

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE DEVELOPING CHILD - A LIBRARY-BASED  
ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND MENTAL HEALTH



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**Acknowledgement**



### **Abstract**

The number of domestic violence victims has been on the rise in the recent years. Children are among the people are also severely affected by such incidences. Even though there are various policies which had been formulated, the reviewed studies showed that their implementation process is still faced with a lot of setbacks hence a key catalyst to the increasing number of families affected with domestic violence issues. The main focus of the present study was to analyse the impacts of domestic violence on children. In order to achieve the set goal, the study followed a specific structure composed of the introduction, methodology, literature review and then conclusion and recommendation. Because there are a lot of studies which had been previously conducted on this area, the present study was focused on analysing the trends and gaps present in those studies. For that matter, a library-based project was conducted by searching for relevant literatures from different databases such as PubMed, Science Direct and PsycINFO. The analysis of the data collected from the selected studies showed that there is a positive relationship between experiencing domestic violence as a child and registering poor academic performance and social development. Furthermore, episodes of domestic violence may also interfere with the quality of parent-child attachment hence exposing the affected children to severe health problems such as sleep disorders, post traumatic stress disorders among others. When the students are exposed to domestic violence episodes, their mental health would be negatively impacted hence leading to the development of problems such as the post-traumatic stress disorders. For that matter, there is need to formulate and present strategies that would help in preventing or reducing the incidences of domestic violence as well as managing the health problems experienced by the affected children.

*Keywords:* domestic violence, library-based project, children, social development, mental health.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Rationale and Background for The Study**

The incidences and impacts of domestic violence on children are an area that has been extensively assessed by different researchers. Based on the information presented in the study by Woodlock (2017), 29.5 percent of the United Kingdom children aged below 18 years have been exposed to different forms of domestic violence and that approximately 5.9 percent of the children in this country are often exposed to such violence every year. Additionally, Howell et al. (2016) noted that the children who grow up in families that are characterised by high cases of domestic violence are often at higher risk of developing mental health problems as well as poor social skills. The other impacts of domestic violence on children that have been documented in the past studies include poor physical health (Morrison 2015), high risk of school dropout and poor academic performance (Vidal et al. 2017), high risk of being involved in criminal behaviours, as well as poor intimate relationships and friendship in future (Namy et al. 2017). For that matter, there is need to develop highly effective strategies that would be used for helping the children from such families.

Parents have the responsibility of taking care of their children by offering protection Woodlock (2017) and providing them with basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education among others. Furthermore, the children must be shown love. Unfortunately, most of the children who are coming from the families experiencing domestic violence are not in the position of enjoying such privileges in life. Domestic violence and abuse have the ability of pervading the involved families as well as exposing them to different types of negative consequences, such as poor relationship in the family, that might interfere with the overall family structure and pattern (Skivenes and Stenberg, 2015). According to the information presented in the research studies by

Morrison (2015) and Howell et al. (2016), the intimate partner violence has the ability of interfering with the children's functioning as a result of the potential mental health consequences which are experienced by their mothers. The level of physical or emotional distress that is experienced by the mothers during pregnancy has the ability of impacting their parental warmth, caregiving skills as well as the development of a healthy attachment with their partners and children (Izaguirre and Calvete 2015). Inappropriately, large percentage of these early and serious risks to fetal development does not automatically abate following birth.

Similarly, Skivenes and Stenberg (2015) noted that the occurrence of continuous domestic violence or intimate partner violence would negatively interfere with the attachment relationships between children and parents, especially their mothers. In a study conducted by Namy et al. (2017), that involved 72 mothers and their 15-month old infants, it was determined that the exposure of the mothers to intimate partner violence would lead to child's disorganised attachment style and that more than 75 percent of the infants in the study being determined to be insecurely attached. Additionally, the longitudinal research conducted by Izaguirre and Calvete (2015) determined that domestic violence or intermate partner violence has a positive relationship with the children's attachment to their parents (especially their mothers) over time. The occurrence of lower cases of intimate partner violence would influence the development of stable attachment relationships between the children and their parents (Vidal et al. 2017). Therefore, the intimate partner violence poses to primary caregiving relationships as well as social development during the infancy stage of development is serious and associated with prolonged difficulties across childhood.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

Studies focusing on the factors influencing the occurrence of domestic violence, impacts of domestic violence on marriage success and spouses' health have in the recent years increased (Vidal et al. 2017). Nevertheless, there are still limited number of studies analysing the impacts of domestic violence on children (Izaguirre and Calvete 2015). For that matter, conducting a critical analysis of secondary data on this topic would help in generating new insights such as the relationship between quality of health among children and domestic violence, and to propose strategies to managing children's health problems associated with domestic violence.

