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# How the Media Cover School Violence: Evidence from Five African Countries

David K. Evans and Kiersten Robertson

## Abstract

School violence—physical, sexual, and psychological—is prevalent in many schools around the world. Because media coverage of current events can play an important role in shaping tolerance for school violence and policy responses, we examine 208 recent news items about school-related violence in the five most populated African countries with major English-speaking populations (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania). We find significant variation in news coverage across countries, with suggestive evidence that this coverage is driven not by varying levels of underlying violence but rather by differences in societal acceptance of different types of violence. News coverage of school-related violence by African news sources focuses mostly on sexual violence, whereas coverage by non-African sources focuses equally on sexual and physical violence (including but not limited to corporal punishment); this again may reflect differences in levels of acceptance. Most articles report on general trends of school violence rather than particular incidents. Most focus on teacher-on-student violence, followed by student-on-student violence. We find no substantive evidence of placing responsibility on victims of violence in our sample. Solutions to school violence in media coverage tend to focus on increasing coverage, stronger punishments for perpetrators, and increased security at schools, among others, which diverge from the training approaches currently under study by many researchers. We discuss potential ways to leverage media coverage to promote action against school violence more effectively.

### KEYWORDS

education; media;  
violence; teachers;  
gender; bullying

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# 1. Introduction

Violence in schools is a challenge in many countries (Evans et al., 2023). This violence manifests in many forms—physical, sexual, and psychological—and through different perpetrators, including teachers, other school personnel, students, and outside actors who enter schools. School violence—along with any violence against children—is a violation of children’s human rights (UNHCR, 1989). It also has significant adverse impacts on children’s learning outcomes in school (Burdick-Will, 2013; Ponzo, 2013) and on subsequent life outcomes (Brown and Taylor, 2008; Varhama and Björkqvist, 2005). Yet many countries do not highly prioritize student safety in their proposed efforts to improve their education systems (Crawford et al., 2022).

Media coverage of social issues—like school violence—influences real world outcomes. News coverage of violence has affected news consumers’ attitudes (Cao, 2022; Keita et al., 2023) as well as their choices in voting (Couttenier et al., 2021) and in travel (Besley et al., 2020). In areas beyond violence, news coverage affects behaviors related to health (Ozgun and Broekel, 2022), fertility (Guetto et al., 2023), domestic and international migration (Di Maio et al., 2023; Wilson, 2021), and policy choices such as disaster relief allocation (Eisensee and Strömberg, 2007).

This paper examines news media coverage of school violence in the five most populated African countries with major English-speaking populations: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania. The news media plays a significant role in deciding what to cover and how to cover it. Understanding how the news media currently covers school violence and how that varies across countries can reveal how news media could contribute in the future to efforts to eliminate school violence.

We identify 208 newspaper articles from the last ten years in a systematic search. We find significant variation in coverage across countries (even adjusted for population) and provide suggestive evidence that this variation reflects different societal norms around school violence rather than differences in actual levels of violence. We also find that sexual violence is more likely to be reported in local news sources in every country, whereas non-African news sources tend to cover sexual and physical violence evenly. More articles in news outlets focus on raising awareness of the issue of school violence (i.e., through editorials or op-eds) than actually report on specific incidents of violence. Violence perpetrated by teachers is more frequently reported than violence from students, despite at least some evidence that the latter is more prevalent. Again, this may reflect norms about the acceptability of different kinds of violence. Articles often critique the government for failing to act against school violence. We find no substantive evidence tying responsibility for the violence to the victims. The primary solution proposed in media is to increase media coverage. We discuss the potential for leveraging the media to change norms around school violence, potentially realizing society-wide change that individual interventions may struggle to accomplish.

This work builds on previous studies examining how school violence is reported in the media. Previous research has examined the framing of violence—e.g., that teachers who perpetrate sexual violence against students often blame students’ demeanor or attire in media interviews in South Africa (De Wet, 2020) or how arson in schools is framed in Kenya—i.e., as a form of school protest, a sign of broken society or an act of few “bad apples” (Oburu et al., 2020). Other research looks at the distribution of coverage, such as that media in South Africa may overemphasize physical rather than sexual or emotional violence (Jacobs, 2014). Some research uses media reports as a source to identify understudied aspects of either school violence—e.g., violence against teachers in South Africa (De Wet, 2021) or reactions to school violence—e.g., family members walking to school with children with albinism to protect them in Tanzania (Burke et al., 2014). This study adds to the existing literature by examining differences in reporting patterns across several countries and comparing those patterns to data on prevalence of violence and attitudes toward violence.

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## 2. Methods

### 2.1. The search and the sample

We identified the five countries with the largest anglophone speaking populations in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania. Relative to the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, these five countries represent a fair amount of diversity: Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania have higher than average GDP per capita for Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas Ethiopia and Tanzania are lower than average.<sup>1</sup> While we lack systematic data on school violence for the region as a whole, we can place these countries in the regional context with respect to one indicator of attitudes toward violence, the proportion of women and men who ever justify domestic violence. On that measure, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are below average while Ethiopia and Tanzania are above average (Sardinha and Catalán 2018).<sup>2</sup>

We used ProQuest (a news search engine) to identify articles.<sup>3</sup> Our objective was to find news articles related to school violence in each of these five countries. We used filters to refine the search results by three source types: “Newspapers,” “Wire Feeds,” and “Blogs, Podcasts, and Websites.” The search parameters encompass a timeframe spanning more than ten years from January 2013 to June 30, 2023, along with specific keywords: “(school OR teacher OR classroom) AND (violence OR rape OR abuse OR harassment OR bully OR assault OR stab OR beat OR spank OR punish OR impregnate) AND [Country Name].” We searched a total of 250 search results from each country. We identified papers that report on violence in a school setting by (1) screening each result based on the headline or the

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1 The GDP per capita data are from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, in constant 2015 US dollars for 2022.

