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Profiles and behavioural consequences of violence victimisation among male and female adolescents from the Caribbean

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The Stockholm Criminology Symposium, 19-21 June 2017
The prevalence of child abuse & neglect (CAN)

Key statistics - worldwide (WHO, 2014):

- 25% of all adults report having been physically abused as children.
- 36% were emotionally abused.
- 20% of women and 5-10% of men reported experiences of sexual abuse.

Key statistics – high income countries (Gilbert et al., 2009):

- Every year, 4-16% of children are physically abused.
- 10% are emotionally abused.
- A higher risk of penetrative sexual abuse was noted for girls (5-10%) than for boys (5%).
CONSEQUENCES OF CAN

- Perpetrating or being a victim of violence
- Depression and anxiety
- Self-harming behaviour and suicide
- Aggressive/antisocial behaviour
- Smoking
- Obesity
- High-risk sexual behaviours
- Unintended pregnancy
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Educational underachievement

Not all abused children will suffer these consequences at a similar level of intensity.
Consequences of CAN

• **The specificity assumption** – certain exposures may be linked to particular mental health consequences
  - Child sexual abuse (CSA) thought to be associated with most harmful outcomes

• More recent evidence – various forms of CAN may have **non-specific**, widespread effects on mental health
  - Vachon *et al.* (2015): CAN can result in anxiety, depression, rule-breaking, and aggression; unique effect of CSA not identified
Methodological limitations

• Previous studies tended to employ **variable-centred approaches**, which focus on associations between study variables.

• Since different forms of child abuse commonly co-occur, such approach appears limited.

• Innovation is needed in the methods used to assess CAN consequences.

• **Latent class analysis** is becoming increasingly important in CAN research
  ▪ *Child Abuse & Neglect* (official journal of the International Society for Prevention of CAN) is currently preparing a special issue on measurement of child maltreatment, in an effort to summarise the ways advanced statistical approaches can be applied in child maltreatment research.
The project commenced in March 2016.

To study child abuse and family violence in the Eastern Caribbean (Barbados and Grenada) (behaviours and attitudes).

To develop a pro-social video game for adolescents which would challenge gender-based violence-supportive attitudes and evaluate its effectiveness.

We collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

First, we conducted a systematic review of CAN profiling studies:
• To develop a better understanding of patterns of maltreatment and related consequences across different samples
• To recognise limitations of prior research
• To better position our empirical study within the wider context of CAN profiling
Systematic review of CAN profiling studies

**Selection process**: articles published in peer-reviewed journals using LCA/LPA to profile CAN (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence)

- **16 relevant empirical** studies published between 2008 and 2017.
- Results presented as a narrative review, grouped into subsections: children and adolescents (n = 9), mixed-gender adult populations (n = 4), and exclusively male samples (n = 3).

**SOME FINDINGS**

- Inconsistent findings as to the number of CAN classes.
- Most research uncovered a poly-victimized and a low abuse group.
- Poly-victimization associated with most adverse internalizing and externalizing outcomes, especially when sexual abuse was present.
- Exposure to physical and emotional abuse leads to behavioural problems.
- Child sexual abuse only – predominantly female participants

**SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is a need for studies profiling CAN types by victimisation setting.
- Research should compare maltreatment patterns between the two sexes (no studies among exclusively female samples to date).
- Most studies conducted in the West - more research within non-Western societies is needed to build a better understanding of CAN co-occurrence worldwide.

Violence in the Caribbean

• **Ecological model of violence** – the extent, causes, and correlates of child maltreatment appear to be population specific.
  - Cultural values and practices can have the effect of condoning certain expressions of violence (Wood, 2007)

• Violence is widespread in the Caribbean, to the extent that its reduction has been presented as an **urgent challenge** (UNICEF, 2006).

• Despite its low visibility, domestic violence, including CAN, seems to be the most prevalent type of violence in the region (Imbusch, 2011).
CHILD CARE BOARD in Barbados

3519 cases of child abuse were reported in Barbados in 2008-2013

The most common form of maltreatment was neglect (41.8%), followed by physical (24.5%), sexual (23.8%), and emotional (10%) abuse.

The majority (86.5%) of perpetrators were known to the victim. 88.6% of victims of sexual abuse were female.

CHILD WELFARE AUTHORITY in Grenada

During the period 2009-2013, there were 1503 reported cases of child victimisation.

Physical abuse was the most prevalent type of maltreatment (34.9%), followed by neglect (33.1%) and sexual abuse (29.1%).

There were no reported cases of emotional abuse.
The present study aims

1. To examine the prevalence of different types of childhood victimisation (physical, emotional, and sexual) experiences across two different settings (in and outside the family) among girls and boys in Barbados and Grenada.

2. To uncover patterns of co-occurrence between childhood victimisation types among males and females.

To explore the associations between childhood victimisation profiles and age as well as behavioural outcomes (violence perpetration, hostility, and non-violent conflict resolution).
Methods

Participants: 1351 children and adolescents (9 – 17 years old) from Barbados and Grenada.
  • 662 boys ($M$ age = 13.02 years, $SD = 2.16$)
  • 689 girls ($M$ age = 12.95 years, $SD = 2.19$)

Materials: 4 self-report measures to assess (1) childhood victimisation (physical, sexual, emotional) in and outside the family; (2) violence perpetration; (3) hostility; (4) non-violent conflict resolution

Analysis: Latent class analysis (LCA) with covariates (separate analyses for girls and boys)
Results (aim 1): Prevalence of victimisation

- 1% of children in Barbados and Grenada were officially reported to suffer from child maltreatment.

- In the current sample, physical victimisation in the family was experienced by 40.6% of boys and 31.1% of girls.
  - These rates were roughly 10% higher for physical abuse outside the home.

- Emotional victimisation outside the family was the most common form of victimisation among girls (65.5%) and boys (65.4%).
  - Around 40% of children reported emotional abuse in the family
  - WHO (2014) worldwide statistics – 36%

- Boys were more likely to experience sexual violence than girls.
  - Boys – 20.5% in the family; 25.1% outside the family
  - Girls – 11.5% in the family; 15.4% outside the family

- Most victimisation occurred outside the family.
LCA results (aim 2): CAN profiles

**BOYS**

- PV family: 43.2%
- PV not family: 39.2%
- EV family: 17.6%
- EV not family: 17.8%
- SV family: 40.7%
- SV not family: 7.6%

**GIRLS**

- PV family: 43.2%
- PV not family: 39.2%
- EV family: 17.6%
- EV not family: 17.8%
- SV family: 40.7%
- SV not family: 7.6%
Results (aim 3): Associations

• Compared with members of low victimisation groups, youngsters who reported having experienced high/moderate levels of various forms of violence, including those who were poly-victimised, were significantly more likely to engage in **violent and hostile behaviour**.

• Among girls, emotional & physical victimisation in the family, but not outside the family, was related with increased odds of violence perpetration and hostility.
  • Intrafamilial victimisation results in most adverse consequences - the feeling of powerlessness and betrayal of trust

• Contrary to our predictions, a sexual abuse only class was not retrieved for girls.

• Non-violent conflict resolution skills were not affected by victimisation.
Some limitations & directions for future research

- Self-report
- We did not measure neglect.
- Not controlled for perpetrator type, onset and intensity of abuse.
- Victimization outside the family – need to control for where maltreatment takes place to inform prevention efforts.
Thank you!

Questions?

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