The impact of domestic violence on cognitive and psychological development of children: A scoping review

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Abstract

Background: Domestic violence is an incident that affects all family members, including children. The impact of domestic violence needs to be identified from the beginning, so that early treatment can be given. The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of domestic violence on child development.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore the coping strategies of adolescents with divorced parents.

Methods: This study used the Scoping Review method. Literature were sourced from CINAHL, PubMed, and Scopus. The keywords are “domestic violence” AND “child” AND “impact”. The criteria for articles in this study are full text, free access, English language, and the publication period of the last 10 years (2013-2022).

Results: Nine articles were found discussing the impact of domestic violence on children’s development, namely the psychological impact, social impact, and the impact on school life. Several samples from UK ranged from 8-336 respondents. These impacts occur due to trauma events in children that are not treated immediately. The impact will be even worse if there is no immediate intervention to reduce the impact of domestic violence.

Conclusion: Domestic violence can cause disturbances to the development of children including psychological impacts, social impacts, and impacts on school life.

Keywords: children; domestic violence; impact

Introduction

Domestic violence has experienced a significant increase. Domestic violence is behaviour that hurts and injures physically and psychologically, resulting in unwanted pain and distress (subjective suffering) for the injured party within the family (household). Domestic violence can occur between intimate partners, or against children or other family members, or against people who live in the same household (Lamela et al., 2018; Pamungkas et al., 2022). According to a study, the number of victims of violence against children reached 2.29 million (3%) with rural areas having a higher number of cases than urban areas. When viewed from the side of the perpetrators of violence, then 61.4% such acts were committed by parents (Macniven et al., 2020).

In general, the factors that cause domestic violence can be classified into two categories, namely external factors and internal factors (Lamela et al., 2021; Yosep et al., 2022). External factors are factors that come from beyond the perpetrators of violence. An offender who initially is normal or does not have aggressive behaviour and attitude may be able to commit acts of violence if faced with a situation under pressure (stress), for example, prolonged economic difficulties or infidelity or being abandoned by a partner.
or other events (Stanley & Boel-Studt, 2021; Yosep et al., 2022). While internal factors are factors that originate from the personality of the perpetrator himself, which causes them to be easily provoked to commit acts of violence, even though the problems they face are relatively small (Lawson & Quinn, 2013).

The two factors above can have a negative effect not only on perpetrators and victims who experience acts of violence in the form of physical or verbal (Christian, 2015; Yosep, Hikmat, & Mardhiyah, 2022). Some research results show that children who are indirect victims of violent events, such as bickering between their parents at home, also have a vulnerability to psychological trauma, so that in the end the child has the possibility to be involved in or imitate doing the same thing in adulthood (Graham et al., 2021; Hikmat et al., 2022; Ristia et al., 2018). In other words, victims of domestic violence, either directly or indirectly, have the same trauma effect depending on their age and gender (Saltmarsh et al., 2020).

Domestic violence victims are frequently children who are victims of their own parents’ actions. Domestic violence has a very bad effect on children (Ragavan et al., 2018). As for children who are raised in families or environments that experience domestic violence, they will experience stunted development, for example in terms of social maturity (Miranda et al., 2022). Children will tend to find it difficult to develop feelings of peace and calm, will always feel afraid, find it difficult to interact with other people, and tend to be more aggressive when playing with their peers (Lamela et al., 2021).

The impacts of domestic violence need to be a shared concern, especially for families. By knowing the impact early on, nurses and families can collaborate to prevent these impacts from becoming more complex. Therefore, the authors are interested in conducting research related to the impact of domestic violence on children.

Methods
Design
This study was designed with a systematic scoping review framework. Systematic scoping reviews are a methodological technique to explore and discuss a topic that is currently developing (Tricco et al., 2018). This methodology has a wide conceptual range to discuss various research results to achieve research objectives (Peterson et al., 2017). The framework used has five main steps: finding research questions, finding relevant study results, choosing a study, mapping data, putting together results, and reporting study results (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2021). The PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) is used in this literature review to find different topics that talk about how domestic violence affects children.

Search Methods
Publications were searched using three databases, CINAHL, PubMed, and Scopus. The keywords used are: “domestic violence” and “child” and “impact”. After the authors obtained articles based on keywords, they eliminate them based on inclusion and exclusion criteria (Acob, 2022). Then they selected based on the title and abstract. The next step was to read the full text to determine the feasibility of the article for analysis. The research question is: What is the impact of domestic violence on children? Article search strategy used several relevant keywords based on PCC’s Framework (Table 1).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria
This literature review uses the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Review (PRISMA -ScR) which serves to identify various topics that discuss the impact of domestic violence on children (Figure 1). Articles were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for this study were that the patient was a sample of children or adolescents, the article was an original study, used English, full text, and was set in the last 10 years (2021-2022).