2 South Africa is not included in the study referenced above, but we provide analysis on this issue in Section 3.1.

3 We considered two other sources of articles (AllAfrica.com and individual news sites), but ProQuest proved the most navigable to search for articles over time and often had articles—even from the same news sites—that were not in the other sources. We describe the process of choosing a search site in Appendix 1.

news summary/abstract, and then (2) confirming the subject matter of the article by reading the full text. The full list of sources included in our ProQuest search is in Appendix Table A2. We included news articles that discussed interventions aimed at mitigating school violence, general discussions of the issue including prevalence, policies devised to prevent school violence, and actual instances of abuse in a school setting irrespective of whether instigated by school-affiliated or external individuals. We examined the relevance of the search results after each 50 results; we stopped at 250 as the average relevance of the results dropped (Appendix Figure A1).<sup>4</sup>

In total, we identified 208 articles discussing school violence. Our sample of 208 articles is distributed across countries as follows: 52 from Nigeria, 35 from Kenya, 26 from Tanzania, 87 from South Africa, and 8 from Ethiopia.

## 2.2. The analysis

For each article within the identified sample, we recorded the country that the article related to and classified the article into one of five types: (1) awareness (the article discussed the problem of school violence generally rather than focusing on reporting a specific incident), (2) program (the article describes a program related to reducing school violence), (3) policy (regulations implemented by governing bodies aimed at reducing school violence), (4) incident by school personnel (the article reports on a specific incident perpetrated by an individual associated with the school—i.e., a student or staff member), or (5) incident by non-school personnel.<sup>5,6</sup> We also distinguished between African and non-African newspaper sources. Additionally, we documented the publication year.

If an incident was referenced in the article, we encoded details such as the perpetrator's role (e.g., teacher, student, principal), the perpetrator's gender, as well as the victim's role, age, and gender. We further categorized the type of violence mentioned—sexual, physical, or emotional. If an article discussed multiple incidents, we coded these data for each incident in the article. We also coded indications of attribution or blame directed at specific entities, whether individuals, groups, or institutions such as the education system, government, or parents. Additionally, we analyzed the article's framing of the violence discussion and took note of any recommended courses of action.

## 2.3. Limitations of this work

While this analysis provides insight into how local and international news organizations cover school violence in five countries, there are limitations. We focus on English-language news. While each of the five countries we examine has a substantial English speaking population, each also has media in other languages. Just as a handful of examples, there are newspapers in Hausa, Igbo,

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4 The articles were sorted by relevance.

5 These types were not determined in advance; rather, examination of the articles lent itself to this categorization.

6 Articles that discuss multiple incidents within a couple of months of each other would be categorized as incidents; articles that discuss multiple incidents over a longer period of time, i.e., documenting a pattern of violence, were categorized as awareness.

and Yoruba (in Nigeria), Amharic (in Ethiopia), Swahili (in Kenya and Tanzania), and Zulu (in South Africa). It is possible that newspapers in African languages may cover school violence at different rates or in different ways than English-language newspapers, which may cater to readers that are more nationally representative, more highly educated, or different in some other way. For example, English-language newspapers might be more likely to cover urban violence than rural violence, since readers may be more likely to be in urban areas. Alternatively, they may be more likely to cover rural violence, if the journalists' objective is to distance the problem from the readers. An informal survey of newspapers in each of these five countries suggests that Nigeria has the highest penetration of English-language newspapers, followed by South Africa and Ethiopia, then Kenya, and finally Tanzania (Appendix Table A3). Our study, with its focus on newspapers, represents just one aspect of news coverage of school violence: many residents in the study countries consume news by radio, television, or social media.

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## 3. Results

### 3.1. How much do the news media cover school violence?

Of 208 articles identified, nearly three-quarters (151 articles) were from African news sources. The others (57) were from non-African news sources covering school violence in African countries. In absolute numbers, South Africa has the greatest coverage across countries (87 articles), followed by Nigeria (52), Kenya (35), Tanzania (26), and Ethiopia (8) (Figure 1 Panel A). When we adjust for population, we see that South Africa has more than twice as many articles per capita as the next highest country, Kenya (Figure 1 Panel B). Nigeria and Ethiopia have the fewest articles per capita.

This greater coverage could reflect at least two different factors: higher rates of school violence in the country and lower tolerance for school violence. We provide suggestive evidence on each factor in turn. First, we compare the coverage of school violence in media to rates of school violence from other sources. The news media generally do not seek to document exact rates of a phenomenon in society, unlike nationally representative surveys which attempt to accurately measure rates of violence. However, even national surveys likely underestimate true levels of violence (Palermo et al., 2014; Parkes et al., 2023), in which case, we can treat these estimates as a lower bound. We use the Demographic and Health Surveys, which provide data on the experience of violence among adolescent girls for all five of our sample countries. We find that the number of articles adjusted for population per capita seems to be uncorrelated with estimates of actual levels of violence.<sup>7</sup> For example, the proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who are enrolled in school and who experienced sexual or physical violence in the last year ranges from 7 percent in Ethiopia to 22 percent in Nigeria

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<sup>7</sup> While a sample of just five countries is very few observations to calculate a meaningful correlation coefficient, we see no correlation between the articles per million population and the experience of violence in the last year. The simple correlation is -0.14.

(Table 1).<sup>8</sup> South Africa, despite having lower rates of violence among school-going adolescent girls (11 percent), has by far the highest number of articles per capita. Conversely, Nigeria, which has the highest rates of violence among school-going adolescent girls according to the survey data, has the second lowest number of articles per capita.

The second factor is a lower tolerance for school violence. One measure for this would be a cross-country parent or student survey regarding tolerance for school violence. We are unaware of any such metric, and we also know that opposition to certain forms of violence—e.g., corporal punishment—is far from universal in many contexts (Kalolo and Kapinga, 2023). We use tolerance for domestic violence (specifically, wife beating) as an admittedly imperfect proxy for tolerance for violence in the society as a whole, including school violence (Appendix Table A4). (Of course, tolerance for violence against spouses and tolerance for violence against children could diverge; we present these statistics as suggestive only.) We find that Ethiopia and Tanzania have the highest tolerance for domestic violence—with 31 percent of respondents saying that wife beating is acceptable in Ethiopia and 32 in Tanzania—and South Africa has the lowest tolerance—where the number is just 4 percent. Kenya and Nigeria fall in the middle. The low tolerance for violence in South Africa could be one factor contributing to the relatively high per-population coverage of school violence there.

