comparatively weaker magnitude ($OR = 1.23$). This pattern indicates that the internal emotional states of neglect, sadness, and anxiety, arguably downstream psychological consequences of a broader climate of emotional unavailability at home, carry more predictive weight for behavioral outcomes than the overt hostile behaviors that are often the primary focus of school-based abuse-detection efforts.

In summary, the descriptive findings show that a meaningful minority of students, ranging from approximately 14% to 36% depending on the specific indicator, were exposed to some form of emotional/psychological abuse at home, with fear during conflict and difficulty concentrating in class being the most frequently reported experiences. The inferential findings narrow this picture further by showing that it is emotional neglect specifically, more than overt hostility, that most reliably predicts aggression, anger dysregulation, and rule-breaking, a pattern that is explored in greater depth in the discussion that follows.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that emotional/psychological abuse, and emotional neglect in particular, significantly shapes the social behavior of secondary school students in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda. This is consistent with Bueso-Izquierdo et al. (2025), whose systematic review found that emotional abuse leads to anxiety, depression, aggression, and social maladjustment, and with Chen et al. (2022), who found that psychological abuse reduced self-esteem and social support among Chinese adolescents. The consistent emergence of emotional neglect as the strongest predictor of aggression, anger-control difficulties, and rule-breaking in the present study mirrors Ciren and Ong's (2026) finding that emotional abuse was the strongest predictor of social anxiety among adults who experienced it in childhood, reinforcing the idea that the absence of emotional support, rather than only overt hostility, carries some of the most damaging long-term behavioral consequences. A plausible explanation for this pattern is that neglect deprives adolescents of the corrective emotional feedback and sense of belonging that would otherwise buffer against stress, whereas overt hostility, while distressing, at least confirms that the adolescent remains emotionally visible within the family system; the felt absence of any emotional response may therefore be experienced as a more fundamental rejection.

These findings align closely with Sianko et al. (2016), who found that emotional violence negatively affected help-seeking behavior, trust, and peer communication among rural adolescents, and with the qualitative accounts gathered in this study, where students described withdrawing from peers, doubting their own worth, and struggling to concentrate in class. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory, students who are repeatedly exposed to hostile communication, insults, or neglect within the home may internalize these interaction patterns and reproduce them, whether through aggression, anger dysregulation, or defiance of school rules, within the school environment (Sutton, 2021). Ecological Systems Theory further situates these findings by illustrating how disruption within the family microsystem inevitably reverberates into the school microsystem through the connecting mesosystem, consistent with Guy-Evans's (2024) conceptualization of Bronfenbrenner's model. Specifically, a home environment characterized by emotional neglect constitutes a disruption at the level of the immediate microsystem; because the mesosystem links home and school as interconnected settings in an adolescent's life, this disruption does not remain confined to the household but is carried into the classroom, manifesting as the aggression, poor concentration, and disciplinary difficulties documented in this study's results.

The results also resonate with regional findings. Margarida Simões et al. (2024) found that witnessing interparental violence increased antisocial behavior among Portuguese adolescents, while Ugwu et al. (2024) linked emotional abuse to bullying and peer aggression in South Africa; both patterns were echoed in the present study's finding that emotionally neglected students were significantly more likely to display aggression and disciplinary problems. Within East Africa, Karanja (2019) and Nyagwencha et al. (n.d.) similarly found psychological abuse to be strongly associated with poor academic and emotional outcomes among Kenyan adolescents, while in Rwanda, Bahati et al. (2024) and Mukasano and Faustin (2023) both confirmed that emotional abuse undermines children's psychosocial functioning, communication, and pro-social behavior, directly corroborating the present findings within the same national context.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that emotional neglect, more consistently than overt verbal hostility, drives negative behavioral adjustment among the students studied. This has important implications: interventions that focus solely on reducing overt conflict or verbal abuse may be insufficient if they do not also address the quieter, and arguably more corrosive, experience of feeling ignored or emotionally unsupported at home.

The relatively modest odds ratios observed in the regression analysis, ranging from approximately 1.02 to 1.51, compared with the substantially larger effects reported for physical abuse exposure in the broader thesis from which this article is drawn, suggest that emotional/psychological abuse may operate more subtly and cumulatively than physical abuse, gradually eroding students' self-esteem, trust, and willingness to engage socially rather than producing immediate, overt behavioral disruption. This distinction is important for practitioners: while physical abuse may prompt urgent protective action, emotional abuse and neglect require

sustained, relationship-based interventions such as counseling and mentorship that rebuild a student's sense of being valued and supported.

