

# The effects of domestic violence on the cognitive development of children: A case study of Lusaka.

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**Abstract**—Domestic violence is a global phenomenon that cuts through races, ethnic groups, social classes, tribes, and religions and is passed from one generation to another. Domestic violence takes many forms, it can be physical, sexual (though many scholars will classify sexual violence under physical violence), verbal, emotional, psychological and economic. Domestic violence affects victims, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Children are often victims of domestic violence or witness domestic violence. The lack of information on how domestic violence affects the brain development of a child hinders the development of interventions that will effectively help such children, reducing the prevalence of domestic violence, because children that are victims or witnesses of domestic violence often become perpetrators of violence or become susceptible to violence which is one of the reasons why domestic violence remains prevalent. This does not only affect individuals but communities as well because this leads to an increase in crime rates. Another effect of this is that relationships often end up unsuccessful leading to the breakdown of families and this breakdown of families in turn affects communities because communities are made up of families, so when families are unstable communities become unstable. This research will study the effects of domestic

violence on the cognitive development of children. The objectives of this research are to; I. Determine the effects of domestic violence on a child's schema. II. Investigate the ways in which domestic violence affects a child's problem solving and coping strategies. III. Assess the effects of domestic violence on a child's interpersonal relationships. This research employed qualitative methods of research and made use of questionnaires in conducting a survey. This research is a case study that was conducted in Lusaka province. The target population in this research was police officers, social workers, counselors, psychologists, and all family life practitioners. This research also made use of archival research using records from the police.

**Keywords**— domestic violence, cognitive development, schema, early maladaptive schema, problem solving skills, copying strategy, interpersonal relationship.

## I. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Domestic violence is a global phenomenon, which cuts through races, ethnic groups, social classes, tribes, and religions. According to an article by Sparknews, The prevalence estimates of lifetime intimate-partner violence range from 20% in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe and 25% in the World Health Organization (WHO) regions of the Americas to 33% in the WHO African region, 31% in the WHO eastern Mediterranean region, and 33% in the WHO southeast Asia region (Sparknews, 2021).

Domestic violence survivors can face ongoing and challenging effects after enduring physical, mental, and emotional abuse. It can take time for a survivor to adjust to living in a safe environment, especially if a perpetrator was severely violent and/or committed the actions over an extended period of time (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2022). An article by A Train Education alludes to the fact that victims of repeated violence experience more serious consequences than victims of one-time incidents (A Train Education, n.d.).

Common mental effects of domestic violence are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts. Depression, including prolonged sadness. Anxiety. Low self-esteem and questioning sense of self. Suicidal thoughts or attempts. And alcohol and drug abuse.

Common emotional and spiritual effects of domestic violence are, hopelessness, feeling unworthy, apprehensive and discouraged about the future, inability to trust, questioning and doubting spiritual faith, unmotivated (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2022).

Women with a history of intimate partner violence are more likely to display behaviors that lead to further health risks such as substance abuse,

alcoholism, and suicide attempts. Intimate partner violence is also associated with a variety of negative health behaviors; studies show that the more severe the violence, the stronger its relationship to negative health behaviors by victims.

Some victims may engage in high-risk sexual behaviors such as unprotected sex, decreased condom use, early sexual initiation, choosing unhealthy or multiple sexual partners, or trading sex for food, money, or other items. There is often an increased use of harmful substances and illicit drug use, alcohol abuse, and driving while intoxicated. Victims of intimate partner violence may also engage in unhealthy diet-related behaviors such as smoking, fasting, vomiting, overeating, and abuse of diet pills. They may also overuse health services (A Train Education, n.d.).

Whether children witness or experience abuse, it can take a toll on their development. Domestic violence victims are not isolated to intimate partners. Children are at an increased risk for emotional behavioral problems regardless if they were directly abused or not. Common effects on children who witness domestic violence are, anxiety, depression, academic problems, and fear (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2022).

This research is necessary because it will help break the pattern of domestic violence from one generation to another, as it will enable social service providers such as counsellors, teachers, religious leaders, and other family life practitioners, be better equipped to assist troubled children with a background of domestic violence through the process of cognitive and behavioral therapy and schema therapy.

This research is necessary as it would help curb the effects of domestic violence on children, thereby, reducing negative outcomes and threats to society such as crime.

This research will compliment and strengthen existing research in this field of study, providing information to social workers and other social science disciplines.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

As stated in the background of this study domestic violence is a global phenomenon. In Zambia, according to a report by the Zambia Police Service, a total of 20,540 cases of Gender Based Violence were reported Countrywide in 2021, with Lusaka recording 3,623 cases translating to 20.6%, having the second highest GBV criminal cases, with a difference of 92 cases from Copperbelt which recorded the highest number of GBV cases with 3,715 cases translating to 21.1% (Service, 2022). The Victim Support Unit of the Zambia police reported a 29% increase in gender-based violence (GBV) cases in the fourth quarter of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, from 7,920 to 10,241, though many other incidents of GBV go unreported (Chibwili, 2023).

In an article by the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence it is said that, domestic violence affects every member of the family, including the children. Family violence creates a home environment where children live in constant fear. Children who witness family violence are affected in ways similar to children who are physically abused. They are often unable to establish nurturing bonds with either parent. Children are at greater risk for abuse and neglect if they live in a violent home (Violence, 2012).

