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Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression, Physical Punishment, and Street Children:

A Vicious Circle of Domestic Aggression in South Sudan





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Portrait photo: Seppälän Valokuvaamo, Vasa

Cover picture: "My mother and my father are fighting" drawn by a child in South Sudan



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Abstract

Aims. The overall aim of the thesis was to investigate aspects of domestic aggression, in particular intimate partner aggression and physical punishment of children, and their concomitants, in South Sudan. One sub-aim was to investigate sex differences in victimisation and perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in a sample of adults (Studies I and II). In relation to this, it was investigated whether the revised gender symmetry theory regarding intimate partner aggression could be applicable in an African developing country. A second sub-aim was to investigate the role of low intensity intimate partner aggression as a mediating factor in the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children (Study III). A third sub-aim was to investigate whether there was an association between victimisation from domestic aggression and the fact that some children chose to sleep in streets and markets although they had parents they could go home to, in comparison with children who were only working in the street by day but spent the nights at home (Study IV).

Methods. Two datasets were collected. Questionnaires were completed by 420 adults (302 females, 118 males), and 197 street children in South Sudan. The adults filled in the DIAS-Adult questionnaire, and the Brief Physical Punishment Scale. The children in the street completed a questionnaire constructed specifically for the current study. They were also interviewed, and they completed drawings. The first dataset was used for Studies I-III, and the second for Study IV.

Results. The results of Study I showed that males had been significantly more victimised from physical and verbal forms of low intensity intimate partner aggression than females. Males reported significantly more often than females having been bit, hit, had their belongings damaged, scratched, spit at, and shoved by their female partners. Regarding self-reported perpetration of IPA, Study II showed no significant difference between females and males on perpetration of five out of seven types of aggression. The results of Studies I and II provided support for the revised gender symmetry theory. The results of Study III showed that the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children in the sample was substantial, and that perpetration of IPA mediated the relationship for both mothers and fathers. Study IV examined whether children who slept in the streets in South Sudan although they had parents they could go home to had been victimised more from domestic violence than children working in the street by day but spending the nights at home. The hypothesis was corroborated: domestic violence, including physical aggression between parents, and physical punishment of children, was found to be associated with children not only working but also ending up sleeping in the streets of South Sudan.

Conclusions. The revised gender symmetry theory regarding intimate partner aggression was found to be applicable in an African country. The intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children in the sample was substantial and mediated by perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in the case of both mothers and fathers. Domestic aggression was associated with children not only working, but choosing to sleep in the streets of South Sudan.

Key words: low intensity intimate partner aggression, physical punishment, intergenerational transmission, children in the street, South Sudan

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Original Publications

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Thesis

The data for the studies presented in the current thesis were collected in South Sudan, a young nation which received its independence in 2011. The overall aim of the thesis was to investigate aspects of domestic aggression, in particular intimate partner aggression and physical punishment of children, and their concomitants. The research methods are mostly quantitative, although some qualitative methods are also utilized. The research addresses particular theoretical issues. One sub-aim was to investigate sex differences in victimisation and perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in a sample of adults (Studies I and II). In relation to this, it was investigated whether the revised gender symmetry theory regarding intimate partner aggression (Archer, 2018) could be applicable in an African developing country. A second sub-aim was to investigate the role of low intensity intimate partner aggression as a mediating factor in the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children (Study III). A third sub-aim was to investigate whether there was an association between victimisation from domestic aggression and the fact that some children chose to sleep in streets and markets although they had parents they could go home to, in comparison with children who were only working in the street by day but spending the nights at home (Study IV).

1.2 Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression

South Sudan is, like most African nations, highly patriarchal with men playing a dominating role in society. Domestic violence directed at women is common, and also widely accepted in South Sudan. A study found that 82% of females and 81% of males agreed that a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together (Scott et al., 2013). The present author is not by any means trying to belittle this problem; however, Studies I and II of this thesis is taking a somewhat broader view, investigating not particularly wife battering, but a wide range of intimate partner aggression directed from wives against husbands as well as from husbands against wives. Aggression is in this thesis defined as any behaviour intended to harm another person, physically or psychologically. Several types of aggression were investigated, and the term low intensity aggression, as a contrasting concept to high intensity

aggression (direct physical abuse leading to or aiming at physical pain or injury), plays a key role in this context. Studies I and II had as their explicit aim to test the so called revised gender symmetry theory by Archer (2018).

In the area of research on intimate partner aggression (IPA), there is an ongoing debate about whether there are sex differences or not in the use of different forms of IPA. The traditional view, also adhered to by policy makers, has been that men are the main perpetrators, with women being the main victims (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Researchers proposing this view often argue that the predominantly male violence against females is a reflection of the patriarchal domination in society-at-large. IPA is a concomitant of men having control and being in power, and a consequence of the general gender inequality in society (DeKeseredy, 2011; Dragiewicz & Lindgren, 2009; Dobash & Dobash, 1988; 2004).

The historical division of labour into those who do the household work and those who work outside of the home has been cited as a reason for societal gender inequality. This division of tasks came to define the characteristic roles of men and women (Kray, Howland, Russel, & Jackman, 2016; Lindsey, 2015). It allowed males to earn and provide for the family income, which in turn gave them control over the family's economy.

However, Straus and his colleagues (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011; Straus & Gelles, 1992; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), in studies based on community samples in the US, came to the, at that time, surprising conclusion that the use of aggression in intimate relationships is symmetrical and reciprocal, with males and females being more or less equally aggressive; oftentimes, women actually aggress more frequently than men, although their aggression results in lesser injury. This finding has been corroborated by others (Archer, 2000, 2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Bates, Graham-Kevan, & Archer, 2013; Black et al., 2011; Kar & O'Leary, 2010). The first and traditional view, that men are more aggressive than women in intimate partner relationships, has since then been referred to as the gender asymmetry theory, and the second, that they aggress more or less equally frequently, as the gender symmetry theory (Kar & O'Leary, 2010; Straus, 2008, 2009, 2011).

Because there are data supporting both views, Archer (2018) has suggested a revised gender symmetry theory, according to which gender symmetry holds only for low intensity aggression, while as far as high

intensity aggression resulting in physical injury or death is concerned, males are perpetrators to a higher degree than females. Furthermore, Archer suggested that gender symmetry should be expected to be found mainly in community and student samples in modern Western nations, and be linked to a relatively high degree of gender equality in the society in question. As a consequence, in developing countries with a patriarchal society structure, such as African countries, gender symmetry should not be expected to occur even in community samples. At least in Straus' (2008) cross-national sample of students from 32 nations, this association was not found in developing countries.