The qualitative narratives further revealed a coping pattern in which some students masked their distress in front of peers, appearing to "socialize well, laugh, and appear happy" at school despite considerable emotional turmoil at home. This masking behavior, documented among several respondents, suggests that teachers and school staff cannot rely solely on visible signs of distress to identify emotionally abused students, reinforcing the importance of confidential reporting channels and proactive, trust-based relationships between students and school counselors rather than purely observational screening.

From a practical standpoint, these findings imply that psychosocial interventions in schools should move beyond generic anti-bullying or discipline-focused programs toward approaches that specifically address emotional neglect, such as mentorship schemes that ensure every student has at least one consistent, trusted adult figure within the school. Given that emotional neglect was more strongly associated with rule-breaking and anger-control difficulties than with peer fighting specifically, disciplinary responses to such behaviors should be paired with psychosocial assessment rather than punitive measures alone, since the underlying driver may be unmet emotional needs rather than defiance.

It is also worth situating emotional abuse within the wider pattern of domestic violence exposure documented in the broader thesis from which this article is drawn. Across the three forms of abuse examined, physical, emotional, and sexual, emotional abuse indicators such as insults, threats, and neglect were reported considerably more frequently by respondents than direct experiences of physical or sexual victimization, suggesting that while physical and sexual abuse may be comparatively rarer, emotional abuse and neglect represent a more pervasive, everyday reality for a substantial proportion of students in Rutongo Parish. This pervasiveness, combined with its demonstrated behavioral consequences, underscores why emotional abuse deserves dedicated attention in school-based prevention efforts rather than being treated as a secondary concern relative to more visible forms of violence.

Finally, these findings should be understood within the broader socio-economic and cultural context of Rutongo Parish, where limited arable land and household economic pressure have been associated with elevated family conflict. In such settings, emotional neglect may not always stem from parental indifference but can also reflect the practical strain of caregivers who are themselves overwhelmed by economic hardship and who may have limited time, energy, or awareness to provide consistent emotional support to their children. This nuance suggests that effective intervention may require addressing not only parenting practices in isolation but also the broader economic stressors that constrain caregivers' capacity to provide emotionally responsive parenting. It also implies that framing emotional neglect purely as a matter of individual parental choice risks overlooking the structural and economic conditions that shape parenting capacity in contexts such as Rutongo Parish, and that sustainable solutions will likely require coordinated action across schools, faith communities, and local economic support structures rather than parenting interventions alone.

The convergence between the quantitative and qualitative strands of this study further strengthens confidence in its conclusions. Where the regression analysis identified emotional neglect as the strongest statistical predictor of aggression, anger dysregulation, and rule-breaking, the interview narratives independently described the same underlying experience in the students' own words, feeling ignored, unsupported, and marginalized within one's own family, and consistently linked it to withdrawal, diminished confidence, and disengagement from academic and social life. This methodological triangulation, a central strength of the explanatory sequential design employed, suggests that the observed relationship between emotional neglect and maladaptive social behavior is unlikely to be a statistical artifact, but rather reflects a genuine and psychologically coherent pattern among the adolescents studied.

Taken as a whole, the discussion above suggests that any comprehensive response to emotional/psychological abuse in schools such as those in Rutongo Parish must resist the temptation to treat all forms of emotional maltreatment identically. Overt hostility, such as insults and shouting, is easier to observe and therefore easier to target through conventional awareness campaigns and disciplinary codes. Emotional neglect, by contrast, is quieter, less visible, and, according to the present findings, more behaviorally consequential; it demands a

different kind of institutional response, one built around sustained relationships, consistent presence, and deliberate attention to students who do not necessarily present with obvious distress but who may nonetheless be silently disengaging from the people and activities around them.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that emotional/psychological abuse exposure, particularly emotional neglect, significantly and consistently predicts negative social behavior, including aggression, poor anger regulation, and school rule-breaking, among secondary school students in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda. Although not every dimension of emotional abuse reached statistical significance across all behavioral outcomes, the overall pattern of findings, corroborated by rich qualitative testimony of withdrawal, low self-esteem, sadness, and poor concentration, confirms that emotional abuse undermines students' psychosocial adjustment in ways that are both measurable and deeply felt. Emotional neglect, more than overt verbal hostility, emerged as the most consistent driver of maladaptive behavior, suggesting that the absence of emotional support may be at least as damaging as its active violation.

By isolating this single objective from the broader study of domestic violence and social behavior, this article demonstrates the value of examining emotional/psychological abuse on its own terms rather than solely as one component of a composite domestic violence measure. Doing so reveals nuances, such as the differential weight of neglect relative to hostility, that risk being obscured when emotional abuse is aggregated together with physical and sexual abuse in a single overall analysis.

