MIGRATION LETTERS

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Reporting Violence against Children: Social Norms in Nyarugusu Refugees Camp

Abstract

There is substantial evidence to show that the two million children living in refugee camps are vulnerable to violence, although little is known about under what circumstances children will report that violence, complicating efforts to reduce vulnerabilities. We presented 300 children in a Tanzanian refugee camp (Nyarugusu) with hypothetical vignettes regarding a victim's response to violence. Vignette characteristics were randomized (e.g. victim, perpetrator, and location) to test what factors influenced reporting. Respondents believe the victim was more likely to report violence at school or adolescent perpetrators. Surprisingly, we find no substantial difference based on victim or respondent's gender.

Keywords: Violence; children; refugees; Nyarugusu; refugee camp; Burundi; Democratic Republic of Congo.

Introduction

In 2016, there were over two million children worldwide living in planned or managed refugee camps (UNHCR, 2016). Camp situations are found to increase vulnerability to violence for all residents, but particularly children (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014). Refugee populations also face greater difficulty reporting violence due to barriers such as language, familiarity with to whom to report victimization, fear of officials, and being deported or repatriated against their will (Freedman, 2016). Though refugee camps have limited and sometimes inadequate resources, they are likely better able to offer access to medical treatment, authorities, counseling, or other assistance to victims than the institutions in the countries the refugees have fled. In camps, reporting violence might lead to lower incidence and increased victim support, but little is known about under what circumstances children will report violence to authorities in camps in order to avail themselves of the aforementioned and other services.

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This paper's main contribution is to quantitatively measure social norms of reporting violence of children in one of the world's largest refugee camps, Nyarugusu, in Kigoma, Tanzania. At the time this survey was conducted, the camp was home to over 130,000 refugees, mainly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and like other refugee camps, is a place where women and children experience significant, ongoing violence (Paik, 2012; Norman & Niehaus, 2015; Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). Despite amassed qualitative evidence of this ongoing violence, no quantitative studies to our knowledge focus on refugee populations, partially due to the fact that investigating violence against children is fraught with ethical issues to prevent re-traumatization, ongoing abuse, and subsequent disclosures that the study may not be equipped to handle (UNICEF, 2014). In order to gain actionable information and to limit children's exposure to trauma, we ask children if a hypothetical primary-school aged victim would report violence they experience to an official, such as a teacher or police. The hypothetical scenario works to elicit the child's perceived correct or common course of action without requiring self-reports of victimization and the potential problems associated with it.

These hypothetical scenarios are presented as two short vignettes given to over 300 primary-school aged children in the Nyarugusu camp. The novel research design randomizes characteristics that vary the victim, perpetrator, location, and severity of the violence. The children are asked if they believe the victim would report the violence to an official such as a teacher, police officer, or health care worker. Using the randomized variation in the characteristics we can elicit social norms by showing under what conditions children believe victims are more likely to report to an official.

We find that children believe the victim would be more likely to report the violence if it occurred in school and the perpetrator was a child. Surprisingly, we do not find differences based on the gender of the respondent or the hypothetical victim. These results could potentially guide policy and programming efforts in order to allocate resources towards schools where children appear more likely to believe violence would be reported.

Background of Refugees in the Nyarugusu Camp

There has been a surge of displacement in countries neighboring Tanzania recently with over 145,000 refugees arriving in the country by the end of June 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). While there has been some work on risk factors associated with migration into Tanzania and current migration trends (Todd et al., 2017), less work has been done on the experiences of refugees once they have arrived. Nyarugusu Refugees Camp was established in 1996, and in 2016 was the third largest refugee settlement in the world (Lombardo & Wheeler, 2016) becoming one of "the largest and most overcrowded refugee camps in

the world" (UNHCR, 2016) with more than 130,000 refugees currently being housed in a camp designed for 50,000 (Lombardo & Wheeler, 2016). The camp's population consists primarily of refugees from Burundi and the DRC in equal numbers. While Burundian refugees arrived mainly in the last year and a half, those from the DRC have been in camp over ten years, many as long as twenty years (UNHCR, 2016).

