

Research Article

Violence Against Children in the Arab Sector and the Place of the Child in the Family Structure in Arab Society-Situation Picture and Suggestions for Possible Solutions

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Abstract

Physical abuse and violence against children are often defined differently by researchers and writers in the academic literature. The difference and diversity in definitions is mainly due to the academic discipline in which the research was conducted and/or the direction of the research and the subjects of the research. Mainly, broad definitions of physical abuse of children can be identified in the literature (for example: pushing, slapping or beating). On the other hand, there is a minority of "narrow" and specific definitions (such as: beating with an object, confinement in a closed room, etc.). The reason lies, mainly, in the methodological context and the frequency of the phenomena it is easier to define cases under a comprehensive definition (such as beating) and it is also difficult to find enough cases for cases with a "narrow" definition, to create validity for the findings. Also the methods of reporting parental aggression or abuse towards children (for example: Welfare reports, police reports, self-reports, etc.) also affect the definitions due to the focus of the phenomenon (for example: in the context of police reports, the level of attribution and definition is the criminal level), subjective feelings (feelings of the person reporting or answering the research questions) or determination of the researcher and the context of the research article (for example: focus on sexual violence). In the present article, I chose to use the following definition: violence against children is the control of one over another in the family relationship and includes one or more of the following types of violence: sexual, physical, emotional-psychological, economic and neglect.

Keywords

Youth at Risk, Violence Within the Family, Parental Neglect, Parental Violence Against the Child in the Family, The Child's Place in the Arab Family

1. Introduction

The Phenomenon of Child Abuse

Several hypotheses have been proposed in the literature to try and explain the phenomenon of child abuse and why it is as much as the literature on the subject is widespread mainly among a family that is defined as violent and as part of that

family violence. One explanation is that some people have a tendency towards aggressive behavior and because of this tendency everyone who is near these people (spouses and children) is at increased risk of becoming a victim of violence [16].

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Of crime and deviance [7], which claim that aggressive people do not tend to "specialize" in certain forms of aggression (general domestic violence vs. child abuse and violence). Instead, they simply tend to be aggressive and violent and do not differentiate between targets. This explanation usually emphasizes personality-based variables to explain why these people have a tendency toward aggressive behavior.

Examples of such variables include personality characteristics (eg: impulsivity, hostility), biological characteristics (eg: physiological stress reactivity), psychological functioning (eg: depression, substance dependence), and historical risk factors that "set the stage" for later aggression (eg: exposure to violence in the family of origin) [7]. In accordance with this hypothesis, many of the personality-based variables that explain why people have a tendency to aggressive behavior are found in correlation and a direct relationship with the phenomena of domestic violence and child abuse [16].

The aggressive behavior towards the child or children in the family is seen as a direct result of the child's status in general in the family and Arab society and of course in his nuclear family, this is already a social phenomenon at the deep traditional level.

2. The Child's Place in the Arab Family

In Western society, the child is "at the center".

According to the approach of "the child in the center" each child is seen as a unique individual, and it is the role of his parents to diagnose his unique needs and meet them, and not to fulfill predetermined duties. For example, the parents try to spare no effort to respond to the child's needs, and invest a lot of energy in trying to understand his inner world and help him deal with his difficulties and pains.

If in Western society the child is "in the center", then in traditional Arab society the child is at the bottom of the pyramid: the father is the head of the family, followed by the adult men, adult women, young men and women, and finally, the children. In the day-to-day life of the family, the child is usually not the center of attention of the adults.

A child who disturbs his parents in social gatherings is considered spoiled, and if she responds to her son's entreaties, she will be considered as someone who does not know how to educate her son in good behavior. A "good child" is a quiet, obedient, disciplined and conforming child who does not disturb the rest or the fluent conversation of the adults [8]. Whereas a creative child who likes to argue may be perceived as a brat who challenges the parent's authority. Children are generally not encouraged to develop a set of personal values, thoughts and attitudes, but are expected to adopt without criticism the opinions, conventions and values adopted by the family [2, 11].

As part of the set of relationships within the family, sibling relationships in the Arab family are also characterized by an authoritative hierarchy. The older male brothers are more dominant than the younger brothers and sisters.

Regardless of their age, the parents delegate authority to the older children, who help watch over and look after their younger sisters and brothers.

The eldest son is supposed to serve as a role model for his younger brothers and take care of them, not only in their childhood but throughout their lives. The transfer of parental authority of responsibility for the young children to the older children in the family is not considered an unusual phenomenon in Arab society, and this is because children in Arab society go through socialization processes that grow them to be responsible for their siblings and in the future for their parents. Unlike what is accepted according to Western psychological theory, in Arab culture this situation is not considered a pathology in the division of family roles, but rather it is a cultural norm that is fundamentally different.