However, Darko, Björkqvist, and Österman (2018) found, in a sample comprising 1,204 intimate partners in Ghana, that males reported being victimized from both physical, indirect, and nonverbal intimate partner aggression to a greater extent than females; reciprocally, females scored higher than males on being perpetrators of physical, indirect, nonverbal, and cyber aggression. The instrument used was the Direct & Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman & Björkqvist, 2009). This finding runs counter to the suggestion that gender symmetry theory would not hold in a patriarchal, developing country.

In Studies I–III of this thesis, subscales from DIAS-Adult were used for the measurement of intimate partner aggression, as was the case in the study by Darko et al. (2018). It should be noted that DIAS-Adult measures primarily low intensity forms of aggression. In the present study, the term high intensity aggression is used more or less equivalently to what other authors have referred to as physical abuse, or physical assault, within an intimate partner relationship. Forms of IPA which do not aim at or result in physical injury or severe physical pain are here referred to as low intensity aggression. Low intensity aggression is mostly aiming at causing psychological harm. It should be noted that the distinction between high and low intensity aggression is not fully comparable to the distinction between physical and nonphysical aggression. There are, for instance, forms of aggression which are of physical nature, such as locking the partner in or out of the house; these forms are aiming at psychological rather than physical harm. DIAS-Adult includes such items in its subscale of physical aggression.

The different views about sex differences in IPA may have come about partly because of the different data sources from which researchers draw their conclusions: asymmetry theorists have typically based their conclusions on evidence obtained from crime and homicide data, or

clinical data from women's shelters (DeKeseredy, 2011; Dragiewicz & Lindgren, 2009; Dobash & Dobash, 1988; 2004). Gender symmetry theorists such as Straus and his colleagues draw their conclusions on questionnaire data based on instruments such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996).

These different data sources may have influenced the direction of the findings. When the levels of aggression are assessed on the basis of criminal records, and when the emphasis is on the injuries of the victims, males form the majority of perpetrators with their female partners being the victims (Grech & Burgess, 2011). On the other hand, when levels and types of aggression are based on representative community samples and not on extreme groups, studies find an overall larger percentage of females perpetrating physical aggression against their partners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Black et al., 2011).

The foremost aim of Studies I and II was to test Archer's revised gender symmetry theory, and investigate whether it holds also in an African country. As mentioned above, Archer (2018) did not think it would be possible due to the patriarchal nature of African societies. When Study I was conducted, the study by Darko et al. (2018) was not yet published, and the data collection made by Darko in Ghana was conducted simultaneously with the data collection by the present author in South Sudan. Both Darko and the present author belong to the same research group, led by Karin Österman and Kaj Björkqvist. The findings made by Darko and the present author should be regarded as simultaneous.

1.3 Physical Punishment of Children

1.3.1 *Negative Outcomes of Physical Punishment of Children*

There is solid evidence that the physical punishment (PP) of children is associated with a multitude of negative outcomes. Victimization from PP has been found to be associated with aggressiveness (e.g. Taylor, Manganello, Lee, & Rice, 2010), depression (MacMillan, Boyle, Wong, Duku, Fleming, & Walsh, 1999; Österman, Björkqvist, & Wahlbeck, 2014; Turner & Finkelhorn, 1996; Turner & Muller, 2004), suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Österman et al., 2014), externalizing problems (Callender, Olson, Choe, & Sameroff, 2011; MacMillan et al., 1999), schizotypal personality (Österman et al., 2014), and psychopathy (Lynam, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2008).

In a review, Gershoff (2002) found an association between PP and 10 negative outcomes. In the case of children, these were increased risk of aggression, antisocial behavior, victimisation of abuse, poor mental health, poor quality of relationship to parents, and poor moral internalisation. In adults, there was evidence of increased risk for aggression, criminal and antisocial behavior, spouse and child abuse, and poor mental health.

The impact of PP on mental disorders has been studied extensively by Afifi and her colleagues in nationally representative samples in the US. In one study, physical punishment was found to be associated with the following mental disorders: major depression, dysthymia, mania, specific phobia, anxiety, borderline personality, narcissism, obsessive compulsiveness, schizoid and schizotypal personality, antisocial personality, and alcohol and drug abuse (Afifi, Mota, Dasiewicz, MacMillan, & Sareen, 2012). In another study, Afifi, Mota, MacMillan, and Sareen (2013) found that harsh physical punishment during childhood (note: in the absence of maltreatment) was associated with higher odds of somatic illnesses such as arthritis, obesity, and cardiovascular disease. There is also a link between victimisation from PP during childhood and alcohol abuse during adulthood (Afifi et al., 2012; Cheng, Anthony, & Huang, 2010; 2011; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997; Österman et al., 2014).

There are indeed two reviews which claim no or no substantial associations between childhood PP and negative concomitants (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005; Paolucci & Violato, 2004). However, the overwhelming evidence points in the other direction.

Taking into account the evidence for negative outcomes, an increasing number of nations have prohibited PP of children not only at school, but also in the homes. To date, the number of such nations is 53, and South Sudan is one of them (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018). It is unclear, however, to what extent citizens of South Sudan are aware of this fact.

1.3.2 Intergenerational Transmission of Physical Punishment

The idea of the existence of an intergenerational “cycle of abuse” was introduced by Kempe and Kempe (1978). Intergenerational transmission of child abuse has since then been studied extensively. In an early review (Widom, 1989), it was concluded that abused and neglected children run a higher risk for displaying different types of aggressive behaviour later

in life. However, the author pointed out that the majority of abused and neglected children did not display violent behavior (*ibid.*). A more recent review concluded that most studies support the cycle of maltreatment hypothesis (Thornberry, Knight, & Lovegrove, 2012). The transmission of physical punishment as a specific type of abuse has been studied much less. Nonetheless, there is evidence for intergenerational continuity of aggressive parenting (Conger, Neppl, Kim, & Scaramella, 2003; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Chyi-in, 1991) and harsh discipline practices (Bailey, Hill, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009; Capaldi, Pears, Kerr, & Owen, 2008). Intergenerational continuity of constructive parenting has also been documented (Chen & Kaplan, 2001).

