



Sheraton Hotel
Pretoria
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The Optimus Study on Child Abuse, Violence and Neglect in South Africa





What are we exploring? The child's exposure to violence

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Violent crime (e.g., robbery, theft, assault)
- *Cyberbullying*
- Witnessing violent incidents
- Exposure to family violence

Research Approach

Scientific Data Collection

Population Survey

Agency
Study

Stakeholder
interviews

Schools
SAQ

Schools
IAQ

Household
SAQ

Household
IAQ



Population Survey

Household Survey:

- N=5,631
- 15 to 17 year old
- Multi-stage area probability sample

School-based survey:

- N=4,086
- Cluster sampling (matched to h/h)
- Grades 8 to 10

Administered questionnaires

Self-completed forms

Population Study & Instrument

Instrument:

- Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (Finkelhor et al, 2005)
- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (Briere, 2001)

* Sample: de=3, CI=95%, RR=94.8%/96.1%



The importance of interview location & method

- The location of the interviews (i.e. home or school) seemed to impact on the information disclosed by the participants.
- Greater disclosure, and thus, higher prevalence rates for the child sexual abuse and maltreatment variables were observed for most interviews conducted within schools when compared to household interviews.
- Further to this, disclosure rates were also influenced by the interview method – with higher disclosure rates being observed in the self-administered questionnaires when compared to the interviewer-administered questionnaires.







Whether adolescents had been exposed to:

- coerced (unwanted or by force) and consensual sexual touching,
- exposure to intimate body parts or pornographic images
- sexual harassment
- penetrative and non-penetrative sexual intercourse (actual or attempted),
- ... by or with an adult or similar aged peers.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT

Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

- Of the young people interviewed in schools, 35.4% - **one in every three young people** – had experienced *some* form of sexual abuse at some point in their lives.
- Of those interviewed in households 26.3% – **more than a quarter** – had experienced some form of sexual abuse.
- This means that a total of **784 967** young people in South Africa have been the victims of sexual abuse by the age of 17 years:
 - Almost the population of Port Elizabeth and almost double the population of Bloemfontein.
 - Equivalent of filling up Johannesburg’s Soccer City Stadium eight times over and the Cape Town Stadium 14 times over.
 - 12 abused children may be sitting in your child’s classroom and 20 will be sitting in an average school bus.



Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

- The differences between males' and females' reported rates of abuse were not as stark as anticipated.
- The mean age at which girls first experienced sexual abuse was 14, while boys typically reported their first experience to be at the age of 15 years.
 - First experiences of and exposure to *any form* sexual abuse occurred between the ages of 1 and 17
- In the school survey, boys (36.8%) were found to be slightly more likely than girls (33.9%) to report *some* form of sexual abuse, however:
 - girls were more likely to experience forced and penetrative sexual abuse, and other forms of sexual abuse that involve contact with the abuser (contact abuse)
 - boys were more likely to report forced exposure to sexual acts and material (non-contact abuse)

Differentiating different 'forms' of abuse

- Remarkably difficult to 'grade' sexual abuse in terms of its perceived severity
- Highly subjective and situational:
 - threat of rape (no-contact) vs physical contact
- Range of factors which influence the degree to which one might experience no-contact and contact sexual abuse as more or less threatening or abusive:
 - *any previous personal history* with the person committing the act (and the perceived likelihood of a sexual offence being committed);
 - *personal, social, cultural or religious norms* surrounding the acceptability of such behaviour;
 - *the relationship dynamics of the parties*, including authority or influence;
 - *the perceived manifestation of the incident* (whether an uninvited touch will result in further or 'more serious' sexual abuse or not); and
 - *the extent to which one sees themselves as empowered or disempowered* to handle the incident.

Touching by a known or unknown adult

- The schools SAQ produced an **11.3%** prevalence rate of young people who had experienced sexual touching by a *known or unknown adult* in their lifetime.
 - **Gender:** Males (10.6%) and females (12%)
 - **Urban and rural rates were similar:** 11.2% (urban) and 11.5% (rural).
 - **By unknown adult:** 5.5% reported that sexual abuse perpetrated by an unknown adult: 5.9% of females and 5.1% of males

Schools SAQ: Sexual experiences with peers and 'others' (similar aged)

Overall prevalence rate is **32.7%**: boys (**34.8%**) and girls (**30.4%**)

SEXUAL ACT	Urban Male	Urban Female	Rural Male	Rural Female	TOTAL PREVALENCE
Another child or teen make you do sexual things against your will	11.1%	8.5%	10.6%	6.0%	9.4%
Anyone <u>try</u> to force you to have sex	10.2%	15.7%	6.4%	11.1%	11.7%
Anyone make you look at their private parts/ masturbation/pornography	19.7%	8.3%	12.4%	6.2%	12.9%
Sexual things with anyone 18 or older	16.7%	16.2%	13.6%	13.7%	13.1%





Lifetime Prevalence

- **1 in 5** young people who had experienced *sexual abuse by a known adult*, had this experience more than once and **1 in 10** had experienced this four or more times.
- **Half of young people** who experienced *sexual abuse by another child* or adolescent reported this occurring more than one time.
- **Two thirds** of young people who reported having been sexually abused, had a *sexual experience with an adult* more than one time.
- **One fifth** of young people who have been sexually abused, have experienced some form of *sexual harassment* four or more times.

