



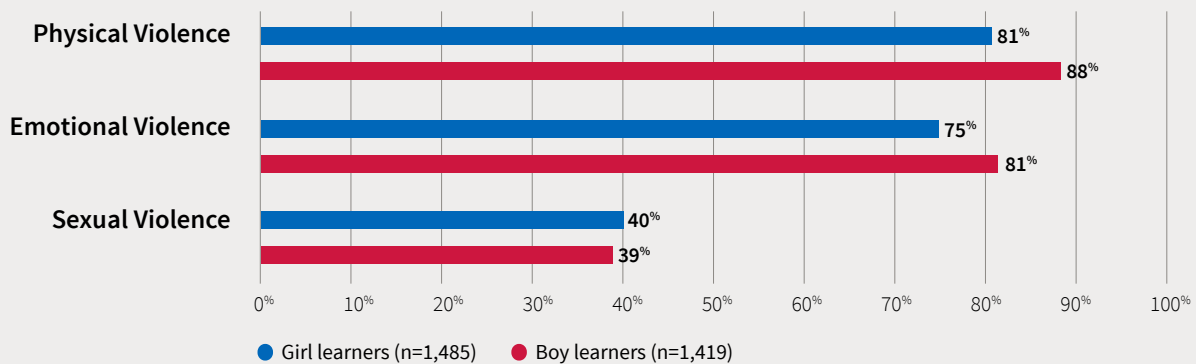
Ending Teacher-to-Learner Violence as an Entry-point to Addressing School-related Gender-based Violence

There is high prevalence of school related gender based violence (SRGBV) in Ugandan primary schools, including emotional, physical, and sexual violence, mostly from teachers and peers (Menendez et al., 2020). The Ugandan Penal Code (Amendment) Act of 2007 abolished corporal punishment and made sexual violence and defilement of persons under 18 years of age a criminal offence subject to life imprisonment on conviction. All forms of violence are detrimental to learners and need addressing in Ugandan schools. This brief makes the case that that ending teacher-to-learner violence, which correlates strongly with learner exposure to all forms of SRGBV by peers, can become a catalytic entry point for SRGBV prevention and accountability, within a holistic framework of strategies at policy, district, school, and community levels.

SRGBV is highly prevalent in Uganda’s primary schools

As much as 81 percent of girls and 88 percent of boys reported experiencing physical violence at school by any type of perpetrator in the previous year. Proportions of learners reporting experiencing school-related emotional violence were only slightly lower, at 75 percent for girls and 81 percent for boys. A similar percentage of boys and girls reported sexual violence exposure, with both teachers and peers reported as perpetrators. Girls reporting of sexual violence exposure increased with age, and the share of 11 to 12-year-old girls reporting sexual violence exposure (38 percent) is 4 percentage points lower than 13 to 16 years old girls (42 percent).

Figure 1. Percentages of learners who experienced SRGBV in the past year



Corporal Punishment is a form of physical violence

More than 75 percent of nine to 16-year olds reported past-year physical violence from a teacher in Uganda's National Violence Against Children Survey (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, 2015). Yet, as noted above, legislation abolished corporal punishment in Uganda in 2007. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Sports issued a circular stating violence against children in schools, institutes, and colleges had been outlawed in the Constitution, the Children Act, the Penal Code, the Domestic Violence Act and the Employment Act. The circular set a nation-wide education sector requirement that schools replace corporal punishment with positive, non-violent discipline and learning actions. Regulations have been under development since 2016 to implement laws against corporal punishment in schools.

An external evaluation by NORC at the University of Chicago of the Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA: April 2016 – April 2021) in Uganda, found that 88 percent of teachers reported believing that corporal punishment is not an effective form of discipline (Nayyar-Stone et al., 2016; Menendez et al., 2020). However, many schools continue to tolerate and normalize teacher-to- learner physical violence.

Figure 2. Percentage of women and men teachers admitting to hitting learners with an object such as a stick, cane, or belt in the previous year

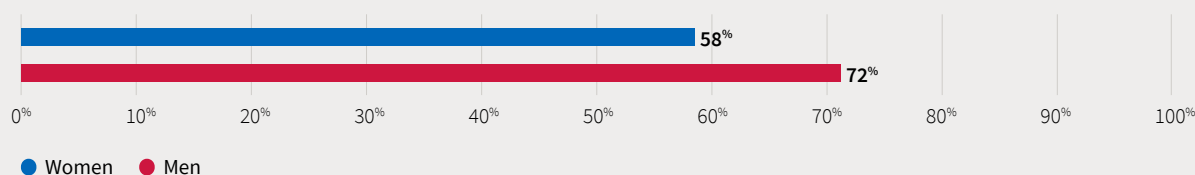
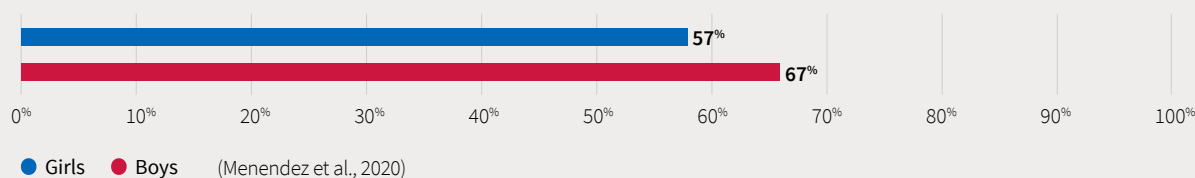


Figure 3. Percentage of girls and boys surveyed corroborated high levels of physical violence by a teacher

