



Assessing the Effect of Domestic Violence on Youths Behaviour: A Case Study of Kalingalinga Compound

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a pervasive and frequently lethal problem that challenges countries and societies at every level and Zambia is no exception. Violence of this nature is often hidden from view and devastates its victims physically, socially and emotionally. Directly or indirectly, it affects the quality of life of the whole society. This study aimed at assessing the effect of domestic violence on youths' behaviors in Lusaka District. The study specifically examined the forms of domestic violence which youths gone through, identify the reasons behind domestic violence from the youth's perspective and analyzed the effects of domestic violence on the youths. A qualitative exploratory approach was adopted for the study.

The study population included youths and parents. The study sample consisted of 80 participants. Data was collected using in-depth interviews for the youths and key informants were parents. Data was analysed thematically. The findings from the study reveal that youths were exposed to different forms of domestic violence such as physical abuse, emotional abuse and economic abuse. In this study it also became apparent that youths were aware of the reasons behind domestic violence. The reasons identified by the children were alcohol abuse, jealousy, infidelity and arguments over youth needs. The study also revealed that exposure to violence had negative effects on the youths such as physical injury, fear and anxiety, loss of confidence and self-esteem and educational failure.

The recommendations are that more research is needed that advances the current understanding of the prevalence and effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence, so that policy makers and practitioners can design interventions necessary to address the size, nature and complexity of the problem. Curricula that teach non-violence, conflict resolution, human rights and gender issues should be included in elementary and secondary schools, universities, professional colleges, and other training settings. Adults who work with children, including teachers, social workers, relatives, and parents themselves should receive ongoing training on domestic violence to enable them recognize the effects of domestic violence on youths and refer children to appropriate services.

Keywords: Youths, Violence, Human rights, Abuse and Parents

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is one of the most pervasive human rights challenges of our time. It remains a largely hidden problem that few countries, communities or families openly confront. Violence in the home is not limited by geography, ethnicity or status it is a global phenomenon (United Nations Children's Fund, 2006). The Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (2013-14) states that domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, and any other person who is a member of the household, dependent, or parent of a child of that household.

Domestic violence has negative health consequences on the victims and especially on the reproductive health of women. According to the World Development Report (2004), domestic violence is a more serious cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age than cancer, and a greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2005) estimates that 20 per cent to 50 per cent of women worldwide have suffered from some form of domestic violence at some point in their lives.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2006 defines domestic violence or intimate partner violence as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion used by adults or adolescents against their current or former intimate partners. UNICEF (2006) give examples of physical abuse include slapping, shaking, beating with fist or object, strangulation, burning, kicking and threats with a knife. Sexual abuse includes coerced sex through threats or intimidation or through physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts, forcing sex in front of others and forcing sex with others.

Contemporary understandings of exposure of children to domestic violence prefer the term ‘experience’ of domestic violence rather than ‘witnessing’ as ‘experience’ communicates the level of impact on children in these situations (Lamb, Humphreys & Hegarty, 2018). There is wide recognition based on empirical research that there is correlation between child abuse and neglect and children experiencing domestic violence (Broady & Gray, 2018; Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl & Moylan, 2008; Yount, Di Girolamo & Ramkrishnan, 2011).

1.1 Background

It is important to bear in mind however, that many children and young people do not report their experiences of child abuse and neglect and retrospective studies have found that this number exceeds those who are known to support systems (Euser, Alink, Pannebakker, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van Uzendoorn, 2013). What is known is therefore based on those children who may be reached through their, and their caregivers’, contact with services. Based on this research population, the impact of domestic violence exposure on children can be understood in various ways including its physical health outcome effects, its psychological and behavioral effects and its. According to Holden (2003) one of the problems researchers face in the field of children exposed to domestic violence is a lack of a common terminology and definitions. Each scientific tradition and every perspective in the field relating to children exposed to domestic violence has its own concepts, definitions and terminology.