It is often not explained the perceptions that a child might have developed in their cognitive developmental process especially after having experienced or witnessed domestic violence, the way a child has been conditioned through their experience to perceive life, the way they perceive themselves and others, the way the child has been conditioned to solve problems, the way they handle emotions.

Most research simply shows traits exhibited by children that have a background of domestic violence but doesn't explain what leads to these outcomes. This research will endeavor to determine what happens during a child's cognitive development that leads to these outcomes. It is necessary to understand this because it helps cognitive and behavioral reformation.

## 1.3.1 General objective

To establish the effects of domestic violence on the cognitive development process of children.

## 1.3.2 Specific objectives

- I. To determine the effects of domestic violence on a child's schema
- II. To investigate the ways in which domestic violence affects a child's problem solving and coping strategies
- III. To assess the effects of domestic violence on a child's interpersonal relationships

## 1.4 Research questions

- I. What are the effects of domestic violence on a child's schema?
- II. How does domestic violence affect a child's problem solving skills and coping strategies?
- III. How does domestic violence affect a child's interpersonal relationships?

## 1.5 Theoretical/conceptual framework

Jeffrey Young hypothesized that, schemas that develop primarily as a result of toxic childhood experiences might be at the core of personality disorders, milder characterological problems, and many chronic Axis I disorders. To explore this idea, he defined a subset of schemas that he labeled Early Maladaptive Schemas.

He defined Early Maladaptive Schemas as a broad, pervasive theme or pattern comprised of memories, emotions, cognitions, and bodily

sensations, regarding oneself and one's relationships with others developed during childhood or adolescence, elaborated throughout one's lifetime and dysfunctional to a significant degree. Early Maladaptive Schemas are self-defeating emotional and cognitive patterns that begin early in our development and repeat throughout life.

According to this definition, an individual's behavior is not part of the schema itself; Young theorizes that maladaptive behaviors develop as responses to a schema. Thus behaviors are driven by schemas but are not part of schemas (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Jeffrey Young established eighteen Early Maladaptive Schemas which he divided into five domains; the first domain being Disconnection and Rejection, the Early Maladaptive Schemas under this domain are, abandonment, mistrust and abuse, emotional deprivation, defectiveness and shame, and social isolation.

The second domain is Impaired Autonomy and Performance, and the Early Maladaptive Schemas under this domain are, dependence and incompetence, vulnerability to harm and illness, enmeshment and undeveloped self, and failure.

The third domain is Impaired Limits, and the Early Maladaptive Schemas under this domain are, entitlement and grandiosity, and insufficient self-control and self-discipline.

The fourth domain is Other Directedness. The Early Maladaptive Schemas under this domain are, subjugation, self-sacrifice and, approval and recognition-seeking.

The fifth domain is Over-vigilance and Inhibition. Under this domain he Early Maladaptive Schemas are, negativity and pessimism, emotional inhibition, unrelenting standards and, punitiveness.

## 2.0 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *The effects of domestic violence on a child's schema*

Jeffrey Young states that within cognitive development, a schema as a pattern imposed on reality or experience to help individuals explain it, to mediate perception, and to guide their responses. A schema is an abstract representation of the distinctive characteristics of an event, a kind of blueprint of its most salient elements. He goes on to state that within cognitive psychology a schema can also be thought of as an abstract cognitive plan that serves as a guide for interpreting information and solving problems (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Looking at all the ideas of the cognitive development theories by various psychologists it is evident that a child's cognitive development process is greatly affected by the environment they grow up in. Jean Piaget believed that children's thought process was influenced by their eyes, ears and hands, that is, what they see, what they hear and what they felt. Lev Vygotsky also argued that mental processes begin as social activities, that is, a child's cognition developed through their social interactions. Jeffrey Young also ascribes the formation of Early Maladaptive Schemas to the environment a child lives in. So in an environment of domestic violence because a child's cognitive development will be affected by what they are experiencing around them, in their interactions, it is most likely that a child's schema will be affected in a way that they will develop Early Maladaptive Schemas. (Karpov, 2014) (Piaget, 1977).

Piaget also argued that a child's knowledge of the world is being developed by a child from the earliest stage of cognitive development through their physical interactions and experiences. Young also argues that the dynamics of a child's family are the dynamics of that child's entire early world. So it is most likely that a child that experiences or witness's

domestic violence will view the world according to this experience of domestic violence.

In the second stage of Piaget's cognitive development theory children govern their thinking by what they see rather than what is logical. As we mentioned earlier, a child's cognition will most likely be affected by what they are experiencing, and this may be what a child starts to deem as normal and not what is logical, so this will most likely govern their thinking. Young and his colleagues also argue that Early Maladaptive Schemas fight for survival, this may govern a child's thinking in a way that they fight for survival whether it's logical or not, Young and his colleagues say "although it causes suffering, it is comfortable and familiar. It feels right." This may affect a child even in later stages of their lives. (Piaget, 1977).