A second measure for tolerance would be an indicator of the policies around school violence. Media might be more likely to cover school violence when such violence is illegal. As an example from just one form of school violence, corporal punishment in schools is illegal under all circumstances in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa, but not in Nigeria or Tanzania (End Corporal Punishment, 2021, 2022).<sup>9</sup> Again, the illegality of corporal punishment in schools in Kenya and South Africa could be part of the explanation of higher coverage in those contexts. News media may be more likely to cover illegal behavior. While Ethiopia appears to be an outlier in this case: the fact that corporal punishment is banned in schools but not at home (unlike in Kenya and South Africa) could reflect a less pervasive anti-violence norm in Ethiopia.

Of the two candidate hypotheses we propose, tolerance for violence—as reflected both through attitudes and laws—appears to be a stronger candidate for explaining coverage than the actual rate of school violence.

### 3.2. What types of violence get covered?

Across our sample, media are almost twice as likely to cover sexual violence (60 percent of articles) as physical violence (35 percent of articles), with only a few articles covering emotional violence (5 percent) (Figure 2). Sexual violence is more likely to be covered in every country; the one near-

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<sup>8</sup> These violence statistics are not specifically for school violence. They are rates of violence among adolescent girls who are enrolled in school. Some of this violence may take place outside of school. We merely use it as a proxy.

<sup>9</sup> Corporal punishment at home is also banned in Kenya and South Africa but not in Ethiopia.



exception in South Africa, where sexual violence is covered in 47 percent of articles and physical violence is covered in 44 percent in articles. This is in contrast to the available data on the relative prevalence of violence (Table 1), which suggests that physical violence is much more prevalent than sexual violence.<sup>10</sup> We hypothesize that this may be because some parents view some forms of physical violence in the school context (e.g., corporal punishment) as acceptable, whereas fewer may view sexual violence as acceptable. International news sources (mostly based in high-income countries) cover physical and sexual violence more evenly (Appendix Figure A2), perhaps because physical violence is more commonly banned in high-income countries than in the target countries of this study (End Corporal Punishment 2023).

### 3.3. What types of coverage does school-related violence receive?

We identify four different types of articles covering school violence: articles that promote awareness, articles that report on specific incidents of violence (which we subdivide into articles documenting violence by persons associated with the school and violence by persons not associated with the school), articles describing programs to combat school violence, and articles describing policies related to school violence. Across our sample, the most common type of article promotes awareness of school violence (Figure 3). This is true in general and in each of the five countries in our sample. Examples include articles like “How safe is your child at school?” in Kenya’s *Daily Nation*, “Sexual violence, poverty & education corruption in Nigerian secondary schools” in *The Vanguard*, “‘Corporal punishment breeds violence’: Teachers believe there is a discipline vacuum in the classroom” in South Africa’s *The Daily News*, or “Cases of defilement, sodomy increase in Tanzania” in *The Citizen*. These articles do not report on a specific incident of violence but rather comment on trends or propose solutions. For example, the *Daily Nation* article mentioned above includes several anecdotes of violence rather than reporting on a particular incident, as part of a narrative around the overall problem of bullying in Kenyan schools.

The second most common type of article reports on specific incidents of school violence. We divide these into two groups: incidents committed by individuals associated with the school (i.e., students, teachers, other staff) and those committed by individuals not associated with the school (e.g., armed groups). In four of the five countries, incidents by school individuals far outnumber incidents by outsiders; Nigeria is the exception (Figure 3). Examples of articles reporting on incidents perpetrated by school personnel include “Classroom bully outrage: Pupil assault in front of teacher angers officials” in South Africa’s *Independent Online*, “TSC (Teachers Service Commission) ignored assaulted teachers’ cries for help” in Kenya’s *Sunday Nation*, “Federal college staff in trouble for allegedly raping student” in Nigeria’s *Premium Times*, or “Outcry as boy, 13, dies after beating from teacher in Tanzania” in the United Kingdom’s *The Guardian*.

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<sup>10</sup> Sexual violence is likely underestimated in the Demographic and Health Surveys, both because people may feel uncomfortable reporting sexual violence and because that survey defines sexual violence narrowly. The Violence Against Children Survey, which we have for Kenya and Tanzania, shows similarly low numbers for the narrow definition of sexual violence (see Evans et al. (2023); Appendix Table A16).

Examples of news articles that report on incidents committed by individuals not associated with schools (e.g., armed men or police) include “Jilted husband storms school, stabs female teacher in middle of lesson” in Kenya’s *Daily Monitor*, “Shock as robber stabs teacher in classroom before school begins” in South Africa’s *Cape Times*, or “Hammer dangles over four policemen in Ekiti for assault, harassment” in Nigeria’s *Vanguard*.

The third most common type of article reports on interventions or programs being developed or implemented to curb school violence. Examples include “School clubs to curb gender based violence” in Tanzania’s *The Citizen*, “Head teachers call for security personnel, cameras” in Kenya’s *Daily Nation*, or “DA drive to rid schools of sex abuse, violence” in South Africa’s *The Pretoria News*. These articles often report on trainings or campaigns to increase awareness in the wake of acts of violence.

The fourth and least common type of article reports on policies being developed or needed to be developed. These discuss regulations or laws that governments could implement to curb school violence. These could include declaring a state of emergency or enforcing changes in the laws for teachers. When an official change was either proposed or was enacted by governing bodies, it was coded within the policy category. Examples include “Anti-bully policy needed” in South Africa’s *Cape Argus*, “Now Amina names team to develop policy to address sexual abuse” in Kenya’s *Daily Nation*, or “Women group wants inclusion of secondary, special schools in sexual harassment bill” in Nigeria’s *Vanguard*.