### **Aims and Purpose of the Research**

#### **Research Aims**

- To analyse the impacts of domestic violence on children's current and future relationships.
- To assess how family violence interferes with the academic performance and social development among children.
- To analyse the impacts of domestic violence on the mental health of the involved children.
- To propose strategies that may be used to help the children from families characterised by domestic violence to cope with the developed problems.

#### **Purpose of the Research**

Despite the fact that there are increasing cases of domestic violence in the United Kingdom, very few studies have assessed the impacts of this kind of violence on children (Smith-Marek et al. 2015). For that matter, the present study would fill this gap by providing a comprehensive explanation of the impacts of domestic violence on children. Furthermore, both Woodlock (2017) and Namy et al. (2017) reported that there are still very few strategies already formulated with the aim of helping children from families characterised by domestic violence to

effectively cope with such situations. Therefore, the present study would also propose strategies that would be used to improve the health status of the affected children.

### **Research Approach and Techniques**

The present study employed a qualitative secondary research approach for the collection and analysis of the data. Specifically, a library-based qualitative research was used for this purpose. As explained by Robson (2011), library-based research has in the recent years proven to be of great importance and value as it allows the researcher to collect and analyse the data from the previous studies on similar subject area. The technique is very appropriate especially in areas which had been extensively researched, but still have some gaps that should be filled. The library-based research that was employed followed important procedure such as searching for the relevant studies, employing inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify the most appropriate studies, data analysis, and then theme development and presentation.

### **Protocol for The Search Phase**

In order to successfully identify original studies about the impacts of domestic violence on children, different databases, such as PubMed, Science Direct and PsycINFO, were searched. The keywords that were used during the search process include “domestic violence” or “intimate partner violence” or “children’s health” or “physical health” or “mental health” or “social development” or “divorce” or “parental love.” According to Robson (2011), the use of keywords during the search process is important as they provide a description of the main concept within the research question or topic. There was a closer examination of the full texts among the identified studies in order to select the most appropriate studies for reviewing.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The selection of the appropriate studies for reviewing was achieved by using inclusion and exclusion criteria. As explained by Banister et al. (2011), a study must meet all of the set inclusion criteria in order to be selected for reviewing process. The first inclusion criterion was that the studies must have been published between 2015 and 2019, in order to help in ensuring that only those studies with latest information about the subject matter are included. For that matter, those studies published in 2014 and earlier were excluded. Furthermore, only those studies that assessed the impacts of domestic violence of children were selected. Therefore, others that assessed the impacts of domestic violence on quality of marriage, couple's health, among others were excluded. The other inclusion criterion was that the study must be originally written in United Kingdom English language and included the assessment of United Kingdom population. Studies published in other languages such as French, Spanish among others or included participants from other countries other than United Kingdom were excluded.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was done through the application of thematic analysis approach. Gibson (2009) and Gomm (2008) noted that thematic analysis is an important form of qualitative data analysis that is focused on identifying, analysing and interpreting themes or patterns of meaning within the qualitative data. The selection of thematic analysis was influenced by its high flexibility as well as ability to interpret secondary data successfully. Thematic analysis process was conducted by following the procedure provided in the study by Castleberry and Nolen (2018). The first in the data analysis involved data familiarisation where the research read through all of the selected studies. Subsequently, the researcher assigned preliminary codes to the collected data in order to effectively describe the content. The third step involved search for

themes in the used codes across the data collected from the reviewed studies. Thereafter, reviewing, defining and interpreting the identified themes as well as reporting the obtained findings was performed.

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

The concerns regarding the use of secondary data have largely revolved around the potential harm to the individual subjects as well as the issues of return for consent (Reid et al. 2018). Even though the present research led to the production of appropriate data that were used for answering the research questions, it is important to know that there were still some important ethical dilemmas which impacted the quality of the study. The first dilemma was the inadequate access to library materials. Despite the fact that there were many studies that had been conducted to determine the impacts of domestic violence on children, very few of them were on “free-access” format, with some of them requiring the approval of the author before their use. The protection of intellectual property right was another important ethical dilemma that was experienced during the study. As explained by Ngozwana (2018), library-based researchers do not often seek permission from the article authors before they are reviewed, a behavior which put the intellectual property right of the scholars at risk. In order to address this issue, only those studies which were on “free-access” and their authors permitted for their use in subsequent studies were selected and reviewed.

