

Parenting, Gender Socialisation and the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Low- and Middle-income Countries

SVRI/Oak Foundation Research Seminar

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Outline

- Background to the literature review
- Methodology
- Incidence and prevalence of CSA in SSA
- Impact and consequences
- Profile of perpetrators
- Risk factors
- Protective factors
- Promising regional practices
- Policy implications
- Research priorities

Background

- Review objectives:
 - Understand the spectrum of CSA experienced, determinants, and consequences;
 - Determine the magnitude
 - To identify the existing policy and programme responses policies and programs devoted to combatting child sexual abuse, and gaps
 - Make recommendations re a comprehensive inter-sector programmatic response

Methodology

- Core group
- Technical working group
- Request for information via listservs
- Reports of international/national agencies/NGOs/UNCRC Country Reports
- Electronic data base searches
- On-line searches via Google
- Most countries in SSA covered – 47 in total

Methodology

- Limitations:
 - Varying definitions
 - Interchangeable terminology
 - Methodological differences between studies – variability in prevalence estimates
 - Differing samples – large surveys, clinical samples, anecdotal information
 - Almost no information on certain types – e.g. boys

Incidence and prevalence of CSA

- Sexual harassment:
 - High rates across SSA, including at primary schools – from 16-60%
 - Boys also vulnerable

Incidence and prevalence of CSA

- Rape

- High rates across all regions of SSA
- Number of studies from SA but fewer (to very few or none!) from other parts
- Incidence rates from 5% to over 60%
- High rates of rape also in conflict areas

Incidence and prevalence of CSA

- Exploitation, prostitution, transactional
 - Data scanty and patchy
 - Based mostly on children identified and repatriated
 - Rates high across the region
 - Prostitution, production of pornography
 - Boys and girls

Impact of CSA

- Denial of fundamental rights
- Undermining development goals
- Health complications
- Social and behavioural problems
- Psychological consequences
- Perpetuating the cycle of violence
- High socio-economic costs

Consequences of CSA

- Poor school performance, and impediment to completing education
- Rejection by family and society
- Family disharmony
- Poor parenting and abusive behaviour in later life

Consequences of CSA

- Physical consequences:
 - HIV infection and STIs
 - More sever genital injury
 - Unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion

Impact of CSA

- Reproductive health consequences:
 - pregnancy-induced hypertension
 - anaemia,
 - infections (including malaria and HIV),
 - premature labour and delivery,
 - low birth-weight,
 - peri-natal and infant mortality,
 - maternal mortality, and
 - obstructed and prolonged labour

Impact of CSA

- Mental health consequences:
 - Debilitating fears, anxieties, regressive behaviours, nightmares, withdrawal
 - depression, anger and hostility, self-injurious behaviours, low self-esteem
 - Inappropriate sexual behaviour
 - severe psychiatric disorder
 - negative effects are life-long
 - boys have same range of negative consequences

Impact of CSA

- Mental health consequences:
 - Changes girls' view of their bodies – see them as bargaining tools
 - serious negative emotional and psychosomatic consequences for the child's caregiver

Profile of perpetrators

- Fathers
- Mother's male partner
- Other children
- Strangers
- Neighbours
- Teachers
- Relatives

Risk factors - environment

- Home
- School
- On the way home from school
- Immediate neighbourhood
- Other people's homes
- Public places

Risk factors - environment

- Terminology in use in schools in Togo:
 - Bush stipend or chalk allowance
 - Sexual compensation for teachers
 - BF (bordello fatigue)
 - Experienced by a girl involved in multiple sexual relationships with teachers, punning on a common brand of soap
 - Africell
- 'A free sell' refers to girl students coming to class without undergarments to sexually titillate teachers.

Risk factors

- Alternate care
- Prison
- Work places
- Care arrangements – exacerbate vulnerability
- Poverty
- Violence
- Cultural construction of gender, power
- Perceptions of male sexuality
- Ways in which children are perceived

Protective factors

- Children never vulnerable in just one way, and vulnerability to other forms of abuse exacerbates vulnerability to CSA
- Holistic and coordinated response is key
- Children best protected from CSA when 'the system' is protective of all children

Protective factors

- Strategies for protection:
 - WHO-AFRO (2004):
 - Advocacy
 - Law enforcement
 - Development of standardised protocol, clinical care and management
 - Multidisciplinary and coordinated responses
 - Rehabilitation of CSA survivors
 - Community-based surveillance, support and reporting

Protective factors

- Strategies for protection:
 - ACPF (2008) - countries most protective of children:
 - ratify international treaties
 - institute appropriate laws to protect children; and
 - ensure adequate budgetary commitments to child-related services
 - have a juvenile justice system
 - free education
 - effective plans of action and coordinating structures

Protective factors

- VERY important to work with boys and men
- Training and capacity-building of service providers
- Adequate resourcing

Promising regional practice

- Kenya: *Be a champion for children campaign*
- South Africa: RAPCAN's Healing Pack
- 14 countries in SSA: Child helplines (and growing)
- Senegal, Kenya: free legal services to victims
- Uganda plus several countries: Stepping Stones programme

Policy implications

- Broad and coordinated (prevention and response)
- Adequate resourcing
- Provision of services:
 - Response teams
 - Early identification and child-friendly reporting systems
 - Targeted services designed for children

Policy implications

- In criminal justice system:
 - Sensitive and responses to children's needs
 - Prosecute effectively – no impunity
 - Train personnel specifically in dealing with traumatised children
 - Ensure accessible services
 - Supervision of service provision

Policy implications

- In schools:
 - Improve professionalism of teachers
 - Prohibit sexual relations with pupils
 - Display codes of conduct and sanctions on sexual relationships prominently
 - Increase number of female teachers
 - Improve conditions of service

Research implications

- Gendered nature of CSA, and links to construction of power
- Linkages to intimate partner violence
- Better understanding of why CSA is (a) high frequency and (b) so deeply stigmatised
- Costs of failing to prevent CSA

Research implications

- Variables such as:
 - place of residence
 - rural or urban setting
 - level of education
 - child birth order
 - Family structure
 - Parents' income
 - Degree of social cohesion
 - Role of traditional systems of sexual control

Thank you

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Protecting children's rights

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