### 3.4. Who are the perpetrators and the victims?

When reporting incidents of violence, news media commonly describe the perpetrators and the victims, at least to some degree. The most common association reported across all countries is violence committed by a teacher against a student (Figure 4).<sup>11</sup> These make up 34 percent of total articles, ranging from 0 in Ethiopia to 75 in Tanzania. The next most common type is committed by one student against another (12 percent of total articles).

How does this compare to the best evidence available on who is committing violence? The Violence Against Children Surveys provide detailed information about perpetrators of violence against children at school, and those data are available for three of our study countries (Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania). If we look at who perpetrates school violence against children and youth, we see that—in all three countries—peers are the most common culprits, followed by romantic partners (Table 2).<sup>12</sup> For example, children in Kenya report that 86 percent of incidents of unwanted sexual touch are perpetrated by peers, 7 percent by romantic partners, and 3 percent by teachers—the same proportion as incidents perpetrated by strangers. In Nigeria, 60 percent of instances of forced sex

11 Appendix Table A5 provides a more detailed breakdown of associations between perpetrators and victims.

12 We focus on sexual violence because it is the only type of violence that, for all three studies, allows us to identify the perpetrator for violence that takes place on school grounds. In the Tanzania survey, peers are grouped in the “other” category.

on school grounds are by peers, whereas 20 percent are by romantic partners and 20 percent by teachers. We see similar patterns in Tanzania. Thus, relative to the underlying distribution, the news media overreports on violence perpetrated by teachers relative to violence perpetrated by peers. One hypothesis to explain this is that even though all sexual violence is unacceptable, violence from teachers is viewed as more problematic than that from peers.

We find little evidence of articles explicitly or implicitly blaming students. Insofar as articles assign responsibility, they most commonly highlight three entities: law enforcement, the education system, or other aspects of government. For example, one article in Nigeria highlighted that law enforcement had failed to take action in response to the violence: “The lawmaker said that since concluding investigation into the matter by the ministry, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and the Nigeria Police Force, no action had been taken on the matter.” Another—in South Africa—highlighted a failure to keep sex offenders from becoming teachers: “We must get the Justice and Correctional Services Minister to maintain the sexual offense register. Names of people who were convicted of sexual crimes must be recorded in the register so that they cannot be teachers again.” (*Premium Times Nigeria*, 2019; *The Pretoria News*, 2018). One article in South Africa that blamed the education system reported that an eleventh-grader who had been sexually assaulted by a male teacher “told three female teachers” who said “they would take care of it, but they didn’t. They didn’t even tell the principal” (Mbageni 2015).

If we restrict to articles that report on incidents (rather than promoting awareness of the problem), we find a similar distribution of blame, with parents and terrorist groups added to the list. As examples, two articles in South Africa mention that parents have responsibility for teaching their children not to bully others (Matlhabe, 2016a, 2016b). The lack of assigning responsibility for attacks to student victims is consistent with previous analysis in South Africa, where just one of 68 articles on school violence mentioned a learner’s “provocative attire and seductive demeanor” (i.e., implicitly placing at least partial blame on the learner) (De Wet, 2020).

### 3.5. What do the media recommend?

News reports often include recommendations to reduce violence. The most common of these recommendations is increased media coverage, which could drive increased awareness of school violence. This could be because media outlets are most acutely aware of the limited coverage or because that is the lever of policy influence they are most familiar with. Several news articles point to the fear of potential societal stigma against victims (Atueyi, 2014) and parents’ underreporting of school violence (*The Sunday Independent*, 2017) as limiting factors to media coverage of incidents.

Other common recommendations include greater punishment of perpetrators, encouragement of victims to speak out more, revised or new laws around school violence, and increased security

in schools. Two of those recommendations—security measures and greater punishments—are consistent with previous analysis of newspapers in South Africa (De Wet, 2009).

How these recommendations line up with the research literature is a challenge to evaluate, as the research literature remains sparse in terms of effective interventions to curb school violence in low- and middle-income countries (Devries et al., 2022). Most rigorous evaluations have been of programs implemented at only very small scales, telling us little about how they might function when implemented at large scale and through government channels (e.g., the public school system). The studies we do have recommend the promise of “whole school approaches,” in which all members of the school community (from head teachers to teachers to students to parents to community leaders) receive training and tools to reduce violence (Devries et al., 2022).

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## 4. Discussion

In this study, we examine how English-language news media in five African countries cover school violence. We find that the variation in levels of violence coverage across countries, what kinds of violence get covered, and what types of perpetrator-victim relationships get highlighted may be driven at least in part by tolerance for school violence in different societies.

We see an apparent divergence between recommendations for action by news media (e.g., more news coverage) and those by researchers (e.g., more of certain types of programs). This highlights a limitation of the systematic review approach to a problem like school violence. Systematic reviews of interventions that work and do not work to reduce school violence tend to focus on individual interventions—e.g., a training program or monitoring technique.<sup>13</sup> These may reduce violence, yet large, sustained reductions in school violence across multiple communities may require broader changes in societal norms. Indeed, a recent study of largely unsuccessful efforts to eliminate corporal punishment through official policies in Tanzania suggests that many teachers and parents believe that corporal punishment is beneficial for children (Kalolo and Kapinga, 2023). De Wet (2020) highlights news articles in South Africa that either normalize sexual relationships between teachers and pupils (e.g., by referring to teacher-pupil relationship as teachers being “romantically involved with pupils”) or that report on such norms (e.g., “parents told him that sexual relations between teachers and learners are common occurrences”). Whole school approaches represent efforts to change those norms at the school and community level.

We know that the media has a role in changing norms at a larger, societal scale. Entertainment media affects fertility, migration, gender norms, and education (La Ferrara, 2016). The news media likewise affects attitudes and choices (DellaVigna and La Ferrara, 2015). Yet the role of news media campaigns on changing school violence norms remains largely unstudied (Crawford and Hares, 2020).

