

**"The Harsh Reality: Unraveling the Effects of Childhood Exposure to Violence"**Chitra.R.<sup>1</sup> and Dr.Beulah Shekhar<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Manonmaniam Sundranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu<sup>2</sup>Emeritus Professor, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Karunya Institute of Technical Sciences, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu**ABSTRACT**

To improve children's health and wellbeing, there is a need to address the widespread violence against children. Children are vulnerable to all types of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, and others. Stress, anxiety, and depression in children are all known risk factors. Domestic violence, school violence, and community violence are the types of violence that have been linked to negative psychological effects. Children that are exposed to violent environments have drastically altered psychophysiological and behavioral functioning. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the amount of anxiety and tension experienced by children exposed to violence, as well as the prevalence and effects of violence on children. For this study, a quantitative research strategy and a descriptive research design were chosen. The 100 school-age participants in the current study were chosen using the snowball sampling technique. To get the information, a systematic questionnaire was used. Part I of the questionnaire covered demographic information, while Part II included structured questions to gauge how frequently people are exposed to violence. Part III contained a stress assessment scale, while Part IV contained an anxiety assessment scale. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The majority of school-aged children had moderate levels of anxiety, according to the study's findings, and 61.7% of them also had moderate levels of stress. It is recommended that the interventions be implemented to lessen violence in the home, classroom, and neighborhood. It may be useful in preventing stress and anxiety in school-age children.

**Keywords: Anxiety, Community violence, Domestic violence, School violence and Stress**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children are the future's guardians, therefore a society's ability to maintain a healthy future rests on their wellbeing (WHO, 2005). In our society, childhood is seen as a time of unique protection and rights. It is believed that children would develop in a secure and nurturing environment. Violence is still pervasive and has a detrimental effect on children's development. Violence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, a group or a community, which results or is likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, or developmental loss or damage" (Krug, 2002).

Child abuse can take many different forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Violence can occur anywhere, including in homes, families, communities, and schools. The abusers are frequently individuals who are closest to the children, such as their parents, guardians, teachers, law enforcement officials, and security personnel. It may have an effect on a child's physical, psychological, cognitive, and social growth. Childhood exposure to violence is one of the known risk factors for children developing stress, anxiety, and aggression. Children's physical, emotional, and psychological health are all at risk when they are the victims of violence. It makes sense that children's psychological well-being is essential for their development.

## **THE STUDY'S HISTORY**

Childhood is a crucial time in life that calls for a lot of emotional investment and social support. Children's care from their families, other social networks, and institutions considerably enhances their chances of survival and quality of life. Additionally, caring serves as a reference value that aids youngsters in forming their initial thoughts about themselves, other people, and the world (Deslandes, Assis, & Santos, 2005).

Violence exposure and victimization are widespread among school-age children. It can happen anywhere kids spend time, whether at home, school, or in the neighborhood. Violence exposure can make people more susceptible to mental illness. There are several causes for the beginning of violence against children. They are physical, social, environmental, and psychological aspects, according to studies. As the prevalence of violence against children rises quickly in our society, it impedes children's ability to develop psychologically normally. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the incidence of violence and its effects on children's anxiety and stress among school-age children.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A study to evaluate the incidence and effects of violence on children among students attending particular schools in Chennai.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To determine the frequency of violence exposure in schools
- To determine the level of stress and anxiety among children exposed to violence

- To determine the relationship between stress and anxiety and certain child demographic variables

## METHODS

This study, which was descriptive in nature, involved students from particular Chennai schools. For the study, a quantitative research strategy was adopted. On the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the samples were chosen. The current study involved 100 school-age children who were chosen using the snowball sampling technique. The goal of the investigation was stated to the samples. Informed consent was gained from their parents when they were told of their children's participation in the study. Data from the samples were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire.

## MATERIALS

Based on the data acquired from the review of the literature, the study tools were created. Schoolchildren's demographic information was gathered via a semi-structured questionnaire. The survey was translated into the indigenous Tamil language. The instrument included four components, including:

**Part I:** Demographic data It emphasized demographic data such as age, gender, educational level, religion, family type, number of siblings, family structure, household income, and parent-child relationships.

