

## Relationship between Domestic Violence And Self- Esteem of School Age Children in Assiut City

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**Abstract:** Domestic violence is a devastating social and human rights problem that has significant and enduring effects upon school age children, threatening both their health and emotional wellbeing. Exposure to violence may take a variety of forms; physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual. A close relationship has been documented between low self-esteem and domestic violence. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between domestic violence and self-esteem of school age children in Assiut city. A cross-sectional descriptive design was used in this study. The study was carried out in (4) primary schools in Assiut city (Unified University Primary school and El-Wehda El-Arabia Primary school) as urban areas and (Omar bin Abdul Aziz primary school of El-Walydia and El-Nahda Primary school of El-Walydia) as rural areas which were selected randomly to constitute Assiut city. The study sample consisted of 1000 school age children, 250 from each setting. There were no inclusive criteria. Data were collected during the period from the beginning of February 2012 to the end of May 2012 through using the following tools: 1)- An interview questionnaire sheet which developed by the researcher 2)- Domestic violence Scale and 3)- Self-esteem scale for children which adopted from El-Himady, (2004) and El-Ganady, (2011) respectively and used to collect the necessary data. Results of this study revealed that the mean age of the studied children was  $11.43 \pm 1.02$ , 51% were males, while 49% were females. (15.4%) of them had domestic violence and more than one fifth (20.6%) had low self-esteem. Statistically significant differences were found between domestic violence and low self-esteem ( $P=0.001$ ), between parents socio-demographic data and domestic violence and also with scores of self-esteem. Concluded that domestic violence experienced more in males than females school age children leading to low self-esteem among them and that less than one fifth (15.4%) of studied school age children in Assiut city had domestic violence and more than one fifth (20.6%) of them had low self-esteem score and affected by all items of socio-demographic data of their parents while there is no significant relationship was found between studied children sex and their self-esteem. Recommended that early teaching of children about self-esteem is a critical need in order to help prevent domestic violence in future generations.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, Self-esteem.

### I. Introduction

Domestic violence is a devastating social problem that affects every segment of the population (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). As long as there has been violence, there have also been religious, philosophical, legal and communal systems which have grown up to prevent or limit it. None has been completely successful, but all have made their contribution to this defining mark of civilization (Dahlberg and Krug, 2002). While system responses are primarily targeted toward adult victims of abuse, increased attention is now being focused on the children who witness domestic violence. Studies estimate that 10 to 20 percent of children are at risk for exposure to domestic violence (Carlson, 2000). In Egypt, it is estimated that over 91% of children are subjected to emotional and sociological violence, 78% of them aged 2-14 years (UNICEF, 2016). Parents often underestimate and are surprised to discover how much violence their children witness (Stephens, 1999).

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner (U.S department of Justice, 2015) and also the World Health Organization defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against one self, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation (Dahlberg and Krug, 2002).

Domestic violence can happen to anyone, regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender and it affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels (Child Welfare Information

Gateway,2014 ).The types of domestic abuse include: physical abuse (domestic violence),verbal or nonverbal abuse (psychological abuse, mental abuse, emotional abuse) ,sexual abuse , stalking or cyber stalking ,economic abuse or financial abuse and spiritual abuse (Benedictis ,et al. ,2012 ).

Exposure to violence may take a variety of forms in addition to or instead of visually observing violence .Children can be exposed to domestic violence by intervening in violence ,being directly victimized ,being unintentionally physically hurt (such as being hit by a thrown object),being threatened by the abuser , verbally or physically coming to their mother's defense , participating the abuse ,seeing or hearing the violence,observing the immediate aftermath or hearing about the abuse from others (Holden ,2003) .Unfortunately ,the family is the most common place where children experience different forms of violence owing to a number of causal and contributory factors such as stress , poverty, living conditions, marital discord ,psychiatric and/or psychological problems of the adults at home and so on ( Mitra and Deb ,2004 ) .

