



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN AND ITS EFFECTS TO THEIR SOCIO- EDUCATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

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**Abstract:** Domestic violence is a large social issue in today's contemporary setting, which may include but not limited to, sibling abuse, elder abuse, spouse abuse, and child abuse. Domestic violence has many names; family violence, wife or child beating, and domestic abuse. Spouse abuse talks about abuse from a marital or a dating partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence is merely not just physical, but is any behavior that is intended to control another person through the use of verbal assaults. Children exposed from any form of violence at home have higher risks of alcohol/drugs abuse, post-traumatic stress director, and juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. Family feuds or conflicts oftentimes happen in the eyes of the members of the family. It may either be in the form of shouting, physical or verbal violence and in some cases the mother or the father is forced to leave the house in order to subdue the conflict to avoid further heated arguments or worst, physical fight. Witnessing can mean seeing actual incidents of physical, verbal and or sexual abuse. It can mean hearing threats or fighting noises from another room. Children may also observe the aftermath of physical abuse such as blood, bruises, tears, torn clothing and broken items. Also, children may become aware of the tension in the home such as their mother's fearfulness when the father-abuser's car pulls into the driveway. This undertaking aims to determine the effects of domestic violence on children especially on their socio-educational behaviour. Specifically, it looks into the profile of the children-respondents and the effects of domestic violence to their socio-educational behaviour. This study utilizes the descriptive research design which focuses only in describing the effects of domestic violence on children-respondents. Purposive sampling is utilized in identifying the subjects of the



study which covers only children who had witnessed domestic violence at home were taken as samples. An interview schedule and a structured questionnaire were also used in gathering the data. These were pre-tested at Maraburab, a barangay in Alcala, Cagayan and validated before these were finally administered to the respondents. It was discovered in this particular study, that the children are disturbed in their studies resulting to poor performance and lack of concentration in their class. Children who experienced domestic violence internalize the incident, thus do not feel good and emotionally unwanted.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Physical Attributes, Emotional Status, Effects, Children, Socio-educational, behaviour, verbal abuse, physical abuse

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This undertaking aimed to determine the domestic violence on children and its effects on their socio-educational behaviour.

Specifically, it sought answers for the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the children-respondents as regards:
  - a. Age
  - b. Sex
  - c. Grade level
2. What are the forms of violence witnessed by the children-respondents at home?
3. How do the violence witnessed by the children-respondents affect their being in terms of the following:
  - a. Physical attributes
  - b. Emotional status
  - c. Studies
  - d. Relationship with other children
  - e. Relationship with their family
4. What problems do these children-respondents encounter while living in a family that is exposed with any form of domestic violence or conflict?

## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a large social issue in today's contemporary setting, which may include but not limited to, sibling abuse, elder abuse, spouse abuse, and child abuse. Domestic violence has many names; family violence, wife or child beating, and domestic abuse.



Spouse abuse talks about abuse from a marital or a dating partner in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence is merely not just physical, but is any behavior that is intended to control another person through the use of verbal assaults. Domestic violence is a very important social issue because it has a large negative affect on the victims. Even though domestic violence can be caused by either male or female it is usually caused by the male due to the large physical advantage. Domestic violence today is very common in households, but little is being done to stop it.

One major cause of domestic violence is stress. Things such as being unemployed, taking drugs, drinking alcohol, or having little money can cause a person a lot of stress, which can result in abuse. It can be due to the person being abused themselves in their childhood. Statistics show that many people who are abused in their childhood become abusers themselves. These are various factors that can cause domestic violence. When domestic violence occurs there are different types of abuse that can take place. The first kind is called physical violence. Physical violence includes slapping, kicking, or anything that is intended to physically injure the person. The second type is emotional abuse which consists of consistently doing or saying things to emotionally harm another person. The third kind is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is when someone is forced to have sex when he/she does not want to. Just because someone is married to someone doesn't mean that they have to have sex with them. Even though these are different levels of abuse, all of them are damaging in their own ways.

Children who witness violence between adults in their homes are only the most recent victims to become visible. These children have been called the "silent," "forgotten," and "unintended" victims of adult-to-adult domestic violence (Elbow, 1982; Groves et al., 1993; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981). Studies of archived case records from social service and governmental agencies provide ample evidence that violence has long occurred at levels similar to those measured today and those children are frequently present during violence incidents (Edleson, 1991; Gordon, 1988; Peterson, 1991; Pleck, 1987).

