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# Literature Review on Safe Learning Environments and Educational Achievement

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# Outline of presentation

- About the literature review
- Key concepts and definitions
- Prevalence of school violence in developing countries
- Impact of school violence on educational achievement
- Pathways linking school violence and poor educational achievement
- Moving forward

# About the literature review

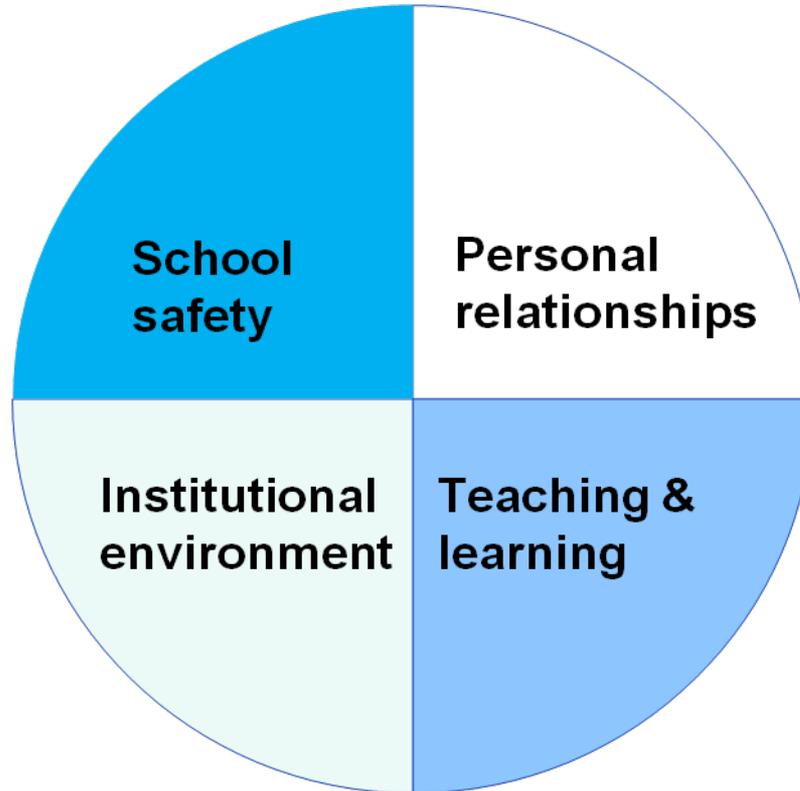
- Focus
  - Effects of school violence on educational achievement in low-income settings, especially SSA
- Sources and Scope
  - Academic journals & grey literature (last 10 yrs)
  - prePIRLS and TIMSS studies (2011)
  - SACMEQ survey (Saito, 2011)
- Method
  - Systematic online search
  - Snowball technique
  - Search of specific journals, e.g., Journal of School Violence.

# What is a 'safe school'?

'A safe school may be defined as one that is free of danger and where there is an absence of possible harm...in which non-educators, educators, and all learners may work, teach, and learn without fear of ridicule, intimidation, humiliation or violence'.

Prinsloo, 2006.

# School safety is an important aspect of school climate



# Defining 'school violence'

The term “school violence” encompasses corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence, bullying, fighting, and gang-related violence.

UN Study on Violence against Children  
(Pinheiro, 2006)

# High prevalence of violence in developing countries

Country	School 'not safe & orderly' (% of students)	School discipline & safety problems (% of students)	Bullied about Weekly (% of students)
Colombia	11	42	34
South Africa	14	21	55
Botswana	15	16	54
Main PIRLS av.	4	11	20

*(Adapted from PIRLS & prePIRLS 2011)*

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## Perceptions of sexual harassment increasing in several SACMEQ countries

Country	2000 (% of students)	2007 (% of students)
Botswana	15	28
Kenya	17	49
Lesotho	12	23
Seychelles	49	62
South Africa	25	40
Uganda	41	58
Zambia	35	48
Zanzibar	47	97
<b>SACMEQ</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>

Percentages of students who say sexual harassment occurs 'sometimes' or 'often'

