

Violence against women impairs children's health

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Violence against women in a family also has serious consequences for the children's growth, health, and survival. Kajsa Åsling Monemi from Uppsala University has studied women and their children in Bangladesh and Nicaragua and shows, among other things, that children whose mothers are exposed to violence grow less and are sick more often than other children.

Kajsa Åsling Monemi, paediatrician, the Department of Women's and Children's Health, monitored more than 3,000 children in Bangladesh from the women's pregnancy tests till when the children were two years old. The study shows that children to women exposed to some form of violence had lower birth weights and grew less as infants and toddlers. They also got sick more often than other children with diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia.

"Both in Bangladesh and Nicaragua deaths before the age of five were more common among children whose mothers had been exposed to violence than among children of women who had never been subjected to violence," she reports.

According to Kajsa Åsling Monemi, there are several possible explanations for why violence against a mother can affect her children's health. During pregnancy the fetus grows less, and after birth the mother's mental health is crucial both for her emotional contact with the children and for her ability to care for the children. What's more, women who have been subjected to violence often have weaker social networks

and often lack economic resources to seek medical care for their children, for example. This means that the children's health is dependent on the economic resources and the protection that the environment can offer.

"My studies indicate that the health consequences of violence against women within the family in a global perspective are greater than we previously knew," says Kajsa Åsling Monemi.

Source: Uppsala University

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