Studies on the relationship between the experience of childhood physical punishment or abuse and subsequent involvement in IPA as an adult are scarce. In the US, childhood victimisation has been found to double the risk of being involved in IPA as an adult (Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). Women in Kenya who had been victimised from childhood violence were also found to run a higher risk of experiencing physical IPA as adults (Chiang, Howard, Gleckel, Ogoti, Karlsson, Hynes, & Mwangi, 2018). In the case of females, but not of males, victimisation from childhood physical abuse has been found to be associated with both perpetration and victimisation of physical IPA (Maneta, Cohen, Schulz, & Waldinger, 2012). Harsh discipline by authoritarian parents has been found to be among the most important early precursors of aggression and antisocial behaviour in boys (Farrington, 1978; 1991; 2005). Parental physical punishment has also been found to be a mediator between parental and child criminal convictions (Farrington, Ttofi, & Crago, 2017). Perpetration of domestic aggression and perpetration of child abuse against one's own children is on the other hand well documented. Several Western studies have found intimate partner violence to be a risk factor for child maltreatment (Casanueva, Martin, & Runyan, 2009; Dixon, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Browne, & Ostapuik, 2007; Taylor, Guterman, Lee, & Rathouz, 2009; Zolotor, Theodore, Coyne-Beasley, & Runyan, 2007). A study from Hong Kong also found co-occurrence between intimate partner violence and physical violence against one's own children (Chan, 2015). In families characterised by physical violence between parents, 48% had perpetrated physical violence against their children during the preceding year. In a study carried out in South Africa, it was found that participants who had experienced high levels of IPA were more likely to have accepting attitudes towards PP of children (Dawes, Kafaar, de Sas

Kropiwnicki, Pather, & Richter, 2004). In families with reciprocal IPA, the risk for a child to be victimised from PP by a parent has been found to be twice as high (Taylor, Lee, Guterman, & Rice, 2010). This was the case also for minor, non-physical types of aggression between parents. Thus, there seems to be evidence for the existence of a link between IPA within the family and PP of children.

In Study III, intergenerational transmission of PP was investigated; furthermore, it was explored whether IPA served as a mediator in the process.

1.4 Domestic Violence and Street Children

In South Sudan, like in many other developing countries, children sleeping in the street is a common sight and a severe societal problem. Of the children who work and/or spend their days in the streets, not all of them return home - even if they have one - in the evening, regardless of the risk for violence and exploitation connected with sleeping in streets or market places. The consequences of sleeping in the street are in many cases fatal for the children, as they easily become victims of physical violence and sexual abuse.

Multiple factors have been considered as contributing to children living in the streets. In a review of studies on street children in the developing world, it was found that not only poverty, but also abuse, was related to children choosing to live in the streets (Aptekar, 1994). Street children in South Africa have mentioned family violence, alcoholism, and poverty as reasons for leaving their home (Le Roux, 1994). There is increasing evidence that poverty alone is not the only reason for children turning to the streets; abuse in the home can be a significant contributing factor (Lalor, 1999). Both physical and psychological abuse have been shown to predict running away from home (Feitel, Margetson, Chamas, & Lipman, 1992; Hammer, Finkelhor, & Sedlak, 2002; Kim, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Huang, 2009). In a study conducted in Cameroon (Matchinda, 1999), 61% of the street children mentioned maltreatment by parents or relatives as the reason for deserting their home. The family's economic situation also contributed, but to a lesser degree. Likewise, in a study of street children in Bangladesh (Conticini & Hulme, 2007), it was shown that a low level of cohesion in the family, and repeated multiple forms of violence inflicted on the children by their parents, were the most important underlying factors. Poverty alone could only partially explain the phenomenon of children migrating to the streets. According to a

survey conducted in seven different parts of South Sudan, nearly half of the street children had been driven to the streets as a result of a combination of cruelty, lack of parental care, and poverty (Madut, 2011). In another study of street living children in Juba, South Sudan (Enfants du Monde, Droits de l'Homme, 2009), the children reported that domestic violence, lack of parental care, and parents' alcohol problems were more difficult to cope with than life in the street. The same reasons for children to migrate to the street were also identified by adults taking part in the study.

Groenendijk and Veldwijk (2011) examined life stories collected among of sex workers in Juba, and found that violence in the family was reported in all the stories. Many girls also stated explicitly that they had run away from their family because of violence committed towards them by fathers or other male relatives. Two other recent studies from South Sudan mention mistreatment or abuse at home among the reasons for children ending up in the streets (Belay Tefera, 2009; 2015).

Furthermore, a survey carried out in Khartoum, Sudan, showed that 27% of street boys and 40% of street girls had been physically abused at home, and that 18% of the boys and 17% of the girls had been thrown out from their family home (Plummer, Kudrati, & Yousif, 2007). Some of the children reported extremely violent physical abuse in their home. Many drawings and stories of street children in the same study were also related to mistreatment at home. In a study carried out in neighbouring Uganda, it was found that the most common reason for children migrating to the streets (34.6%) was mistreatment by parents or guardians (Young, 2004).

A descriptive epidemiology of the prevalence of street children in the South Sudanese capital Juba was published by Poni-Gore et al. (2015). They drew the conclusion that among other factors, one of the reasons why the percentage of street girls was lower than that of boys was that girls preferred to endure difficulties of life at home rather than in the streets.

A central aim of Study IV was to examine whether domestic violence was a contributing factor for children leaving their homes and turning to a life in the streets. It was investigated if there were children who were not orphans, but had parents they could go home to, still preferred to remain sleeping in streets and market places during the night.

1.5 The Cultural Context of the Studies

1.5.1 *Background Facts*

The Republic of South Sudan, formerly Southern Sudan, was an autonomous region of Sudan during the period 2005–2011 (NBS, 2012). The new state was formed as a result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005). Though the war has ended in South Sudan, security still remains a severe problem. The prolonged ethnic conflict has destroyed income opportunities, and insecurity has prevented children from receiving education. During the civil war, many children saw their parents being killed, mothers being sexually abused, and sisters forced to have sex in front of them. Of children under five years of age, 17.2% have been found to have one or both parents dead (SSHHS, 2010).

Among children under 17 years of age, the proportion of orphans was 2% in 2009 (NBS, 2012). Sixty percent of the population in urban areas have attended school, compared to 26% in the rural areas; 44% and 20% of females have attended school. In 2009, the literacy rate was 40% among 15-24 year olds (NBS, 2012).

The South Sudan Household Health Survey (SSHHS, 2010) is a nationally representative study of 9,369 households, with respondents aged 15-49 years, and children under five years of age. Of the households, 98% had no close access to drinking water (SSHHS, 2010). Ten percent of the population in urban, and 20% in rural areas walk one hour or more one way to have access to drinking water (NBS, 2012). In 86% of the households, an adult woman usually fetches the water. Improved drinking water and improved sanitation has been found in only 6% of the households (NBS, 2012). For lighting, 35% use firewood, 15% grass, and 13% paraffin lamps, while 27% of the population has no source of lighting (NBS, 2018). For cooking, 94% of the population in rural areas and 44% in urban areas used firewood. Charcoal was used by 54% in urban areas. Eighty-six percent of the rural population and 46% of the urban population does not have access to any toilet facility; people who have access use a private pit latrine (NBS, 2012).

1.5.2 *Aspects of the Legal System: Statutory and Customary Law*

The statutory law of Sudan was disrupted during the war. After South Sudan's independence on the 11th of July 2011, efforts to develop legal institutions and to promote rule of law have been made. However, there have been challenges, and traditional customs are frequently used instead of laws. South Sudan as a multicultural state is today operating on both

statutory law and customary law, and social life is still largely structured based on cultural traditions. The relationship between the national government in Juba and the state governments of the ten states is unclear, and the Local Government Act of 2009 codifies the recognition of customary law courts in South Sudan (Ali, 2011). These courts are to decide cases within their jurisdiction based on traditional customary norms and ethics of the communities (Jok, Leitch, & Vandewint, 2004). Most customary chiefs are not using the statutory law (Kaphle, 2013). Especially in family matters, the customary system is frequently used (Pimentel, 2010).