One of the effects of domestic violence is that parents are usually unavailable either physically or emotionally. Looking at the context of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding a child's cognitive development is most likely to be affected by the absence of their parents in a way that they develop Early Maladaptive Schemas such as abandonment and instability, or emotional deprivation. Young argues that Early Maladaptive Schemas develop from the absence of core emotional needs, so with the absence of parents a child's core emotional needs will not be met. Several scholars also argue that a child's IQ levels will be affected negatively and it's most likely due to the lack of scaffolding by a child's parents who are a child's primary source of socialization and learning.

Karpov asserts that Vygotsky believed the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) (Karpov, 2014). The zone of proximal development is also referred to as the Zone of Potential Development.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) defines skills and abilities that are included in the

process of development. The ZPD is the series of tasks that one cannot yet perform independently, but can achieve with the facilitation of a more competent individual. For example, a child trying to put puzzle pieces together, the child struggles to get the pieces in their right place without supervision, but when the child's parent shows the child how to match the pieces to their right place matching the shapes, the child is able to get the concept and finish up the puzzle.

Scaffolding can be defined as an arrangement or guidance of a more skilled person which can be provided in many ways such as breaking the assignment down into smaller and easy steps, providing adequate motivation, and providing regular feedback about the progress of active person on that particular work. In the first example above, the child's mother provided assistance to the child where mother worked as a scaffold in that situation.

Jeffrey Young and his colleagues argue, that early maladaptive schemas result from unmet core emotional needs in childhood. They have identified five core emotional needs for human beings, these being; (1) Secure attachments to others which includes safety, stability, nurturance, and acceptance. (2) Autonomy, competence, and sense of identity. (3) Freedom to express valid needs and emotions. (4) Spontaneity and play. (5) Realistic limits and self-control.

They also argue that these needs are universal. Everyone has them, although some individuals have stronger needs than others. A psychologically healthy individual is one who can adaptively meet these core emotional needs.

The interaction between the child's innate temperament and early environment results in the frustration, rather than gratification, of these basic needs. So they argue that patients need to find adaptive ways to meet their core emotional needs.

Jeffrey Young and his colleagues argue that, toxic childhood experiences are the primary origin of Early Maladaptive Schemas. The schemas that develop earliest and are the strongest typically originate in the nuclear family. To a large extent, the dynamics of a child's family are the dynamics of that child's entire early world. When patients find themselves in adult situations that activate their Early Maladaptive Schemas, what they usually are experiencing is a drama from their childhood, usually with a parent.

Jeffrey Young and his colleagues observed four types of early life experiences that foster the acquisition of schemas. The first is toxic frustration of needs. This occurs when the child experiences too little of a good thing and acquires schemas such as Emotional Deprivation or Abandonment through deficits in the early environment. The child's environment is missing something important, such as stability, understanding, or love.

The second type of early life experience that engenders schemas is traumatization or victimization. Here, the child is harmed or victimized and develops schemas such as Mistrust/Abuse, Defectiveness/Shame, or Vulnerability to Harm.

In the third type, the child experiences too much of a good thing: The parents provide the child with too much of something that, in moderation, is healthy for a child. With schemas such as Dependence/Incompetence or Entitlement/Grandiosity, for example, the child is rarely mistreated. Rather, the child is coddled or indulged. The child's core emotional needs for autonomy or realistic limits are not met. Thus parents may be overly involved in the life of a child, may overprotect a child, or may give a child an excessive degree of freedom and autonomy without any limits.

The fourth type of life experience that creates schemas is selective internalization or identification with significant others. The child selectively

identifies with and internalizes the parent's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and behaviors. For example, two patients present for treatment, both survivors of childhood abuse. As a child, the first one, Ruth, succumbed to the victim role. When her father hit her, she did not fight back. Rather, she became passive and submissive. She was the victim of her father's abusive behavior, but she did not internalize it. She experienced the feeling of being a victim, but she did not internalize the feeling of being an abuser. The second patient, Kevin, fought back against his abusive father. He identified with his father, internalized his aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior, and eventually became abusive himself. (This example is extreme. In reality, most children both absorb the experience of being a victim and take on some of the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors of the toxic adult.)

Young and his colleagues stated some factors other than early childhood environment that also play major roles in the development of schemas. They point out that a child's emotional temperament is especially important. As most parents soon realize, each child has a unique and distinct "personality" or temperament from birth. Some children are more irritable, some are shy, and some are more aggressive.

They also argue that emotional temperaments interact with painful childhood events in the formation of schemas. Different temperaments selectively expose children to different life circumstances. They give an example of an aggressive child who might be more likely to elicit physical abuse from a violent parent than a passive, appeasing child. In addition, different temperaments render children differentially susceptible to similar life circumstances. Given the same parental treatment, two children might react very differently. For example, consider two boys who are both rejected by their mothers. The shy child hides from the world and becomes increasingly withdrawn and

dependent on his mother; the sociable one ventures forth and makes other, more positive connections. Indeed, sociability has been shown to be a prominent trait of resilient children, who thrive despite abuse or neglect (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Piaget and Vygotsky both identify a stage in a child's life where they become egocentric. Piaget believed that children remain egocentric throughout the preoperational stage. This means they cannot understand that other people think in different ways to them or that events that take place are not always related to them. Vygotsky believed egocentric Speech occurs due to a child's inability to perceive things from another's viewpoint. So in an environment of domestic violence where a child's core emotional needs are unmet at this stage of their lives, a child is most likely going to develop Early Maladaptive Schemas. (Karpov, 2014) (Piaget, 1977).

