

Early life factors associated with childhood trajectories of violence among the Birth to Twenty-Plus Cohort in Soweto South Africa

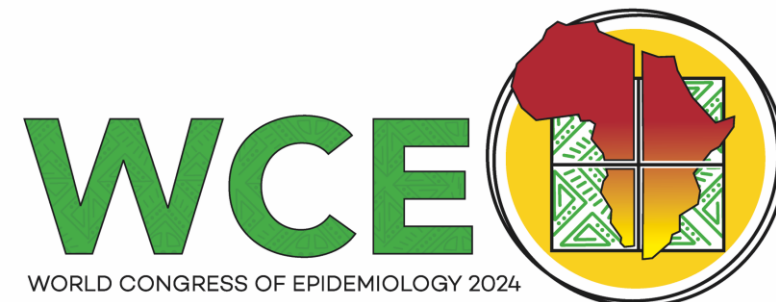
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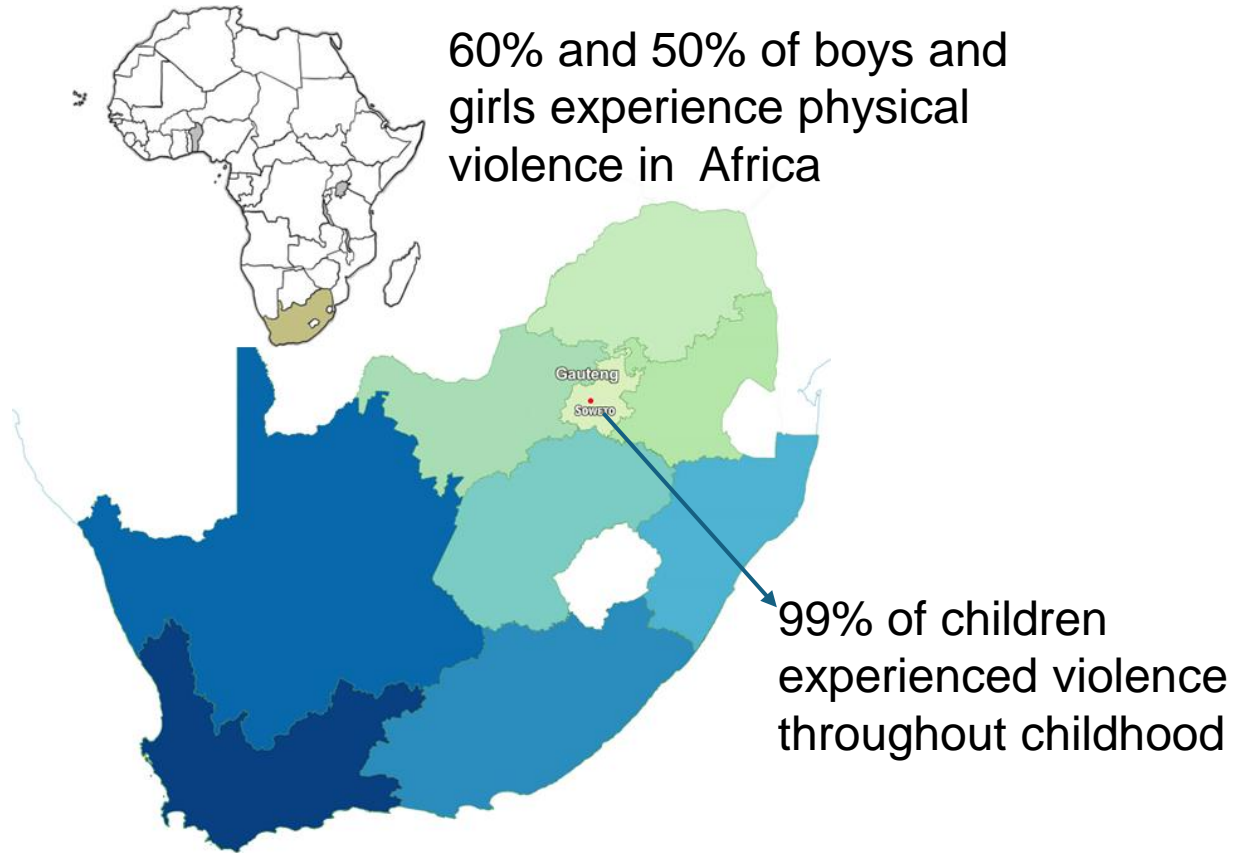
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Introduction

