

Effects of Exposure to Domestic Physical Violence on Children's Behavior: A Chinese Community-Based Sample

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Abstract : Purpose: This study examined the effects of exposure to domestic physical violence (DPV) on children's behavior in a community sample. Method: Ninety-three 12-16 year-old adolescents exposed to DPV were matched with 54 adolescents with no exposure to DPV based on age, gender, family composition and parental age and education level. Participation included assessment with the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ-SF) and Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) by the adolescents and their parents respectively. Results: CBCL total score and anxiety/depression, social interaction problems, attention problems, delinquency, aggression and externalizing scores were significantly higher in adolescents exposed to DPV than those in controls (all $p < 0.05$). The CBCL total score and scores of anxiety/depression, social interaction problems, attention problems, delinquency, aggression and externalizing behaviors of boys were significantly higher in the research group than in the controls (all $p < 0.05$). Delinquency scores in abused adolescents were significantly higher than in DPV witnessed ($p < 0.05$), but no other scores of CBCL were significant different. Different subtypes of behavioral problems were associated with different types of abuse. Conclusions: DPV exposure is associated with adverse behaviors in children, especially among boys. Children witness DPV alone have similar behavioral scores as the abused children. We recommend that both abused and DPV witness adolescents in Chinese communities need treatment to mitigate the effects on maladjusted behaviors.

Keywords : domestic violence, child, behavior, community, China

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