Lawrence Kohlberg's first stage of moral development has people whose behavior is driven by avoiding punishment. A child that is experiencing domestic violence could in this stage develop a fear based schema which could cause the child to develop an anxiety or personality disorder. For example, if a child develops a Vulnerability to harm Early Maladaptive Schema, they may develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in which they may be hyper-vigilant, they may be unable to relax, have trouble sleeping, they may become highly paranoid, they may have low self-esteem, they may isolate themselves, and have a short temper, not from anger but from fear. The absence of parents could also cause PTSD because the ultimate cause of PTSD is the absence of love.

Kohlberg's second stage of moral development called individual interests, has people whose behavior is driven by self-interest and rewards. Most people become violent with others as a way of getting what they want, that is, because of their

selfish interests. A child who witnesses domestic violence that is motivated by selfish interests might learn that the only way to get what they want is by being violent. This argument is justified by Young's argument that children may develop an Entitlement Early Maladaptive Schema. For example, in a society where men are deemed to be superior to women, a child's schema may be affected in a way that they see themselves superior to girls and can exploit and be violent with them to get whatever they want. (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983).

The second level of Kohlberg's moral development has people whose behavior is driven by social approval and the maintenance of social order. Children who witness domestic violence from the head of the house (authoritative figure) may become susceptible to domestic violence when they see how victim of domestic violence tolerates the perpetrator of violence, in order to get their approval and maintain social order. As in the example above, where a male child develops an entitlement schema and becomes violent himself and continues the chain of domestic violence, a female child in the same situation could learn to be susceptible to domestic violence because it becomes what they know to be normal and it's the view they have of the world, where men are superior to women. (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983)

## *2.2 The effects of domestic violence on a child's copying strategies*

Looking at the effects of domestic violence as outlined by Carlson (2000), we could explain why a child experience these effects of domestic violence according to the situation they find themselves in, for example, the child that learns to be entitled could exhibit aggressive behavior or the child could learn to use aggressive behavior as a defense mechanism because they developed a vulnerability to harm schema. A child with, for example, an abandonment or instability, mistrust or abuse, emotional deprivation schema, could end up depressed and

have decreased social competence. While a child that lacks the attention of their parents because they are unavailable may experience diminished academic performance, which could be caused by a lack of scaffolding by their parents, which might make a child's process of learning slow. So it is clear that children develop mental health issues as a result of domestic violence which affects them in various ways.

As discussed earlier, domestic violence causes children to develop Early Maladaptive Schemas, and these schemas affect the way a person thinks and behaves. These Early Maladaptive Schemas will also affect the way a child learns to solve problems.

Young and his colleagues argue that, Patients develop maladaptive coping styles and responses early in life in order to adapt to schemas, so that they do not have to experience the intense, overwhelming emotions that schemas usually engender (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Young states that all organisms have three basic responses to threat: fight, flight, and freeze. And he argues that these correspond to the three schema coping styles of overcompensation, avoidance, and surrender. He says, in very broad terms, fight is overcompensation, flight is avoidance, and freeze is surrender.

He goes on to argue that in the context of childhood, an Early Maladaptive Schema represents the presence of a threat. The threat is the frustration of one of the child's core emotional needs (for secure attachment, autonomy, free self-expression, spontaneity and play, or realistic limits). The threat may also include the fear of the intense emotions the schema unleashes. Faced with the threat, the child can respond through some combination of these three

coping responses: the child can surrender, avoid, or overcompensate.

All three coping styles generally operate out of awareness, that is, unconsciously. In any given situation, the child will probably utilize only one of them, but the child can exhibit different coping styles in different situations or with different schemas. Thus the triggering of a schema is a threat, the frustration of a core emotional need and the concomitant emotions, to which the individual responds with a coping style. These coping styles are usually adaptive in childhood and can be viewed as healthy survival mechanisms. But they become maladaptive as the child grows older because the coping styles continue to perpetuate the schema, even when conditions change and the individual has more promising options. Maladaptive coping styles ultimately keep patients imprisoned in their schemas (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

So the schema a child develops through their cognitive development process will affect the way the child solves problems. Children that develop a self-isolation Early Maladaptive Schema will solve problems using the avoidance copying style, and this may go on even when they are adults and their environment has changed, they might still solve problems in life and conflict with others using the avoidance copying style. A child with an emotional inhibition Early Maladaptive Schema will most likely solve problems using the avoidance or surrender copying style.

Children with a schema that will manifest in aggressive behavior like, Mistrust and abuse, vulnerability to harm, will most likely use the fighting as a defensive mechanism to solve their problems.

Children with a self-sacrificing schema will most likely use the surrendering copying style to solve problems, while those with the unrelenting standards or hypercriticalness will most likely use the over



compensating. All this to say a child will solve problems influenced by the schemas they have developed.

### *2.3 The effects of domestic violence on interpersonal relationships*

The negative perceptions that a child gains through their cognitive development as a child will affect the individual as an adult. As already discussed, domestic violence will affect a child's cognitive development by the development of Early Maladaptive Schemas, which in turn affect a child's problem solving methods, and will also affect interpersonal relationships of an individual as an adult.