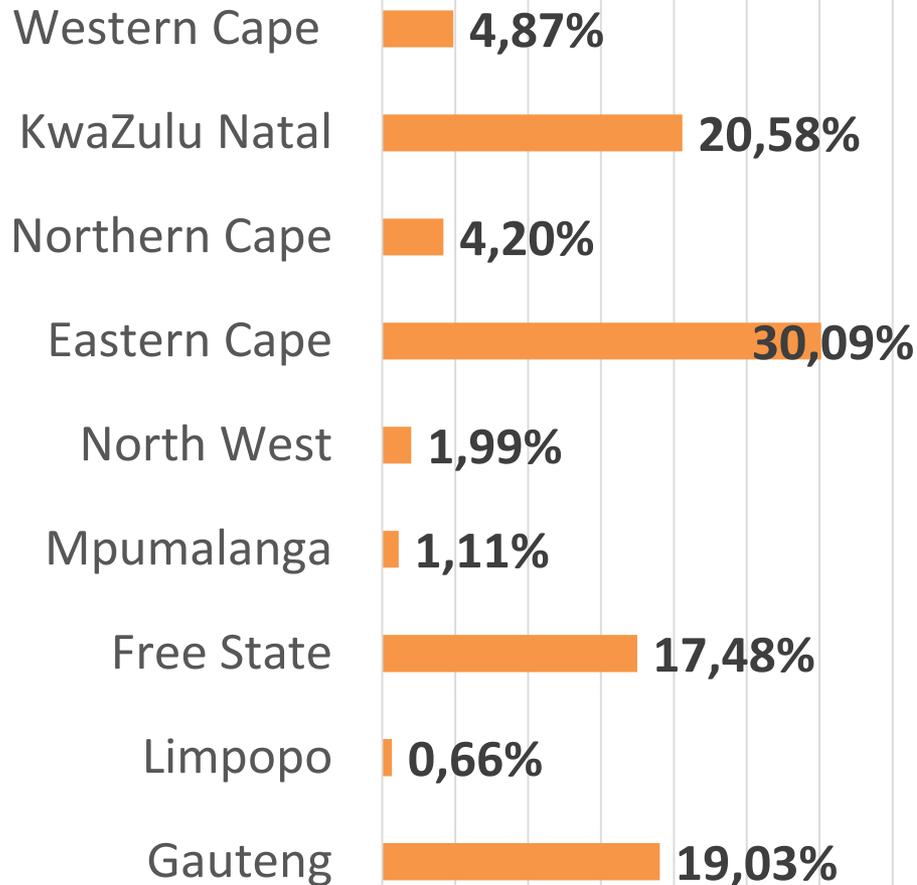
 EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE OVER LIFETIME	NO. OF TIMES	SCHOOLS IAQ
Sexual abuse by known adult	1	59.4%
	2	18.8%
	3	11.5%
	4+	10.3%
Sexual abuse by unknown adult	1	91.4%
	2	5.7%
	3	2.9%
	4+	0
Sexual abuse by a child or adolescent	1	54.0%
	2	24.1%
	3	11.5%
	4+	10.3%
Forced sexual intercourse (actual or attempted)	1	72.9%
	2	15.5%
	3	4.7%
	4+	6.9%
Sexual harassment (verbal or written)	1	54.2%
	2	18.8%
	3	7.3%
	4+	19.7%
Sexual experience with an adult	1	39.1%
	2	18.9%
	3	13.9%
	4+	28.1%