**Part II** this section, which included 20 items, was made to collect data on children's exposure to violence. There were three areas of exposure to violence: the family (10 things), the school (5 items), and the community (5 items). The 20 items used to evaluate the violent exposures totaled.

**Part III:** Stress Level The modified Gordon stress inventory, which consists of 15 statements, was used to measure stress. Each item was given one of the following ratings: never (0), almost never (1), sometimes (2), pretty often (3), and very often (4). The top score is 60. The percentage was computed after adding up the overall score.

**Part IV:** Level of Anxiety: A four-point Likert scale with 15 items was used to measure the level of anxiety. Each item received a rating of never(0), occasionally(1), frequently(2), and always(3). 45 is the maximum score. The percentage was computed after adding up the overall score.

## RESULTS

### Background Details

The majority of the kids (70%) were under the age of 13, while the remaining 25% and 5% were 14 and 15 years old, respectively. In terms of gender, 58.3% of them were men and 41.75 were women. Hindus made up the majority of children (75%), who made up 66.7% of nuclear or single families. In terms of the number of siblings, 50% of kids had one sibling and 13.3% had more than two. The majority of the kids (86.7%) were residing with both parents. 25% of children had poor relationships with their parents, while 48.3% had average relationships. Only 25% of youngsters had positive relationships with their siblings, while 46.7% had average relationships.

### Detailed information about exposure to violence

Violence was present in every single sample (100%) in the home, classroom, or community. In terms of familial violence, 80% of children have experienced insults, yelling, threats, denials of affection, slapping, kicking, etc. Regarding school violence, 60% of the kids

had seen it firsthand, such as when someone was attacked, slapped, punched, etc. About 45% of them had experience with gang-related violence, such as being punched and being chased.

### Stress and anxiety levels

When it came to stress, the majority of kids (61.7% of them) had moderate levels, and only 25% of them had low levels. 53.3% of them reported having moderate levels of anxiety, whereas 38.3% of the kids reported low levels.

At a 1% level of significance, there was a statistically significant correlation between the amount of stress, anxiety, and exposure to violence. Levels of stress and anxiety did not significantly correlate with children's demographic characteristics.

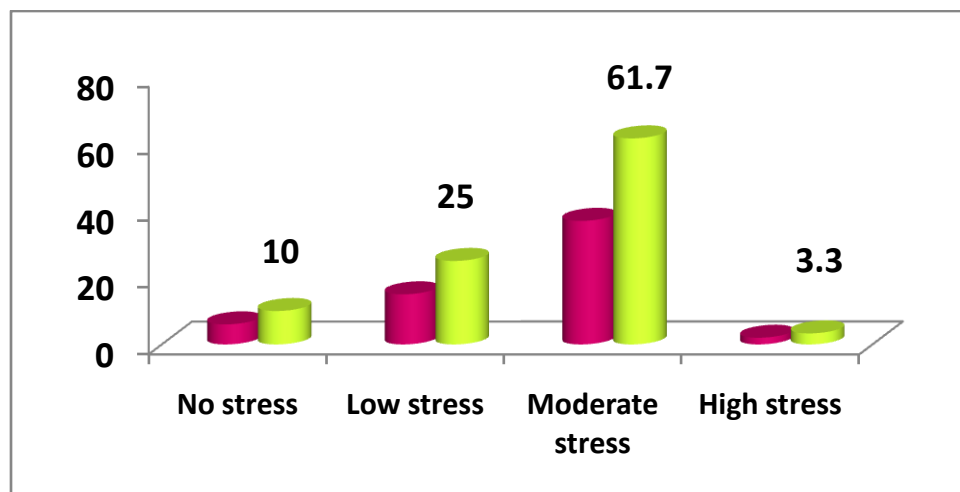
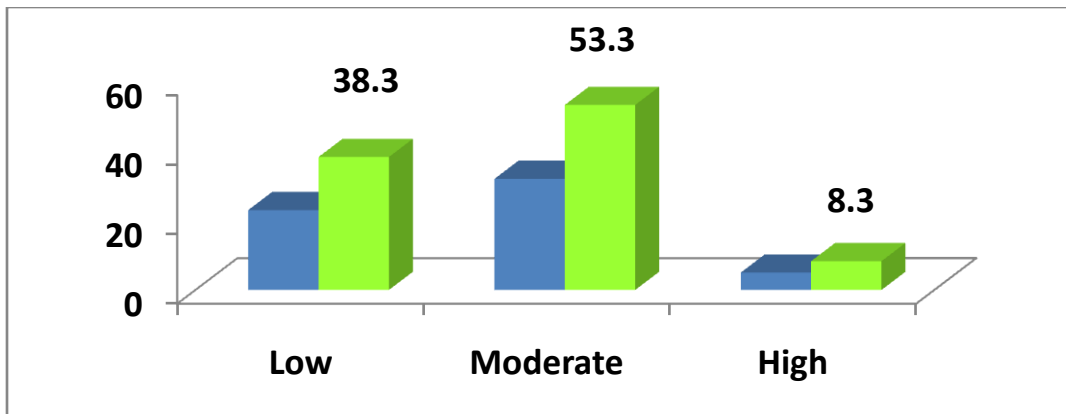