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the Good School Toolkit in Uganda helps schools set goals, develop action plans, and learn non-violent disciplinary techniques. It has proven to be effective at reducing physical violence (Devries et al. 2015).

News media exercise significant discretion in what they cover and how they cover it. There is an opportunity for news media to contribute to efforts to eliminate school violence through increased coverage, shifting tolerance for school violence. Likewise, those outside the media who would campaign against school violence have the possibility of influencing traditional news media via social media or paid media content. In Nigeria, extensive social media coverage of sexual abuse from a group of older students against an eleven-year-old student led to coverage in traditional news media (This Day, 2021). Social media campaigns may offer a cost-effective intervention if large groups of youth are already using social media and can be nudged to push for changes in school violence policies and their enforcement. In countries' efforts to eliminate school violence, entertainment media presents a further opportunity to engage demographic groups who may be less likely to consume news media (Banerjee, La Ferrara, and Orozco, 2019). Different forms of media could raise awareness of school violence, and it could also provide guidance on how to report school violence effectiveness and on the most promising, evidence-based approaches to reducing school violence.

Future research may expand this work to a broader set of countries and include news coverage in regional languages. Future work may also explore — experimentally or quasi-experimentally — the causal link between news media coverage of violence and subsequent policy discussions, policy changes, and actual rates of violence.

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## Tables and figures

**Table 1. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 who are enrolled in school and who report having experienced physical or sexual violence previously**

	Ethiopia	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa	Tanzania
Ever experienced physical or sexual violence	11%	32%	38%	15%	20%
Experienced physical or sexual violence in the last year	7%	21%	22%	11%	13%
Experienced physical violence in the last year	7%	20%	22%	11%	11%
Experience sexual violence in the last year	0%	3%	2%	1%	3%

Notes: These numbers are calculated from the Demographic and Health Surveys, and are drawn directly from Table 1, Appendix Table A5, Appendix Table A6, and Appendix Table A7 in Evans et al. (2023).

**Table 2. Share of violence experienced on school grounds by children enrolled at the time of survey in primary or secondary school, by type of perpetrator (first instance of violence)**

	Obs	Peers	Romantic partner	Teacher	Community leader	Family	Employer	Neighbor	Stranger	Other
<b>Kenya</b>										
Unwanted touch	29	86%	7%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Attempted sex without consent	16	75%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	6%	0%
Pressured to have sex	2	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Physically forced to have sex	0*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Nigeria</b>										
Unwanted touch	65	83%	6%	6%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	2%
Attempted sex without consent	21	67%	19%	10%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Pressured to have sex	2	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Physically forced to have sex	5	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Tanzania</b>										
Unwanted touch	11	NA (1)	27%	0%	0%	9%	0%	9%	0%	55%
Attempted sex without consent	9	NA (1)	33%	22%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%
Pressured to have sex	0**	NA (1)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Physically forced to have sex	0***	NA (1)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Authors' construction from Violence Against Children Surveys (Together for Girls, 2023): 2019 survey in Kenya (published in 2020), 2014 survey in Nigeria (published in 2016), and 2009 survey in Tanzania (published in 2011). NA = Not available.

Note: The denominator for each number are all enrolled students who reported having experienced that particular type of sexual violence in school as reported in the column marked Observations (Obs). As such, the numbers in each row across perpetrators sum to 100 percent (+/- 1 percent due to rounding). Other perpetrators are those not in the list of potential perpetrators as enumerated by the survey (the list includes partner, peer, family, teacher, police/security, employer, community leader, neighbor, or stranger).

\* There are four reported cases of forced sex on school grounds by enrolled students in Kenya, but all four instances are reported by post-secondary students.

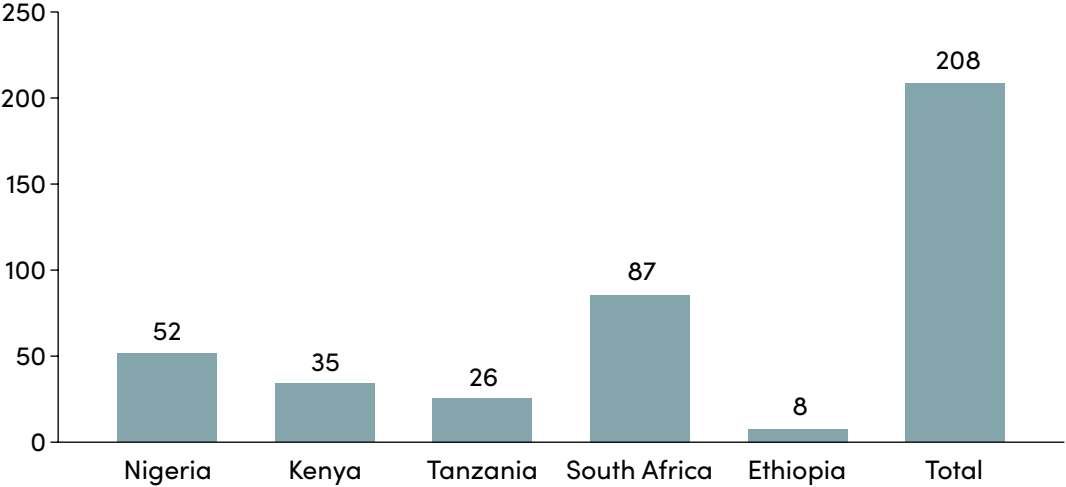
\*\* There are 10 cases of being pressured to have sex by enrolled primary or secondary students in Tanzania, but none of these happened on school grounds.

\*\*\* There are 14 cases of physically being forced to have sex reported by enrolled students in Tanzania, but none of these happened on school grounds.