Burundian and Congolese refugees both fled violence in their home countries, which have the potential to influence social norms related to violence. Nyarugusu's population doubled in 2015 with record numbers fleeing political violence associated with President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial run for a third term in Burundi (UNICEF, 2017).

The DRC's history of conflict is long-standing and has been called the "world's most neglected humanitarian crisis" (Insight on Conflict, 2009). From 1998 to 2007 there were approximately 45,000 deaths every month in the DRC (UNHCR, 2014). Beginning in the early 2000s and continuing to the present, non-state actors and militia groups conducted mass rapes, recruited child soldiers, and killed thousands of civilians throughout the DRC (BBC, 2016). The majority of Congolese refugees currently in Tanzania fled in 1996, with a second surge occurring from 2002 to 2005 (UNHCR, 2014).

Qualitative work suggests that physical violence and gender-based and sexual violence has been present in Nyarugusu camp for many years. Domestic abuse and the sexual exploitation of children by teachers who use corporal punishment and receive sexual favors in exchange for grades were named as common forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in focus groups (Norman & Niehaus, 2015; Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). Women are at a high risk for sexual violence from their partners and locals, and suffer from lack of reliable reporting mechanisms in camp (Mabuwa, 2000).

A number of international and Tanzanian organizations offer services for victims of violence in the camp. The IRC runs a women's center and a community services center along with offering meeting spaces and programming around gender-based violence. The IRC also runs primary and secondary schools in the camp, where corporal punishment is disallowed. At the time of data collection, there were four health posts and two health clinics in the camp as well as safe spaces for children to congregate when school is not in session. Tanzanian police also operate in the camp.

Limited quantitative data has been collected about violence against children in conflict-stricken areas and even less within refugee populations (Browne, 2013). The scarcity on this subject is due to a combination of the difficulty in measuring violence against children along with the fact refugee camps are "generally difficult to access" (Vogler, 2006). Both the severity and prevalence

of violence exposure can greatly influence children's lives and both of these factors can be dictated by social norms.

Measuring Social Norms with Vignettes

Social norms are rules, behaviors, or common practices within a society that can guide behaviors of the individual in meaningful ways (Schultz et al., 2007). Identifying and measuring social norms in a community is difficult, particularly for sensitive subjects such as violence and with vulnerable populations such as refugee children. Elucidating and measuring social norms could illuminate an individual's perceptions of what is normal, expected, or required within society, since the norms of a group may exert an influence on an individual's own behavior when norms become salient (Paluck, Shepherd, & Aronow, 2016). Shifting governing social norms has been successful in reducing the prevalence of intimate-partner violence and peer harassment (Tankard & Paluck, 2016).

We use vignettes to measure social norms around reporting violence. Vignettes are short hypothetical scenarios designed to better understand how a respondent believes other would react when presented with information that is realistic, but not real, or threatening (Finch, 1987; Martin, 2004). Here, we ask children how they believe other children would react in a situation, in order to gain a measure of what is typical for this population. Research on other sensitive topics have used vignettes including domestic violence (Aviram & Persinger, 2012), stigmatized lifestyle choices (Velleman et al., 1993), electing corrupt officials (Bannerjee et al., 2014), and drug use (Hughes, 1998).

The vignettes in this study aimed to reflect real-life situations based upon focus group discussions with teachers and parents, and key informant interviews of community leaders and children from the same populations conducted a few months prior to the survey. All groups were asked what types of violence against children typically occurred in, around, and on the way to and from school. Vignettes were designed to cause the least discomfort to respondents by focusing on mild situations of verbal, physical, and sexual violence.