Self-system impairments including deteriorations in self-awareness, agency, self-continuity and self-coherence during early self-development result in poor interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Harter, 1999). One of these effects being self-isolation that could start in childhood and continue in adulthood.

The dysfunctional nature of schemas usually becomes most apparent later in life, when patients continue to perpetuate their schemas in their interactions with other people even though their perceptions are no longer accurate. One reason why this happens as argued by Young is that Early Maladaptive Schemas fight for survival (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Greenberg argued that schemas can be rigid and resistant to change. She said they are often biased to the negative or represent a kind of fear-based thinking that is unhelpful. And that individuals will behave in a way that brings their fears to life. She gives an example of a person having the belief that people will abandon them. So they act in a controlling or manipulative way to stop them from doing this. These behaviors may turn the other person off and, ironically, make them more likely to abandon to them. If you didn't have the schema and

acted in a more relaxed and authentic way, perhaps this wouldn't have happened.

She goes on to argue that schemas can also make us more likely to choose people who match the schema but who may not be healthy for us. For example, if you have a Subjugation schema, you may believe you always have to put aside your needs for others. Perhaps this belief may draw you to choose a partner who needs a lot of help or who is exploitative. Over time, you may begin to resent the person or feel bad about yourself for not speaking up (Greenberg, 2019).

Individuals that develop a schema that causes them to solve problems using the avoidance and surrender might face a lot of problems in their interpersonal relationships as adults such as their marriage, friendships, work relations, and in other social contexts. These problems can be from a lack of communication due to their avoidant way of resolving conflict, which may leave a lot of issues unsettled and would cause them to not be able to build healthy relationships with others.

They could also be easily exploited as mentioned by Greenberg, not only by the partner they choose but in their social circles as well, such as in the work place. Their conflict avoidant nature could cause them to not be able to compete effectively in the work place and might cause them not to achieve much.

People with schemas such the Emotional Deprivation Early Maladaptive Schema might become too needy in their relationships trying to get the core emotional needs that were not met in their childhood met by other people in adulthood such as their partner. This may cause problems in their relationship because they could exhibit overly jealous behavior, be very clingy and protective which could affect their partner negatively and they could push their partner away. This could also cause them to become violent themselves towards their

partner when they feel their partner is not meeting their emotional needs.

A person with this kind of schema could also, on the contrary, become physically or emotionally unavailable towards his or her family as an adult. Because of what they came to know as normal, they may treat their own family the way they were treated, by being unavailable for their family. This will most likely cause their own children to develop Early Maladaptive schemas because they won't be able to meet their children's core emotional needs.

Their reason for being unavailable may come from their over compensating copying style. They might have felt they were never able to get their parents attention and learnt to over compensate through their achievements in school, and later in their work place. This may continue even when they have their own family and they may end up being unavailable for their family because of their need to achieve which may cause them to focus on their work more than their family.

#### *2.4 Personal critique of literature review*

These findings in various literature have helped to create a basis for understanding a child's cognitive development and the impacts of domestic violence on children but the existing literature does not directly show the relation between these cognitive developmental processes and concepts, and the effects of domestic violence on children.

#### *2.5 Establishment of research gaps*

The existing literature does not explain the cognitive development processes in the context of a child that has been exposed to domestic violence. Or rather, it does not directly address the effects of domestic violence on the cognitive development of a child. This study, therefore, aims at creating a basis for bridging these concepts and providing better understanding, to help curb the effects of domestic violence by creating better interventions.

### 3.0 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *3.1 Research design*

This study employed qualitative methods of research in our aim to understand how domestic violence affects the cognitive development of children. This study made use of questionnaires in conducting a survey that enabled us get the necessary information we needed from participants. This research is a case study that was conducted in Lusaka province, therefore, all the participants in this study were from Lusaka. The target population in this research was police officers, social workers, counselors, psychologists, and all family life practitioners. This research also made use of archival research using records from the police that gave us more insight into this study such statistics on gender based violence.

#### *3.2 Target population*

The target population consists of professionals that directly work with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, as well as those working with children in Lusaka. Our target population consists of professionals such as police officers, Social workers, counsellors, including religious leaders, psychologists, and other professionals such as sociologists, and policy makers.

#### *3.3 Sampling design*

This research made use of a non-probability sampling method in order to select our sample size. This research employed the purposive sampling method also known as the judgmental sampling in order to select a sample of professionals that are directly linked to domestic violence victims and perpetrators as well as children.

Purposive sampling is used in research studies to select a specific group of individuals or units for analysis. This method is appropriate when the researcher has a clear idea of the characteristics or attributes they are interested in studying and wants to

select a sample representative of those characteristics (Dovetail, 2022).

This study made use of a sample size of police officers working under the victim support unit, social workers working with children in orphanages, as well as social workers and other professionals working in non-governmental organizations that deal with gender based violence.

### 3.4 Sample size determination

This study made use of a sample size of 30 participants that answered an open-ended questionnaire. These participants are professionals in this field and will guarantee quality data that will be accurate.

### 3.5 Data collection methods

This research made use of qualitative research methods. This research used a questionnaire survey method of qualitative data collection. These questionnaires contained open ended questions that allowed us to attain expert opinions, observations, and knowledge that enabled the establishment of the effects of domestic violence on the cognitive development of children. This research also made use of archival research using records attained from the Zambia police Lusaka division.