Witnessing a violent event is most commonly defined as being within visual range of the violence and seeing it occur. For example, witnesses are often portrayed as giving an "eyewitness account" of a crime. Pynoos and Eth's (1984) studies of children who witnessed the murder of a parent reinforce this definition. One example they offer is:



"Julie, a 4-year-old girl, was the only witness to her divorced mother's fatal stabbing. Several months earlier, at the time of the divorce, Julie's father had publicly threatened to kill his ex-wife...Although the father lacked an alibi for the night of the crime, there was no physical evidence linking him to the homicide...In describing the event, she (Julie) consistently placed her father at the scene, described significant portions of the central action, and recounted her father's efforts to clean up prior to leaving...Only after the district attorney saw Julie stabbing a pillow, crying 'Daddy pushed mommy down,' did he become convinced that the father indeed was the murderer" (p. 100).

Children from homes exposed of any form of violence have higher risks of alcohol/drugs abuse, post-traumatic stress director, and juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. It is also the number one reason children run away (Bancroft, L. and Putnam Adult, 2004). Whether or not children are physically abused, they often suffer emotional and psychological trauma from living in homes where their fathers abuse their mothers. Children whose mothers are abused are denied the kind of home life that fosters healthy development. Children, who grow up observing their mothers being abused especially by their fathers, grow up with a role model of intimate relationships in which one person uses intimidation and violence over the other person to get their way. Because children have a natural tendency to identify with strength, they may all themselves with the abuser and lose respect for their seemingly helpless mother. Abusers typically play into this by putting the mother down in front of her children and telling them that their mother is "crazy" or "stupid" and that they do not have to listen to her. Seeing their mothers treated with enormous disrespect, teaches children that they can disrespect women the way their fathers do.

Reviewed studies report a series of childhood problems statistically associated with a child's witnessing of domestic violence. These problems can be grouped into the three main categories examining effects of recent witnessing – (1) behavioural and emotional functioning; (2) cognitive functioning and attitudes; (3) physical functioning – and a fourth category that examined long-term effects. Each of these four categories are reviewed in more detail below.

The area in which there is probably the greatest amount of information on problems associated with witnessing adult domestic violence is in the area of children's behavioural



and emotional functioning. Generally, studies using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) and similar measures have found child witnesses of domestic violence to exhibit more aggressive and antisocial (often called “externalized” behaviours) as well as fearful and inhibited behaviours (“internalized” behaviours) (Christopheropoulos et al., 1987; Davis & Carlson, 1987; Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Hughes, 1988; Hughes, Parkinson & Vargo, 1989; Jaffe et al., 1986; Jouriles, Murphy & O’Leary, 1989; Kerouac, Taggart, Lescop & Fortin, 1986; Stagg, Wills & Howell, 1989; Wolfe et al., 1985), and to show lower social competence than other children (Davis & Carlson, 1987; Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Stagg, Wills & Howell, 1989; Wolfe et al., 1985, 1986). Children who witnessed violence were also found to show more anxiety, self-esteem, depression, anger, and temperament problems than children who did not witness violence at home (Christopheropoulos et al., 1987; Forsstrom-Cohn & Rosenbaum, 1985; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Hughes, 1988; Martin et al., 1987; Westra & Martin, 1981). Children from homes where their mothers were being abused have shown less skill in understanding how others feel and examining situations from others’ perspectives when compared to children from nonviolent households (Hinchey & Gavelek; 1982).

The emotional responses of children who witness domestic violence may include fear, guilt, shame, sleep disturbances, sadness, depression, and anger at both abuser for the violence and at the mother for being unable to prevent the violence. Physical responses may include stomach aches and or headaches, bedwetting, and loss of ability to concentrate. Some children may also experience physical or sexual abuse or neglect. Others may be injured while trying to intervene or being of their mother or a sibling (Bancroft and Jay Silverman, 2002). The behavioural responses of children who witness domestic violence may include acting out, and withdrawal or anxiousness to place. The children may exhibit signs of anxiety and have a short attention span which may result in poor school performance and attendance. They may experience developmental delays in speech, motor or cognitive skills. They may also use violence to express themselves displaying increased aggression with peers or mothers. They can become self-injuring (Putnam Adult, 2004).

Overall, these studies indicate a consistent finding across various samples and differing methodologies that child witnesses of domestic violence exhibit a host of behavioural and emotional problems. A few studies have reported finding no differences on some of these



measures, but these same studies reported significant differences on other measures (for example, Christopher Paulus et al., 1987; Wolfe et al., 1986).

Zerk, Martin & Proeve (2009) have suggested that enduring stress in the early years may adversely impact on brain development and organisation, arguing that more research is required to determine the effects of stress on the developing nervous system, how these effects are manifested through observable symptoms and what factors in the child's environment may either enhance or modify these effects. They examined 60 pre-school children who lived in households where D/FV was present. They found a modest relationship between the levels of reported violence and the mothers' emotional distress levels but no relationship between violence levels and parenting stress. The authors suggested that future research should examine trauma symptoms in young children and develop more appropriate and standardised means of assessing trauma symptoms. Research should also focus on the extent to which the primary carer's distress and possibly diminished coping abilities as a result of family violence may influence their perceptions of their children (Zerk, Martin & Proeve 2009).

