Teacher perpetrated violence in Liberia and its association with experiences of sexual violence

Jordan Steiner, MA, Doctoral Student
Laura Johnson, MSW, Doctoral Candidate
Judy L. Postmus, PhD, ACSW
Rebecca Davis, PhD

CIES Presentation: Tuesday, March 7th, 10-1130am
Liberia
Sexual Violence in Liberia

• Sexual violence in the Liberian context is manifested in numerous ways, one being within the school environment.

• Postmus et al. (2015) found that sexual violation, sexual coercion, and transactional sex were common types of sexual violence experienced by schoolchildren in Liberia.

• Teachers and men in positions of authority have been reported to engage in transactional sex for grades, with students describing parents and peers to be encouraging of this in order to access education and status (Atwood et al., 2011).
Impact of Sexual Violence

• Impact is vast but includes:
  – School dropout
  – Low self-esteem
  – Health issues
  – Depression
  – Post traumatic-stress disorder (Wible, 2004; Smit et al., 2006)
Original Study - Purpose

- Assess gender based violence (GBV) against children and youth in schools in four Liberian Counties

- Methods included:
  - Analysis of existing policies, laws, and research
  - Interviews with key stakeholders
  - Focus groups with students, teachers, parents, and community members
  - Anonymous survey distributed to students in primary schools
Methods – Instrument Development

Scales:
• Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) – heavily modified
• Additional questions included on disclosure, perpetration, & what happened following disclosure (previously used by Postmus)

Cultural relevancy:
• Two faculty research collaborators from Liberia
• Students at Cuttington University
• Liberian Research Consortium on Gender Based Violence
Methods – Data Collection

• Full sample = 2,167
• Collaborative study with Cuttington University in Liberia
• Study was approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board & approved by Cuttington University Research Department
  – Consent given by principals at each school; policy was that parents needed to opt out
  – Students instructed that they did not have to participate and did not have to answer any question they chose not to answer
• Anonymous
  • Ensured that not even age was collected so as to not be able to identify students
  • Students were separated into male or female classrooms; collected forms indicated the gender
Methods - Original Study

Preliminary Analysis:

• Frequencies on all individual survey items
• Mean scores for each section of the survey
• Chi square tests on each survey item and compared by sex to determine statistically significant differences between boys and girls
Current Study

• Analytic sample – 749 students
  – 479 girls; 270 boys

• Three Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models were run

• Dependent variables (continuous):
  • Transactional sex (i.e. sex for grades or money)
  • Sexual coercion (i.e. forced sex)
  • Sexual violation (i.e. peeping or inappropriate touching)

• Independent variables (binary):
  – Teacher perpetrator
  – Staff perpetrator
  – Teacher and staff perpetrator
Results – Prevalence by Gender

Sexual Violence by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactional Sex</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Coercion</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Violation</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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</table>
Results - Perpetrators

School Staff Perpetrator of Violence: 33%

Teacher Perpetrator of Violence: 22%

Center on Violence Against Women and Children

Partnering for Change
## Results – OLS Regression Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Transactional Sex B</th>
<th>Transactional Sex SE</th>
<th>Sexual Coercion B</th>
<th>Sexual Coercion SE</th>
<th>Sexual Violation B</th>
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<td>Model 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>.056***</td>
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<td>-.114</td>
<td>.082**</td>
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<td>.046*</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.085***</td>
<td>-.198 **</td>
<td>.044***</td>
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<td>School staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td>.048*</td>
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<td>.045*</td>
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<td>.091***</td>
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</table>
Discussion/Recommendations

• Address relations between school staff, teachers, and students, particularly between teachers and students; especially transactional sex + motivators

• Increase coordination between formal and informal systems, community and institutional levels to increase access to justice for students in context of sexual violence in school

• Develop and implement comprehensive prevention and education programs; focus on perpetrators

• Measurement + methods: Scales adapted to specific cultural context; inspiration from validated scales

• Conduct further research on:
  – Transactional sex between teachers and students
  – Sexual violence– consequences and characteristics
  – Refining measurement instruments for Liberian and West African population
Cuttington University Research Team and Professors
Contact Information

**Jordan Steiner, MA, Doctoral Student**  
Center on Violence Against Women & Children  
School of Social Work, Rutgers University  
390 George Street, Suite 408  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
848-932-4367  
jsteiner@ssw.rutgers.edu

**Laura Johnson, MSW, PhD Candidate**  
Center on Violence Against Women & Children  
School of Social Work, Rutgers University  
390 George Street, Suite 408  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
848-932-4367  
ljohnson@ssw.rutgers.edu

**Judy L. Postmus, PhD, ACSW**  
Center on Violence Against Women & Children  
School of Social Work, Rutgers University  
390 George Street, Suite 408  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
848-932-4365  
postmus@ssw.rutgers.edu

**Rebecca Davis, PhD**  
Center for Global Social Work  
School of Social Work, Rutgers University  
536 George Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
848-932-4489  
redavis@ssw.rutgers.edu
References