According to Article 21 of the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan 2005, physical punishment of children is prohibited in all settings, including the home (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, GIECPC, 2018). It states that: “Every child has the right /.../ to be free from corporal punishment and cruel and inhuman treatment by any person including parents, school administrations and other institutions /.../”. Customary law gives the right to a husband to discipline his wife using physical force, but only to a “reasonable” level (Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment, HSBA, n.d.). This can be the case e.g. if a wife has failed to cook, insulted her husband, or has been drinking.



Fig. 1. Map of South Sudan (The Economist, 2012).

1.5.3 Poverty

South Sudan has long been plagued by poverty, a factor that has been linked to high levels of aggressive behaviour in a population (Bubenzer & Lacey, 2013; Guerra, Huesmann, Tolan, Van Acker, & Eron, 1995). Low household income has also been shown to heighten the probability of intimate partner violence (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002). In a 167 country analysis of latitudinal gradients of heat, poverty, and aggression, it was found that poverty mediated heat-induced aggression (Van de Vliert & Daan, 2017).

The most vulnerable groups in society are children, women, elderly, and disabled people who are without support. Many families are so poor due to unemployment that they cannot serve daily meals to their children. Due to poverty, many girls in South Sudan are forced into early marriage. This fact increases the risk of intimate partner aggression between spouses, and children become witnesses of aggression in their own homes.

1.5.4 Overcrowding

According to the South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), 86% of the population in rural areas, and 67% in urban areas live in “tukuls”, grass thatched houses made of mud and sticks. In urban areas, 11% live in one floor-brick or concrete buildings. Overcrowding is common; 59% of the population sleep in a room with four or more other people (MacKinnon & MacLaren, 2012).



Fig. 2. Girl in front of tukuls in Yei, 2015. Photo by the author.

Overcrowding has been associated with aggressive behaviour (Bubenzer & Lacey, 2013). Two recent studies from Nigeria have linked overcrowding to domestic aggression and antisocial behaviour. While keeping the level of poverty as covariate, overcrowding has been shown to be significantly associated with victimisation from sibling aggression, parental negativity towards adolescents and antisocial behaviour of adolescents (Makinde, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2016). Another study of the same research group showed that the effect of overcrowding on antisocial behaviour of adolescents was mediated by parental negativity, adult aggression, sibling aggression, and witnessing of domestic violence (Makinde, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2017). It was concluded that overcrowding might have serious consequences leading to antisocial behaviour.

1.5.5 Gender Inequality

In 2010, the literacy rate among women aged 15-24 years was 13.4% (SSHHS, 2010). Women have limited participation at every level of political life and decision-making, and there is lack of women in public institutions higher offices. Although the culture encourages respect for social norms in general, women of South Sudan often feel incompetent and insecure (Jok, 1999). South Sudanese cultural norms and values have been said to marginalise women (Scott et al., 2013), and women and girls in South Sudan are also at risk of violence, embedded in the culture (UNICEF, 2010). Sixty-five percent of women who participated in a study had been victimised from either sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (International Rescue Committee, 2017).

Girls are punished for bringing shame to the family by violating cultural norms such as becoming pregnant outside marriage, having a boyfriend from another society, wearing an inappropriate dress, or seeking divorce (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Traditionally, mothers have the main responsibility for taking care of the children's health, food, education, and social behavior. Women and girls of South Sudan also carry the responsibility of taking care of the elderly and disabled people, farming, collecting firewood, bringing water, cooking, brewing beer, and cleaning the family compound (Ali, 2011). Men and boys are responsible for making decisions concerning family matters, involvement in communities activities, cattle herding, hunting, fishing and collecting of firewood (Care, 2013).

1.5.6 Marriage

South Sudan is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries on the African continent (Bubenzer & Lacey, 2013), and, accordingly it encompasses a large diversity of social norms and unique styles of livelihood. There are more than 64 ethnic groups, many of which having unique traditions concerning marriage (Martin & Sluga, 2011). How marriages are conducted differs from tribe to tribe, based on old traditions (HRW, 2013).

In 2010, 44.8% of women under 18 years of age were married (SSHHS, 2010). Lack of gender equality for women and girls, women's status within the family, and traditions surrounding marriage are associated with intimate partner aggression and harsh parenting. Parents control the marriage decisions of their sons and daughters, and organise the marriage on behalf of them (Juuk, 2013). This is in line with cultural norms, according to which the decision of the parents is final and culturally binding (Kasongo, 2010). The marriage is typically arranged by the mother, who chooses a girl for her son (Beswick, 2001). Parents can choose a husband for their daughter without her consent, and force her to marry. A girl who refuses to marry a man chosen for her is punished physically by relatives, she may even be put under police custody for long periods without trial.

Marriage is not only considered a union beyond the two individuals, it is also bonds the two families together (HRW, 2013). For a marriage to be cemented, it involves exchange of goods or money in cash, depending on the rules of each ethnic group (Care, 2014). For a boy to get married, he has to pay a bride price in the form of a large sum of money, and in addition he has to provide the bride's family with livestock (Beswick, 2001). In some ethnic groups, the bride price may be paid in large numbers of livestock only, while in others, like in the Equatorial region of South Sudan, the price comprises of both money and agricultural products, and only a few livestock (Jok, 2011). Women are in this way sold to other families in the name of marriage (Bubenzer & Stern, 2011). It has been said that a traditional South Sudanese marriage is like selling a human-being, a girl, to a man from a different clan (Beswick, 2001).

Some nomadic tribes also have a tradition for when a person from another group has been killed during a cattle raid; they give away a sister or a daughter in marriage as compensation (Kaphle, 2013).

Marriage is legal at the age of 18 years (South Sudan's Child Act, 2008) but early marriage is commonly practiced; the brides are girls between 12

and 16 years of age who are powerless and poor (Beswick, 2001). Among women aged 15–19 years, 26% have been found to already have given birth, and an additional 5% were pregnant with their first child; thus, 31% percent had begun childbearing before the age of 20 (SSHHS, 2010). Skilled attendance at delivery had been present for only 19.4% of women giving birth, and 11.5% delivered their child in an institution/hospital. The highest maternal mortality rate in the world is found in South Sudan, with approximately 2 deaths per 100 births (Human Rights Watch, HRW, 2013). The average number of children is 7.4 per woman in the urban areas, and 7.5 per woman in the rural areas (SSHHS, 2010). Among children under five years of age, 35.4% have an official birth registration. The mean duration of breast feeding was 17.2 months, still 27.6% of the children suffered from moderate or severe underweight, and 12.2% from severe underweight (SSHHS, 2010).

