

What Are the Effects of Domestic Violence Against Children?

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Introduction

The focus of this research study is to examine literature which addresses the detrimental effects of domestic violence among children between the ages of 8-18 years old. Approximately 9 million Canadians or 1 out of 3 Canadians have experienced abuse before the age of 15 (Taylor, G., 2016, p.3). Domestic violence can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation and exposure to family violence (Kaukinen, C., Powers, R.A., & Meyer, S., 2016, p. 203). As individuals of society, we must recognize that domestic violence against children can negatively impact the development of the child and can place an increased risk for physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms. The research question is “What are the effects of domestic violence against children?” The scope of the research study is to examine the role of law enforcement agencies when dealing with children who have been domestically abused. The research study also attempts to discuss the important and urgency to provide effective intervention strategies to minimize the negative effects from domestic violence.

Background

Domestic violence against children is a horrific epidemic that has created negative effects among many children. Domestic violence against children is a significant issue due to the devastating consequences the child receives, which can have a detrimental impact on society. According to De Jong (2016), domestic violence can contribute to an unhealthy adult lifestyle, poor physical and mental health and future criminal behavior (p. 201). Furthermore, law enforcement agencies must have extensive knowledge on the impact of domestic violence against children. Law enforcement agencies must be aware of the symptoms associated with domestic violence and use effective intervention strategies to mitigate the situation. Domestic violence can impair the child’s ability to function and effect the well being of the child, which is why it is crucial that law enforcement agencies and individuals pay greater attention to children who are being abused and reform the methods to combat this issue.

Methods

A critical appraisal method was used to complete the research study from secondary data. The secondary data obtained was relevant to the research topic. The secondary data was collected through the Justice Institute of British Columbia’s online library database (EBSCOhost Discovery Service EDS) by using keywords to narrow the results and find the most relevant literature. The keywords “domestic violence” and “children” yielded a total of 18,467 hits. Inclusion criteria was established to narrow the literature search to full English text, research conducted in North America and a publication range from 2010 to 2018. Other databases searched included ProQuest and Google Scholar. Furthermore, specific keywords were added such as “child abuse”, “childhood exposure”, “child maltreatment” and “child neglect” which resulted in 35 articles. The secondary data was analysed to ensure that the information was credible and strongly related to the research question.

Results/Findings

The literature review presented four common themes pertaining to domestic violence among children. The themes were:

1. Children who are domestically abused are at risk for aggression, depression, anxiety, poor academic performance that can lead to an unhealthy adult lifestyle.
2. Law enforcement officers must undergo specialized training to effectively deal with children who have been domestically abused.
3. The criminal justice system is not set up to meet the best interests of children who have been domestically abused.
4. Domestic violence can result in children engaging in criminal behavior in their adulthood which can lead to the continuation of domestic violence.

The themes suggest that domestic violence among children can lead to detrimental outcomes and that law enforcement agencies are not doing enough to mitigate this issue.

Discussion

The research study suggests that domestic violence can be destructive a child’s development and can be mitigated with effective intervention from law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement officers must have proper intervention strategies that ensure the child is not at a risk of secondary victimization. The financial resources to ensure that officers have specialized training in assisting children who have been domestically abused become costly for the department to do so (McCabe & Murphy, 2017, p. 197) The research also suggests that agencies that are aimed to help and support children from domestic abuse, however they cannot because of the challenges they are faced with (Kaukinen et al., 2016). Ineffective intervention strategies can lead to a heightened risk for secondary victimization or future criminal behavior. It is critical to focus on the issue of domestic violence against children because it is detrimental to their health and can not be mitigated without the help and support from law enforcement agencies. Hence, domestic violence among children can occur at the beginning of one’s life and often continue until death (McCabe & Murphy, 2017, p. 28).



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Conclusions and Recommendations

The following recommendation can be made to law enforcement agencies:

1. Establishment of specialized training for officers about intervention methods for domestic violence cases
2. Establishment of seminars on mitigating the issue of domestic violence among children from professionals in the field.
3. Establishment of community based programs to educate parents about domestic violence and how to create a safe environment for your child.
4. Continuing to create practices and programs to mitigate domestic violence among children.

The research study concludes that children who are abused from the ages of 8-18 years old are at a heightened risk to experience negative symptoms. The research shows that law enforcement agencies are must create effective intervention methods to mitigate the issue of domestic violence and to better prepare officers when dealing with domestic violence cases. The effects stemming from domestic violence among children can be significantly mitigated with proper intervention methods that are carried out by law enforcement agencies.



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