Domestic violence is the third leading cause of homelessness among families (Collinson, 2014).Exposure to domestic violence can have serious negative effects on children. It is uniquely combines several threats to physical and emotional security. These effects may include behavioral problems such as aggression ,phobias , insomnia ,low self esteem and depression (Carter ,et al. , 1999 ) , ( Osofsky ,2003 ).A close relationship has been documented between low self-esteem and such problem as violence (Reasoner, 2016). Research also shows that a link exists between domestic violence and low self esteem,victims gain low self esteem during the course of abuse which is a serious issue for them,the victim endures being hurt because of lack of self - awareness or worth (Brodshow, 2013).

During school age years,academic achievement is a significant contributor to self-esteem development (Baumeister, et al., 2003). School-age children develop more cognitively complex emotions related to the domestic violence than do younger children (National Institute of Mental Health ,2001) .They consolidate their self -image during this age period ,so experiences that lead to low self -esteem during this developmental window may have enduring effects ( Harter ,1998 ).Self-esteem in sociology and psychology is a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself (Hewitt, 2009)while Smith and Mackie, (2007 ) define it as "The self-concept is what we think about the self; self-esteem, is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it .It is also the way of thinking ,feeling and acting that implies levels of acceptance ,respect ,trust and belief in yourself (Leichhardt women's community health centre ,2006 ) .

Every human being , with no exception ,for the mere fact to be it ,is worthy of unconditional respect of everybody else ;he deserves to esteem himself and to be esteemed .Self-esteem is important because it shows ourselves how we view the way we are and the sense of our personal value .Thus , it affects the way we are and act in the worldand the way we are related to everybody else ( Jose-Vicente Bonet ,1997 ).No one can be expected to have a high level of self-esteem all the time but our basic sense of being a worthwhile human being is not usually severely lessened by what happens to us in life. Abusive behavior can have a traumatic and long - lasting effect on children,living in an abusive relationship can slowly but surely decrease and damage their self esteem and sense of identity .In a supportive environment and with healthier relationships they can regain their sense of self worth(Leichhardt women's community health centre ,2006 ) .

Nurses and other health care providers play a key role in domestic violence identification and intervention and have been visible advocates for its prevention (Draucker, 2002). Everyday contact with violence against children awakens in the nurse a state of alertness , which mobilizes him /or her to identify warning signs to detect the violence .The primary motivation for the actions of the nurse is centered on the creation of a protective and moral , human and professional values ( Angelo ,et al. , 2013 ) .

### **Significance of the study:**

Domestic violence is a costly and serious public health and human rights problem that has a significant and enduring effect upon school age children, threatening both their health and emotional wellbeing in which it negatively affecting their self-esteem. According to UNICEF report,(2016), it is estimated that over 91% of children in Egypt are subjected to emotional and sociological violence, 78% of them aged 2-14 years. Emotional violence affecting 86 percent of children in Assiut, 66 % of them had witnessed domestic violence in their homes (UNICEF,2015).Therefore this study was done to explore the relationship between domestic violence and self-esteem of school age children in Assiut city.

### **Aim of the Study:**

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between domestic violence and self-esteem of school age children in Assiut city.

## **II. Subject and Method**

### **Research Design:**

Across-sectional descriptive design was used in carrying out this study.

**Setting:**

This study was carried out in (4) primary schools in Assiut city (Unified University Primary school and El-Wehda El-Arabia Primary school) as an urban areas and (Omar bin Abdul Aziz primary school of El-Walydia and El- Nahda Primary school of El-Walydia) as rural areas which were selected randomly to constitute Assiut city.

**Sampling:**

The study sample targeted in this work consisted of 1000 school age children (6-12 years) of both sexes (500 from urban schools and 500 from rural schools), 250 primary school students were recruited from all classes of the six grades in each school. There were no inclusion criteria, apart from being an enrolled student in this school. The children were selected randomly by seating arrangement in their classes (single numbers).

**Tools of data collection:**

Three tools were used to collect the required data for this study:-

**1-An interview questionnaire sheet:**

Which was developed by the investigators in an Arabic form and it includes:

- a)-Sociodemographic characteristics of the studied children and their parents as (name, age, sex, residence, education and occupation).
- b)-History of the studied children parents as (previous exposure to domestic violence, Psychological or mental problems and chronic diseases).

