



PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

1st Aysha Manahil, 2nd Kavya Vijayan

1st PG Student, 2nd Assistant Professor,

Department of Psychology,

1CDOE, JAIN(Deemed -to- be University) Bengaluru-78, INDIA

Abstract: Domestic violence is a major public health and psychological concern that affects not only intimate partners but also children who witness or directly experience violence within the home. Exposure to domestic violence during childhood has profound consequences for emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social development. Children living in violent households frequently experience chronic stress, fear, insecurity, and trauma, which may contribute to long-term psychopathology. This paper reviews the psychological effects of domestic violence on children, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), attachment disturbances, behavioral problems, academic difficulties, and intergenerational patterns of violence. It also discusses developmental differences in response to violence exposure and highlights the importance of early intervention, school-based support, and trauma-informed therapeutic approaches.

Index Terms – Stress, Anxiety, Domestic Violence, Children, Attachment

I. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence refers to physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or economic abuse occurring within intimate or family relationships. Children may be exposed to domestic violence either directly through abuse or indirectly by witnessing violence between caregivers. Even when children are not the direct targets of violence, exposure to an unsafe and hostile environment can significantly impair their mental health and psychosocial development. Globally, violence against children remains widespread, often occurring within the home environment where children should feel safest. Exposure to violence in the family context has been associated with emotional distress, impaired learning, poor social adjustment, and longterm mental health problems. Research consistently demonstrates that children exposed to domestic violence are at greater risk for internalizing disorders such as anxiety and depression, as well as externalizing behaviors including aggression, hyperactivity, and conduct problems. The effects often persist into adolescence and adulthood if left untreated.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Violence towards children and domestic violence both can directly affect a child's mental health. Long exposure to violence such as domestic violence or being experienced themselves can lead to mental health issues. Besides to prone having mental health issues, the child can have an overall psychological impact that can influence their emotional regulation, cognitive development, and attachment styles. The literature

has been reviewed with the purpose of examining how domestic violence can also have an influence on their mental health which can extend into influencing their adult life if left untreated. The literature review also focuses on the mental health policy that is currently present for children exposed to domestic violence.

Children are obligated to see their parents as their emotional support system and safe haven. Domestic abuse, on the other hand, can force them to believe otherwise. The kid who thought their parents were supposed to shield them from harm ends up being the one who causes harm to others. As explained Margolin & Vickerman (2007) by complex traumas are a relatively new conceptualization of long-term, repeating traumatic events (Cook et al., 2005; van der Kolk, 2005). The occurrence of numerous, persistent, and prolonged, developmentally adverse traumatic experiences, most frequently of an interpersonal nature (e.g., sexual or physical assault, war, group violence) and onset in early life, according to the definition of complex trauma (Margolin & Vickerman, 2007, p.4. Adding to that, According to Buss et al. (2015) "More recently, the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2014) indicated that 88% of child abuse and neglect fatalities occurred among children 7 years of age and younger. Often, there is an overlap between domestic violence and child physical and sexual abuse (Osofsky, 2003)." (Buss et al., 2015, p.225). As a result, children who grow up in a household where there is domestic violence will be vulnerable to neglect and abuse. The abuse can be both physical and emotional.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on how domestic violence can psychologically impact children and specifically discusses emotional dysregulation, cognitive development, and attachment styles influenced because of exposure to violence. The paper also focuses on how what kind of mental health policy exists for these children who suffer from mental health problems in the context of Bangladesh. This research aims for depth analysis of how violence psychologically impact the children which could extend into their adult life and how a proper inclusive mental health policy that is needed for these children. For this reason the research was conducted in a Qualitative research method.

