Time tells tales
Longitudinal perspectives on violence in the lives of children

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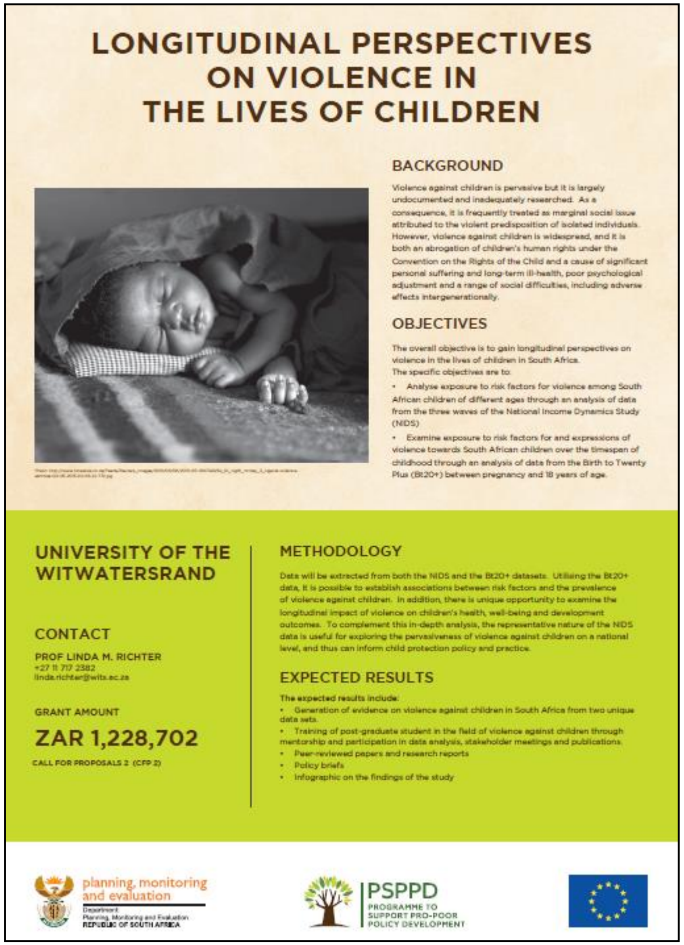

LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

BACKGROUND

Violence against children is pervasive but it is largely undocumented and inadequately researched. As a consequence, it is frequently treated as marginal social issue attributed to the violent predisposition of isolated individuals. However, violence against children is widespread, and it is both an abrogation of children's human rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a cause of significant personal suffering and long-term ill-health, poor psychological adjustment and a range of social difficulties, including adverse effects intergenerationally.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to gain longitudinal perspectives on violence in the lives of children in South Africa.
The specific objectives are to:

- Analyse exposure to risk factors for violence among South African children of different ages through an analysis of data from the three waves of the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS)
- Examine exposure to risk factors for and expressions of violence towards South African children over the timespan of childhood through an analysis of data from the Birth to Twenty Plus (Bt20+) between pregnancy and 18 years of age.

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GRANT AMOUNT

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2 (CFP 2)

METHODOLOGY

Data will be extracted from both the NIDS and the Bt20+ datasets. Utilising the Bt20+ data, it is possible to establish associations between risk factors and the prevalence of violence against children. In addition, there is unique opportunity to examine the longitudinal impact of violence on children's health, well-being and development outcomes. To complement this in-depth analysis, the representative nature of the NIDS data is useful for exploring the pervasiveness of violence against children on a national level, and thus can inform child protection policy and practice.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The expected results include:

- Generation of evidence on violence against children in South Africa from two unique data sets.
- Training of post-graduate student in the field of violence against children through mentorship and participation in data analysis, stakeholder meetings and publications.
- Peer-reviewed papers and research reports
- Policy briefs
- Infographic on the findings of the study

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- DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development, Wits
- PIs: Linda Richter (Wits), Shanaaz Mathews (UCT), Rachel Jewkes (MRC)
- Dr Juliana Kagura – Epidemiologist
- Dr Sahba Besharati – Post-Doc Fellow
- Ngandwe Chibuye – Data Analyst
- Engelbert Nonterah – Data Analyst
- Refiloe Cele – Research Assistant
- Norah Museta - Administrator

