Trauma exposure and men’s use of violence against women in a peri-urban settlement near Johannesburg

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Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) affect millions of children globally.

The ACE study* revealed the following estimates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABUSE</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGLECT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Available at www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm

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*a Stoltenborgh (2014) Child Abuse Review*
ACEs & adult trauma are linked to violence against women (VAW)

- All forms of ACEs are associated with men’s adult perpetration of IPV a

- ACEs linked to rape of a non-partner b
- Human rights violations or witnessing violations of friends or family linked to IPV c

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Socio-demographics

2,603 men

Age Median: 27 years
Range: 18-40

Median monthly income: R 500
Food Secure: 57%

39% matric
Violence Against Women in a South African informal settlement

53% Used Recent Violence against Women\textsuperscript{a}

19%

Informal settlement\textsuperscript{b}

Nationally\textsuperscript{c}

\textsuperscript{a} Violence against women is any physical and/or sexual act of violence towards a partner or any rape of a non-partner
\textsuperscript{b} Data on men’s perpetration from What Works, c. Data from the Men’s Health and Violence Study, Jewkes et al.(2010) - aligns with national data on women’s victimisation Stats SA (2017) Demographic Health Survey
Violence Against Women

53% Past-Year use of Violence against Women

Of whom 60.2% enacted VAW multiple times

Both 19%

Physical VAW only 15%

Sexual VAW only 19%
85% Abused or neglected as children

beaten witnessed mother being abused sexually abused raped humiliated lacked food

a. Measured using the 12-item Childhood Trauma Scale
witnessed a murder
witnessed rape
sexually assaulted
tortured
robbed at gunpoint

60%
One or more adult traumas

a. Measured using the 15-item Harvard Trauma Questionnaire
31% Harmful alcohol use\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{a} Measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Scale, cutoff of 10
bothered by things
not hopeful
fearful
lonely
felt like a failure
crying spells

42%
Probable depression\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{a}. Measured using 20-item Center for Epidemiology Depression Scale, cutoff 16
8.6% Probable PTSD\textsuperscript{a}

\textit{nightmares, detached, jumpy, trouble sleeping, avoiding thoughts}

\textit{a. Measured using the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, cutoff 25 measured only among men experiencing 1+ adult traumas}
Association between VAW and trauma or mental health predictors:

- Childhood Abuse: 5 times
- Adult Trauma: 2.5 times
- Depression: 2.4 times
- Alcohol misuse: 3 times
- PTSD: 3 times

Past-year use of Violence Against Women

a. Adjusted odds ratios controlling for age, food security, education, cluster
Linear relationship between VAW and trauma

- Each additional type of Child Abuse → 23% greater odds of VAW use
- Each additional type of Adult Trauma → 23% greater odds of VAW use

a. Adjusted odds ratios controlling for age, food security, education, cluster
**Figure 1.** Structural equation model of trauma, mental health, and violence against women use among men (n = 2,597). Relationships represented by standardized parameter estimates, with boxes indicating measured variables and oval representing latent variable. All relationships significant at the p<0.05 level. Model controls for age, education, food security.


Goodness of model fit Chi-square = 611 p = 0.000; CFI = 0.978; RMSEA = 0.032 (90% CI 0.029 - 0.034).
Direct effects of Childhood Trauma on IPV

- Childhood Abuse
  - Alcohol Misuse
    - PTSD
    - Depression
  - Adult Trauma
    - PTSD
    - Depression

- Physical VAW
- Sexual VAW

Path coefficients: 0.26, 0.29, 0.11, 0.28, 0.19, 0.19, 0.33, 0.19, 0.18, 0.17, 0.04, 0.05, 0.62, 0.07, 0.19.
Path 1: Depression + Alcohol

Diagram showing relationships between Childhood Abuse, Depression, Adult Trauma, PTSD, Alcohol Misuse, Physical VAW, and Sexual VAW, with various path coefficients indicated by the arrows and their values.
Path 1: Depression + Alcohol
Path 2: Continued trauma + PTSD
Key Findings

• High rates of childhood trauma in our setting are consistent with new studies from SSA
• Childhood adversities seem to directly influence men’s use of VAW and operate through key pathways:
  • Depression -> Alcohol Misuse
  • Further adult traumas -> PTSD

Recommendations

• Alcohol use may be an unhealthy coping strategy for dealing with previous trauma
  • not a “stand-alone” cause for IPV

• Provide safe, therapeutic spaces for men to process childhood adversities

• Consider mental health symptomology in programming

• Must be integrating IPV work with prevention of violence against children
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[Logos of WhatWorks, UKaid]