

Romina Shtini Phd Candidat

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ALBANIAN YOUTH'S PERCEPTIONS

Abstract

Perceptions of increased rates of violence worldwide, whether it occurs at home, or even via television images, have heightened the need to understand how children think and feel about their experiences as victims or as witnesses of violence (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardno, 1992; Jaffe, Hurley, & Wolfe, 1990; Leavitt & Fox, 1993). The purpose of this study was to examine children's perceptions of domestic violence and to record the level of information among young people aged 15 to 18 years old on this phenomenon. A survey of Durres children, aged 15 to 18 years, with a representative sample of 150 children from 5 randomly selected schools of various sizes, geographic areas and socioeconomic neighbourhoods was undertaken. The methods used in this study was questionnaire which is composed of 15 closed questions and 3 open questions. Results showed that adolescents generally tend to be closest to their mother compared to the paternal figure is seen as an authoritarian figure. All were against domestic violence and all forms of its. Comparison of the three types of violence revealed emotional violence to be the most prevalent form of violence. The study demonstrated children's competence to express the ways in which violence perceived by those. Conclusions are that effective development of policy and provision should be based on data that reflects children's perceptions of the violence in the context of their own lives.

Keywords

Domestic violence, adolescent perceptions, family relationships

SK - Academic Publishing

Official address: 811 03 Staromestska, Bratislava - Slovakia

Web: skaponline.com // Email: info@skaponline.com

Literature Review

Domestic Violence

Perceptions of increased rates of violence worldwide have heightened the need to understand what children think about their experiences as victims or witnesses of violence. Violence against children is a serious problem (Lowenthal, 2001; Osofsky, 1999, Perry, 2005). Children are more prone to victimisation than adults (Finkelhor, 1995; Hartless, Ditton, Nair, & Phillips, 1995). They suffer many of the same crimes that adults do, but also experience forms of violence that can be unique to children because of their dependency status (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). With home and school being focal environments for children, two important and relevant areas of research are children's experiences of violence in these settings. International research (Finkelhor, 1995; Garbarino, 1992, 2001 ; Morgan & Zedner, 1992; Osofsky, 1999; Perry, 1996, 1997, 2004, 2005; Reiss, Richters, Radke- Yarrow, & Scharff, 1 993 ; Schwatz & Hopmeyer Gorman, 2003; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & laffe, 2003) shows that violence experienced by children has profound effects on their development, on their relationships with others, and on their ability to function in the community, school and home environments.

Most literature about the victimisation of children includes reference to the vulnerability of children and the detrimental effect that violence often has on children's development (Wallach, 1994; Wolfe et al. , 2003). Yegidis (1992) stated that the impact of violence on children is easy to describe, but difficult to explain. Violence and abuse may harm children in many ways. In particular maltreatment may adversely affect children's physical, emotional, cognitive or social development (Garbarino, 2001 ; Osofsky, 1999; Wolfe et al., 2003). .

Youth are victimized in domestic violence homes by being neglected and physically and/or sexually abused (Beeman, Hagemester, & Edleson, 1999; Carlson, 2000), and often suffer from

severe stress. Children may not always witness the episodes of abuse; however, they are affected by what they hear. The children are able to feel the tension in the air just as the victim does; however, they do not understand the cycle of violence and can easily internalize their feelings about the situation. This internalization can manifest itself in the following ways: academic problems, aggression, insomnia, irritability, distractibility, and truancy ((Newton, 2001). Additionally, data suggest that children who come from homes in which violence takes place are more likely to become the abuser or victim in their intimate relationships (Newton, 2001).

Several studies support a link between exposure to community violence and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and aggressive behaviors in school-age children living in violent urban neighborhoods (Gorman-Smith and Tolan, 1998). School-age children exposed to violence are more likely to show increases in sleep disturbances, and less likely to explore and play freely and to show motivation to master their environment (Osofsky, 1995). Other studies have reported that schoolage children who are exposed to family violence are affected similarly to those exposed to community violence (Bell and Jenkis, 1991). Studies show that as children get older, those who have been abused and neglected are more likely to perform poorly in school; to commit crimes; and to experience emotional problems, sexual problems, and alcohol/substance abuse (Cicchetti and Toth, 1997). Additionally, children of abused mothers are six times more likely to abuse drugs and/or alcohol, and are at a higher risk of running away (Turning Point, n.d.). Data suggest that living in homes where domestic violence occurs affects males and females differently (Turning Point, n.d.). Boys who have witnessed abuse of their mothers are 10 times more likely to abuse their female partners as adults whereas females who grow up in a home where the father assaults the mother are 651% more likely to be sexually abused than girls in non-abusive homes (Turning Point, n.d.)

