

Incidence of Self-Esteem Among Children Exposed to Sexual Abuse in Kenya

Abstract

It has been established that sexual abuse against children is a global problem and quite widespread. Sexual abuse against children is a public health concern given that its outcomes are not only detrimental to the health of children, but also to the health of their families and society. Often, poor mental health functioning among children is identified late and in very low numbers by health professionals. In view of the fact that children exposed to sexual abuse are one group in Sub-Saharan Africa that exhibits serious mental health problems, this article examined self-esteem among children exposed to sexual abuse in Kenya. The study used data collected between June 2015 and July 2016 from 191 children and their legal parents/guardians. Specifically, the study adopted a longitudinal research design. Children who had experienced sexual abuse and their parents/legal guardians were followed up for a period of 1 year and interviewed at 4-month intervals. Participants were recruited from the Kenyatta National Teaching and Referral Hospital and Nairobi Women's Hospital in Kenya. Findings indicated that low and average self-esteem was significantly associated with frequency of abuse ($p < 0.001$) and how long ago the abuse had taken place ($p = 0.005$), also how long it took to receive medical attention ($p < 0.001$), change of attitude towards school ($p < 0.0001$), and use of school to escape abuse ($p = 0.01$). The study concludes that sexual abuse against children has negative mental health outcomes. These outcomes have detrimental effects on children's development and therefore suggest the need for psychosocial support for victims.

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