



The relationship between family cohesion and depression among school going children with elevated symptoms of behavioral challenges in Southern Uganda.

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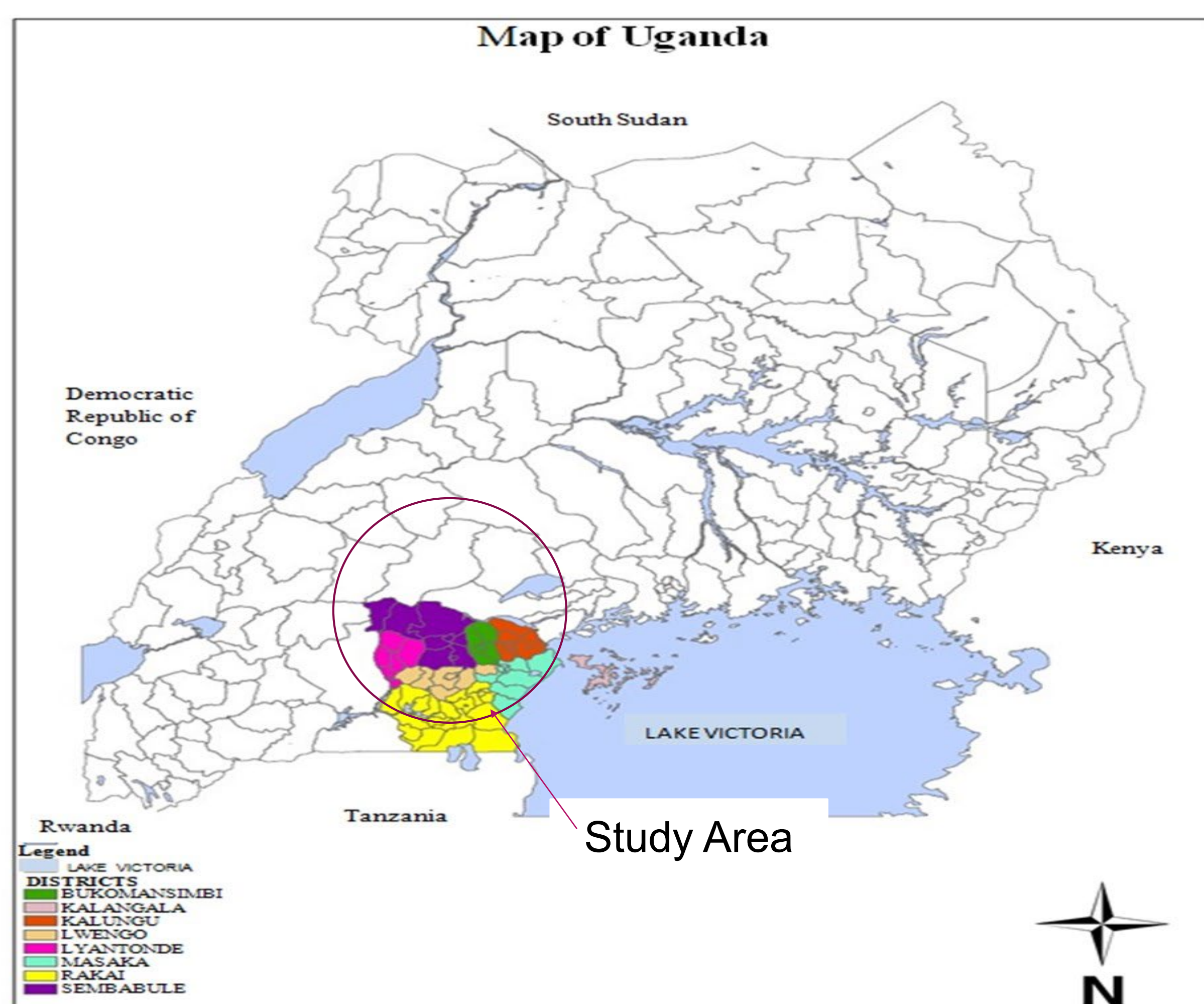
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Background