Globally, greater than 50% of children experience violence each year.



20% and > 30% of children 15-17 years experienced sexual and physical violence in South Africa

- Majority of violence studies are based on cross-sectional or retrospective recall of violence experiences
- Limited studies in Africa assess longitudinal patterns of violence

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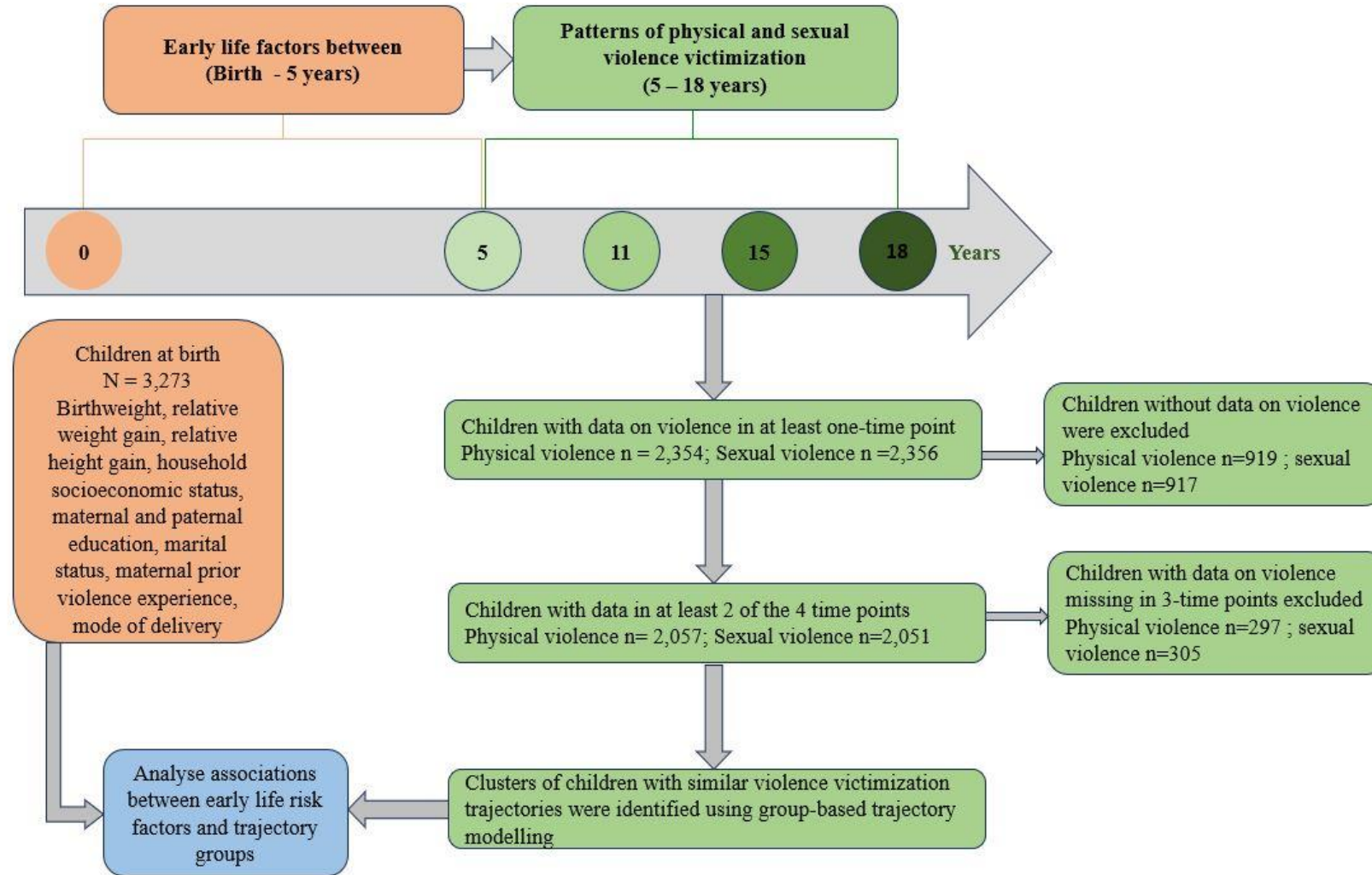
To generate physical and sexual violence victimization trajectories across childhood and evaluate early life factors predicting these violence trajectories in the study setting.

