

Violence and abuse

Strand organisers: Murylo Batista (London Borough of Camden), Lana Chikhungu (University of Portsmouth), Rebecca Harris (University of Southampton) and Amos Channon (University of Southampton)

16:45 - 18:15 Monday 9 September: Violence & abuse 1: Intersectional and emerging topics in violence & abuse

Invisible Victims: Investigating the Rights and Realities of Unnamed Children in Nigeria's Baby Factories
Ugochi Nkwunonwo, Lana Chikhungu & Karen Shalev-Greene - University of Portsmouth

This research examines the frequently disregarded situation of unidentified children who are born in Nigerian "baby factories," which are establishments where vulnerable women are forced into pregnancy through illegal maternity operations to market the babies. The study centers on the profound repercussions and various manifestations of violence that these children encounter, starting from the moment they are born into clandestine, unregulated settings. This study employs a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative data and qualitative interviews, to examine the ramifications of an absence of legal identity and the subsequent obstacles to fundamental rights including healthcare, education, and protection. Data were sourced from local NGOs, hospital records, and interviews with survivors, caregivers, and law enforcement officials. Additionally, the research investigates the wider socio-economic ramifications on society and the obstacles in implementing policies that sustain this covert cycle of mistreatment. Preliminary results reveal significant increase in vulnerability due to lack of legal statuses and inadequate legal frameworks. By exploring the silent suffering experienced by these unidentified children, this study seeks to stimulate discourse regarding the pressing necessity for legal reforms and intervention approaches that safeguard these susceptible individuals from violence, abuse, legal repercussions, guarantee their legal recognition, and facilitate their lawful assimilation while upholding their dignity and rights.

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Is there a relationship between childhood exposure to domestic violence and abuse and mental health outcomes? An examination of evidence from 10 low- and middle-income countries
Rebecca Harris & Amos Channon - Centre for Global Health and Policy, Department of Social Statistics and Demography, University of Southampton

Background: Evidence from high income countries indicates that children exposed to domestic violence and abuse (DVA) are at an increased risk of adverse mental health in later life. Evidence from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is limited, despite high estimates of the level of childhood exposure.

Aims: This study aims to address the lack of evidence through the research question: how does childhood exposure to DVA relate to mental health outcomes during adolescence and early adulthood within LMICs?

Methods: The CDC Violence Against Children Surveys were used to identify childhood exposure to DVA in 10 LMICs across Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South-Eastern Asia, and Eastern Europe. Bivariate analyses and logistic regression were used to explore the relationship between a range of mental health outcomes and DVA exposure, focussing on internalising and externalising mental health symptoms.

Results: Exposure to DVA ranged from 11.8% in Honduras to 30.7% in Malawi. Bivariate analysis revealed a higher prevalence of internalising and externalising symptoms amongst those exposed to DVA as a child when compared to those who were not. Regression analysis found that in all ten countries, those who had been exposed to DVA had a higher likelihood of experiencing psychological distress than those without childhood exposure. In most countries, there was an association between childhood exposure with having ever experienced suicidal thoughts, engaged in risky behaviours, perpetrated DVA, and perpetrated non-partnered violence.

Conclusion: There is clear evidence that childhood exposure is associated with poor mental health outcomes in LMICs.

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Autistic Lives Matter: Intersectional Insights into Violence against Autistic People in Brazil
James Thiago Leite Cruz - Universidade Federal do Pará; Instituto Tecnológico Vale

Autism Spectrum Disorder involves neurological changes that may increase the risk of violence due to affected social interactions, behavioural development, and communication, suggesting a higher vulnerability to violence. This article aims at checking that assumption, exploring the patterns of violence against autistic individuals in Brazil from 2006 to 2021 and comparing it with global trends, using data from the Brazilian Ministry of Health which in 2006 started collecting information regarding violence and disabilities from public hospitals and police stations in 27 municipalities. The most reported type of violence was physical (53%), followed by psychological (31%) and neglect/abandonment (29%). Violence was predominantly reported among adolescents and young adults, with 61.6% of assaulted women aged between 20 and 59. Additionally, a comparative mention shows that in France, nine out of ten autistic women reported being victims of violence. In Brazil, 60% of violence against autistic individuals involved women, with 42.1% related to domestic violence. In 2019 alone, there were 4,847 cases of violence against women and 2,755 against men. The study underscores the critical role of intersectionality, particularly age, gender, and race, in vulnerability to violence. Some caveats involve the inadequate availability of data, that currently relies on reports to police stations and medical service records in just 27 of the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities. Underreporting is a serious issue. Besides, there are no official census data on the Brazilian autistic population yet. This gap significantly hampers the effectiveness of interventions and policy formulations aimed at reducing violence against autistic individuals.