### **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

According to the Office of National Statistics, approximately 7.9 percent of women and 4.2% of men had been affected by domestic violence in the United Kingdom during the year of 2018 (ONS 2018). Even though domestic violence has been determined to have the ability of interfering with the quality of intimate partner relationship and might also lead to divorce (Vu et al. 2016), Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017) and Katz (2015) on the other hand argued that the children in such families are the most affected. The intimate partner violence might affect the social, mental and physical health of the children. According to the information presented in the research study by Smith-Marek et al. (2015), domestic violence has a positive relationship with poor academic performance. Similarly, Grasso et al. (2016) determined that 35 percent of the children with lower reading abilities as well as poor overall academic performance are often coming from families that are characterised by high cases of domestic violence.

Furthermore, various studies have determined that domestic violence would lead to the development of severe behavioural and personality problems such as depression and suicidal thoughts (Sharps et al. 2016), sleep problems and poor social skills (Lyons et al. 2015), and the psychosomatic problems such as palpitations, a fast heart rate, sweating, chest pain, dry mouth and headache (Izaguirre and Calvete 2015). Such problems might affect their future relationships with their peers or intimate partners. Additionally, Bowen (2015) noted that approximately 63 percent of the children from families affected by domestic violence do not have adults to guide and advise them on the right decisions to make in order to help them cope with these problems.

#### **Witnessing Domestic Violence as A Child**

Grasso et al. (2016) argued that it might be very easy for people to assume the problems that affect children from families undergoing domestic violence. In some cases, the children may

seem to be doing well or their parents are often protecting them by keeping them away from the violent incidents (Lyons et al. 2015). Nonetheless, the impacts of belonging to family that is characterised by domestic violence episodes might be detrimental on the children. Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017) supported that claim by noting that there are many children who may vividly describe the traumatic events they heard without physically being present at the violent scene.

Witnessing domestic violence may lead to the occurrence of different types of age-dependent negative effects (Bowen 2015). Previous studies that have assessed the impacts of domestic violence on the child have focused on different aspects such as cognitive development (Katz 2015), behavioural changes (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2015), as well as emotional impacts (Foshee et al. 2016). Correspondingly, both Sharps et al. (2016) and Grasso et al. (2016) are in agreement that children who have experienced domestic violence often express similar psychological problems. Specifically, Grasso et al. (2016) mentioned that these children are often at higher risk of developing internalised behaviours such as depression and anxiety, in addition to externalised behaviours such as bullying, cheating, fighting and lying. While supporting the explanations provided by Sharps et al. (2016) concerning the problems associated with witnessing of domestic violence, Eriksson and Mazerolle (2015) noted that children from families which that experience cases of domestic violence are often disobedient both at home and school as well as being at higher risk of developing social competence problems such as problems in having healthy relationship with others and poor academic performance. Nevertheless, Katz 2015) believe that not all of the children who experience domestic violence from their families would develop externalised behaviours such as bullying and fighting but only those who display inappropriate attitude about violence as a conflict resolution tactic.

Even though Katz (2015) and Sharps et al. (2016) generally described the potentially negative effects of domestic violence on the health of children, Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017), Lyons et al. (2015), Vu et al. (2016) on the other hand went into details by classifying the types of impacts which may be experienced by the children based on their ages. For example, the potential impacts of witnessing domestic violence among the infants include disrupted attachment, poor sleeping habits, eating problems and higher risk of physical injury (Vu et al. 2016). On the other hand, the potential impacts highlighted in the study by Lyons et al. (2015) among the preschool children include feelings of unsafety, separation or stranger anxiety, insomnia and parasomnias as well as the development of regressive behaviours. Among the school-aged children, the potential impacts of experiencing domestic violence, as described by Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017), include self-blame, aggressive behaviours, regressive behaviours, and somatic grievances. In the cases where adolescents are involved, both Vu et al. (2016) and Lyons et al. (2015) were in agreement that problems such as school truancy, delinquency, substance abuse as well as early sexual activities, may be experienced. Based on the fact that these studies have demonstrated that the impacts of witnessing domestic violence among the children are age-dependent, the strategies for helping the affected children to cope well with their problems should also be age-specific.

### **Current and Future Relationships Among Children**

Domestic violence does not only have the ability of threatening the psychological, physical and emotional health of the children but also may affect the social life of the children both in the present days and in future (Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso 2016). With reference to the explanations provided by Howarth et al. (2015), the impacts of domestic violence may be used to effectively explain the possible types of difficulties that an individual

might experience both during the parenting process and the intimate relationships. The factors that may interfere with the quality of the relationship between the children and their family members is the attachment theory (Opaas and Varvin 2015). Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) described it as a psychological model which is focused on describing the dynamics of both long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships among human beings.