Data extraction
The articles were extracted using a manual table by authors. The contents of the table include author, year, country, research design, population and sample, scale, and results of the study. Filling in the table is done based on the summary results that have been discussed by the author.

Data Analysis
The articles collected were then read in full and analysed by all the authors. After being analysed, the impact of domestic violence on children from the articles reviewed was classified based on similar effects and then described.

Results
The number of articles obtained from the search is 468. After removing duplicates, 408 articles were obtained. Furthermore, after elimination based on the inclusion criteria, there were 372 articles remained. Then, after checking the title and abstract, nine articles were found. Articles were analysed with all authors based on criteria and topic relevance.

There are nine articles that discuss the impact of domestic violence on child development. Of the nine available interventions, they are classified into three types, namely: psychological impacts, social impacts, and impacts on school life. The results of the analysis are shown in the following table (Table 2).

Discussion
Domestic violence is an incident involving family members, including the wife, husband, children, and
other family members (Thornton, 2014) and takes the form of physical and/or verbal violence. For example, physical violence in the form of slapping, hitting and torturing, while verbal violence takes the form of insults and threats. Domestic violence can occur due to economic problems, infidelity, incompatibility, and others (Rolè et al., 2019).

Domestic violence affects all family members, including children. Children can suffer trauma due to unpleasant events that they feel. Although they are not victims directly, children who see incidents of domestic violence can also feel the negative impact of domestic violence. The following is the impact of domestic violence on child development:

Psychological Impact

Children who have been victims of domestic violence since childhood suffer mental disturbances, so that the idea arises that children only deserve to be sacrificed (Lamela et al., 2021). If you have a mindset like that, your child will continue to be a victim and surrender to the situation. In addition, children who are victims of domestic violence can have low self-esteem due to the fear that they will do something wrong and experience violence again (Lamela et al., 2021). This will cause the child’s development to be hampered. Children will find it difficult to show an attitude of initiative in solving problems and have difficulty getting along. Children are also prone to stress, depression and anxiety (Wang & Pannell, 2019). This has the impact of disrupting child development. The violence experienced by children will cause them heartache and trauma. The impact on the child’s later life will be very large, resulting in depression, stress, and other psychological disorders that can interfere with social life and daily activities (Gustafsson et al., 2015). Children will also become afraid of all forms of violence, even the smallest ones, for example, loud voices, high-pitched speech, and others (Chung et al., 2021).

Social Impact

The impact of domestic violence on children can lead to new violence caused by the victim. Children who are victims of domestic violence can become perpetrators of violence. The results of the study reveal that violent behaviour is actually carried out by those who have been victims of domestic violence (Gurtovenko & Katz, 2020). The impact of violence also causes quite drastic changes in the emotional condition of children, which will be immediately visible. Greene, Chan, McCarthy, Wakschlag, and Briggs-Gowan (2018) describe such a child as quiet, moody, and prone to crying. The child won’t have a good opinion of him or herself because they won’t be able to deal with stress and take their mind off of things. Children who experience violence feel they have lost an adult figure who can protect them, that’s why, little by little, their trust in others will begin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author &amp; Year</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swanston et al., 2014</td>
<td>Dual perspectives of school-aged children’s experiences of domestic violence</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
<td>8 participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>The impact of domestic violence on children is that it can cause stress and depression; the impact can also have consequences in adulthood such as anti-social behaviour and difficulties communicating with others. Children who are victims of domestic violence face emotional trauma, physical and psychological barriers to learning, and display disruptive behaviour at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonnell et al., 2016</td>
<td>Contextual risk and protective factors</td>
<td>Franklin Street</td>
<td>Mixed-methods study</td>
<td>289 participants</td>
<td>Child Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale</td>
<td>The impact of domestic violence on children is not being able to adapt to their environment. This is because children are less sensitive to their environment. In addition, children also experience a decline in cognitive abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusco, 2017</td>
<td>Emotional harm</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Empirical studies</td>
<td>336 students</td>
<td>Patient Health Questionnaire-9</td>
<td>The impact of domestic violence on children is that there are socio-emotional problems where children have difficulty communicating with their environment and difficulties in controlling emotions. This causes the child’s cognitive development to be disrupted and it is difficult to make friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd, 2018</td>
<td>Emotional impacts on the lives and education of children</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>A case study</td>
<td>10 students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic violence has an impact on children and can instil anxiety and fear, leading to social isolation and a decline in cognitive abilities. Children who are victims of domestic violence experience anxiety, stress and post-traumatic syndrome disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaghan et al., 2017</td>
<td>Emotional Competencies and Relational Contexts</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Interpretive Interactionism</td>
<td>107 students</td>
<td>Constrained Articulation – Expressing Emotions</td>
<td>Domestic violence has an impact on children, causing children to become anti-social and display disruptive behaviour at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldman-Levi et al., 2015</td>
<td>Childhood post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and attachment security</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Quantitative research</td>
<td>54 children</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Diagnostic Scale</td>
<td>Traumatic events, namely domestic violence, cause children to experience anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic syndrome disorder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to erode, and children will find it difficult to put trust and confidence in others again (Callaghan et al., 2017). They will assume that there is no one who can be relied on to provide protection for them, because there is no one who is worthy of their trust (Kh et al., 2014).

