

caring for boys

AFFECTED BY

sexual violence

IN SOUTH AFRICA





[acknowledgements]

This research was a collaboration between the Children in Distress Network (CINDI) and Childline South Africa with support from Family for Every Child, a global alliance of which CINDI is a member. The report was written by Suzanne Clulow from CINDI and Dr Joan van Niekerk, an independent child rights and protection consultant. It forms part of a series of research reports coordinated by Family for Every Child on boys affected by sexual violence. More information on this collective work can be found under the Changemakers for Children portal

<https://changemakersforchildren.community/dashboard/rise-learning-network>

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[list of acronyms]

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| CSA | Child sexual abuse |
| DSD | Department of Social Development |
| GBV | Gender based violence |
| HSB | Harmful sexual behaviour |
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| KZN | KwaZulu-Natal |
| CINDI | Children in Distress Network |
| SRH | Sexual and reproductive health |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |



list of terms

| Term | Definition |
|----------------------------|---|
| Actor (of sexual violence) | A boy (under 18 years) who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour. |
| Child | A person under the age of 18 years. |
| Child sexual abuse | <p>Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity • the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices • the exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and materials. <p>(WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention (1999)).</p> |
| Harmful sexual behaviour | <p>Harmful sexual behaviour¹ of children is sexual activity where one individual has not consented, or where their relationship includes an imbalance of power, for example due to age, intellectual ability, physical ability or impairment (disability), or physical strength.</p> <p>The harm caused may be physical and/or emotional / psychological even though the behaviour is sexual in nature. The child with harmful sexual behaviour may use grooming, coercion or threats to influence the other person to comply with their wishes, or they may use force.</p> <p>This term is useful because it may not be appropriate to label a child's behaviour as abusive or criminal. However, it is important to intervene to protect the rights of other children and to support the child with sexual behaviour to take responsibility for changing their behaviour. It is important to understand that the engagement in harmful sexual behaviour may be due to an underlying vulnerability.</p> |
| Mother | The biological female parent of a child or any other person who is the primary caregiver of a child and fulfils the "mothering" role in place of a biological mother. |
| Sexual violence | <p>Non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact; non-consensual acts of a sexual nature not involving contact (such as voyeurism or sexual harassment); acts of sexual trafficking committed to someone who is unable to consent or refuse, and online exploitation. (WHO INSPIRE Handbook 2018)</p> <p>This term is used as an umbrella term for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour in this research.</p> |
| Social fathers | Someone other than a child's biological father from within their family or community who plays a fathering and influential role in their life. |
| Uncle | A non-related man from a child's community who is looked to for guidance and advice by them and their family. |
| Victim (of sexual abuse) | A boy (under 18 years) who has been forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. |

¹ Family for Every Child (2018) Caring for boys affected by sexual violence. Family for Every Child, p.8. <https://familyforeverychild.org/report/caring-for-boys-affected-by-sexual-violence/>



[executive summary]

Very little is known about the incidences, prevalence and correlates of sexual violence affecting boys. Where data does exist, it is often widely varying.

An initial scoping study by Family for Every Child which explored the existing knowledge base on the drivers of sexual violence affecting boys, found that it remains largely unknown, unacknowledged and not responded to (Family for Every Child 2018). The role of gendered social norms in influencing perceptions of boys' vulnerability was highlighted. With this in mind, this research sought to better understand what role normative social constructs of masculinity and sexuality in South Africa play in the sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour of boys, referred to collectively in the report as 'sexual violence'.

Three topics were explored using a participatory, qualitative research approach: a) masculinity and sexuality; b) how these relate to sexual violence affecting boys, and c) what interventions are available to boys affected by sexual violence.

The experiences and opinions of 51 adults and 44 children, including those affected by sexual violence, in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo were listened to, analysed and summarised into a series of key findings. Available literature was reviewed, prioritising where possible the most recent, to help shape research questions and findings. In addition, practitioners, researchers and experts in the fields of sexual violence and masculinity were also consulted.

Findings



• Masculinity and sexuality were constructed around traditional patriarchal values of men as heterosexual providers and protectors. Little space for alternative discourse was evident which highlighted challenges in how the vulnerability of boys to sexual violence as well as their involvement in harmful sexual behaviour were viewed. Boys, in general, were not considered vulnerable to sexual violence because of their physical strength and ability to protect themselves. They were provided with far less parental supervision and much greater freedom than girls, both of which place them at heightened risk of sexual violence. The harmful effects of childhood sexual abuse, for both boys and girls, were often equated with physical outcomes such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease. This strengthened the narrative of girls' heightened vulnerability. It was acknowledged that the focus on girls as exclusively vulnerable denies boys an adequate response.

social taboos
on discussing
sex

What constitutes sexual violence was not well understood and was mostly limited to penetrative acts which were in turn mostly limited to the rape of females. Recognition of grooming behaviours in general varied but was lower in relation to boys than girls. When acknowledged, grooming was seen as wrong and harmful but less so for boys than girls. Very little understanding of non-contact sexual abuse was apparent, even though engagement with pornography was mentioned by a number of boys.

Families play an important role in teaching boys about masculinity. The role of social fathers in this regard, both in addition to and in place of the biological father, was highlighted as significant by men, women and boys. Mothers felt less empowered to raise their boys and this was reinforced by social narratives around boys needing to be raised by men. Boys' feelings of support and connection to their mothers suggest a mother's role is more important than these narratives permit.

In contrast to the strong role of families in shaping masculinity, sexuality was shaped mostly outside the home. Reasons for this centred around social taboos on discussing sex and sexuality within the home as well as traditional values limiting sex to child bearing. Whilst early sexual debut was acknowledged, it was not desirable and was raised as a concern by both men and women. The negative influence of peers and the media on sexuality were also highlighted. Many boys referred to engaging with pornography; yet little parental supervision of online access and television viewing was apparent.

The idealisation of masculine success places considerable pressure on boys to perform. In the data, boyhood itself was socially constructed as a pathway to manhood with its own set of expectations and responsibilities. Yet, particularly in contexts of poverty, attaining these idealised standards for many men and boys is not possible. The gulf between men and boys' lived and idealised identities was fraught with feelings and perceptions of uselessness, failure, being "less than", disrespect, ridicule and being unwanted and unloved. Boys, in particular, reflected on the harm social norms bring to them.

The idealisation of masculine success places considerable pressure on boys to perform.

In relation to social constructs of sexuality, the delegitimising of other forms of sexuality to heterosexuality limited people's understanding of harmful sexual behaviour between boys. This was generally conflated with homosexuality which in turn was negatively viewed. Fear of being considered homosexual was noted as both a barrier to disclosure as well as a driver in the perpetration of sexual violence. Narratives around boy's lack of sexual control and their need to prove themselves sexually to peers were also foregrounded in discussions about drivers of sexual violence.

The influence of peer groups in the lives of boys was described as extremely negative. These were characterised by high levels of social control through unhealthy competition (“one-upmanship”), ridicule, teasing, violence, humiliation and a general lack of empathy and compassion for others. Whilst the support of individual friends was recognised as a protective factor, very few boys identified such a friend in their lives.

Although most respondents recognised sexual violence affecting boys as wrong, steps taken in response varied. The extremes ranged from denial, to victim blaming and shaming, to death threats against the actor, to seeking support for both the actor and the victim. In general, men favoured more punitive measures whilst women favoured gentler, more relational interventions, although these still tended to focus on correcting or limiting behaviour rather than understanding its causes. Little evidence of people's knowledge of mandatory reporting requirements relating to sexual violence was apparent. Conversely, most respondents were knowledgeable about where to seek and access help.

Social workers, teachers, the police, Uncles, family members and trusted friends were all recognised sources of support, although people's experiences of engaging with these role-players differed. Issues of confidentiality and trust were frequently raised as risk factors in people's help-seeking behaviour.

Protective factors identified through the research include:

- Parental knowledge about sexual violence
- Having a trusted friend or confidante
- Responsive parent-child relationships
- Life skills programmes at school
- The involvement of fathers and social fathers
- Responsive, community-based support for boys affected by sexual violence and their families

Risk factors identified through the research include:

- Little parental supervision of television and online usage
- Lack of quality, accessible child-care options
- Enforcing respect and obedience to elders
- Competitive hierarchies of masculinity amongst peers
- High levels of violence in families and communities
- Lack of parental supervision of boys
- Polarised views of boys and girls
- Focusing only on physical outcomes of abuse
- Not talking about sex and sexuality in the home
- The absence of responsive and appropriately resourced support structures in communities
- Views that mothers cannot raise boys



recommendations

The research makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations for families

Families should be enabled, through a supportive policy and service delivery environment, to carry out their parental and caregiving responsibilities in:

- Ensuring boy's and girl's online and media use is safe, monitored, restricted to age-appropriate content and that children know what to do if they are exposed to harm online and that children know where to seek help if they are exposed to harm online.
- Ensuring boys and girls are kept emotionally and physically safe and when their safety is in danger appropriate help is sought.
- For both boys and girls, spending time with them, talking to them (including about sex and relationships) taking an interest in their activities, friends, hopes and dreams and supporting them in good and bad times.

Recommendations for community members, cultural and religious leaders

- Ensuring rites of passage which help boys and girls transition from childhood into early adulthood, provide accurate and appropriately messaged information around gender, sexual orientation, sex and relationships so as to avoid reinforcing harmful social norms and protect the rights of all children.

Recommendations for civil society organisations

Interventions provided by civil society organisations working with children should:

- Specifically recognise the differing vulnerabilities and trauma responses of boys and girls to sexual violence, address gendered social norms which contribute to these vulnerabilities and have specific safeguarding policies and procedures in place for boys and girls.
- Provide community education on the different sexual acts that constitute sexual violence, as per the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 5 of 2015, including both contact and non-contact sexual acts; how boys and girls may be vulnerable to and affected by these crimes in different ways; and the reporting obligations and responsibilities of community members and families outlined in South African legislation.
- Deepen understanding amongst families and communities of the long-term physical, emotional and psychosocial impacts of sexual violence on both boys who are victims as well as those who are actors and the role families can play in their healing.
- Recognise the differing parenting needs of boys and girls, encourage the caregiving involvement of fathers (not just their



financial provision), promote responsive parenting and the elimination of harsh discipline.

