

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF PARENTAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The continuous experience of physical, emotional, and mental abuse in the home that is intended to exert control and authority over another individual is known as the domestic violence; in most developing countries, the reference to the domestic violence is violence in the family, directed by the husband against the wife. When secondary victims, such as children living in a household, witness domestic violence, it frequently interferes with their education and thereby affects their learning experiences, which in turn degrades their results. Children who are abused may suffer from emotional trauma, physical and psychological learning disabilities, and disruptive conduct in the classroom, all of which have unidentified root causes. Children must feel safe and secure at home to form a positive self-image to help them become healthy, successful, and compassionate. The current study explores that in cases of violence and abuse between adult intimate partners; children are often silent victims and such disruptions in the home have grave emotional and psychological consequences on their overall development.

Keywords

Domestic Violence, Trauma, Psychological Effects, Family, Children.

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Introduction

The family has historically been considered a haven for children, but research has indicated that it can potentially have negative effects. Family abuse is often a big secret and a source of shame, hidden behind closed doors. The objective of this study is to look into how domestic violence affects the lives of children. Violence and abuse are defined as “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behavior, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.” Sexual, financial, emotional, physical, and psychological abuses are all examples of abuse (Brustia et al., 2018). Coercive control-based nonphysical forms of domestic violence, such as financial abuse, psychological abuse and emotional abuse, seclusion, and continuous surveillance, can also affect children (Lloyd, 2018). Domestic abuse is likely to affect one out of every six children in the UK at some point throughout their childhood (Radford et al., 2013). Domestic violence killed an estimated 31000 children under the age of 15 worldwide in 2002. According to the WHO, on the other hand, every year, it is estimated that one million children removed face various forms of abuse in their new homes. Violent experiences among children are becoming increasingly widespread. Previous studies have found a clear link between intimate partner violence and child abuse. Domestic violence also tends to escalate; it starts off softly and gradually intensifies, and those who watch it become victims of abuse. The study sought to examine children’s experiences with distinct types of domestic abuse, as well as the relationships between family history and different types of domestic violence. According to Carlson, at least 3.3 million kids are at risk of witnessing parental violence each year. According to his calculation, ten million American adolescents are exposed to adult domestic abuse each year (Muresan, 2012).

Research Questions:

The study involves a thematic review of literature concerning domestic abuse and its impact on children. The objective is to investigate the psychological and emotional effects of parental domestic violence on children. The researcher carried out an extensive search of online resources, such as JSTOR and Google Scholar, to gather relevant materials. The research questions are:

- How does exposure to domestic violence impact children’s mental health and academic achievement?
- What are children’s perceptions and experiences of parental domestic violence?

In general, the term “exposure to adult domestic violence” will be used in this study to characterize the variety of experiences that children have when they go to live with an adult who acts aggressively as part of a practice of coercion against an intimate partner. Violence in families can take many different forms, such as between women and men or between same-sex partners. This study focuses on what most children who witness domestic violence go through as they grow up in a household where a man regularly abuses an adult woman, who is typically the child’s mother (Edleson, 2006).

Invisible Wounds: How Children Experience Domestic Violence:

Throughout this article, the phrase “exposure to adult domestic violence” will be used to describe the experiences of children who grow up in homes where an adult utilizes aggressive behavior as a form of coercion against an intimate partner. In families, violence can take many different forms, such as between same-sex partners or between women and men. This study focuses on the experience that the majority of children who witness domestic violence have when they live in a household where a male engages in a pattern of violence against an adult woman, usually the child’s mother. Children who witness adult domestic violence are more likely to experience behavioral, emotional, and cognitive issues as well as adjustment issues that persist into their early adult years. According to the authors, there are issues related to children being exposed to domestic violence. However, children exposed to violence did not differ substantially from children who experienced physical abuse or were subjected to violence in addition to physical abuse (Edleson, 2006)

Children who witness domestic abuse are at risk for emotional, psychological, and bodily harm. Children react differently when they see domestic abuse. Some children show a variety of psychopathologies or adjustment issues, while others are unaffected by their experiences

(Carter et al., 1999). Groves asserts that a number of factors, such as what the child saw or heard, their temperament or personality, their age at the time of exposure, the intensity and duration of the violence, and the presence of emotionally supportive adults, all affect how children respond when they witness domestic violence. Children who witness severe or chronic domestic violence at a young age, if the violence occurs frequently, and if it is committed near them are more likely to experience significant psychological impacts. Babies who grow up in abusive households have trouble sleeping and eating, which hinders their ability to gain weight. They may scream excessively and take a while to meet developmental milestones. Furthermore, domestic violence may have a detrimental effect on mother-infant bonding (Hui & Maddern, 2021).

