

**FAMILY VIOLENCES AGAINST GIRLS AND BOYS IN BURKINA FASO:  
differences across normative contexts**

Communication

**Alis BAMBARA & al.**

PhD student in demography

Institute of Demography and Socioeconomics/ University of Geneva

**Abstract**

Studies in health and social sciences found a relation between violence against children and social norms, including gender norms. In different contexts, social norms can either act as safeguards against or promote violence against children. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to diverse and multicultural settings, yet few studies have compared how variations in social norms impact family violences' practice against girls and boys in these societies. This research uses an intersectional approach, with Burkina Faso as a case study, to examine how specific normative contexts contribute more significantly to the protection of girls and boys from various forms of family violences. Multilevel analyses were conducted using data from children under 12 years old in Burkina Faso in 2018. The first findings reveal disparities in the family violences practice against children based on their region of residence. These variations are pronounced depending on the children's sex or the specific forms of violence experienced. Importantly, these variations in violent practices are partly attributed to differences in social norms supporting corporal punishment across various regions.

**Keywords:** *Family violences, Childhood, Intersectionality, Social norms, Burkina Faso*

**Family violences against children: considered the individual and their context.**

In Sub-Saharan African societies, as in most societies around the world, children remain victims of violences and more often by their caregiver (Delanoë, 2015; Durant and Ensom, 2012; Dassa et al, 2005). One of the explanations given for this result is that these practices are encouraged by social norms supporting violent discipline (Lilleston et al., 2017; Mackie et al. 2015; Markus and Harper, 2014). However, beliefs and perceptions relating to girls' and boys' education vary greatly in families and communities, particularly in multicultural contexts such as those of Africa (Gelles, 1985; Danhoundo, 2017; Niang, 2002). And they do not all systematically involve acts of violence (Niang, 2002). Indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa, empirical studies from sociology, psychology and public health have examined, through interviews or cross-sectional survey data (EDS, data on communities) the relationships between beliefs and perceptions at the individual level or social norms at the meso-level and corporal and/or emotional punishment. They show positive relationships between beliefs or attitudes or even perceptions valuing disciplinary violences and the use of acts of violence against children in families (Kouwonou and Locoh, 2006; Fourn, Hountondji and Ayatode, 2014; Mayisela, 2017; Mansor and Talib, 2012; Benebo, Schumann and Vaezghasemi, 2018; Murphy et al, 2020). This general trend is, however, not always confirmed. Dassa, Bakonde and Djassoa (2009) reveal that in Togo, social beliefs, although favorable to acts of punishment, prohibit touching the genitals, drawing blood, using a sharp object, or starving people. The work of Meryl et al (2017) in Uganda finds no statistical link between corporal punishment and attitudes supporting physical punishment. Thus, social beliefs and norms, including gender ones, can, depending on the context, encourage family violence against children by encouraging practices with an educational aim or, on the contrary, protect them from it by limiting or prohibiting practices of violence against them against (Lilleston et al., 2017). Therefore, guarantee the children's protection and achieve the sustainable development goals ((UN, 1989, 2016)) require thinking children's vulnerabilities in a more global ecosystem considering in addition to the child, his or

her life context (Lacharité, 2021, Bonnet, 2020) which also implies the use of multiple methodological and conceptual approaches (Rossier et al, 2023; Bonnet, 2020).

However, few studies compare practices of violence against children in different normative contexts.

This contribution is part of a doctoral research project which mobilizes knowledge in demography and gender studies to provide information on social norms and/or contextual factors which protect children from violences.

The aim of this paper is to understand how some specific cultural contexts (norms relating to the education of children, gender) in Burkina Faso protect girls and/or boys from family violences? More specifically, it asks the following questions: i. Are practices of violence different from one cultural community to another in Burkina Faso? ii. What are the normative contexts where children are protected from family violences?

### **Data**

This study uses data from the national survey on violence against children in Burkina Faso. This survey was carried out in 2018 to provide information on the extent and determining factors of violence against children. It covered 10,900 households and provides information on various forms of violence suffered by children during the last twelve months preceding the survey, as well as on the social norms, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals in relation to these violences. The analyses in this paper are mainly based on data from children under 12 collected through one of their biological parents, or a guardian. In total, information from 4,709 parents (guardians) is available for 10,915 children. Data on the violences of 5051 female children and 5765 male children were effectively considered in the analyses.