Similarly, Howarth et al. (2015) argued that the parents have the responsibility of providing protection to their children. For that matter, the distress within the quality of child-parent relationship may be caused when the parents have no ability of protecting their children hence leading to the straining of the attachments. Even though Foshee et al. (2015) did not highlight the quality of attachment between the parent and child, the study believes that the environment within which the child is brought up in has a significant impact on both his or her present and future relationship with other people. Such arguments were in agreement with the findings from the study by Opaas and Varvin (2015) where it was noted that the quality of child developmental process is largely influenced by the nature of their environment. For that matter, those children who were brought up in families characterised by increased cases of domestic violence might not have poor relationships with their present colleagues and loved ones.

Furthermore, Howarth et al. (2015) explained that the children who experience abusive and unattached caregiving are often at higher risk of developing negative relationships with their caregivers, parents and colleagues as a result of poor attachment as well as increased anger. Both Opaas and Varvin (2015) and Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) are in agreement that there is a positive relationship between child exposure to domestic violence and the quality of their future relationships. While explaining this phenomenon, Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) noted that children brought up in abusive relationships may not see the value of

having a healthy, loving caring relationship hence they may carry the anger, poor attachment, rage, dishonestly, violence and abusive characteristics to their future relationships. Similarly, Opaas and Varvin (2015) determined that there is a positive relationship between the exposure of children to family violence and the perpetration of teen dating violence. In that study, Opaas and Varvin (2015) noted that between 10 percent and 20 percent of the teens in a romantic relationship have been experiencing violence in their relationship and that the exposure to domestic violence is one of the most important factors that have led to the occurrence of such trends.

The social learning theory is another important theory that has been in the recent years used for explaining the relationship between family violence exposure and the quality of relationships among the children. For example, Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) noted that the children who are brought up in families with episodes of domestic violence are at higher chances of experiencing the violence themselves and develop violent acts that might interfere with the quality of their present and future relationships. Nevertheless, Opaas and Varvin (2015) determined that the domestic violence might interfere with the quality of present and future relationships among the boys and girls differently. In that study, it was noted that boychild are more likely to develop abusive and violent characteristics from their families more than the girlchild.

### **Social Development and Academic Performance Among the Children**

As cited in the study by Foshee et al. (2015), the social development is the process through which the child learns to interact with other people around them, and that they may also gain important skills for communicating with others as well as process their own actions during the development of process of perception of the own individuality within their environment.

Social development has the ability of impacting different types of developmental process among the children. Furthermore, Guedes et al. (2016) argued that the ability of the child to effectively interact in a healthy manner with other people in their environments may impact everything, as simple as learning new words as a toddler and developing the skills and strengths for resisting peer pressure in their school-age periods as well as to successfully navigate different forms of challenges during the adulthood. Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016) highlighted domestic violence as an important health concern among the children as it has the ability of negatively impacting both their physical and emotional health and may also have long-term impacts on the child's social development.

Importantly, Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) noted that at least one in five women has been exposed to domestic violence in England and Wales at the age of 16 years and below, a number which equates to 4.8 million women. Engaging in domestic violence is an important characteristic of bad parenting (Huang et al. 2015). Correspondingly, Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) and Guedes et al. (2016) argued that bad parenting habits such as engaging in violence as a means of solving family issues might have important social problems among the children, such as antisocial behaviours, poor resilience, aggression, violent habits, bullying among others. Frequently engaging in domestic violence among other types of poor parenting decisions may have harmful impacts on the child's development process. As explained by Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016), most of the parents who engage in domestic violence often pay less attention to their children hence may influence the development of loneliness, isolation and social withdrawal habits among the children. Such habits might have both short-term and long-term impacts on the social development process and future relationships among the children.

Many studies, such as Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015), Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016), Foshee et al. (2015) and Felitti et al. (2019), have determined that domestic violence episodes have significant impacts on the both the social and academic performance among the children. Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016) noted that domestic violence is a bad practice that has the ability of interfering with the quality of education and academic performance among the children in one way or the other, regardless of their age, race, gender, culture or religious orientation. There is a strong relationship between the arguments provided by Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016) and the findings from the research study by Foshee et al. (2015) which indicated that 86 percent of the learners who have experienced domestic violence showed poor academic performance. Exposing children to violent family environments might interfere with their social development leading to the occurrence of social isolation, loneliness, poor relationship with their colleagues, development of violent acts such as bullying, abusive among others (Banyard, Hamby and Grych 2017). Such newly developed characteristics may prevent the children from paying much attention in their academic work hence leading to poor performance.