Tony (2002) also define ‘domestic’ as derived from the Latin word ‘domus’ meaning a ‘home’. Domestic (Domesticus in Latin connotes what happens in and around a family dwelling place. Whereas, World Health Organization (WHO) (2002) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or had a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal- development or deprivation. However, it is worth noting that not all family violence is caused by men, but research shows that men are most often the perpetrators of violence in domestic relationships, and women and children are often the victims. International research has shown that, globally, one in three women experience violence from a partner.

On the other hand, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2014) contend that domestic violence was the victimization of a person with whom the abuser had or had had an intimate, romantic, spousal relationship. It consists of a pattern of coercive behaviours used by a competent adult to establish and maintain power and control over another competent adult. These behaviours which can occur alone or in combination, periodically or repeatedly include physical abuse, psychological, emotional abuse, and economic abuse. The term ‘domestic’ includes violence by an intimate partner and by other family members, wherever this violence takes place and in whatever form (Khan, 2000).

In Zambia gender-based violence is rampant and the most common is domestic violence. The common forms of violence are physical, economic and psychological. Although men are also victims, the majority of the victims tend to be women and children (GIDD, 2011). The Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS, 2013-14) indicates that 54 per cent of Zambian women have suffered from spouse or partner abuse at some point in time (Physical, emotional, sexual).

In Zambia various non-governmental organizations have seen the need to fight the problem. The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) offers counseling and legal advice which is done at the drop-in center, it also has a shelter established in 1993 which offers refuge to battered women and their children. The National Legal Aid Clinic for Women (NLACW) was established in 1990 by the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ). The organization was established to provide legal aid to women and children from marginalized social sectors. These would usually not afford the normal legal costs to hire a lawyer to represent them in their pursuit of justice.

The clinic works to help women, youth and children who have been victims of social injustice and prevent the decrease in their quality of life. This it does through legal redress, arbitration, mediation and advocacy for law reform. The YWCA refers all litigation cases to the National Legal Aid Clinic for Women. To consolidate the operations of the YWCA and other organizations that deal with gender violence, the Zambian government created the Police Victim Support Unit (VSU) in 1994 to prosecute cases of violence that are of criminal nature. Further, the will to fight gender-based violence has been recognized in national instruments such as legislative and policy frameworks which include the National Gender Policy, amendment to Act No.15 of 2005 Laws of Zambia and the recently enacted Gender Based Violence Act 1 of 2011.

Many children in Zambia are suffering silently and with little support. Children exposed to violence in the home need trusted adults to turn to for help and comfort and services that will help them cope with their experiences. Far more must be done to protect these children and to prevent domestic violence from happening in the first place. The challenge for the future is to bring ourselves to a point where families in Zambia are characterized by love and nurturing thoughtfulness as opposed to the horrific psychological abuse, battering, and killing that are a tragic part of domestic violence. A multifaceted and integrated approach that embraces human rights is required to effectively eliminate domestic violence (Hester et al., 2000).

- **Main Objective**

To assess the effects of domestic violence on youth behavior in Kalingalinga Compound

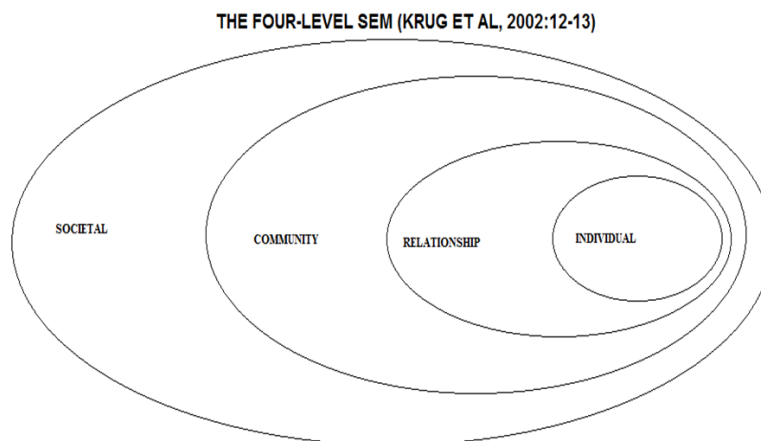
- **Specific Objectives**

- i. To identify the forms of domestic violence witnessed by youth.
- ii. To assess the reasons behind domestic violence from the youth perspective.
- iii. To analyze the effects of domestic violence on the youth.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This research work was based on the Ecological theory. According to the ecological theory (Giardino and Giardino, 2010:78), violence in the home is rooted within the greater context of societal violence. Stressors are combined with a lack of protective factors, which lead to domestic violence. A four-level social-ecological model (SEM) has been developed to better understand and prevent violence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano, 2002:12-13).