### **Main variables**

- ***Social norms***: Social norms are understood through data from three questions using the 5-degree Likert scale “1. strongly agree, 2. agree, 3. neither agree nor disagree, 4. not agree 'agree, or 5. strongly disagree with the following sentence'. “The majority of people in my community hit their child when he or she does not obey,” “The majority of people in my community would agree that parents hit their son or daughter if the child has disobeyed,” “The Most people in my community would think badly of parents if they didn't hit their child when he disobeyed. This information was synthesized into its essential component through factor analysis.
- Violence against children under the age of twelve was detected by questioning one of their parents/guardians about events they had suffered during the last twelve months preceding the investigation.

***Emotional violence***: being shouted at, yelled at or called by offensive names, humiliated, insulted, cursed, ignored for a period of time.

***Mild physical violence***: having been spanked, hit on the hand, arm, leg, pulled on the ears with a bare hand.

***Severe physical violence***: being slapped, kicked on the buttocks, hit, beaten, with a hard object or kicked.

***Deprivation***: having privileges taken away, forbidden from leisure by sermons and warnings.

### **Other variables**

In addition to violent practices, other factors linked to the individual, family and contextual characteristics of the child were considered:

Child: *Sex - Age - Biological child status - Schooling*

Parent(guardian): *Sex - Age - Religion – Ethnic group - Level of education - Economic activity  
-Marital status*  
*Household standard of living, Place of residence, Region of residence (context variable)*

### **Multilevel analysis**

To examine variations in practices of violence against children based on normative contexts, we conduct a multilevel analysis using quantitative data from the 2018 national study on violence against children in Burkina Faso. This analysis encompasses multiple levels: the individual level, which includes characteristics of the children and their parents, and the community level, approximated by the geographical regions.

### **Extract of first results**

This section presents an extract from the study's findings. Multilevel analyses have revealed significant variability in the incidence of family violence against children across various regions in Burkina Faso. The magnitude of these differences varies depending on whether the comparisons are based on population groups of girls or boys and whether the focus is on mild or severe physical violence, or emotional violence, or even deprivation. A part of these regional variations in violent practices can be attributed to differences in social norms. Furthermore, the extent of these social norms variations varies depending on sex of the children and the specific types of violence under consideration.

### **Some results' table.**



**Table11: Multilevel regression of emotional violences in female children population**

FEMALE CHILDREN									
Emotional violences	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )
<b>Fixed effects</b>									
Intercept	1.7924919	0.03314998	1.02438E-15	1.79393498	0.03380074	1.192E-15	1.98684102	0.0459134	8.0272E-31
<b>Social norms</b>				0.05123737	0.00568105	2.6461E-19	0.04110755	0.01184705	0.0052366
<b>Child age</b>							-0.03209941	0.00212438	1.7759E-50
Child biological status( <i>No</i> )							0.05775368	0.01875013	0.00207998
<b>Child schooling (<i>No</i>)</b>							0.02666409	0.01444588	0.06498132
<b>Parent sex (<i>female</i>)</b>							-0.05923031	0.01292629	4.7135E-06
<b>Parent age (ref:18-35 ans)</b>							0.00338925	0.01329861	0.79884345
<i>36-49ans</i>									
<i>50ans+</i>							0.00531516	0.01753044	0.76175325
<b>Parent level of education</b>							0.00739206	0.00982842	0.45201984
<b>Parent marital status (ref:monogamous)</b>									
<i>Single parent</i>							0.04923539	0.02479592	0.04712932
<i>Polygamous</i>							-0.02739517	0.01237414	0.02688009
<b>Parent religion (ref:muslim)</b>									
<i>Catholic</i>							-0.03434789	0.01455029	0.01828173
<i>Protestant</i>							-0.01868441	0.02597982	0.47205775
<i>Trational/other</i>							0.00641111	0.02130486	0.76348604
<b>Parent ethnic group (ref:mossi)</b>									
<i>Dioula/Bobo/Samo</i>							-0.04550346	0.02591556	0.07917886
<i>Peulh/Touareg</i>							-0.03444987	0.02566026	0.17948589
<i>Gourmantche</i>							-0.07767571	0.03378812	0.02156439
<i>Bissa/Gourounsi</i>							0.06071532	0.02381157	0.01080746
<i>Dagara/lobi/Senoufo</i>							-0.06715227	0.03028861	0.02666903
<i>other</i>							-0.06213936	0.02101596	0.00312441
<b>Household living's standard</b>							-0.00409013	0.00713329	0.56640888
<b>Residence area (<i>rural</i>)</b>							0.01489234	0.01415137	0.29268517
<b>Random effects</b>									
Level 2 ( Region)									
Intercept variances	0.01377757	0.11737791		0.01435143	0.11979747		0.01577269	0.12558935	
Slope variances							0.00132687	0.03642623	
Level 1 : intraregion variances	0.13538057	0.36794099		0.13324361	0.3650255		0.12016076	0.34664212	
-2 Log V		3247.5			3211,4			3015,3	