Recommendations for the media

- The media, in particular local media, must accept their responsibility in ensuring content is safe for children and does not perpetuate gendered social norms which increase boys' and girls' vulnerability to harm.

Recommendations for the Government of South Africa

The Government of South Africa must:

- Ensure that intersectoral and multifaceted violence prevention policies and programmes do not delegitimise violence against boys through the exclusive focus on girls, the labelling of boys as perpetrators or the lack of explicit recognition of the different vulnerabilities and responses of boys and girls to sexual violence.
- Adequately resource programmes that work with boys who are victims of and/or actors in sexual violence given existing evidence in research of the link, for boys, between victimisation and/or exposure to violence and its later perpetration. Particular attention must be given to the long-term nature of these types of programmes and the need to concurrently address interconnected wider psychosocial contributors (including gendered social norms) to maximise outcomes.
- Ensure that life orientation programmes continue to be implemented in schools; that lessons are ringfenced within timetables and cannot be used for other lessons; are taught by an appropriately trained and skilled teacher; encourage the participation and engagement of children in discussions, including between genders; have content which focuses on equitable norms around sex and relationships; explicitly recognises the vulnerability of both boys and girls to sexual violence; and promotes emotional literacy in children.
- Ensuring that corporal punishment in the home is prohibited as per current amendments to the Children's Act no. 38 of 2005 and that appropriate policy and services are developed, budgeted for and implemented at the scale required to support responsive parenting and positive discipline in families for the safeguarding of boys and girls from conception to adulthood.





[chapter 1]





[introduction]

In 2017-2018, Family for Every Child, an international alliance of civil society organisations working to mobilise knowledge, skills and resources around children's care, conducted a scoping study (Family for Every Child 2018) to understand how social norms around gender influence the support for boys affected by sexual violence, and what is already being done to ensure that these boys grow up in a permanent, safe and caring family or quality alternative care where needed. The study explored two aspects of sexual violence affecting boys: sexual abuse and exploitation of boys; and boys' harmful sexual behaviour.

The scoping study drew a number of conclusions which relate to the need for further primary research including:

- The need to think critically about why some boys are more at risk than others and the varied ways that boys with different characteristics, and living in different situations and contexts, will experience and be affected by sexual violence.
- The need for more in-depth, participatory, primary research that engages with ecological and intersectional theoretical frameworks to help develop a more nuanced understanding of how culture and context influences sexual violence affecting boys over the life course.
- Understanding how that protecting boys from sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour requires a multi-layered strategy, but how this can be done requires further exploration through locally contextualised research with meaningful participation from children, adults, caregivers and community members.

The need to think critically about why some boys are more at risk than others...

With this in mind, this research seeks to better understand what role normative social constructs of masculinity and sexuality play in sexual violence related to boys in South Africa by exploring three topics: a) masculinity and sexuality; b) how these relate to sexual violence affecting boys, c) what interventions are available for boys affected by sexual violence.



The main research questions for each topic were:

A. Masculinity and sexuality

- A1** How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed?
- A2** How are social constructs of masculinity reflected in the lived experiences of boys?
- A3** How are social constructs of sexuality reflected in the lived experiences of boys?

B. Sexual violence

- B1** How do dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity link to the sexual abuse of boys?
- B2** How do dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity link to the harmful sexual behaviour of boys?

C. Interventions

- C1** How do people respond to sexual violence affecting boys?
- C2** What support and interventions are available to boys who are victims of sexual abuse?
- C3** What support and interventions are available to boys who are actors in harmful sexual behaviour?
- C4** What interventions and support are helpful?
- C5** What interventions and support are not helpful?
- C6** What gaps exist?



[chapter 2]





methodology

Approach

This study forms part of a series of research studies on boys affected by sexual violence coordinated by Family for Every Child. To date, studies have been completed in six different countries: Cambodia, India, Nepal, the Philippines, South Africa and Zimbabwe with research also underway in Guyana. Effort was made to follow a similar methodology in each country and to cluster research in regions where possible for greater advocacy. A qualitative participatory approach was used involving the participation of children, adults and experts – programme staff, academics and specialists.

In South Africa, the research was coordinated by CINDI and carried out in conjunction with Childline South Africa. This approach provides for the combining of CINDI's expertise in research and Childline's knowledge of and work with boys affected by sexual violence. The initial research design was based on findings from Family for Every Child's scoping study on boys affected by sexual violence, which included South Africa. The design was further refined to reflect the local context through a literature review as well as consultations with local social workers with experience of working in this field.

This is a qualitative research study using participatory activities in focus group discussions (FGD) and individual interviews.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Research Ethics Committee Protocol No REC 8/22/08/18: Caring for Boys Affected by Sexual Violence: understanding how boys are affected by sexual violence.

Given the sensitive nature of the research and the assumed vulnerability of participants, a number of measures were put in place to reduce risk of further harm. These included

- Clearly explaining the research to adults and children before participation in order to obtain their informed consent for voluntary participation
- Carrying out an individual risk assessment for each boy before participation was confirmed

the design was
further refined to
reflect the local
context



- Screening social workers involved in data collection to ensure suitability
- Providing a three-day training to social workers prior to data collection
- Obtaining commitment from Childline to provide psychosocial support and counselling to participants during and follow the research if needed through a clearly outlined referral procedure
- Changing all data relating to names and locations in order to protect the confidentiality of participants

Research sites, sampling and participants

Two research sites, one in Limpopo and one in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), were selected based on Childline's existing work in the area and their availability to provide ongoing counselling and psychosocial support to participants during and following the research where needed.

Purposive sampling was used to identify boys aged between 12 and 17 years and their parents who had previously participated in Childline's specialised programme for boys affected by sexual violence. An initial contact session took place with a social worker already familiar to them to explain the research and assess their availability and willingness to participate. Given the sensitive nature of the research, the social worker also completed a risk assessment for each boy at this time. Boys assessed as vulnerable were not included for participation in order to avoid further harm to them.

Local community-based organisations and high schools provided support in identifying participants for the FGD involving boys, girls and parents from the general population at both sites as well as the men from the general population in KZN.

Key informants were identified by members of the research team based on their expertise in areas relating to the research topics.

Data collection

Data was collected through individual interviews with boys affected by sexual violence as well as their parents. FGD with parents, boys and girls from the general population were also facilitated. Due to an under-representation of men in the parent sample group, additional individual interviews were undertaken with men in the general population in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) to triangulate findings. Findings were also reviewed and expanded upon through a series of key informant interviews with experts in the fields of violence, child sexual abuse, diversion programmes, masculinity and fatherhood.

Boys assessed as vulnerable were not included for participation in order to avoid further harm to them.



| Data collection method and sample group | Number of participants | | | Total |
|--|------------------------|---------|----------|------------|
| | KZN | Limpopo | National | |
| Individual interviews with boys affected by sexual violence | 6 | 6 | | 12 |
| Individual interviews with mothers of boys affected by sexual violence | 6 | 6 | | 12 |
| Individual interviews with men from the general population | 8 | | | 8 |
| FGD with boys from general population | 8 | 8 | | 16 |
| FGD with girls from general population | 8 | 8 | | 16 |
| FGD with mothers from general population | 19 | 12 | | 31 |
| Key informant interviews | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| Total | | | | 103 |

To help parents and boys affected by sexual violence feel more comfortable participating, social workers already known to them carried out their individual interviews. This meant that a trusting relationship was already in place. Participatory methods, visual tools and vignettes were used when discussing sensitive topics. In this way, participants were offered space to reflect on the issue with some emotional distance. The research also deliberately avoided asking direct questions about participants' personal experiences of sexual violence.

Data analysis

Where agreed to, interviews and FGD were recorded and later translated and transcribed. Transcripts were analysed using hand-tabulated thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data.

Limitations of the study

Whilst providing valuable insight, the study cannot be seen to be representative of boys affected by sexual violence in South Africa since data collection was limited to two sites and involved participants from one racial group.

Careful consideration was given to depersonalising questions as much as possible and using participatory methods to allow for emotional distance; however the sensitive nature of the research may still have felt threatening to some respondents. In addition, for mothers and boys affected by sexual violence some questions may have resonated closely with their own experiences. This was noted in low engagement with certain questions by individual respondents, although this was not consistent across sample groupings.





[chapter 3]





[overview of available literature]

A literature review was conducted as part of the research to explore existing knowledge around masculinity, sexuality and boys affected by sexual violence, and how these topics interconnect. Findings from the qualitative data were reviewed against the literature review to help inform analysis and discussion as well as formulate recommendations.

Sexual violence affecting boys globally

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) INSPIRE handbook defines sexual violence involving children as *"non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact; non-consensual acts of a sexual nature not involving contact (such as voyeurism or sexual harassment); acts of sexual trafficking committed to someone who is unable to consent or refuse, and online exploitation"*. Sexual violence affecting children can include acts in which the child is a victim as well as harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) in which the child is an actor.

The development of adequate and appropriate responses to sexual violence against children requires accurate data. This has proven problematic for a number of reasons including differences in research methodologies, data collection methods, definitions, measures of severity, population samples, recollection bias and under-reporting (HSRC 2004; Meinck et al. 2016; Richter et al. 2018, Family for Every Child 2018). In relation to boys specifically, there is a paucity of data (UNICEF 2017 & 2014; Miller et al. 2018) leading some to claim that the sexual abuse of boys is *"massively denied, misunderstood and trivialized"* (Richter et al. 2018 citing Spiegel 2013, p. vii). Where data does exist, results are widely varying or focus on engaging men and boys for the prevention of violence against women and girls (Family for Every Child 2018; Miller et al. 2018). The lack of research and data on boys affected by sexual violence limits understanding of risks boys face and support they need (Family for Every Child 2018; Richter et al. 2018).

