

## The impact of poverty and the level of parents' education on violence against children in the family

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### Abstract:

*The main goal of this research is to study the prevalence of violence against children in the family, and the impact that poverty and parents' education level have on the prevalence of violence against children. This study is based on a survey conducted on a sample of 618 adolescents from 10-12 grades of high school in Pristina. The sample was administered by structured questionnaire, consisting a list of types of the violence (20 types), and dealing with 5 forms of violence: neglect, psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence and exposure to domestic violence. Study results show that nearly 1 in 3 adolescents at least once felt neglected, nearly 1 in 2 adolescents has experienced physical violence at least once, 1 in 3 has experienced physical violence, about 1 in 6 is exposed to domestic violence and 1 in 10 has experienced sexual violence at least once. Poverty has emerged with impact in the prevalence of neglect, in exposure to domestic violence and in sexual violence. The level of mother's education appeared to have impact only when we talking about the prevalence of neglect, while the level of father's education seems to have no impact in any of the violence forms.*

**Key words:** violence against children, neglect, physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, exposure to domestic violence, poverty, parents' education

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Violence against children, today considered one of the most concerned phenomena in the world, taking in consideration the fact that the violence perpetrated against children, has major implications for the growth and development of children, but also for family, community and society in general. Accurately, the child being as a human being that is in development, needs a good treatment without violence, needs others help and care, in a peaceful environment, where he would fulfil his needs for better development.

Kosovo as a new state has no exception from these negative social trends. Moreover, Kosovo for a long time has passed through a long stage in a systematic violence that has culminated with the war years 1998 - 1999 and the harshest and cruellest humanity behaviour, such as the rape and a lot of massacres carried on by the proportions of genocide against the Albanian population in Kosovo. Such a period, has left many consequences, many of which are accompanied by violence, whether in the family, at school, educational institutions, or anywhere else. There are frequent daily news related to violence cases in general and violence against children in particular. Children today have become the object of violence by the parents (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2014), teachers (UNICEF, 2005), peers (Krasniqi & Osmanaj, 2012), and by the society in general. The most disturbing in this context is considered violence perpetrated against children in the family, because the family considered the first environment where are created the first experiences, the first social relationships with close persons, first of all with parents or guardians, and then with other family members. Exercise of domestic violence and raising children in such violent conditions, results in the most serious consequences for their child's development. Practically, raising children in violence today, we build a society that tomorrow will be violent.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The prevalence of violence against children, in numerous researches differs from one country to another, depending on various circumstances and factors. When talking about perpetrated violence against children in the family, according to the United Nations Report on violence against children (Pinheiro, 2006), violence against children in the family is divided into four violence forms, physical violence, neglect, sexual and psychological violence. According to this report, physical violence is the most widespread form of violence against children in the family, followed by psychological violence, neglect and sexual violence. Kicking, punching, hairs pulling, shaking, pinching, are some of the violent behaviour that most children suffer in their families. Kicking, punching, pulling hair, shaking, pinching, are some of the violent behaviours that most children suffer violence. Even more, children's corporal punishment is considered as a form of discipline, it has taken alarming proportions, which in some cases ends with fatality (Pinheiro, 2006). Even by Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod (2007), children in most families are mostly victimized by physical violence and exposure to domestic violence. Official data of the Health State Department in the USA indicate that in 45 American countries approximately 18% of children suffer physical violence (Olive et al., 2007). However, in developed countries, negligent is considered as one of the most widespread forms of violence against children in the family. This is proven in the Hussey's study (2006), according to who the negligent is the most prevalent form of violence against children in the family, followed by physical and sexual violence. Even in the UK, negligent is the most common form of violence against children, followed by psychological violence, physical and sexual violence (Radford et al., 2009). On the other hand, according to the World Health Organization is estimated that around 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have

experienced forced sexual relationship or other sexual violence involving physical contact. Generally, violence and sexual abuse of children in the family is less prevalent comparing with other forms of violence and abuse. From the total number of abused children, only 10% are considered to be sexually abused (Krug et al., 2002). Deeply analyzing the situation, regarding violence against children in 9 countries in the Balkan, we find that psychological violence is the most common violence perpetrated against children in the family, followed by physical violence, than from negligent and sexual violence (BECAN, 2013).

Talking about family, there are several factors related to the family which increase the possibility of child's victimization in the family, including socio-economic factors such as poverty, violence and the level of parents' education. The impact of these factors on violence against children is often associated with a specific form of violence. Thus, Hussey et al. (2006), in his study concluded that the low income level influenced the degree of negligence and sexual abuse. On the other hand, the parents' education level seemed to influence the negligent degree and physical violence perpetrated against children in the family. Children, who had parents with lower education level, had reported higher levels of violence. The income and poverty level have an impact on the level of physical violence perpetrated against children; this also shows the study of Wolfner & Gelles (1993), according to who the study children living in families with low income had reported 1.5 more times of brutal physical violence, compared to the richest families. On the other hand, the education level of the parents appeared to impact on physical violence, lower level of education impacts on lower level of punishment. Furthermore, while the education level of the mother did not have any impact on abusive violence of parent, father's education level was reported in close connection with the highest degree of abusive violence against children. Brown , J. et al., (1998), in his study found that certain types of violence against children in the family, are associated with