This study's principal strength lies in its integration of statistically robust quantitative measurement with rich qualitative testimony, allowing both the magnitude and the lived texture of emotional abuse's effects to be captured within a single, coherent analysis. The disaggregation of emotional abuse into four distinct indicators, rather than treating it as a single composite score, further allowed the specific behavioral risk associated with neglect to be distinguished from that associated with overt hostility, a distinction with direct practical value for designing targeted interventions. At the same time, as a cross-sectional study conducted in two schools within a single parish, its findings should be interpreted as reflective of this specific context rather than assumed to generalize automatically to all secondary school populations in Rwanda, a caveat that future comparative and longitudinal research, as suggested above, could usefully address.

Based on these conclusions, the study offers the following targeted recommendations:

To the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC):

- Strengthen and standardize school-based psychosocial support systems across all secondary schools, with specific protocols for identifying emotional neglect and abuse.
- Ensure recruitment and deployment of trained professional school counselors in all schools.
- Integrate emotional abuse awareness and child protection education into the national curriculum.
- Develop clear national guidelines for identifying, reporting, and managing cases of emotional abuse affecting learners.
- Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of school-based psychosocial support programs to ensure they specifically address emotional neglect, not only overt abuse.

To School Administrations:

- Establish functional guidance and counseling departments with confidential, student-friendly reporting mechanisms for emotional abuse and neglect.
- Organize regular awareness sessions for students on emotional health and healthy coping strategies.

- Ensure timely referral of students showing signs of severe emotional distress to relevant psychosocial and child protection services.
- Introduce structured mentorship programs pairing students with a consistent, trusted staff member to counter the effects of emotional neglect at home.

To Teachers and School Staff:

- Undergo continuous training to recognize early warning signs of emotional distress, such as withdrawal, poor concentration, or sudden behavioral change.
- Provide empathetic, non-judgmental support to students affected by emotional abuse or neglect.
- Collaborate closely with school counselors in supporting at-risk students.
- Avoid interpreting rule-breaking or anger-control difficulties solely as disciplinary problems without first considering possible underlying emotional distress.

To Parents and Guardians:

- Adopt positive parenting practices that promote emotional warmth, consistent communication, and validation of children's feelings.
- Avoid insults, humiliation, and neglectful treatment within the household.
- Participate in parenting education and community sensitization programs addressing emotional abuse specifically.
- Seek support from community, church, or counseling services when facing economic or personal stress that limits capacity for emotionally responsive parenting.

To Counselling Psychologists and Religious Leaders:

- Provide accessible, child-friendly psychological counseling for students affected by emotional abuse and neglect.
- Develop structured interventions focusing on self-esteem building, emotional regulation, and resilience.
- Integrate messages on emotional well-being and non-violence into pastoral and community programs.
- Offer family counseling and mediation services to help parents overwhelmed by economic hardship build more emotionally supportive home environments.

To Local Government and Community Leaders:

- Organize community awareness campaigns specifically addressing the harm caused by emotional neglect and psychological mistreatment of children.
- Collaborate with schools and religious institutions to identify and support families where children show signs of chronic emotional neglect.
- Establish community-based child protection committees capable of early detection and referral of emotional abuse cases, alongside physical and sexual abuse.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could usefully explore emotional neglect as a distinct construct, given its consistently stronger predictive power relative to overt verbal hostility in the present study, and could examine these relationships longitudinally to establish causal pathways between emotional abuse exposure and the development of maladaptive social behavior over time.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledged several limitations relevant to the interpretation of its findings. First, although the study was conducted and reported in English, participants were Rwandan students whose primary language is Kinyarwanda; questionnaires and interview guides were therefore translated into Kinyarwanda and responses translated back into English, a process that may have introduced minor variations in the interpretation of participants' original meaning. Second, some respondents did not complete the questionnaire fully or accurately, which may have affected the completeness of the data, although data screening procedures were applied to minimize this risk.

Finally, emotional abuse, like other forms of domestic violence, remains a sensitive and sometimes stigmatized topic; some participants may therefore have been reluctant to disclose their experiences fully, suggesting that the actual prevalence of emotional/psychological abuse in this population may be higher than reported here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to the school administrations, students, teachers, and other key informants of ES Rutongo and G.S. Rwanyanza in Rutongo Parish, Rwanda, for their participation and cooperation, and to the supervisors who guided the broader thesis from which this article is drawn.