Figure 1: Frequency & Percentage distribution of level of stress



**Figure 2: Frequency & Percentage distribution of level of anxiety**

## DISCUSSION

This study set out to determine the frequency and effects of violence on kids. The study's findings, which show that 100% of children are exposed to various types of violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional violence in the home, school, and community, are highly significant. Any form of maltreatment with the aim to do harm to children or adults is considered violence. Any punishment that involves physical force and is meant to inflict pain or discomfort is known as corporal punishment. This type of discipline is frequently used to punish children for misbehaving or to improve their academic performance. Verbal and emotional abuse, such as excluding, rejecting, ignoring, insults, spreading rumors, fabricating lies, name-calling, humiliation, and threats, as well as psychological punishment are all examples of psychological violence. The findings were comparable to those of a prior study on the prevalence of violence against children (Riberio, I.M. 2015). We can conclude from the findings that there was a significant prevalence of various forms of violence among school-aged children. The majority of the youngsters exposed to violence, according to the data, experienced moderate levels of tension and anxiety. This result makes it quite evident that youngsters who are exposed to violence suffer harmful effects. Children that are affected have trouble building emotional bonds with others and may act violently when hugged, comforted, or caressed. Children exposed to violence are known to have higher rates of anxiety, sadness, hyperactivity, and less frustration tolerance (Moran, K. 2017). In their investigation into the effects of violence on children, Ferrara, P. *et al.* (2019) support the same conclusion.

## RECOMMENDATION

Children need to be protected from violence by criminologists and child health nurses. To lessen violence and its effects, awareness campaigns must be held for teachers, parents, and kids.

The suggestions are,

- Positive parenting techniques to raise children well; anticipatory advice to parents and school instructors on the effects of violence on children's development.
- Counseling parents on how to discipline their kids in a way that is developmentally appropriate. Teaching parents on the effects of exposing their kids to violence.
- Tell parents to keep an eye on and limit their kids' media use.
- Screening tool to detect early kid exposure to violence and lessen its long-term effects.
- Steps to improve the School Mental Health Service to improve children's mental health.
- Children with psychological consequences may benefit from behavioral and psychotherapy.

## CONCLUSION

Children's behavioral and psychological issues are significantly attributed to violence. The study's findings made a strong connection between exposure to violence and its effects on stress and anxiety. All of the study's samples had experience with violence in their homes, places of education, and communities. The majority of the youngsters experienced moderate levels of stress and anxiety, according to the study's findings. The right to an unviolent life is guaranteed to every child. To lessen violence in families, schools, and communities, it is recommended that interventions like positive parenting, counseling parents about negative effects, screening kids for exposure to violence in school, bolstering school mental health services, etc., be implemented. It may be useful in shielding schoolchildren from worry, stress, and depression.

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