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Methodology



Study setting: Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa

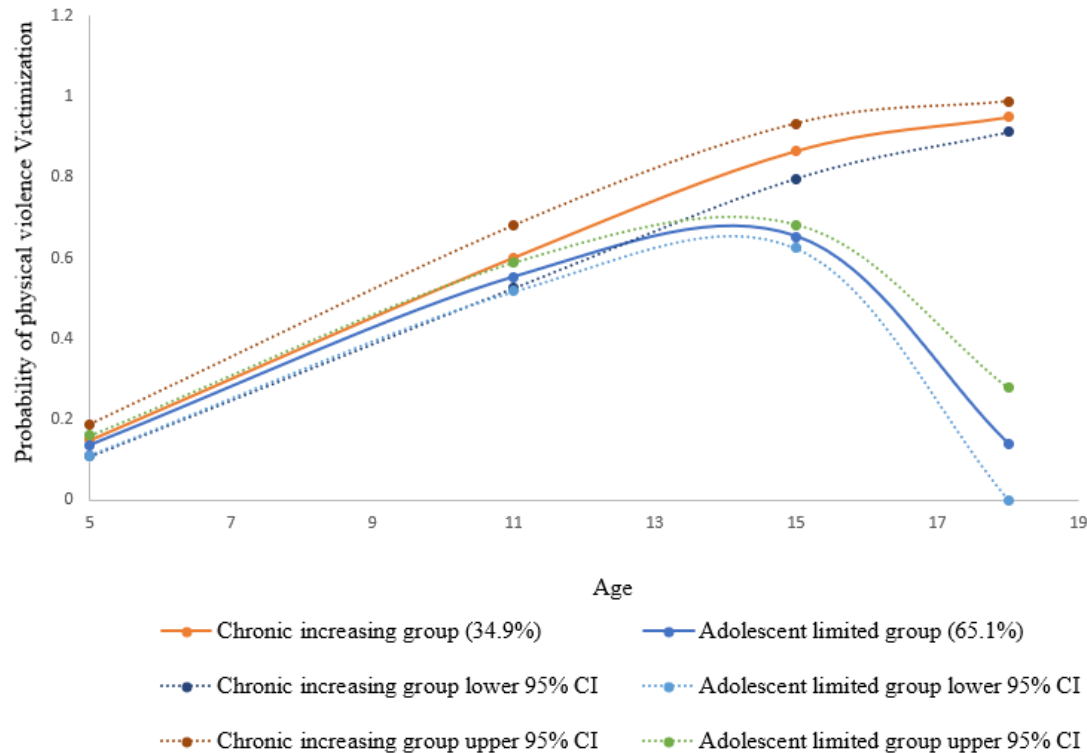
Results: Characteristics of the study sample