Correspondingly, some of the potential indicators of domestic violence among the children include self-blame, self-harm, suicidal ideation, risk-taking behaviours, poor social networks, substance abuse, depression, criminal behaviours and disaffection with education (Howarth et al. 2015). All of these indicators may prevent the affected children from concentrating in their class work or practicing healthy behaviours in their school environments hence leading to poor performance in their school activities. Guedes et al. (2016) elucidated that the separation anxiety, as a result of domestic violence, may not be only limited to the pre-school

children but also among the young school-aged children which may influence those children to develop negative feelings towards school and learning process.

Both Huang et al. (2015) and Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) presented similar arguments regarding the impacts of domestic violence on the development of emotional problems that may disrupt the learning process among the school going children. The problems highlighted in those studies include poor attentiveness and concentration in class, insecurity, non-attendance and increased absenteeism, sleep disturbance, guilt, withdrawal, depression and low self-esteem. Instead of only focusing on the direct impacts of domestic violence on the academic performance among the affected children, Felitti et al. (2019) went ahead to analyse the possible indirect impacts of this social problem. In that study, it was noted that children from families experiencing episodes of domestic violence are at higher chances of developing bullying behaviours that they may use to make their colleagues in the school to feel uncomfortable. For that matter, domestic violence is an important social problem that should be addressed as an approach of protecting the children.

### **Quality of Childhood Mental Health and Exposure to Domestic Violence**

Different studies, such as Banyard, Hamby and Grych (2017), Huang et al. (2015) and Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015), have shown that there is a positive relationship between the quality of childhood mental health and the exposure to domestic violence. Children who have experienced domestic violence would have state of mental health (Banyard, Hamby and Grych 2017). Mental health refers to the behavioural, cognitive and emotional wellbeing of an individual; hence it is about how a person thinks, feels and behave (Howarth et al. 2015). The quality of mental health has important impacts on the daily life, relationships as well as the physical health of an individual. Similarly, Huang et al. (2015) described the mental health as the

ability of an individual to enjoy life by attaining a perfect balance between the life activities and the efforts to realise psychological resilience. Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) elucidated that the children who are exposed to violent episodes in their homes are often at higher risk of developing conflicting feelings towards their parents.

Importantly, affection and distrust often coexist among the abusers hence influencing the child to become overprotective of the victims and feeling sorry for them. Felitti et al. (2019) further agreed with the arguments provided by Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) concerning the impacts of domestic violence of child's mental health by identifying problems such as anxiety and the fear of being injured or abandoned by their parents. Additionally, Grasso et al. (2016) claimed that there are some children who might be depressed as they think that they are the people to be blamed for the violence taking place in their homes. Even though Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) only highlighted depression and anxiety as the key emotional problems that could be experienced by children from abusive families, Banyard, Hamby and Grych (2017) and Grasso et al. (2016) went ahead to mention other important emotional symptoms that might be cause of domestic violence, such as shame, grief as well as low self-esteem.

Among the studies reviewed to identify the mental health problems associated with domestic violence, only Felitti et al. (2019) and Howarth et al. (2015) identified the transfer of role reversal to children, from their parents who are victims of psychological and emotional dysfunction caused by domestic violence. In such situations, Felitti et al. (2019) argued that the parents would stop treating the young ones as their children but as therapist and confidants. For that matter, the children would be forced to mature faster than the average child in order to successfully perform the new roles provided to them by their parents. Some of the new roles that the child would be expected to perform, as explained in the study by Howarth et al. (2015),

include caring for their younger siblings, doing house chores such as cooking and cleaning. Eventually, such children would suffer from social isolation and not actively participating in the activities which are normal for the children of their age.

### **Strategies for Helping Domestically Abused Children**

The primary strategy that has been explained in different studies, such as Bowen (2015), Grych (2017) and Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017), is educating the parents on the importance of maturing their children in a healthy and violent free environment. Specifically, Grych (2017) noted that the parents who engage in domestic violent activities should consider seeking help from other people in order to prevent exposing their children to unwanted and unhealthy environments that might interfere with their growth and development. Nevertheless, Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017) argued that this strategy would not help those who have already been exposed to such problems. Domestic violence events are important example of traumatic episodes in the life of the child that may lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorders.