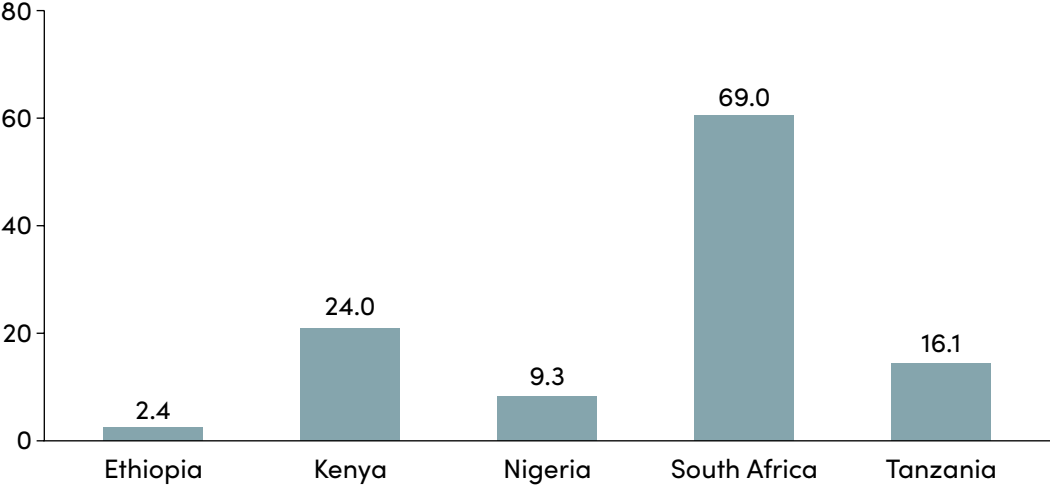
(1) The Tanzania survey does not specify peers, friends, or classmates as an option so they are usually included in "Other."

**Figure 1. Distribution of articles on school violence across countries**

**Panel A. Simple totals**

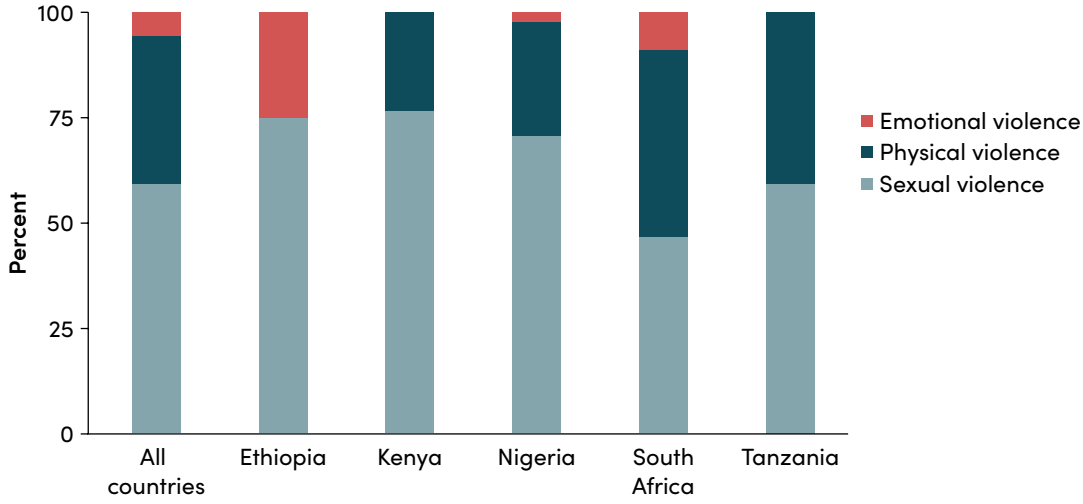


**Panel B. Total articles per million school-age population**

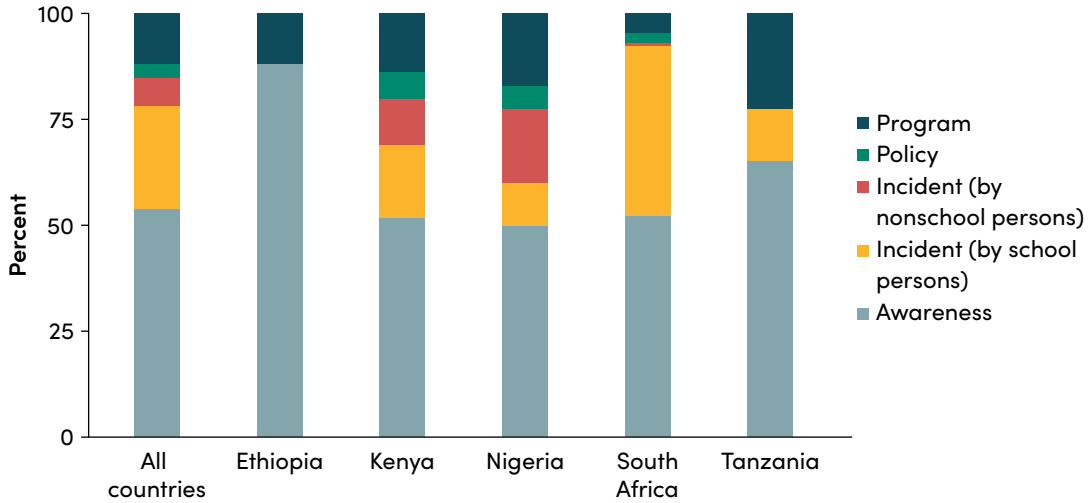


Notes: To calculate the articles per million school-age population, we divided the number of articles per country (Table 1 Panel A) by the population of children ages 6–18 for 2013 (the beginning of our sample period) for each country, based on data from the United Nations (2022).

