Do Children in Domestic Servitude Experience More Violence? — Results from the Violence Against Children Survey, Haiti, 2012

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My Experience with Child Domestic Servants in Haiti: “Restavèks”

Photo taken with permission by Leah Gilbert
Child Domestic Servants: “Restavèks”\(^1,2\)

- From an impoverished family
- Sent to live with a host family
- Perform unpaid domestic labor
- Often unable to attend school
- Treated worse than other children
- Illegal, but not enforced

Why Study the Restavèk Population?

- Restavèks are common in Haiti: estimates of 200,000 - 500,000 children\(^1\)

- Difficult population to access

- No nationally representative data

- Small studies, qualitative reports and anecdotes suggest that restavèks experience more violence\(^1,2\)

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Study Rationale

- Restavèks are exposed to documented risk factors for child maltreatment \(^1,^2\)
  - Living away from biological parents
  - Not having a close relationship with their mothers
  - Socially isolated
  - Having less education
  - Lower socioeconomic status

- **Hypothesis:** Restavèks experience more violence than other children in Haiti.

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Study Design: Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) Haiti

- Nationally representative
- Cross-sectional
- Household survey
- 13-24 year old males and females
- May-June 2012
- Stratified, three-stage, cluster design
  - Standard enumeration areas
  - Internally displaced persons
- Sample
  - N = 2,916 (1,457 F; 1,459 M)
  - Response rate: 86% F; 82% M
Three-Stage Cluster Sampling: VACS Haiti

- Haiti is divided into 4,993 SDEs
- Stage 1: 177 SDEs randomly selected
- Stage 2: A cluster of 35 households randomly selected from each SDE
- Stage 3: 1 eligible respondent is randomly selected from each household
Analysis: VACS Haiti

- **History of child domestic servitude**

- **Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:**
  - Physical Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
    - Committed by public authority figures
  - Emotional Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
  - Sexual Violence
    - Committed by anyone
Definition of Physical Violence

- Did a household or public authority figure ever:
  - Punch, kick, whip, or beat you with an object
  - Choke, smother, or attempt to drown you
  - Burn or scald you intentionally
  - Threaten to use a knife or other weapon against you
Definition of Emotional Violence

- Did a household authority figure ever:
  - Say that you were not loved or did not deserve to be loved
  - Say that they wished you had never been born or were dead
  - Ridicule or put you down
  - Threaten to abandon you or force you to leave home
Definition of Sexual Violence

- Did anyone ever:
  - Touch you in a sexual way without your permission
  - Try to make you have sex without your permission
  - Pressure you into having sex using non-physical means
  - Physically force you to have sex
Definition of Sexual Violence

Did anyone ever:

- Touch you in a sexual way without your permission
  - Unwanted sexual touching

- Try to make you have sex without your permission
  - Attempted sex

- Pressure you into having sex using non-physical means
  - Pressured Sex

- Physically force you to have sex
  - Forced Sex
Results: History of Child Domestic Servitude

- History of child domestic servitude

- Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:
  - Committed by household authority figures
  - Committed by public authority figures

  • Emotional Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures

  • Sexual Violence
    - Committed by anyone
Results: History of Child Domestic Servitude

- Reported ever working as a restavèk
  - 17% of females
  - 12% of males
  - Weighted estimate: 385,373 children (15%)

- Age at becoming a restavèk
  - Range: 3-17 years old
  - Mean: 10 years old
  - Median: 10 years old
Results: Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence

- History of child domestic servitude
- Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:
  - Physical Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
    - Committed by public authority figures
  - Emotional Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
  - Sexual Violence
    - Committed by anyone
Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Physical Violence (PV)</th>
<th>Household Authority Figure PV</th>
<th>Public Authority Figure PV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Non-Restavèk</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Restavèk</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant, p<0.05
Prevalence of Childhood Physical Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

- **Household Authority Figure PV**
  - Male Non-Restavèk: 60%
  - Male Restavèk: 69%  
  * Statistically significant, p<0.05

- **Public Authority Figure PV**
  - Male Non-Restavèk: 24%
  - Male Restavèk: 19%
Results: Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence

- History of child domestic servitude
- Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:
  - Physical Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
    - Committed by public authority figures
  - Emotional Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
  - Sexual Violence
    - Committed by anyone
Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

* Statistically significant, p<0.05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Emotional Violence (EV)</th>
<th>Female Non-Restavèk</th>
<th>Female Restavèk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household Authority Figure EV</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * 55%
Prevalence of Childhood Emotional Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

* Statistically significant, p<0.05

Type of Emotional Violence (EV)

- Male Non-Restavèk
- Male Restavèk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Authority Figure EV</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Non-Restavèk</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Restavèk</td>
<td>* 51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence

- History of child domestic servitude
- Prevalence of childhood violence before age 18:
  - Physical Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
    - Committed by public authority figures
  - Emotional Violence
    - Committed by household authority figures
  - Sexual Violence
    - Committed by anyone
Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence in Female Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

- Unwanted Sexual Touching: Female Non-Restavèk 19%, Female Restavèk 26%
- Attempted Sex: Female Non-Restavèk 13%, Female Restavèk 27% (* Statistically significant, p<0.05)
- Pressured Sex: Female Non-Restavèk 5%, Female Restavèk 8% (* Statistically significant, p<0.05)
- Forced Sex: Female Non-Restavèk 6%, Female Restavèk 6%
Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Violence in Male Restavèks Compared to Non-Restavèks

* Statistically significant, p<0.05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sexual Violence</th>
<th>Male Non-Restavèk</th>
<th>Male Restavèk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted Sexual Touching</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Sex</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressured Sex</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Sex</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Conclusions: VACS Haiti

- Child domestic servants (restavèks) do experience more violence than other children in Haiti:
  - Physical Violence
    - Committed by a household authority figure (females and males)
  - Emotional Violence
    - Committed by a household authority figure (females)
  - Sexual Violence
    - Unwanted sexual touching (males)
    - Attempted sex (females)
    - Pressured sex (females)
Limitations: VACS Haiti

- Head of household may not have listed restavèks as household members nor permitted them to participate
- Unable to assess directionality of restavèk status and violence
- The study is cross-sectional
- Could not control for socio-economic status
The Way Forward:
Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

Rescue  Re-integration  Improvement  Prevention

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

- Rescue
- Re-integration
- Improvement
- Prevention

- Bolster social services
- Build safe-houses

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

Rescue

Re-integration

Improvement

Prevention

• Reconnect with families
• Provide skills for independence

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

- Rescue
- Re-integration
- Improvement
- Prevention

- Enforce existing laws

The Way Forward: Eliminating Child Domestic Servitude

- Rescue
- Re-integration
- Improvement
- Prevention

- Build community capacity
- Create public school systems
- Increase public awareness

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