

Report highlights inadequate support for children exposed to violence

January 18 2011

A national evaluation study in Sweden has highlighted the need for a chain of interventions to offer children who have experienced violence against their mother the right level of support to work through their experiences. There is also frequently a lack of structured risk assessments for identifying children who are at continued risk of exposure to violence, reveal researchers from the universities of Gothenburg, Karlstad, Uppsala and Orebro.

At the request of the National Board of Health and Welfare, an interdisciplinary group of researchers from the four universities – headed by professor Anders Broberg from the University of Gothenburg's Department of Psychology – has evaluated various support interventions in Sweden for children who have been exposed to [violence](#) against their mother. The report, Support to Children Who Have Experienced Violence Against Their Mother – Preliminary Results From A National Evaluation Study, looks at mothers and children who have participated in various support interventions in terms of their experiences of violence, mental health and perceived quality of life.

"Children who have experienced violence against their mother are a group of children with a high level of mental health problems compared to children in general," says Broberg.

"The research group's preliminary results indicate that agencies which offer support interventions adapted to the group of children who have experienced violence against their mothers constitute a valuable

complement to agencies which offer standard interventions for children and families," says Broberg. "The adapted support interventions are appreciated and they also seem to contribute in a positive way to children's mental health."

In its report, the group emphasises that children who have experienced violence against their mother run the risk of continued exposure without this being detected, as the risks facing these children are not assessed in a systematic way.

"In many cases, systematic risk assessments of the mother and child's situation are lacking. This is in spite of the fact that, in most cases, children continue to have regular contact with the father who has previously been violent to the mother and sometimes also the child. There is a need for improved knowledge amongst the social services and child and youth psychiatry services who deal with the vast majority of these children about different models for systematic risk assessment, and how they can be used when children have experienced violence against their mothers."

Need for a chain of interventions

The researchers also recommend that a chain of interventions be set up for children who have experienced violence, so that they can be given the right level of support.

"Opportunities to get treatment at a specialist level of psychiatry are lacking today when it comes to children who have experienced violence against their mother and who have also developed psychiatric problems of their own," says Broberg. "Small, often voluntary, organisations offer support interventions which are intended to be universal and supportive measures where children are made visible and get recognition and validation of their experiences of violence. However, there is a risk that

these support interventions are used as a replacement for psychiatric treatment, either due to the fact that there is a lack of adequate treatment methods within child and youth psychiatry, or due to the fact that fathers are not giving consent to treatment of the child. Access to adequate treatment for children with more severe difficulties needs to be improved in order to create a chain of interventions which offers [children](#) interventions at the right level."

Provided by University of Gothenburg

Citation: Report highlights inadequate support for children exposed to violence (2011, January 18) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-01-highlights-inadequate-children-exposed-violence.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--