Early marriage destroys the lives of innumerable girls and reinforces gender inequality on a global scale (Singh & Samara, 1996). It also jeopardises education for girls, is harmful for the health, and turns millions of girls to believe they are second-class citizens (Brown, 2012). Poverty plays a central role in early marriage (Fonchingong, 2013), as it is one of the main reasons for forcing girls into marriage. It is common when parents cannot afford sending their children to school. Families get access to money in exchange for marriage, and consequently, they consider marriage as a means to achieve better economic conditions (Ali, 2011).

It also happens that girls are kidnapped in order to be married, especially during traditional dances, or in market places (Ouattara, Sen, & Thomson, 1998). Boys highjack a girl and rape her, and as a result, the young girl is forced to marry (Beswick, 2001).

Another matter of consideration is that men are allowed to marry more than one wife; polygyny among women 15-49 year old was found to be 41.0% in 2010 (SSHHS, 2010). This may be seen as desirable, since having several wives bring more children who have the obligation of defending their family and its wealth (Jok, 1999). The age difference between husband and wife may also create problems for young girls who are forced to marry an older man (Amato & Previti, 2003).

In case of divorce, the dowry paid to the bride's family must be negotiated, and if the couple has no children, the entire dowry must be returned (Jok, 2004). This perspective makes divorce rare in South Sudan, and families pressure women to remain in marriages (Orly, 2011),

especially since customary laws dictate that children of divorced couples remain with the husband, unless the child is still breast fed, in which case the child may stay with the mother until the age of six. The risk of losing children is forcing many women in South Sudan to remain in abusive marriages (HSBA, 2011).

1.5.7 Domestic Aggression in South Sudan

Levels of domestic violence have been reported to be very high in South Sudan (Stern, 2011). It has been found that at least 70% of the South Sudanese population have been victimised from different forms of domestic aggression, such as being forced to marry or divorce against their will, talked harshly to, being slapped, and forced to have sex (Beswick, 2001).

An average of 79% of the female respondents in the SSHHS (2010) study thought that a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the following reasons: if she goes out without telling him, neglects the children, argues with him, refuses to have sex with him, burns the food, insults him, refuses to give him food, has another partner, steals or gossips. These opinions were unregarded of age, education, and wealth. In the Central Equatorial region, in which the data for this studies primarily were collected, it was found that high percentages of women held accepting attitudes towards a husband hitting his wife if she does any of the following: neglects the children (62.7%), goes out without telling him (51.5%), argues with him (42.8%), refuses sex with him (33.8%), or burns the food (31.9%).

2. Method

2.1 Samples

Two datasets were collected. Questionnaires were completed by 420 adults (302 females, 118 males), and 197 children, between six and 17 years of age, in South Sudan. Results based on the first dataset are presented in Studies I–III, and results based on the second dataset are presented in Study IV.

The children and the adults in the samples were not related. The collections were made both in urban and rural areas of South Sudan,

primarily in the central Equatorial state, in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, and Yei, located about one hundred miles south-west of Juba city. Other parts of the country were too difficult to access due to poor roads and general insecurity.

2.2 Instruments

Dataset 1: A paper-and pencil questionnaire was constructed for collecting self-reports from adults regarding (a) victimisation from and (b) perpetration of intimate partner aggression, (c) victimisation from physical punishment during childhood, and (d) perpetration of physical punishment against own children.

Victimisation from intimate partner aggression was assessed with the victim version of the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman & Björkqvist, 2009), consisting of seven scales measuring victimisation from (1) physical aggression, (2) verbal aggression, (3) nonverbal aggression, (4) direct aggressive social manipulation, (5) indirect aggressive social manipulation, (6) cyber aggression, and (7) economic aggression. All responses were given on a five-point scale ranging from 0 = never, to 4 = very often. For exact wordings of items and Cronbach's alpha scores, as measures of reliability (internal consistency) of the scales, see Table 1.

Perpetration of intimate partner aggression was measured with the perpetrator version of the same instrument. For exact items and Cronbach's alphas for the scales, see Table 1.

Victimisation from PP during childhood was measured retrospectively using the Brief Physical Punishment Scale (BPPS; Österman & Björkqvist, 2007), which consists of four questions: "When you were a child, did an adult subject you to any of the following things? (a) pulled your hair, (b) pulled your ear, (c) hit you with the hand, and (d) hit you with an object." Responses were given on a five-point scale (0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often). The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .80.

Table 1

Single Items and Cronbach's Alphas for Victimisation and Perpetration of Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression in the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman & Björkqvist, 2009), N = 420.

My partner has / I have ...	Cronbach's alpha	
	Victimisation	Perpetration
<i>Physical Aggression, 9 items</i>	.82	.82
a) hit me, b) locked me in, c) locked me out, d) shoved me, e) bit me, f) scratched me, g) spit at me, h) thrown objects, i) damaged something that was mine		
<i>Direct Verbal Aggression, 7 items</i>	.85	.82
a) threatened to hurt me, b) yelled at me, c) quarrelled with me, d) purposely said nasty or hurting things to me, e) called me bad names, f) interrupted me when I was talking, g) angrily nagged at me		
<i>Nonverbal Aggression, 8 items</i>	.89	.87
a) refused to talk to me, b) refused to look at me, c) refused to touch me, d) put on a sulky face, e) slammed doors, f) refused to sleep in the same bed as me, g) left the room in a demonstrative manner when I came in, h) made nasty faces or gestures behind my back		
<i>Direct Aggressive Social Manipulation, 5 items</i>	.85	.81
a) threatened to leave me, b) purposely provoked a quarrel with me, c) omitted doing things that (s)he usually does for both of us (e.g. household work), or done them less well, d) been ironic towards me, e) been contemptuous towards me		
<i>Indirect Aggressive Social Manipulation, 5 items</i>	.83	.74
a) spoken badly about me to someone else, b) tried to influence someone, such as children or relatives, to dislike me, c) ridiculed me in my absence, d) tried to exclude me from social situations, e) tried to make me feel guilty		
<i>Cyber Aggression, 4 items</i>	.82	.76
a) written angry text messages to me, b) written angry e-mails to me, c) written nasty text messages about me to somebody else, d) written nasty e-mails about me to someone else		

<i>Economic Aggression</i> , 2 items	.76	.74
a) not let me know details about our household economy, b) not allowed me to use money that belongs to both of us		

Perpetration of PP against one's own children was measured with the same items: "Do you yourself do any of the following things to your child/children?" (a) "I pull his/her hair, (b) I pull his/her ear, (c) I hit him/her with the hand, (d) I hit him/her with an object." The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .83.