Another explanation for aggressive behavior towards the child and his position in his nuclear family, also stems from violence that exists between spouses and also leads to violence and abuse of children, this violence arises and is used as a result of stressful events or a series of events or circumstances that cause stress [13]. For example, the accumulation of family crises and stressful circumstances lead to higher levels of negativity/aggression in family contexts (parent-child, parent-parent), especially among family members for whom interpersonal aggression was reinforced in the past [13].

Accordingly, stress factors, such as financial and parental pressure, are highly correlated with family violence in general and child abuse and violence in particular [18]. In addition, certain types of family stressors (such as: financial stress, parenting pressure or children's behavior problems) were found to strengthen the relationship between domestic violence, in general and between the child's status in the Arab family and violence towards him in particular [18].

Another possible explanation is that one type of violence causes or "sets the stage" for other types of violence and abuse [6]. This explanation usually uses the concept of "spillover", which is used in various theories (such as leisure or mass media), according to which domestic violence, which is often expressed as violence between spouses, spills over and increases the likelihood of violence and parental abuse of their children.

Several conceptualizations of this claim have been proposed in the literature. For example, the negative effect created as a result of the violence of the spouses spills over into the interaction between parent and child, and increases the likelihood of aggression and violence by the parents towards the children. Another example is that spousal violence causes mothers to direct aggression towards their children (usually for behavior that is not acceptable or suitable for them) in an effort to avoid angering their violent husbands [6]. That is, apparently, the aggression and violence towards the children, in fact, is intended to protect them and/or the mother from more serious violence by the husband.

Studies that examine the effects on children who have ex-

perceived violence and abuse and who have witnessed violence usually have complex research designs and cross-disciplinary challenges and inherent methodological weaknesses, which include small sample sizes and the bias of sampling procedures and the selection of the sample population, which make it difficult to statistically and scientifically infer whether the relationship between the phenomenon The subject and violence and child abuse is indeed causal and distinct [18].

The main methodological problem lies in the difficulty of statistical control for intervening variables [9].

For example, although the theoretical assumption according to which the child's status as the last in the family hierarchy has consequences and psychological effects on those children who have experienced violence towards them in the nuclear family and who have also witnessed neighborhood violence, depends in part on the level of parental well-being and family functioning that we mentioned, these variables are usually not taken into account in theoretical analyzes or Studies of the effects of violence and child abuse .These limitations are understandable considering the ethical considerations that exist in the process of domestic violence research [9].

However, still, studies show connections and significant effects of violence and child abuse, mainly with psychological and psychiatric consequences such as: anxiety and depression [15].

Moreover, studies have proven that the impact of experiencing violence and abuse in childhood has later consequences in adolescence and studies show a direct and strong connection between experiences of violence in childhood and personality problems in adolescence [15]. Also, a connection was found between the experience of violence in childhood and low self-esteem, social problems, bullying and delinquency [18]. Another research focus is the "double exposure" - exposure to domestic violence and the experience of personal violence. The findings show that the double exposure has a stronger and more significant effect in the psychological context of children and teenagers [18].

3. Violence Against Children in Israel

In Israel, several studies and surveys have been carried out in the field of child abuse and violence (for example: [18]. The main part of the information and data of these studies is based on information and reports from agencies (welfare offices, police, etc.) [10]. The findings show a complex reality that includes diverse victims and of different types of abuse and neglect. The main source for receiving information regarding violence and child abuse (referring to information based on institutional reporting by welfare and enforcement agencies) is the yearbook "Children in Israel", which is published by the Council for the Peace of the Child with the assistance of the Haruv Institute. A comparison of the data of recent years shows a trend of a sharp and consistent increase in recent

years of violent offenses and child abuse.

The most recent findings regarding violence and abuse of children can be found in the publication by. of a study they conducted jointly with the Ministry of Education and the "Triana" company between the years 2011-2014. This was the most comprehensive survey carried out in Israel and therefore, other government ministries joined it, beyond the Ministry of Education (welfare, health and internal security).

The research findings show that close to 53% of the respondents were exposed to or experienced violent harm (of any type or at any level).