Overview of the research

Significance of the study

- High levels of violence against children (VAC)
  - Globally eg nearly half of children in USA assaulted in previous year (Finkelhor et al, 2005)
  - South Africa:
    - 3 children a day are murdered
    - 44% of sexual assaults reported to police are of children
    - 60% of parents hit children (mostly 3-4-year olds)
- Violence has serious adverse short- and long-term personal and social consequences

Overview of the research

Research objective

- To give a developmental, gender and contextual perspective on VAC across childhood and adolescence and its impact on personal and social wellbeing
  - Exposure to violence (seeing, hearing violence)
  - Experience of violence (being a victim), sexual and non-sexual
  - Perpetuation of violence

Methodology

Use 2 longitudinal data sets to describe violence

- **Birth to Twenty Plus (Bt20+) – 1990-2013**
- National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) – 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012
  - Parental stress and wellbeing; Aggression in the community and social cohesion; Negative life events; Parental substance abuse; Single motherhood, family composition and child care; Family mobility

Methodology – Bt20+ data

- Describe different types of violence, by gender across childhood in all the settings in which children find themselves
- Longitudinal data, collected prospectively
- Multiple informants: mother, father, teacher, child
- Antecedents: eg SES; family stress; substance abuse
- Outcomes: eg education, health, adjustment

Methodology (cont.)

- +400 variables from pregnancy to age 22 years on violence exposure, experience & perpetration
- 4 age groups: Preschool; Primary (6-13y); Adolescence (14-17y); Young adulthood (18-25y)
- 5 settings: home, school, community, with peers and intimate partners
- 4 categories of violence
  - **Exposure**: Eg Hearing gun shots; seeing robbery
  - **Experience**: Eg Mom beats child; school attack
  - **Experience sexual violence**: Eg forced to have sex
  - **Perpetration**: Eg pick fight; force someone into sex

Approach

- Preparation of 4 papers for publication
  - Longitudinal perspectives (SAMJ) – presenting
  - Sexual violence against boys (CA&N) – almost complete
  - Pathways to perpetration of violence (in preparation)
  - Consequences of violence: Young adult health, mental health and social wellbeing (in preparation)
- Communication materials

Research findings – Prevalence (at least one incident)

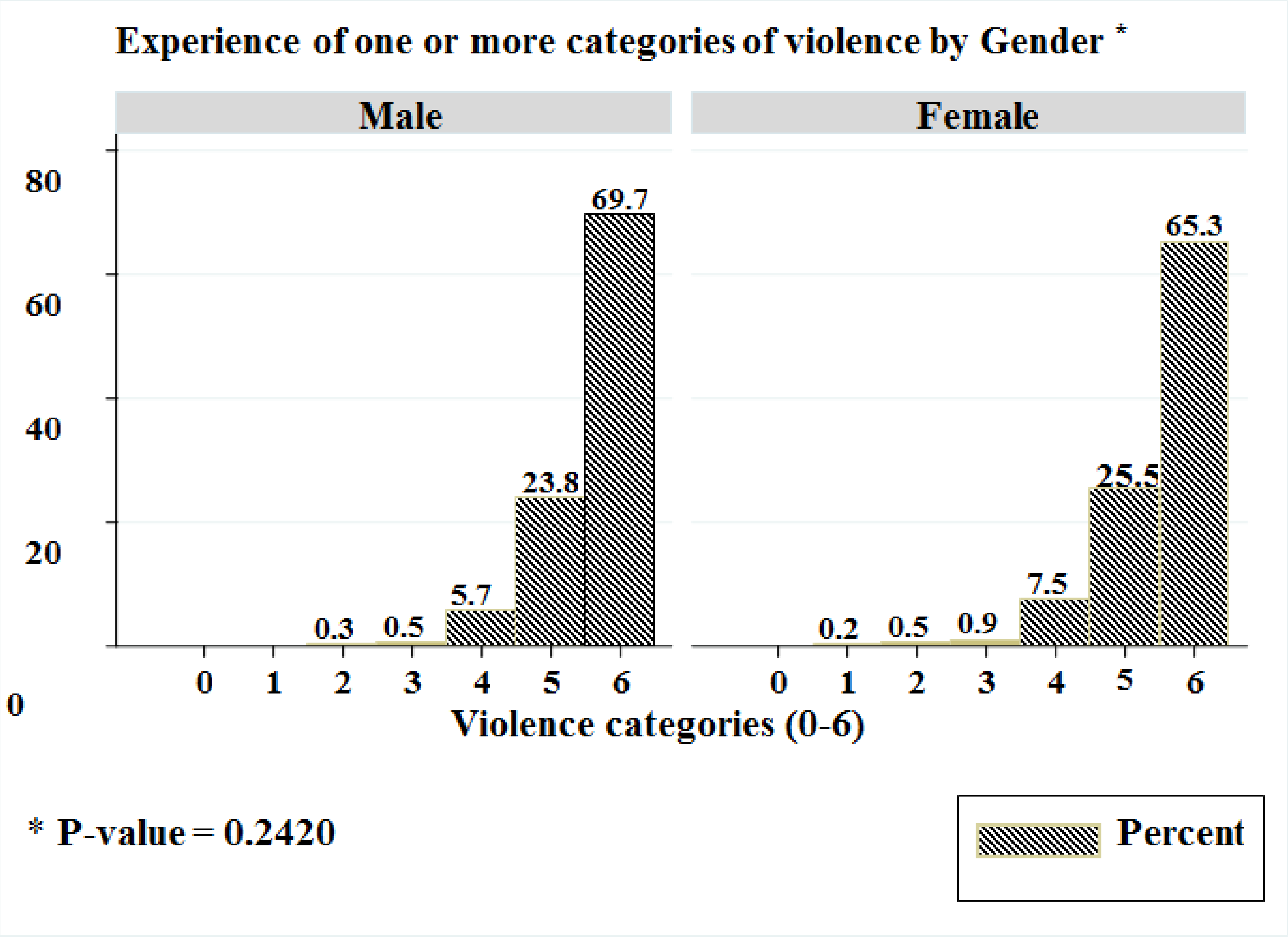
Violence	Preschool	Primary 6-13y	Adol 14-17y	Adult 18-22y
Community	39%	**94%***	**87%***	**79%***
Home	45%	**58%***	71%	61%
School	-	88%	89%	**79%***
Peer	-	43%	63%	**32%***
Victim	46%	81%	99%	**69%***
Victim - sex	3%	**20%***	**54%***	33%
Perpetrate	**52%***	79%	**30%***	**33%***