Impact on school life

Pressure due to violence that children receive can also damage a child's ability to concentrate and focus on something. For example, on school activities and school lessons (Joseph et al., 2006). It could be that the interests and talents of children that once seemed great and promising will disappear drastically along with a decline in their ability to concentrate (Waldman-Levi et al., 2015). Violence can suppress the process of a child's development. Children's IQ development will tend to be static, and IQ levels can even decrease (Swanston et al., 2014). Children's cognitive development will also deteriorate and not be as it should be (Lloyd, 2018). In other words, the condition of children's intelligence will be hampered by the constant violence continuously experienced by children.

The limitation in this study is the lack of previous studies discussing domestic violence. So it is quite difficult for researchers to discuss the impact of domestic violence on child development. In addition, the research methods in this study are quite diverse, so the discussion is not comprehensive.

Conclusions

Domestic violence is an unpleasant incident in the family that affects every family member, including children. Children who are in the process of development are prone to disturbances due to stressors and developmental disorders. The effects of domestic violence on children include psychological effects, social effects, and school-related effects. The experience of trauma due to domestic violence needs to be a shared concern among people such as parents, teachers, and health workers, including nurses, to provide interventions to prevent a more severe impact.

The suggestion from this research is that there is a need for further research on interventions to reduce the effects of domestic violence. The impact of domestic violence has an impact on the development of children to adulthood, so interventions are needed to prevent the impact of continued domestic violence. Nurses can work with families and other health workers to prevent and lessen the effects of domestic violence on children.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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### Impact on school life

- **Pressure due to violence** can damage a child's ability to concentrate and focus on school activities and lessons.
- Children may lose interest and talent that once seemed promising.
- IQ development can be static, and levels can decrease.
- Cognitive development can deteriorate.

### Conclusions

- Domestic violence affects every family member, including children.
- Children are prone to developmental disorders due to stressors.
- Psychological, social, and school-related effects are evident.
- Trauma due to domestic violence is a shared concern.
- Further research and interventions are needed to prevent severe impacts.
- Collaboration with families and health workers is essential.

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### Table: Impact of Domestic Violence on Cognitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author &amp; Year</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (Callaghan et al., 2018) | Learning difficulties, economic difficulties, and anxiety | 21 children | Interpretive interactionism | UK | Educational performance and behavioral problems | The results showed that children with domestic violence experienced slow learning.
| (Kithonga & Mbogo, 2018) | Educational performance and behavioral problems | 56 students | Descriptive Design | South Africa | Learning difficulties, economic difficulties, and anxiety | The results showed that children with domestic violence experienced slow learning.
| (Pang & Thomas, 2020) | Learning achievement | 21 children | Interpretive interactionism | UK | Motivate learning, anxiety, and fear | The results showed that domestic violence impact was anxiety, difficulty in the learning process, and less motivated to learn.
| (Chester & Joscelyne, 2021) | Motivate learning, anxiety, and fear | 14 children | Interpretive interactionism | England | The results showed that domestic violence impact was anxiety, difficulty in the learning process, and less motivated to learn.

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Not applicable.

**References**


Saltmarsh, S., Tualauelei, E., & Ayre, K. (2020). "I'm trying to tell you this man is dangerous... and no one’s listening": Family violence, parentschool engagement and school complicity. *Australian Educational Researcher, 1–24*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00415-7


