

Drivers of violence affecting children in Italy Preliminary findings

Erika Bernacchi, Bianchi D, Fabris A, Pregliasco R and Zelano M

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Multicountry study on the Drivers of Violence affecting children

- Coordinated by **Unicef Innocenti Office of Research** with the support of the **University of Edinburgh**
- It involves 4 countries: **Peru, Vietnam, Zimbabwe and Italy**
- In Italy the research is carried out by the **Istituto degli Innocenti** with the contribution of different stakeholders including the **Department of Equal Opportunity**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Observatory for the Fight against Pedophilia, and key organizations and experts in the field

Methodology

Stage 1 Grounding the Programme: Identify Country Trends and Research Priorities

- **Systematic literature review:** 237 studies collected out of which **74** met the inclusion criteria about quality and reliability of the research
- **Secondary analysis of data sets** of a **retrospective national survey** (Bianchi and Moretti, 2006) which investigates previous cases of child abuse among **Italian women** between **19 and 60 years** of age
- Analysis of **90 projects** aimed at preventing violence against children

The phenomenon at a glance

Most reported violence against children occurs in families and is committed by parents.

- **Sexual abuse**

- High prevalence of sexual abuse mainly within the **family** in two different national surveys: from 10% (Istat, 2015) to 33% (Bianchi and Moretti, 2006) women in Italy experienced sexual violence when they were minors. The closer the relationship between perpetrator and victim, the longer the duration of the abuse.
- **Adolescent girls** are significantly more likely to report sexual abuse than boys overall according to social services and police records

- **Physical abuse**

- In schools, bullying affects over **1/3 of students** (11, 13 and 15 years) who have participated in acts of violence (WHO, Hbsc survey, 2010)
- Italian fathers more than mothers say they believe in the educational value of **corporal punishment** especially for boys (Arace et al., 2013)

- **Emotional abuse**

- Among children assisted by social services (2015), **20% have witnessed domestic violence** and **50%** is victim of physical and/or psychological **neglect**.

Protective and risk factors of violence in the family

Risk factors

- **Family isolation**, weak social networks, conflict, family norms around silence and blame (secondary analysis of national survey)
- **Witnessing domestic violence**
- **Previous experience of abuse**
- Deprived socio-economic conditions
- Lack of extended family support (especially for migrant families)

Protective factors

- positive **attachment bonds** between children and parents
- quality of couple relationship
- **women's economic independence**

Emerging issues:

1) trafficking and child prostitution

a) Trafficking involving foreign born children

- For its geographical position Italy is one of the **top European countries for trafficking of human beings**, including children for sexual exploitation
- 21, 975 (of which **1,171** child victims) of trafficking received services from social reintegration projects between 2000 and 2012 (Department of Equal Opportunities)
- **Emerging risk factors:**
 - **poverty**; entrapment;
 - fear and attachment to traffickers;
 - invisibility of trafficking victims and presence of **criminal organisations**
 - **demand for sexual services**

b) Child prostitution involving Italian-born children

Emerging risk factors

- material poverty of the families
- consequence of on-line **grooming or sexting**
- induced by the **consumerist desire** for consumption goods also for adolescents coming from wealthy families.

Emerging issues:

2) On-line violence

- Growing importance of violence through **Internet and social media** (e.g. grooming and sexting)

Emerging risk factors:

- Children and young people are often **unaware of the risks** of online sexual abuse
- Their vulnerability seems to be linked to **experimentation** or desire for adventure and to an exploration of sexuality
- Lack of **parents supervision** and skills

Emerging issues:

3) Bullying

- Bullying appears to **decrease with age** (WHO, Hbsc survey, 2010).
- **Gender differences:** boy bullies tend to be more physically aggressive, while girl bullies tend to resort to gossip, cyber bullying and exclusion (Menesini and Nocentini, 2007).
- **Lack of confidence on how to handle violence: adults (both parents and teachers)** appear uncertain about how to cope with bullying: **43% of parents** didn't know how to handle bullying (Telefono Azzurro, 2012) and **the majority of teachers** surveyed felt they were unprepared to deal with bullying (Di Vita et al, 2009).
- **Not all children want help from their parents in dealing with bullying.** Only 32.3% of children would like more guidance from their parents. (Telefono Azzurro and Eurispes, 2011)

Conclusions

- Most relevant forms of violence emerged in the literature review: violence in the family, trafficking for sexual exploitation, on-line violence, bullying.
- Strong engagement of the **Italian public administration and civil society**
- Notwithstanding the comprehensive **child protection system** in place in Italy, violence against children remains a problem
- Italian government recognises the relevance of carrying out an **evaluation of interventions** in order to better understand 'what works' and determine priority services vis-à-vis the current economic crisis
- **Final report** will be completed in 2016 and available on <http://www.unicef-irc.org/>

Thank you for your attention !