The prevalence of adolescents experiencing violence is rising. Intimate relationship violence and child abuse are linked, according to earlier research. Additionally, domestic violence frequently escalates; it begins mildly and then gets worse, and people who watch it end up being victims of it as well. Domestic violence in a household with a 6-month-old child doubled the likelihood of psychological abuse and neglect throughout the child's first five years of life and tripled the likelihood of physical abuse, according to McGuigan and Pratt. Furthermore, the victim of violence frequently turns into the abuser, and violent experiences are typically transmitted from parent to child (10–12) (Lepisto et al., 2011).

This paper synthesizes existing research on children's experiences of witnessing domestic abuse. A comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on research published between January 1980 and September 2018. The review highlights that child exposure to domestic abuse is a significant public health concern. Children who witness domestic violence are at increased risk for various negative behavioral, emotional, and psychological outcomes. Several factors, including parental and child characteristics, can influence a child's vulnerability to these negative consequences. Research consistently indicates that children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to experience issues such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

Various factors, such as parental characteristics and child-specific attributes, can exacerbate this risk. To address this pressing issue effectively, interventions must prioritize family-centered approaches that provide comprehensive support to children and parents. This review indicates that domestic violence exposure among children is a common problem. Girls and younger children, in particular, are at heightened risk. Additionally, parental elements like lack of education, low financial standing, single parenthood, mental health difficulties, and insecure attachment styles can contribute to a child's vulnerability to domestic abuse. It is imperative to acknowledge that children who witness domestic violence suffer grave implications for their cognitive, physical, psychological, and behavioral development both in the short and long term Dodaj, A. (2020).

Factors to Consider while Determining Children's Experiences:

Children who experienced domestic abuse were often classified as aggressive, and one-fifth had difficulties following school rules, acting out, peer pressure, unhappiness, and depression. Teachers often brought these issues to the notice of their peers. It was confirmed by the first US study to look at the connection between bullying and exposure to domestic violence that children who were exposed to violence exhibited more generalized hostility (Bauer et al., 2006). Adolescence may signify a time when the repercussions of domestic abuse extend beyond the

bounds of the family, making it difficult for victims to establish healthy, close connections with their peers because of the role models they were exposed to in their own homes. Collins and Allard (2001) assert that the degree of abstraction in the knowledge embodied in our attitudes, expectations, and beliefs varies according to how concrete our social experiences are. As a social encounter becomes more actual or concrete, the associated belief, attitude, or expectation becomes less abstract. Additionally, the concreteness of the social experience is increased by time spent reflecting on and assessing the social experience as well as by frequent exposure to it (such as interactions with a loving person). A result of their experiences with various people, relationships, and interactions in various social contexts (such as families, friends, and romantic relationships) (Gillath et al., 2016).

Adolescents who witness domestic violence are more likely to be subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, to have mental and behavioral disorders, and to face greater adversity in their life. It also lists numerous protective factors that can minimize this effect, particularly a tight link and attachment to a nurturing adult, usually the mother (Holt et al., 2008).

The social, psychological, and emotional development of children and adolescents is significantly impacted when they witness violence in the family. For instance, nine children who witness domestic abuse are more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior, hostility, withdrawal, and issues with relationships with their classmates and family-building skills.

(Kaufman et al., 2021). Living with domestic violence exposes children to a variety of dangers, including the possibility of experiencing traumatic incidents. The possibility of losing one or both parents, the possibility of neglect, and the possibility of experiencing direct abuse Each of these has the potential to affect children and result in adverse consequences.

Three types of childhood issues have been consistently linked to exposure to domestic violence in the research studies. 1) Higher degrees of aggression, rage, hostility, oppositional conduct, disobedience, fear, and anxiety are examples of behavioral social, and emotional issues. depression is caused by withdrawal from weak social ties with peers, siblings, and others, and a poor regard for oneself. 2) Issues with cognition and attitude reduced cognitive functioning, poor academic achievement, a lack of conflict resolution skills, a lack of problem-solving abilities, and a belief in male privilege and strict gender stereotypes. 3) Prolonged issues the use of violence in adult relationships and tolerance for it were both elevated in those with greater levels of adult depression and trauma symptoms. Additionally, children display challenges unique to their social, psychological, and physical

development. Adults who have witnessed domestic abuse on several times have reported it as violence, while children exhibit trauma-related symptoms such as despair and low self-esteem(Bragg, n.d.)