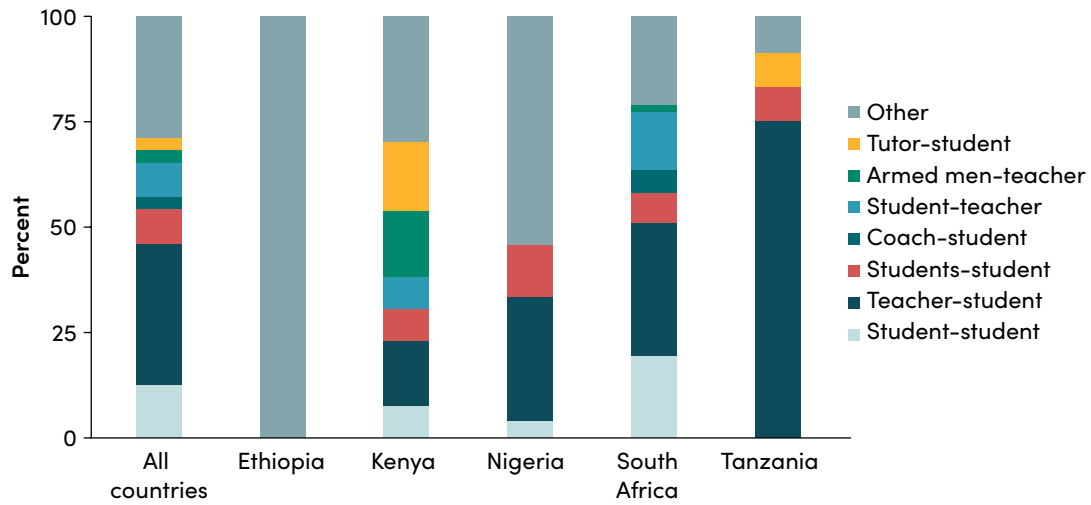
**Figure 2. Distribution of types of violence in media pieces**



**Figure 3. Distribution of article types by country**



**Figure 4. Distribution of associations between perpetrators and victims**



Note: Ethiopia had one article that focused on a single incident, which was a sexual assault of a student by a gang on the way home from school. That is why Ethiopia is marked as “other” in this figure. As Figure 3 shows, most articles from Ethiopia focused on awareness rather than specific incidents.

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## Appendix 1. Choice of search engine

We considered three sources: individual news websites, AllAfrica (a popular news aggregator for the region), and ProQuest (a news search engine).

For individual news websites, we initially identified prominent English-language newspapers in each country (Appendix Table A1). We then conducted searches for “school violence” on their respective websites and assessed the relevance of the first 25 articles retrieved. We found relatively few relevant articles: Nigeria stood out with 40 percent of the articles being relevant to our study, while Tanzania and South Africa yielded just 20 percent relevant articles, and Ethiopia and Kenya returned only 1 or 2 pertinent articles.

We also examined AllAfrica, a widely-used aggregator for African news content and found that 20 percent of the articles were relevant to our search. To compare the comprehensiveness of AllAfrica’s coverage versus that on individual news sites, we determined that an average of 66% of locally sourced articles did not surface on AllAfrica.

Turning to ProQuest, employing similar search terms filtered by country, we noted a substantially higher proportion of relevant articles: 50 percent for Nigeria and 68 percent for South Africa. Comparing ProQuest to AllAfrica, we found that 83 percent of the articles from AllAfrica were present in ProQuest, with a much smaller fraction of the ProQuest articles appearing in AllAfrica. Likewise, ProQuest returned news stories from the underlying individual news sources that did not turn up within the first 200 results on the individual news sites. As such, we selected ProQuest as the best search engine for news articles.

## Appendix tables and figures

**Appendix Table A1. Sample English-language newspapers for original search**

Country	News sites searched
Ethiopia	The Reporter
Kenya	Daily Nation
Nigeria	Daily Trust
South Africa	The Times
Tanzania	Daily News

Notes: These are not necessarily the highest circulation newspapers. They are a convenience sample drawn to test the best way to find articles.

**Appendix Table A2. Underlying sources for ProQuest**

Ethiopia	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital; Addis Abada</li> <li>• New Business Ethiopia; Addis Ababa</li> </ul> <p>PLUS other local sources indexed on AllAfrica</p> <p>PLUS international sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Nation; Nairobi</li> <li>• The East African; Nairobi</li> <li>• The Star; Nairobi</li> <li>• Sunday Nation; Nairobi</li> </ul> <p>PLUS other local sources indexed on AllAfrica</p> <p>PLUS international sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Daily Trust; Abuja</li> <li>• The Guardian; Lagos</li> <li>• Naija 247 News; Lagos</li> <li>• Peoples Daily; Abuja</li> <li>• Premium Times; New Delhi</li> <li>• The Sun; Lagos</li> <li>• This Day; Lagos</li> <li>• Vanguard; Lagos</li> </ul> <p>PLUS other local sources indexed on AllAfrica</p> <p>PLUS international sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Day; Johannesburg</li> <li>• Cape Argus; Cape Town</li> <li>• Cape Times; Cape Town</li> <li>• Daily Dispatch; East London</li> <li>• The Daily News; Durban</li> <li>• Go &amp; Express; East London</li> <li>• The Herald; Port Elizabeth</li> <li>• The Independent on Saturday; Durban</li> <li>• The Mercury; Durban</li> <li>• Post; Durban</li> <li>• The Pretoria News; Pretoria</li> <li>• The Rep; Komani</li> <li>• Sowetan; Johannesburg</li> <li>• The Star; Johannesburg</li> <li>• The Sunday Independent; Johannesburg</li> <li>• Sunday Times; Johannesburg</li> <li>• Sunday Tribune; Durban</li> <li>• Talk of the Town; Port Alfred</li> <li>• The Times; Johannesburg</li> <li>• Weekend Argus; Cape Town</li> </ul> <p>PLUS other local sources indexed on AllAfrica</p> <p>PLUS international sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Citizen; Dar es Salaam</li> <li>• Daily News; Dar es Salaam</li> </ul> <p>PLUS other local sources indexed on AllAfrica</p> <p>PLUS international sources</p>

**Appendix Table A3. Proportion of a sample of newspapers that are in English**

Country	Proportion in English
Ethiopia	0.9
Kenya	0.7
Nigeria	1.0
South Africa	0.9
Tanzania	0.5

Notes: To construct these numbers, we randomly selected ten newspapers from the Wikipedia list of newspapers available in the country, and we identified what proportion of those ten newspapers were available in English. Given that the Wikipedia lists may not be exhaustive, that the lists could be biased towards English-language newspapers (since this was the English-language version of Wikipedia) and that we drew only a sample of ten newspapers, these are merely suggestive.