Characteristics of sexual victimisation

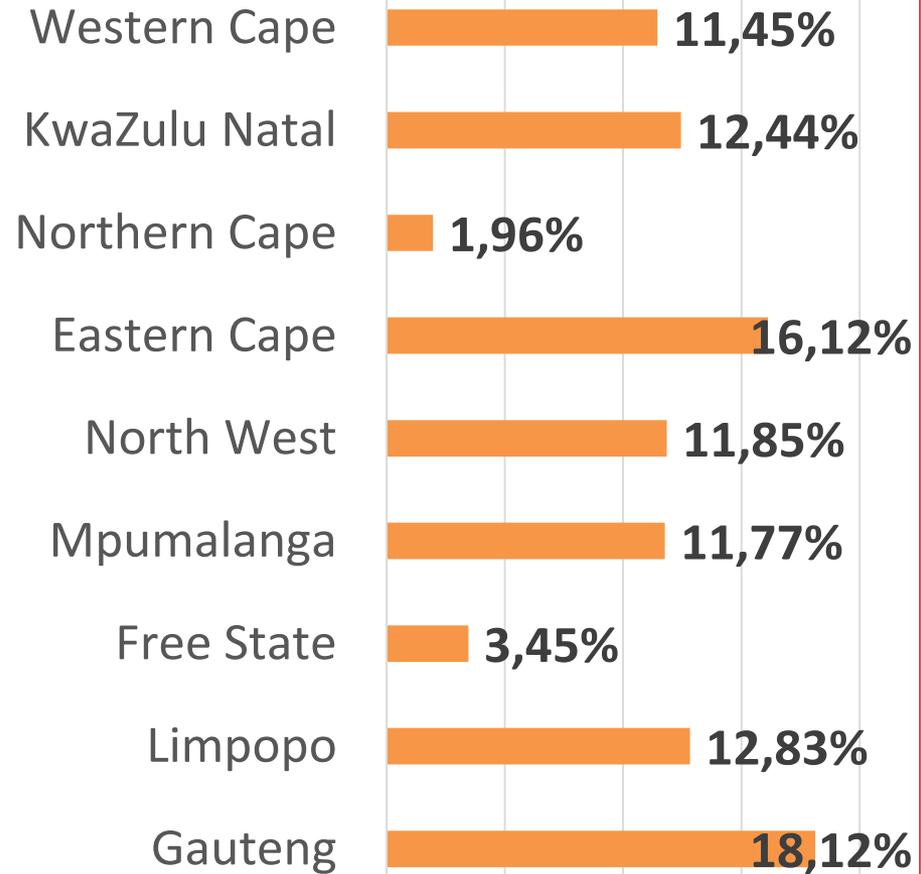
SCHOOL SURVEY						
Type of Abuse	Males			Females		
	Min.	Max.	Mean	Min.	Max.	Mean
Sexual abuse by known adult	6	17	14.24	4	17	13.03
Sexual abuse by unknown adult	13	16	15.70	8	17	14.46
Sexual abuse by a child or teen	9	16	14.25	7	17	14.03
Forced sexual intercourse actual or attempted	11	17	14.88	9	17	14.41
Sexual exposure	10	17	14.00	10	17	14.43
Written or verbal sexual harassment	12	17	14.48	12	17	14.79
Sexual experience with an adult	11	17	15.29	11	17	15.30

Any form of abuse by province

School IAQs



Household IAQs



Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

- **Will it happen again (sexual abuse by known adult)?**
 - Boys 28%
 - Girls 25.4%
- **Penetration (by known adult):**
 - Boys 23.1%
 - Girls 28.2%
- **Penetration (by unknown adult):**
 - Boys 0 (38.5% in household survey)
 - Girls 40.7%
- **Penetration by another teen: 40%** for boys and girls
- **Sexual *experience* with an adult:** four out of five cases involved penetration
- **Distinct differences in the location** involving known and unknown perpetrators:
 - *Known* – 56.6% cases had taken place at the victim's home
 - *Unknown* – 66.3% area close to the victims' homes such as the community, streets nearby or local parks

Nature of abuse: known adult

NATURE OF ABUSE	Schools (IAQ)	
	Male	Female
By a Known Adult		
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	11.5%	57.7%
Weapon was used	0%	39.0%*
Verbal threats were used	4.3%	26.7%
Victim felt threatened	9.5%	36.8%
Incident was part of a traditional, cultural practice or initiation	0	2.8%
Victim was promised something in return for the act (alcohol, drugs, transport, food, housing, money etc.)	11.5%	10.0%
Victim received what was promised	33.3%	28.6%
Victim was under the influence of any drugs or alcohol	7.7%	1.4%

*16.7% of cases that a gun was used, in 16.7% of cases that a knife was used and in 5.6% of cases that another object (bottleneck) was used.