Elements of the vignettes are varied including the victim's gender and age, type of violence, perpetrator, and location, resulting in 4,752 possible vignette scenarios. A few examples of potential combinations are displayed in Table 1 below. The acts of violence included teasing, pushing, kicking, punching, and being hit with a stick. Sexual teasing and being touched sexually were also scenarios. No formal definition of sexual assault was provided. If participants asked for clarification, enumerators were instructed to describe sexual violence as any touching of private areas. Self-reports on violence suggest boys are more likely to be called bad names (49% vs 39%) and hit by peers (61% vs. 54%), though 84% of boys and 78% of girls feel safe on the way to school. For reasons expressed above, we did not collect self-reports on more severe violence include sexual assault.

Table 1. Sample Vignette Characteristics

Victim's Gender	Victim's Age	Violence Type	Act of Violence	Perpetrator	Location
Boy	10	Low	teased	Neighbor	At School
Girl	8	Medium	hit with a stick	Teacher	At School
Girl	9	High	hit with a stick very hard	Young Adult	On route to school
Boy	12	Sexual	Touched sexually	Older Child	Home

One potential shortcoming of surveying beliefs is desirability bias, where respondents report what they think the researchers would like to hear rather than their true beliefs. Vu et al. (2014) in their review of studies on sexual violence in refugee populations highlight the potential for desirability bias due to the sensitivity of the questions. Vignettes mitigate desirability bias by eliciting social norms rather than a respondent's opinion. In addition, by focusing on what a fictional character may do, desirability bias is reduced (Gourlay et al, 2014). Gourlay et al (2014) suggest that vignettes can reduce social desirability biases associated with taboo or sensitive topics such as HIV or in our case violence, while Hainmueller et al. (2014) found vignette methodologies minimize social desirability bias in respondents compared to survey self-report methodology. Unfortunately, there is no way to measure if responses deviate from the respondent's personal views and therefore there is still the potential for desirability bias. Even if we could measure this deviation, it would be hard to distinguish what is social desirability bias and what is truly a difference between personal belief and perceptions of community beliefs.

Data and Descriptive Statistics

The data for this research originate from a survey conducted by one of the authors for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in the Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania. There were 317 children between the ages of 7 and 12[1] enrolled in school interviewed in this 2015 survey. Child respondents were selected by parents, who were selected via a random walk strategy, stratified on tent or compound location in the camp. Ideally the enumerator and child had the same gender.

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[1] One six-year-old and seventeen children over thirteen were dropped as the design of the study intended collect only data on 7 to 12 year olds.

The main outcome is the respondent's belief if the vignette victim would report the violence to an official. This option was coded as one to include a teacher, a head master, a medical professional, or the police, and deliberately did not include family or friends. Overall 67% of respondents believe the victim would report the violence to an official.[2]

Vignette characteristics include the location, perpetrator type, victim age and gender, and violence severity (Table 2). For location, children may be more likely to report violence in situations where officials or authority figures are present, such as at school. Whether the perpetrator of the violence was a child or an authority figure was also a component of the analysis, which illuminates a difference in likelihood of reporting peers versus authority figures. Similarly, there may be a perception that it is better for younger or older children to report violence. Finally, we examine four mutually exclusive severity levels of violence that were assigned post-hoc to the hypothetical violent events for ease of analysis and description: low (e.g., teasing), for medium (e.g. rapping the knuckles with a stick), for high violence (e.g., punching or beating severely with a stick) and sexual (e.g. teased or touched sexually) scenarios.

The perceived likelihood the victim would report was estimated controlling for respondent demographics such as gender, age, family size, nationality, time in camp and maternal literacy[3] (Table 2). In theory, respondents may perceive different social norms for boys and girls. That respondents with a greater number of siblings are more likely to think a victim would report may reflect the effects of a larger support system on respondent's encounters with violence. Nationality was examined in order to identify if differences between the groups that may reflect culture, violence experience, or time in country. Mother's literacy, which proxies for educational attainment, could directly affect children's success in school and ability to deal with conflict.

