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The negative impact of violence on children's education and well-being: Evidence from Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study provides comprehensive evidence on the negative effects of physical, sexual, and emotional violence on children's well-being and educational outcomes in Northern Nigeria. In this paper, we analyzed household survey data, conducted surveys with a representative sample of pupils, and carried out interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. We provide some evidence that exposure to physical or emotional violence is negatively associated with social-emotional skills and self-efficacy. Subsequently, we find that children who experience any kind of violence are more likely to be out of school, have reduced learning, and are less likely to feel safe traveling to and from school. Exposure to sexual violence has a pronounced negative relationship with children's mental health, an increased the likelihood of early marriage, and a lower likelihood of attending school.

1. Introduction

Globally, up to one billion children aged 2–17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year (World Health Organization, 2019). In Nigeria, the Child's Rights Act was passed into law in 2003, protecting children's right to a life free of violence, but twelve states in the north have yet to domesticate it (Muanya and Onyedika-Ugoeze, 2019). The 2014 Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) in Nigeria demonstrated that physical and sexual violence are common, with roughly half of respondents aged 18–24 reporting that they had experienced physical violence as children, while 25 % of females and 10 % of males reported experiencing sexual violence as children. The study shows clear links between violence and education: over 50 % of children cited male teachers as the perpetrator of their first incident of physical violence, and of those who experienced sexual abuse as children, 15.1 % of individuals reported that the abuse took place in school (National Population Commission of Nigeria et al., 2016). Globally, violence has been associated with negative impacts on educational outcomes, with analyses of school-based surveys associating bullying with lower school participation and learning, and a small number of quantitative studies finding negative effects of sexual violence on school participation and achievement (Psaki et al., 2017).

The present study provides comprehensive empirical evidence on the adverse impacts of violence on children's educational and social-emotional outcomes in Northern Nigeria and an examination of the mechanisms behind these impacts. The key research questions, the results of which will be used to discuss the potential policy implications, are summarized as follows:

1 Is violence against children associated with worse mental and emotional well-being, and incidence of early marriage and pregnancy? Does this violence translate to lower access to education, attendance, or learning?
2 What are the risk factors and possible mechanisms associated with violence against children and do they differ by type of violence?
3 What are the perceptions of violence among the different stakeholders (teachers, head teachers, children, and parents), and their perceived impacts on boys and girls?

To directly inform policy and programs, the research team involved a broad set of Nigerian government and civil society stakeholders in research design and dissemination activities. Research activities were carried out in three stages, beginning with analysis of VACS data to investigate the effects and predictors of violence in the Northern states.[1]

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[1] The Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) Nigeria does not permit us to identify individual states. However, we are able to identify the Northern states of Nigeria.

Following this, we conducted surveys with teachers and pupils in a representative sample of 103 schools in the three Northern states of Bauchi, Niger, and Zamfara, and also carried out interviews and focus groups with children and adults in a subset of these schools. Finally, we shared, validated and disseminated the findings with stakeholders at national, state and local levels including policy makers, traditional and religious leaders, politicians, education leaders, and the media.

2. Literature review

This study focuses on explicit violence against children, which refers to visible acts of physical, sexual, and emotional violence. Physical violence refers to the use or threat of physical force with the potential to cause death, disability, injury, or harm. Sexual violence refers to any attempted or threatened non-consensual sex acts, verbal sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation, which includes receiving favors or gifts in exchange for sex (National Population Commission of Nigeria et al., 2016). Emotional violence, also called emotional violence (National Population Commission of Nigeria et al., 2016), bullying (Perznieto et al., 2010) or other violence, commonly refers to abusive verbal behavior (National Population Commission of Nigeria et al., 2016).

These three types of explicit violence are not exclusive to one another and often overlap. For example, bullying may be both psychological and physical, and sexual exploitation may occur by way of a physical threat. In addition, individuals may be victims, perpetrators or both (Leach et al., 2014; Devries et al., 2013). There is increasing concern and growing evidence around the negative effects of violence on children. Violence in childhood has been associated with increased rates of suicidal ideation, mental distress, self-harm, substance abuse, STI prevalence, and sexual risk-taking behavior (Norman et al., 2012). In Nigeria and globally, physical, sexual, and emotional violence have been strongly associated with negative impacts on students' mental and sexual health (Leach et al., 2014; Psaki et al., 2017).

These trends are global. A study in South Africa using a random household sample of adolescents found that reported experience of non-consensual sex was associated with lower levels of school enrollment and poorer grade attainment and progression among females (Hallman, 2007). Another recent, longitudinal analysis following students in rural Malawi found that school-related sexual violence was associated with poorer learning outcomes, absenteeism, and dropout for males and females; domestic violence was associated with male absenteeism and female dropout, and physical violence was associated with reduced absenteeism and better numeracy performance for females (Psaki et al., 2017). Analyses of a school-based survey in Ghana found that students who reported being bullied received lower math scores than those who did not (Dunne et al., 2013, UNGEI and UNESCO, 2015), while 2011 TIMSS and PIRLS data showed that students attending schools with more frequent teacher-reported bullying had lower achievement in math and reading than schools with less bullying (Kibriya et al., 2016; Mullis et al., 2012)

Acceptance of other forms of violence in the home may contribute to continued prevalence of violence in schools in Nigeria: for instance, corporal punishment is legal according to Sharia law, with 62 % of Nigerian caregivers believing that it is necessary to raise a child (National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund, 2017). In Northern Nigeria, women have particularly poor education outcomes and limited livelihood opportunities, with female literacy rates lower than 10 % in several states (National Population Commission and ICF International, 2013). The prevalence of child marriage and gender-based violence in Northern Nigeria may contribute to women's low status. As of 2017, 44 % of girls in Northern Nigeria are married before the age of 18 (Girls Not Brides, 2019). Research indicates that girls who marry young are more likely to describe their first sexual experience as forced (Girls Not Brides, 2018). Intimate partner violence and female genital mutilation are also reported as prevailing practices in Nigeria.

2.1. Conceptual framework

This study explores the relationship between experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual violence and adolescents' (age 12–15) educational, social and emotional learning, and mental health outcomes. Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual framework behind the hypotheses being tested in this paper. The diagram shows the different pathways by which children/adolescents can experience emotional, physical, or sexual violence in contrast to a counterfactual pathway whereby the child experiences a childhood free from violence.

