Children’s Experiences of Everyday Violence: linking research, policy and practice

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Seminar overview

• 12.30-1.30 - Presentation and discussion on research on violence affecting children conducted with the Young Lives study

• 1.30-2.00 - Lunch and networking

• 2.00-3.00 - Workshop
  • Case studies of tackling violence affecting children
  • Lessons learnt and promising practices
An opportunity: growing focus on preventing VAC

- Global Goals (especially Goals 4, 5 & 16)
- UNCRC (especially Article 19)
- Dialogue between research, policy and practice (e.g. African Child Policy Forum; Know Violence in Childhood; Global Partnership to End Violence)
Persisting (and emerging) challenges

- 300 million (3 in 4) children aged 2 to 4 experience regular violent discipline by their caregivers on a regular basis.
- 130 million (slightly more than 1 in 3) students aged 13-15 experience bullying.
- 15 million adolescent girls aged 15-19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime.
- 100,000 cases of child homicide (2015).

UNICEF (2017) A Familiar Face: Violence in the Lives of Children and Adolescents
https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-familiar-face/

Know Violence (2017) Ending Violence in Childhood
http://www.knowviolenceinchildhood.org/publication
Young Lives: longitudinal study of childhood poverty

**OLDER COHORT**
- Age: 8, 12, 15, 19, 22
- Following 1,000 children

**YOUNGER COHORT**
- Age: 1, 5, 8, 12, 15
- Following 2,000 children

**Household and child survey**
- Round 1 2002
- Round 2 2006
- Round 3 2009
- Round 4 2013
- Round 5 2016

**Qualitative data collection**
- Qual 1 2007
- Qual 2 2008
- Qual 3 2011
- Qual 4 2014

Plus thematic sub-studies and school surveys
Four countries

Ethiopia

India

Peru

Vietnam
UNICEF Office of Research: Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children

What drives violence affecting children and what can be done about it?

https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/274/
Socio-Ecological Framework

**INDIVIDUAL**
Personal history and individual developmental factors that shape response to interpersonal and institutional/community stressors

**INTERPERSONAL**
Immediate context of violence and situational interactions between individuals involving household, family or intimate or acquaintance relationships

**COMMUNITY**
Social capital or networks influenced by particular opinions, beliefs and norms that may affect interpersonal relations, including informal institutions and places of social gathering

**INSTITUTIONAL**
Formal institutions, organizations and services that are governed by a set of rules, policies or protocols expected to determine how things function

**STRUCTURAL**
The macro-level political, economic and social policy environments

(Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2016)
Understanding the drivers of violence affecting children

- Socio-ecological and life course approaches:
  - Which children are at greater risk of experiencing violence (home, school and community)?
  - What shapes violence affecting children at different or multiple levels (structural; institutional; community; interpersonal and individual)?
  - How do children’s experiences of violence affect their outcomes and trajectories?

“Drivers refer to factors at the institutional and structural levels that create the conditions in which violence is more or less likely to occur. Risk and protective factors reflect the likelihood of violence occurring due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels” (Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2016: 2)

For case studies see: Pells and Morrow (2017) Children’s Experiences of Violence: Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam
Violence is a part of everyday life for many children:

- over half (Peru and Vietnam) three quarters (Ethiopia) and nine out of ten children (India) aged 8 witnessed corporal punishment in the last week
- At age 15, over third of girls and quarter of boys in Peru reported being hurt by a family member
Corporal punishment in schools

- **Younger children**: incidence at age 8 double the rate reported at age 15.

- **Boys** at greater risk across all 4 countries. Girls often at greater risk of other types of violence.

- **Disadvantaged children** more likely to be punished than peers in the same community (India, Peru and Vietnam) and than peers in the same school (India and Vietnam).
Children experience multiple forms of violence across different settings. Interconnections between experiences of different types of violence and between settings, e.g., corporal punishment and bullying; between home and school.

“Boy: I do not like my school, since the teachers beat me badly. They beat with a stick on my back, even if we are sitting and talking. 
Researcher: Do you not complain to your parents? Boy: No, because they only beat because we must study well. My mother will thrash me very hard, if she knows I am not answering in class”

(Morrow and Singh, 2014)
Poverty is a key factor shaping violence affecting children

• Violence linked with structural factors, e.g. poverty, inequality and social norms
• Poverty limits access to resources, services (where these exist) and places considerable strain on children, families and communities

‘She studies well, ... but when there is no uniform and when we delay the fee payments then she will not go, she refuses to go, and she hides behind that wall... and says “sir will beat me, they will beat me”’. (Mother, India, cited in Morrow and Singh, 2014)

• Bullied for being poor. Children stop going to school or attend irregularly
• **Wider inequalities** crystallised and reinforced in schools

• **Harsh disciplinary practices** normalise violence and reinforce structural inequalities and discriminatory gender norms

• **Replicated in peer bullying**
  • use of violence justified as teaching a lesson or changing behaviour
  • enforcing conformity with gender norms through the use of physical aggression to establish masculine identities whereas girls expected to conform
  • Discourses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ children - disciplining unruly out-of-school children
Violence reflects and reinforces discriminatory social norms

• Violence is an accepted (and expected) way for parents to discipline children. Children both justify and challenge the use of violence:

  “If we are punished it is because we deserve it, because we have done something wrong.” (José, 13, urban Peru)
  “Some scientists have discovered that if a child our age is beaten, he or she will think it is OK to hit others.” (Girl, 13, urban Peru)