Global estimates for sexual violence reflect that 120 million females aged under 20 years have suffered some form of forced sexual contact (UNICEF 2014). Whilst no such comparable global data is available for boys, a 2019 study of data from 24 countries identifies a prevalence range of between 3% to 17% for boys as compared to 8% to 31% in girls (Ligiero et al. 2019). Boys are most likely to

the lack of research
and data on boys
limits understanding
of risks boys face





experience sexual violence for the first time in adolescence between the ages of 14 and 19 years (WHO 2020; Andersson & Ho-Foster 2008; Richter 2018). Current or former intimate partners are the most commonly cited perpetrators (WHO 2020; Richter et al. 2018; Meinck 2016), although boys may be abused by male and female adult relatives or people outside the family such as friends and classmates (UNICEF 2017; Andersson & Ho 2008).

**Barriers:
Shame. Confusion
and ignorance.
Guilt. Fear.**

In terms of reporting, boys are considered less likely to report sexual violence than girls (Easton 2013, UBS Optimus Foundation 2016) and their experiences are not always identified as abusive or harmful (Jewkes et al. 2015). A 2010 briefing paper by the Sexual Violence Research Initiative highlights five key barriers to report for men (and boys):

- Shame of being seen as less male, or because of an involuntary physical response to sexual violence
- Confusion and ignorance with regards to where to seek help or when help is sought lack of awareness, knowledge and skill by the service provider leading to discrimination.
- Guilt, particularly in boys who may have been coerced.
- Fear of not being believed, ridiculed, being labelled homosexual or potential child abusers.
- Isolation as a result of the general silence around sexual violence affecting men and boys and not realising other men may also have experienced this.

Sexual violence affecting boys in South Africa

There are two pieces of legislation which deal with sexual violence involving children in South Africa, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and its related amendments and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 5 of 2015. The latter states that any sexual act by an adult (including grooming, exposure to sexual offences, sexual violation and sexual penetration) against a child younger than 16, whether a boy or a girl, is child abuse. Protection from exposure to pornography, using a child to make child sexual abuse material (child pornography) and child exploitation extends to the age of adulthood (18 years). If a child is younger than 18, any non-consensual sexual act is considered child abuse. Exceptions include consensual sexual acts between children 12 years and older but younger than 16 which are not criminalised if the age gap between the children is no more than two years. All sexual acts by children (and adults) with a child younger than 12 years are considered non-consensual and harmful.

36.8% of boys reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse

The first nationally representative study on CSA in South Africa was produced by the UBS Optimus Foundation in 2016. Findings from self-administered questionnaires in schools show that 36.8% of boys, as compared to 33.9% of girls, reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse. Findings from a longitudinal study on boys as victims of CSA in South Africa show that 37.7% of 14-year-old boys in the study cohort reported sexual abuse (Richter et al. 2018). Another 2008 study of schoolboys in South Africa shows that by the age of 18 years two in every five (44%) reported being forced to have sex (Andersson & Ho-Foster 2008).

Whilst boys report being victimised by both male and female adult perpetrators (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016, Andersson & Ho-Foster 2008), there is strong evidence to suggest the high involvement of peers in incidences of sexual violence against boys (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016, Richter et al. 2018, Miller et al. 2018) or by adults younger than 25 (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016). HSB by children can be defined as "*sexual activity where one individual has not consented, or where their relationship includes an imbalance of power, for example due to age, intellectual ability, physical ability or impairment (disability), or physical strength.*"¹ The behaviour may be the result of a deliberate, considered action or an "*uncalculated expression of inappropriate sexualised behaviour*" (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016).

For children, the line between actor and victim is much less defined as two separate phenomena (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016) with many children experiencing and requiring support for both roles. In Andersson's 2008 study of schoolboys in South Africa, 10% admitted they had forced sex on someone else. This is not to say that there is an inevitable link between CSA and HSB, but rather that many of the vulnerabilities to abuse and abusing are the similar (Family for Every Child 2018). Very little literature exists on the effects of sexual violence on boys. Likewise, specific risk and resilience factors of boys are hard to identify, partly because of the paucity of data but also due to "*generalised statements, stereotypical notions and untested assumptions about pathways to violence and victimisation, as well as simplistic dichotomies identifying girls as victims and boys as perpetrators*" within the literature (Family for Every Child 2018).

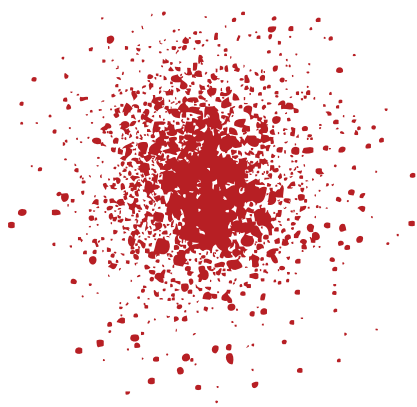
¹ Definition created by the Family for Every Child working group on boys affected by sexual violence.

In South Africa, studies describe a number of vulnerabilities which warrant foregrounding. Ward et al. 2018 note that childhood sexual

These findings highlight the cyclical and intergenerational aspects of violence and the connectedness of violence in general to sexual violence.

abuse heightens children's risk of experiencing other forms of violence and that experiencing violence also places children at greater risk of sexual abuse. A 2016 summary of research findings on the direct and indirect determinants of all forms of violence against women and children identifies childhood abuse as the most significant risk factor for violence perpetration (Matthews et al. 2016). These findings highlight the cyclical and intergenerational aspects of violence and the connectedness of violence in general to sexual violence. Ward et al. 2018 also highlight the poorer quality of the child's relationship with their female caregiver as well as the poorer knowledge by this caregiver of their child's whereabouts, friends and activities as risk factors. With respect to boys, Matthews et al. 2016 note that they are more likely than girls to perpetrate all types of violence, irrespective of the influence of any other determinant. This likelihood increases when other risk factors are included, for example exposure to drugs and alcohol, poverty or being exposed to or suffering childhood abuse. In addition, personal norms about inequitable gender relationships and views on rape are also significant determinants.

In relation specifically to sexual violence, Andersson & Ho-Foster 2008 identify a link between victim age or location (rural versus urban) and perpetrator gender with boys ages 10-14 years or from rural areas more likely to be abused by a male compared to by a female for boys 15-19 years or from urban areas. Richter et al. 2018 found that boys who are shorter for their age are more vulnerable. Boys report experiencing more non-contact sexual violence, for example being forced to look at pornography or watch someone masturbate (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016; Ward et al. 2018) or electronic harassment (Miller et al. 2018) and younger adolescent boys (below 16) appear to be more likely to be coerced (Richter et al. 2018; Miller et al. 2018). Boys tend to externalise their responses to violence as victimising behaviour, including HSB (UBS Optimus Foundation 2016; Matthews et al. 2016). Sikweyiya & Jewkes 2009 note that boys' experiences of sexual violence are not always identified as abusive, particularly when perpetrated by a female, because of gendered norms around masculinity. They also foreground the challenges boys face in refusing sex to older men and women due to the South African values of respect for elders and obedience. Both Moore et al. 2012 and Miller et al. 2018 note the influence of peer pressure in forcing boys to engage in unwanted sex or in HSB towards others.





a set of values, established
by men in power...

Masculinity and sexuality in South Africa

The role of normative views of masculinity and sexuality in shaping sexual violence affecting boys is raised as an area requiring further study (Richter et al. 2018; Family for Every Child 2018; Chimanzi 2019; Miller et al. 2018). Gendered social norms have been identified as a contributing factor to low levels of recognition, prevention and reporting of the sexual abuse of boys (Family for Every Child 2018; Miller et al. 2018). Boys who show vulnerability or emotion are equated with being cowardly, weak or effeminate (UNICEF 2017). Boys are often discouraged from reporting because of likely stigmatisation (Know Violence in Childhood 2017) or because social norms dictate that boys should show self-reliance, stoicism and psychological resilience (Jewkes et al. 2015).

Masculinity, and in particular hegemonic masculinity, is a topic of considerable study in South Africa. Connell 1987, 1995 & 2005 has shaped much of the current understanding about men's identities and practices with more recent work by others expanding on the multiplicity, dynamism and fluidity of masculinities (Morrell et al. 2013; Jewkes & Morrell 2012, Jewkes et al. 2015). Jewkes & Morrell 2012 ascribe the following explanation to hegemonic masculinity: *"a set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy"*. Whilst more than one hegemonic masculinity may exist within a given context; they are all, in general, associated with an idealised heterosexual male who earns a living in order to grow and support his family (Connell 2005; Connell 1987). This idealisation of a particular type of manhood raises concerns about its attainability for the majority. For most men, it is far from their lived experience (Connell 2005; Connell 1987), particularly in societies where poverty and violence levels are high (Morrell et al. 2013; Jewkes et al. 2015).

Studies on manhood and masculinity in South Africa foreground the role that South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid has played in shaping the multiple masculinities that exist. Morrell et al. 2012 raise concerns about the "fixing" of definitions of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa along racial and class, and urban and rural realities. This is in contrast to the dynamism and fluidity



ascribed to hegemonic masculinity by other scholars. The danger, Morrell et al. argue, of such fixed definitions is that they stigmatise certain types of male behaviour and attitudes as hegemonic and in turn link certain hegemony with “bad” men. Thus, hegemonic masculinity becomes synonymous with negative male attitudes and behaviour, for example violence against women.

Heterosexuality is an important construction of masculinity in South Africa (Bhana 2013). Chimanzi 2019 notes the role that normative sexuality plays in reinforcing normative gender - real men are heterosexual and all other forms of sexuality are delegitimised, chastised and inferior. Fear of being seen as gay is linked with fear of being excluded, ridiculed and placed at the bottom of the male hierarchy (Ratele 2016). In this way, male behaviour is controlled and stereotyped even if this is contrary to how a man would like to act. Gibbs et al. 2018 suggests that social control over masculine behaviour is even stronger in boyhood. He describes this as a youthful hypermasculinity that prioritises sexual dominance, displays of violence, power over women and competition between boys, particularly in contexts where boys feel unable to achieve other aspects of hegemonic masculinity. High risk sexual behaviour and intimate partner violence are also linked to masculinity in adolescent and younger men (Jewkes et al. 2009 & 2016).

Heterosexuality is an important construction of masculinity in South Africa.

