

# Connections between childhood trauma and current experiences and perpetration of rape amongst Gauteng women and men: a household survey

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**South African Medical Research Council**

BUILDING A HEALTHY NATION THROUGH RESEARCH



# Background

- South Africa has a very high prevalence of rape
- Most rape perpetration and victimization begins in the teenage years:
  - 40% of victims reporting sexual violence to the police were girls under 18 (Peden et al, 1999)
  - Three quarters of men who rape do it for the first time before the age of 20 (Jewkes et al, 2009)
- Perpetration has been associated with anti-social, violent and sexually risky practices among men (Jewkes et al, 2006)
- Victimization associated with engaging in high risk sexual practices among women (Lang et al, 2011)

# Connecting Child Abuse and Rape

- Exposure to adversity in childhood has serious health consequences
- Childhood adversity has been associated with rape perpetration or victimization:
  - Re-occurrence of physical/sexual abuse in adult women (Coid et al, 2001)
  - Development of anti-social and violent behaviour (Lui, 2011)
  - Incident HIV infection among women (Jewkes et al, 2010)
  - Perpetration of domestic violence among sexually abused boys (Duke et al, 2010)
- Limited literature on the relationship between childhood abuse and rape perpetration (RP) or rape victimisation (RV) occurring in adulthood in South Africa

# Objectives of the presentation

- ✓ To describe the prevalence and patterns of rape perpetration and experiences, and
- ✓ To determine the associations between childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and adult rape perpetration and victimization by an intimate or non-partner among women and men living in Gauteng province, South Africa

# Study Design

- **Design:** cross-sectional household survey on GBV
- **Setting:** All districts of Gauteng Province, SA
- **Sample:** 511 of 707 women and 487 of 635 men in eligible households completed interviews
- **Sampling units:** 75 primary sampling units
- **Inclusion criteria:** over 18 years of age, slept 4 or more nights in the eligible household
- **Ethical approval:** MRC Ethics Review Committee
- **Data analysis:** using Stata 11
- PDAs devices for data collection

# Questionnaire

- Structured questionnaires
- Non-partner rape including streamlining
- Intimate partner sexual violence
- Childhood Trauma Scale: a modified version of the short form Childhood Trauma Scale (Bernstein, 1996)
  - included experiences of emotional abuse and neglect, physical punishment and hardship, and sexual abuse, all before the age of 18 years
- Socio-demographic characteristics
- Gender equity and sexuality questions
- Physical health, HIV and substance use
- Mental health

# Prevalence and patterns of rape

	Women (n = 511)	Men (n = 487)
	%	%
<b>Intimate and non-partner rape* (lifetime)</b>	26.4	37.8
Non-partner rape (lifetime)	12.5	31.5
Intimate and non-partner rape (past year)	7.8	4.7
Rape when a woman is drunk	4.2	14.4
Streamlining	1.6	6.9

**\*Outcome variable**

# Patterns of Childhood Adversity

	Women (n = 511)			Men (n = 487)		
	Never %	Sometimes %	Often/v.often %	Never %	Sometimes %	Often/v.often %
Physical punishment	26.1	44.3	29.7	13.3	47.8	38.9
Sexual abuse	70.7	15.5	13.9	79.5	15.2	5.3
Emotional abuse	45.2	28.3	26.5	36.5	46.3	17.2
Physical hardship	54.4	35.9	9.7	47.5	38.3	14.1
Emotional neglect	59.1	22.7	18.3	43.2	41.3	15.0



# Characteristics of rape victims/perpetrators

	Rape Victims* (n=126)	Rape Perpetrators^ (n=183)
	%	%
<b>Age groups:</b>		
<25 years	16.7	22.5
25-34 years	24.6	34.6
35+ years	58.7	42.9
<b>Race groups:</b>		
Black African	88.0	90.7
Coloured, Indian and Other	5.6	2.7
White	6.4	6.6
<b>Educational level:</b>		
High school incomplete /lower	<b>61.1</b>	41.5
High school complete /higher	38.9	<b>58.5</b>

\*=women; ^=men; Rape Victims (RV); Rape Perpetrators (RP)

# Bivariate associations between rape and childhood trauma

	Rape Victims			Rape Perpetrators		
	Not RVs	RVs		Not RPs	RPs	
	%	%	<i>P</i> -value	%	%	<i>P</i> -value
<b>Physical punishment</b>						
Never	30.8	11.2	0.002	13.6	13.1	0.74
Sometimes	42.2	52.0		48.8	45.9	
Often/v.often	27.1	36.8		37.5	41.0	
<b>Sexual abuse</b>						
Never	78.6	47.2	<0.0001	86.4	68.9	0.0001
Sometimes	9.4	32.0		11.3	21.9	
Often/v.often	12.0	20.8		2.3	9.3	
<b>Emotional abuse</b>						
Never	50.7	28.0	<0.0001	39.5	32.2	0.37
Sometimes	27.1	32.8		44.2	49.2	
Often/v.often	22.2	39.2		16.3	18.6	
<b>Physical hardship</b>						
Never	55.5	47.1	0.06	45.9	50.3	0.57
Sometimes	36.4	38.8		40.2	35.5	
Often/v.often	8.1	14.1		14.0	14.2	
<b>Emotional neglect</b>						
Never	63.8	45.2	0.004	46.5	38.8	0.20
Sometimes	20.5	28.6		40.9	42.6	
Often/v.often	15.7	26.2		12.6	18.6	

# Multivariate association between being a victim or a perpetrator and prior childhood adversity exposure

Adjusted for age, strata/clustering and SES						
	RV			RP		
	aOR*	95% CI	P-value	aOR	95% CI	P-value
High school complete /higher	-	-	-	1.53	1.02, 2.31	0.04
Sexual abuse in childhood (Sometimes)	4.89	2.77, 8.65	0.001	2.61	1.55, 4.38	<0.001
Sexual abuse in childhood (Often/V.Often)	2.10	1.09, 4.07	0.03	4.46	1.79, 11.1	0.001
Emotional abuse in childhood (Often/V.Often)	1.94	1.06, 3.54	0.03			

\*= Adjusted Odds Ratio

# Conclusion

- Rape in South Africa appears to be un-abating
- The findings confirm that sexual abuse of boys is a reality in South Africa
- Physical punishment is common in South Africa, but it is sexual abuse of girls and boys that has the most impact on recurrence of violence in adulthood
- Sexual and emotional abuse appear to have lasting effects which imply the potential for inter-generational transference from victimhood as a child to repeat victimhood or perpetration in adulthood
- Thus curbing childhood abuse is very important as a primary prevention strategy that needs to be prioritised

Thank you for listening