socio-economic factors, such as poverty (negligent) and parents education (physical violence). However, the impact of these factors varies when talking about different countries. This proved by Gelles & Edfeldt,(1886), who emphasized that the parents' education level in Sweden is not related to the level of violence against children, while parents in the USA with the highest education level and those with lower education level, exercised violence less. Studies in Kosovo (UNICEF, 2005) and Albania (Hazizaj et al., 2013), concluded that there is a link between poverty and violence level against children in the family.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the research is to study the prevalence of violence against children in the family, and the impact that poverty and parents education level have on violence against children in the family. The study is based on quantitative methodology, in a sample of 618 adolescents, 10-12 grades, from Prishtina high schools. The definition of violence against children is based on the United Nations report for the violence against children, which includes violence forms such as: negligent, psychological violence, physical violence and sexual violence. A part has been added to the definition that has dealt with exposure to domestic violence. Sample selection is based on probability method of the selected random simple sample, based on the 95% of confidence level and 5% of the error margin. In the sample was administered a questionnaire that included closed questions, each question consisted of a specific type of the violence (20 types of violence in total), divided into 5 sections: negligent, psychological violence, physical violence, exposure to domestic violence and sexual violence ( 4 specific types of violence in each part).Whereas, the poverty level is taken into account based on the income amount that a person spends on an adult day, based on a report of the Kosovo

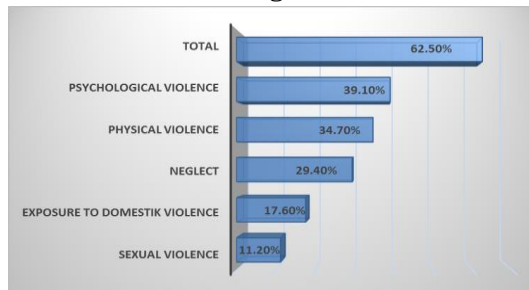
Statistics Agency. While, the parents education level is based on the education system in Kosovo. Before the questionnaire began to be administrated, subjects were informed about the purpose of the study, and are taken permission from them and from institutions (schools).where the questionnaire was administered. Data analysis is done through a statistical program SPSS 21, and descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency, etc. •.) are used to understand the prevalence of violence that is perpetrated against adolescent, while inferential statistics are used for non-parametric data (Mann Whitney and Kruskall Wallis, which are analogous to parametric tests T-test and ANOVA) that are based on the ranking of averages, are used to understand the violence months relationship and the poverty prevalence or the parents education level.

#### **4. RESULTS**

##### *a. The prevalence of violence against children in the family*

The results of the study show that adolescents throughout their lives have experienced domestic violence, the prevalence of which varies depending on the violence type. In total, there are 62.5% of adolescents (N = 391) who have suffered at least once domestic violence. From data analysis we can see that in the family the most frequent violence against teenagers is psychological violence, or 43.4% (267).Physical violence is the second type of violence which is generally exercised more to adolescents, which in total reported 34.7% of adolescents (N = 213),whereas negligent generally is experienced by 29.4% of adolescents (N = 179 ). Against domestic violence are exposed 17.6% of adolescents (N = 108), while sexual violence is the type of violence which is reported less by adolescents in the family in general. From the results is carried out that 11.2% of adolescents (N = 68) have reported that at least once have experienced sexual violence.

Chart 1. Prevalence of violence against children in family (N=618)



*b. The relationship between the income level in the family and violence suffered by family adolescents*

The poverty level based on family income, is one of the factors of violence against adolescents in the family and home is shown from the results of the research. The difference that exists between the groups for the level of violence against adolescents based on income those families have, in statistical aspect results to be valid when dealing with negligent, sexual abuse and exposure to domestic violence. In fact, negligent is always difficult to separate completely from the level of income and poverty, especially when a family is able or not to fulfill the child's needs. By average ranking, is illustrated that adolescents who come from families where the family income is less than 1 euro per day per family member, report the highest negligent level in the family (average ranking = 473.17). It was followed by teenagers living in average conditions up to 5 euro per day per family member (average ranking 326.23). This proves the statistical test Kruskal Wallis (see Table 19), where statistical valued show that poverty affects negligent in family and that this affect is significant in statistical aspect over 99% (Chi-Square  $(\chi)^2$  (df = 3, n = 607) = 16,152, p = 0.001 <  $\alpha$  = 0.05 level). Also sexual violence suffered in the family seems to be influenced by the family income level. This at least results from the average ranking, but also from statistical test results (see Table 1). Based on ranking of averages results that sexual violence is exercised more in adolescents who come from

families where income is below 1 euro per day per member (483.83) and less at families living in conditions of medium level, where incomes are ranged around 2-5 euro per day per family member (299.47). These changes that exist at sexual violence suffered in the family, from the statistical test, results to be significant in statistical aspect (Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) (df = 3, n = 612) = 12,146,  $p = 0.007 < \alpha = 0.05$ ). In this regard, even violence that occurs in the family between family members seems to be influenced by the income level in the family. This indicates that adolescents who come from these families are more exposed to the violence that occurs between family members. Domestic violence, from ranking of results, results expose adolescents living in poverty (468.50) and at lees teenagers living in good conditions (299.45). The difference exists between groups depending on the income that families have, it results to be significant in statistical aspects (Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) (df = 3, n = 612) = 7933,  $p = 0.047 < \alpha = 12:05$ ).