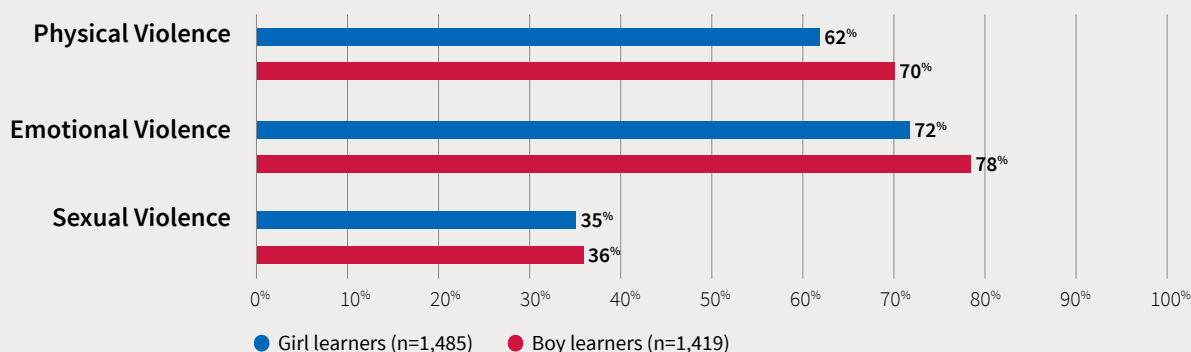


Violence against children in schools is gendered, including corporal punishment (Schulte, 2020). In LARA schools, girls and boys expressed fear of being caned for giving wrong answers, having low grades, or arriving late (Menendez et al., 2020). Girls reported lower frequencies of physical punishment from a teacher and often described that teachers caned them with five strokes for a given incident, versus boys who reported up to 20. Still, girls reported more often than boys that they avoid attending school at times due to fear of harsh physical punishment. Higher proportions of girls than boys reported experiencing sexual violence by a teacher, while boys may be yet more likely to stay silent about sexual violence.

Teacher-to-learner physical violence correlates strongly with learner exposure to all forms of SRGBV by peers

Teachers and school staff are the most commonly reported perpetrators using physical violence against learners. Where teacher-to-learner physical violence is highly prevalent, learners report high levels of exposure to all forms of SRGBV (emotional, physical, sexual) by peers.

Figure 4. Percentages of learner exposure to peer perpetrated violence in schools



LARA evaluation results indicate that high levels of teacher-to-learner physical violence correlate strongly with high levels of peer-perpetrated violence in Ugandan primary schools. Similar studies have found associations between attitudes supportive of violence against children from school staff and learner exposure to physical and emotional violence by peers (Wandera et al., 2017).

Harsh physical punishment in schools normalizes cycles of power abuse and violence by authority figures as societally condoned ways to resolve conflict. Teacher-to-learner violence creates a school climate that tolerates and perpetuates SRGBV by other teachers and learners' peers. Community norms that frame caning or beating children as necessary for child development, need to be replaced with new positive norms valuing non-violent disciplinary methods, positive teacher-learner communication, emotionally supportive classroom management techniques, and physical and mental health in child development. Given that a high proportion of teachers surveyed reported seeing corporal punishment as an ineffective form of discipline, many teachers may be receptive to and uphold positive changes in classroom practices for learner safety.

What can make schools safer for learners?

Previous evaluations in Uganda and Jamaica provide strong evidence that teacher-to-learner physical violence can be prevented within a holistic, multi-component program. In Uganda, an evaluation of the Good School Toolkit, a complex behavioral intervention designed by Raising Voices, reported a 42 percent reduction in the likelihood of primary school learners suffering physical violence from school staff (Devries et al., 2015). In Jamaican pre-schools, an evaluation of the Irie Classroom Toolbox reported, "fewer counts of violence against children by teachers in the intervention schools compared with control schools at post-intervention"

(Baker-Henningham et al., 2019). Devries and Naker (2021), called for building a programs-based, policy-informing research agenda to reduce teacher-to-learner physical violence. Prioritizing education sector planning, policy and program evaluation to focus on reducing teacher-to-learner violence is an evidence-based first step in reducing SRGBV.

Recommendations

Recommendations will require close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, for coordinated investment and action within and beyond the education sector at national, district, school, and community levels.



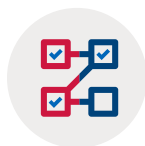
1. Create a nation-wide advocacy campaign promoting new norms supporting positive, non-violent teacher communication and disciplinary methods.

Raise awareness of the positive benefits for healthy child development and achievement. Clearly communicate that teachers caning and beating children in schools is illegal, socially unacceptable, and harmful to child development. Co-design the campaign with diverse range of communities in multiple languages, and use print, broadcast and online media for community-level campaign reach.



2. Plan for in-service teacher trainings on positive, non-violent behavioral interventions and learner support,

including several full-day workshops spread over one school year for all teachers and head teachers, not just senior teachers. Combine trainings with SRGBV prevention and accountability-dedicated in-class technical support and mentorship to each teacher at least once per month to promote safe classrooms and academic success.



3. Build accountability pathways for teacher-to-learner violence:

- Create targeted 2-3 day compulsory trainings for teachers who use violence against learners. Make the training interactive, using role-play, and continuous standardized assessment. Facilitate sessions covering laws and regulations abolishing physical and sexual violence against children; positive, non-violent disciplinary methods; and emotionally supportive classroom management techniques. Make successful training completion a requirement to retain the license to teach in schools, colleges, and institutions.



- Implement and enforce laws and regulations against violence against children in schools. Pursue strategic litigation and judicial sentencing for emblematic cases of severe teacher physical and sexual violence against learners. Ensure child violence survivors' confidentiality, recovery support services (e.g., psychosocial counseling, medical treatment, legal aid, safe house), and protective accompaniment throughout the investigation and court proceedings. Stop transferring teachers who use severe forms of violence against learners to another school, as it only shifts the violence and its harmful effects on children elsewhere.

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