We hypothesize that the pathways created by exposure to violence, as a result of demographic and socioeconomic factors, gender norms, history of violence, violence-related beliefs and perceptions, and negative life experiences such as economic hardship or homelessness, can lead to worsened mental health, self-esteem, or future outlook as well as increased sexual risk-taking behavior, and early marriage or pregnancy. These pathways, in turn, lead to negative effects on the child's educational outcomes and overall well-being. In the counterfactual pathway of no violence, the child would experience educational outcomes that are considered normal for their age and demographic characteristics. Our hypothesis, in this case, assumes that the 'normal' level for outcomes are higher than the levels attained under the different pathways through exposure to violence. We explore these relationships in the context of Northern Nigeria, seeking to understand the mechanisms by which violence impacts children's educational outcomes.

Our quantitative analyses test this framework empirically by measuring children's experiences of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. It will then measure intermediate mental health outcomes through the assessment of children's self-efficacy and emotional well-being, as well as their education outcomes, namely school access, progression, and reading ability. The empirical strategy, here, is to compare the outcomes of children who have had various levels of exposure to violence to similar children who have not using a linear regression framework that accounts for differences in adolescents' characteristics. The qualitative tools will then inform the mechanisms by which violence impacts children's education, illuminating how perceptions and experiences of violence may or may not impact children's wellbeing and education.

3. Research methods

As a mixed-methods study, this section includes both quantitative and qualitative components, as well as a combined analysis. We first describe the quantitative component which draws upon primary and secondary data sources to shed light on the prevalence of the different types of violence in Northern Nigeria, the risk factors associated with violence, and the effects of violence on adolescents' outcomes. We then describe the qualitative component, which includes primary data collection in three states, is described second, and includes significant detail on sampling, instrumentation, data collection, plans, and analysis.

3.1. Quantitative methods

3.1.1. Analytic framework

We employ an estimation method that relies on both primary and secondary data sources to address the research questions posed in this study and provide an overview of the state of violence against children at home and at school in Nigeria, broadly, while focusing on the Northern states. The purpose of this analysis is to put forward the existing evidence on the prevalence and effects violence at home and at school. This enables us to identify the common traits of in and out of school children from different age groups who are most exposed to violence at various levels of their living environment. The analysis will be used to determine empirically the extent that violence at home or at school can act as a barrier to access to school, and as a hindrance on a child's potential for learning. In addition, the analysis in this report will
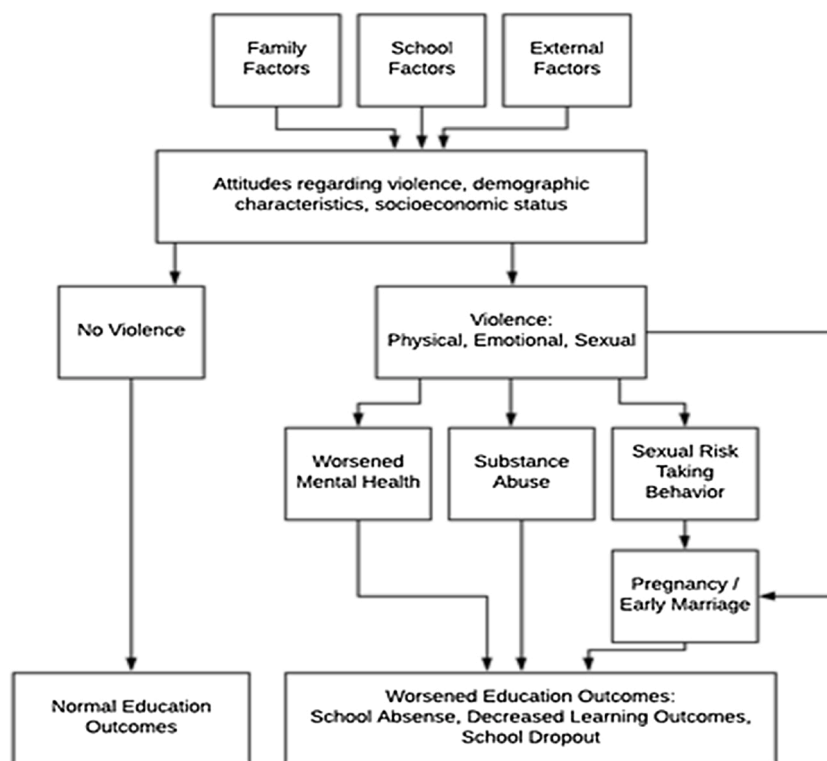
Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework.
Source: Framework elaborated by FHI360 with UNICEF's guidance based on Review of Literature

shed light on the impacts that violence can have on children's wellbeing, social and emotional learning, and mental health.

We follow a multi-stage analytic framework that relies on simple descriptive analyses, followed by a multivariate examination of the risk factors associated with different types of violence, and a multivariate analysis of the relationship between violence and children's outcomes. In the first stage, we describe the prevalence of violence and summarize the sampled children who have and have not experienced physical, emotional, and sexual violence. The second stage employs a logistic regression analysis to estimate the likelihood of occurrence of each type of violence in relation to respondents' experiences with other types of violence, demographic and socioeconomic factors, and attitudes toward violence. The final stage employs a multilevel hierarchical linear model (HLM) framework that compares those who have and have not experienced violence while controlling for their observed characteristics. The second stage, thus, enables us to associate the likelihood of occurrence of different types of violence as per children's demographic factors, perceptions and attitudes toward violence, and whether they have been exposed to other forms of violence as well. While the final stage enables us to determine whether different types, or a combination, of violence are significantly correlated with potentially worsened intermediate outcomes of early marriage, pregnancy, social and emotional learning skills that may ultimately adversely affect educational attendance, dropout, and reading.

It is important to note, however, that any findings produced via our multivariate logistic or linear regression approaches cannot be construed as causal given the non-random nature of experiences of violence. Meaning that differences in characteristics between adolescents (ages 12–15) who have experienced violence and those who have not may be confounded with the estimated effects of violence on outcomes. However, our findings still provide relevant insight into the existing correlations and associations between violence and relevant adolescent outcomes as the multivariate regression approach mitigates the influence of observed differences between those who have and have not experienced any violence.

