

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS TO MALE INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Susanne Tonsing & Sandy Lazarus
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EXTENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence¹ in the world [1]. Its rates of interpersonal violence are five times higher than the global average [2]. While violence has been estimated to constitute 26% of all injury deaths worldwide by the World Health Organization [3], it accounted for just under 50% of all injury deaths in South Africa, as recorded by the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System [4] (see Fig 1). While there is a lack of figures on the gender of perpetrators of violence in South Africa, there is qualitative evidence to suggest that a major percentage of perpetrators are male [5,6]. It is also known that among South Africa's youth, young men are far more likely than young women to start a physical fight or behave violently [7]. These indications offer an initial indication as to the general perpetrator trends by gender.

With regard to the specific characteristics of violence in South Africa, most violent deaths occur between 20h00 and 00h00, on Saturdays and Sundays. Seasonally, most homicides occur during December, followed by September and July. Regarding the external cause of death, sharp force objects, such as knives, followed by fire-arms were the leading causes of death due to violence [4].

Global patterns show that homicide rates among males are more than three times higher than those for females [3]. However, in South Africa males are even more at risk of death due to homicide, at a rate of 6 men to 1 woman [4]. The highest global and South African homicide rate for male victims has been recorded for the age group 15-29, followed closely by the age group 30-44 years [3]

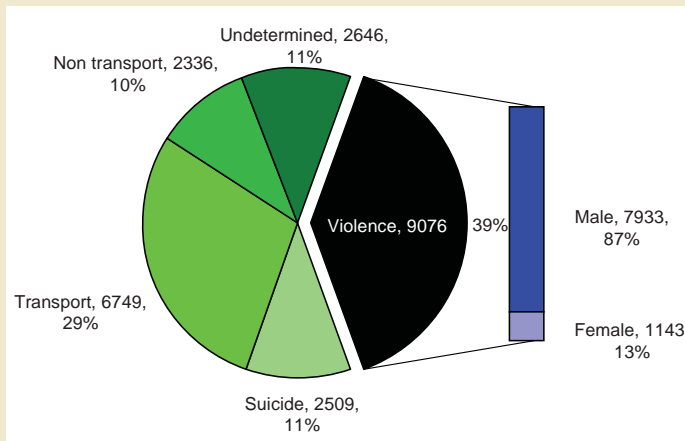


Figure 1: Proportion of injury deaths caused by violence, and proportion of male versus female deaths due to violence (based on 2007 data from the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System) [4].

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS TO MALE INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE?

A preliminary review of South African and international literature was undertaken by the MRC-UNISA Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme as part of a study that aimed to identify the risk and protective factors to male interpersonal violence.

The analysis was categorised according to the four levels of the ecological model: individual, relationship, community and society, with a multitude of risk factors being identified at each of these levels [8]. The most strongly emphasised and most commonly discussed 'top three'² risk factors, at each ecological level, are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key risk factors to male interpersonal violence [8]

ECOLOGICAL LEVEL	KEY GROUPS OF RISK FACTORS PER ECOLOGICAL LEVEL	SOME EXAMPLES OF RISK FACTORS
Individual	• Masculinity identity challenges	- Masculine identity needs, loss of masculine role, link between masculinity and guns
	• Demographic factors	- Low socio-economic status (SES), low levels of education, being unskilled
	• Intrapsychic and emotional factors	- Feelings of shame and humiliation
	• Substance abuse	- Experienced alcohol and drug abuse
Relationship	• Violence in the family	- Witnessing violence, experiencing abuse, learning aggressive behaviour in the family, exposure to substance abuse
	• Gender relations and roles	- Gender inequities, stereotypes, gender role conflict
	• Family structure	- Being single or unattached
Community	• Socio-economic factors	- Income inequality, low SES, unemployment
	• Lack of community support and involvement	- Lack of social support and interaction, no recreational facilities, lack of school connectedness, substance abuse in peer groups or gangs
	• Community safety	- Prevalence of fire-arms, high crime, violence and conflict; lack of faith in police
Societal	• Socio-economic and political dynamics	- Income inequality, globalisation, arms and drugs trade, rapid social change, history of militarisation
	• Cultural norms and values	- Culture of violence, negative construction of masculinity, media violence
	• Gender relations in society	- Gender inequality, low status of women in society

1. For purposes of this statistic, violence includes suicide.
2. This selection of the "top three" groups of risk factors is not based on empirical evidence, but rather on a limited literature study drawing from psychology, sociology and criminology, internationally and locally. The table has been provided in order to identify the topics that occurred at the highest frequency, according to a broad spectrum of relevant studies that were included in the literature review. It does not claim to be comprehensive, nor exhaustive.



WHAT ARE THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS TO MALE INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE?

None of the protective factors listed here occurred at a high frequency in the reviewed literature, due to a limited focus on protective factors in most studies, as well as the limitations of the pilot study. The literature does, however, note the need for a greater focus on protective factors [8].

Table 2: Key protective factors to male interpersonal violence [8]

ECOLOGICAL LEVEL	GROUPS OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS PER ECOLOGICAL LEVEL	SOME EXAMPLES OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic • Intra-psychoic and emotional • Behaviours and skills • Cultural and religious factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher level of education of men, maturity/higher age - Individual resilience, self-reflection, constructive view of masculinity - Conflict management skills, vocational skills - Having a purpose in life, religious or spiritual beliefs
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marital and family relations • Peer relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive family role models, attachment to family, family support, presence of father or father-figure - Belonging to a positive social group, close peer relations
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social capital • Community support and networks • Community empowerment • School connectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense of community, cultural-community resilience - Recreation opportunities, active community structures - Sense of human agency, community mobilisation - Participation in and connectedness to schools
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National policies and legislation • Socio-economic factors • Cultural factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human rights framework and policies, laws to constrain violence - Economic opportunities, affordable housing, welfare - Non-violent male role in media, values promoting gender equality and positive view of masculinity

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY OF RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS TO MALE INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

- The identification of risk and protective factors to male interpersonal violence should take place through the guidance of a conceptual framework that engages critically with the underlying dynamics.
- Future studies should focus on the interactions between the different levels in the ecological model.
- A particular focus should be placed on determining how masculinity is operationalised at the community and societal levels.
- The concept and reality of social historical trauma (historical, inter-generational effects of colonisation and oppression) within the context of identifying risk factors to male interpersonal violence should be examined.
- Future studies should place emphasis on protective factors, including a focus on health determinants.
- The role of faith/religion/spirituality, as positive mediating factors to MIV, should be investigated.
- The focus on promoting a constructive, non-violent, egalitarian masculinity constitutes an important area of further research [8].

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CONTACT DETAILS

MRC-UNISA Crime, Violence and Injury Lead Programme

P.O. Box 19070, Tygerberg, 7505, South Africa
 Tel: +27 21 0534 | Fax: +27 21 938 0381 |
 E-mail: susanne.tonsing@mrc.ac.za
 Website: <http://www.mrc.ac.za/crime.crime.htm>

Institute for Social & Health Sciences

University of South Africa
 P.O. Box 1087, Lenasia, 1820, South Africa
 Tel: +27 11 857 1142/3 | Fax: +27 11 857 1770 | E-mail: Lourilc@unisa.ac.za
 Website: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/ishs>