Predicting Reporting to an Official

We estimate the probability that a respondent (child i) believes the victim would report the violence experienced in the vignette (t = 1,2) to an official using a probit where Y=1 if that the child believes they victim would tell an official and 0 if not. We denote the coefficients of demographics with β and vignette characteristics with γ.

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[2] 90% of respondents believe the victim would report to an official or family member and 93% believed they would report it to officials, family, or friends.

[3] We initially looked at the number of brothers and sisters to determine an effect, but seeing none combined to a total number of siblings.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Vignette Response		Mean
Report	1=Respondent believes victim told an official	67%
Vignette Characteristics		
Violence at School	1= violence occurred at school	55%
Child Perpetrator	1= perpetrator was a child	35%
Adolescent Perpetrator	1= perpetrator was an adolescent	23%
Authority Perpetrator	1=perpetrator was an authority figure	42%
Low Severity	1=violence in vignette was low	19%
Medium Severity	1=violence in vignette was medium	21%
High Severity	1=violence in vignette was high	47%
Sexual Violence	1=Violence was sexual	11%
Female Victim	1= victim was female	48%
Female Victim & Respondent	1= both respondent and victim were female	24%
Victim Age 6	1= victim in vignette was 6yo	32%
Victim Age 10	1=victim in vignette was 10 yo	31%
Victim Age 12	1=victim in vignette was 12yo	35%
Vignette Number	1=vignette number 1, 0 = vignette number 2	0.5
Demographics		
Respondent	1=female, 0=male	50%
Age 7	1=respondent is 7yo	13%
Age 8	1=respondent is 8yo	18%
Age 9	1=respondent is 9yo	9%
Age 10	1=respondent is 10yo	21%
Age 11	1=respondent is 11yo	11%
Age 12	1=respondent is 12yo	29%
Siblings	the number of total siblings ranging 0-15	4.4
Burundi Respondent	1= Burundi, 0= Congolese	51%
Months in Camp	the number of months in camp for Burundi	4.6
Years in Camp	the number of years in camp for DRC	5.3
Illiterate Mother	1= mother is illiterate	23%

N = 317 children and 634 Vignettes

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\begin{aligned}
Pr(Y_{it} = 1) = {} & \beta_0 + \gamma_1 Location\ School_{it} + \gamma_2 Perp\ Child_{it} \\
& + \gamma_3 Perp\ Authority_{it} + \gamma_4 Low\ Violence_{it} \\
& + \gamma_5 High\ Violence_{it} + \gamma_6 Sexual\ Violence_{it} \\
& + \gamma_7 Victim\ Female_{it} + \gamma_8 Respondent\ Victim\ Female_{it} \\
& + \gamma_9 VictimAge\ 6_{it} + \gamma_{10} VictimAge\ 12_{it} \\
& + \gamma_{11} Vignette\ Number_{it} + \beta_1 Female_i + \beta_2 Age7_i + \beta_3 Age8_i \\
& + \beta_4 Age9_i + \beta_5 Age10_i + \beta_6 Age11_i + \beta_7 Burundi_i \\
& + \beta_8 Total\ siblings_i + \beta_9 Mother\ illiterate_i \\
& + \beta_{10} Present\ months_i + \beta_{11} Present\ years_i
\end{aligned}
$$

Finally, we perform two sets of subanalyses. The first runs separate regressions by the gender of the child respondent, and the second by the nationality of the respondent in order to test for systematic difference between the boys compared to girls and Burundi compared DRC children.