3.2. Data and sample characteristics

For the purposes of this paper, we draw upon two sources of data to ascertain the impacts of violence on children's educational outcomes and well-being. The first is the VACS which is a cross-sectional household survey of 13 to 24-year-old females and males in Nigeria, designed to produce national estimates of the prevalence of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children. We, thus, restrict our analysis of the VACS to respondents who are between 13 and 18 years of age, a total of 2234 children, in alignment with the age range of our study sample. The survey sheds light on the magnitude of violence against children as well as the patterns of risk factors for and consequences of violence. Another added value of using the VACS data is that the survey informs our research in terms of children's state of mental health, access to education, progress in school, sexual health, and attitudes toward violence. This enables us to ascertain the links between the exposure to different forms and combinations of violence and outcomes.

The VACS defines violence as follows: physical violence refers to incidents where the respondent has been physically beaten, choked, drowned, burned, or attacked or threatened with a weapon. Emotional violence refers to incidents where respondents were told by a parent or relative that they are not loved or are stupid or useless. Sexual exploitation refers to incidents where the respondent has received favors or gifts in exchange for sex or participated in a sex photo or video. And sexual abuse refers to incidents where the respondent experienced unwanted sexual touching, unwanted attempted sex, physically forced sex, or coerced sex. Respondents were then asked to report on incidents of violence occurring over the span of their lifetime. We calculated the lifetime prevalence of violence based on responses from 13 to 18-year-olds reporting on violence they have ever experienced in their lifetime.

The second data source is a student survey that the authors collected to inform the research questions posed in this paper as part of a larger study commissioned by UNICEF to investigate the effects of violence on children's educational outcomes. The pupil surveys were administered in the three Northern Nigerian states of Bauchi, Niger, and Zamfara. The

primary data analytic sample includes a total of 1087 upper primary pupils aged 12–15 from 108 schools in the three Northern Nigerian states. The schools are divided equally among states and LGAs, i.e. 6 schools per LGA and 6 LGAs per state resulting in 36 schools per state. Again, we follow a very similar definition of physical, emotional, and sexual violence as in the VACS dataset. We define physical violence as being punched, kicked, or beaten up. Emotional violence refers to someone saying you are not loved or don't deserve to be loved, telling you they wished you had never been born or were dead, or calling you stupid or useless. We define sexual violence as verbal sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, or sexual abuse. Sexual exploitation occurs when someone exchanges money or gifts in exchange for sex. Sexual abuse refers to inappropriate sexual touching, attempted rape, rape, and coerced sex.

3.3. Qualitative methods

The qualitative component seeks to answer a range of research questions to gain insight into the causes and drivers of violence in schools, how this violence affects children's participation in education, and what mechanisms for prevention are being undertaken in different communities. With qualitative research, the goal is to gain deep insight and understanding of issues specific to children, rather than to generalize to the larger population. Our study features in-depth qualitative data collection in twelve school communities from across Bauchi, Niger and Zamfara states, including focus group discussions and key informant interviews with students, parents, teachers, and local leaders. The sampling, data collection, and analysis strategies are described below.

3.3.1. Sampling

For this component of the study, we selected four school communities from each of the three states: Niger, Zamfara, and Bauchi, for a total of 12 school communities. These twelve schools are a subset of the 108 schools sampled in the quantitative component and were assessed on both the quantitative and qualitative measures. To get the most comprehensive possible picture of the range of circumstances across the three states, we selected "typical" schools that represent different types of communities. The schools were considered "typical" based on being medium sized. In each state, we sampled one urban school, one semi-rural school, and two rural schools. For sampling within each school and school community, the strategy is described in the section on data collection.

3.3.2. Data collection: instrumentation

Data collection took place with gender-balanced teams of enumerators spending approximately one full day in each school and school community conducting qualitative research. As mentioned, these schools also participated in the quantitative data collection. Head teachers and community leaders were notified prior to school visits and briefed on the purpose of the research. The team solicited their support and assistance and set up a preliminary schedule for focus group discussions and interviews. Data collection methodologies at each school included the following:

Data collection activities in each of the 12 schools		Total number
Focus Group Discussions	Male students age 12+	12
	Female students age 12+	12
	Female parents	12
	Male parents	12
	Female local leaders	12
	Male local leaders	12
Interviews	Male student age 12+	12
	Female student age 12+	12
	Female parent	12
	Male parent	12
	Teacher	12
	Local leader (male or female)	12

Eight interviews were also conducted with federal, state and local level government officials, representing a range of agencies involved in gender and education issues.

3.3.3. Analysis

All focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. The analysis team developed a coding scheme based on the research questions and key themes under consideration. The data itself was coded using *Dedoose*, an online qualitative data analysis tool that allows multiple analysts to collaboratively work simultaneously. During analysis, emerging themes were noted and new codes created accordingly. All data were reviewed twice by two different analysts to ensure high-quality and comprehensive coding. Once coding was completed, the analytical team drafted a set of key findings as related to each of the research questions.

A key limitation of the qualitative analysis is the risk that the selected schools and communities are not representative of the larger population. A related challenge is that, because the topics under discussion are sensitive, respondents may have been advised not to answer honestly, in order to hide the true state of affairs from researchers. To help mitigate these challenges, we employed several techniques meant to improve the validity and reliability of the qualitative findings. First, we used a purposeful sampling approach meant to identify school communities that are typical, and with 12 schools as a sample, we should have sufficient data to inform on broad trends. Secondly, we triangulate our findings among numerous sources of data and insight – from different stakeholders within the schools. Third, we look for clear patterns in the data, not focusing attention on findings that emerge from only one or two voices but rather compelling patterns.

4. Findings

In this section, key findings from all data sources are presented by theme: prevalence and perceptions of violence; risk factors by exposure to violence; and impacts of violence on education and well-being.

4.1. Prevalence and perceptions of violence in Northern Nigeria

4.1.1. Prevalence of violence against children

Table 1 reveals that violence in childhood is a common reality in Nigeria. According to the VACS data, most males and females report experiencing some form of physical violence by age 18. Boys were more commonly affected than girls, with 62 % of boys experiencing physical abuse in childhood compared to 59 % of girls. Boys also face higher levels of emotional abuse than girls. 1 in 5 girls and 3 in 10 boys experience emotional abuse at the hand of a parent or relative. Girls, on the other hand, face much higher rates of sexual exploitation and abuse than boys. About 14 % and 22 % of girls report experiencing sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, respectively. Compared to boys, 7 % and 6 % of whom report experience sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

We also see that the VACS sample reports much higher rates of all types of violence in the South of Nigeria than in the North. 72 % of

Table 1
Prevalence (in %) of Violence by Type and Region.