*(Adapted from Saito, 2011)*

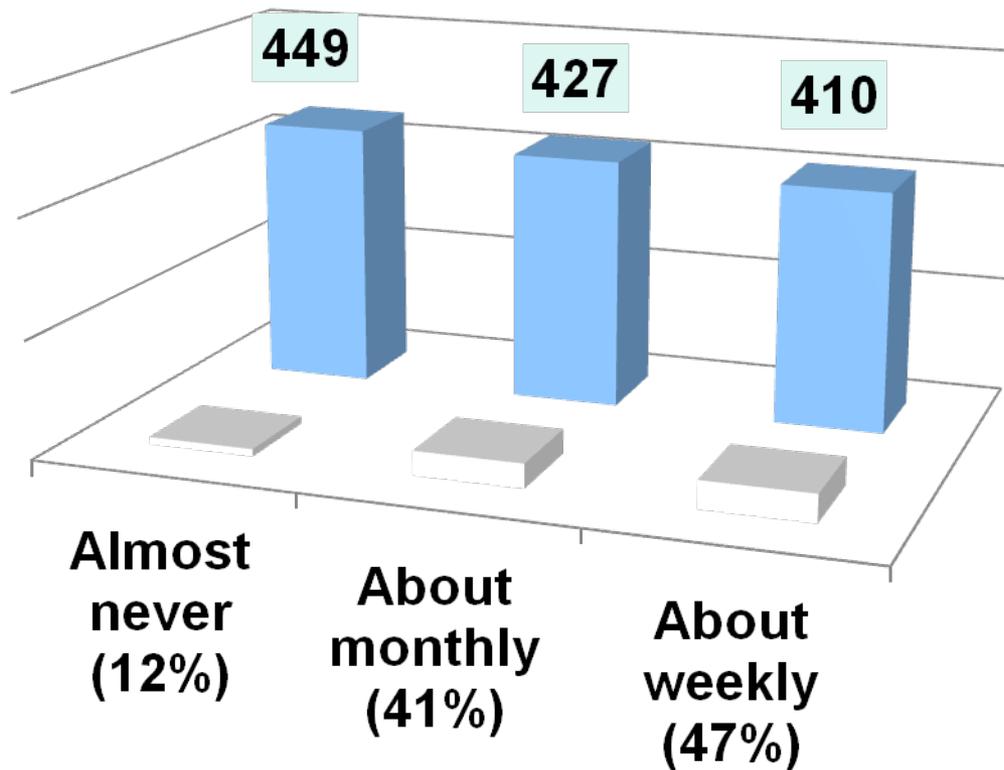
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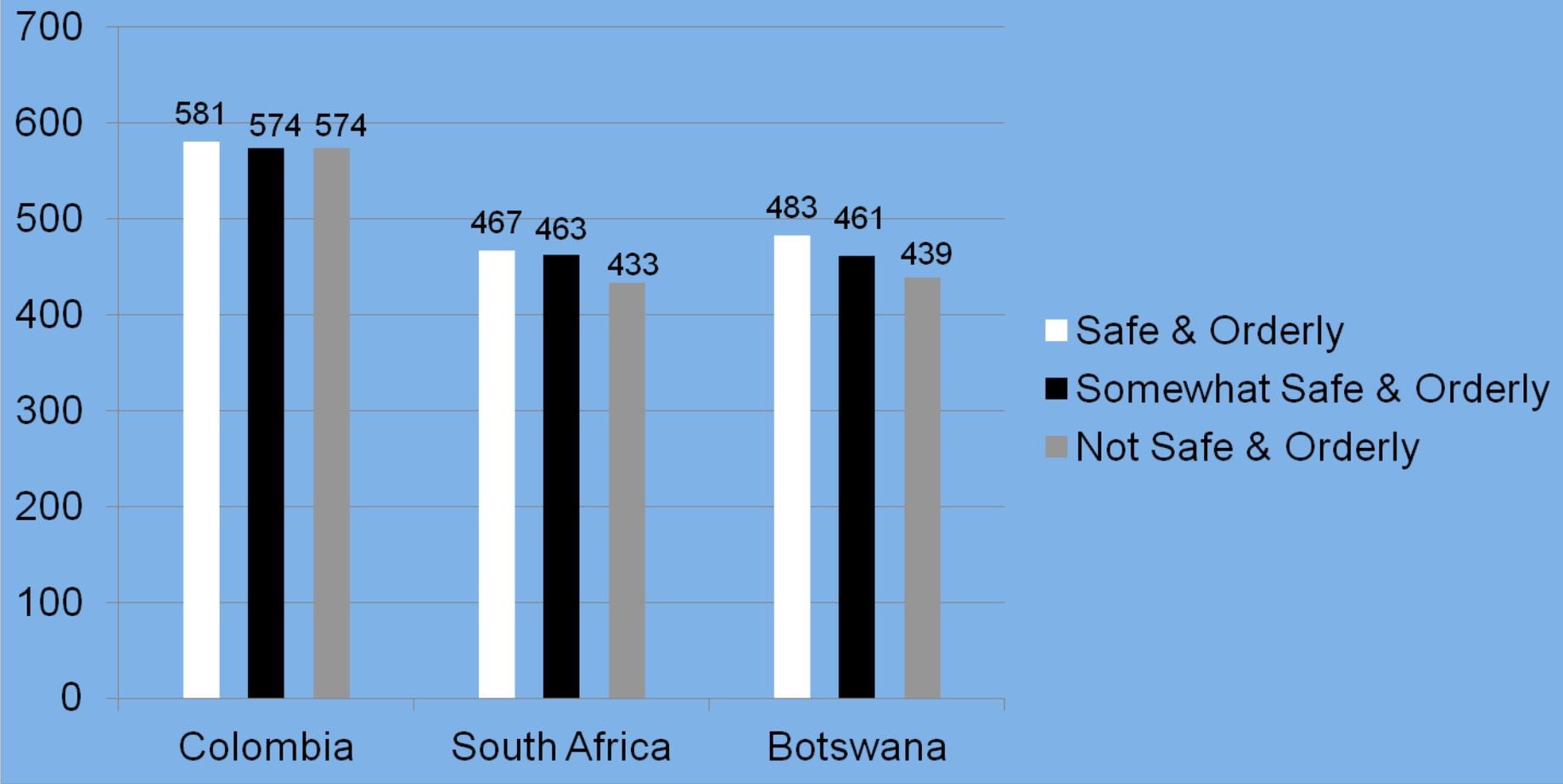
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# Association between bullying and 6th Grade maths scores, Botswana (TIMSS 2011)