Another aspect of the effects on children is their own use of violence. Social learning theory would suggest that children who witness violence may also learn to use it. Several researchers have attempted to look at this link between exposure to domestic violence and subsequent use of it. Some support for this hypothesis has been found. For example, Carlson (1990) found that adolescent males who witnessed spouse abuse were significantly more likely to use violence than non-witnesses. There were no significant differences found for females in her study.

A number of studies have measured the association between cognitive development problems and witnessing domestic violence. Children resident in shelters were found to show significantly lower verbal and quantitative skills when compared to a national sample (Westra & Martin, 1991). Children's exposure to adult domestic violence was also significantly associated with greater immaturity and inadequacy among both boys and girls (Jouriles, Murphy & O'Leary, 1989).

One of the most direct consequences of witnessing violence may be the attitudes a child develops concerning the use of violence and conflict resolution. Jaffe, Wilson and Wolfe (1986) suggest that children's exposure to adult domestic violence may generate attitudes justifying their own use of violence. Spaccarelli, Coatsworth and Bowden's (1995) findings



support this association by showing that adolescent boys incarcerated for violent crimes who had been exposed to family violence believed more than others that “acting aggressively enhances one’s reputation or self-image” (p. 173). Believing that aggression would enhance their self-image significantly predicted violent offending.

Boys and girls appear to differ in what they learn from these experiences. Carlson (1991) found that adolescent boys who witnessed domestic violence were significantly more likely to approve of violence than were girls who had also witnessed it.

Few studies have reported on children’s physical conditions. Larsson and Anderson (1988) found that Swedish children living in families where adult domestic violence was occurring had “almost twice as many admissions to the hospital (than controls) and majority had been hospitalized during their pre-school age” (p. 166). Children in this study who were exposed to domestic violence also recorded psychosomatic complaints more often than children in control groups. Kerouac, et al. (1986) found that children residing in a Montreal shelter were almost twice as often absent from school for health problems when compared to government data on the general populations of Canadian and American children.

Most studies reviewed to this point have examined child problems associated with recent witnessing of domestic violence. A number of studies have mentioned much longer term effects reported retrospectively by adults or indicated in archival records. For example, Silvern et al. (1995) found that witnessing violence as a child was associated with adult reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem among women and trauma-related symptoms alone among men. These effects appeared to be independent of the effects of parental alcohol abuse and divorce. In the same vein, Henning et al. (1996) found that adult women who had witnessed domestic violence as a child showed greater distress and lower social adjustment than non-witnesses. These findings persisted even after accounting for the effects of witnessing parental verbal conflict, being abused as a child, and level of reported parental caring.

A number of authors have discussed a child’s relationship to adult males in the home as a key factor. Peled (1996) suggests that children’s relationships with their battering fathers were confusing, with children expressing both affection for their fathers and resentment, pain and disappointment over his violent behavior. Children’s relationships to their mothers have also been identified as a key factor in how children are affected by witnessing domestic violence. Some have conjectured that a mother’s mental health would negatively



affect a child's experience of violence but the data are conflicting. Wolfe, et al. (1985) found that maternal stress statistically accounted for a large amount of child behavior problems. Another study of child witnesses of violence, however, found that mothers' mental health did not affect a child's response to violence in the home (McClosky et al., 1995). Family support and children's perceptions of their parental relationships have also been identified as key parent-child variables. For example, Durant et al. (1994a) found home environments to be important among the 225 urban black adolescents they studied. Adolescents exposed to community and domestic violence appeared to cope better if they lived in more stable and socially connected households.

Family feuds or conflicts oftentimes happen in the eyes of the members of the family. It may either be in the form of shouting, physical or verbal violence and in some cases the mother or the father leaves the house in order to subdue the conflict to avoid getting it worst. Witnessing can mean seeing actual incidents of physical and or sexual abuse. It can mean hearing threats or fighting noises from another room. Children may also observe the aftermath of physical abuse such as blood, bruises, tears, torn clothing and broken items. Also, children may become aware of the tension in the home such as their mother's fearfulness when the abuser's car pulls into the driveway.

Children who are exposed to battering become fearful and anxious. They are always on guard, watching and waiting for the next event to occur. They never know what will trigger the abuse, and therefore they never feel safe. They are always worried for themselves, their mother, and their siblings. They may feel worthless and powerless. Children who grow up with abuse are expected to keep the family secret, sometimes not even talking to each other about the abuse. Children from abusive homes can look fine to the outside world, but inside they are in terrible pain. Their families are chaotic and crazy. They may blame themselves for the abuse thinking if they had not done or said a particular thing, the abuse would not have occurred. They may also become angry at their siblings or their mother for triggering the abuse. They may feel rage, embarrassment, and humiliation. Children of abuse feel isolated and vulnerable. They are starved for attention, affection and approval. Because their mother is struggling, she is often not present for her children. Because their father is so consumed with controlling everyone, he also is not present for the children. These children become physically, emotionally and psychologically abandoned.