**2- Domestic violence Scale: -**

It was adopted from El-Himady, (2004) and used to assess the presence of domestic violence of children. It consists of 22 items and scored according to subjects' responses as :- 1= does not apply 2 = apply with weak degree, 3 = apply with moderate degree and 4= frequently applying. The total score of this scale ranged from 22 to 88.

**3- Self- esteem scale for children: -**

It was adopted from El- Ganady, (2011) and used to assess self-esteem for children. It consisted of 52 pictures, two in each page. Two scores were given, a score of one if the subjects respond to the right picture = 1, and a score of zero for the wrong picture = 0. The scoring system of this scale according to cut point which means  $\pm 3$  standard deviation if the score equals cut point or more means positive self-esteem while the score below cut point means negative self-esteem.

**Method:**

An official permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ministry of Education and directors of each school in Assiut city after explaining the purpose of the study.

**Pilot Study:**

A pilot study was carried out on 10 % (25) of school age children from grade six of each primary school to test clarity and applicability of the study tools and to estimate the time needed to collect data. According to the results of the pilot study, the needed modifications were done. A jury acceptance of the final form was secured before actual study work from both pediatric and psychiatric nursing fields to test its contents validity and the reliability was assessed by measuring its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient method which was (77.9) for domestic violence scale and (84.2) for self-esteem scale.

**Field of the work:-**

The study was conducted over a period of four months; from the beginning of February 2012 to the end of May 2012. The study was conducted at the morning shift in all schools. Interviewing the studied children was conducted according to their available time in their classes schedule to collect data. The time needed for each interview ranged from 30 to 45 minutes.

**Ethical considerations:**

Theoretical consent was taken from parents of all students participating in the study and they are secured that data will be confidential and used only for the research purpose.

**Statistical analysis:**

The obtained data were coded ,analyzed and tabulated using SPSS 19.0 statistical software packages.Data werepresented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables ,means and standard deviations for quantitative variables. P value less than 0.05 levels considered statistically significant.

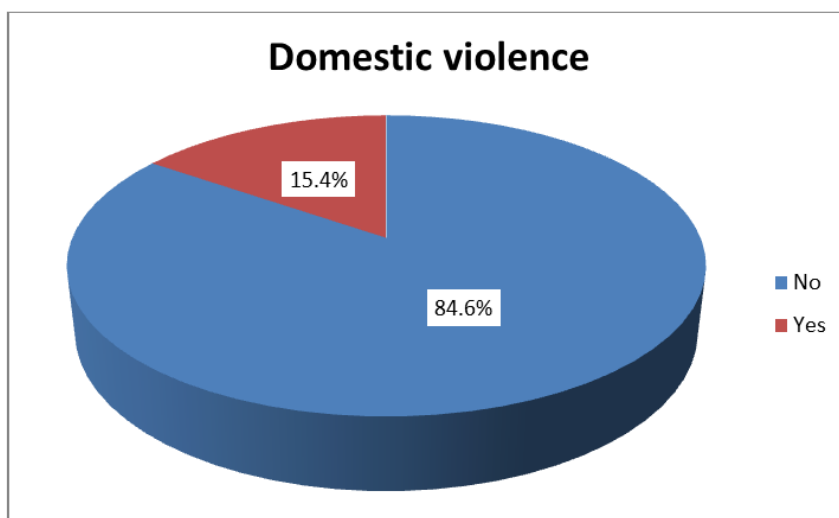
**III. Results**

**Table (1):**Distribution of Socio-demographic data of studied childrenand their parents

Items	No=1000	%
Mean age	11.43 ±1.02 (11 – 12)	
<b>SEX</b>		
Male	510	51
Female	490	49
<b>Father Occupation</b>		
Employee	564	56.4
Non skilled work	328	32.8
Professional work	108	10.8
<b>Mother Occupation</b>		
Work	432	43.2
House wife	568	56.8
<b>Father Education</b>		
Illiterate	72	7.2
Read and Write	36	3.4
Primary	112	11.2
Preparatory	146	14.6
Secondary	344	34.4
University and Over	292	29.2
<b>Mother Education</b>		
Illiterate	224	22.4
Read and Write	36	3.6
Primary	90	9
Preparatory	92	9.2
Secondary	358	35.8
University and Over	200	20