Results:

The outcome of interest is coded as one if the respondent believes a vignette victim would report experienced violence. Table 3 presents the marginal effects, which shows the estimated percentage point change in the outcome variable from changing a demographic or vignette variable from 0 to 1, while all other variables are at the sample means. Characteristics of the vignette influence the likelihood of reporting. There is a 23% increased likelihood to report violence when the vignette occurs at school versus other places in the camp. Since children are not likely to report if they feel they will be ignored or subject to retribution this finding may mean respondents feel their own schools in Nyarugusu are a safe space to report.. When the perpetrator is a child, violence is 17% more likely to be reported and when the perpetrator is an authority figure the violence is 8% less likely to be reported compared to an adolescent. The results indicating an increased likelihood to report a child perpetrator and a decreased likelihood to report an authority figure are consistent with typical reporting patterns (Johnson et al., 2014).

Surprisingly, we find no difference between male and female respondents in the main analysis. The result runs counter to the literature discussed above. Separate estimates by the respondent's gender show only minor differences on the victim's age between girls and boys in terms of vignette characteristics (See columns 2 and 3 of Table 3). This finding coupled with the lack of difference between the effect of the victim's gender on the outcome in the main result suggest that social norms around victim behavior are quite similarly perceived by boys and girls.

Additionally, we find that younger children, those from Burundi, and those with more siblings believed the victim would be more likely to report to an authority. Children aged 8 are 3% more likely and children aged 9 are 12% more likely to believe the violence will be reported compared to the omitted group of 12 year olds. Younger children may be more likely to report because they are more dependent on adults. Older children may believe they can handle the same violent situation themselves or may be more likely to find it embarrassing, whereas younger children may believe they need help or support from an adult increasing the likelihood they report. Respondents from Burundi, holding all else equal, were 19% more likely to report than their Congolese counterparts. The differential points to a potential cultural nuance that may encourage Burundian, or discourage Congolese, children to report violence. In addition, respondents with more siblings are 2% more likely for each additional sibling

Table 3. Probit (Marginal Effects) Respondent Believes Victim Would Report Violence

Sample	All	Female	Male	Burundi	DRC
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violence at School	0.254***	0.246***	0.243***	0.217***	0.315***
	(0.0402)	(0.0568)	(0.0561)	(0.0521)	(0.0612)
Child Perpetrator	0.171***	0.160**	0.216***	0.0453	0.269***
	(0.0484)	(0.0655)	(0.0704)	(0.0664)	(0.0733)
Authority Perpetrator	-0.0178	-0.0809	0.0585	-0.154**	0.123
	(0.0505)	(0.0677)	(0.0752)	(0.0677)	(0.0767)
Low Severity	-0.0479	-0.0928	-0.00537	-0.0265	-0.0492
	(0.0651)	(0.0931)	(0.0902)	(0.0786)	(0.0998)
High Severity	-0.0747	-0.0849	-0.0551	-0.00198	-0.129
	(0.0527)	(0.0729)	(0.0753)	(0.0648)	(0.0821)
Sexual Violence	-0.0351	-0.0435	0.0248	-0.00430	-0.0833
	(0.0748)	(0.105)	(0.102)	(0.0871)	(0.118)
Female Victim	0.0118	0.0728	-0.00761	-0.0330	0.0358
	(0.0568)	(0.0557)	(0.0569)	(0.0701)	(0.0901)
Female Victim & Respondent	0.0442			0.0569	0.0716
	(0.0772)			(0.0891)	(0.124)
Victim Age 6	0.0383	0.0102	0.0478	-0.0329	0.105
	(0.0482)	(0.0706)	(0.0684)	(0.0639)	(0.0735)
Victim Age 10	0.0537	0.00159	0.121*	0.0179	0.0783
	(0.0475)	(0.0680)	(0.0666)	(0.0608)	(0.0740)
Vignette Number	-0.0399	-0.0584	-0.0204	-0.000902	-0.0677
	(0.0396)	(0.0543)	(0.0566)	(0.0483)	(0.0622)
Respondent Female	0.0185			-0.0555	0.0511
	(0.0564)			(0.0703)	(0.0875)
Age 7	0.101	0.0401	0.106	0.122**	0.0642
	(0.0624)	(0.0861)	(0.0936)	(0.0611)	(0.113)
Age 8	0.0434	-0.0498	0.124	0.0447	0.0307
	(0.0601)	(0.0920)	(0.0769)	(0.0701)	(0.103)
Age 9	0.128**	0.227***	0.109	0.104	0.106
	(0.0634)	(0.0719)	(0.0860)	(0.0729)	(0.112)
Age 10	-0.00372	-0.0847	0.0709	-0.0407	0.0467
	(0.0569)	(0.0820)	(0.0780)	(0.0765)	(0.0867)
Age 11	-0.00213	0.00878	0.0284	0.0665	-0.114
	(0.0708)	(0.0913)	(0.102)	(0.0762)	(0.111)
Burundi	0.302**	0.162***	0.217***		
	(0.143)	(0.0542)	(0.0549)		
Mother illiterate	-0.0539	-0.0606	-0.0344	0.0152	-0.170**
	(0.0487)	(0.0672)	(0.0732)	(0.0550)	(0.0797)
Total Siblings	0.0209**	0.00150	0.0457***	0.0188*	0.0309**
	(0.00899)	(0.0123)	(0.0130)	(0.0107)	(0.0152)
Present Months	0.0139			0.00807	
	(0.0147)			(0.0124)	
Present Years	0.0216***				0.0247***
	(0.00698)				(0.00854)
Observations	606	312	308	308	298

