



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare

The Long-term Consequences of Violence: Protecting the Mental Health of Children and Youth in Namibia

The Government of the Republic of Namibia in 2019 completed a nationally-representative Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS).¹ This survey interviewed 5,191 children and youth 13-24 years old about their experiences of physical², sexual³, and emotional⁴ violence.

FINDINGS

Both boys and girls experience unacceptably high rates of violence. No matter the type of violence experienced, those who experienced violence in childhood were more likely to have recent mental distress, to have self-harmed, and/or thought of suicide.

- Females aged 18-24 years who experienced violence in childhood were significantly more likely to have mental distress in the last 30 days (60.1 vs. 44.6%), to have self-harmed (22.7% vs. 7.6%) and/or thought of suicide (32.6% vs. 11.8%) than females who had not experienced violence.
- Males aged 18-24 years who experienced sexual violence in childhood were more likely to have mental distress in the last 30 days (46.0%) than males who did not experience childhood sexual violence (22.1%).



CONCLUSION

Violence against children, whichever form it takes, leaves its mark in the short term and in the long term. Even when there are no signs of physical harm, or when the physical harm has healed, there was trauma. We must protect children from violence to prevent long-term impacts and ensure children who experience violence receive the quality support they need to start to recover.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the VACS in Namibia highlight that there is a significant need to expand social care and mental health services for children and youth, particularly for those who have experienced violence. The following will help ensure every child and youth who experiences violence knows where to go for help as well as receives the help s/he needs.

- Ensure that the tollfree LifeLine GBV helpline, 116, is well-advertised throughout Namibia.
- Increase the number of social workers in Namibia, as social workers provide critical stop-gap psycho-social and mental health support.
- Provide regular training opportunities to people who provide daily frontline services to children, such as teachers and healthcare providers, on how to identify, care for, and provide other support to child survivors of violence.
- Expand availability of referral to social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists and explore providing some services through telemedicine.

Together we will end violence against children and youth in Namibia.

Your support can make a difference.

For additional information, please contact:

Directorate of Child Protection
Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare
Juvenis Building, Independence Avenue (north),
Windhoek
Private Bag 13359, Windhoek, Namibia

Telephone: (+264) 061-2833111

Fax: (+264) 061-229569

Website: www.mgecw.gov.na

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MGECWNAMIBIA

NOTES

- 1 Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Namibia Statistics Agency, and International Training and Education Center for Health at the University of Washington. *Violence Against Children and Youth in Namibia: Findings from the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey, 2019 (Full Report)*. Windhoek, Namibia: Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2020.
- 2 Physical violence includes slapping, pushing, shoving, shaking, intentionally throwing something to hurt, punching, kicking, whipping, beating with an object, strangling, smothering, trying to drown, burning intentionally, or using or threatening with a knife, panga, gun, or other weapon.
- 3 Sexual violence includes unwanted sexual touching, attempted sex, physically forced sex, and pressured sex (through threats or harassment).
- 4 Emotional violence includes being told that you were unloved or did not deserve to be loved, being told that they wished you were dead or had never been born, or being ridiculed or put down by a parent, caregiver, or adult relative.

