The impact of Domestic Violence on Children's Psychology and Self-cognition

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Abstract. Domestic violence has become an issue of high social concern, mainly focusing on the impact and solutions to domestic violence in intimate relationships. This article mainly focuses on the psychological impact of children witnessing or experiencing domestic violence. It studies from many aspects, mainly on children. The psychological impact on academic performance and self-esteem is also analyzed, and it is also analyzed that children are very likely to engage in violent behavior in the future. This article collects data ranging from the number of children experiencing domestic violence to data analysis of youth violence. This article ultimately believes that domestic violence has a great impact on children's personality, psychology, and academic performance, and not only affects the child's personal psychology. Such children will have a high chance of subconsciously imitating their parents' intimate sexual relationships when they grow up. Violent behavior will form a vicious cycle of violence, which will also be a huge hidden danger to society. Therefore, paying attention to and actively mitigating domestic violence will also alleviate children's psychological problems and health problems.

1 Introduction

The family has a great influence on the whole growth and life of the child. It can even be said that the family environment is the only channel to obtain information and learn in childhood. Children appear in the family unit as soon as they are born, and when they cannot walk or speak, Actions require the help of others, but the child’s vision and thinking have been absorbing the surrounding information. When he grows up a bit, he can either learn by himself or help others. The child begins to learn to speak and walk. The beginning of life is in the family. If people grow up in a harmonious and happy family, then the child’s personality and the relationship between people will be friendly at first. But if it is a family with problems and defects, then no matter how confident the adults are in caring for the child, there is no way to cover the child’s eyes and ears to prevent him from seeing the breakdown of the relationship and the fierce quarrel. If there is even domestic violence in the family environment, no matter whether the child witnesses or experiences it, it will have a great impact on him. The child himself may have mental illness, have incorrect cognition of intimacy, and even imitate the behaviour of his parents. Behaviour, there may be violent behaviour in the future, which is a hidden danger to others and society. So, paying attention to children's psychological problems is also equivalent to solving hidden dangers in the future of society. People should pay attention to it, just like the future of human beings. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sees kids as having rights and has shifted how people view their rights and influence [1]. It changed kids from just getting help to being strong rights holders [1]. The CRC is a powerful human rights agreement that most countries support [1]. Still, people are not moving quickly enough to stop all kinds of harm to kids [1]. Related practitioners must do more to end violence against children by 2030, like the promise in Sustainable development Goals (SDG) 16.2 [1].

2 Background

Studies on the effects of intimate partner violence exposure on children were limited with methodological issues as well as challenges. First of all, it needs to be understood that the results of seeing abuse in the home are rather than a "homogeneous uni-dimensional event" that can be scientifically evaluated without taking additional stresses or traumas that young children might face into account [2]. It’s crucial to distinguish between ignored kids who also witness violence as opposed to those who just observe domestic violence as additional types of trauma and hardship frequently co-occur alongside domestic violence. Otherwise, without considering the potential consequences of being an immediate victim of abuse, it may be incorrect for attributing a child’s problems to the influence of paying attention [3-5].

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3 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is described as the occurrence of aggressive or violent behaviour in personal relationships, marriages, or other familial contexts [6]. However, when domestic violence takes place within the context of children’s families, it profoundly impacts the children involved and influences their well-being and development. Domestic violence can be described as violent behaviour towards another spouse including but not limited to controlling, bullying, violent, arguing, or threatening behaviour [2,7]. The difference between domestic violence with children and domestic violence without children in different families is that observing a family Children that are violent are probably affected in some way. For instance, babies and kids react differently after witnessing cruelty at home. According to the Department of Justice, between 3.3 million and 10 million kids are exposed to domestic abuse each year [8]. Recent research has highlighted how children suffer emotionally or mentally from being the victim of domestic abuse between parents, guardians, or siblings. Abuse that occurs within a household may be physical, psychological, or online [6]. The reviewed literature claims that when children witness domestic violence as a feature, Youth may act in an antisocial manner against other children [6]. This article examines the impact of domestic abuse of children, including mental, physical, and bullying [6].

3.1 The impact of Domestic Violence on Children

3.1.1 General situation

Previous research has shown that children who experience domestic abuse have psychological repercussions. In the past, domestic violence was not a clash with most nations’ cultural ideas, hence this is unimportant. However, most studies agree that using violence against abused people prevents dangerous conduct. But because of its nature, domestic violence is considered a problem between adults solve it yourself in court. However, when children see the home between parents, family members, or other siblings an indirect effect of family violence is problems with self-perception and possibly antisocial feelings towards other children.