Dataset 2: The children were interviewed individually based on an interview scheme. The following topics were covered: family background and education, daily life in the streets, injuries, war experiences, victimisation from domestic violence, and expectations for the future. Injuries were rated by the researcher on a four-point scale (no injuries = 0, small = 1, severe = 2, extremely severe = 3). When analysing the data, the children were divided into two groups based on their response to the question "Where do you sleep?" (at home/in the street).

Children's victimisation from physical punishment at home was measured with three single items from the Brief Physical Punishment Scale (BPPS; Österman & Björkqvist, 2007): "How often has an adult at home (a) pulled your hair, (b) hit you with the hand, and (c) hit you with an object? " Responses were given on a five-point scale (0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often).

Witnessing of interpersonal violence between parents was measured with two questions: "How often (a) did your father hit your mother, and (b) did your mother hit your father?" Responses were given on a four-point scale (never = 0, sometimes = 1, often = 2, very often = 3).

Questions concerning shortage of food at home, parents' alcohol problems, and sexual abuse were dichotomous yes/no answers. Children also told their life stories and made drawings of what they were afraid of or what they liked.

2.3 Procedures

The adult respondents were reached through the Women's Union in Yei as well as in Juba, or were friends and neighbours of the members. Before the data collection, permission was obtained from local authorities in the cities of Juba and Yei. The respondents were informed about the purpose

and procedure of the study; and that participation was voluntary, and that no consequences would follow their participation.

In order to interview the street children, the researcher visited places where children were expected to be found. Interviews with children were held in an environment that was safe and familiar to them with other people present or nearby. The children were carefully informed that taking part in the interviews was completely voluntary, and that their identities would not be disclosed.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study was endorsed by the University of Juba, and research permissions were given by the local authorities in Juba and Yei. Data were collected with informed consent and under strict anonymity. The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as guidelines for the responsible conduct of research (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, 2012). The adult respondents have remained anonymous, names or other identifying circumstances have not been registered. Real names of the children do not appear in any report; if names are used, they are pseudonyms. All data material, the completed questionnaires, and the children's filled-in interview schemes have been stored in accordance with international research practice.



Fig. 3. The author interviewing a boy in the street in Juba.

3. Overview of the Original Publications

3.1 Study I: Victimization from Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression in South Sudan

As mentioned in Section 1.2, there are two conflicting viewpoints regarding whether there is a sex difference in IPA or not, which are usually referred to as gender symmetry theory and gender asymmetry theory. The asymmetry theory is in accordance with traditional gender stereotypes, suggesting that males in intimate partner relationships are more aggressive against their female partners than the other way around, i.e. there is an asymmetry between the sexes as far as IPA is concerned. This clearly seems to be the case if criminal records are used for an assessment of the matter (Grech & Burgess, 2011). Symmetry theory, again, suggests that males and females in an intimate partner relationship at an average are equally aggressive, and that aggressive interactions tend to escalate and de-escalate with the two combatants giving and taking roughly equally much to each other. Evidence for this viewpoint was first found by Straus and his colleagues (e.g. Feld & Straus, 1989; Straus, 1979, 1999; Straus & Gelles, 1992; Straus & Sweet, 1992), but similar findings have been made by others (e.g. Robertson & Murachver, 2007; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005).

To reconcile these two views, Archer (2018) suggested a revised symmetry theory. According to him, symmetry holds as far as low intensity (less severe) forms of IPA are concerned. However, if and when the aggression escalates to more severe aggression, when physical injury is inflicted, then males are more often perpetrators and females are victims. Archer (2018) thought that symmetry would hold only in developed, Western type societies. In less developed, more patriarchal societies, he believed an asymmetric relationship would exist not only for high intensity IPA, but also as far as low intensity IPA is concerned.

The aim of Study I was to examine sex differences in victimization from low intensity forms of IPA in South Sudan, and to test whether Archer's proposition about gender asymmetry in developing countries would hold true or not. A questionnaire was completed by 420 respondents (302 females and 118 males) in two cities in South Sudan. The mean age was 22.5 years (SD 8.4) for women and 25.6 years (SD 7.8). Victimization from intimate partner aggression was measured with the Victim Version of the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales (DIAS-Adult;

Österman & Björkqvist, 2009) including six scales measuring verbal and nonverbal aggression, direct and indirect aggressive social manipulation, cyber aggression, and economic aggression. The results showed that males had been significantly more victimised from physical and verbal aggression than females. A tendency was also found for males to be more victimised from nonverbal aggression and direct aggressive social manipulation. No sex differences were found regarding victimisation from indirect aggressive social manipulation, cyber aggression, or economic aggression. Males had been significantly more often bit, hit, had their belongings damaged, scratched, spit at, and shoved by their female partner. Males had also been significantly more often subjected to quarrels, to being told nasty or hurtful words, and to being yelled at by their female partner. No sex difference was found for being interrupted when talking, been called bad names, or having been angrily nagged at by their partner. Thus, Archer's (2018) proposition about expected gender asymmetry (with males being more aggressive), in cases of low intensity IPA in African countries, did not gain support. Gender symmetry, however, was, in the case of low IPA, supported.

3.2 Study II: Perpetration of Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression in South Sudan

Study II was based on data from the same respondents as in the first study, collected at the same time. In this case, however, sex differences in perpetration, not victimisation from low intensity intimate partner aggression in South Sudan were investigated. Again, the study tested whether, in the case of perpetration, the revised gender symmetry theory of intimate partner aggression (Archer, 2018) would be applicable in an African country. The study yielded similar results as Study I: there was no significant difference between females and males on self-reported perpetration of five out of seven types of aggression; physical, verbal and nonverbal aggression, and direct and indirect aggressive social manipulation. Study II validated the findings from Study I. The results provided support for Archer's (2018) revised gender symmetry theory, in general terms. However, the results of both Study I and Study II suggest that Archer's addendum to his theory, about an expected gender asymmetry regarding not only high, but also low intensity IPA in patriarchal, developed countries (such as African ones) needs to be revised. The results are instead in line with those of Darko et al. (2018),

who made similar findings in Ghana. The findings of Studies I and II suggest that gender symmetry regarding low intensity IPA might be a more universal human phenomenon than previously thought, irrespective of culture and status of development of a country.

3.3 Study III: Intergenerational Transmission of Physical Punishment of Children in South Sudan

Study III investigated the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment (PP), and whether perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression could be a mediating factor in the transmission. The concept of the “cycle of abuse” was introduced in the 1970s (Kempe & Kempe, 1978). Intergenerational transmission of child abuse has since then been studied extensively. Most recent studies support the cycle of maltreatment hypothesis (see a review by Thornberry, Knight, & Lovegrove, 2012). However, studies on the transmission of PP as a specific type of abuse are scarce.