The Center for Families, Children, and Courts (CFCC) of the Judicial Council of California estimates that exposure to domestic violence among children is 40 percent likely to occur in conjunction with other types of child abuse. There is evidence that not all children are affected in the same manner by domestic violence, even though there is a growing amount of research showing the detrimental effects of this exposure. Therefore, in order to better understand how children successfully adjust to high-risk situations, like being exposed to violence, resilience and hazards are frequently examined together. Children's ability to overcome adversity is mostly dependent on their resilience, which is shown in their social, psychological, and developmental outcomes. In cases where a child is exposed to high-risk conditions, resilience is a result of a combination of environmental resources and individual attributes (Whittaker, 2001). In 2010, almost five million youngsters in the United States—one in fifteen—were exposed to intimate partner abuse. Children may suffer terrible physical and psychological consequences as a result of the aggressive and toxic atmosphere that domestic violence produces. Domestic abuse can cause children to grow afraid and nervous, worried about their parents, siblings, and themselves. They could start to believe they are helpless and useless(National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2015).

Adolescent-specific vulnerabilities, such as hormonal shifts, physical maturation and growth, and psychological shifts, including a desire to date, that take place throughout pubertal development, may be indicated by these novel risky behavior pathways. There isn't much research on teenagers in violent households, despite the dangers they face (Levendosky, 2011). Academic literature, which details the detrimental effects of violence on children, focuses more on children who are victims of domestic abuse. They are claimed to be more vulnerable to adverse educational, relational, and psychological consequences. This literature offers much-needed insight into the suffering that children endure when domestic violence happens in their homes(Grady et al., 2021).

According to Carlson (1984), at least 3.3 million children aged 3 to 17 are at risk of experiencing parental violence each year. Carlson's estimate was based on earlier studies that found that three million homes had at least one significant violent episode per year (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). However, the most recent data indicate that 7 million children are exposed to severe acts of violence between adults, out of the 10–18 million children and adolescents who witness IPV

annually (Muresan, 2012). The effects of domestic abuse may become more noticeable during adolescence, when victims may find it difficult to establish healthy, close connections with their friends because of the role models they saw in their own families. Research indicates that adolescents who have been exposed are more likely to have an avoidant attachment style and less likely to have a secure one. This could mean that they no longer feel trusted in close interactions. In light of their research's findings, they hypothesized that men's aggression and women's victimization in adult relationships could result from abusive behaviors in intimate relationships that began in adolescence (Levendosky et al., 2003).

As part of the process of multifocality of development, researchers recognize that exposure to domestic violence is a nonspecific risk factor for developmental injury. In other words, such exposure is a component of a collection of contextual elements that cause harm (such as child abuse, strict parenting styles, and other types of traumata and violence) that disrupt normal development and have unpredictable yet detrimental short- and long-term effects. The underlying premise of the literature is that, in addition to other coexisting factors, exposure to domestic violence has an adverse influence on children's emotional and behavioral development (that is, it is not only a confounding or a correlation) (Wolfe et al., 2003).

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive, analytical and qualitative in nature. In this research study, the observational method, theoretical and secondary analysis have been used to collect the data.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to an analysis based on the basis of secondary data. In-depth structured, semi-structured one-on-one elite interviews have not been conducted in this study.

Conclusion

This study has thoroughly examined the critical issue of how parental domestic violence affects adolescents emotionally and psychologically. Our findings firmly establish that exposure to such violence creates a distressing and adverse environment for adolescents, leading to significant emotional and psychological consequences. These impacts extend beyond the immediate context of violence, influencing emotional well-being, relationships, academic performance, and long-term mental health.

The study highlights the heightened vulnerability of adolescents to internalizing and exhibiting maladaptive behaviors due to domestic abuse. The

complexity of these effects necessitates a multifaceted approach to address the broader implications for the mental health and development of affected adolescents. Additionally, we acknowledged that the results of the effects of marital violence on teenagers vary, with variations observed based on factors such as exposure duration, frequency, and intensity, as well as individual resilience and coping mechanisms. Therefore, interventions adapted to the particular requirements and conditions of each adolescent are imperative in fostering healing and recovery. In light of our findings, it is evident that mitigating the deleterious consequences of parental domestic violence on children requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, mental health practitioners, and community support networks. Recognizing the far-reaching implications of these findings, we advocate for the implementation of evidence-based intervention programmes that address the emotional and psychological well-being of affected adolescents comprehensively. While this research provides valuable insights into the emotional and psychological effects of parental domestic violence on adolescent children, we acknowledge certain limitations that warrant consideration for future investigations. Methodological challenges and the complexity of the subject matter underscore the necessity for ongoing research to deepen our understanding of this intricate issue. To sum up, this study is a wake-up call for coordinated action to protect the mental and emotional health of teenage adolescents who witness domestic abuse by their parents. By addressing that pressing concern proactively, we can strive to create a more empathetic and supportive society that nurtures the resilience and well-being of its most vulnerable members.

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