Also intertwined with masculinity is fatherhood (Morrell & Richter 2006). Men do not become fathers simply through the biological act of creating a child, but also through social constructs aligned with norms around masculine success of financial provision, protection, authority and role-modelling manhood (Richter 2010). South Africa's complex socio-economic legacy of apartheid means that many men are not in a position to meet these expectations. Further, policy and practice in South Africa have consistently placed value on the nuclear family even though only 36,7% of children actually live with their father (Statistics South Africa 2019). This has created a normative framework in which the physical absence of the father in a household is a perceived vulnerability (Hall & Mokomane 2017). All children desire the love and care of both their parents and experience the absence of one or both as a loss which may be added to by feelings of unwantedness or inferiority when experienced within a normative framework that prioritises the nuclear family (Richter et al. 2010, Clowes et al. 2013, Ratele 2012).



Clowes et al. 2013 argue that paternal absence is presented as particularly problematic for boys and that more effort needs to be made to highlight alternative discourses of fathering and being fathered. Richter et al. 2010 notes the importance of legitimising multiple family forms in order to be inclusive of all children and to mitigate children's feelings of being unwanted or blaming of their parents. A number of studies highlight the importance of the quality of the father-child relationship (emotional presence) above their physical presence as well as the significant role that social fathers play in the lives of children (Ratele et al. 2012, Clowes et al. 2013, Richter 2010).

Conclusion

It is clear from the literature that sexual violence affecting boys requires more recognition and understanding. It is also clear that normative values around masculinity, boyhood as a sub-set of masculinity, sexuality and fatherhood as well as peer pressure, exposure to violence and family structure and relationships all play a role in boys' vulnerability to sexual violence. More understanding of how these determinants interconnect is needed. In addition, more data is needed on the long-term effects of childhood sexual violence on boys.

more understanding
is needed





[chapter 4]





findings

The findings from the research are organised according to the main topics the study aimed to explore. The first topic looks at how masculinity and sexuality are socially constructed and how this is reflected in the lived experiences of boys. Next, the study explored the links these social constructions have in relation to sexual violence affecting boys. Lastly, the research looked into people's experiences of support and interventions for boys affected by sexual violence and what gaps exist.

Under each topic, themes are identified and discussed using key points raised by the respondents. Quotes from the fieldwork are used to illustrate findings. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, identifying characteristics for quotes have not been included in order to ensure anonymity.

Topic A1: How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed?

Men and women, boys and girls have uniform views of what it means to be male

Responses to questions about what it means to be male were very similar across all respondent groups. Masculinity was uniformly aligned with patriarchal views that men are:

- Preferred (by the universe and/or ancestors, by society, within families)
- Powerful (physically, sexually, as decision makers and simply by virtue of being male)
- Providers (financially for their family)
- Protectors (defending the household, the community and the family's honour)
- Procreators (having children to continue the family line)

*"The man is the head in all things,
this is the quality of a man."*

A man as someone who represents strength and who can cope with many things in life. Respect, financial provision, protection, taking care of those close to one as well as those not cared for in the community, being uncritical of others, solving problems in the community and being a good role model to boys were all highlighted as important male qualities. "Real men" meet all of these and are

privileged individuals within families and communities. A sense of failure, or being seen as less masculine, effeminate or homosexual were attached to men who did not achieve these standards.

"The community judges a boy according to his physical appearance, if you are slender you are undermined, but if you are active then you considered for sports and or other men related activities in the community. When you are slender they look at you like you will never get married or rather you cannot be married."

"You need to be able to provide get a good job and when you take a wife be able to afford. Also, be able to take care of them. After that the responsibility of a man is that he needs is to be able bare a child and take care of his responsibilities."

Boyhood has its own social construction

It was clear from the data that boyhood is also socially constructed, mostly as a pathway to manhood. Within families and communities, certain practical and physical tasks outside the house were identified as being "boy's work", for example fetching water and wood or looking after livestock. When men were absent, boys were also expected to lock up in the evenings, protect the household and represent the family at community meetings. Looking after siblings when adult supervision was not possible was another expectation of boys. A few mothers felt that boys and girls should have the same tasks in the household and should be treated the same.

"We teach him work of becoming a man that at home he must be the man of the house. We don't put him in the kitchen because when he does everything, he will not know his role at home as a boy. I am still here as a mother I am responsible for this side and the father is still there. He is happy that he has got another man, teaching him that when you are old you will grow to be a man just like me. They talk about those things. As I have said before he is responsible for the things outside."

"He acts as a man, he notices everything that is happening at home for example, he wouldn't go to sleep before he is sure the gate is locked and check if the car is locked and the windows are closed. He plays a father's role, like watering the garden."

"Proper boys" should behave in a certain way. Listening and being respectful to elders was frequently cited as important as well as having good manners, studying hard, being obedient and helpful. They are also expected to protect themselves from harm.

"Listen and listen. Respect it must be at the top."

Boys and girls were consistently constructed in opposition, for example boys are strong and girls are weak; girls are emotional, boys are not; girls work in the house, boys work outside; boys participate in community decision making, girls do not. Girls were described as vulnerable, weak, emotional, unable to protect themselves and in need of constant protection and vigilance. Boys, on the other hand, were seen as physically strong, unemotional, self-sufficient and able to defend and protect themselves, even from a young age.

Within peer groups, constructions of boyhood also exist and these were described in both positive and negative ways. In general, more negative views were described than positive ones. Boys expected other boys to prioritise "hanging out" together over studying, helping out in the home and spending time with girls. At the same time, "real boys" should have more than one girl friend and be sexually active. This was the most common negative construction of boyhood referred to by boys.

Others included being ridiculed or teased for having a curfew or family boundaries. Mothers also raised concerns about the negative influence of peers in relation to alcohol and drug use as well as crime. Girls talked about high levels of unhealthy competitiveness between boys which focused on "one-upmanship".

Very few boys referred to peers positively. When they did, they talked about individual friends who were supportive, caring and could be relied on in difficult situations.



“Real men” are heterosexual

In terms of sexuality, heterosexuality was described as the norm for men and boys. Although acknowledged as a reality and linked to equal human rights for all in South Africa, homosexuality was described as unacceptable, unnatural, a learnt behaviour, a disease and a *“disgrace to the family and community”*.

“For a man to have sex with another man! It is not allowed as it is an unusual act.”

Even when talked about in less negative terms, homosexuality was generally constructed as an *“unnatural”* form of heterosexuality as opposed to a sexual orientation in its own right.

Male sexuality was defined by participants in relation to social constructs of masculinity, for example sexual prowess was noted as a measure of status, particularly within peer groups, and boys were seen as driven by sexual urges and thoughts which some consider uncontrollable.

“It is because, when some boys wants to have sex nobody can stop them because they have decided that they want to have sex.”

Relationships between boys and girls were also described in relation to social constructs of masculinity. A number of examples were given of boys' position as powerholders (decision makers), providers and procreators within relationships.

“When a girl says that they love a boy the boy say hey “I don't like this girl”

“I mean he can easily refuse to different temptations, unlike girls can be easily influenced by boys to sexual activities. I can bank on him to revive the family in future unlike girls.”

“I like it when a girl tells me to come over to her place, I would visit her at home and if she asks me what she likes me to bring for her and I would do that.”

Boys learn about masculinity mostly at home

More tolerance for homosexual relationships between women was apparent in a few responses. One participant explained that women engage in sexual relations with other women for fun, to satisfy their sexual needs without risk of pregnancy or because they don't want to be "hurt in love".

Home was where most respondents felt boys learnt about masculinity. Learning takes place through talking, observing and imitating. Participants felt that both positive and negative behaviour (for example violence) can be learned.

"Boys who grew up with abusive men take those men as their role models; men who beat their wives and think that that is a correct way because "dad is correcting mom for her to be a good wife."

Some responses referred to parents in general taking a role in teaching boys about masculinity; but mostly this was specifically linked to male individuals within the household or communities. Uncles, older brothers, grandfathers, pastors and other male community members were described as taking on the role of "social fathers" in the absence of biological fathers. Men described this role of social fathering as an important responsibility of manhood in teaching boys how to "stand" in life as a man.

"...having a dad or an uncle is a big thing because when the child is out of line, they can discipline him. Also, if the uncle does something, the child will also want to imitate that which is done by the uncle."

"There is an IsiZulu saying that says, "The road to walk is guided by those that have been on a similar road before", so that could be anyone like a father or an uncle or anyone around you that has a positive impact on your life."

Men, women and boys also recognised the role that mothers can play in shaping manhood if fathers are not around.

Boys learn about sexuality mostly outside of the home

Outside of the home, initiation schools were the second most commonly cited places of learning followed by the community in general, school and teachers, friends and the media. Concerns were raised about negative examples of masculinity being learnt from the streets or inappropriate television. Examples of what boys learned or admired in others aligned with social constructs of masculinity. Fighting crime, helping the community, decision making, dedication to work, material success and financial provision were all mentioned by boys as worthy of emulating.

Boys and men respondents reported the main places they learnt about sexuality as the media - television, magazines, radio, the internet and social media. A concerning number mentioned learning about sexuality from pornography. Within families, fathers or social fathers also play a roll. Talking about sex with a "female figure" was described as "unusual" and several mothers made reference to their discomfort with the topic of boys and their sexuality.

"It can sometime be fathers, brothers and uncles, because it is unusual for a boy to learn from a female figure concerning sex, it is usually fathers."

The next most commonly referenced learning source was the church. Responses indicate a general support of abstinence-based messaging in religion. Other sources referenced included initiation schools, life orientation classes in school and life experience "on the streets". Initiation schools were generally viewed positively as places of learning about sexual intercourse and men's health.

"Boys are lucky to have programs such as going to the mountains for circumcision. I think they are trained there about sexual intercourse; they also have a men's only clinic that teaches them about things that could affect them when they engage in sexual activities, diseases in most cases."

With regards to life orientation, one participant noted that teachers in this subject need to be skilful in connecting with the students and gaining their trust.

"I think they learn them maybe if they have teachers, they trust that they can talk with asking them about the situations they are going through or the stage they are in."

Topic A2:

How are social constructs of masculinity reflected in the lived experiences of boys?

Men and boys experience a lot of pressure to perform

The boys and men interviewed described feeling a lot of pressure from the high expectations of responsibility and success placed on them. More material success was expected of boys than of girls and men reflected that women face less pressure to perform. In particular, the pressure to provide financially was described as a high expectation and that, if one failed, one might get depressed or turn to alcohol. Unemployed men were reminded constantly to find work.