**Table (2) :**Total scores of domestic violence and self-esteem among studied children

Items	No=1000	%
<b>Domestic violence</b>		
No	846	84.6
Yes	154	15.4
<b>Self-esteem</b>		
Low	206	20.6
High	794	79.4



**Figure (1):** Distribution of studied children according to domestic violence

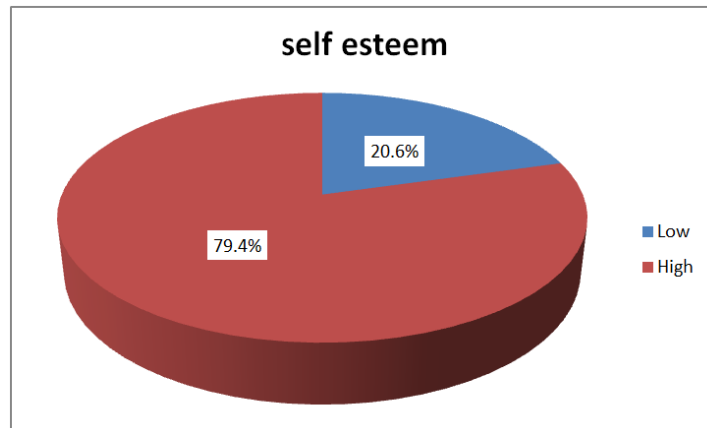


Figure (2):Distribution of studied children according to their self-esteem score.

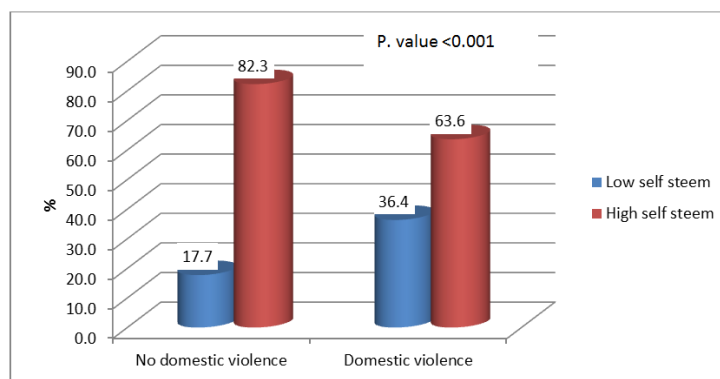


Figure (3):Relationship between domestic violence and self-esteemof studied children

Table (3):Relationship between Socio-demographic data and domestic violence of studied children

Items	Domestic Violence		P. value
	mean	SD	
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	36.9	10.3	0.001*
Female	32.9	8.1	
<b>Father Occupation</b>			
Employee	31.9	5.9	0.001*
Non skilled work	36.3	10.2	
Professional work	47.2	11.7	
<b>Mother Occupation</b>			
Work	32.4	6.7	0.001*
House wife	36.9	10.8	
<b>Father Education</b>			
Illiterate	36.7	13.3	0.001*
Read and Write	31.7	5.4	
Primary	43.4	12.6	
Preparatory	39.5	10.6	
Secondary	34.3	7.3	
University and Over	30.3	4.9	
<b>Mother Education</b>			
Illiterate	38.4	12.2	0.001*
Read and Write	32	5.8	
Primary	42.6	13.1	
Preparatory	37.4	8.6	
Secondary	33.3	6.4	
University and Over	30.1	5	

**Table (4):**Relationship between Socio- demographic data and self-esteem of studied children

Items	total self esteem		P. value
	mean	SD	
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	17.5	4.5	0.184
Female	17.9	4.3	
<b>Father Occupation</b>			
Employee	18	4.1	0.002*
Non skilled work	17.5	4.6	
Professional work	16.4	5.2	
<b>Mother Occupation</b>			
Work	18.2	4	0.001*
House wife	17.3	4.7	
<b>Father Education</b>			
Illiterate	17.1	5.4	0.098
Read and Write	17.5	4	
Primary	17	5.3	
Preparatory	17.3	4.2	
Secondary	17.7	4.2	
University and Over	18.2	4.1	
<b>Mother Education</b>			
Illiterate	16.8	4.9	0.001*
Read and Write	20.2	2.7	
Primary	17.1	5.2	
Preparatory	17.5	4	
Secondary	17.9	4	
University and Over	17.9	4.3	

