



Masculinities and Violence in Indonesia and India



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For most people in the world, violence is something they encounter every day. The majority of those who commit violence are men and the majority of victims of violence are also men. Yet accounts of violence rarely mention the topic of masculinity,

except in the case of domestic abuse or sexual assault. We know that not all men endorse or practice violence. It is necessary to look at social and cultural influences. This project sought to understand how men themselves understand and experience violence in two developing countries with close links to Australia: Indonesia and India. Although there are vast cultural differences, both countries have specific histories of violence linked to the colonial past and struggles for independence. Surveys were collected from 1004 men in Indonesia and 1000 men in India. Interviews were conducted with 86 men in Indonesia and 59 men in India. Interviews were also conducted with 18 NGO workers in Indonesia and 24 NGO workers in India. The project was an initiative funded for two years by an Australian Development Research Award from AusAID – the Australian Agency for International Development. Indonesian research was undertaken in Jakarta, Solo, Pekanbaru, Makassar, Mataram.

Snapshot of Survey Findings

- Over 70% of men in both countries had experienced male peer violence.
- 59% of men in Indonesia, 87% in India experienced violence defending honour.
- Over 90% of men overall thought young men would be involved in violence.
- Over 90% of men overall thought unemployed men would be involved in violence.
- 96% of men in Indonesia and 100% in India thought more jobs would reduce violence in their communities.
- 96% of men in Indonesia and 85% in India thought more religious piety would reduce violence in their communities.
- 93% of men in Indonesia and 83% in India thought better community leadership would reduce violence.
- 89% of men in Indonesia and 84% in India thought more police presence would reduce violence in their communities.
- 50% of men in Indonesia and 80% in India had sometimes or often experienced family violence.



Snapshot of Interviews

- In both countries there were some accounts of extreme violence.
- Alcohol was identified as a triggering factor in male violence.
- Men were reluctant to discuss violence toward women and children.
- Some accounts addressed explicit physical violence towards women.
- Many expressed distrust of the police, including their role in provoking violence and corruption.
- For minor incidents, community mediation and family counselling by local leaders was viewed positively.

'If I were to beat my wife, I would have the right because I was teaching her how to behave properly '

(R4, 31, Military, Muslim, married, Pekanbaru, Indonesia, 4 August 2010).

Conclusions and implications

- Men have a high exposure to violence and have normalised attitudes towards violence.
- The social construction of masculinity emphasises the defense of honour and respect within long-established male status hierarchies.
- Unemployment and poverty are acknowledged as contributing factors to violence.
- Men are not inclined to see women as their equals and not well-prepared for responsibilities of marriage and children.
- Violence is far more common among men with little to do and few prospects. This has implications for community employment schemes.

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For further information: www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/research/research-grants/masculinities-and-violence.html



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