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

to believe a victim would report the violence to an official. The likelihood of a child with a higher number of siblings to report violence to an authority figure could be attributed to a feeling of support siblings may provide.

Turning now to the comparison of DRC and Burundi separate estimates (columns 4 and 5 of Table 3). The time in camp for DRC children was significant, indicating a 2% increase for each year the likelihood to believe it would be reported, while the effect was not significant for Burundi. This may be due to the larger variation over years with DRC children while Burundian children who had only been in Nyarugusu a number of months.

Conclusion

This paper presents new insight into refugees and violence within camps an area of study lacking empirical research (Yazgan, Utku, & Sirkeci, 2015). Our findings suggest that two-thirds of children in Nyarugusu believe that children who experience violence would report it to an official within the camp. Respondents are more likely to believe the victim will report when the violence takes place at school or the perpetrator is a child. Surprisingly, we find no substantial influence of the gender of the victim or respondent.

The nature of this topic and the targeted population posed unique limitations to the study. Data collection is difficult in refugee camps due to obstacles including isolated areas of camps, and there are numerous ethical challenges of research collection on children and violence. While respondents may have experienced other, more serious forms of violence in their country of origin or in their homes, due to ethical considerations the study did not explore such topics.

By better understanding how norms around reporting and violence govern the behavior of children in Nyarugusu, groups operating in the camp may better serve children. A potential policy implication of this research is to illuminate where NGOs and intergovernmental organizations should allocate resources to deter violence and increase reporting. For instance, the creation of educational segments or community programs directed at better informing children on prevention, reporting, and developing coping skills. Our results suggest a social norm for reporting in schools, which may point to schools as being potential partners in these programs. The similarities between social norms for both gender respondents and victims suggest that programs may not need to provide separate programs for boys and girls.

Another potential policy implication of this research could be a new emphasis placed on advocacy through programming in the camp. Our results indicated perceptions that victims would report violence to someone, including friends or family, at 93%. Since it is perceived victims are already reporting violence,

further work to connect victims with resources and identify perpetrators could be key elements of policy to reduce levels of violence.

This work focuses on a specific population of child refugees and may not be indicative of the experiences of refugees of other countries. The cultural nuances and differences in types of conflict worldwide highlight the need for individualized programming efforts on violence in various camps. To do so, continued research that focuses on the experience of child refugees and violence is needed in camps around the world. With recent surges in the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, the number of children in camps will only continue to rise, highlighting the importance of further work on this subject.

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