Weapons or Threats: Unknown Adult and Peers

By Another Child or Teen	M	F
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	9.4%	47.1%
Weapon was used	0	13.3%
Verbal threats were used	0	27.8%

By an Unknown Adult	M	F
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	16.7%	53.6%
Weapon was used	0	40.0%
Verbal threats were used	20.0%	30.8%

Other forms of maltreatment and victimisation

- Neglect: 12.2% of children had experienced this in their lifetime
- Physical abuse: 34.8%
- Emotional abuse: 16.1%
- Exposure to family violence: 31.4%
- Other victimisation:
 - 65.2% experienced direct victimisation
 - 63.4% experienced indirect victimisation



Mental health and sexual abuse

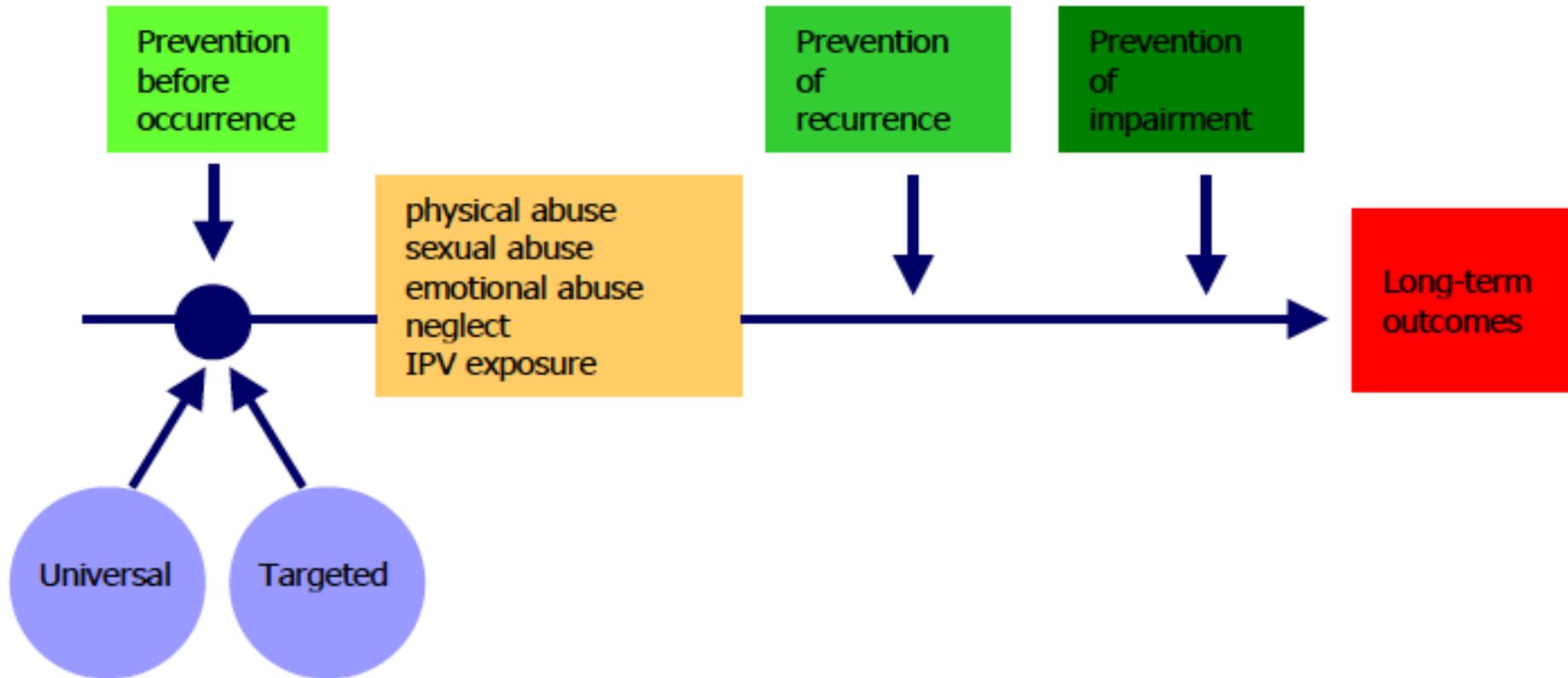


Other consequences associated with sexual abuse

- Problems with schoolwork (abuse by unknown adult): 20.4%
- Injuries (abuse by known adult): 29.9%
- High risk sexual behaviour: 37.4% (compared with 9.9% of children who have not been abused)
- Risky substance use: 43.2% (compared with 17.8% of children who have not been abused)



What now?



Source: PreVAAL – Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan

So what do we do?

- Sleeping density: 10% higher risk for sexual abuse
- Parents hospitalised: 1.5 – 2.0 times higher risk
- Parents using drugs or alcohol: 2.2 – 3.4 times higher risk
- Young person is disabled: 1.5-2.1 times higher risk
- Good relationship with parents, and parents monitor them: 0.9 the risk of other young people

So what do we do with that?

- Preventing impairment and recurrence:
 - We need a unified protocol for assessment, referral and management that brings agencies together to deal with cases in a seamless fashion
- Preventing abuse from occurring:
 - Support children whose parents are in hospital for a long time
 - Support parents to develop good relationships with their children
 - Make substance abuse treatment widely available for young people and their parents
 - Provide housing that reduces sleeping density
 - Equip schools to prevent and deal with violence and abuse



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