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EFFECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Domestic Violence is like a giant and eats the childhood of the children. Children are precious for the development of the nation. But domestic violence leaves the adverse impact on the children. Children are the center point for the parents, but they are forgetting them in own fight. If children are growing up in the environment of domestic violence and then they are live in tension and anxiety and in fear of anger. Thus, the children are victims of child abuse due to emotionally and psychologically broken. Domestic violence affects the lives of many children in Iraq. 23 children were killed in separate cities of Iraq during year 2020, at the hands of their families, as a result of domestic violence that has been prevalence in the country, while about 50 others were admitted to hospitals because of severe beatings that lead to fractures or burns. Baghdad, Diyala and Basra topped the crimes of violence against children. UNICEF condemns all acts of violence against children and call for society to protect them from such behaviors. Also, calls on government authorities in Iraq to strengthen mechanisms to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice and safeguard the life of the child. Children in Iraq need a safe environment, free of violence and conducive to allow them to develop their full potential, in order to ensure children's right to privacy and dignity.

KEYWORDS: Effect, Domestic Violence, children

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence has been a persistent problem in society and is likely to continue to rise [1]. Domestic violence is an act of destructive physical and mental harm and neglect among family members; it may include spouses, children, relatives and any person dependent on the same household. The problem of domestic violence can affect people of all genders, ages, and classes, and has a profound impact on the happiness of family members, especially for children, who are the second most affected by domestic violence [2].

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the phenomenon of violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, a group or a community, which results or is likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, or developmental loss or damage” [3].

The effects of domestic violence are highly influential on children and can result in emotional problems, such as depression, emotional confusion, nervousness, fear, possible adaptation problems, difficulty and willingness in socializing with colleagues and friends [4]. Continually violent families affect the perceptions and attitudes of children such that those children start assuming violence as a normal and sociable behavior [5]. As children enter adolescence, they may become more aggressive and violent and fight with friends, where they are more likely to continue violence [6]. For some children, the problem can lead to depression, a state of a person that can lead to serious issues, such as neurosis, psychosis, and suicide [7].

In 2007 mental health specialists say there has been an increase in domestic violence against children largely a result of the violence that has gripped Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003. They say the violence has affected people's behavior. "We have observed that there has been an increase in the number of cases of aggression against children in Iraq and the main perpetrators of this aggression are the children's own parents. Their aggressive behavior is seriously affecting the daily life of thousands of innocent children [8].

UNICEF will continue to support the Governments in both Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region with a shared vision that by 2024 children, adolescents and women, especially the most vulnerable, are protected from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, in accordance with national legal and policy framework and international standards [8].

In 2018 still 4 out of 5 children in Iraq experience violence at home or in school. UNICEF condemns all acts of violence against children and call for society to protect them from such behaviors. Also, calls on government authorities in Iraq to strengthen mechanisms to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice and safeguard the life of the child. Children in Iraq need a safe environment, free of violence and conducive to allow them to develop their full potential [9].

Finally Domestic Violence directly or indirectly has leaved the impact upon the family members and especially upon the children. The children are needed too healthy or peacefully or securing or safe environment in the home. Homes are the heaven and secured place for children. But domestic violence spoiled the home environment. Impact of domestic violence clearly shows on their behaviors, adjustment, development and thoughts. Children are losing faith on the relationships. In current era the great impact of domestic violence upon the children’s attitude, behavior. The children are suffering at the hands of family members and they are suffering from silence. A child needs the both mother and father for the development. Due to violence the children are divided into two parts and they’re brought

up makes them stubborn, impatient, violated, etc. They are facing so many problems to cope up with the society and other peoples [10].

Types of the domestic violence

1. Physical violence

Physical violence refers to injury by an offender in the form of flogging, kicking, biting, or other means that cause injury such as fracture, bleeding, bruising, and complete exposure to toxins. Any controversy that takes place has to be classified as a non-accident event for it to be deemed as physical violence [4].

2. Sexual violence

Sexual violence refers to actions intended to use the act as a tool to meet the offender's sexual needs, including forcing for sex, intimidating, or seducing [11].

3. Psychological violence

Psychological violence refers to abuse of the mind controlling it, causing a person's humiliation and resulting in the feelings of a sense of impairment or degradation of humanity [5].



Effects domestic violence on physical, psychological, relationship and education of children

1) Physical Effects

This effect can occur when children try to help or protect someone, or try to stop their parents from fighting and clearly see if the child is directly affected or assaulted. The direct and immediate physical effects that can happen in domestic violence include injuries such as bruises, fractures, and teeth and hair loss. This is clear evidence that the effects of domestic violence also have a huge effect on mental health and may lead to increased use of alcohol, drugs, and other substances [12].