3.1.2 Statistical results

UNICEF research in 2018 found that globally, between 133 million and 275 million children have witnessed or experienced domestic violence, in the United States, there are 339,000 to 2.7 million such children, in the United Kingdom, 240,000 to 963,000, and in Canada, 85,000 to 36.2 million [6]. In Africa, an estimated 500,000 to 1.3 million children suffer from family violence according to UNICEF [6]. After experiencing domestic violence, children not only suffer from physical pain, but psychological problems are the most easily overlooked, and they will become hidden dangers in the process of growing up.

3.2 Impact on Children's Behaviour

From the research of Flannery, Singer, and Wester, it can be found that girls who are victims of dangerous violence are 2-7 times more likely to score in medical measures such as anxiety, depression, anger, post-traumatic stress, and dissociation, 3-5 times that of the control group [9]. Violent boys were 3-6 times more likely than controls to be victims or witnesses of violence [9]. Violence in adolescence will pose a particularly large social hidden danger [10]. Violence in adolescence affects the growing psychology of children and has a negative social impact. According to statistics, the incidence of violence in adolescence is much higher than that in other stages, and adolescents suffer disproportionately violent consequences, including death [10]. This type of child usually has external violence in adolescence, which has a very bad impact on the child’s social relationship. The child may subconsciously learn the violent behaviour of the parents, which is not conducive to the development of the child itself and other children., and the child may also hurt the partner in the face of other intimate relationships. If there is a child in the future, the violence is likely to continue, which will form a vicious cycle of violence.

3.3 The impact of Domestic Violence on Children’s Academic Performance

3.3.1 Direct effect

The top graduates will become a nation’s leaders and social resources, which will impact the nation’s social and economic development, therefore students' academic achievement is crucial [11]. There are many valuable studies in the past that have developed various models to evaluate student performance through various factors such as family salary, parental orientation, teacher-student ratio, distance to school and gender of students, etc., but there are too many factors [11]. If children in the family engage in violent behaviour, on the one hand, their physical health is not guaranteed, they are injured and have difficulty moving. Without parental care, they cannot concentrate on their studies. Their academic performance will be affected by domestic violence and decline. If the child subconsciously learns in adolescence, because of his parents' violent behaviour, if he commits violent behaviour in school, not only his own academic performance will be
affected, but the physical health and academic performance of the classmates who were abused by him will also be affected.

3.3.1 Indirect effect from the perspective of emotion and cognition

It is not just the violent factors that affect children, family misfortune can also make them feel insecure. Previous studies have shown that when interviewing children about domestic violence, the words that appear frequently are very negative, and many children express fear. Parents, afraid of grown-ups [6]. According to studies using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach and Edelbrock, 1983) that children’s behaviour was more aggressive, antisocial and fearful [12]. Their social relationships were also simpler than those of the other children [12]. In these studies, it was shown that children who experienced violent behaviour had great emotional and cognitive problems. These emotional and cognitive problems may affect children’s academic performance.

4 Impact of Experienced or Witnessed Domestic Violence on Children

The previous research showed that violent activities happening in households will have negative mental effect on kids who saw it personally. Domestic violence was historically tolerated by most nations and by a variety of cultural ideas. Typically, children exhibit alterations in their behaviour, frequently coupled with a diminishing academic performance and intellectual development. These changes become evident when it becomes apparent that something is unsettling the children. Upon investigation, it becomes evident that this disturbance is attributable to the family’s turmoil arising from their parents’ conflicts and fights.

4.1 Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence on Children’s Academic Performance

Children who are exposed to home violence and violent community environment or experience physical injury during violence are most likely to suffer both reduced academic progress and disruptive and unfocused classroom behaviour. It is well-estimated that almost 10 to 20 percent of kids in America have witnessed and been part of some sort of violence [12]. Children affected by domestic and social violence are more likely to have lower emotional competence, diminished academic performance. If they are put into the same traumatic situation over and over again, then a significant part of people would develop posttraumatic disorders both emotionally and physically.

There is research done by Jennifer Chastain it says approximately 85% of mothers reported observing adverse changes in their children’s academic and behavioural performance both before and after incidents of domestic violence. Out of the seven mothers who participated in the interviews, five mentioned that once the domestic violence ceased, their children’s academic achievements actually improved. To illustrate, they attained higher grades, dedicated more time to their homework, and displayed increased engagement in the classroom. These survey findings indicate that the highly stressful atmosphere resulting from domestic violence might hinder children’s ability to focus on completing school assignments, both inside and outside the classroom. Struggling academically can create difficulties for children in terms of getting back on track. As a child’s performance deteriorates, it becomes challenging for them to keep up with their peers. Ultimately, children may lose hope of attaining good grades because they have fallen significantly behind in the classroom materials [13].