Parents and Adolescents as Relationship

The mothers, fathers, and adolescent children have different expectations about their relationships. Fathers expect the family to be a respite from work; mothers anticipate family

obligations to be a major source of stress and gratification: adolescents, whose emotional energies tend to be focused on peers, tend to hold utilitarian views of the family (Larson & Richards, 1994). These expectations are a product of cognitive structures that interpret experiences on the basis of past interactions and that construct scripts that guide future interactions (Baldwin, 1992). Differences in relationship schema arise because the nature and the content of interactions differ across family members: Mothers, have more mundane socializing interactions with children than fathers, and a much higher percentage of mother-child interaction, fall into this category than father-child interactions. When parents are living in constant fear, they may deny their children normal developmental transitions and the sense of basic trust and security that is the foundation of healthy emotional development (Drell, Siegel, and Gaensbauer 1993). Parents who have been traumatized by violence exposure must cope with their own trauma before they are able to help their children (Lewis, 1996).

Methods

The present study involved a questionnaire of 150 children, aged between 15 and 18 years. In particular the study examined perceptions of domestic violence and child abuse that takes place in family. By identifying the patterns and duration of children's exposure to violence and children's reported feelings in response to their experiences of violence, this research will help to determine the level and type of information needed to help prevent domestic violence. Specifically, the study investigated children's perceptions of how often they experienced violence, directly or indirectly, and how the violence has been and is affecting their lives.

To examine children's perceptions about their experiences of violent events this study addressed four main objectives:

1. to obtain information about the relationship of adolescents with their parents
2. to collect information on the level of basic knowledge among young people,

linked to domestic violence

3. identify ways of behavior responses to violence against adolescents
4. identify forms of violence faced by children in the family

In this study 5 randomly selected schools of various sizes, geographic areas and socioeconomic neighbourhoods was undertaken. The methods used in this study was questionnaire which is composed of 15 closed questions and 3 open questions.

Data Collection

Data were collected from children in the 5 participating schools between the months of September and November. A time to conduct the survey was negotiated with each participating school. The survey was carried out in school time. The questionnaire was administered to the students in each classroom by the researcher who is a qualified teacher.

RESULTS

The participating children were asked whether or not they had ever experienced a variety of events that were or might have been harmful to them, and in particular, their experiences of direct and indirect physical, emotional and sexual violence. The children rated the impact of these events on their lives. These results are organised and presented around the four research questions.

Research questions “ What is the relationships with your parents?” the major number of adolescents reported her good and very good. About 15 % of adolescents they have confirmed that they are situations that define this relationship, while 10% of them have been classified as negative relationship between them and their parents. The question of which of the parents have a closer relationship so they responded: 62% of adolescents have stated that their relationship is

more closely with their mother. The paternal figure is seen as an authoritarian figure. However, about 20% of adolescents relationship with the father is more closely.

The second objective is to collect information on the level of basic knowledge among young people, linked to domestic violence. Most of adolescents reported that they have information about domestic violence. The question “ How would you define domestic violence on the basis of information that you have?” gave some interesting conclusions. 25% of respondents claimed that domestic violence is a negative phenomenon labeled as a “social problem”. Labeling of violence as something negative that should stop comprises 40% of adolescents whereas for 30% of adolescent violence is defined as “abuse” and “maltreatment”.

In terms of identifying forms of expression of domestic violence, in the first place ranking with 40 % of adolescents is emotional violence. Only 30% of respondents have identified physical violence.

The fourth objective is to identify ways of behavior responses to violence against adolescents. Adolescents want to be heard in their families and be involved in decision-making. The first option selected by 38% of adolescents is respecting the opinion of a adolescents in different family problems.

Conclusion

This study extends understanding of youth’s perceptions of their experiences of violence. Miljeteig (2000) suggested that to establish a culture for listening to children it may be more appropriate to promote an "adult ears" movement instead of the more common "children's voices" movement. Adolescents want to be heard in their families and be involved in decision-making. 25% of respondents claimed that domestic violence is a negative phenomenon labeled as a “social problem”. Labeling of violence as something negative that should stop comprises 40% of adolescents whereas for 30% of adolescent violence is defined as “abuse” and “maltreatment”. Parenting styles characterize parents and their relations with specific children . The question of

which of the parents have a closer relationship so they responded: 62% of adolescents have stated that their relationship is more closely with their mother. The paternal figure is seen as an authoritarian figure. The study demonstrated children's competence to express the ways in which violence perceived by those. Conclusions are that effective development of policy and provision should be based on data that reflects children's perceptions of the violence in the context of their own lives.