"Pressure I would say starts from a very young age, in trying to get a job, getting a car, being able to be independent, it easier for a girl to stay at home and should she get married she will have someone to take care of her. It is not easy for us to say, "I am going to find a sugar mummy."

"I usually tell them that you cannot be a man who does not have a house at home you've built for yourself."

"For him to grow, study for his career and work. If he gets a job and we are still struggling, he could come back, fix the family home, and make it warm and then he could do what he wants for himself, then get married, and buy cars. As a parent, I would be happy to see that my home is beautiful."

Communities were reflected as an extension of the family with similar expectations and related pressure to meet these.

"A community is the same as a family, because as a man if there is something wrong happening in the community you as a man need to take a lead in the matter to try and find a solution."



Boys often narrated their friendship groups as places of unwanted pressure. Non-conformance was described as being met with competitiveness, "one-upmanship", teasing or social exclusion. Many boys shared feeling pressured to meet expectations of sexual prowess with girls for fear of being ridiculed or considered homosexual.

"...they [friends] also pressurize you to ask girls out and they laugh at you saying "you don't have a girlfriend" and they want you to have a lot of girlfriends and be famous for it to the point that girls end up beating you up."

"...they boast about having girlfriends when you don't have one and they will say you're not into things. They also force you into doing things that you don't want to do."

Boys are more privileged and indulged in families

References to boys being superior to women and girls were common. Mothers appeared to play a significant role in upholding this narrative. Responses indicated boys were more indulged and were given greater respect and freedom.

"At home moms would ask their boys what they would like them to bring, maybe something from the kitchen or something from the bedroom."

"Boys are treated well because they are deemed to extend the family..."

Within families mothers described the tension they hold between their personal love for their sons and people's negative experiences of boys and men.

"The one of liking girls has a bad affect as the guy is not able to progress in life and ends up stuck with these girls that are driving him crazy."



The lived identities of men and boys can be very different to what is idealised

In contrast to the high expectations of masculine success, being male lived identities were consistently linked to violence, disrespect, stupidity, pride, stubbornness, money wasting, substance abuse and crime.

"They say that boys are dogs, they are not loved, you will see them getting blamed in most cases for rape, transmitting diseases and they say all this is done by men."

"Boys are seen as Nyaope smokers, drunkards and they are known for bullying girls on the road."

"They [men] are considered as abusive, drunkards and problematic people in the society and think that when a man finds a job they will not use the money at home."

Within families mothers described the tension they hold between their personal love for their sons and people's negative experiences of boys and men.

"Men and these boys you just become scared when you see them. They wear masks, they beat people. We not sure but we heard. The target women who stay alone and traumatise them because they smoke things. You need to lock and always be alert. We are so hurt because these are our children. [...] They make it look or sound like we don't love them, but reality is that we do love them they are our kids."

At a community level, a number of contradictory expectations were also apparent. For example, boys are expected to protect the community from crime but at the same time are seen as the instigators of crime. Similarly, boys are expected to be respectful and obedient but at the same time are considered "*untrustworthy*" and "*always out of order*". This creates a confusing social dynamic of shaming versus honouring.



"Issues like name calling is one amongst the other things that are not going well with him. Then you look into the very same people that are doing that to him, you find that they are the same people that expect him to become a star in the near future."

Boys expressed feeling frustrated and upset by the disconnect between how they see themselves (kind, honest, helpful, well behaved, loving) and how they are perceived and received by their community (criminals, drug addicts, disrespectful, "bad"). A number described how negative stereotypes of boys lead to them being unfairly blamed for wrongdoing.

"Like people who play soccer, fine we play soccer usually with the other boys in the street and sometimes the ball goes into people's yards and then they complain and reprimand them and sometimes I am reprimanded when I was not part of that group that day."

The interviews with men highlighted the stress and worry they experience around being able to provide financially and how this can sometimes lead to violence. They also noted that the need to be seen as strong and coping made it difficult for them to reach out for help.

"Many men are still afraid to talk openly about things that upset them; it could be that his partner is abusing him, but because he is a man, he will not want to seek help. It could affect him in a way that he might be filled with anger and rage so much so that he might end up physically abusing his family."


Mothers find it harder to connect with and parent their sons

Discussions with mothers highlighted how they found it easier to "hold a girl child close". Boys were described as bottling up their emotions and harder to talk to. A number of responses reflected low expectations of relational connection with boy children.

"Boys are just observed; parents do not keep them close and spend time with them but would spend over three hours with the girl chatting. Boys are interacted with when they have to run errands. We stay with girls even before the damage happens, you talk to them, you would reprimand boys after the incident, but you would have never sat down and talked to them about things. You tend to reprimand them after the wrong has been done."

He is a kind of a person who can be dangerous, he bottles his anger and he looks like someone who can hurt."

Some mothers also expressed finding it harder to set and maintain boundaries with sons, particularly as they grow older and become more assertive of their male position as a powerholder within the family:



"...they want smart phones, grasshoppers [shoes] and I had to buy them by force. That has started, he wants expensive phones and all that and at the end, he will be uncontrollable wanting things that I cannot afford in the end and that is how they get into this ado (adolescence) of theirs. I do not even have that smartphone because I do not have money to buy, which is when they end up stealing it, and they end up doing crime, because you taught them that you would give them everything."

Whilst traditional values and norms around masculinity and femininity were predominant, a few participants did express different views which recognised that, whilst children may have different experiences of life because of their gender, they should be treated the same by their families. Mothers noted that treating children differently based on gender can cause them to feel less loved, less connected to their family and build hatred between siblings.

"[...] in the end when you treat them different, they would complain that you love one over the other and that creates hatred between them. They grow up thinking that their mother loved them less than their siblings."

"As parents, we should not treat boys and girls differently, treat them equally because they are both yours, when one does wrong you get broken hearted, so love them both the same and bring the boy child closer to your heart too and guide them about things."

Many boys consider their mother a close source of support

In contrast to the distance mothers described in their relationship with their sons, boys often identified their mother or another female relative as a close source of support, care and protection.

"If my mom were able to come to my school, I would tell her about the boys that bullied me and show them to her."

"It's my mom [who is my role model]. She tells me everything."

Some mothers also described close relationships with their sons and attributed this connectedness to the way in which they raised and related to their children.

"I give him guidance and advise, we encourage him to continue doing great things, we encourage him to respect and also we discourage him from things that are out of line. We just talk to him always. I encourage them to stay home so they can avoid getting involved in dangerous things and influence from their peers. I always encouraged them to play at home with their friends because there is history of wrongdoing with friends."



The involvement of men in boys' lives is important

The important role of fathers, in particular in relation to learning about masculinity, was highlighted. Mothers expressed feeling disempowered to connect with their boys around this issue.

"Their fathers [are boys' role models] in most cases."

The absence of a father was seen as a challenge to a boy's development, although other male relatives and community members can fill this gap as 'social fathers'.

"When a male child doesn't have a father while others have and are able to get certain things, that can also put on pressure on a child."

"Beside the father not being in his life but there is an uncle in the yard who plays a role of a father figure in his life."

Social norms around masculinity are recognised as sometimes harmful

Boys described being harmed by gendered social norms. Several commented how girls are generally treated better, how they feel less "wanted" than girls, and how they experience the greater freedom given to boys as a lack of care.

"Because sometimes you find that other parents do not wish to have boy children, they just want girls only, that's just their preferences."

"It's because other parents don't really care if their boy child is roaming in the streets till who know what time, they just don't care because he trusts that this is a boy child, he doesn't even care about the boy child's age, when he is outside until whatever time, he does not care."

Responses from mothers also highlighted the harm social norms around masculinity can do to boys, for example bottling up their emotions or not crying when hurt. A number of mothers pointed out that the focus on girls as exclusively vulnerable or needy (emotionally and physically) denies boys an adequate response.

"We are too overprotective when it comes to female children and we think that the male children are male and therefore can take care of themselves."

Whilst interviews with men highlighted their support for women's rights, in particular with regards to protecting them from violence, they also described a discomfort with their position in relation to this new "equality". A number described feeling less respected in their traditional role as men as a result.

"As men or boys I think one of our major pressures have to do with women, we have become equal to women and that as men does not sit well with us. They have been given so many rights now that they now see us less than them and we no longer get the respect that we deserve as men."

Topic A3:

How are social constructs of sexuality reflected in the lived experiences of boys?

Early sexual debut is not desirable, although acknowledged

Although the many respondents acknowledged that early sexual debut had become a norm for most children, this was considered neither acceptable nor desirable. Public displays of affection, such as holding hands and kissing, were generally not considered appropriate at any age. Sex was often referenced alongside child-bearing rather than love or affection. Indeed, reasons for delaying sexual debut consistently referred to preparedness for parenting and the completion of studies in preparation for work.

"Because at that age, some are mentally prepared to have a baby and can actually be able to maintain their babies."

"Because if they start young then it will interrupt them from school, and they will become parents at a young age."



Adults acknowledged peer pressure on boys to have sex early and have as many girlfriends and sexual encounters as possible in order to be accepted by friends and peers. In contrast, they felt pressure on girls to have sex early was less intense, because girls live under stricter rules and they were not permitted to have sex early on. It was noted that whilst boys can be sexually promiscuous from a young age, girls who had sex early or were promiscuous were labelled as "not nice".

"We are used to seeing young men walking around with a girlfriend, we see things like that, but it is not something that we are happy to see. What we see then leads to things like our daughters falling pregnant and that really disappoints you as a parent who had better hopes for your child."

Despite acknowledging its reality, there was general disapproval of early sexual debut amongst adults. A few responses suggested a "disapproving tolerance" provided it was kept hidden and out of public knowledge.

"Not to kiss when the elders are looking."

A concerning number of boys made reference to accessing pornography, including in magazines and online sex videos. Little to no parental supervision of online usage was apparent.

"I can't tell the truth because I don't know what he is actually doing in there [his phone]."