**Table12: Multilevel regression of emotional violences in male children population**

MALE CHILDREN									
Emotional violences	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )
<b>Fixed effects</b>									
Intercept	1.77871099	0.03086157	5.0266E-16	1.78110553	0.03177664	6.5158E-16	1.96266679	0.04216636	9.6104E-37
<b>Social norms</b>				0.05329509	0.00541124	1.0457E-22	0.05766195	0.01245838	0.0006789
<b>Child age</b>							-0.03587991	0.00207713	3.2478E-65
Child biological status( <i>No</i> )							0.04660728	0.0193556	0.01607387
<b>Child schooling</b> ( <i>No</i> )							-0.00725353	0.01399057	0.60415844
<b>Parent sex</b> ( <i>female</i> )							-0.01548954	0.01217942	0.20350297
<b>Parent age</b> (ref:18-35 ans)									
36-49ans							0.04531415	0.01274869	0.00038187
50ans+							0.04060245	0.0167044	0.01510248
<b>Parent level of education</b>							-0.00049655	0.0099388	0.96015544
<b>Parent marital status</b> ( <i>ref:monogamous</i> )									
<i>Single parent</i>							0.00905471	0.02412928	0.70748231
<i>Polygamous</i>							-0.0573336	0.01190227	1.4946E-06
<b>Parent religion</b> ( <i>ref:muslim</i> )									
<i>Catholic</i>							-0.03112654	0.01439915	0.03068312
<i>Protestant</i>							0.04017835	0.02504515	0.10871686
<i>Trational/other</i>							0.03740498	0.01966825	0.05724795
<b>Parent ethnic group</b> ( <i>ref:mossi</i> )									
<i>Dioula/Bobo/Samo</i>							-0.00146238	0.02413913	0.95169499
<i>Peulh/Touareg</i>							-0.01578193	0.02364669	0.50454282
<i>Gourmantche</i>							-0.06251727	0.03143839	0.04681288
<i>Bissa/Gourounsi</i>							0.03424423	0.02299106	0.13642243
<i>Dagara/lobi/Senoufo</i>							-0.02688085	0.0291298	0.35616641
<i>other</i>							-0.04282182	0.02068536	0.03848876
<b>Household living's standard</b>							0.00835334	0.0071711	0.2441234
<b>Residence area</b> ( <i>rural</i> )							0.0507725	0.01355846	0.00018238
<b>Random effects</b>									
Level 2 ( Region)									
Intercept variances	0.01190758	0.10912187		0.01265942	0.1125141		0.01194796	0.10930673	
Slope variances							0.00154738	0.0393368	
Level 1 : intraregion variances	0.13967339	0.37372903		0.13736451	0.37062718		0.12467059	0.35308723	
-2 Log V		3849.2			3805.4			3591.7	