### 3.6 Data analysis

This research made use of inductive thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data collected. According to Dr. Hannes Nel, Inductive thematic analysis draws on inductive analytic methods. It involves reading through textual data and identifying and coding emergent themes within the data (Nel, 2020). This method of data analysis required the researcher to create themes from the participant's answers to the open ended questions. This enabled us to evaluate the frequency of responses to enable the validation of data. This research made use of data analysis tools such as tables and charts to further enable the interpretation of data.

### 3.7 Triangulation

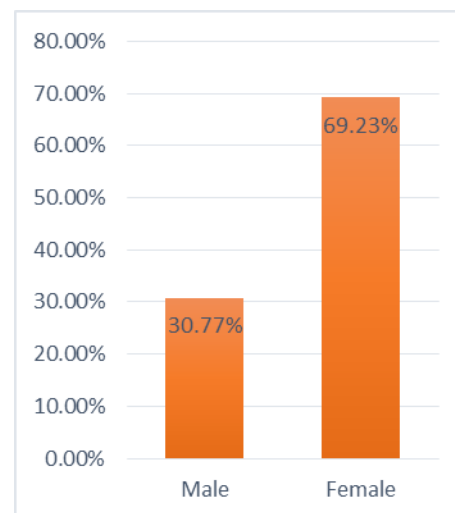
This research made use of questionnaires to enable the collection of qualitative data from thirty (30) participants that are experts in this field of study. This data was further categorized using main themes in order to evaluate the frequency of responses, this helped us to validate the data. This research also used theories to further prove that the data collected is reliable and valid.

## 4.0 RESULTS/FINDINGS

### 4.1 Presentation of research Findings.

This research was supposed to use a sample size of 30 participants but because of limiting factors such as funds, bureaucratic processes and the lack of availability of experts because of their busy schedules, only a total of 26 participants took part in the research. Of this number of participants 18 were female representing 69.23% of the sample size and 8 were male representing 30.77%.

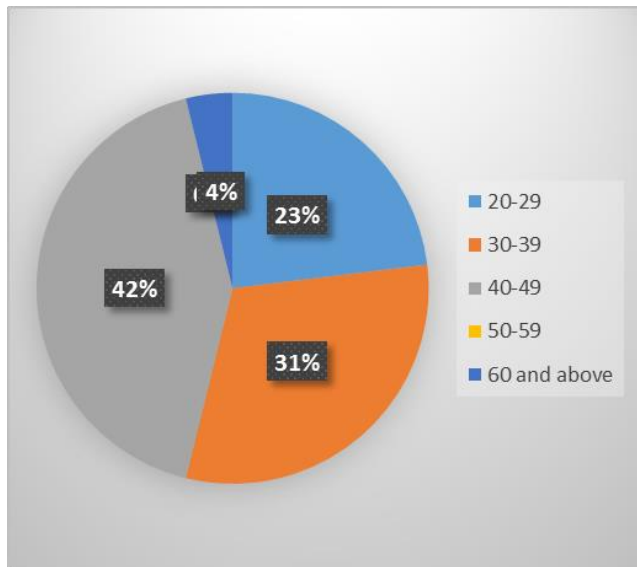
Figure 1.0: Participants gender



6 of the participants were in the age range of 20-29 representing 23.08%, 8 were in the age range of 30-39 representing 30.77%, 11 were in the age range 40-49 representing 42.31%, there were no

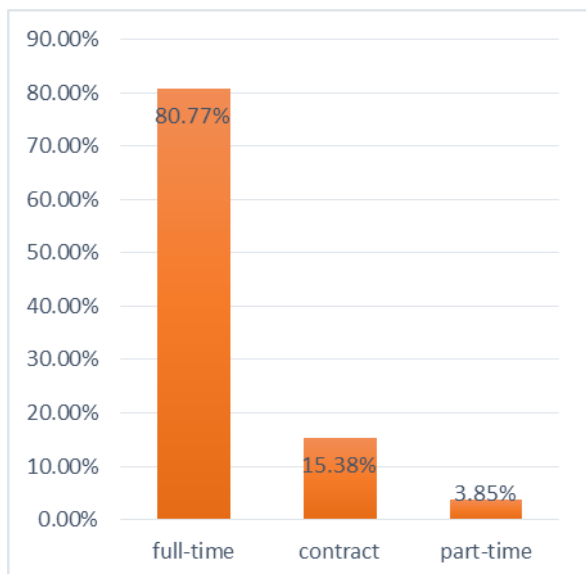
participants in the age range of 50-59, and 1 was in the age range of 60 and above representing 3.85%.

Figure 1.1: Participants age range



21 participants' work full time representing 80.77%, 4 work on contract representing 15.38%, and 1 works part time representing 3.85%.