# 'School safety & order' and reading achievement (pre-PIRLS 2011, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade students)

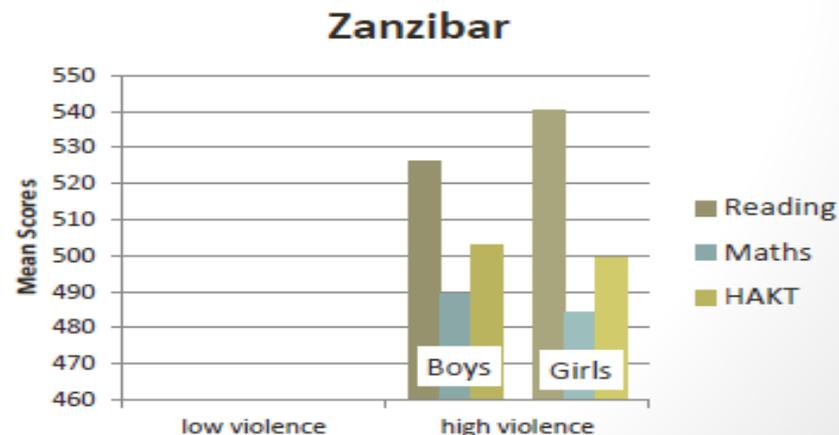
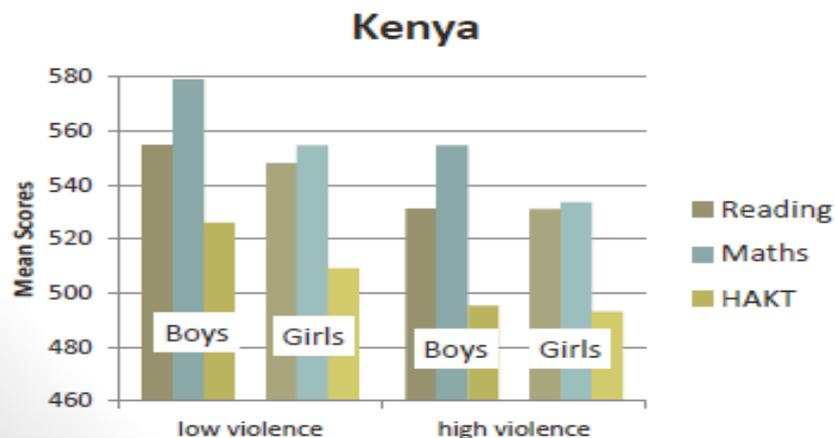
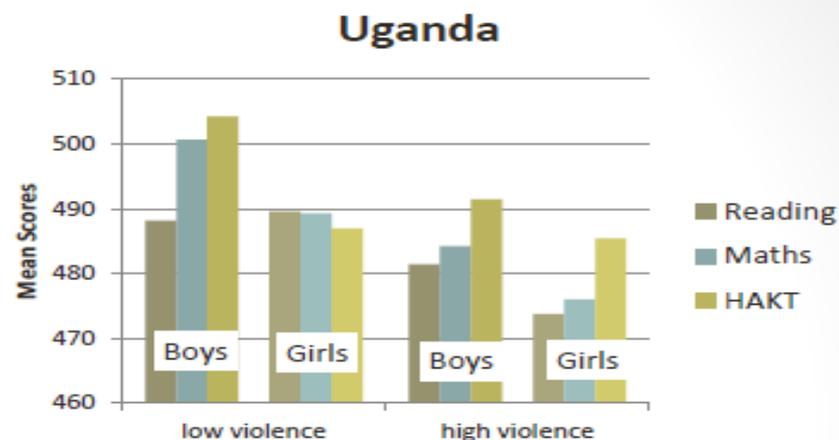
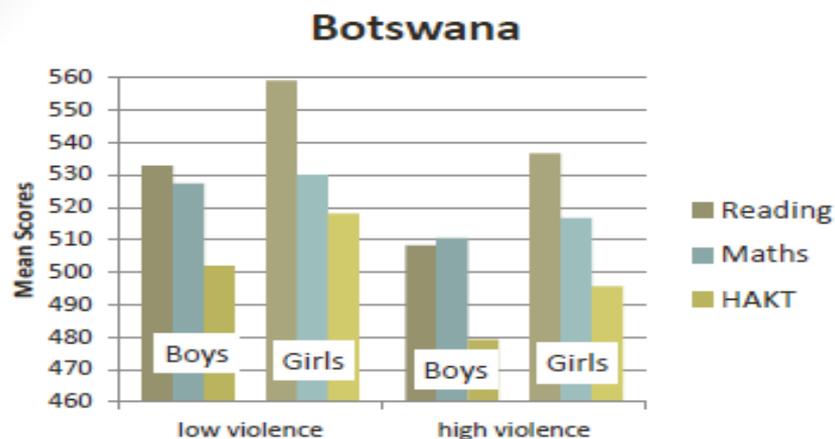


*a Non English/Afrikaans schools only*

# From Saito, 2011: Survey of SACMEQ primary schools

UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning

## Differences between boys' and girls' achievement scores in schools with low violence vs. high violence



Source: Saito (in press)

# What are the pathways linking school violence to poor educational achievement?

- Impact on Enrollment, Attendance, and Completion (e.g., Ghana, Malawi)
- Inability to concentrate in class (e.g., Ethiopia)
- Use of corporal punishment leads to fear of speaking in class (e.g. Botswana) & poor academic performance (e.g., Pakistan)
- Depression & reduced self-esteem (e.g., Zambia)

# Gaps and weaknesses in the literature on low-income countries

- Very few large-scale quantitative studies
- No longitudinal studies
- Reliance on teachers' perceptions
- Very little data on social identity and school violence
- Cross-sectional studies don't tell us about the direction of the causal effect.
- How do we distinguish between effects of school violence and other aspects of school climate?

## In sum...

‘The complex interplay of school violence and disruption, academic achievement, and prevention approaches is not well understood’  
(Cornell & Mayer, 2010).

- **BUT** the available evidence supports the hypothesis that school violence has a negative impact on educational achievement in low-income settings
- From both human rights and human capital standpoints, school violence in developing countries needs more attention

# How can we build understanding of the impacts of school violence on educational achievement?

- **Conduct:**
  - Large-scale, gender-sensitive longitudinal and comparative research
  - Qualitative studies to complement quantitative surveys
  - Studies on the relative vulnerabilities of students
  - Reviews of programs for reducing school violence
- Disseminate evidence-based best practices
- Roll out effective interventions.



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# THANK YOU