	Male	Female	North	South
Physical violence	62 %	59 %	49 %	72 %
Emotional abuse	29 %	20 %	18 %	32 %
Sexual Exploitation	7 %	14 %	6 %	14 %
Sexual Abuse	6 %	22 %	8 %	20 %
Observations	**1273**	**961**	**1092**	**1142**

*Note: The VACS does not distinguish individual states. We match state-level information from the VACS to other nationally representative household surveys using religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic population composition to differentiate between Northern and Southern states in the VACS.
Source: Violence against children survey, 2014.

children reported experiencing physical violence in the South compared to 49 % in the North. This difference is particularly stark for sexual exploitation and abuse, where those in the South report rates over twice as high as those in the North, 14 % and 20 % report experiencing sexual exploitation and abuse respectively in the South, compared to only 7 % and 8 % in the North. The severity of these differences has the potential to confound findings from our analytic strategy, since we seek to understand how certain characteristics and outcomes correlate to violence. This may be attributable to the fact that Nigeria is a country that is divided regionally along religious lines with the North being predominantly (approximately 75 %) being Muslim and the South (approximately 85 %) being Christian.[2] These differences are also in part due to differences in socioeconomic and educational standing between Northern and Southern states. A possible explanation for this striking difference is the cultural value of silence in the Northern states, where open discussion of abuse (particularly sexual abuse) is discouraged (Medubi, 2010). As such, we restrict our VACS analysis to the Northern states to mitigate this potential source of bias, which results in a final sample of 630 males and 462 females residing in the North.

Our 2019 school survey (Table 2) confirms the findings from the VACS data that violence is still commonly experienced by children. Again, most boys and girls report experiencing some form of physical violence in childhood. Unlike the VACS sample, girls report higher rates of physical violence than boys, with rates of 74 % for boys and 87 % for girls. Girls also report experiencing higher rates of sexual violence: 24 % of girls experienced some form of sexual abuse compared to 21 % of boys. Boys, on the other hand, report higher rates of emotional violence than girls, comparing 26 % of boys to 15 % of girls. Prevalence rates for physical and sexual violence are much higher than those in the VACS, which reported physical violence for 62 % of boys and 59 % of girls, and sexual violence for 6 % of boys and 22 % of girls. This may be because of differences in our definitions of violence. Though our physical and emotional violence modules use very similar definitions to the VACS, our sexual violence module includes verbal harassment in addition to other forms of abuse.

Meanwhile, we break down experiences of sexual violence by severity. Although sexual exploitation is commonly witnessed, it is far less commonly experienced, by only 3 % of girls and 1 % of boys. These numbers are much lower than those from the VACS, 11 % for girls and 4 % for boys. Verbal harassment, in comparison, is very common. 28 % of girls and 11 % of boys report being the subject of sexual name calling or rumors. Next, we asked children about their experiences of inappropriate touching and other sexual abuse. 12 % of boys and girls report being touched inappropriately without their consent. 11 % of girls and 5 % of boys report experiencing attempted rape, and a much smaller proportion report experiencing forced or coerced sex. 3 % of girls and 1 % of boys report experiencing rape, and 4 % of girls and 2 % of boys report being coerced into sex. Our prevalence figures for sexual abuse differ slightly from the VACS: our sample reports higher rates of less-severe abuse, like touching and attempted rape, but lower rates of more-severe abuse, like rape and coerced sex, than the VACS survey.

4.1.2. Locations of violence against children

Table 3 displays the percentage of students who reported experience violence at home, at school, or at some other location. Sexual abuse was most commonly reported at some location other than a child's home or school, with 10 % of boys and 14 % of girls reporting sexual violence at some other location. Meanwhile, 7 % of boys and 8 % of girls experienced sexual abuse at home, and 2 % of boys and 4 % of girls report sexual abuse at school. Emotional violence was most commonly experienced in the home, reported by 14 % of boys and 8 % of girls. But this violence was also experienced commonly in schools and other locations. 7 % of boys and 6 % of girls experience emotional violence in schools.

4.1.3. Community definitions of violence against children

In interviews and focus group discussions, parents and community members define violence as any act that goes "against the norms and values of the society." This includes the following: corporal punishment that is too severe or unfairly given; severe verbal abuse; sexual abuse; physical fighting; stealing; disrespecting elders; and banditry. Parents believe that these types of violence against children (as defined above) have a negative impact on children, including the risk of children becoming reclusive and unable to concentrate on their studies. Children consider unfair or overly severe corporal punishment as violence, developing a sense of solidarity in their shared experience. In a focus group with female students, one girl said "flogging is what the students here fear most. It threatens us."

4.1.4. Perceptions of physical violence against children

Interviews and focus groups revealed that, for most parents, corporal punishment is a tool to enforce the norms and values of society among children and is therefore not violence. Teachers agreed, arguing that violence against children largely takes place in pupils' homes or in the community, describing corporal punishment as necessary and schools and classrooms as safe spaces. Most children participating in the study, regardless of their gender, reported experiencing physical violence both at home and school on a regular basis, usually for disciplinary purposes. Some students, like their parents, view corporal punishment as a mechanism to enforce collective norms and values. Some children stated that "disobedience" is what makes teachers beat students, and one girl expressed that punishment doesn't affect attendance, because "it only makes us to be careful and obey the school rules and regulation" and "make[s] us to be more serious in our studies."

Both at home and at school, physical violence is usually described by respondents as harsher for boys than for girls. Parents often emphasizes how girls are less able to withstand any kind of corporal punishment or violence; as one father said, "She is weak by her gender. Even our religion has emphasized this difference." Many parents worry that schools are not safe for girls, particularly because of the risk of sexual violence. Community members describe girls as the "weaker" sex or emphasize that "she will be a mother," while boys are "tougher" and therefore can take a beating better. Boys are beaten with a cane, forced to do demanding physical exercises such as "frog jumps," and are grabbed by

Table 2
Student Experiences of Violence by Type.