**Table (1):** shows socio-demographic characteristics of the studied children and their parents. It was found that the mean age of studied children was  $11.43 \pm 1.02$ , and that 51 % of them were males, while 49% were females. Regarding to father's occupation, 56.1% of them were employee, while 56.8% of mothers were housewives. As regard parent's education, 34.4% of fathers had secondary level of education followed by 29.2% of them had university level and over. In the same context 35.8% of mothers had secondary level of education while 22.4% of them were illiterate.

**Table (2):** illustrates the total scores of domestic violence and self-esteem of the studied children. Findings of the present study revealed that less than one fifth (15.4%) of the studied children had experienced domestic violence and more than one fifth (20.6%) of them had low self-esteem score.

**Table(3):** demonstrates the relationship between Socio-demographic data of studied children and their parents and domestic violence of studied children. It was found that, statistically significant differences were found between sex of studied children and domestic violence ( $P=0.001$ ) and also between all items of Socio-demographic characteristics of their parents and domestic violence ( $P= 0.001$ ).

**Table (4):** demonstrates the relationship between Socio-demographic data of the studied children and their parents and self-esteem of the studied children. No statistically significant difference was found between the studied children sex and their self-esteem. In the other hand statistically significant differences were found between approximately all items of Socio-demographic characteristics of their mothers and their self-esteem ( $P=0.001$ ), while some significant difference was found between their father's occupation and their self-esteem ( $P=0.002$ ) and no statistically significant difference was found between their father's educational level and their self-esteem.

#### IV. Discussion

Each child has the right to his or her physical and personal integrity, and protection from all forms of violence. (UNICEF, 2005) Violence against children is vast and its repercussions can be irreversible. It violates their basic right of welfare and dignity. Violence has devastating effects on children (UNICEF, 2015). Children are often the invisible victims of domestic violence. Living in a home with domestic violence is often very traumatic for children and can lead to a range of serious long term consequences. Low self-esteem, conflicted feelings about the abuser, increased aggression toward peers, sibling and parents shame (denying the violence at home and delinquent behavior (stealing, fighting, using drugs) are often behaviors seen in children ages 7-13 years (Domestic violence and advocacy center, 2015). It is critical for child welfare professionals and other providers who work with children to address the impact of domestic violence on children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

About 3.3 to 10 million children witness some forms of domestic violence annually (Domestic violence and child advocacy center, 2015). Violence against children, in its different forms, is widespread in Egypt. UNICEF estimates that 92% of children in Egypt between ages 2-14 years experienced violence (UNICEF,

2007). Children are at home during 75% of domestic violence incidents and women report that their children are usually aware of or directly observe the incidents (Hutchison and Hirschel, 2001). Compared to children in the general population, children exposed to domestic violence have approximately four times the rate of severe psychological symptoms and are 15 times more likely to be victims of child abuse (GOLDSTEIN, 2007),(Volpe ,1996 ).Despite high prevalence of children exposed to domestic violence, researchers have only recently begun to investigate the effects of this exposure (Evans ,et al , 2008 ).Experiencing psychological and behavioral problems in childhood places individuals at greater risk for continued problems throughout adolescence and adulthood(Masonetal.,2004).Thus this study was done to explore the relationship between domestic violence and self-esteem of school age children in Assiut city

Findings of the present study revealed that the mean age of the studied children was 11.43+ 1.02 ,more than half (51%) were males and (49%) were females .These findings were approximately in accordance with (Statistics Canada ,2013) which reports that boys appear to be more at risk in the 8 to 11 years age ,(Christian et al .,1997) who reviewed records of 139 children who presented to the emergency department with injuries resulting from domestic violence and found the age of the child victim to range from two weeks to 17 years with a mean age of 5 years, and(Jouriles and Norwood,1995) who found that boys exposed to domestic violence were at higher risk than were girls,while these findings were in contrast with(Spaccarelli , et al., 1994) who stated that some domestic violence studies report that girls are more likely to develop problems .Moreover domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, religion or gender and occurs in both opposite sex and same sex relationships (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).Additionally,exposure to domestic violence would be expected to affect children differently depending on their developmental level (Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999).