	Physical violence (%)	Sexual violence (%)
N	2057	2051
Violence trajectories		
Adolescent limited	65.1	74.1
Chronic/ late increasing	34.9	25.9
Individual level factors		
Gender		
Female	52.5	52.4
Birth weight		
Low	11.3	11.2
Child growth (mean, sd)		
Relative height gain (0-2 years)	-0.04 (0.98)	-0.04 (0.98)
Relative height gain (2-5 years)	0.00 (1.0)	0.00 (1.0)

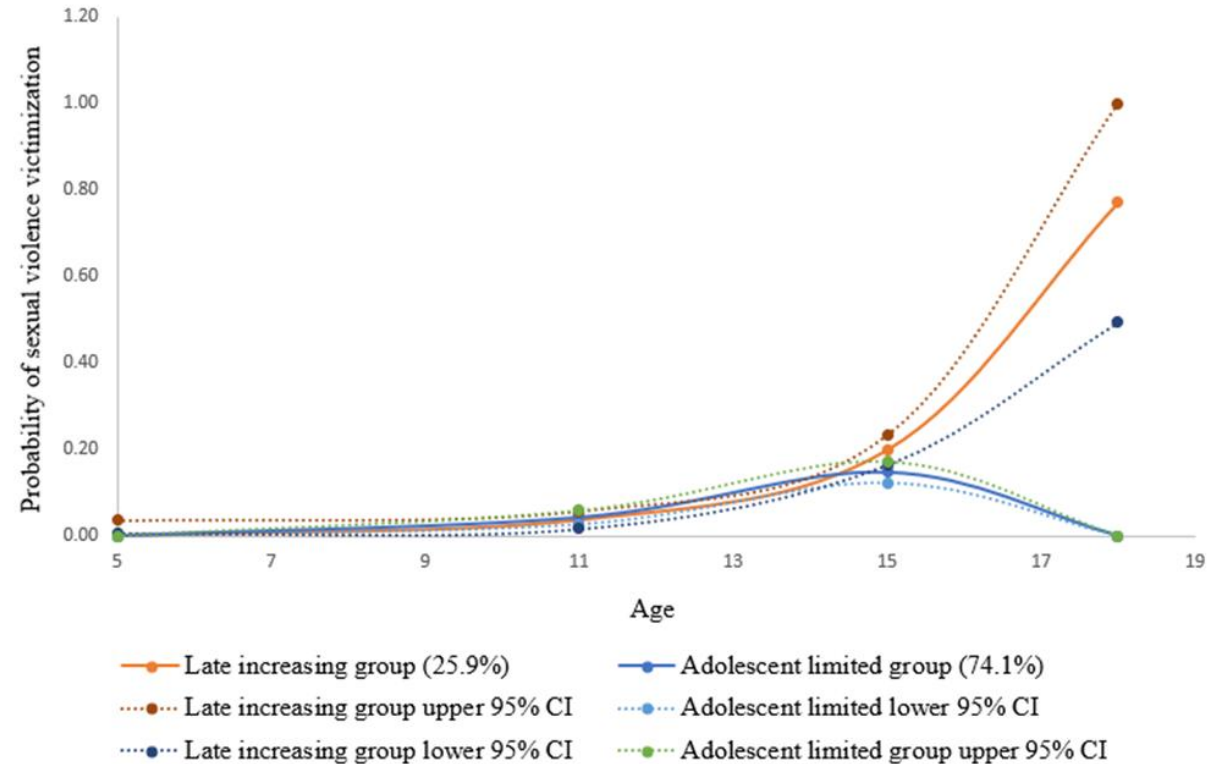
	Physical violence (%)	Sexual violence (%)
Family level factors		
Socioeconomic status		
Low	65.0	64.8
Middle	20.9	21.0
High	14.1	14.2
Maternal education		
Primary and below	12.3	12.4
High school	79.1	79.1
Post school training	8.6	8.6
Paternal education		
Primary and below	8.3	8.3
High school	72.9	73.0
Post school training	18.8	18.7
Household crowding		
Yes	41.8	42.0
No	58.2	58.0