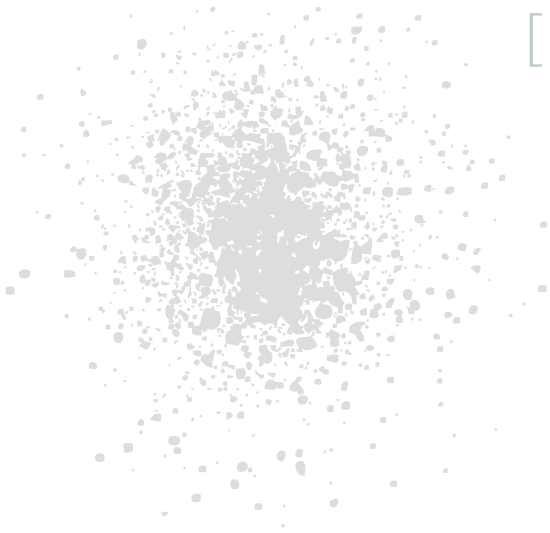
"I talk to my friends and look at pictures of love"

One mother shared a story around the sharing of "trophy" photos by boys of their sexual prowess with girls.

"You see here at C, there was a stabbing between two boys, fighting over a girl. The one was chatting going around showing the pictures, the other one saw that it his girlfriend, they fought and started hating each other and those kind of things end up happening."

Many boys are involved with pornography





Mothers find it hard to talk to their sons about sex

Some boys and mothers did highlight positive sexual reproductive health (SRH) messaging being provided by the media, but this mostly related to physical health, for example condom use, and did not include emotional and relational aspects of SRH.

Several mothers expressed not feeling comfortable with or able to talk to their male children about sex and sexuality.

"As parents we are unable to talk [about sex] to them [boys] that is why they end up taking it from the street."

"Oh no that is not easy, that is why I said that they end up getting help from school; life orientation foundation maybe taught by a male teacher."

"When we look into young boys we don't see them as sex objects."

Preference was expressed for the input of outside "experts" to provide sex education, including social workers, teachers and church leaders.

Boys are not considered to have control of their sexual urges

A number of responses reflected the view that boys do not have sexual agency. Uncontrollable sexual urges, hormones, peer pressure, heterosexual denial, alcohol, television and poor role models were all blamed for harmful sexual behaviour.

"His hormones throw him to boys, I cannot dispute that"

"They beat girls up when they refuse and want sleep with them forcefully."

Topic B1: How do dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity link to the *sexual abuse of boys*?

Boys are less supervised than girls

Responses overwhelmingly described boys as able to physically protect themselves, even from a young age. As a result, they are not seen to be in need of protection and are given far more freedom and a lot less parental supervision than girls.

"Boys can look after themselves and take responsibility for protecting themselves."

Sexual abuse in general is not well understood and even less so for boys

Many participants, across all age groups and sexes, reflected misunderstandings about what constitutes sexual abuse in general, whether involving a boy or a girl. Penetrative sexual acts (rape) were seen as sexual abuse; however grooming activities (such as inappropriately asking a child to undress or exposing a child to pornography) although considered wrong, were not seen as abusive. Some respondents did recognise grooming as a process that could culminate in rape, but even in these instances rape was seen as the abusive behaviour, not the grooming activities leading up to this.

Participants saw boys as less vulnerable to sexual abuse than girls. In particular, they described boys' physical strength as allowing them to either get themselves out or be in control of potentially abusive situations, even when age and size differences were significant. A number of respondents saw rape as only perpetrated on girls, either because they can be easily overpowered or because they believe boys cannot be penetrated. Others recognised the possibility of rape for boys, but believed it was less traumatic for them. Grooming was also considered less serious when involving a boy and the progression between grooming and rape was more recognised for girls.

"It's not difficult because [a boy] could be able to fight for himself and a girl could not be able to fight for herself."

"... a male is not a person created to be penetrated."

Boys are thought to be less harmed by sexual abuse than girls

Very few respondents believed the impact of sexual abuse to be equal for boys and girls. Most felt it was worse for a girl because of the perceived number of potential negative outcomes. Pregnancy was frequently raised as a concern and this contributed to the narrative of girls being more vulnerable.

"A girl child could end up being raped and she could fall pregnant as a consequence, she is a girl child..."

Other concerns for girls included contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and damage to the genital area which might affect their capacity to fall pregnant and give birth. The risk of boys contracting an STI was recognised by very few respondents.

"It is worse, for women it is worse because they are abused in the same area that they need for giving birth".

Little acknowledgement of the risk of physical and emotional trauma resulting from sexual abuse was evident for either boys or girls. When these were mentioned, it was mostly by adult respondents who described girls as more likely to be affected. A few respondents from the general population did recognise the harmful impact of abuse on boys such as loss of trust, loss of self-esteem, fear of others and intrusive memories.


Topic B2:

How do dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity link to the *harmful sexual behaviour* of boys?

Harmful sexual behaviour between boys is often linked to homosexuality

HSB between boys was commonly linked to homosexuality which in turn was generally negatively perceived. Dominant notions around homosexuality being unnatural or "*caught*" were reflected in comments about the actor acting to satisfy his denied heterosexual urges as well as concerns the victim would become gay or go on to rape other boys.

"It's worse because in the end this child growing up would end up attracted to males. He would not have grown up to have feelings for males. He will end up living believing that he is a female and it's alright for him to sleep with males."



HSB between boys also focused on physical outcomes. When psychological consequences were recognised, these were most frequently associated with the taboo on homosexuality. There were some misconceptions about the physical harm that victims could suffer, for example sexual penetration of boys will rupture the appendix.

The importance of disclosure of abuse was recognised by many. Responses indicate that fear of being perceived as gay may be a greater barrier to disclosure than the possible stigma of being labelled an “abused child”.


Failure to disclose abuse was linked to a number of negative consequences for the victim such as poor self-esteem and self-confidence. It was further recognised that these negative consequences could extend through adulthood.

“....the more you are silent about what upsets you it's the more it hurts you psychologically. Psychologically you end up a drug addict whilst you avoid thinking about what happened. You would think about doing it to others, why did it happen to me. And people do not understand why you do this, it's because it happened to you and you didn't tell anyone.”

Boys need to have sex to prove themselves

Peer pressure appears to play a considerable role in sexual activity, to the extent that several boys referred to feeling forced to engage in (sometimes violent) sex with girls.

“Another case maybe that someone is under peer pressure, because his friends are laughing at him saying that he has never had sex, that might cause someone to want to have sex so bad that he ends up even raping a girl.”



Topic C1:

How do people respond to sexual violence affecting boys?

Sexual violence is recognised as wrong, although not always reported

People mentioned shock, anger, hurt and betrayal as common response to sexual violence. With few exceptions, respondents agreed CSA and HSB were wrong and not taking action could result in further harm to children; however, views on what action to take varied. Quite a number of respondents, particularly mothers of boys affected by sexual violence and the boys themselves, felt the family should intervene first. This would help establish the full story and decide what action to take next. Other respondents would take action straight away and report the abuse to a social worker, teacher or the police. A few people felt keeping quiet was acceptable. These responses were mostly linked to feelings of shame.

"You can be angry [about the abuse] but you must not make noise about it"

"It can be resolved between the two families. [The] parents are supposed to meet and talk about it and then sit [the offending youth] down and give him counselling. They should try show him the dangers of this act where he can end up."

The potential for family conflict was recognised by a number of respondents in the study when the victim and abuser were members of the same family, including extended family. Some mentioned the need for discussion and/or mediation to manage this conflict, others anticipated a continuing estranged relationship.

Disbelief, social taboos around homosexuality and anticipation of poor service provider response were mentioned as other possible barriers to disclosure and reporting.

Boys are blamed for being victims of abuse

Subtle victim blaming was also evident in a few responses which suggested the victim should have left the situation or should not have been "keeping company" with the actor in the first place.

"...the right way would have been for [the victim] to leave the offender and go back home."

On the other hand, some mothers clearly saw the actor as responsible for the abuse and not the victim. A few also said they would blame themselves for not being there for their children.

"I don't think it is how boys carry themselves or how [the victim] was carrying himself. It is what's inside [the actor], [the victim] is not to blame for this."

Some responses reflect the belief that the victim has responsibility for protecting himself and that if the abuser apologises the victim must forgive him/her. What was interesting about these responses was that they tended to come from boys with a history of harmful sexual behaviour.

"Maybe if he says, "I will tell mom about what you showed me," maybe [the actor] would apologise, [the victim] would forgive him, and it would not happen again."

Victim blaming remains a challenge in many families and communities as children are often mistakenly perceived to have more power and control over abusive situations than is realistically possible. This might be exacerbated by so-called child abuse prevention programmes in which children are enjoined to "say no" to the offender/actor or to remove themselves from the situation, without recognising that the age, ability to manipulate or power differentials make it unlikely that children will be able to either protest, instruct and/or extricate themselves from the abusive situation.

Recipients were able to name a number of sources of help in their communities. The police, Childline and social workers from the Department of Social Development (DSD) were the organisations most frequently mentioned

**People know
where to get help
in their
community**

Topic C2: What support and interventions are available to boys who are victims of sexual abuse?

Families

Respondent views on discussing abusive experiences with family members were mixed. Some believed families were helpful and supportive and some experienced them as unhelpful, blaming or lacking in confidentiality. A number of children believed that boys would find it difficult to approach the issue of boy-on-boy sexual abuse in their families and others (boys as well as girls) believed that abuse could be discussed between mothers and sons. Fear of being blamed for the abuse was mentioned by quite a few as a barrier to disclosure. Responses indicated that the nature of the help received from family is a reflection of the quality of the relationships within the family.


"For a child to help another child it depends on the kind of the family he is coming from. If a child is coming from well caring family, that child is likely to help but if a child is coming from a family that everyone does for himself he wouldn't help the other."

"I do not normally share my problems with my family, and because you tell, one person and they pass it on to others".

"Uncles" in the community are sometimes approached for help and advice regarding abuse. "Uncles" may not necessarily be related by blood but this is a generic term of respect for older adult men in the community. Brothers of parents, both mothers and fathers, are usually given the same appellation as a father, especially if the family remains true to tradition.

Trusted friends

Although friends could not consistently be relied on to respond in helpful ways, many respondents stated that it was easier to talk to a friend who is more likely to be of similar age. Siblings may also play an important role in supporting each other but there was some ambivalence from respondents about confiding in them.