Violence results from a combination of multiple influences on behaviour. It is about how individuals relate to those around them and to their broader environment. The SEM considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors.



- **Individual level:** identifies biological and personal history factors such as age, education, income, substance use, or history of abuse that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.
- **Relationship level:** examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a victim or perpetrator; a person's closest social circle peers, partners and family members influence an individual's behaviour and contribute to a range of experiences.
- **Community level:** explores the settings, such as schools, work places, and neighbourhoods in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence.
- **Societal level:** considers broad societal factors such as health, economic, educational and social policies that engender a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited, which assists in maintaining economic or social inequalities between groups in society.

In support of the ecological theory (Giardino and Giardino, 2010:78), Afolabi (2014:11) bio-ecological framework explains how youngsters adjust to cruel situations in their environment, i.e., direct and indirect kinds of violence that compromise their adjusting methods and on-going development.

Children's continuous exposure to DV impacts negatively on their biological and emotional adjustment and later leads to nervous and self-doubting approach in relationships which time and again manifest by robust feelings (e.g., frustration, dissatisfaction, aggression, panic). Another aspect the scholar articulates was that, children also differently to their exposure to DV by demonstrating different emotional problems. This was logical as it signified child's adjustment to maladaptive circumstance. Though bio-ecological framework permits interaction and understanding at different levels within social systems, what was mostly unnoticed in the research literature about children's mental health was the significance of ecological factors that act as a mediator to violence.

Most importantly, Afolabi (2014:11) states that Bio-ecological model advances future postulation about the consequence of household violence on youngsters' wellbeing by using rudiment research techniques and systematic philosophies of ecological theory and developmental psychopathology to analyse the relationship between domestic violence and child's development. This means that, ecology was contextually based and developmental psychopathology was child focused.

Therefore, bio-ecological theory incorporates all the finest of these methods and covering the following mutually dependent emphases of study:

- (i) understand the difficulty analysed in the context,
- (ii) appreciate the influence of difficulty understudy on the youngster with an appreciation for the multidimensional of child's engagement, and
- (iii) consider the significance of difficulty on child's activity over time. So, the process of examining children's outcome as a determinant of their development and transformation over time was a symbol of developmentally sensitivity investigation.

Other insights drawn from scholarly literature are supplemented with those from Swart and Pettipher (2005) and Lewis (2009) investigating individual proximal and distal environment is a basis for understanding the complexity in the individual's life, particularly the interaction and interrelationships between individual and the multiple systems that constitute his environment.

As children grow up, they pass through different developmental stages that are influenced by the environment (Dawes and Donald, 2000). This constant interaction significantly influenced their behaviour either positively or negatively, depending on the circumstances they find themselves.

However, Gewirtz and Edleson (2007) show theoretically that the most identified primary developmental tasks of infancy are forming affection with the main caregiver. Yet, to achieve complete dependency, an infant needs a primary caregiver that is passionately sensitive to his needs, promotes a sense of confidence and security and offer safe or enriching environment for him to explore. Similarly, insecure attachments are built up when parents fail to respond adequately to their baby's needs. Gerhardt (2004) explains that DV disturbs children's attachment relationships in a family.

Similarly, Cummings et al., (2009) affirm that children respond to family violence through integration of both biological and psychological processes. On the other hand, biopsychosocial model of emotional and physiological reactivity is a strategy that supports children witnessing domestic violence and that children's regulatory process is a moderating factor in their adjustment to violent situations. Furthermore, contemporary studies indicate that toddlers and pre-school children face increasing developmental challenges in life.