**Table21: Multilevel regression of mid physical violences in female children population**

FEMALE CHILDREN									
Mild physical violence	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )
<b>Fixed effects</b>									
Intercept	1.79651031	0.02551912	6.40251E-17	1.79762865	0.02585464	6.377E-17	1.9686879	0.03865308	1.3967E-54
<b>Social norms</b>				0.03757054	0.00573604	6.3299E-11	0.03467667	0.01413377	0.02988631
<b>Child age</b>							-0.03160514	0.00215343	8.8139E-48
Child biological status( <i>No</i> )							0.0390917	0.0190053	0.03974896
<b>Child schooling</b> ( <i>No</i> )							0.02066632	0.01464102	0.15814891
<b>Parent sex</b> ( <i>female</i> )							-0.07319098	0.01310091	2.4359E-08
<b>Parent age</b> (ref:18-35 ans)									
36-49ans							0.01566196	0.01348143	0.24539523
50ans+							0.02367259	0.01777424	0.18297043
<b>Parent level of education</b>							0.00174447	0.00996197	0.86099788
<b>Parent marital status</b> ( <i>ref:monogamious</i> )									
<i>Single parent</i>							0.03785391	0.02513523	0.13212736
<i>Polygamious</i>							-0.00094297	0.01254234	0.9400719
<b>Parent religion</b> ( <i>ref:muslim</i> )									
<i>Catholic</i>							-0.00498629	0.01473802	0.73512996
<i>Protestant</i>							-0.05920607	0.02633088	0.02458488
<i>Trational/other</i>							-0.02053665	0.02155572	0.34077643
<b>Parent ethnic group</b> ( <i>ref:mossi</i> )									
<i>Dioula/Bobo/Samo</i>							0.03834081	0.02613698	0.14246937
<i>Peulh/Touareg</i>							-0.01176209	0.02582147	0.64876394
<i>Gourmantche</i>							-0.02327513	0.03370394	0.48991336
<i>Bissa/Gourounsi</i>							-0.00649711	0.02408772	0.78738178
<i>Dagara/lobi/Senoufo</i>							0.02435508	0.03037144	0.42267032
<i>other</i>							-0.00419657	0.02113687	0.84263165
<b>Household living's standard</b>									
<b>Residence erea</b> ( <i>rural</i> )							0.00921224	0.00722059	0.20207535
							0.01243496	0.01432282	0.38533124
<b>Random effects</b>									
Level 2 ( Region)									
Intercept variances	0.00795411	0.08918583		0.00818183	0.09045346		0.00750338	0.08662205	
Slope variances							0.00207305	0.04553072	
Level 1 : intraregion variances	0.13714893	0.37033623		0.1360094	0.36879452		0.12346415	0.35137466	
-2 Log V		3277			3257.9			3081.1	

**Table22 : Multilevel regression of mid physical violences in male children population**

	MALE CHILDREN								
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr(> t )
<b>Mild physical violence</b>									
<b>Fixed effects</b>									
Intercept	1.77314904	0.02669803	8.9414E-17	1.77504804	0.02736879	1.078E-16	1.90906467	0.03891993	9.1925E-52
<b>Social norms</b>				0.04151974	0.00550914	5.5738E-14	0.04822201	0.01467129	0.00611495
<b>Child age</b>							-0.02883818	0.00213682	6.936E-41
Child biological status( <i>No</i> )							0.02085848	0.01991236	0.29490649
<b>Child schooling (<i>No</i>)</b>							0.0188276	0.01439212	0.19086195
<b>Parent sex (<i>female</i>)</b>							-0.02864661	0.01252924	0.02226823
<b>Parent age (ref:18-35 ans)</b>									
36-49ans							0.03918693	0.01311669	0.00282403
50ans+							0.05358079	0.01718827	0.00183427
<b>Parent level of education</b>							-0.00892122	0.01022538	0.38299519
<b>Parent marital status (ref:monogamous)</b>									
Single parent							0.03716344	0.02482456	0.13443711
Polygamous							0.00310459	0.01224659	0.79988614
<b>Parent religion (ref:muslim)</b>									
Catholic							-0.05337777	0.01480923	0.00031558
Protestant							-0.05582359	0.02576048	0.03027402
Trational/other							0.01709063	0.02022051	0.3980276
<b>Parent ethnic group (ref:mossi)</b>									
Dioula/Bobo/Samo							0.01289747	0.02473819	0.60214093
Peulh/Touareg							0.0372068	0.02421638	0.12450352
Gourmantche							0.07670957	0.03208551	0.01687306
Bissa/Gourounsi							-0.0437245	0.02362352	0.06423878
Dagara/lobi/Senoufo							0.00579901	0.02973893	0.84540786
other							-0.02047056	0.02117909	0.33382558
<b>Household living's standard</b>							0.02068437	0.00736791	0.00501206
<b>Residence area (rural)</b>							0.02939195	0.01393701	0.03499591
<b>Random effects</b>									
Level 2 ( Region)									
Intercept variances	0.00877998	0.09370154		0.00925491	0.09620246		0.00788875	0.08881862	
Slope variances							0.00229207	0.04787554	
Level 1 : intraregion variances	0.14386998	0.37930196		0.14247352	0.37745664		0.13194633	0.36324417	
-2 Log V		3932.6			3908.6			3753.5	



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