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# MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA AND INDIA

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[www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/  
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# MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA AND INDIA

For most people in the world, violence is something they encounter every day. It might be just hearing about it, or seeing it in the media. 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. At the present time both countries are plagued by political and religious violence carried out almost exclusively by men. Rates of domestic violence are also high. We maintain that gaining insights into the perspectives of men about violence can provide useful information to improve the outcomes of campaigns and interventions to address various kinds of violence in Indonesia and India. 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 Australian Aid initiative funded for two years by an Australian Development Research Award from AusAID – the Australian Agency for International Development.

## RESEARCH LOCATIONS

The cities of Jakarta, Solo, Pekanbaru, Makassar, Mataram (Indonesia); cities and towns in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala (India).

## SNAPSHOT OF SURVEY FINDINGS

- Over 70% of men in both countries had experienced male peer violence.
- 59% of men in Indonesia and 87% in India had experienced violence in defence of honour.
- Over 90% of men in both countries thought young men would be involved in violence.
- Over 90% of men in both countries thought unemployed men would be involved in violence.
- 29% of men in Indonesia and 25% in India agreed that violence against women is OK sometimes.
- 96% of men in Indonesia and 100% in India thought more jobs would reduce violence in their communities.
- Over 90% of men in both countries thought better education and better social services would reduce violence in their communities.
- Over 90% of men in both countries thought controlling drugs 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 in their communities.
- 89% of men in Indonesia and 84% in India thought more police presence would reduce violence in their communities.
- 84% of men in Indonesia and 90% in India thought filtering violence out of the media would reduce violence in their communities.
- 64% of men in Indonesia but 95% in India thought improving the status of women would reduce violence in their communities.

## SNAPSHOTS FROM INTERVIEWS

**IN BOTH COUNTRIES THERE WERE SOME ACCOUNTS OF EXTREME VIOLENCE.**

“IT WAS A BATTLE BETWEEN TWO OPPOSING GANGS. A GUY FROM THE OTHER GANG WAS KILLED AND TWO PEOPLE WERE INJURED”

J2, 40, Ex-prisoner, married, Muslim, Jakarta, Indonesia, 12 August, 2010

“THEY HAD A HEATED ARGUMENT FOLLOWING WHICH HE TOOK OUT A KNIFE AND STABBED THE VICTIM. HE THEN RAN AWAY, BUT THE WOUNDED YOUNG MAN LATER SUCCUMBED TO HIS INJURIES.”

K22, 26, Graphic Designer, unmarried, Hindu, Pala, India, 21 May, 2011

**DENIALS OF VIOLENCE TOWARD WOMEN AND CHILDREN.**

“VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN VERY RARELY HAPPENS AROUND HERE”

MK8, 31, Military, married, Muslim, Makassar, Indonesia, 22 June, 2010

“THERE IS NOT MUCH VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MY COMMUNITY”

K18, 34, Shopkeeper, married, Hindu, Melukavu, India, 21 May, 2011

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN.**

“MEN HAVE A PARTICULAR ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY. MEN THINK THAT WOMEN SHOULD SURRENDER THEMSELVES TO MEN OR WOMEN SHOULD YIELD TO ALL THE WHIMS AND FANCIES OF MEN. MANY MEN BEHAVE BADLY WITH WOMEN OR ARE VIOLENT TOWARDS WOMEN”

J2, 40, Ex-prisoner, married, Muslim, Jakarta, Indonesia, 12 August, 2010

“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

**MANY MEN EXPRESSED DISTRUST OF POLICE.**

“I HAVE SEEN THE POLICE BEAT UP A YOUNG DRUG ADDICT. I ABSOLUTELY DID NOT AGREE WITH WHAT THEY DID”

S7, 50, Political parl. secretary, married, Muslim, Solo, Indonesia, 28 July, 2009

“POLICE VENTURED INTO THE CAMPUS AND RESORTED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST STUDENTS”

K22, 26, Graphic Designer, unmarried, Hindu, Pala, India, 21 May, 2011

## CONCLUSIONS

- Men in Indonesia and India have a high exposure to violence and may have normalised attitudes towards violence.
- The social construction of masculinity in both countries emphasises the defense of honour and respect within long-established male status hierarchies.
- Unemployment and poverty are acknowledged as contributing factors to male violence in both, with alcohol also a factor.
- Men are not inclined to see women as their equals and many are not well-prepared for the responsibilities of marriage and children.
- There is little trust in the police but community mediation and counselling are favoured.
- Alcohol was identified as a triggering factor in male violence.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Violence is far more common among men with little to do and few prospects. This has implications for community employment schemes.
- Reform of recruitment, training and conditions for police are needed so that violence does not breed violence.
- Government agencies and NGOs working on projects, campaigns and initiatives relevant to men, family life, public disputes and violence can productively work with existing community and religious mediation processes.