2. Material and method

The research was an exploratory study conducted using qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods were applied in order to capture and provide insight on the children's experiences of domestic violence. Babbie (2007) states that qualitative methods are recommended for studying people's wider perception of everyday behaviour and are also used in explaining how people conceptualize the world and construct meaning from it.

A qualitative exploratory approach was adopted to keep the data as original as possible. Gupta and Gupta (2013) further state that qualitative researchers aim to obtain a complete detailed description and are concerned with enhancing the data such that the phenomenon under study is clearly understood. Qualitative style is known for its focus on authenticity, meaning attribution based on the participants social reality and cultural meaning and thematic content analysis.

Ghosh (2002) defines sampling procedure as the process of selecting representative units of the population in order to obtain information regarding a phenomenon in a way that represents the entire population. Non-probability purposeful sampling method was applied in this study. Using this sample method, the researcher purposively targeted a group of people believed to have been reliable for the study. Kombo and Tromp (2006) state that the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied. Thus, the first phase of recruitment was to purposefully target youths through their parents via key, Zambia Police-VSU and NLACW in Kalingalinga compound.

Access to these youths was negotiated in a twofold process, the researcher met with key informants in the institutions to discuss the research, interview them and seek access to parents who had used their service. The second phase was to negotiate access to the youths by interviewing the parents and getting permission to interview their children. The key informants were identified by the institutions (social workers and counsellors).

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According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) data analysis refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. It involves uncovering underlying structures, extracting important variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions. It also involves scrutinizing the acquired information and making inferences. The analysis of qualitative data varies from simple descriptive analysis to more elaborate reduction and multivariate associate techniques.

Data for this study was analysed using thematic analysis. The first step in analyzing the data was to get familiar with the data collected by thoroughly reading the text of the collected data paying specific attention to the patterns that emerged. Key themes and patterns that addressed the research questions were then identified and organised into coherent categories to help in summarising and bringing meaning to the collected data. The outcome was presented in form of key themes that described the essence of the study for example: forms of domestic violence, reasons behind domestic violence from the youth's perspective and effects of domestic violence on the children.

3. Results and Discussion

Forms of Domestic Violence

The experiences reveal that physical violence is an ever-present issue in the lives of many youths. Youths spoke about a range of abusive behaviours that they had witnessed or had been victims of. For some youths witnessing domestic violence meant seeing their parents physically assaulted and witnessing their parent's physical injuries. In some instances, the study uncovered evidence of youths themselves being direct targets of the violence. These findings are similar to research conducted in the United States by Levendosky et al (2002) which revealed that youths were often third party to the domestic violence and were caught between the fighting. This observation was also confirmed in a British study by Atkin (2001) that youths were often third party to the domestic violence and were caught between all kinds of conflicts. Similarly, a study in New York by Cohen et al (2006) identified that children were frequently assaulted when they tried to intervene to protect their mothers during domestic violence.

The findings in this study are echoed in a study conducted in Australia by Schaefer (1997) which revealed that youths were exposed to emotional (verbal) abuse especially in homes where only one partner was in employment and the other was dependent on the other for survival, the research revealed that when one was not working it put pressure on the other to make ends meet leading to high stress levels, this in turn led to name calling, arguments, ridicule and even threats over issues such as accommodation, money and food.

Similarly, research by Spilsbury et al (2007) in Australia revealed that verbal abuse is more frequent where individuals experienced loss of wage-earning power, the study also reviewed that the abuse peaks during the Christmas season as parents faced pressures of paying bill collectors and buying Christmas gifts. The frustration of the inability to make ends meet increased conflicts in the home, feelings of helplessness mounted, anger flared and in the face of inadequate coping mechanisms violence erupted in the home.

The study also revealed that some parents failed to provide for their youth's material needs such as shelter, food, clothes and even paying school fees leading to the children being chased from school, this made the youths feel embarrassed and feel like they were financial burdens. This finding confirms the findings by Siyothula in South Africa (2004) which revealed that parents failed to provide for their youth needs such as paying for their school fees. The youths in the study indicated that they preferred to go to boarding school until they finished school.

