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Original Research Paper

Psychology

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES ON CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT Domestic violence is a serious problem of today's society, which is not limited to only husband-wife or two members of the family. It affects the entire family, especially children. As can often be seen that activities related to women are the victims of this phenomenon, but in reality, domestic violence affects all members of the family, especially children. Children are valuable for national development, but domestic violence is harmful to children Children are going through the most sensitive phase of their lives and the environment in which they grow up forms the foundation of their personality. When this environment is full of violence, abuse and fear, it has a profound negative impact on the mental, emotional and social development of children. The purpose of this research is to briefly review the impact of witnessing and being a victim of domestic violence on children. This study focuses on the literature related to the impact of domestic violence on children, in fact, domestic violence is also one of the problems that lead children to antisocial activities such as disobedience, crime, drug addiction, abuse. The literature review shows that domestic violence has an impact on the child's physical, mental, family and educational relationships.

KEYWORDS : Domestic Violence, Domestic Abuse, Child, Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is not just a dispute between husband and wife or two family members, but it affects the entire family environment. Its most profound effect is on the children, who see and endure this environment directly or indirectly. Childhood is the stage in which the foundation of personality is laid. If this stage is surrounded by fear, insecurity and violence, then it is natural for the child's psychological development to be negatively affected.

Due to domestic violence, children may develop lack of confidence, decline in studies, irritability, fear, depression and negative attitude towards relationships. Many times this effect is not visible immediately, but in the long run it affects both their mental health and behavior.

Thus, domestic violence is not limited to physical injury, but it leaves invisible mental wounds within children, which determine the direction of their future.

Domestic violence does not only mean physical assault. It also includes abuse, humiliation, intimidation, financial control and emotional torture. When children repeatedly see such scenes or become victims of it themselves, insecurity, fear and inferiority complex arise within them.

According to Scientific Studies

A comprehensive meta-analysis (Kitzmann et al., 2003) found that interparental violence has a strong negative impact on children's socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes — that is, children who witnessed violence had worse outcomes than non-witnesses.

WHO/UNICEF global reports indicate that household-family settings are the main source of violence on children and have long-term effects on mental health, developmental milestones, and future relationships.

Recent peer reviews and studies have confirmed a higher frequency of diagnostic clusters associated with domestic violence — such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and behavioral problems — in children. (Systematic Review, 2023).

The indicative conclusion of the available controlled trials is that targeted psychotherapeutic/trauma-focused interventions (counselling, school-based programs) may help improve children's symptoms; but there remains a dearth of high-quality RCTs.

Recent research in India (2025) has also shown that maternal experiences of domestic violence have a significant impact on adolescent mental health — highlighting the need for local, culture-specific interventions.

Psychological Effects on Children

1. Feeling of Fear and Insecurity

Children who witness violence develop a fear that they can be in danger at any time. Home, which should be the safest place for them, becomes a cause of fear and stress for them.

2. Decreased Self-confidence and Self-esteem

Such children often start considering themselves weak and helpless. They feel that they cannot control any situation. Gradually this thinking reduces their self-confidence and hinders their personality development.

3. Effect on Studies and Concentration

When a child is constantly in fear and stress, his attention is diverted from studies. Many times they do not like to go to school, do not concentrate in class and fall behind in studies.

4. Change in Behavior

Some children become aggressive after seeing violence and start getting angry over small things. They start repeating the same behavior that they have seen from their parents or elder members of the house. On the other hand, some children become extremely quiet, sad and introverted.

5. Risk of Mental Diseases

Children who suffer domestic violence for a long time have an increased risk of mental illnesses. They may experience serious symptoms like depression, anxiety, sleep problems, suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

6. Negative Attitude Towards Relationships

Children may grow up and form wrong notions about relationships. They may feel that every relationship is full of conflict and violence. This thinking has a bad effect on their future marital life and social relationships.

7. Effect on Social Behavior

Children who suffer violence shy away from trusting others. Some children may also engage in antisocial tendencies, such as fighting, leaning towards crime or becoming addicted to drugs.

Major Psychological Diseases in Children Due to Domestic Violence

Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and Solutions

Problem	Solution
Fear and insecurity	Providing a safe, loving and supportive environment to children
Lack of confidence	Counselling, involving in sports and creative activities

Depression and anxiety	Psychological counselling, trauma-focused therapy
Decline in studies	Teacher support at school, extra guidance and positive encouragement
Anger and aggression	Peaceful behaviour of parents, balance in communication and discipline
Distrust in relationships	Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and love in the family
Sleep and health problems	Regular routine, comfortable environment and health check-ups
Social isolation	Participating children in group activities, sports, arts and social work programmes

SI No	Disease	Main Symptoms/effects
1	Depression	Sadness, tendency to cry, loss of interest in life, suicidal thoughts
2	Anxiety Disorders	Feeling anxious all the time, restlessness, fear, panic attacks
3	Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	Repeatedly remembering incidents of violence, having nightmares, getting scared of loud noises
4	Conduct and Behavioral Disorders	Anger, aggression, quarrelsome nature, stealing/lying, antisocial behavior
5	Somatic disorders	Headache, stomach-ache, fatigue, physical discomfort without apparent medical reason
6	Sleep and eating disorders	Insomnia, nightmares, loss of appetite or overeating
7	Learning and attention difficulties	Inability to concentrate, poor performance in studies, lack of confidence

Major Schemes and Provisions Run by the Government

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 - Provides legal protection to women and children from domestic violence. The victim gets protection order, right to residence and counselling.
2. One Stop Centre Scheme – 2015- It is also called Sakhi Centre. Women and children suffering from domestic violence or any kind of violence get counselling, medical, police and legal help at one place.
3. Women Helpline (181)- 181 women helpline is available for 24×7 help across the country. Counselling and emergency help is given to the family even if the children are affected.
4. Child Helpline (1098)- It is run in collaboration with the Child Rights Protection Commission and Child line India. Provides quick help, counselling and safe shelter to children in distress.
5. Nari Niketan and Short Stay Home- Here women and their children facing violence are given temporary shelter, food and psychological support.
6. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)- Provides safe environment, counselling and rehabilitation to children in distress. Children affected by domestic violence can also get help under this.
7. POSCO Act (2012) and Juvenile Justice Act (2015)- Special laws to protect children from sexual violence and exploitation. Also includes provision for psychological care and rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence is not just a personal family problem of two individuals, but it directly affects the mental health and future of children. Children who grow up in an environment of violence either become victims of violent tendencies themselves or continue to suffer mental struggles throughout their lives. Domestic violence causes invisible wounds to the childhood of children. These wounds are not visible from outside, but go deep into their soul. If we want a healthy and sensitive society, then we will have to provide children with an environment free from violence. Because childhood is not only the present, it is the foundation of the future. Therefore, it is important that society takes this problem seriously and provides children with a violence-free, safe and loving environment. If we want a healthy and sensitive society, then we will have to provide children with an environment free from violence. Because childhood is not only the present, it is the foundation of the future. A healthy and happy childhood of children is the guarantee of their bright future. The purpose of this article is to try to understand the negative impact of increasing domestic violence on children in society and to bring it in relation to causal impact solutions and cooperative schemes and to add many other influences to it and there is a need to do a special study on it so that a healthy and better mentality can be formed in the society.

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