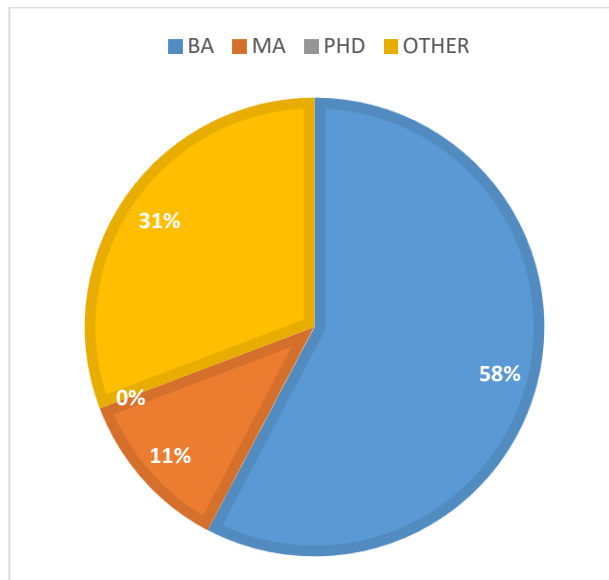
Figure 1.2: Participants job type



15 participants have a bachelor's degree representing 57.69%, 3 have a master's degree

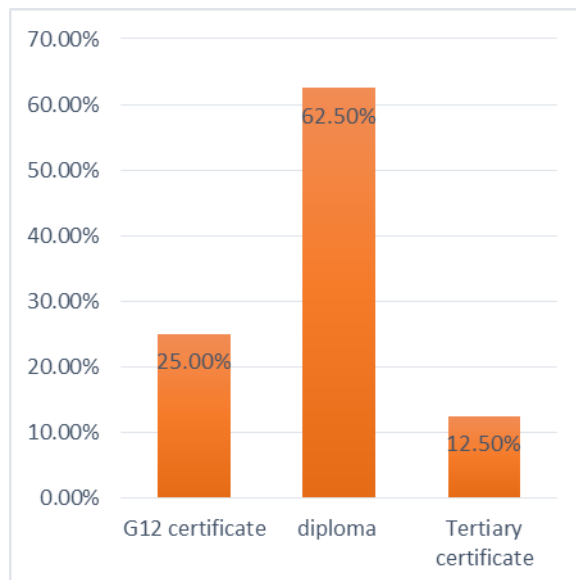
representing 11.54%, none of the participants has a PHD, and 8 were classified as other representing 30.77%.

Figure 1.3: Participants professional qualifications



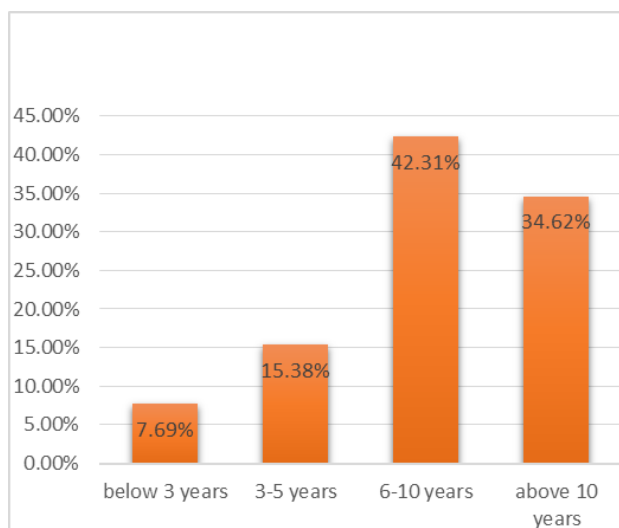
Of the participants classified as other 2 have a Grade twelve certificate or rather O level certificate representing 25%, 5 have a college diploma representing 62.50%, and 1 has a tertiary certificate representing 12.50%.

Figure 1.4: Other



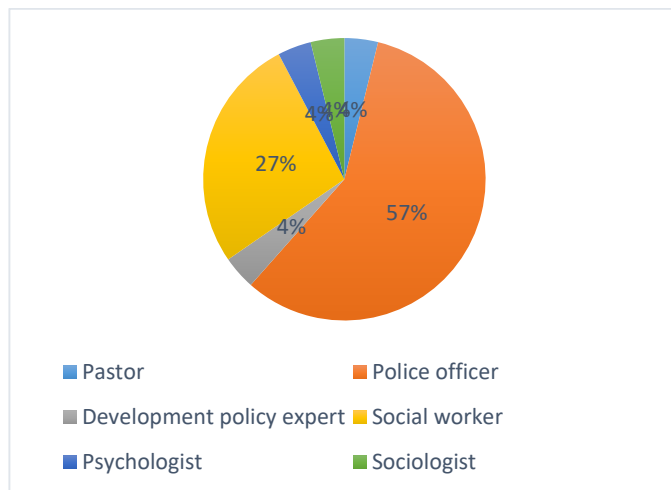
Of the 26 participants, 2 participants have served within a period below 3 years representing 7.69% of the participants, 4 have served within a period of 3-5 years representing 15.38% of the participants, 11 have served within a period of 6-10 years representing 42.31% of the participants, and 9 have served for a period above 10 years representing 34.62% of the participants.

Figure 1.5: Participants working experience



Of the 26 participants 1 is a pastor representing 3.85% of the participants, 15 are police officers representing 57.69% of the participants, 1 is a development policy expert representing 3.85% of the participants, 7 are social workers representing 26.92% of the participants, 1 is a psychologist representing 3.85 of the participants, and 1 is a sociologist representing 3.85% of the participants.

