

Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence: Screening of School Children at a Rural Area in Galle District

Ponnamperuma, T.¹, Lakmini, A.N.G.P.¹, Kudagama, V.C.D.²

¹Department of Community Medicine, University of Ruhuna

²Medical Officer of Health Udugama

thyagi_p@yahoo.com

Millions of adolescents get exposed to violence between their parents or caregivers each year but most of the partners involved in violence do not believe that their children get exposed to their fighting. Violence in family creates an unhealthy environment at home that influences adolescent's healthy development. Studying the exposure of these silent victims is thus important for their safety and healthy development and at large, for a better society. Therefore, the current study attempted to identify the types of domestic violence, degree of exposure and its associated factors among adolescents. School based screening was conducted on 244 (females=124) children age 14-16 years from 2 mixed schools in Udugama MOH area, Galle district. Rate, frequency and degree of violence exposures were measured by 'Child Exposure to Domestic Violence' (CEDV) scale.

Almost all (99%) adolescents lived with their parents and had two siblings on average. Majority of the families belong to the middle social class (68%). Substantial amount of adolescents (29%) reported exposure to at least one domestic violence event. The mean frequency of exposure was 4.6 (SD=2.8) and degree of exposure was 12.7 (SD=7.9). The commonest types of exposures were father destroying things at home, parents arguing about the adolescent and disagreements between parents. Nearly half of the adolescents reported that they cannot remember when the violence was started but 16% have said that violence was present since they could remember. Adolescents exposure to number of domestic violence events and degree of exposure to violence did not differ with gender [$t(65) = .71, p > .05$, $t(67) = .52, p = .08$] or socioeconomic status ($f = 2.76, p = .071$). Adolescents with family violence were unhappy at home compared to the others in a non-violence home environment [$t(236) = 4.64, p > .001$]. Adolescents with violence at home reported to have major life changes compared to the others [$t(227) = 3.07, p > .05$].

The results suggest that equally higher number of boys and girls get exposed to adult violence at home irrespective of the social class. Policy makers should take necessary actions to protect the youth of the country in order to achieve better social transformation.

Key words: *Adolescents, Domestic violence, Trauma exposure.*