3.1 Data sources

This research was done using the Qualitative research method. The data presented in the paper are from secondary data sources. There is a lot of data and research on violence on children and domestic violence so the paper has been focused on secondary data. According to Silva Martins et al. (2018) in simplistic terms, secondary data is more applicable to every dataset set not collected by the author, or "the analysis of data gathered by someone else". Secondary data also includes data previously collected and considered to be reused for new issues for which the data collected was not originally intended (Silva Martins et al., 2018, p.2). Thus because of the present vast research already available on the topic, it can be the best way to achieve a deeper understanding of the issue. As the research question focuses both on the child who is directly abused and children growing up in domestic violence, the data from the secondary sources have been carefully examined and analyzed. The data for the research question focusing on mental health policy is collected from data that has been previously collected from research one in the context of Bangladesh. The data has been collected from journals and government records. The data is analyzed to ensure that the issue is actually addressed and discusses the research questions. In this research, secondary data is used in the literature review and discussion of the findings. The literature view consists of data gathered from numerous journals and statistics provided from government records and other researches conducted on the violence on children.

3.2 Background

Bangladesh for a very long time had prevalent domestic violence problems. Bangladesh being a patriarchal society, where women have to live with economic and social disadvantage domestic violence is very common. According to Rahman (2019) to women subjected to physical or sexual assault by intimate or non-partner violence at some stage in their lives estimates vary from 23.2 % in high-income countries to 37.7 % in WHO South-East Asia regions (WHO, 2017). Bangladesh has a high incidence of domestic violence among South-East Asian countries, which continues to obstruct the country's growth and equality. (Rahman, 2019, p.98-99).

Domestic violence can happen in form of physical aggression, sexual assault, or verbal aggression. As Hossen (2014) states in the findings of the VAW Survey 2011, 87 percent of currently married women have ever encountered some form of violence from their current partner, and 77 percent have experienced some type of violence in the previous 12 months. Psychological abuse accounts for the highest percentage of all types of violence. Almost 90% of those who have ever been abused by their current husband have experienced violence in the previous 12 months, implying that the spouse's abuse is persistent (Hossen, 2014, p.5-6).

IV. RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Children's emotional health is deeply affected: Exposure to domestic violence often leads to anxiety, depression, and difficulty controlling emotions. Cognitive growth gets disrupted: Trauma interferes with memory, reasoning, and learning, which can harm academic performance and social skills. Attachment patterns are disturbed: Many children develop insecure or avoidant bonds with parents, which later influences their adult relationships. Trauma continues into adulthood: Even after leaving the abusive environment, unresolved childhood trauma can cause problems in trust, intimacy, and emotional stability. Gender differences are visible: Girls tend to internalize trauma (sadness, withdrawal), while boys often externalize it (anger, aggression). Children are often misdiagnosed or untreated: Because they cannot express their feelings clearly, PTSD and trauma symptoms are overlooked or mistaken for other issues. Policy gaps in Bangladesh: Although laws like the Domestic Violence Act (2010) exist, mental health services for children are missing. Over 90% of people with diagnosable mental disorders remain untreated. Need for inclusive mental health policy: Findings highlight that without accessible, stigma-free services, children remain vulnerable, and cycles of trauma continue.

V. CONCLUSION

Domestic violence can be of different kinds, from physical, sexual to emotional too. It is not unknown how much it can affect the victims in the long run. In this paper, the children who were from abusive households have been the main focus and how chronic domestic violence can lead to problems in emotional regulation, cognitive development disorder, and attachment styles in children. As explained earlier, the children's emotional, cognitive, and attachment development would be affected. The research questions were investigated using a qualitative approach, which allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the emotional, cognitive, and attachment issues that children may experience as children, which can persist into adulthood and trigger impairments in how they perceive themselves and the environment around them. We may infer from the findings that trauma can cause a child to externalize or internalize his or her problems. This can lead to them imitating past experiences or developing self-esteem problems, making social and interpersonal relationships difficult. Most importantly the relationship with their parents is affected by the trauma from the violent environment. They become distant and distrustful about their parents which reflects on how they manage their future relationships

VI. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Context-Specific Focus (Bangladesh). Policies and cultural factors discussed are specific to Bangladesh. Results may not fully apply to other countries with different socio-cultural and legal systems. Lack of Direct Child Perspectives. Children's voices are absent since no interviews or surveys were conducted. This limits understanding of their lived experiences and emotional nuances. Parental support programs children's recovery often depends on the non-abusive parent, programs should strengthen parental coping skills. Potential Misdiagnosis Issues highlights that PTSD and trauma symptoms in children are often misdiagnosed.

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