

Social and behavioural trials: can we prevent school violence?

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How common is violence against children?



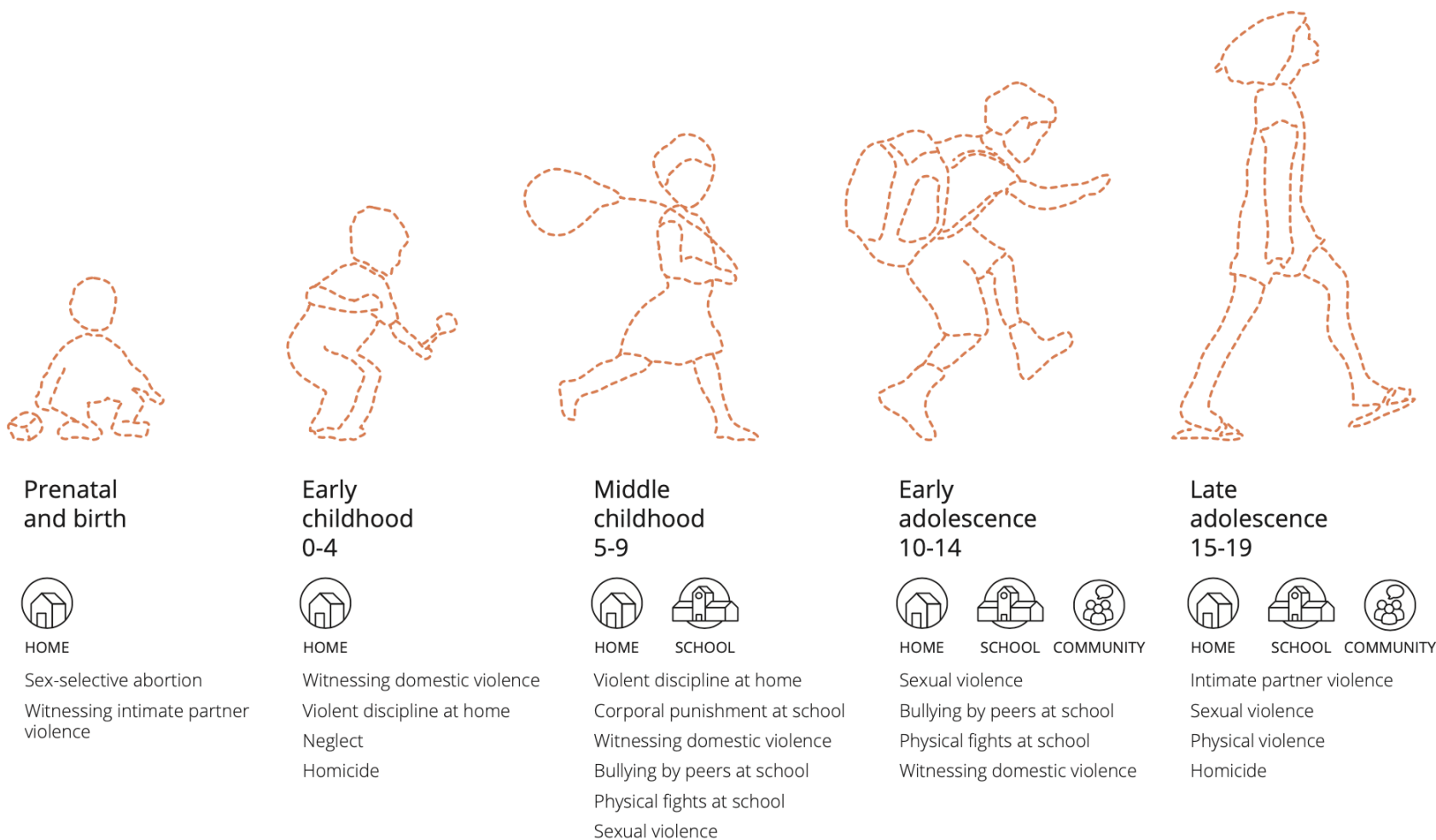
1 billion children

Experience physical, sexual or emotional violence each year.

Hillis et al. 2016 Pediatrics: 137 (3)

Violence prevention and the life course

FIGURE 3.1: Exposure to violence through stages of childhood.



Source: Know Violence in Childhood 2017.

The Good Schools Study

- Aim: to evaluate the impact of the Good Schools Toolkit Intervention by Raising Voices
- Primary and secondary outcomes
 - Children’s experience of physical violence from school staff
 - Children’s mental health
 - Children’s educational performance