The symptoms for this mental health problem include insomnia, nightmares, poor concentration, increased alertness to the environment (Grasso et al. 2016). Banyard, Hamby and Grych (2017) further explained that children with post-traumatic stress disorders may also be at high risk of experiencing physical injuries. Both Howarth et al. (2015) and Huang et al. (2015) presented a common argument in that children who are exposed to early maltreatment, such as the episodes of domestic violence, within the caregiving relationships would develop complex traumatic stress disorder that would severely impact their social, mental, emotional and physical health.

The problems associated with domestic violence have generated large number of interventions within the social service, law enforcement and health domains (Foshee et al. 2016). According to the argument provided by Izaguirre and Calvete (2015), the school-going children often spend much of the time in the school environments. For that matter, developing strategies to help those children to cope with their health problems would require constant involvement of the school. Teachers and other education stakeholders should therefore ensure that such children are identified, guided, counselled and provided with necessary resources that would help them to realise positive mental, social and physical growth and development processes. Even though there are social work organisations and child social groups that have the mandate of caring of children from families characterised with episodes of domestic violence (Lyons et al. 2015), Porche, Costello and Rosen-Reynoso (2016) noted that inadequate funds and effective training of the personnel in such organisations are some of the most important problems that have prevented them from realising positive results despite their efforts. For that matter, the government should consider allocating adequate funds to these social groups for effective management of the affected children.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Even though studies such as Maneta, Foshee et al. (2015), Eriksson and Mazerolle (2015) and Bowen (2015) proposed different strategies that could be used for helping those children who were exposed to domestic violence to regain their mental health status, none of them highlighted the age-specific approaches. With reference to the fact that both Sharps et al. (2016) and White and Mezzacappa (2017) acknowledged that the magnitude of domestic violence impacts depends on the age of the children involved, it would be very important to formulate and implement strategies which are specifically focused on addressing the mental and social health

problems among children within a specified age group. For that matter, this is one of the most important gaps in literature that the present library-based project has identified that would like to fill. Based on the data collected from the review process, large percentage of the domestic violence victims are women. Nevertheless, the studies have failed to highlight some of the reasons that have influenced the occurrence of this trend. Even though the present review would not look into such factors, it is justifiable to note that this is an important area for future research. The data from those studies would therefore be used for developing strategies for ending or reducing the domestic violence cases.



## **Chapter Four: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

Even though there are strategies put in place to help in reducing the incidences of domestic violence, previous studies on this area show that the number of people exposed to this problem is still on the rise. Unfortunately, the children are the most affected people. Children brought up in domestic violent families have higher chances of experiencing growth and development problems. Based on the fact that there are a lot of studies which have been conducted to determine the impacts of domestic violence on children, the present study opted for the library-based project with the aim of identifying the common trends and literature gaps in those studies. The first important finding that was made is that children exposed to domestic violence are at risk of developing mental health problems such as sleep disorders, withdrawal and isolation, post traumatic stress disorders among others. Such problems prevent them from freely interacting with their colleagues. Additionally, the present library-based project determined that children who are brought up in families characterised by domestic violence would register poor social development process as well as have poor academic performance in school. The present study also noted that there is a positive relationship between exposing children to domestic violent episodes and poor present and future relationships. For that matter, children who have witnessed episodes of domestic violence have higher chances of developing poor relationships with those close to them as well as their spouses in future. Such relationship may be used to explain the occurrence of vicious circle of domestic violence in the society.

### **Study Limitations**

Even though the present study was able to achieve its intended outcomes, it is justifiable to note that there were still other important limitations that could be experienced. The first

limitation was associated with the over-reliance on the secondary data to make conclusions. One of the problems associated with the use of secondary data is that they may lead to the development of inappropriate conclusions as the researcher is not aware of the actual source of the data presented in the studies being reviewed. Nonetheless, the present research only selected those studies that were published in reputable databases and journals as an approach of increasing the chances to collect and analyse high quality data. Furthermore, the study design that was chosen did not allow for the presentation of primary perception of the participants regarding the impacts of domestic violence on children.

### **Recommendations**

Because the research study was able to report a positive relationship between domestic violence and poor mental health, social development and academic performance, there is need for the formulation and implementation of strategies for preventing or reducing the incidences of domestic violence in the society. Despite the fact that the present study was also to achieve its set goals, it is important to note that there are still important recommendations that could be made in order to help in improving its overall quality in future. The present research focused on collecting and analysing secondary data. For that matter, it is recommendable for future studies in this area to consider collecting and analysing primary data in order to promote the reporting of first hand information from the affected people. Furthermore, it is important to note that large percentage of the research studies about domestic violence and children's health have used qualitative approaches. For that matter, this is an important that future research studies should fill by using quantitative research approaches for collecting and analysing primary data.