	Male	Female
Physical Violence	74 %	87 %
Emotional violence	26 %	15 %
Sexual abuse	18 %	24 %
Sexual exploitation	1 %	3 %
Observations	**532**	**555**

Table 3
Student Experiences of Emotional and Sexual Violence by Location.

	Male	Female
Experienced sexual abuse		
At home	7 %	8 %
At school	2 %	4 %
At other location	10 %	14 %
Experienced emotional violence		
At home	14 %	8 %
At school	7 %	6 %
At other location	11 %	6 %
Observations	**532**	**555**

the ears. Most girls mentioned "kneeling" and getting beaten on the hands. However, in one focus group discussion, girls said "sometimes we are flogged more than boys in the classroom" due to being more "stubborn" and making more noise, and one parent mentioned a girl's hands being destroyed by a teacher.

Respondents also reported that they value certain types of physical violence as necessary to maintain social stability. For example, perpetrators of sexual violence in rural communities are more likely to be beaten and sent away from the community than punished through the court system. A respondent described how, when a father found out his son was stealing, he beat him before bringing him to the police. In response to a question about promoting safety, security, peace, and unity, a community leader responded that "Any one we talk to and refuses to listen, we used to assign people to beat them very well." Participants also mention arming themselves to combat bandits or hired vigilantes. The formal punishment for pupils that engage in violent acts is to be beaten by a teacher or prefect, while those that report being the victims of violence may be targeted once again by the perpetrator with more violence.

4.1.5. Perceptions of sexual violence against children

Respondents shared that many girls are kept out of school completely, or are removed from school once they reach adolescence, because of the (real or perceived) threat of sexual violence in school and on the route to and from school. Sexual violence against girls was frequently referenced by participants, although most descriptions are described anecdotally about others in the community, rather than personal experiences, and may represent more rumor than fact. A few teachers shared that schools can be sites of transactional sex between teachers and students, including teachers who pay school fees in exchange for sex. Stories of girls being raped by older boys and men were mentioned by multiple respondents, with incidents reported to have taken place in and around schools, at home, and in other locations in the community. Several cases involved male students raping female peers, and several stories implicated male teachers assaulting female students. One story described a brother raping a sister, while another described a male school administrator facilitating transactional sex arrangements with female pupils. When female survivors of sexual assault become pregnant, respondents report that they are sometimes forced by the family or community to marry the perpetrator. In other instances, young victims were described as going to great lengths to remove a fetus through abortion or selling babies to traffickers. Sexual violence against boys was hardly mentioned.

4.1.6. Perceptions of emotional violence against children

Respondents, especially children, made frequent references to emotional violence (e.g., being treated differently because of gender, bullying, or verbal assaults) and also to the psychosocial effects of physical and sexual violence (e.g., becoming a "reclusive" or "shy"). Emotional violence, particularly bullying and verbal assaults, appears to be common in schools. A few teachers mentioned bullying and an overreliance upon corporal punishment within schools as contributing to a culture of violence. Examples of bullying include older students stealing food from younger ones and multiple examples of school prefects abusing their power over younger pupils. Teachers, parents, and prefects were described on multiple occasions as "ridiculing" students or verbally assaulting them. Many respondents spoke about the "wickedness" of prefects and their role in perpetuating violence in schools. Children also mentioned being "ridiculed" or shared stories of verbal abuse from prefects, teachers, and sometimes parents.

4.2. Risk factors, by exposure to violence

In this section, we implement a multivariate logistic regression analysis to estimate the likelihood of occurrence of different type of violence in relation to children's exposure to other types of violence,

demographic characteristics, attitudes toward violence, and some negative past experiences. Formally, we estimate the following logistic regression model:

$$\log\left(\frac{p_i}{1 - p_i}\right) = \alpha + X\beta + Z\delta + \varepsilon_i$$

Here, p_i, represents the probability of exposure to physical, emotional, or sexual violence by child i and X is an array of independent variables including whether child i has also experienced other types of violence, their sex, age, ethnicity, religion, whether living with both parents, marital status, number of children, disability status, and socioeconomic status (SES).[3] Z is another array of independent variables that include child i's attitudes toward violence and whether they experienced certain hardships in the past such as meal cutting or homelessness. Our estimates of β and δ represent the odds ratio of the likelihood of occurrence of violence in relation to the children's various demographic factors, attitudes, and past hardships. The results of this analysis would then enable us to what factors are most associated with the likelihood of the occurrence of violence against children.

4.2.1. Children exposed to multiple forms of violence are at higher risk of more violence

Table 4 shows that children who are exposed to any type of violence

Table 4
Child risk factors, by type of violence (Odds ratios from multivariate logistic regressions).

	Physical Violence	Emotional Violence	Sexual Violence
Exposure to other forms of violence:			
Physical Violence		3.41***	2.15***
Emotional Violence	3.01***		1.73***
Sexual Violence	2.54***	1.76**	
Demographic factors:			
Female	2.51***	0.32***	2.49***
Age	0.83**	0.83**	1.12
Repeating grade	0.65	0.55	2.37
Ethnicity - Hausa	1.81	1.08	1.06
Language - Hausa	0.18***	0.70	1.82
Religion - Islam	1.38	0.95	0.53
Does not live with both parents	1.47	0.99	1.58**
Married	0.27*	0.31*	1.77
Has Children	0.14**	2.27	0.85
Physical disability	1.07	1.64	1.09
Cognitive disability	0.28***	0.42*	2.81***
Low SES	1.44	1.01	0.93
Children's attitudes toward violence:			
Acceptance of Domestic Violence	1.01	1.90**	1.20
Acceptance of Gendered Violence	0.95	1.16	2.48***
Acceptance of Corporal Punishment	3.54***	1.61**	1.41
Negative life experiences:			
Cutting the size of meals	1.43**	0.93	0.79
Respondent has lived on the street	0.80	0.93	2.68*
Observations	*928*	*702*	*494*

Notes: Figures reported in the table refer to odds ratios as estimated using logistic regression. Statistical significance is denoted as follows: *** p < 1 %, ** p < 5 %, and * p < .10 %

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[3] SES is an index calculated using the DHS methodology that employs a principal components analysis based on household asset ownership.

are more likely to have experienced other types of violence. For instance, we find that children who have experienced emotional violence are 3 times more likely to also experience physical violence than children who have not experienced any emotional violence. Similarly, we find that children who have experienced physical and/or emotional violence are between 1.7 and 2.2 times more likely to experience sexual violence than children who have not experienced any physical or emotional violence. In sum, this finding confirms the notion that children who are once exposed to violence become at risk of experiencing other forms of violence as well.

