

Psychology-victims of crime

Psychology



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Exposure to Verbal Violence Here s Here Exposure to Verbal Violence Verbal abuse is often considered to be a feature of emotional and/or psychological violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). However, the use of words to intimidate or demoralize another person may be considered as a type of violence on its own. While the perpetration of verbal violence offers a possible avenue of study, we will instead focus exclusively on the exposure to this form of abuse. Verbal violence can be experienced in a variety of situations, and can potentially cause seriously negative outcomes for those who are targeted.

There are many examples of verbal abuse. Persistent negative criticism, screaming, cursing, threats of physical attacks or damaging acts, and continuous insults are just a few ways that words can be used as weapons of violence. The factors leading to this situation are also numerous (stress, psychological disorders, personality, etc.), with social environment (including familial relations) playing a large role in the development of such circumstances.

The variety of settings in which verbal violence has been observed are virtually countless. Some of the most well known places of conflict include the home, workplace, and at social gatherings such as parties and bars. Additionally, recent media has focused largely upon bullying, which is a serious problem that commonly includes verbal attacks in addition to other forms of violence. Disturbingly, some research has suggested that verbal abuse is so common that it may be considered universal in some cultures, such as American (Strauss & Field, 2003).

Incidents of verbal abuse are an international problem. For example, call center environments are notorious for verbal assaults upon front-line

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workers by telephone customers, and these workplaces are known to be located in multiple locations throughout the world. An experiment by Sprigg, Armitage, & Hollis (2007) investigated the incidence of verbal abuse in National Health Service centers in the United Kingdom and found that 80% of workers experience significant verbal abuse in 7% of their customer interactions.

The exposure to verbal abuse has negative implications for the different populations that are effected by this form of violence. Customer service employees, elderly residents in institutions or in a family setting, students, teachers, parents, and children are just some of the groups that may experience consistent verbal violence. We will examine a study that investigates the experience of verbal violence during one of the most vulnerable times in life, childhood, and how it influences the neurological structure of the experiencer by young adulthood.

Choi, Jeong, Rohan, Polcari, & Teicher (2009) offered evidence that implicates exposure to parental verbal violence in the formation of abnormalities in white matter tracts within the brain. They compared the MRI data from a group of young people who had experienced persistent verbal abuse in childhood to that of a group who did not experience these circumstances. The results showed that weakened connections in the white matter of the brain were associated with the experience of verbal violence through childhood. These abnormalities can be considered “ deletions” in the structure of white matter tracts, and is likely associated with several cognitive deficits, though further research is required to investigate these effects.

Verbal violence is internationally pervasive, and may have serious

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neurological implications for those who experience regular verbal abuse during childhood. It is conceivable that similar problems might be observable in those who experience persistent verbal violence in any of the many other settings in which it is commonly observed, and investigations should follow that investigate the potential harm faced by all at-risk groups.

References

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