

RESEARCH PAPER

Family violence linked to children's height and weight

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ABSTRACT

The present cross sectional investigation is based on a sample of 850 children (430 boys and 420 girls) ranging in age from 8 to 16 years to study the impact of domestic violence on the weight and height of children. The data have been collected from different schools of Ludhiana city. To assess the domestic violence in the families of school children 'family violence scale' was followed. Height and weight of children were taken by following standard techniques. Students 't' test was calculated to see the impact of domestic violence on weight and height of children. The children both boys and girls from low domestic violence families were significantly heavier and taller than children from high domestic violence families.

Key Words : Family violence

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Domestic violence is conceptualized as 'One partner's attempt to control, dominate or humiliate the other partner a variety of means viz., physical, sexual, psychological, economic and spiritual abuses' (Jaffe *et al.*, 2003). Domestic violence is a global phenomenon and not restricted to any geographical area though regional variations may exist. Various religions, castes and societies, overtly or covertly, have supported subjugation of women in one form or the other; therefore, gender violence cannot be traced only to individual male dominance but should be linked to larger social and familial structures that are based on patriarchy and exploitative relationships. Violence is an act of aggression usually found in interpersonal interactions or interpersonal relations and is situated in the socio-economic and political content of power relations (Kelker, 1991). Everybody including men, women and their children can be the victims of domestic violence in a family. Though chances of men being victims of domestic violence are very less in patriarchal society, the women and children are at a larger risk.

When we talk about the impact of domestic violence on children's development, we are considering the effects on children of living in a home where spousal abuse is occurring. In every society, the child suffers incalculable harm which

may be mental, emotional, physical and sexual at the hands of those who are supposed to mould them into wholesome personalities. The victims who are thus, scared of life may either belong to childhood or adolescence. Nair (1997) and Sunny (2003) reported that witnessing domestic violence can cause long term effects, the children have more physical and mental problems. Veeraraghavan (1995) opined that whatever may be the type of violence, the effect of various forms of violence in the family are often very disastrous both in terms of immediate effects that are quite visible as well as long term effects that are often less visible. Laurance (1997) studied the family conflict linked to children's height and well being and reported that children raised in an atmosphere of domestic tension are almost twice as likely to be below average height as those brought up in happier circumstances. Montgomery *et al.* (1997) opined that acute stress stimulate production of human growth hormone which controls metabolism and is essential for growth. Children are known to be the worst victims of the growing menace of domestic violence. That is why most rightly this issue is becoming the focus of societal attention. Keeping this in mind, the present research investigation was undertaken with the following objectives :

– To study the impact of domestic violence on weight