4.2.2. Demographic characteristics matter

In terms of students' demographic characteristics, we estimate that girls are 2.5 times more likely to experience physical and sexual violence than boys but are less likely to experience emotional violence. We also find that older children are less prone to experiencing physical and emotional violence than younger children. However, the likelihood of sexual violence does not vary significantly with age. Children who do not live with both their biological parents are more susceptible to sexual violence and physical violence, although the latter effect is not statistically significant. Children with disabilities are also shown to be more likely to experience sexual violence than able-bodied children. Further, we estimate that children who are repeating their current grade or are married are about 1.8 times more likely to experience sexual violence than their counterparts who are not repeaters or married. However, these last two estimated odds ratios are not found to be statistically significant.

4.2.3. Exposure to violence is associated with more favorable attitudes towards violence

The data also show that children who experience any of the three types of violence studied in this paper are also more likely to report favorable attitudes toward violence. For instance, victims of physical violence tend to have more favorable attitudes toward corporal punishment and victims of sexual violence tend to have more favorable attitudes toward gendered violence relative to their counterparts. Lastly, our analysis provides valuable insight into how economic hardships characterized by meal cutting at home or living on the streets currently or in the past increase the risk of exposure to physical or sexual violence, respectively. Adolescents who have reported meal cutting in the past are 1.4 times more likely to experience physical violence while those who have reported living on the streets were almost 2.7 times more likely to experience sexual violence.

4.2.4. Victims are more likely to have experienced economic hardship and shocks

These findings show that victims of violence, in general, are those children who belong to vulnerable groups and certain shocks such as economic hardships can act as transmission mechanisms of violence against children. In addition, our results suggest that children who experience violence are more likely to be accepting of these types of behaviors. Specifically, we find that children who experience physical violence are more likely to be accepting of corporal punishment, those who experience emotional violence are more likely to be accepting of domestic violence and corporal punishment. While victims of sexual violence are more likely to be accepting of gendered violence. This suggests that victimization may have adverse effects on the children's perceptions of violence and may normalize such behaviors. Respondents report that violence against children is exacerbated by poverty, vulnerability, and insecurity. Girls who are involved in "hawking" goods on the street to support their families may be more vulnerable to sexual violence than others. Bandits make travel difficult, further constricting economic opportunities and committing crimes such as kidnapping, raping, maiming, and killing community members.

4.3. Impacts of violence on well-being and education

In the final stage of the analysis, we complete a multivariate linear regression analysis to estimate the correlation between children's exposure to different types, or a combination thereof, on children's outcomes. First, we estimate the correlation between the different types, or combinations of, violence and children's intermediate outcomes of mental health and wellness, early marriage and pregnancy, and social and emotional competencies. Next, we estimate the relationship between exposure to violence and educational outcomes.

We argue in our conceptual framework that exposure to violence against children can lead to adverse effects on their mental health, early marriage and pregnancy, and social and emotional well-being. At the same time, although violence can have negative effects on educational outcomes directly, worsening of these intermediate outcomes may contribute to exacerbating these effects among victims. The multivariate framework will enable us to test whether the relationship between violence and the intermediate outcomes hold, and whether the net effects of violence on educational outcomes are significant. One drawback to this approach is that this analytic framework does not allow us to disentangle the different pathways by which violence can negatively impact educational outcomes. As such, the estimated relationship between violence and educational outcomes are the sum of the possible pathways, hence the term 'net' effect.

To estimate the relationship between different types of violence and the intermediate and educational outcomes for children in the analytic sample, we employ a two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) with random effects at the lowest geographic region available. The HLM is an extension of the generalized linear model that will enable us to establish the relationship between physical, emotional, and sexual violence and the outcome variables while controlling for observed covariates and the level-2 random effects will account for heterogeneity and clustering effects between the geographic areas. Formally, we estimate the following HLM regression equation:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \mu_j + X\beta + \delta_1 P_i + \delta_2 E_i + \delta_3 S_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Y_{ij} denotes the dependent variable representing well-being and educational outcomes of child i in cluster j.[4] α estimates the overall mean, the level-1 intercept, and μ_j represents the individual level-2 random intercepts for each geographic cluster, j. X is again an array of student observed characteristics including age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, language, and disability status. The variables P_i, E_i, and S_i denote whether child i experienced physical, emotional, and sexual violence, respectively. Lastly, ε_{ij} is the idiosyncratic error term.

As such, the HLM will allow us to first establish the effects of violence on children's likelihood of early marriage, pregnancy, mental wellness, emotional awareness, and self-efficacy. Early marriage and pregnancy are restricted to the girls in the sample. We measure children's mental wellness and self-efficacy by constructing a standardized index via Principal Components Analysis (PCA). Both indexes are measured in terms of standard deviations from the mean where higher positive values indicate improved wellness and lower negative values indicate below average worsened mental health relative to the mean.

After establishing the correlations between violence and child well-being which we hypothesize to affect educational outcomes, we estimate the relationship between violence and access to school, attendance, dropout, basic literacy, and perceptions of safety in and around school. This analysis will shed light on the degree to which experiences of violence, be it physical, emotional, sexual, or a combination can negatively impact children's educational opportunities, basic learning, and perceived safety. At the same time, this analysis will allow us to shed light on the scope and reach of the impacts of violence.

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[4] The cluster is defined as the lowest geographic area included in the survey.

4.3.1. Violence and child well-being (mental health, emotional awareness, and self-efficacy)

Table 5 presents the results of the HLM regression to test whether there are significant associations between different types of violence that respondents have reported and early marriage and pregnancy, mental health, emotional awareness, and self-efficacy. This analysis aids us to determine possible pathways by which violence can eventually lead to worsened educational outcomes. Specifically, we estimate the effects of violence on emotional awareness (ACES), self-efficacy, and mental health.[5] We find that sexual violence, more so than physical or emotional violence, is associated with increases of 7.4 percentage points in the likelihood of self-harm, significant at the 1 % level. Exposure to physical and emotional violence are also associated with an increased probability of having suicidal thoughts by 2.1 percentage points, although significant only at the 10 % level. Similarly, we find that children experiencing any type of violence have relatively worse mental wellness, more so for victims of sexual violence, by between 0.11 and 0.24 standard deviations. The results, more importantly, show that experiencing more than one type of violence can have cumulative effects, the harshest being on victims of all three types of violence.