"...it easier to speak to a friend because they are mentally in the same age group and they can understand each other."

"Siblings play a big role in supporting their friends and other siblings because some parents are not easy to speak to."

Peer groups

Many boys showed empathic responses to questions about a friend disclosing, although not all felt they would have a similar friend to confide in. Discussions reflected a general concern about the unsupportive responses of the victim's peers to the victimised boy child. It was noted that sometimes boys who experience abuse were ridiculed and teased by peers rather than supported and helped.

External sources of support

Some social workers as well as Childline were seen as there to help child victims of sexual abuse. They were referred to as sources of support. If parents fail to help and protect their children from abuse, removal of the child to a child and youth care centre was suggested.

"..... get help from Childline by explaining what happened. They should speak to his parents and ask them whether they will protect him from this, or they should take him to a home."

Topic C3: What support and interventions are available to boys who are actors in harmful sexual behaviour?

Families

Male responses towards the actor focused on punitive measures such as social exclusion, threats and violence. This is in line with social norms around men being protectors within communities and families. Mothers and boys affected by sexual violence shared their insights into the effects such punitive measures have on boys, including feelings of shame and failure, anger, dropping out of school, involvement in crime, distancing in relationships with family ("sleeping away from home") and violence.

"Some [actors] end up with a lot of anger in their hearts, some turn to drugs and some drop out of school and they end up being a bad child who does not do schoolwork. At home as well they behave like hooligans and end up being street criminals."

Generally, female respondents were more "gentle" in their approach to the young offender and proposed a more relational response. Talking to the offender about his behaviour, helping him to understand its impact on the victim and explaining the possible longer-term consequences such as prison were proposed. Although their approach was not punitive, it tended to focus on correcting behaviour rather than addressing the underlying causes. Guidance provided was also sometimes incorrect which could lead to further harm.

"He needs to be told that what he did was wrong and that if he wants to do such, he must find his peers. If his feelings point him towards boys, he must look for his peers and not children."

"You need to remind him that his body parts are not to be used at once and be finished, they are there for the rest of his life he must not be in a hurry to use them otherwise he will end up abusing them."

External sources of support

The need for specialised help for boys with harmful sexual behaviour was recognised by a small group of respondents.

"...they need to talk to the offender and find out what could be his problem and find a way they can help him to stop what he is doing."

"I say as a single parent, I would contact the social workers because they trained for this and they do counselling with the child."



Topic C4: What interventions and support are helpful?

Friends

Respondents articulated trustworthiness and the ability to listen as characteristics that were helpful and supportive in friends.

Families

Children who responded to this tended to be quite materially focused on help from the family or on physical needs, for example *"taking him to the doctors"* so that they can help *"with diseases that may have entered him"*.

The ability of parents to give each other support was recognised. The importance of trust in helping relationships was again emphasised and open discussions with boys rather than keeping the issue *"in their minds"*. Family meetings to talk about the behaviour were also recognised as helpful.

The special challenges of single parents parenting boys were acknowledged. The ability of women to parent their sons spontaneously elicited differing opinions. Some respondents believed this was possible and others believed that this was the responsibility of men in the community (most frequently "Uncles") and that single mothers were unable to manage appropriate responses to the sexuality of their boy children.

Community

Community meetings and life skills education in schools were recommended as ways of informing and educating on sexuality and inappropriate sexual behaviour. The use of traditional mechanisms such as attending sangomas (traditional healers) and initiation/circumcision school were advised by some. Sports coaches were mentioned as possible sources of advice for boys and sporting activities were mentioned as a means of helping boys accept boundaries and develop self-discipline. The issue of trust in these resources was raised and remained a concern.

"...call all members of the community to come talk about it."

"His family could go see a prophet/sangoma who will be able to show them the problem."

"Soccer can keep some of them disciplined. The soccer coaches also talk to them how a boy carries himself when they go to camp."



The educational role of “Uncles” in the community and initiation schools was mentioned mainly by parents as a means of educating boys about their role as men and family and community protectors and providers and about appropriate sexual behaviour, thereby reducing risk to children.

Community education meetings were suggested as potential prevention strategies by some respondents. Social workers were noted as appropriately educated professionals to address these meetings, giving information about abuse and sexuality.

External support

The need for an independent mediator when abuse takes place within families was recommended by some. The importance of the mediator being trustworthy and confidential was regarded as vital.

Families also valued external support from people who are “*educated on sexual issues*” and are “*straightforward people*” who can address the behaviour directly. Outside of the family, social workers, teachers and the police were mentioned in this regard.

The Childline workshops and residential camps for boys affected by sexual violence were seen as especially helpful for the boys.

“*Luckily, we stay with our children. As they went away, they came back they are now a child I can use. We wish for this not to stop. These workshops build children. We would like for it to reach other children too...*”.

“*Childline programs should continue, I love the change I saw in my child and I know that other parents would love to see the same for their children.*”

Another suggestion was to place actors in specialised residential care centres in which the wrongfulness of their behaviour is stressed in order to promote change.



Topic C5: What interventions and support are not helpful?

Lack of support within friendships groups, families and communities was characterised by teasing and mockery about the abuse, especially in relation to the victim of sexual abuse; social exclusion and isolation; lack of confidentiality and trustworthiness; and being unreliable or unpredictable.

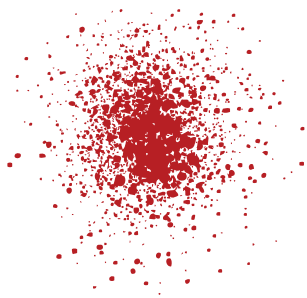
Participants' experiences of external support from the police and social workers were not always supportive. Examples were given of the police and social workers being unhelpful.

"Sometimes police do not help with anything, sometimes to go there with a serious issue and they just laugh at you and you end up being upset and leaving. Sometimes at social welfare, you get there and some are busy with their own things, you speak to one person and they busy with their things and then they go for their lunch. In situations like that you end up being fed up and you leave. In clinics sometimes you find someone who knows why they came to work and they pay attention to you while some do not".

Topic C6: What gaps were recognised?

Mothers of boys affected by sexual violence recognised the importance of repetitive messages for boys with harmful sexual behaviour as changes in behaviour may not be immediate. Although this is the reality of behaviour change therapies for children, the high costs of these types of interventions means they are not adequately available.

"...another thing would be to make Childline programs a regular thing perhaps every year because you would not be able to see progress within a year, a longer time must pass, and then you will see the difference."



Parents also felt they need more training and support in responding appropriately to inappropriate sexual behaviour and dealing with children's sexuality.

"There also should be training groups for parents to train them to handle such situations [talking about harmful sexual behaviour with their son]."

"They [the parents] need a lot of support with boys, when boys go to high school, they are exposed to many things, and that is why they need support."

Parents also recognised that the use of harsh discipline was not helpful or support and that more support is needed in developing positive parenting methods.

"Sometimes we shout at them and call them names, saying with what you are doing you will end up like so and so which is not right."

"As a parent I would resort to punishing the child and a stick will never speak the truth so I do not want that situation."



[chapter 5]





[discussion and analysis]

In this chapter, key findings are further explored in relation to correlations with the literature review or issues raised during the expert consultations. For ease of presentation, they have been organised into two broad categories: protective factors and risk factors.

Protective factors identified through the research

Parental knowledge about sexual violence

Several parents showed insight about sexual violence and its possible sequelae. Examples of such include the understanding that both victim and actor in CSA need therapeutic interventions; the understanding that grooming behaviour could progress to further abusive behaviour, and that abuse harmed both boys and girls. Parents who understand sexual violence and its sequelae are assumed to be more likely to seek help.

Having a close friend or confidante

The support of a trusted confidante was highly valued by both adults and children. This person could be a listening ear, provide emotional and practical support, advice and comfort. Trust was the most desirable characteristic referred to. Quite a few respondents, especially boys, did not feel they had this person in their lives.

Quality of parent-child relationships

The importance of parental supervision, instruction and care for boys was acknowledged by many as a protective factor. Open communication and spending time with boys to get to know them were seen as enabling factors in prevention and abuse disclosure. These align with findings from the literature review which foreground the importance of the quality of a child's relationship with their female caregiver and that caregiver's awareness of their whereabouts, friends and activities (Ward et al. 2018). A mother or other close family member can serve in the role of confidante in a boy's life.

Life skills programmes at schools

Programmes at school were seen by parents as potentially useful in educating children about abuse and the need for these programmes articulated. It is of note that the Department of Basic Education has developed an appropriate life skills education curriculum that begins



The involvement of fathers and social fathers

in the 4th year of formal schooling. It is carried through to the final year, becoming more comprehensive and specific to appropriate and responsible sexual and relationship behaviour in the later years of schooling. However, this is not a prioritised activity in many schools and is not always taught by educators in a sensitive and appropriate manner. The curriculum has also received extensive negative publicity.

Fathers and social fathers play a unique role in the lives of boys. The data, supported by the literature review, indicates this extends beyond the role of the authoritarian provider often portrayed. Boys noted the role their fathers and other social fathers play in teaching them about masculinity and sexuality, providing guidance and support in general, teaching them how to fix things and helping with problem solving.

Responsive, community-based support for boys affected by sexual violence and their families

Where responsive support was available at community level, for example Childline workshops as well as some social workers, teachers and police, these were highly valued by respondents. The data from interviews with experts also reflects the importance of community-level responses which are boy- and family-friendly. Confidential and informed responses to children and families are important in providing guidance on both parenting, appropriate sexual behaviour, masculinity, transitional challenges as children enter puberty and early adulthood and appropriate responses to harmful sexual behaviour

Risk factors identified through the research

Little parental supervision of television and online usage

Although responses did indicate concern about the influence of media on boys, low levels of parental supervision were apparent. This is particularly concerning when viewed in conjunction with boys' responses regarding viewing of pornography. Lack of online safety and supervision and the normalisation of pornography were recognised as risk factors by the expert key informants.