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**Appendix**

IRP Proposal Form

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL CARE & COMMUNITY PRACTICE**

**INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM**

**Student:**

**Enrolment No.:**

**Course:** Social Work BA (Hons)

**Supervisor:**

**Proposed Title of Research Project**

Analysis of the impacts of domestic violence on children

**Aims and Purpose of Research**

**Research Aims**

To analyse the impacts of domestic violence on children's current and future relationships.

To assess how family violence interferes with academic performance and social development among children.

To analyse the impacts of domestic violence on the affected children's mental health.

To propose strategies that may be used to promote quality mental health and social development process among children in families characterised by domestic violence.

### **Purpose of the Research Project**

With reference to the information presented in the study by Vu et al. (2016), domestic violence cases in the United Kingdom and around the world have increased in the recent years. Some leading to divorce. Unfortunately, children who are in such relationships have been determined to be the most affected (Bowen 2015). For that matter, the main purpose of the proposed independent research project will be to identify and analyse the impacts of domestic violence on the mental health and social development process among the children from the affected families. Following the identification of such impacts, the proposed study will also formulate strategies that may be used for helping children from the families characterised by domestic violence to realise a healthy mental and social development process, as well as to improve in their academic performance.

### **Background/Context of The Research**

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is defined by ONS (2018) as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, such as sexual, physical and psychological attacks, along with the economic coercion used by adults against their current or former intimate partners. Even though homes should be very safe places for the children, there are hundreds of millions of children around the globe who are exposed to different forms of domestic violence at home hence leading to the occurrence of powerful and profound on their present and future quality of life (Eriksson and Mazerolle 2015). Different studies, such as Lyons et al. (2015), Huang et al. (2015), Guedes et al. (2016) and Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016), have revealed that children exposed to domestic violence might experience socio-developmental problems in their future lives, including poor relationship with others in the society. Parents have the responsibility of protecting their children against any kind of threat (Bowling et al. 2016). Similarly, Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017) argued that those children who are exposed to domestic violence are often denied the right to have safe and stable home environment. As a result of the increasing number of children suffering silently and having limited support, Smith-Marek et al. (2015) proposed that children exposed to family-based violence are often in need of trusted adults to help and comfort them, as well as highly effective services which can help them to successfully cope with their experiences.

With reference to the data presented in the Office of National Statistics, approximately 4.2 percent of men and 7.9 percent of women were exposed to domestic violence in the United Kingdom in 2018 (ONS 2018). For that matter, there are approximately 685000 males and 1300000 females who are in abusive relationship in this country. Furthermore, Huang et al. (2015) noted that more than 3.3 million children in the United Kingdom are often exposed to

domestic violence. Despite the fact that men are sometimes considered to be victims of such violence, Izaguirre and Calvete (2015) argued that women are the most affected. In both cases, children are often at the centre. In a study by Sharps et al. (2016), it was determined that there is a positive link between domestic violence and child abuse. Similarly, Guedes et al. (2016) noted that 40 percent of the child abuse victims reported the occurrence of domestic violence in their homes. The findings from the study by Smith-Marek et al. (2015) also agreed with such arguments as it was determined that children who are exposed to domestic violence are five times more likely to suffer from physical or sexual abuse than the United Kingdom's national average. For that matter, preventing the occurrence of family-based violence may have significant impacts on the children more than on the involved parents.

Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) argued that domestic violence and child protection are complex and multifaceted areas. There are higher chances for the co-occurrence of domestic violence and intimate partner violence with other problems associated with the experiences and responses of the children to the intimate partner violence exposure. Children below the age of 10 who are exposed to violence in their homes might develop emotional stress which could cause severe impacts on their social and brain development as well as impairing of their cognitive and sensory growth (Katz 2015). In another study by Foshee et al. (2015), domestic violence was associated with the occurrence of behavioural changes, such as excessive irritability, emotional distress, sleep problems and poor language development, among the affected children. Furthermore, Eriksson and Mazerolle (2015) also noted that family-based violence has the ability of influencing the occurrence of sleep problems, poor relationship with others, as well as problems with toilet training and language development.