REFERENCES

1. Bahati, C., Nyirantezirayayo, A., Izabayo, J., Atete, P., Sezibera, V., & Mutesa, L. (2024). Mental health outcomes of offspring exposed to parental intimate partner violence in Rwanda. *BMC Pediatrics*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-024-04884-y>
2. Bueso-Izquierdo, N., Guerrero-Molina, M., Barbosa-Torres, C., Ferrera-Silva, M., & Moreno-Manso, J. M. (2025). Psychological, emotional, and neuropsychological sequelae of child victims of domestic violence: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-025-00746-6>
3. Castro, L., & Valle, Y. (2025). The effect of childhood emotional abuse on the mental health of Latinx adults. *CSUSB ScholarWorks*.
4. Caulfield, J. (2023, June 22). How to do thematic analysis: Step-by-step guide & examples. *Scribbr*. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>
5. Chen, C., Ji, S., & Jiang, J. (2022). Psychological abuse and social support in Chinese adolescents: The mediating effect of self-esteem. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.852256>
6. Ciren, Z., & Ong, E. (2026). Emotional abuse in childhood and social anxiety symptoms in adulthood: Examining the role of self-compassion. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-026-00870-x>
7. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
8. Daramola, C. O. (2025). Domestic violence and its effects on academic performance of secondary school students in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 6(1), 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04240>
9. Gedi, O. S. (2024). The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and substance use among adolescents: The case of Garissa University, Garissa, Kenya. *USIU-Africa Repository*.

10. Guy-Evans, O. (2024). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Bronfenbrenner.html>
11. Hayes, A. (2024, August 19). How stratified random sampling works, with examples. Investopedia. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/stratified_random_sampling.asp
12. Huecker, M., Smock, W., King, K., & Jordan, G. (2023, April 9). Domestic violence. In StatPearls. National Library of Medicine. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499891/>
13. Karanja, D. N. (2019). Effects of domestic violence on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Tetu Sub-County, Nyeri County, Kenya [Master's thesis, University of Nairobi]. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/107358>
14. Khanday, S. A., & Khanam, D. (2023, February 4). The research design. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368257495>
15. Makwana, D., Engineer, P., Dabhi, A., & Chudasama, H. (2023). Sampling methods in research: A review. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371985656>
16. Margarida Simões, Teixeira, A., Sani, A. I., Monteiro, A. P., Martins, J. S., & Relva, I. C. (2024). Interparental violence and development of antisocial behaviors in Portuguese adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 163, 107706. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107706>
17. Mathews, B., & Dube, S. (2024). Childhood emotional abuse is becoming a public health priority: Evidentiary support for a paradigm change. *Child Protection and Practice*, 4, 100093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2024.100093>
18. McCombes, S. (2021, June 7). How to create a research design. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/research-design/>
19. Mukasano, M., & Faustin, D. M. (2023). Effects of domestic violence on children's cognitive development in Rwanda: A case of Gasabo District. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10061260>
20. Nkadimeng, C., Mphasha, M. H., & Skaal, L. (2025). Broken silence: Unraveling the far-reaching effects of witnessing domestic violence on children in Limpopo province. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, 102115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102115>
21. Nyagwencha, S., Munene, A., & James, N. (n.d.). Types of abuse experienced by adolescents living in charitable children's institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. *African Journal of Clinical Psychology*.
22. Nyandwi, A., Nyirandutiye, F., Rusanganwa, V., Munyanshongore, C., Nyirazinyoye, L., Ndola, P., Nshimiyimana, J. D., Ingabire, M.-G., Anastasie, N., Salant, N., Mecthilde, K., Emmanuel, H., & Mukabutera, A. (2022). Predictors of physical violence against children in Rwanda: Findings from a national cross-sectional survey. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-14815-0>
23. Oluigbo, C. U., Ngozi, E. C., & Patterson. (2024). Determination of sample sizes in research using Taro Yamane formula: An overview. *Harnessing Current and Emerging Scientific Innovations for Nation Building and Development in the 21st Century*.
24. Pietrangelo, A. (2019, March 29). Effects of emotional abuse: Short- and long-term, PTSD, recovery. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/effects-of-emotional-abuse>
25. Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
26. Sianko, N., Hedge, J. M., & McDonnell, J. R. (2016). Differential adjustment among rural adolescents exposed to family violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(4), 712–740. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516645574>
27. Sutton, J. (2021, May 17). What is Bandura's social learning theory? 3 examples. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/social-learning-theory-bandura/>
28. Ugwu, L. E., Ramadie, K. J., Ajele, W. K., & Idemudia, E. S. (2024). Childhood adversity and peer influence in adolescent bullying perpetration. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-81978-8>
29. United Nations. (2025). What is domestic abuse? <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>

-
30. Williams, O., Oyundoyin, B., & A., A. T. (2024). The impact of domestic violence on the academic performance of school-aged children and adolescents in Abeokuta South, Ogun State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 7(4), 104–130. <https://doi.org/10.52589/ajsshr-42u5i45f>