Lack of quality, accessible child-care options

Parents in communities often have limited choices for quality child care, particularly for older children. Caring for younger siblings in the absence of adult supervision (siblings can be applied broadly to mean biological siblings as well as cousins and children of close family friends) is noted as the role of older male children in the household. Very few adult respondents expected sexual violence to take place in the context of trusted relationships or within families; however the literature reviews shows that sexual violence against boys is often perpetrated by someone they know and possibly more so by peers.



Enforcing respect and obedience to elders

Whilst not in itself a bad thing, inculcating a norm of respect for elders in societies with strong social hierarchies can make it difficult for a child to refuse sexual advances or remove themselves from an abusive situation if the actor/perpetrator is older. It may also inhibit a child from talking about sex to a parent when this is taboo or a sign of disrespect for a parent. Sikweyiya & Jewkes 2009 highlight these as challenges for boys in South Africa.

Competitive hierarchies of masculinity amongst peers

Responses in the discussions reflect how men and boys are measured by their peers, families and communities against a set of social norms that define "real man". Men and boys who do not meet the standard set are often considered less, or delegitimised through teasing, ridicule and social exclusion. The use of masculine hierarchies to hold power over other men is noted in the literature and particularly amongst youth where it is described as a hypermasculinity. This may place some boys more at risk of abuse than others. For example, observed physical strength was aligned with masculinity in the data, with men who don't look strong or are "too slender" being referred to as less male. A correlation between boys being shorter for their age and increased risk of childhood sexual abuse was established by Richter et al. 2018.

High levels of violence



Responses mirrored the high levels of violence within communities and families foregrounded in the literature review. Violence was pervasive in the data at a number of levels, from parental harsh discipline in response to actors in and victims of sexual violence; to domestic abuse; to fighting between peers; as a result of alcohol abuse in the community; or community vigilantism in response to perceived police inactivity. One key informant noted less sequelae to violence were apparent in their research which could indicate a degree of normalisation.

The literature also notes that violence is often described in relation to boys as perpetrators and girls as victims. Descriptions in the data of violence between boys, as well as violence perpetrated by girls against boys and by mothers against sons suggests it is more complex than this dichotomous narrative suggests. In addition, the links between boys who experience violence and who go on to perpetrate violence mean this narrative needs to be challenged more in practice and policy.

Greater freedom given to boys

The greater freedom given to boys is a risk factor on a number of levels. Firstly, poor caregiver knowledge of a child's whereabouts was identified by Ward et al. 2018 as a vulnerability in CSA. Matthews et al. 2016 found exposure to, as well as personal use of drugs and alcohol a determinant in violence. Taverns are poorly regulated in many communities and the likelihood of boys being exposed to

Polarised views of boys and girls

alcohol is very high. The same exposure risk relates to violence, which is pervasive in many communities. As boys hit adolescence they are given even more freedom; this also coincides with the average age of first abuse noted in the literature. Finally, responses from a number of boys indicate that they equated their greater freedom with feelings of being unloved, uncared for and unwanted. This is realised in a weaker relationship with their parent/s (mostly mothers), a risk factor to CSA highlighted by Ward et al. 2018.

The polarisation of boys and girls and the rigid way in which they were constructed in opposition to each other reflected suggests there is limited space for alternative discourses about gender and sexuality. This was also evident in the social “policing” of other’s sexuality in peer groups. Fear of being seen as gay, and thus excluded from their peer group, was raised by a number of boys. Boy’s responses reflected a degree of personal violation experienced through the inclusion and exclusion factors used to control these unhealthy spaces. Chimanzi 2019 notes that, “although it is thus difficult to admit publicly, boys also long for a more dynamic and flexible way of being a boy. – boys want something different too”.

The focus on girls denies boys an adequate response

A number of caregivers reflected in the discussions that the strong focus on girls as exclusively vulnerable with regards to sexual violence denies boys an adequate response by placing concerns about their abuse and exploitation on the periphery of awareness.

Grooming and non-contact sexual abuse not always recognised

What is constituted in sexual violence was not well understood and was mostly limited to penetrative acts which were in turn mostly limited to the rape of females. Recognition of grooming behaviours in general varied but was lower in relation to boys than girls. When acknowledged, grooming was seen as wrong and harmful but less so for boys than girls. Very little understanding of non-contact sexual abuse was apparent, even though engagement with pornography was mentioned by a number of boys. This is concerning when viewed alongside the findings in the literature review which foreground a greater risk to boys for non-contact sexual abuse and coercion.

Focusing only on the physical outcomes of abuse

Key informants reflected that talking about feelings and engaging with one’s own and other’s emotions is not commonly practiced in South Africa. In light of this, it was interesting to note that very few respondents spoke about the emotional and psychological impact of sexual violence. In most instances, harm was referenced to physical harm. The focus on physical harm, specifically unwanted pregnancy and disease transmission, also limits the harm to girls and penetrative sexual violence whilst the literature notes the sexual abuse of boys is often non-contact. This further distances the abuse of boys from being recognised as harmful.



Sex and sexuality are not talked about at home

Respondents believed that parents, especially fathers and uncles, should talk to boys about appropriate sexual behaviour and boys should also be encouraged to talk to their parents. A number of mothers felt they would benefit from support to initiate and carry these conversations forward. They also noted that they themselves need more sex education. This is consistent with comments from the experts interviewed who highlighted the social taboos around sex and people's general discomfort with the topic. In addition, the linking of masculinity to heterosexuality and sexual virility highlighted in the literature review and the findings, undermine women's sexuality and further disadvantage mothers in talking about this with their sons. In the absence of accurate and sound guidance from home, most boys are learning about sex from the media and their peers, both recognised promoters of unhealthy masculinity and sexuality.

One parent also mentioned the importance of parents being role models to their children and the need to be more aware of this. The sexual activity of parents in poor communities is a particularly difficult and sensitive issue as many families live in one room dwellings in which privacy for normal sexual activity for adult partners is absent. Children may then be exposed to adult sexual activity which may then increase their risk to abuse and developing age inappropriate and/or sexually harmful behaviour.

"Let me just say me as a parent, we often do not act carefully in front of our children, and children see that and then go to experience it on other children....."

The absence of responsive and appropriately resourced support structures in communities

There is a need for external supports for parents, caregivers and children to facilitate and advise on appropriate responses to the challenges of parenting boy (and girl) children and the management of emerging sexual maturity and harmful sexual behaviour if and when it occurs. Staff in such structures should be well trained in providing guidance and support.

Views that mothers cannot raise boys

A number of mothers in the research shared their feelings of disempowerment in raising their boy children. These appear to be reinforced by views that boys can only learn about manhood from men. Whilst the importance of male involvement in boys' lives is important, this should not be used to delegitimise a mother's ability to raise her son, even in the absence of supportive male role models.



[chapter 6]





recommendations

Recommendations for families

Families should be enabled, through a supportive policy and service delivery environment, to carry out their parental and caregiving responsibilities in:

- Ensuring boy's and girl's online and media use is safe, monitored, restricted to age-appropriate content and that children know what to do if they are exposed to harm online and that children know where to seek help if they are exposed to harm online.
- Ensuring boys and girls are kept emotionally and physically safe and when their safety is in danger appropriate help is sought.
- For both boys and girls, spending time with them, talking to them (including about sex and relationships) taking an interest in their activities, friends, hopes and dreams and supporting them in good and bad times.

Recommendations for community members, cultural and religious leaders

- Ensuring rites of passage which help boys and girls transition from childhood into early adulthood, provide accurate and appropriately messaged information around gender, sexual orientation, sex and relationships so as to avoid reinforcing harmful social norms and protect the rights of all children.

Recommendations for civil society organisations

Interventions provided by civil society organisations working with children should:

- Specifically recognise the differing vulnerabilities and trauma responses of boys and girls to sexual violence, address gendered social norms which contribute to these vulnerabilities and have specific safeguarding policies and procedures in place for boys and girls.
- Provide community education on the different sexual acts that constitute sexual violence, as per the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 5 of 2015, including both contact and non-contact sexual acts; how boys and girls may be vulnerable to and affected by these crimes in different ways; and the reporting obligations and responsibilities of community members and families outlined in South African legislation.
- Deepen understanding amongst families and communities of the long-term physical, emotional and psychosocial impacts of sexual violence on both boys who are victims as well as those who are actors and the role families can play in their healing.

Recommendations for the media

- Recognise the differing parenting needs of boys and girls, encourage the caregiving involvement of fathers (not just their financial provision), promote responsive parenting and the elimination of harsh discipline.
- The media, in particular local media, must accept their responsibility in ensuring content is safe for children and does not perpetuate gendered social norms which increase boys' and girls' vulnerability to harm.

Recommendations for the Government of South Africa

The Government of South Africa must:

- Ensure that intersectoral and multifaceted violence prevention policies and programmes do not delegitimise violence against boys through the exclusive focus on girls, the labelling of boys as perpetrators or the lack of explicit recognition of the different vulnerabilities and responses of boys and girls to sexual violence.
- Adequately resource programmes that work with boys who are victims of and/or actors in sexual violence given existing evidence in research of the link, for boys, between victimisation and/or exposure to violence and its later perpetration. Particular attention must be given to the long-term nature of these types of programmes and the need to concurrently address interconnected wider psychosocial contributors (including gendered social norms) to maximise outcomes.
- Ensure that life orientation programmes continue to be implemented in schools; that lessons are ringfenced within timetables and cannot be used for other lessons; are taught by an appropriately trained and skilled teacher; encourage the participation and engagement of children in discussions, including between genders; have content which focuses on equitable norms around sex and relationships; explicitly recognises the vulnerability of both boys and girls to sexual violence; and promotes emotional literacy in children.
- Ensuring that corporal punishment in the home is prohibited as per current amendments to the Children's Act no. 38 of 2005 and that appropriate policy and services are developed, budgeted for and implemented at the scale required to support responsive parenting and positive discipline in families for the safeguarding of boys and girls from conception to adulthood.



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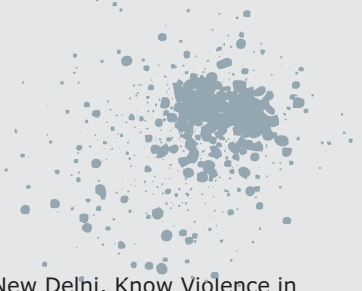
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