The aim of the third study was to investigate the relationship between victimisation from physical punishment as a child and subsequent perpetration of PP against one’s own children, and, additionally, whether this transmission was mediated by two types low intensity intimate partner aggression (IPA), namely physical and nonverbal IPA, as measured with two subscales from DIAS-Adult (Björkqvist & Österman, 2009). These two subscales were selected for the following reasons: physical IPA resembles PP as they both are physical by nature. Nonverbal IPA is a commonly applied form of aggression in intimate partner relationships and also resembles PP in that it is not verbal by nature. The participants in the study were the same as in Studies I and II, and the data were collected simultaneously.

It was found that childhood victimisation from PP and perpetration of PP against one’s own children were highly correlated for both females and males. The relationship between PP during childhood and perpetration of PP as an adult was mediated by perpetration of physical and nonverbal IPA. The effect of sex of the parent as a moderator was not significant. Conclusively, the intergenerational transmission of PP of children in the sample was substantial, and the effect of perpetration of IPA as mediating the relationship was equally strong for mothers and fathers.

3.4 Study IV: The Link between Domestic Aggression and Children Sleeping in the Street in South Sudan

The fourth study investigated the life of children working and sleeping in the street in post-war South Sudan. A main objective was to examine whether children who slept in the streets, although they had parents they could go home to, had been victimised more from domestic violence than the children who were working in the street by day, but spending their nights at home. A sample of 197 children found in the streets of the cities of Juba and Yei, including eight children who were sex-workers, were interviewed and filled in a questionnaire. Of the sample, 43.7 % slept in the street. Among children who slept in the street, 81 % had one or both parents alive, and among children who had enough food at home, 31.1 % anyway chose to sleep in the street. Children who slept in the streets although they had parents had been hit with the hand at home significantly more often, and their mothers had hit their fathers significantly more often than was the case for the children who slept at home. Domestic violence, including physical aggression between parents, and physical punishment of children, and alcohol problems in the home, were found to be associated with children not only working but also ending up sleeping in the streets of South Sudan. A major finding of the study was thus that it was not only poverty, but also domestic violence which drove children into the street.

3.5 Addendum to Study IV: Case Studies of Six Children

In the following, brief life stories of six children found in the street and taking part in the study will be related. The stories were not included in the published article (Study IV) due to space limitations.

The life stories were written down as the children told them, and they have only been slightly condensed. All names appearing in the stories are pseudonyms; they are typical South Sudanese names. Some personal details about the children have also been changed in order to make it impossible to recognise them.

3.5.1 Description of the Social Setting in the Areas of Data Collection

During day hours, street children could be observed moving around in groups of three to five. Their clothes were dirty and worn out. Many of them sniffed on a yellow rubber solution container that they kept in their mouth, others smoked cigarettes. They clearly feared people and kept at a

distance from others. Most of the street children observed in Juba city and Yei were boys. In the evening, some children returned home to share what they had earned with their parents, others stayed in the streets. In Juba city, there were girls making their living as sex workers in Jebel market, Konyokonyo market, and Gumbo market. They were sitting by the doors of their shelters, waiting and calling out to men passing by. Most of the sex workers were from other countries, few were South Sudanese. Some were under-aged. In Jebel market, sex with an older girl costed 30 South Sudanese pounds, while sex with an under-aged girl cost 50. The appearance of some girls suggested that they were unhealthy; it is likely that they were affected with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/Aids.

Most of the street children have to work to support themselves, but particularly in Juba city, some of the already grown-up street children were dangerous criminals. They slept during day time, and sent young street children to steal food and money. In the afternoon, young street children brought to them what they had collected. At night, grown-up street children are sometimes hired to rob, or even kill people. Cases of robbing and killing were common in Juba. This has led to bad relationships between the street children and the police authorities, and also with the rest of the inhabitants.

3.5.2 Six Case Studies

Story of Child No. 61

During the war in South Sudan, a 14 year old girl named Nangiro was taken in for protection and care by her stepmother after the death of her mother. During a traditional dance that many people came to attend, one of the army officers, an old man, saw the girl dancing in the church. Later in the night, the army officer sent his bodyguards to bring the girl to him. The bodyguards went and asked the stepmother to give them the girl. The stepmother forced the young girl to go to the army officer. The old army officer raped the girl. The girl became pregnant. After some time, the old man died, and the girl found a young man who was nice to her at first. Their family life turned bad, however, so she run away with her two children. Traumatized, she ended up working as a sex worker in order to provide for her two children. During her absence from home, a babysitter is taking care of her children. She goes home once a week to see them. She is now 17 years old.

Story of Child No. 5

In accordance with old traditions, girls in some parts of South Sudan are still given as a compensation for murder committed in cattle raiding. Cattle are the main economy for most communities in South Sudan. A man must have at least 20 cows, which is equivalent to 335 dollars, to earn a woman's hand in marriage. As a result, most young men end up conducting cattle raids in order to acquire a good number of cattle. Whenever there is a higher bride price, this results in raids and violence. Those whose cattle are stolen go out to look for the cows, and when they find them, they attack the village in question, in order to take their cattle back. This may result in killing people; usually the victims are women, children, and elderly people. At the end, the cattle is returned, and a compensation is given.

As a result, a 13 year old girl, Nenado, was given to a family as a compensation for a man killed in a cattle raid performed by her brother. Nenado had a bad life in her new family, whose members were feeling bitterness and hatred against her, because she was from an enemy family. She is now 17 years old and has ended up as a sex worker.

Story of Child No. 90

A 9-year-old girl by the name Jangu was coming from school near Gullu town at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. At the same time, rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were attacking the small village where the girl was going to school. The girl was caught by the LRA, but the man in charge said she was too young to be taken hostage. When he went out, the other soldier raped her and left her on the ground bleeding. Later, she managed to reach home, but found nobody, all people had run away. She slept alone as she could not go out due to the presence of the LRA.

In the morning, she saw five people, three men and two women, carrying with them some luggage, while speaking to each other in her mother tongue. She opened the door and called to them, and then went to them, but they could not stop. She followed them for about a mile, then one of them asked her why she was following them. She told the man what had happened to her.

They told her that they were going to Nimule in South Sudan, and asked if she would go with them. She accepted the offer. They came together to Nimule at the border with Uganda. They were good people. She ate, drank and slept with their younger girl, who was a daughter of the man in charge of the family. After two weeks, the brother of the girl,

by the name Namba, said he was going to Juba; and if she wanted, she could see a doctor, since she had been raped. Then she left Nimule together with Namba for Juba, where she was treated in the teaching hospital.

Later, Namba became her first husband and they were blessed with two children. Namba used much alcohol, which resulted in him beating her most of the time. As a result, she ran to a South Sudanese neighbour's house, and stayed with his wife Joyce. Later on, she got a job in one of the lodges as a cleaner during the day, and in addition, she was a sex worker during the night. Joyce takes care of the children, and she pays her 200 SSP monthly. She is now trying to make some money in order to start her own business. Jangu is 17 years old.