In fact, if the substance or alcohol gets in the body of a child, it has a huge impact; it could affect the brain, which can harm the memory of the children and affect their behavior or systems within the body, such as slowing things down, including deteriorating metabolism in the body. Added that children may

get involved with them due to stress or gaining their parents' attention. In addition to physical deterioration, it can lead to loss of personality and lack of consciousness, as well as lead to accidents in extreme cases. Ultimately, these things can harm children [13].

2. Psychological effects

This effect is very dangerous for children because the psychological effects are complex and can be silent in some cases. It is undeniable that any form of domestic violence will certainly have an impact on the mental state of the child, and children affected by this can behave in two different ways: express a feeling or do not express a feeling [7].

3. Relationship effects

It is undeniable that every life has a relationship that cannot be avoided. Family and other personal relationships with domestic violence can cause children, who are victims of domestic violence, to avoid having good relationships with other people because family relationships make them anxious about their relationship with other people [14].

3.1 Family relationship

The family is the starting point for any relationship regarding children. The meaning of the word 'parent' for all children is the person who can protect and comfort them. However, when domestic violence occurs, children lose faith in the relationship. Children may judge things differently than adults. They judge situations according to what they see and, hence, perceive, as their brains are not developed enough to understand the depth of the relationship [15].

3.2 Interpersonal relationship

Domestic violence often takes place in today's society, but it has never been accepted. The worst thing is that children are being bullied and are socially unacceptable simply because of problems they did not cause, and there is no denying that children who are victims of domestic violence are negatively perceived by society; this may cause the children to feel ashamed. These problems prevent children from making friends; hence, they choose to live alone, as domestic violence leads them to poor family relationships, leading them to feel scared in every relationship. In other cases, children may not be socially acceptable due to their aggressive behavior and inability to have a good relationship with other people [12].

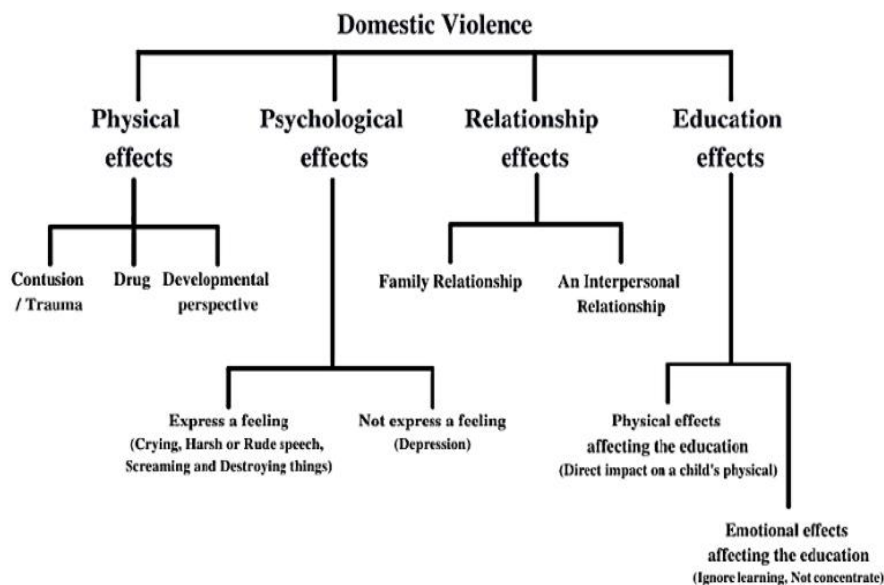
4. EDUCATION EFFECTS

Education is another important aspect for children; it helps them shape their future. Education is now accessible to all children, as everyone has limitless opportunities. Children's education will continue to be beneficial to them with the support of their parents. Basically, all children are interested in getting an education and feel that school is a place where they can meet another form of society: their friends and teachers. If something detrimental occurs in a child's life, such as domestic violence, it could impact their feelings and body, resulting in the decline of their interest in education. A good family

relationship helps a child develop a sound mind, resulting in better education; adverse family relationships that include domestic violence may not directly affect a child’s education; however, they might cause effects which, in turn, have an impact on education [15].

4.1 Physical effects affecting education

Domestic violence may not have much of a direct impact on a child’s education, but when a child sees their mother suffer and they are unable to do anything about it, they might harm their own body in order to vent their anger; if a child does harm themselves, they will not be able to go to school, hence affecting their education. The scars or wounds will take time to get better, and until they do get better, their



studies will remain discontinued [16].