Whereas, when it comes to physical violence and psychological violence, even though there are differences between the groups, from statistical test (see Table 1) results has shown that these differences are not significant in statistical aspects ( $p > \alpha = 12:05$ ), which means that the poverty level based on family income, have no impact on the prevalence of psychological and physical violence perpetrated against children in the family,

**Tab 1. Statistical Test** <sup>a,b</sup>

	Neglect	Psychological violence	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Exposure to domestic violence
Chi-Square	16.152	3.720	2.403	12.146	7.933
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.293	.493	.007	.047

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping variable: Poverty



*c. The relationship between education level of parents and violence suffered in the family*

The education level of parents is an important factor for the children's welfare, but this factor has not significant impact on the violence suffered generally by teenagers in the family and home. The exception has negligence, where from ranking averages results that adolescents feel neglected when their mothers has not finished primary school (440.5), or when she has completed only primary school (322.54) and less neglecting when their mother has not gone at school at all (289.13), or who has completed high school (294.21). This impact and the differences that exist between groups, according to test statistics (see Table 2), have statistical significance (Chi-Square  $(\chi^2)$  (df = 4, n = 607) = 10,226, p = 0.037 <  $\alpha$  = 12:05) which means that the mother's education level affects the level of children's negligent in the family.

Whereas, for all other types of violence, is shown that the level of mother's education has not significant impact in statistical aspects on the violence suffered from adolescents in the family ( $p > \alpha = 0.05$  level).

**Tab 2. Statistical Test<sup>a,b</sup>**

	Neglect	Psychological violence	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Exposure to domestic violence
Chi-Square	10.226	5.135	6.104	3.004	6.955
df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.037	.274	.192	.557	.138

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping variable: Education level of mother

While the mother's level of education seems to be an influential factor in teenagers' negligent in the family, it cannot be said for father's education level. Although, according to the ranking averages is noticed that there are differences with regard to groups, in all violence types suffered from adolescents (negligent, psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence and exposure to domestic violence), however from

statistical test (see Table 3) is shown that these differences are not significant in statistical aspect ( $p > \alpha = 0.05$ ).

**Tab 3. Statistical Test<sup>a,b</sup>**

	Neglect	Psychological violence	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Exposure to domestic violence
Chi-Square	3.562	4.910	5.940	6.371	7.316
df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.469	.297	.204	.173	.120

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping variable: Education level of father

## 5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Socio-economic factors, dealing with the income level in the family and education level of parents, have resulted with an impact on some types of the violence that adolescents have suffered throughout their lives at home and in their family ( $p < \alpha = 0.05$  level). Obviously, the level income of the family in this study has resulted with a great impact when we talk about adolescents who have experienced negligent in the family. Adolescents who come from families' incomes with less than 1 euro a day for family members, and those who come from families with average incomes who live with up to 5 euro per day per family member, are more neglected. But referring to the United Nations Report (Pineiro, 2006), in cases where the poverty is more emphasised there are inabilities to fulfil the needs of children than the negligence. On the other hand the income level has resulted with valuable impact in statistical aspects even when we talk about sexual violence suffered by adolescents, but also their exposure to domestic violence. At these two types of suffered violence, has been indicated that adolescents living in conditions of poverty, are more at risk of sexual violence, but also are more exposed to violence occurred in the family. According to the study, more or less, is an important factor that affects violence against children, especially in family. This somehow, for particular types of violence has even resulted in this study as an important factor.

Whereas the education level, although in many studies turns out to be an influential factor, in this study has not been proved to be an important factor in the level and type of violence suffered by adolescents at home. The only exception, proved to be statistically significant relationship between the education level of the mother and neglect in the family ( $p < \alpha = 0.05$ ). By ranking average, adolescents feel more neglected in cases when the mother has completed only primary education or less than this. Somehow this may be explained by the fact that when mothers are at an educational level, can also have lack of skills or knowledge to fulfil the needs of children Different from mother's education level. Father's education has not been proved to be significant in any of the violence types suffered by adolescents in the family.

It can be concluded that the socio-economic characteristics such as poverty and parents' education level, have essential impact on some violence types that adolescents have suffered in the family. Thus, the poverty has resulted with impact in the prevalence of negligent in the family, including sexual violence and exposure to domestic violence, but not in other types of violence (physical and psychological violence). Whereas, mother's education level affects the level of negligent in the home, but not in other types of violence suffered by adolescents at home. Regarding the education level of the father, it has not had any impact in any of the grouped types of violence suffered at home (psychological violence, physical violence, negligent, sexual violence and exposure to domestic violence).

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