- Millions of African children grow up under harsh and adverse psychosocial conditions which impact their emotional well-being (Kinyanda, et al, 2013).
- Evidence, mainly from the Global North, suggests that families that are close, open, emotionally connected, and flexible have children with better psychological adjustment than families that are distant, hostile or characterized by unhealthy alliances (Richmond and Stocker, 2006).
- Children with behavioral challenges are more vulnerable to depression. However, little is known about the relationship between family cohesion and depression among children with behavioral challenges in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).
- Examining this relationship in SSA, especially in Uganda, is important given context-specific factors, including the high prevalence of caregiver death to HIV/AIDS, and high rates of chronic poverty.
- Current Study:** To examine the relationship between family cohesion and depression among school going children with elevated symptoms of behavioral challenges in southern Uganda

Study Context



Methodology

- Eligibility criteria**
 - Children in primary 2 through 7, 8 to 13 years willing to consent and available for research and intervention activities.
 - Their adult caregiver willing to consent and available for research and intervention activities
- Recruitment**
 - A total of 2758 child-caregiver dyads were recruited from 30 primary schools in the Greater Masaka region in Uganda.
- Data collection**
 - Administered surveys at baseline, 8 weeks, 16 weeks and 6 months post intervention.



Methodology cont'd....

MEASURES

Outcome variable: Depression

- Assessed using a 10 item Child Depression Inventory (CDI) scale.
- The theoretical range is 0-20, with the higher scores indicating higher depression levels.
- Independent variable: Family Cohesion**
 - Assessed using 6 items rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1=never occurs to 5=always occurs.
 - The theoretical range is 6-30, with the higher total scores indicate highly coherent family.

Covariates

- Age, Gender and orphan-hood

Analysis

For this study, baseline data from 626 (total n=2089) participants who had elevated symptoms of behavioral challenges in 26 primary schools was used.

Descriptives

- Univariate analyses on age, gender and orphan-hood.

Linear regression model

- To determine the association between family cohesion and elevated symptoms of depression using the Child Depression Inventory scale.

Results

Table 1: Social demographic characteristics of the sample (N=626)

Variable	N (%)
Gender	
Male	301 (48.08)
Female	325 (51.92)
Ophanhood status	
Orphan	92 (14.70)
Non-orphan	534 (85.30)
Age	
8	61 (9.74)
9	130 (20.77)
10	169 (27.00)
11	131 (20.93)
12	92 (14.70)
13	43 (6.87)
Mean (SD)	10.31 (1.39)

Table 2: Linear regression model showing the relationship between family cohesion and depression.

CDI	Beta	[95% Conf. Interval]	P value
Family cohesion	-0.11	-0.1476393 -0.065383	0.000
Orphan-hood	-0.14	-0.7235286 0.4447652	0.640
Gender	0.13	-0.297121 0.5473406	0.561
Age	-0.07	-0.2260821 0.0790216	0.344

Discussion & Implications

- Results from the multiple linear regression model show that family cohesion is associated with lower levels of depression among children of ages 10-13 ($b=-.11$, 95%CI: $-.15, -.07$, $p=0.000$). Specifically, as family cohesion score increases, depression levels decrease.
- Programs and interventions with children experiencing behavioral challenges should take into account the co-occurrence of depression among this population and aim at strengthening family cohesion as catalyst for addressing depression.

Selected references

- Kinyanda, E., Kizza, R., Abbo, C., Ndyabangi, S., Levin, J. (2013). Prevalence and risk factors of depression in childhood and adolescence as seen in 4 districts of north-eastern Uganda, BMC International Health & Human Rights.
- Richmond, M.K and Stocker, C.M. (2006) Associations Between Family Cohesion and Adolescent Siblings' Externalizing Behavior, Journal of Family Psychology

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