**Appendix Table A4. Respondents who agree that wife beating is acceptable**

Country	Average tolerance across men and women	Average tolerance among...	
		Women	Men
Ethiopia	31	45	17
Kenya	22	23	20
Nigeria	19	23	14
South Africa	4	3	4
Tanzania	32	40	23

Notes: These numbers represent the average percentage of respondents out of 100 who agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife across six scenarios. All estimates are rounded to the nearest one. This data was pulled from the Demographic and Health Surveys STATcompiler tool (USAID, 2023) under the variable “attitude toward wife beating.” They are from the following survey years: Ethiopia (2016), Kenya (2014), Nigeria (2013), South Africa (2016), and Tanzania (2015–16).

**Appendix Table A5 – Panel A. Count of perpetrator-victim associations by country**

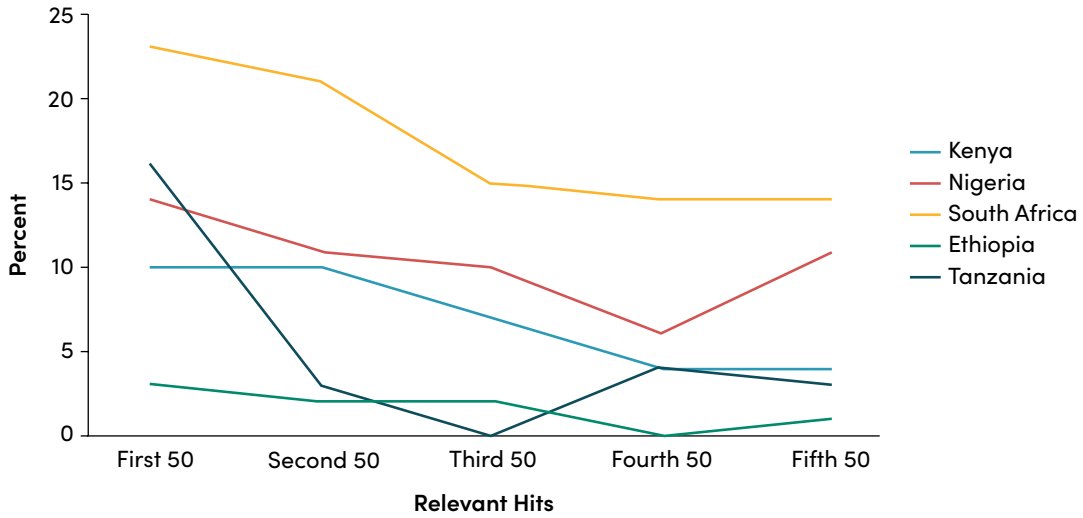
Perpetrator	Victim	All countries	Ethiopia	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa	Tanzania
Teacher	Student	36	0	2	7	18	9
Student	Student	13	0	1	1	11	0
Students	Student	9	0	1	3	4	1
Student	Teacher	9	0	1	0	8	0
Coach	Student	3	0	0	0	3	0
Armed men	Teacher	3	0	2	0	1	0
Tutor	Student	3	0	2	0	0	1
Principal	Teachers	2	0	0	0	2	0
Caretaker	Student	2	0	0	0	2	0
Students	Teacher	2	0	0	0	2	0
Husband	Teacher	2	0	2	0	0	0
Officer	Student	2	0	0	2	0	0
Teachers	Students	2	0	0	1	1	0
Armed men	Teachers	2	0	0	2	0	0
Teacher and classmates	Student	1	0	1	0	0	0
Principal	Student	1	0	1	0	0	0
Armed men	Teacher and student	1	0	0	1	0	0
Man	Teacher and student	1	0	0	1	0	0
Armed men	Student	1	0	0	1	0	0
Supervisor	Student	1	0	0	1	0	0
Teachers	Student	1	0	0	0	0	1
Men	Student	1	1	0	0	0	0
Religious teacher	Student	1	0	0	1	0	0
Busdriver	Student	1	0	0	0	1	0
Islamic extremists	Students	1	0	0	1	0	0
Counselor	Student	1	0	0	0	1	0
Armed men	Students	1	0	0	1	0	0
Policemen	Teachers	1	0	0	1	0	0
Coach	Students	1	0	0	0	1	0
Student	Students	1	0	0	0	1	0
Armed gunmen	Teachers	1	0	0	0	1	0



**Appendix Table A5 – Panel B. Percentage of perpetrator-victim associations by country**

Perpetrator	Victim	All countries	Ethiopia	Kenya	Nigeria	South Africa	Tanzania
Teacher	Student	34%	0%	15%	29%	32%	75%
Student	Student	12%	0%	8%	4%	19%	0%
Students	Student	8%	0%	8%	13%	7%	8%
Student	Teacher	8%	0%	8%	0%	14%	0%
Coach	Student	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Armed men	Teacher	3%	0%	15%	0%	2%	0%
Tutor	Student	3%	0%	15%	0%	0%	8%
Principal	Teachers	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Caretaker	Student	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Students	Teacher	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Husband	Teacher	2%	0%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Officer	Student	2%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Teachers	Students	2%	0%	0%	4%	2%	0%
Armed men	Teachers	2%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Teacher and classmates	Student	1%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Principal	Student	1%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Armed men	Teacher and student	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Man	Teacher and student	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Armed men	Student	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Supervisor	Student	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Teachers	Student	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Men	Student	1%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Religious teacher	Student	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Busdriver	Student	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Islamic extremists	Students	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Counsellor	Student	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Armed men	Students	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Policemen	Teachers	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Coach	Students	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Student	Students	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Armed gunmen	Teachers	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%

**Appendix Figure A1. Relevant news articles per batch of 50 search results**



**Appendix Figure A2. Violence coverage across African and non-African news sources**

