

Policy Brief: Risk factors for severe physical and emotional child and adolescent abuse

Citation: Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, Ndhlovu (in press). Risk and protective factors for physical and emotional abuse victimization amongst vulnerable children in South Africa. Child Abuse Review.

No-large scale community based study has examined risk and protective factors for physical and emotional child abuse victimization in South Africa. We conducted a study with 603 children aged 13 to 19 to investigate what factors put children at risk of physical and emotional abuse. This research is a collaboration between the South African government, the National Action Committee for Children Affected by AIDS (NACCA), Oxford University, and Cape Town Child Welfare.

The Questions:

- What is the prevalence of physical and emotional abuse in a community sample of children and adolescents?
- What are risk factors for physical and emotional abuse?

The Research:

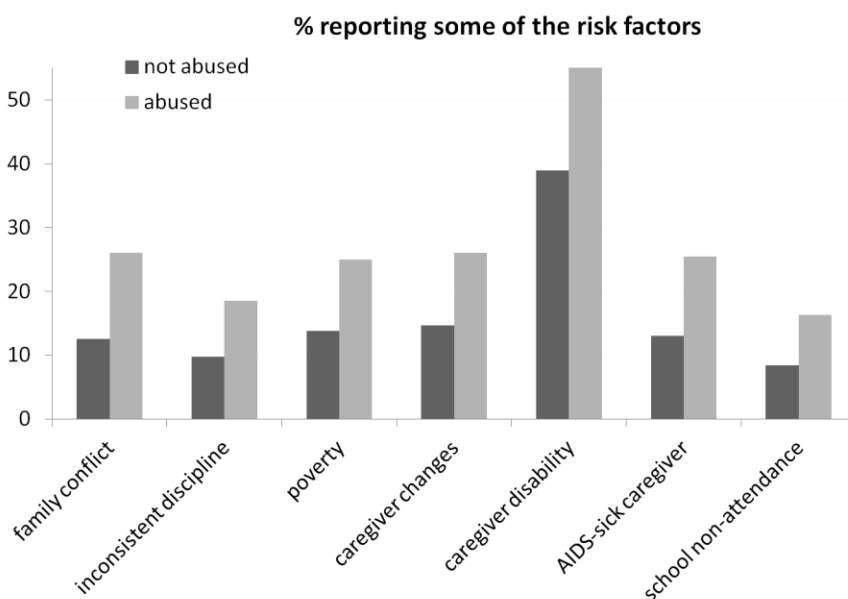
- 2005: Interviewed 1021 children aged 10-19, 730 followed up in 2009. This analysis uses the follow-up sample and only children aged 13-19 (603).
- Included street-children, child-headed & youth-headed households. AIDS-orphaned & AIDS-

Finding 1: A lot of children experience severe physical and emotional abuse in the home

- 6.8% of children reported experiencing severe physical abuse victimization and 11.9% of children reported severe emotional abuse victimization
- 15% reported physical and/or emotional abuse victimization

Finding 2: Risk factors included:

- Family conflict, inconsistent discipline and unequal food distribution in the household
- Poverty, living with a step-parent and having changed caregiver multiple times
- Higher rate of caregiver disability, as well as living with an AIDS-sick caregiver and being an AIDS-orphan
- School non-attendance and school non-achievement
- AIDS-related stigma, bullying and sexual abuse experience



Conclusions:

- Large numbers of children in South Africa experience severe physical and emotional child abuse
- Factors which increase the risk for child abuse can be found in many different life situations that children experience
- Policy and interventions – currently focused mainly on sexual abuse – should also include physical and emotional abuse prevention

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