Regarding the studied children parents level of education and occupation , nearly one third (34.4% ,35.8%) of their fathers and mothers respectively had secondary school while about one fifth and more of them had university level and more, and only (3.4 % , 7.2 % ) of their fathers can read and write and are illiterate respectively ,more than half (56.4%) of their fathers are employed and more than half (56,8%) of their mothers are housewives.Statistically significant differences were found between all parent socio-demographic data and domestic violence .These results were in agreement with Carter ,et al .,(1999) who illustrate that low educational achievement ,poverty and substance abuse of the principal care provider are risk factors for domestic violence of children while disagree with studies show that domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education level (Child Welfare Information Gateway ,2014 ).This can be explained by that, young age of parents ,low educational levels ,poverty , unemployment and lack of awareness are potential risk factors in our Arab countries.

Regarding the studied children total scores of domestic violence,the present study revealed that less than one fifth (15.4%) of them had domestic violence. Statistically significant differences were found between studied children sex and domestic violence ( $P=0.001$ ) and also between all items of parent socio-demographic data and domestic violence of studied children ( $P=0.001$ ) .These findings are almost similar with (Modak and Deb ,2010 ), a national level study in India on violence against children, however it was conducted on a group of 320 children from medium schools in Agartala , Tripura who found that about one - fifth of the children under study did experience violence, and also with Richards , (2011) who stated that in Australia ,children exposure to domestic violence although there are a range of policy initiative and programs that seek to address domestic violence .Furthermore, several reports on violence against children in different countries of the MENA and Gulf regions (Iran ,Jordan ,Lebanon ,Yemen , and North Africa ) have indicated the prevalence of different forms of violence at home or at school ,also a review of the available studies clearly shows that there is a great similarity between countries of the Middle East and North Africa regions concerning the causes behind the high prevalence of violence against children in the different areas , including its most common forms (Gerbaka ,2010 ) .

As regard the studied children self-esteem,more than one fifth (20.6%) of them had low self-esteem score. Statistically significant differences were found between domestic violence and low self-esteem ( $P= 0.001$ ) and approximately between all mother's socio-demographic characteristics and their self- esteem ( $P=0.001$ ), while some difference was found between their father's occupation and their self-esteem ( $P=0.002$ ), and no statistically significant difference was found between the studied children sex and their self-esteem. These findings are in agreement with Magwa ,(2013) who reported that grief ,shame and low self-esteem are common emotions experienced by children exposed to domestic violence and Brodshow,(2013) who reported that a link exists between domestic violence and low self-esteem.Belongingness and knowing that one is loved are basic needs of all people .Persons with low self-esteem are insecure and their self images are often clouded by inaccurate information from their abusers and also with Collinson , (2014) who stated that in many cases ,self-esteem and domestic violence go hand in hand .Low self-esteem can be brought on by a variety of factors .Although no differences have been found between males and females in their development of self-esteem (Orth and Robbins ,2014 ) .Unsurprisingly school age children can be expected to cope with minor everyday difficulties,

but exposure to acute and chronic trauma such as violence may overwhelm their ability to regulate their emotional response (Pynoos and Nader, 1990).

## V. Conclusion

This study concluded that domestic violence experienced more in males than females school age children leading to low self-esteem among them and that less than one fifth (15.4 %) of the studied school age children in Assiut city had domestic violence and more than one fifth (20.6%) of them had low self-esteem score and affected by all items of socio-demographic data of their parents while there is no significant relationship was found between the studied children sex and their self-esteem thus efforts need to be made to prevent domestic violence to foster development of children who have healthy self-esteem.

## VI. Recommendations

1. Early teaching of children about self-esteem is a critical need in order to help prevent domestic violence in future generations.
2. Development of programs and strategies for prevention of domestic violence
3. Prepare school age children to receive counseling regarding domestic violence from professionals at their schools.
4. Further research is needed to clarify the impact of domestic violence on girls and boys at different developmental levels.
5. Creation of a protective environment for the child and moral, human and professional values.
6. Raise public awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children.

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