Results

Physical violence victimization trajectories



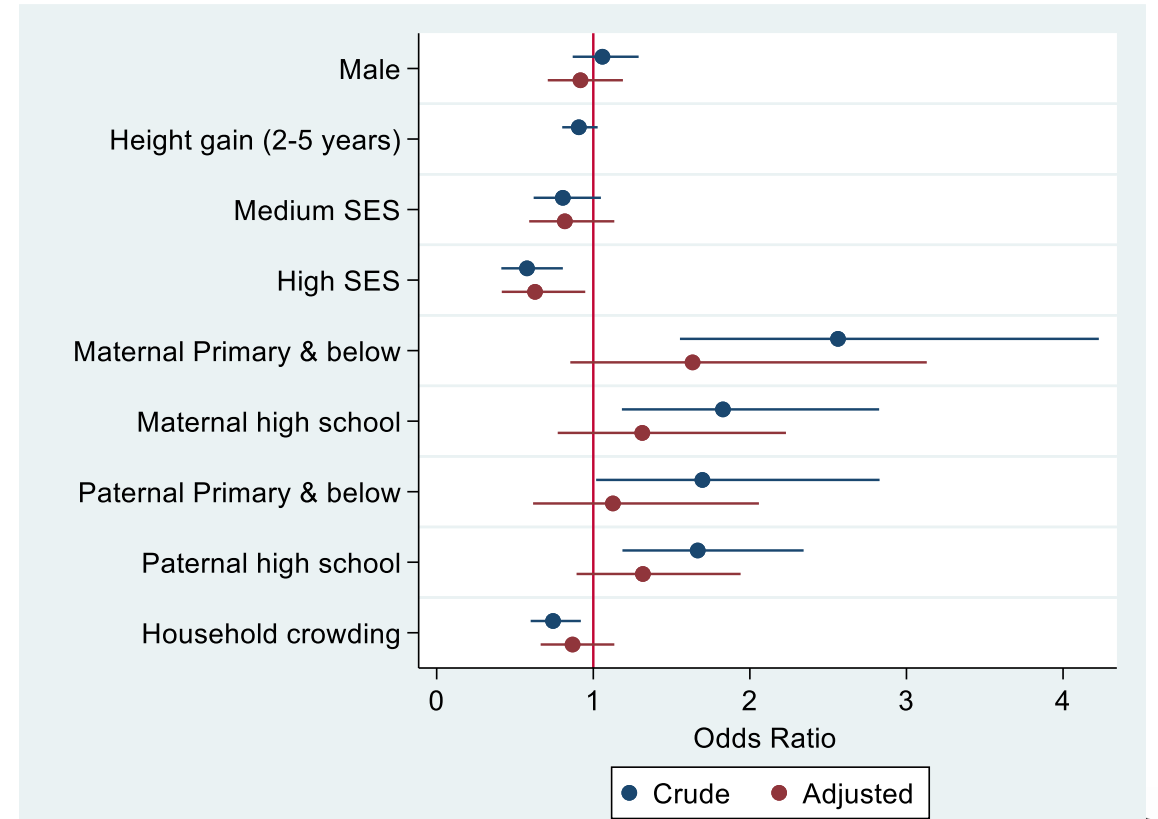
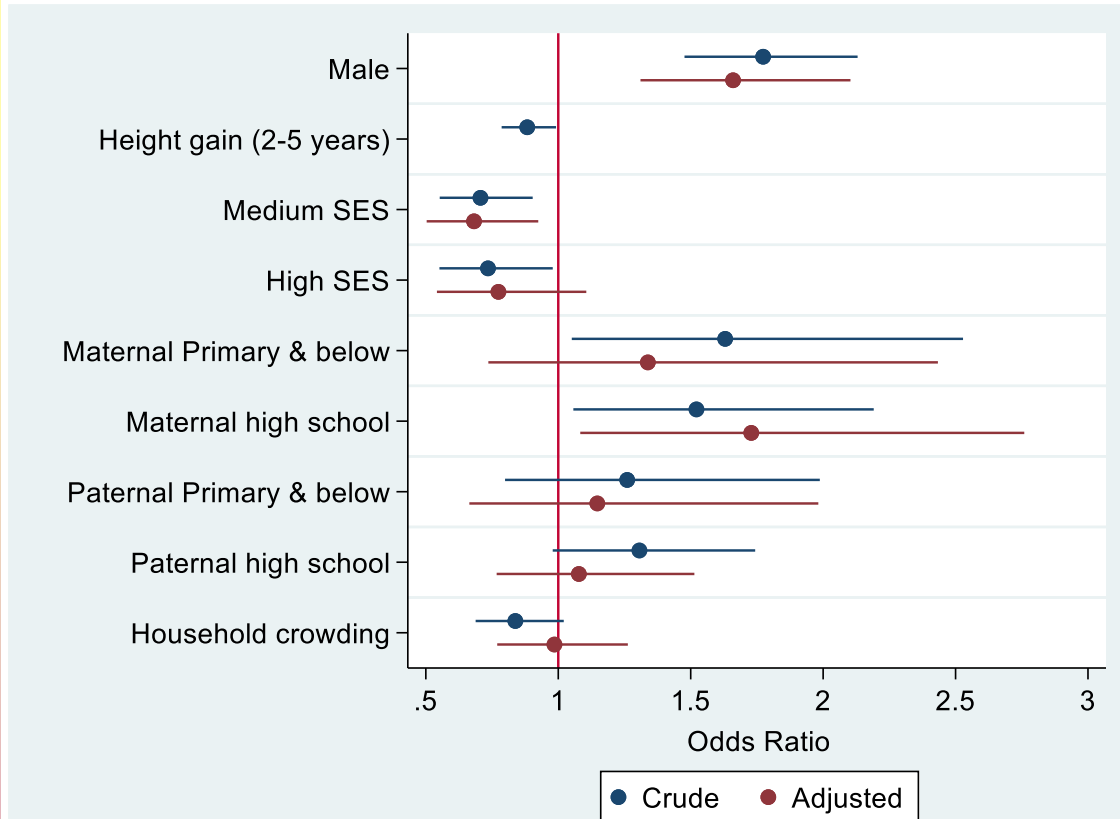
Sexual violence victimization trajectories