4.2 Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence on Children’s Well-being

When children undergo instances of domestic and familial violence, it can have an impact on their emotional well-being. Children frequently experience emotions such as fear, stress, sadness, anger, anxiety, or shame in such situations [14]. Children are confronted with feelings of frustration, hopelessness, concern, sorrow, or embarrassment, they often experience a loss of a recollection of their own memory, logical thinking abilities, and the capability to establish connections. The mere thought of being required to read aloud in class can result in some children becoming paralyzed by fear. Likewise, facing a written test or examination, which necessitates memory recall, reasoning, handwriting, planning, and organization skills, can immobilize some children’s cognitive processes. For certain kids, encountering a math word problem can be particularly challenging. Children who are anxious tend to underperform, and their ability to acquire new information is hindered. Anxiety is, unfortunately, detrimental to memory. Regrettably, in many modern classrooms, children are often seen to have their intellectual potential and capabilities sapped by negative emotional states. Emotions effectively act as a switch that can either facilitate or impede the learning process [15].

4.3 Impact of Witnessing Domestic Violence on Children’s Sleep

The emotional toll of domestic violence can also affect a child’s sleep, the quality of which can have a significant impact on a child’s academic performance.
Furthermore, academic challenges were found to be more prevalent among children with poor sleep patterns compared to those with normal sleep patterns. Among the various factors contributing to low academic performance, one of the most significant predictors has been recognized as children’s fatigue, which manifests as difficulties in waking up in the morning and a need for afternoon naps [16]. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that heightened daytime drowsiness resulting from inadequate sleep quality can significantly hinder the cognitive abilities and behavioural performance of students [17,18].

5. Discussion and Suggestion

Growing up within a household marked by intrafamilial violence constitutes a profoundly distressing and disconcerting experience, wielding the potential to exert a pervasive influence across multiple dimensions of a child’s existence. These dimensions encompass not only the child’s overall development and life trajectory but also their physical and psychological well-being. Such an environment carries the adverse consequence of diminishing a child’s likelihood of achieving scholastic success, heightening the probability of their becoming either victims or perpetrators of violent behaviour, and significantly amplifying their susceptibility to enduring health-related challenges that can persist throughout their entire lifespan.

5.1 Suggestions for mitigating the negative impact of Domestic Violence

It is imperative for families to accord a heightened priority to the holistic well-being of their children, encompassing not just their physical health but also their mental equilibrium. This is especially germane given the escalating prevalence of mental health issues within contemporary society. Regrettably, this facet of child welfare remains underemphasized within many families at present. It is sanguinely envisaged that in the future, a broader societal awareness will be cultivated, inciting heightened attentiveness and proactive responses to this pressing concern.

5.2 Limitation of Current Studies

Presently, empirical research has yet to furnish a definitive delineation of the precise threshold of violence requisite to impact children. It is an avenue ripe for prospective exploration. Such investigations hold the promise of furnishing parents with structured insights into the nurturing, corrective, and pedagogical approaches requisite for fostering a more meaningful and efficacious developmental course for their progeny, devoid of injurious repercussions. The societal import of this endeavour is indubitably substantive.

When contentious issues surface, it is incumbent upon parents to equip themselves with strategies adept at discerning the etiology of these issues, thereby facilitating requisite ameliorative interventions to expedite their children’s journey toward resolution. It is hoped that forthcoming research endeavours shall unearth the most efficacious modalities for addressing these challenges.

6. Conclusion

This review delves into the substantial influence of domestic violence on children, encompassing those who directly experience it and those who witness it. It underscores how the family environment profoundly shapes a child's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. A harmonious family setting promotes feelings of safety and stability, facilitating a child’s optimal physical and emotional growth. Conversely, a tense or violent home environment can impede a child’s development.

The review defines domestic violence within families as encompassing violent or controlling behaviors like bullying, arguing, and threats directed at a spouse or partner. Witnessing such violence can evoke various responses in children, both physically and psychologically.

The term domestic violence is unpacked as not merely a single act but rather a pattern of behaviours—physical, sexual, and psychological—perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. It’s emphasized that this pattern can profoundly affect children’s well-being and development, and research has demonstrated its psychological impact on children who witness it.

The review highlights that domestic violence often co-occurs with other forms of abuse and adversity in a child’s life, making it vital to distinguish between children who witness violence and those directly victimized by abuse.

The research findings suggest that children exposed to domestic violence might experience adverse effects on their academic performance and behaviour, potentially leading to emotional challenges and difficulties in forming relationships outside the family. Additionally, it underscores that the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children as holders of rights and calls for intensified efforts to safeguard them from violence.

In summary, the text underscores the pressing need to address the consequences of domestic violence on children’s physical, emotional, and academic development, particularly focusing on the psychological and behavioural repercussions.

Authors Contribution
All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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