4.2 Emotional effects affecting education

Emotions are both positive and negative, and they can both support and disrupt educational interests. Education in itself is difficult and can cause stress and pressure on students; therefore, managing emotions is very difficult for school-going children who suffer domestic violence [15].

Figure 1 Flow Chart representing impacts of domestic violence on children

A developmental perspective on the consequences of living with domestic violence

There are a number of theories that seek to explain why children’s exposure to domestic violence is likely to adversely affect their development. It is accepted that children, and in particular infants and toddlers, are totally dependent upon the care of others, and that they have an inbuilt need to form an attachment to at least one significant care giver, typically their mother. Attachment theory states that, within close relationships, young children develop mental representations, or working models, of their

own worthiness based upon other people's availability and their willingness to provide care and protection [17].

If an adult's ability to provide care to a child is compromised, or is less than optimal, then a child's attachment can suffer. Domestic violence undermines this developmental need for security and stability, through the main care giver's lack of availability and the child's exposure to a hostile atmosphere. This can result in the child developing attachments of poor quality [18].

Impact of exposure to domestic violence on children's brain development. The structure of the brain is developed over a succession of sensitive periods, each of which is associated with the formation of specific neural pathways (i.e. connections between brain cells) that are associated with specific abilities. The development of increasingly complex skills builds on the neural pathways and skills that were formed at earlier stages of development. Through this process, early experiences create a foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and subsequent physical and mental health. A strong developmental foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes, whilst a weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties [19].

There is emerging evidence that young children who have witnessed domestic violence score lower on cognitive measures even when controlling for mother's IQ, child's weight at birth, birth complications, the quality of intellectual stimulation at home, and gender. Exposure to domestic violence particularly in the first two years of life appears to be especially harmful [20].

In situations where a child's stress levels are high, such as in situations of domestic violence, persistent elevations of stress hormones and altered levels of key brain chemicals produce an internal physiological state that disrupts the structure of the developing brain and can lead to difficulties in learning, memory, and self-regulation. Continuous stimulation of the stress response system can also affect the immune system and other metabolic regulatory mechanisms, leading to a permanently lower threshold for their activation throughout life. As a result, children who experience toxic stress in early childhood may develop a lifetime of greater susceptibility to stress-related physical illnesses (such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes) as well as mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse) [21].

Intervening to support and protect children from domestic violence

Whilst we have an increasing understanding of the processes that underpin risk and protective factors in children exposed to domestic violence, we have substantially less knowledge about how to influence these processes in order to increase a child's resilience [22]. Risk factors heighten the probability that children will experience poor outcomes in both the immediate and longer term whereas resilience factors increase the likelihood that children will resist or recover from their exposure to adversities. There is a debate about whether instigating child protection investigations into situations of domestic violence where children are present are always helpful [23]. This is because the majority of referrals

to the police and children's social services do not meet the threshold for intervention. However, this is not the same as saying that the children are not in need of support services [24].

Regardless of whether a child is in need of a child protection plan or not, the research evidence indicates that all children living with domestic violence or its aftermath can benefit from individual and group work to help them understand what has happened to them and their families, to overcome the negative impact of living with abuse, and to move forward in their lives. Such work can raise awareness about the issues, help children to learn strategies for keeping safe, ensure that they feel less isolated and 'different', and help them to feel better about themselves. It needs to be done sooner rather than later. Involvement of the child's mother in this work has been found to be helpful, although this should usually be done in parallel with individual work for the mother in her own right [25].

There is also emerging evidence of involving fathers who have perpetrated domestic violence in such work, with benefits for some children, and both the victim and perpetrator [26]. Additionally, there is strong evidence to show that children and their families can be better supported by professionals who have undertaken training in responding to domestic violence, underpinned by clear protocols between agencies setting out their respective roles and responsibilities [27].

For example, training of police officers can both dispel myths about the nature and seriousness of domestic violence as well as better equipping officers in how to respond effectively and helpfully. Schools have a key role in identifying children who may be living with domestic violence and in providing a safe place for children to receive support. Similarly, health professionals working in adult mental health teams are well placed to ask sensitively about domestic violence and to identify children who may be currently exposed to domestic violence or living with its legacy [28].

CONCLUSION

This overview has argued that for the significant number of children living with domestic violence in Iraq, the experience is often traumatic and the consequences in both the immediate and longer term are significant for the majority of these children. Children who appear to cope better tend to have strong attachments to a non-violent parent or other significant adult, and to have had the opportunity to engage in therapeutic work sooner rather than later. Professionals working in criminal justice organizations can and should intervene whenever they suspect that a child is being exposed to domestic violence.

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