The results also show that violence is associated with worse emotional awareness and lower self-efficacy. In other words, respondents who report experiencing physical or emotional violence have a lower ability to accurately identify emotions associated with different social situations, lower self-esteem, and worse outlook. Those who experienced emotional violence in combination with physical or sexual violence, scored significantly worse on the ACES emotional accuracy module than those who did not experience any violence. Those who experienced emotional or physical violence reported lower self-efficacy than those who did not experience any violence. However, we find insignificant effects of sexual violence on emotional awareness and self-efficacy. Lastly, we find that victims of sexual violence are more likely to have entered into an early marriage and to have been pregnant in the past. Specifically, girls who are victims of sexual violence are 17.5 percent more likely to be in an early marriage and 8.9 percent more likely to have been pregnant relative to girls who have never experienced any violence. These coefficients are statistically significant at the 5 and 10 % levels, respectively. Our results, thus, support our hypothesis that violence leads to a higher likelihood of early marriage and pregnancy, lower social and emotional learning skills, self-efficacy, and worse mental health that may contribute to worse educational outcomes.

4.3.2. Impact of violence on educational outcomes

Table 6 shows the estimation results of the net effects of violence on educational outcomes. We find that violence, in general, is associated with worsened school attendance, lower reading ability, and lower perceived safety when traveling to and from school. Children who have experienced sexual violence are 22.1 percentage points less likely to currently be attending school than those who have not experienced any form of violence, all else being equal. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 1 % level. Those who have experienced emotional and physical violence are 9.1 and 0.4 percentage points less likely to be attending school respectively, these differences are not statistically significant. Similarly, we find that children who have experienced any type of violence are more likely to have dropped out of school by between 4.2 and 16.8 percentage points, although only the effect of sexual violence is found statistically significant. Given these estimates, we conclude that children who report experiencing all three types of violence are the worst off as the probability of being out of school is 31.6

percentage points higher than those who have experienced none. Whereas those who experienced both physical and emotional violence are only 9.5 percentage points less likely to be in school, these estimates are not statistically significant.

Children who have experienced emotional violence are less likely to have ever attended school, by 19.8 percentage points and is significant at the 1 % level. Those who have experienced sexual violence are less likely to have ever attended school by 6.9 percentage points, though this estimate is not significant. This also means that those who experience both sexual and emotional violence are the worst off as they are 26.7 percentage points less likely to have ever attended school, all other observed factors being equal. In terms of the children's reading ability, when asked to read a short passage in the local language of Hausa, children who had experienced physical violence were 8.6 percentage points less likely to be able to read the entire passage, while victims of emotional and sexual violence exhibited no significant differences from children who have never experienced any violence. Lastly, we find that children who have been victims of emotional or sexual violence report being less likely to fee safe to travel to and from school by 5.3 and 3.5 percentage points, respectively. Although only emotional violence is statistically significant at the 10 % level. More notable, however, is that children who experience both emotional and sexual violence are 8.8 percentage points less likely to feel safe traveling to and from school.

These findings are particularly important as they highlight the severity of the effects of violence on multiple dimensions of children's lives. Our results corroborate our hypothesis that children who experience any form of violence are more likely to experience worsened mental health, emotional awareness, self-efficacy, early marriage and pregnancy that could increase the barriers for access to any formal education, let alone a higher quality of education as exhibited in their lower reading ability. Further, as children do not feel safe going to and from school, parents are also likely to keep their children from going to school as a result, especially in a context such as Northern Nigeria.

4.3.3. Community perceptions of the impact of violence on long-term outcomes

Although most corporal punishment is considered "normal," there are occasions when it is perceived as unfair or too severe, and in these cases community members argue that it may lead to worsened educational outcomes for boys and girls. Participants argue that victims carry these experiences with them into the future, shaping their educational trajectories (and their overall life trajectories). One pupil said that abuse "…will cause both physical and emotional pain. In fact, the person will feel the pain all through his/her life." A teacher said, "There is a reluctance among those students who experience violence because they cannot be able to be free among themselves and they cannot perform very well in the class. And his peers can be harassing him which can lead him to drop out of school." Participants sometimes referred to this phenomenon as "hardening" (e.g., joining gangs, engaging in bullying, etc.) or "becoming stubborn" (refusing to listen, refusing to behave).

In particular, after experiencing sexual violence, community members describe girls as "traumatized" and "reclusive." A male parent said, "When a girl child is raped, her future has been destroyed." Some do not return to school at all, while others return only after a while. "Shy" was a frequent adjective used to describe victims of sexual violence. Girls struggle with the stigma of victimization. In addition, sexual violence does not have to be real to impact a girl's educational outcomes; parental fear is enough. As one policy maker stated, once a girl reaches puberty, she is eligible to be married and the longer it takes for her to marry, the more likely it is for her to be "molested one way or the other by her male colleagues," which has implications for her future marriageability. It is during this "waiting stage" that many girls are pulled from school. Parents who keep their daughters in school deal with mounting social pressures as other girls begin to marry.

Emotional violence is also seen as linked to reduced educational outcomes. Those who experience bullying and other forms of emotional

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[5] We measure emotional accuracy using the Assessment of Children's Emotional Skills (ACES). ACES measures children's ability to perceive and recognize basic emotions (Trentacosta et al., 2006). Mental health outcomes include suicidal thoughts and a PCA index for symptoms of depression.

Table 5
Effect of Violence on Student Outcomes.

Type of violence experienced	Ever married	Ever pregnant	Mental Health	Suicidal thoughts	ACES Score (% Correct)	Self-Efficacy
Physical	−0.054	−0.063	−0.108*	0.021*	−0.009	−0.231
Emotional	0.061	−0.013	−0.142*	0.021*	−0.032	−0.039
Sexual	0.175**	0.089*	−0.239**	0.074***	0.001	0.004
Physical + Emotional	0.006	−0.076	−0.250***	0.042***	−0.008	−0.227
Physical + Sexual	0.121	0.026	−0.347***	0.095***	−0.008	−0.227
Emotional + Sexual	0.236**	0.076	−0.381***	0.095***	−0.031	−0.035
Physical + Emotional + Sexual	0.182*	0.013	−0.489***	0.116***	−0.04	−0.266
Coefficient of Determination	0.68	0.52	0.23	0.24	0.39	0.59
N Observations	462	462	972	1092	1034	987

Note: Figures in the table denote linear regression coefficients estimated using Generalized Linear Model (GLM). Statistical significance is denoted as follows: *** p < 1 %, ** p < 5 %, and * p < .10 %

Table 6
Effect of Violence on Student Outcomes.