Out of all the victims, about 31% of them reported that they experienced multiple types of injuries (3-6). (Name). It was found that boys are at a higher risk level than girls to be sexually, physically, emotionally and physically neglected. On the other hand, girls are more exposed to domestic violence. It was also found that in all types of vulnerability, among Arab children and teenagers there is a higher percentage of vulnerability compared to Jewish children and teenagers. In examining the severity of the injury, it was found that most of the children are exposed to domestic violence (over 70%). Similar to studies around the world, it was found that in families where there is violence between partners, the chance of exposure and experience of violence and abuse is significantly greater. In examining the willingness to share and/or report the injury, it was found that children and teenagers prefer to share the injury with their parents or friends. In contrast, children prefer less to turn to professionals. On the other hand, among the Arab children and youth the educational figure (teacher or school counselor) is more significant than in the Jewish society [10].

4. Violence Against Children in Israeli Arab Society

As mentioned, in studies and surveys it was found that among Arab children and teenagers there is a higher percentage of vulnerability compared to Jewish children and teenagers in all types of vulnerability [10]. Still, however, the phenomenon of abuse and violence against children in Arab society is a phenomenon that is difficult to investigate due to the fact that among large sections of Arab society in Israel there is opposition to reporting to state institutions both to the therapeutic factors (welfare, education, etc.) and the enforcement factors [17].

This reality takes on new validity and importance because, as mentioned, among the Arab children and youth the educational figure (teacher or school counselor) is more significant than in Jewish society [10]. In other words, the information reaches a bottleneck of consulting factors in the education system that prevent his reporting to treatment and enforcement factors [3].

Due to the fact that the Arab society in Israel is a society in transition from a traditional and conservative society to a

modern society, where strong family traditions still exist, another obstacle in the context of research regarding violence against children in Arab society is rooted in the perception that the majority of society does not see the phenomenon as a social problem, but rather a family problem that has Take care of it within the family and not "take it outside" [14].

In Arab society as a whole, there is a patriarchal approach, according to which the children belong to the family and it bears the responsibility in all areas of life, including education [14]. In the context of the approach to violence, in general and violence in the family and towards children, Arab society is very similar to other Arab societies and still, the reality in it is more difficult compared to societies in other Arab countries [4]. Studies show that Arab families in Israel are willing to sacrifice a lot for the well-being of their children and their needs and yet, in cases of violence and neglect, the traditional perception will still prevail. Teachers' reports will only be in serious cases or those with visible signs, which leave no choice [4].

However, it is important to note that in the last decade there has been a trend of change in the rates of reporting to state authorities on cases of violence that require reporting and increased awareness and opposition to violence against children [5]. Moreover, there is a phenomenon of a significant increase in the scope and capacity to recruit foster families in Arab society, who are ready to take in children at risk, who were removed from families - a phenomenon that was not acceptable at all two decades ago and allows for a report that in the end children are removed from families at risk [17].

5. Summary and Recommendations

As mentioned, Arab society in Israel is in the process of transitioning from a conservative and traditional society to a modern society that emphasizes universal values and a desire to resemble Jewish and Western society [14]. Accordingly, we are witnessing far-reaching changes in the structure of the family, structural changes in the local society, moving away from the extended family and more. These processes affect attitude and attitude in many areas of life, including violence within the family in general and violence against children in particular [14].

As mentioned, there has been an increase in reporting rates in recent years and there is an open discourse both in welfare and care institutions and at the social-public level and in the media against the phenomenon of domestic violence in general and against children in particular [12].

It is possible to try if there will also be a need for more extensive use of therapeutic and enforcement tools and methods - as mentioned in the context of foster families and the removal of children from at-risk families.

In addition, there is today an internalization at the institutional level of the local government (municipalities and local councils) of the need to increase standards and recruit quality officials to deal with the phenomenon [12].

It will be very important to also contact the parents and recruit them for treatment, guidance and partnership. It is possible that there are parents who, even if they behave violently towards their child, will be interested in changing this behavior and will benefit greatly from psycho-guidance, perhaps from among the education officials at the school? When the educational consultant on behalf of the school addresses the parents and families, she must get to know the different positions and the possible objections and try to speak with them in a common language, so that they will feel more comfortable sharing with an outside party not from within the family.

Finally, the article is short of containing and encompassing the whole problem on the one hand and on the other hand it does not sufficiently indicate the steps that must be taken in order to reduce the phenomenon. It is strongly recommended to establish a multidisciplinary office research and treatment team and to carry out thorough research work in partnership with the families in order to reduce to a minimum the phenomenon of violence within the Arab family and to improve the root and status of the child and his position within the family.

Abbreviations

eg	For Example
etc	And so on

Author Contributions

Khalid Hreish is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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