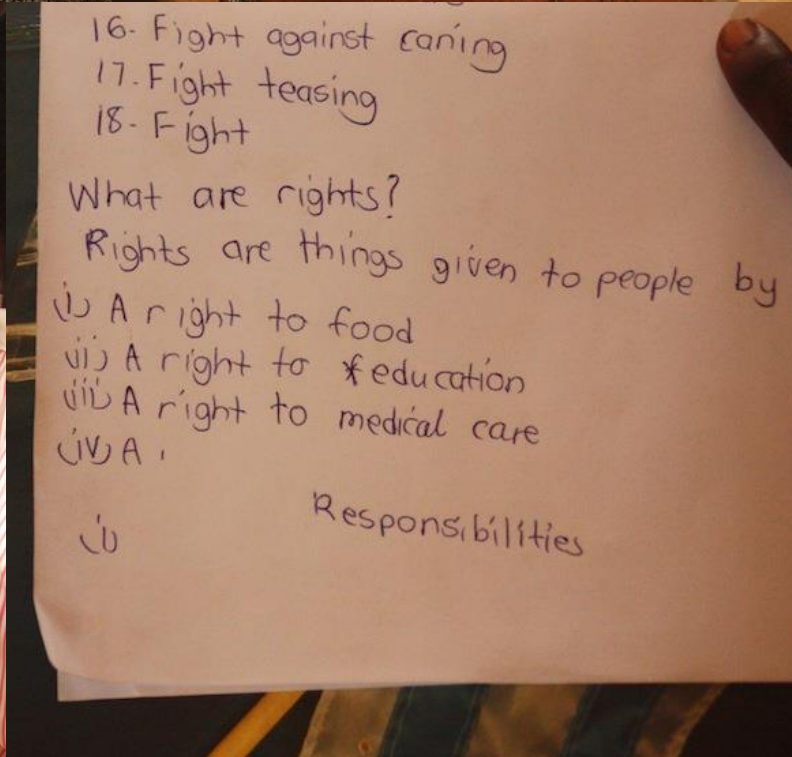


- Donors: MRC, DfID, Wellcome Trust; Hewlett Foundation

We did a cluster randomised controlled trial in Uganda...

- 42 primary schools, representing 1 district
- 3700 students and 500 staff interviewed in June 2012
- 3800 students and 600 staff interviewed in June 2014
- Interviewer-administered questionnaire
- Instruments: ICAST, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Educational tests
- Referral plan for children





So what happened?

Outcome (reported by students)	Difference	Interpretation
Primary		
Past week physical violence from school staff	Control: 49% Intervention: 31% OR=0.40 (0.26 to 0.64) (about 42% reduction)	➤ Reduction in violence in the intervention group
Secondary		
Feelings of safety and well-being in school	Mean difference=0.58 (0.23 to 0.90)	➤ Improvement in feelings of safety in the intervention group
Mental health (SDQ score)	Mean difference=0.01 (-0.02 to 0.04)	➤ No difference in mental health
Educational test scores (EGRA word recognition, reading, reading comprehension; silly sentences, spelling, written numeracy)	No difference	➤ No difference in educational test scores

Conclusions

- The Good School Toolkit works to reduce physical violence from school staff, and creates a safe atmosphere in schools
- This was the first robust RCT of a teacher violence prevention intervention

- But no effect on mental health or educational outcomes—why?
 - Implementation not long enough?
 - More influence from external structural factors not affected by the intervention?



Policy impact

2016 Guidance from WHO and Unicef:

INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children

Implementation and enforcement of laws

Norms and values

Safe environments

Parent and caregiver support

Income and economic strengthening

Response and support services

Education and life skills



8 years later...still an under-researched area

- Still only 6 trials of teacher violence interventions
 - Very different approaches, most successful
 - Still not clear what minimum package is
- The Good School Toolkit still has the largest reduction
 - has been adapted for secondary schools

Comment

Preventing teacher violence against children: the need for a research agenda

From Uganda to Jamaica to the USA, violence against children at schools is widespread.^{1,2} Teachers are often the perpetrator of this violence,³ using corporal punishment and sexual and emotional violence against their students. Surprisingly, national prevalence data on teacher violence against children are still not routinely collected in most countries, but surveys show that 90% of primary school students in some areas of Uganda,⁴ more than 90% in Jamaica,⁵ and 7% of students in Mississippi, USA⁶ have experienced physical violence from teachers.³

Despite this high prevalence, and the range of known negative health and social impacts of exposure to violence in childhood,⁷ there are few interventions

schools, and it is likely that preventing experiences of violence against children at this early age will have knock-on positive effects for children's health and positive development. This one intervention might pay long-term dividends across multiple sectors.

Although these findings are encouraging, the work of preventing violence from teachers towards students is still at an early stage. Further research is needed in at least four broad areas. First, we need to develop a deeper understanding of why teacher violence continues to be widespread in different countries and learning environments, so that we can successfully challenge this behaviour. Second, we need much more research to develop and systematically test different intervention



See Articles page e45E

School violence: where are the interventions?

Globally, 1 billion children experience some form of physical, sexual, or emotional violence each year.¹ Most of these children live in low-income and middle-income countries, and much of this violence occurs in and around schools.² For the 90% of children who are enrolled in primary school, violence might be even more common in school than at home.² About 60% of children aged 6–10 years report recent physical and emotional violence from peers at school,² and 46–95% of primary school students experience corporal punishment from teachers, including in countries with legal prohibitions.³ According to a UNESCO report, sexual violence and harassment are also common, experienced by more than 10% of students in 96 countries. But some groups are at an even higher risk. In Uganda, for example, 20% of primary school girls aged 11–14 years with disabilities, but 10% of primary school girls of the same age without disabilities, reported sexual violence, mainly from peers but also from teachers.⁴

Young people who experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence are more likely to experience

further violence, and to perpetrate it. Violence is associated with a range of adverse health and social outcomes, including increased risk of poor mental health, substance use, chronic inflammation, poor educational outcomes, and worse future employment prospects. Teachers' use and tolerance of violence at school is likely to reinforce girls' and boys' use of violence in peer interactions and intimate partnerships, owing to social learning about how to navigate



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For the UNESCO report on ending school violence and bullying see <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/behind-numbers-ending-school-violence-and-bullying>

For more on bystander programmes see <https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/bystander-programs-sexual-assault-adolescents-college-students.html>

For the World Bank report see <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/35969>

Thank you!

Any questions, or to see other school based violence prevention trials, please get in touch!

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See also:

Child Protection Research Group

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/centres-projects-groups/child-protection-research-group>