*** Males > females**

Conclusions - Prevalence

- Large proportions of children are affected by violence in all settings
- More males are exposed to and experience violence than girls
- More males perpetrate violence at all ages, but very much higher by adulthood
- Perpetration shows strong maturational and gender trends

Research findings – Extent of violence (excluding perpetration)



Conclusions 2 – Extent of violence

- No child was spared exposure to or experience of violence during the course of childhood
- Almost all children (>99%) exposed/experienced at least 4 categories of violence
- Two thirds of children (67%) exposed/experienced all 6 types of violence
- Half of all boys & girls (±50%) exposed/experienced all 6 types of violence across all age groups

Research findings – Concentration

Type of violence	Lower levels <25% of items in category	Higher levels >75% of items in category
Exposure in community	29.7%	21%
Exposure in home	74%	2%
Exposure in school	70%	3%
Exposure to peers	95%	0%
Victim of violence	6%	65%
Victim of sexual violence	74%	4%

Conclusions 3 – Concentration

- Two thirds of children (65%) have been victims of a high concentration of violence (affirmative responses to >75% of questions asked)
- 21% of children have experienced a high concentration of violence in their community
- A very high concentration of violence in the home, with peers, at school and sexual violence is experienced by <5% of children

Violence and socio-demographics

- Socio-demographics
  - Maternal age and education
  - Marital status
  - Race
  - Socio-economic status
- Statistically significant associations with categories of violence
  - More violence reported in poor homes
  - More peer violence reported by/of children of single mothers
  - No other relationships discerned i.e. VAC is widespread; does not appear to be characteristic of particular groups of people

Remaining questions

- What are the most common forms of violence in each category (eg gun shots in the community, parent fights at home; beatings by parents)?
- Is there a small group of children who experience a high concentration of violence in all categories?
  - What antecedents can be identified?
  - What long-terms consequences can be traced?
  - What interventions are suggested?

Recommendations

- More research:
  - Large scale tracking of violence against children eg National Household Surveys?
  - Longitudinal studies
  - Mechanisms – antecedents, pathways and outcomes
- More awareness raising about the saturation of violence in the lives of children
- Reduce high levels of violence in communities
- Plan for multi-setting interventions

Acknowledgements

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