REFERENCES

Baldwin. M. W, (1992) Relational schemas and the processing of social information. *Psychological Bulletin*. 112, 461-484.

Beeman, S. K., Hagemester, A. K., and Edleson, J. L. (1999). Child protection and battered women services: From conflict to collaboration. *Child Maltreatment*, 4(2), pp. 116 to 126.

Bell, C.C., and Jenkins, E.J. Traumatic stress and children. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* (1991) 2:175–85.

Carlson, E. B. (2000). A conceptual framework for the impact of traumatic experience. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 1(1), 4-28.

Cicchetti, D., and Toth, S. Developmental perspectives on trauma: Theory, research, and intervention. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997;

Drell, M., Siegel, C., and Gaensbauer, T. Posttraumatic stress disorders. In *Handbook of infant mental health*. C. Zeanah, ed. New York: The Guilford Press, 1993, pp. 291–304;

Finkelhor, D. (1995). The victimization of children: A developmental perspective. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 65(2), 177-193 .

Finkelhor, D., & Dziuba-Leatherman, J. (1994b). Children as victims of violence. A national survey. *Paediatrics*, 84 (4), 413-420.

Garbarino, J. (2001). An ecological perspective on the effects of violence on children. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(3), 361-3

Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardno, C. (1992). *Children in danger: Coping with the effects of community violence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gorman-Smith, D., and Tolan, P. The role of exposure to community violence and developmental problems among inner-city youth. *Development and Psychopathology* (1998) 10:99–114; Cooley-Quille, M.R., Turner, S.M., and Beidel, D.C. Emotional impact of children's exposure to community violence: A preliminary study. *The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (1995) 34:1362–68;

Hartless, J. M., Ditton, J., Nair, G., & Phillips, S. (1995). More sinned against than sinning. A study of young teenagers' experience of crime. *British Journal of Criminology*, 35(1), 14-33.

Jaffe, P. G., Hurley, D. J., & Wolfe D. (1990). Children's observations of violence: i: Critical issues in child development and intervention planning. *Canadian Journal Psychiatry*, 35(6), 466-470.

Leavitt, L. A. & Fox, N. A. (Eds.). (1993). *The psychological effects of war and violence on children*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lewis, M. Trauma reverberates: Psychosocial evaluation of the caregiving environment of young children exposed to violence and traumatic loss. *Zero to Three* (April/May 1996) 16:21–28

Lowenthal, B. (2001). *Abuse and neglect. The educator 's guide to the identification and prevention of child maltreatment*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Newman, L. S. (2001, September). Coping and defense: No clear distinction. *American Psychologist*, 56(9), 760-761 .

Newton, T. L. & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., (2001). Marriage and health: His and hers. *Psychological Bulletin*, 12 j, 472-503.

Osofsky, J. D. (1 999). The impact of violence on children. *Domestic violence and children*, 9(3), 33-49.

Perry, B. D. (1995). Principles of working with traumatized children: Special considerations for parents, caretakers and teachers. CIVITAS Child Trauma Programs: Houston, TX: Baylor College of Medicine.

Perry, B. D. (1996). Neurodevelopmental adaptations to violence: How children survive the intragenerational vortex of violence. In B. D. Perry. Violence and childhood trauma: Understanding and responding to the effects of violence on young children (pp. 1-18). Cleveland, OH: Gund Foundation.

Reiss, D., Richters, I. E., Radke-Yarrow, M., & Scharff, D. (Eds.). (1993). Children and violence. New York: Guilford Press.

Schwartz, D., & Hopmeyer Gorman, A. (2003). Community violence exposure and children's academic functioning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 163-173.

Turning Point. (n.d.). *How domestic violence affects children*. Retrieved September 23, 2004, from <http://www.dbtech.net/turningpoint/children.htm>

Wallach, L. B. (1994). Violence and young children's development. ERIC Digest. Retrieved from <http://ericecece.org/pubs/digests/1994/wallac94.html>

Wolfe, D. A., Crooks, C. V., Lee, V., McIntyre-Smith, A., & Jaffe, P. G. (2003). The effects of children's exposure to domestic violence: A meta-analysis and critique. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 6(3), 171-187.

Yegidis, B. (1988). Wife abuse and marital rape among women who seek help. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 3(1), 62-68