Results: Early life factors associated with violence trajectories

Physical Violence Victimization

Sexual Violence Victimization



Discussion

- Approximately a third and a quarter of children exhibited persistently increasing physical and sexual violence patterns throughout childhood, respectively.
- Individual (sex) and family level (Household SES and maternal education) factors predicted physical violence victimization trajectories.
- Poor linear growth in early childhood associated with delayed cognitive development, poor educational outcomes and rapid weight gain, all risk factors for physical violence victimization
- Vulnerability to late increasing sexual violence victimization patterns were limited to family level factors only (Household SES).

Conclusions and recommendations

- Children within the same environment can follow different patterns of violence victimization during childhood
- Both individual and family level early life factors contribute to increasing violence victimization patterns
- The results support existing research on the importance of quality nutritional support during the first 1000 days of a child's life, to prevent stunting.
- Need for early and integrated interventions targeting poverty alleviation, parenting and nutritional support.

Strengths

The longitudinal nature of data collection allows the characterization of violence patterns

Prospective study design minimizing the magnitude of recall bias

Use of early risk factors at birth allows for temporal associations to be assessed

Limitations

Presence of large gaps between data collection points affected ability to discern more heterogeneous patterns

High proportion of missing data limited inclusion of child growth variables in the multivariable model

Use of parent or self reporting on sensitive issues may be subject to under-reporting or introduce social desirability bias

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