Story of Child No. 93

A 10 year old boy by the name Kolong came to Juba with his father Abuena after the death of his mother who was killed during crossfire. In Juba, his father remarried. He was drinking too much alcohol, and he did not care about Kolong anymore. Together with a neighbour's son, Modu, Kolong ran away and became a street child. Being young, he was under protection of his friend who is 17 years old. Modu sometimes helps Kolong with food and drink and makes sure no one abuses him. In return, to avoid being beaten, Kolong usually accepts having sex with Modu. According to Kolong, Modu is a professional pickpocket at the bus station.

Story of Child No. 117

Maduwara is a 17 year old boy. His father took a gun and shot his mother to death; then he fled to Ethiopia, and remarried there. The three siblings were taken in for care and protection by their uncle. They were over-worked due to demands by their uncle's wife, cooking food for the whole family, washing clothes, digging in the garden, swiping the compound daily, and taking care of their uncle's younger son. If any of them failed to do what he was told, he was beaten.

After some time, Maduwara as the eldest son ran away from the village to Juba town, where he is now working in a restaurant. Since he had no place to stay, he asked Jujumbu, the restaurant owner, if he could sleep in the restaurant. The restaurant owner accepted, but in return, Mr. Jujumbu asked if he could have sex with him two times a week, paying him 200 SSP per month. Since no one can help Maduwara, he accepted.

He sometimes sends money to his two younger siblings so they can buy clothes and bed sheets for themselves. Neither of them is going to school, they are only doing domestic work at their uncle's house.

Story of Child No. 10

Mary, a 16 year old girl, and her six siblings are not going to school, nor do they get any support from their parents. Both parents drink too much alcohol.

The parents have no education since they dedicated their whole youth to being with the rebels during the civil war. As a result, their children have to do all the family work. Some of them beg in the streets in order to get money to buy food. The children bring home what they have collected, and they all eat together at night. The parents have told their children that they are too many, and that they are not able to support them.

Mary is now working as a babysitter; she also offers sex to the man in that house, without the wife's knowledge. The man gives her 300 SSP per month, which enables her to support her parents and siblings.

Mary has a plan. She has sent her younger sister Ariya to school. According to Mary, when having an education, Ariya will be the one who is going to help the family in the future.



Figure 4. Parents fighting, drawn by a child in the street.

4. Conclusive Remarks

4.1 Summary of Findings

The thesis examined three major research questions: one aim was to investigate sex differences in victimisation and perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in a sample of adults (Studies I and II). In relation to this, it was investigated whether the revised gender symmetry theory regarding intimate partner aggression (Archer, 2018) could be applicable in an African developing country. The results of Study I showed that males had been significantly more victimised from physical and verbal forms of low intensity intimate partner aggression than females. Males reported significantly more often than females having been bit, hit, had their belongings damaged, scratched, spit at, and shoved by their female partners. Regarding self-reported perpetration of IPA, Study II showed no significant difference between females and males on perpetration of five out of seven types of aggression. Thus, the results of Studies I and II provided support for the revised gender symmetry theory, showing that in contrast to Archer's (2018) own expectations, the theory was applicable in at least one African, developing country. Darko et al. (2018) received similar results in another African country, Ghana. The findings of Studies I and II suggest that gender symmetry regarding low intensity IPA might be a more universal human phenomenon than previously thought, irrespective of culture and status of development of a country.

A second aim was to investigate the role of low intensity intimate partner aggression as a mediating factor in the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children (Study III). The results of Study III showed that the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children in the sample was substantial, and that perpetration of IPA mediated the relationship for both mothers and fathers.

A third aim was to investigate whether there was an association between victimisation from domestic aggression and the fact that some children chose to sleep in streets and markets although they had parents they could go home to, in comparison with children who were only working in the street by day but spending the nights at home (Study IV). The results showed that domestic violence, including physical aggression between parents, and physical punishment of children, was indeed found

to be associated with children not only working but also ending up sleeping in the streets of South Sudan.

4.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Studies

The main challenge for the project was the political situation in South Sudan. In January 2014 when the project started, the situation was far from stable. The route between Juba and Yei required six hours driving, the roads were poor, and there was a danger of landmines. Due to the poor transport systems and insecurity in the country, the data collections for the study was limited to two areas, Juba, the capital city of South Sudan and Yei.

Since most children did not go to school during the war, street children only speak their mother tongue. The fact that the author was a native South Sudanese having knowledge of the local languages, culture, and customs, enabled him to approach the children in a culturally appropriate manner. The researcher wandered the streets of Juba and Yei, first observing the children, and then making friends with those who were not too shy. This method was crucial for the collecting of the data, since street children are shy and often reluctant to talk to strangers. At later points in time, when the researcher happened to meet the children, they usually greeted him as a friend and protector. Many also asked for his assistance to help them out of the harsh life in the streets.

4.3. Future Directions

Domestic aggression is detrimental not only for the physical and psychological health of those affected, but for the community at large. The cost of intimate partner aggression and child abuse to society is enormous. Consequently, there is a need to prevent the intergenerational transmission of intimate partner aggression and physical punishment of children.

The young country of South Sudan needs awareness through education to equip the new generations with tools to prevent all types of domestic aggression. The present research project was designed to increase knowledge about domestic aggression in South Sudan. This in turn is hoped to enhance the planning of future aid projects in the country.

Effective policies and programmes can stop intimate partner aggression before it takes place. A well-coordinated effort, involving both

the government and international and national organisations, will be necessary to address this complex deeply rooted problem. Non-governmental organisations working in South Sudan might e.g. provide information campaigns about the negative effects of domestic violence and the physical punishment of children. The establishment of a national center for the prevention and control of domestic aggression is needed.

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Original Publications

Article I:

Ndoromo, O., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2017). Sex differences in victimisation from low intensity intimate partner aggression in South Sudan. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 11, 2, 15–23. doi:10.26417/ejser.v11i2.p15-23

Article II:

Ndoromo, O., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2018). Sex differences in perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in South Sudan. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 10, 93–101. doi:10.26417/ejis.v10i1.p93-101

Article III:

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Article IV:

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Author contribution

The first author is responsible for the collection of all data, and for writing the main part of the text. The statistical analyses have been conducted jointly within the research group.

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Low Intensity Intimate Partner Aggression, Physical Punishment, and Street Children:

A Vicious Circle of Domestic Aggression
in South Sudan

The aim of the thesis was to investigate aspects of domestic aggression, in particular intimate partner aggression and physical punishment of children, and their concomitants, in South Sudan. The revised gender symmetry theory regarding intimate partner aggression was found to be applicable in South Sudan. The intergenerational transmission of physical punishment of children in the sample was substantial and mediated by perpetration of low intensity intimate partner aggression in the case of both mothers and fathers. Domestic aggression was also associated with children not only working, but choosing to sleep in the streets of South Sudan.