Type of violence experienced	Currently attending school	Ever attended school	Dropped out	Can read an entire passage	Feel safe at school	Feel safe travel to and from school
Physical	−0.004	0.058	0.042	−0.086**	0.023	−0.004
Emotional	−0.091	−0.198***	0.071	−0.009	−0.025	−0.053*
Sexual	−0.221***	−0.069	0.168**	−0.014	−0.007	−0.035
Physical + Emotional	−0.095	−0.14*	0.113	−0.095**	0.016	−0.039
Physical + Sexual	−0.225***	−0.011	0.21**	−0.101**	0.016	−0.039
Emotional + Sexual	−0.312***	−0.267***	0.239*	−0.023	−0.032	−0.088**
Physical + Emotional + Sexual	−0.316***	−0.209**	0.281*	−0.109**	−0.009	−0.092**
Coefficient of Determination	0.70	0.71	0.37	0.25	0.21	0.21
N Observations	1092	1092	1092	1007	1034	1035

Note: Figures in the table denote linear regression coefficients estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). Statistical significance at least at the 10 % level is denoted by an asterisk (*).

violence were described as less likely to feel free and socialize with others in school, which in some cases could affect their learning and overall educational participation.

In addition, pupils often shared that they often did not feel comfortable sharing problems with adults, due to a lack of trust in authority figures and a tendency to punish those reporting problems, particularly in schools. They describe taking stresses and challenges into their own hands, sometimes resulting in fighting on the way to and from school, and bullying. One child reported that another had felt so scared to talk about an injury from corporal punishment that he left a wound untreated and his leg eventually had to amputated. Two pupils in a focus group discussion replied "we can't say anything about that" in response to a question about alternatives to corporal punishment, illustrating the cultural of silence and inability to share solutions regarding reducing violence in the classroom.

5. Discussion

At the outset of this study, we hypothesized that children's exposure to violence - physical, emotional, sexual, or a combination - leads to worsened mental health, social-emotional learning skills, and educational outcomes. The main advantage of our analysis is that the effects of violence are identified by comparing the summative and intermediate outcomes of victims to those who report having never experienced violence of any form. This enables us to create a hypothetical, though not necessarily a counterfactual, point of reference regarding what outcomes children would have had they not been exposed to such abusive behaviors during their childhood or adolescence. These analyses confirm that exposure to violence, both in schools and outside of schools, does lead to reduced social and educational outcomes for Nigerian children.

While violence is not limited to the educational system, schools appear to be particularly risky locations for children, due to the high-stakes power dynamics between pupils and those in power over pupils

(teachers, prefects and others). For most Nigerian children, exposure to a certain level of violence is considered normal, mostly in the form of corporal punishment, which is widely considered to be necessary for children to grow up properly and become responsible adults. According to respondents, the main purpose of corporal punishment is to enforce social norms and punish deviant behavior, and schools lean heavily on corporal punishment to maintain discipline. However, alignment to social norms may be more challenging for some children than others, such as children who do not live with both of their parents and children who live in poverty. Children from these groups tend to experience more violence than other children, both inside and outside of school, and as a result, children from these groups experience reduced social and educational outcomes. Additionally, despite the normalization of corporal punishment in Nigeria, the severity of violence also matters: violence that is considered extreme or unfair, and any kind of sexual violence, is almost never culturally acceptable, and these kinds of severe violence also appear to be endemic in schools. Again, the hierarchical power relationships that shape Nigerian schools are behind this.

What are the implications of these findings for the educational system? We provide some evidence that children who report experiencing any kind of severe violence exhibit significantly worse notions of self-worth and mental health, as well as reduced learning and educational outcomes. According to community members, visible impacts of this type of violence on children include "shyness" and a reduced ability for the victim to feel free and comfortable in an educational setting. Sexual violence against girls almost always results in girls leaving school either by choice or necessity, and the fear of sexual violence against girls may lead parents to pre-emptively remove them from school as a protective measure. At the same time, exposure to violence also increases the likelihood that children will be more accepting of violent behaviors in general, thus creating the potential for a cycle of violence, because those exposed to violence may be more likely to perpetuate it.

The issues raised by this research study are directly applicable to current policy dialogues in Nigeria. In collaboration with UNICEF and

Nigerian policy makers, the research team recommended the immediate domestication and implementation of the Child's Rights Act. There has already been progress on this front: directly following research dissemination activities in late 2019 with stakeholders from Bauchi, Bayelsa, Niger, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, and Zamfara, all eight states signed a commitment to hasten the passage of the Child's Rights Act into law and put mechanisms in place to prevent violence against children and prosecute perpetrators. The research team also recommended that Nigerian policymakers consider integrated, cross-sectoral solutions to address the problem of violence against children in all its forms, avoiding siloed solutions and moving towards more holistic improved outcomes for all children. These types of approaches are being successfully used in other West African nations – for example, the National Child Protection Policy of Côte d'Ivoire includes actors from across national and regional levels and across sectors.

Recommendations for Nigerian educational systems should also be relatively clear. Schools are currently sites of both sanctioned and non-sanctioned violence against children, which impacts some children more than others, and leads to reduced educational and social outcomes for many. This is a problem that the educational system needs to address head-on. At a very basic level, teachers who engage in sexual and other types of abuse of children must be criminalized and punished appropriately, and security mechanisms in schools need to be improved, with pupil safeguarding as the top priority. The National Policy on Education, which serves as the national guidelines for the effective administration and management of education in Nigeria, must be strengthened with attention to how schools can address violence through reporting mechanisms, training on alternatives to corporal punishment, expansion of counseling services within schools, and other possible strategies. Finally, although violence against children in and around schools is not unique to the Nigerian context, the solutions must be locally driven and relevant to the unique mix of factors present in Africa's largest economy, particularly in the Northern region.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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