Reasons behind Domestic Violence from the Youths Perspective

The above experiences reveal that the excessive intake of alcohol often led to domestic violence. Various studies have also revealed that excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs were factors in provoking domestic violence. This extends from a spouse acting violently towards the other spouse to a parent emotionally, sexually or physically abusing a child. A survey of domestic violence in Moscow revealed that half the cases of physical abuse were associated with the husband's excessive alcohol consumption. In a 2013 study on gambling addicts and family violence in the Asian journal of Gambling Issues and Public Health, 52.5 per cent of the 120 people surveyed reported abuse at the hands of their alcoholic family member. Those addicts who had greater mistrust and anger issues were more likely to commit violent acts than those without.

Similarly, a study by Ross (1996) in Scotland revealed that individuals who were suffered from alcohol abuse were more likely to subject their partner to domestic violence and abuse. The study reviewed further revealed that intoxication due to alcohol caused an individual to become violent and resulting in an individual not considering the consequences of their actions. In addition, research reviewed by Ullman (2003) in Australia identified the potent presence of alcohol in the lives of parents who were abused. Alcohol was understood and viewed as a causal factor in domestic violence and an additional adversity or stressor for the family to contend with.

Exploring this further Lipsky et al (2004) in the United States revealed that a partner's alcohol abuse was established as a major contributor to domestic violence and was more closely linked to murder, rape and assault than any other substance. It was implicated in most homicides and found to be a contributing factor to incest, child molestation, spousal abuse and other family violence. The percentage of batterers who assaulted their partners under the influence of alcohol ranged from 48-87 per cent.

These findings are supported by a study conducted by Siyothula (2005) in South Africa which revealed that arguments over youth needs were perceived by youths in the study as precipitating violence in homes. The youths were aware that their parents argued over their needs. The youths in this study articulated that, at times they felt bad because they felt they were the reason for the aggravated situation between their parents. According to the children, failure to do as expected in most cases provoked the violence. As a result, the children blamed themselves for the violence, these findings are echoed by research findings by Carlson (1991) who also identified that youths were aware that parents at times fought because of their needs and the youths blamed themselves for the violence.

Effects of Domestic Violence on Youths

These findings above are confirmed by research conducted in London by Cunningham and Baker (2004) which revealed that one of the impacts of domestic violence on youths was on the children's own safety, security, the sense of fear and they dread that domestic violence instilled in them. Exposure to domestic violence left children frightened. Similarly, Tiecher et al. (2006) conducted a study with the intent to outline the impact of verbal aggression, witnessing domestic violence, physical abuse and sexual abuse by themselves and in combination, on psychiatric symptoms. Robust effects were noted in the category of anxiety. Combined exposure to verbal abuse and witnessed domestic violence had a greater additive effect. Youths who were exposed

to verbal abuse and witnessing domestic violence had anxiety scores that were 2.2 times as high as those of non-abused children. In another study by Vickerman and Margolin (2007), the most common impact identified by the children themselves was the fear and the intimidation they felt on an almost daily basis resulting in behavioural problems and aggressiveness.

In another study in Italy, baldly (2003) revealed that exposure to domestic violence had an adverse effect on the child's learning potential that may be compromised by poorly developed verbal skills, competing demands for their energy, exhaustion or absenteeism from school. This study also revealed that exposure domestic violence led to some youths having difficulty with authority figures in school and adhering to school rules.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

More research is needed that advances the current understanding of the incidence and effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence, so that policymakers and practitioners can design appropriate interventions to address the size, nature, and complexity of the problem.

In designing new laws to address the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence, policymakers should assess the potential negative consequences of these laws and weigh them against the benefits.

Courts must be authorized to plan and implement protective orders that thoroughly address the safety needs of battered women and their youths.

Government must specifically allocate resources to support youths who are exposed to domestic violence within the home, within the overall context of prevention support for adult victims of domestic violence.

Government and NGO's should initiate public education and awareness-raising campaigns on domestic violence. These campaigns should focus more on the impact of domestic violence on youths and specific ways to address this hidden problem.

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