• Dissuades children from seeking help due to fear of being punished further

• Girls often experience less recognized forms of bullying and violence which reflect unequal gender norms, e.g. eve-teasing:

  “Earlier we used to be in school [doing homework] but now no one stays back after school.” (Harika, 14, Andhra Pradesh)

• Situated in the wider context of gender inequalities and violence against women
Children’s experiences of and responses to violence are shaped by age and gender

Changes in the ways in which children understand, experience and respond to violence over time:

- understandings of and attitudes towards violence, e.g. corporal punishment or domestic violence
- diverse effects on children’s lives over time
- changes in children’s strategies for navigating violence
Case Study

- Ravi, Scheduled Caste boy from rural Andhra Pradesh. Stopped going to school age 9 to work as a bonded labourer to pay off family debt. At age 12:
  
  “When my Mum and Dad fight I feel very bad. When my Dad beats my Mum we go to try to stop him. Me and my brother go.”

  Adamant that in the future will not hit his own wife

- Age 13, left work as beaten by employer. Beaten at home by his father.
- Age 16 tried to protect sister and nephew from violent brother-in-law:
  
  “She [sister] told me not get involved and to go inside. He pulled me out and started hitting my sister. I had to free her.”

- By age 20 he was married and his wife was 4 months pregnant. Wanted to take care of his wife but said:

  “she [his wife] gets a beating...I hit her when she tells anything...she won’t keep quiet [after the quarrel], she keeps muttering to herself...she just nags, I get angry.”

  (Morrow and Singh, 2016)
CONCLUSIONS

- Violence in the lives of many children is pervasive, often routinized and normalised.
- Children’s accounts reveal the multiple factors that shape their experiences of and responses to violence.
- Interconnections between types and settings.
- Shaped by inequities related to gender and by discrimination and disadvantage, including poverty.
- Children are social actors but constrained by political, economic, social and cultural contexts.
An Integrated Framework for Addressing Violence Affecting Children

DISCUSSION

• Experiences of violence driven by combination of more ‘universal’ structural factors (e.g. poverty and inequality) and context-specific factors (e.g. social norms) that shape power dynamics underpinning interpersonal relationships
  • Legal approaches necessary but not sufficient (and care with unintended consequences)
  • Importance of adaptation to local context
  • Community dialogue and ownership

• Institutional settings (schools) reinforce dynamics directly through violent practices and indirectly through exclusion
  • Whole school approaches to tackling violence have potential to improve access and attendance, learning outcomes and provide safe spaces for children experiencing violence in other parts of their lives.
DISCUSSION

- Children often experience multiple forms of violence, reinforcing normalization and dissuading help-seeking. Note the pervasive nature of emotional violence, which often goes unrecognized
  - Promising evidence on linkages between child protection and social protection
  - ‘Child-friendly’ spaces for children to seek support (e.g. through existing services)

- Taking a life course perspective enables us to trace the effects of violence at different ages, examine whether these effects persist and how cycles of violence can be broken
  - Understanding children’s experiences and responses as a starting point to inform interventions
  - ‘Middle childhood’ as a key opportunity to reach children – both prevention and response
  - Challenging the normalisation of violence through supporting alternative norms and practices
Collaborations to end violence in Peru

Solange’s story:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCN-SLjgZ3E

See also Marino Bustamante's Story:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61YThCoAFkU

https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/22063/UNICEF%20impact%20assesment%20Peru.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
LUNCH!
Creating an Integrated Framework for Addressing VAC: Corporal punishment in Vietnam

Activity

Select an area of children and violence on which you are working/interested in:

• What risk factors arise at the levels of:
  • **Structural** (macro-level political, economic & social policy environments)
  • **Institutional** (formal institutions, organizations & services)
  • **Community** (beliefs & norms, including informal institutions)
  • **Interpersonal** (interactions between individuals i.e. children’s relationships with parents, peers & community members)
  • **Child** (personal history, experiences, position & agency)

• What are potential entry points for policy and practice?
• What might be the challenges faced?
Four objectives:
• Development of a collective vision for the school.
• Creation of a nurturing learning environment
• Implementation of a more progressive learning methodology
• Strengthening school governance

• risk of physical violence by teachers and school staff against children reduced by 42%
• 50% fewer teachers (compared to control) report using physical violence against students
• promoted students’ identification with their school, as well as their sense of safety and belonging at school.

(Devries et al., 2015)
Preventing Violence Affecting Children

Prevention of childhood violence

- Enhance individual capacities
  - Equip parents and other caregivers
  - Empower children

- Embed violence prevention in institutions and services
  - Embed violence prevention in health services
  - Transform institutionalization
  - Prevent institutionalization
  - Ensure online safety

- Eliminate the root causes of violence
  - Free communities from violence
  - Change adverse social norms

(Know Violence, 2017)
Key principles for programming (Know Violence)

- Use a combination of prevention methods
- Engage multiple stakeholders
- Use participatory and positive approaches
- Address discriminatory norms linked to gender, disability and difference
- Mobilize positive community values
- Train bystanders
- Engage for the long term
- Use the best evidence to inform design
- Provide affordable or open-access curricula
- Do no harm: ensure ethical actions


FINDING OUT MORE

www.younglives.org.uk
@YLOxford

- methodology and research papers
- child profiles and photos
- e-newsletter
- datasets (UK Data Archive)