During the stage of development, the child's brain is often being prepared for the adulthood emotional and physical functioning (ONS 2018). Therefore, exposure to domestic violence might severely interfere with such developments. During the childhood growth process, those children who were exposed to violence might show sign of the problems. Katz (2015) added that the school-aged children might have a lot of problems with their school work as well as to show poor concentration in class and overall academic performance. Such arguments could be supported with the findings from the study by Grasso et al. (2016), which noted that 35 percent of the children with lower reading abilities and poor overall academic performance are often coming from families characterised by high cases of domestic violence.

Behavioural and personality problems among the children who are exposed to domestic violence have been determined to take different forms such as psychosomatic illnesses (Izaguirre and Calvete 2015), depression and suicidal tendencies (Sharps et al. 2016), bed wetting, sleep problems and poor social skills (Lyons et al. 2015). Some studies, such as Bowling et al. (2016) and Maneta, White and Mezzacappa (2017), also noted that the social development might also be impaired as the children might lose the ability to feel empathy for others, developing social isolation feelings, unable to easily make friends as a result of social discomfort. Even though Foshee et al. (2015) only provided the relationship between domestic violence and poor cognitive development, Hilton, Harris and Rice (2015) and Hackett, McWhirter and Leshner (2016) on the other hand noted that such cases might also influence the occurrence of aggressive

behaviours among children, such as bullying. Grasso et al. (2016) added that domestically abused children are four times more likely to be involved in fight as compared to those who come from families with no domestic violence. For that matter, parents should ensure that they do not engage in any form of domestic violence, not only for the success of their marriage, but also for the protection of their children.

**Proposed Sample Group (if applicable):**

Not applicable because the proposed study will use a secondary methodological approach.

**Methodological Approach**

The proposed study will follow a qualitative methodological approach. With reference to the information provided by Gomm (2008), qualitative research approaches are largely used in the social sciences for the purpose of exploring the social interactions, systems as well as the process. Banister et al. (2011) added that the approach has the ability of providing an in-depth understanding of the ways through which people come to understand, act and manage their day-to-day situations within a given setting. Based on the fact that the proposed study will be focused on assessing the impacts of domestic violence on children, the use of qualitative research will be the most appropriate, as the study analyses a social problem. Specifically, a deductive approach will be employed. According to Banister et al. (2011), a deductive approach has the ability of providing a convenient and efficient way of analysing both primary and secondary qualitative data. The analysis of qualitative data in the proposed study is also important as it will provide the researcher with the opportunity of developing themes which may be used for explaining the relationship between domestic violence and social as well as mental health of the involved children.

**Data Collection Techniques**

In this proposed study, secondary data will be collected and analysed. For that matter, library-based project approach will be used for the data collection. The main reason that influenced the

decision to use this approach is as a result of the high number of studies which have been previously conducted regarding the impacts domestic violence on children. Oliver (2012) described library-based project as a form of research methodology that uses systematic methods for collecting secondary data, critically appraise the selected research studies and the synthesise the obtained findings. For that matter, the proposed study will be focused on assessing the trends, similarities and differences in the data presented in those studies.

**Research Ethics Checklist**

**Please answer each question below by ticking the appropriate box:**

<b>Research ethics risk factors</b>	Always / Often	Sometimes	Never
Does the research done by students involve vulnerable groups: for instance, children, those with cognitive impairment, or those in unequal relationships?			
Does the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to any vulnerable groups or individuals? (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home?)			✓
Is it necessary for participants to take part in the project without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non- public places)			✓
Does the student’s research project involve discussion of sensitive topics? (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, violence), or the disclosure of normally private information?		✓	
Could any of the research projects induce pain, psychological stress or anxiety, or could it cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?			✓
Do any of the research projects involve prolonged or repetitive testing?			✓
Does the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use or which can be obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests?			✓
Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question? (includes, in international research, locally employed research assistants)			✓
Does the research involve members of the public in a research capacity (for instance using the public as			✓

gatherers of data)?			
Will any of the research take place outside the UK?			✓
Will any of the research involve respondents to the internet or other visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?			✓
Will there be research that involves the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?			✓
Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?			✓
Is there any conflict of interest that might challenge the independence of the research?			✓
Is there a possibility of detrimental impact on the environment?			✓
Does the research use control groups?			✓
Is the research ever in receipt of external funding?			✓
Does the research ever require additional ethical consent from the NHS, a research funding body or another external agency?			✓

If you have identified any risk factors in the list above (i.e. if you have answered always, often or sometimes in response to a question) please describe below what this usually involves and how you intend to manage and contain these areas of risk.

The study will involve the discussion of very sensitive topic, specifically domestic violence. For that matter, the use of secondary data will help in ensuring that the initial identity of the participants is protected.