

The use of Household Survey in measuring violence against women: A case of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Violence against children, including child abuse, has gained increased worldwide attention as a far-reaching and multifaceted societal problem. It also results in devastating short and long-term consequences on the health, development, and mental well-being of boys and girls. In addition to its effects on the individual child, violence undermines national efforts in public health, social welfare and human rights and economic development. Child abuse inhibits achievements in global efforts to uphold the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which seeks to protect all children from sexual, physical and emotional abuse. The United Nation's Secretary General's World Report on Violence Against Children (2006) brought attention to the magnitude of violence against children as a worldwide problem. The report also highlighted the lack of data, particularly population-based estimates, on the extent of violence against children.

In order to respond to the violence against children in our communities, it is necessary to understand the extent of the problem, as well as its influencing factors.

In 2010, the Government of Zimbabwe commissioned a National Baseline Survey on Life Experiences of Adolescents (NBSLEA). The survey, a part of the multi-country Violence Against Children Survey initiative sought to provide, for the first time, comparable national population-based estimates that describe the magnitude and nature of the problem of abuse experienced by children in Zimbabwe. Through the NBSLEA, Zimbabwe bridged the data gap on violence against children and informed policies and programmes to better protect children.

The survey covered three forms of violence against children, that is, sexual, physical and emotional. The survey played an important role in increasing understanding of the extent of violence against children and of its influencing factors in the Zimbabwean society, thus informing national policies and programmes.

Survey Objectives

The primary objective of the survey was to collect information on the magnitudes of sexual, physical and emotional violence affecting children. Data were also collected in the spatial and temporal contexts in which violence occurs, the perpetrators of violence, service seeking behaviours of survivors, and the relationship of sexual, physical, and emotional violence with survivors' current health status. Risky sexual behaviours by females and males aged 13-24 years were also measured and included here such as measures of condom use, multiple sexual partnerships and HIV testing. Measures of social cultural norms were measured using attitudinal questions of acceptability of spousal abuse in different settings.

In the analysis, the 13 to 24 year age group was divided into two sub-groups for analysis: 13 to 17 and 18 to 24. Victimization rates (past 12 months) were based on responses from participants aged 13 to 17 years who reported that they experienced a particular form of violence in the 12 months preceding the survey while childhood prevalence rates were based on responses from participants aged 18 to 24 years who reported that they experienced a particular form of violence prior to the age of 18

Methods

The 2011 NBSLEA was a cross-sectional survey which targeted 13 to 24 year old females and males within selected households and was designed to produce national level estimates.

Due to the sensitive nature of the exercise, the survey used a split sample approach.

Selected Results

Type of Violence	Age Group	Female %	Male %
Sexual Violence Prior to Age 18	18-24	32.5	8.9
Sexual Violence in the Past 12 months	13-17	8.5	1.8
Physical Violence by a Parent or Adult Relative prior to Age 18	18-24	47.8	60.9
Emotional Violence by an Adult Prior to Age 18	18-24	29	39.1

Following the launch of the NBSLEA results, a Cabinet Interministerial Committee (IMC) on Rape and Sexual Abuse was established. The IMC is composed of:

1. Ministry of Woman Affairs, Gender and Community Development (Chairperson of the Committee)
2. Ministry of Health and Child Care
3. Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
4. Ministry of Home Affairs.

The persons who sit in the committee are actually cabinet Ministers responsible for the above mentioned committees. The IMC launched a national campaign against rape and sexual violence on the 19th of June 2014 and further developed a national action plan to end rape and sexual abuse.

The paper will therefore, focus mainly on the experience of using household surveys in measuring violence against children, but will pay particular attention to women age 13 to 24 years.