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Silenced and Dismissed: An examination of Female Victims' Experiences of Police Responses to Sexual Violence in the UK: where is the encouraging evidence?
Dina Kapardis & Beth Matton - University of Portsmouth

This paper offers a critical discussion on police responses to female victims of sexual violence in the UK, and presents an international comparison with police response and processing of victims of sexual violence in Sweden. A rapid systematic review of the existing literature revealed the clear prevalence of victim blaming within police forces in the UK. The literature review process also highlighted a distinct gap within the prevalent research, in that the same concern and rigour doesn't seem to have been applied within the research community to further study and evaluate positive and effective police responses to victims of sexual violence in the UK. Recent official reviews on police response to sexual assault in England and Wales have uncovered systematic flaws in the criminal justice system, such as 'explicit victim blaming'. Official reviews have also emphasised the significance of victim empowerment, and the need for positive police interactions with sexual violence victims to effectively support them and improve their experiences with the criminal justice system. The discussion arising from the current research points to a critical requirement for specific, evidence-based measures to be applied within the UK's criminal justice system to address victim blaming. The implementation of specific recommended legislative reforms in the UK could strengthen legal protections for victims and encourage victim empowerment. Promoting victim-centred approaches is essential for improving outcomes for female sexual violence victims and the example of Sweden can provide best practice within this context.

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18:15 - 19:15 Tuesday 10 September: Violence & abuse 2: Frontiers in violence & abuse measurement

The reciprocal influences of gender-based violence surveys and public policy: from survey design to dissemination of results on prevalence rates in the French overseas region of Martinique.

Stephanie Condon & Sandrine Dauphin - Institut national d'études démographiques (INED)

Since the international call for the collection of statistical data on violence against women (VAW) emerged from the Fourth international Women's Conference in 1995, there has been a continuous effort in Europe and other parts of the world to collect data at national or regional levels. France is one of the rare states to have produced two national surveys (2000 and 2015). In several overseas French territories, local elected representatives called for specific surveys for their islands with the expectation that the data would show the extent of the phenomenon and provide justification for the allocation of human and financial resources towards combating violence against women.

This close link between academic and political expectations raises methodological and ethical questions relating to survey design and how the results are presented and used. It is thus important to consider the social processes linking grassroots mobilization, political discourses surrounding issues related to VAW and the availability of research resources to set up statistical surveys. Here, we will analyze these social processes using data from the survey conducted by INED in Reunion Island, Guadeloupe and Martinique (Virage Outre-mer, 2018). We will focus on the case of Martinique, using a combination of survey data, documents relating to national and local policy and interviews with local policy decision-makers and practitioners. Dissemination of results within policy and practitioner circles presents challenges as researchers must confront entrenched representations of populations most at risk of being victims of domestic violence or child abuse.

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Understanding Fieldworker Influence and Social Desirability Bias in Reporting Intimate Partner Violence in India: Insights from the Fifth Round of the National Family Health Survey
Saurabh Singh - International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai

Accurate data plays a vital role in formulating policies and programs effectively, especially when concern is about intimate partner violence, which is very highly prevalent in low- & middle-income countries like India. In light of the sensitivity of the issue, this study focuses on the fieldworker effect and the impact of social desirability bias on reporting Intimate partner violence (IPV) in India using the fifth round of the Indian National Family Health Survey (2019-21) data. The research question is whether the fieldworker's characteristics affect the reporting of IPV? Also, does the interruption of interviews by adults (husband/male/female) cause social desirability bias, which affects the responses? The cross-classified multi-level model was used to examine the fieldworker's effect on the IPV. Furthermore, propensity score matching was employed to estimate the impact of interruption on the response provided by the respondent. The fieldworker effect accounted for around 32% of the variation in overall IPV, which varied from 26 to 41 % for physical violence, 29 % to 33% for emotional IPV and 30% to 36% for sexual IPV. The interruption of the interview significantly affects the response as well. Results indicate a significant fieldworker and interruption effect on the likelihood of reporting intimate partner violence. This study emphasizes the crucial need for better comprehension of how fieldworkers influence data outcomes, particularly when dealing with sensitive or stigmatized topics like intimate partner violence (IPV). It underscores the necessity of offering additional guidance and training to fieldworkers when gathering such delicate information.

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The demography of domestic homicide
Richard Potter - Independent Researcher, Analytics Cambridge

This would be a presentation on work for the Home Office in analysing Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in England and Wales which have been through the Home Office quality assurance process from September 2021 to October 2022. The information used is that supplied with the DHRs and checked. An initial part of the presentation would cover data quality and how included in the report. The data is for a report to summarise characteristics of victims and perpetrators in domestic homicide and to summarise learning points and recommendations in DHRs. It can act as a resource to help prevent domestic homicide and abuse.

The presentation would show demographic aspects of victims and perpetrators: where there are familial victims, victims who had or had had an intimate relationship with the perpetrator and victims who have died by suicide. It would include geography, age, gender, ethnicity and nationality of victims. There is an indication that the incidence of domestic homicide may be higher in rural areas. The average age of familial

victims is older than the two other groups and there is a higher proportion of male victims. For most ethnicity groups the proportions are the same as the population. On nationality there are different proportions not British for familial victims compared to those who died by suicide. A final element of the presentation would be to show variation in the proportion of types of victim who have been the target of abusers before.

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