In conclusion of this research paper, domestic violence is a large social issue that is being dealt with on a daily basis, but more still needs to be done to stop it. It will continue to damage our society as a whole by allowing those who are dominant to take advantage of those who are inferior.

## STATISTICAL TOOLS

1. To interpret the data, the personal profile, the frequency and percentage distribution was used. The formula for computing percentage is given below:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Responses}}{\text{Number of Responses}} \times 100$$

2. Weighted mean was used to assess the perceived effects of violence on the children-respondents' socio-educational aspects.

**Table 1.1**

### Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile Relative to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
8 years old	18	12.00
9 years old	26	17.33
10 years old	32	21.33
11 years old	40	26.67
12 years old	34	22.67
Total	150	100.00

Mean Age = 9.64

Table 1.1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' profile relative to age. Children who experienced domestic violence are of the ages ranging from 8 to 12 years old. Among the 150 children, most of them are at the age of 11 (40 or 26.67 percent) followed by those who are 12 years old and the youngest are at the age of 8. The mean age of 9.64 indicates that the respondents are still young which further imply that they are still in the age of creating happy family memories.

**Table 1.2:**

### Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile Relative to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	84	56.00
Male	66	44.00
Total	150	100.00



Table 1.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' profile relative to sex. It shows further that in terms of the respondents' sex, the females outnumbered the male with the frequencies 42 or 56 percent and 33 or 44 percent with the male sex.

**Table 1.3:**

**Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile Relative to Grade Level**

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 2	22	14.67
Grade 3	24	16.00
Grade 4	32	21.33
Grade 5	44	29.33
Grade 6	28	18.67
Total	150	100.00

As shown in Table 1.3, most of the respondents are in Grade 5 (44 or 29.33 percent) followed by 32 children who are in Grade 4 or 21.33 percent. Twenty-eight of them are in Grade 6, 24 or 16.00 percent in Grade 2 and 22 or 14.67 percent are in Grade 1. The data imply that most of the respondents are already in the early adolescents' age and the presence or existence of violence in their homes considerably affects their person.

**Table 2.1:**

**Weighted Mean Descriptive Scale on the Respondents' Perceived Effects of Domestic Violence**

Item	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Scale
Physical effect	2.32	To some extent
Emotional Effect	2.16	To some extent
Studies	2.51	To large extent
Relationship with other children	2.32	To some extent
Relationship with the family	2.48	To large extent

Table 2.1 shows the perception of the children-respondents on the effects of domestic violence in terms of physical effects, emotional effects, studies, relationship with other children and relationship with the family. According to the children, they are affected "to a large extent" on their studies and to their relationship with their families with a weighted mean of 2.51 and 2.48 respectively. According to them, they could not concentrate on their studies in school with the fear that untoward acts or violence could be repeated in their homes or with their parents. Their relationship with their family is also affected to a large extent especially when their own fathers are the abusers of their own mothers. The



relationship of the children-respondents with their battering fathers is confusing, with the children expressing both affection and resentment, pain and disappointment over his father's violent behavior. They are likewise affected "to some extent" physically, emotionally and with their relationship with other children with corresponding weighted means of 2.32, 2.16 and 2.32 in that order. It can be inferred that while they are young, they can be sensitive and could feel the effects of domestic violence on them as human beings.

## CONCLUSION

As the results of the study reveal that children-respondents are of ages ranging from 8 to 12 years old, female-dominated and are in the elementary and on their perception regarding the effects of domestic violence, majority revealed that they are affected in terms of their studies and with their relationship with the family with weighted mean of 2.51 and 2.48 respectively. However, they are least affected emotionally with the lowest weighted mean of 2.16. This particular undertaking emphasizes that children are disturbed in their studies resulting to poor performance and lack of concentration in their class. Children who experienced domestic violence internalize the incident, thus do not feel good and emotionally unwanted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings, the researchers offer the following suggestions:

1. That parents should foster a harmonious relationship within the family for the sake of their children and avoid heated or confrontational situations within the hearing of their children.
2. That parents should be aware of the provisions of the law on Anti-Violence against Women and their Act or R.A. 9262 and the rights of their children as embodied in R.A. 7610.
3. That children who experienced or witnessed violence of any form in their homes shall undergo some counselling through the help of proper government or non-government agencies.
4. That school officials who may be observant of the changes in the behaviour or performance of their students in class may apply some intervention mechanism in order to help the victim-children of this kind of violence.



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