Figure 1.6: Participants occupation



In order to determine the effects of domestic violence on a child's schema the following questioned were asked to our participants and these are the themes that were extracted from their answers.

Figure 1.7: What causes domestic violence?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Marital/family disputes	10	10.87%
Adultery	1	1.09%
Ill preparation for marriage/ lack of counsel	2	2.17%
Negative socio-cultural teachings	10	10.87%
Poverty	13	14.13%
unemployment	1	1.09%
Luck of love/ attention deficit/family neglect	3	3.26%
Vulnerable/ low esteem	2	2.17%
Lack of education	2	2.17%
History of being a victim of abuse/past trauma	5	5.43%
Mental disorder/mental health issues/stress/depression	6	6.52%

Drug/alcohol abuse	13	14.13 %
Low IQ	1	1.09%
Poor communication	1	1.09%
Fixation in child development	1	1.09%
Growing in an environment of domestic violence	3	3.26%
Lack of self-control	3	3.26%
Mischievous behavior	1	1.09%
High dowry price	1	1.09%
Pride/selfishness/greed/power and control	4	4.35%
Social economic issues	1	1.09%
Religious differences	1	1.09%
Fights and disputes	2	2.17%
Gender inequalities	2	2.17%
Life choices	1	1.09%
Family dysfunction	2	2.17%

Figure 1.8: How does domestic violence affect children who witness it?

Answer	frequency	% Total
Emotional/ mental/ psychological problems/low self-esteem/trauma/unhappy	16	27.12%
Poor performance academically	7	11.86%
Poor character	1	1.69%
Develop a negative perspective on marriage	1	1.69%
Become dull	1	1.69%
Become failures	1	1.69%
Isolate	1	1.69%
Become violent or susceptible to violence	12	20.34%
Fear	6	10.17%
Freeze	1	1.69%

Hate violent parent	1	1.69%
Withdraw/isolate	3	5.08%
Become unruly	3	5.08%
Become protective	2	3.39%
Lack of self-confidence	1	1.69%
Experience guilt over abuse	1	1.69%
Become street kids	1	1.69%

Figure 1.9: How does domestic violence affect the thought processes of children who witnessed it?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Imitate or become susceptible to violence	7	17.95%
Develop a negative perspective of marriage	1	2.56%
Low self esteem	1	2.56%
Traumatized/psychological effects/ slow down thought process/fail to process trauma	13	33.33%
Develop dismissive attitude/block out others	2	5.13%
Become emotionless/numb pain/difficulty regulating emotions	2	5.13%
They think they are the problem/think they are at fault	1	2.56%
Think they are not enough	1	2.56%
Poor academic performance	4	10.26%
Experience guilt	1	2.56%
Don't participate in activities at school	1	2.56%
Delayed brain development, use downstairs brain	1	2.56%

Lose trust/question their environment	2	5.13%
Thoughts of suicide	2	5.13%

Figure 2.0: How are victims affected by domestic violence?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Traumatized/fail to sleep at night/unhappy/mental disorders	9	16.67%
Loss of self-confidence	9	16.67%
Don't make progress/unable to be independent	2	3.70%
Economically	1	1.85%
Fear/shame	7	12.96%
Start to see everything associated with their abuser as a trigger	1	1.85%
Affects relationship as a family	1	1.85%
May cause death/suicide	5	9.26%
Poor performance academically	3	5.56%
Children become bullies	1	1.85%
Physical injuries	2	3.70%
Failed marriage	2	3.70%
Repeat the violence	2	3.70%
Withdraw	3	5.56%
Freeze	1	1.85%
Blame themselves for the abuse/make excuses for abuser	2	3.70%

Experience social stigma	1	1.85%
Delayed brain development (upstairs brain, downstairs brain)	1	1.85%
Stockholm syndrome	1	1.85%

Figure 2.1: How do victims respond to domestic violence?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Become hateful and bitter/depressed	2	4.17%
Withdraw from participating in community activities	3	6.25%
Become closed up	1	2.08%
Resort to divorce	2	4.17%
Resort to violence	7	14.58%
Run away from home	3	6.25%
Fail to report	3	6.25%
Stay in abusive marriage	2	4.17%
Report/share story/seek help and support	10	20.83%
Isolate/close up/withdraw	7	14.58%
Denial	1	2.08%
Defend abuser	1	2.08%
Rock to sooth	1	2.08%
Employ self-blame and guilt	1	2.08%
Remain in fear/lose trust	3	6.25%
Become clingy	1	2.08%

Figure 2.2: How does the response and the effects of domestic violence on the victim affect their children?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Fail to love children fully/ lack of nurturing	4	10.81%
Growth/development is affected/use down stairs brain than upstairs brain	3	8.11%
Emotional imbalances/ mental issues/trauma	7	18.92%
Children become unruly/violent	6	16.22%
Become susceptible to violence	1	2.70%
Poor academic performance/ no education	2	5.41%
Don't develop good morals	2	5.41%
Affects their perception on marriage	1	2.70%
Lose trust	1	2.70%
Live in denial	1	2.70%
Become defensive	1	2.70%
Repeat what they observe the victim do	3	8.11%
Feel safe when victims report	3	8.11%
Trauma	1	2.70%
Become violent on their own children	1	2.70%

Figure 2.3: Why is domestic violence prevalent?

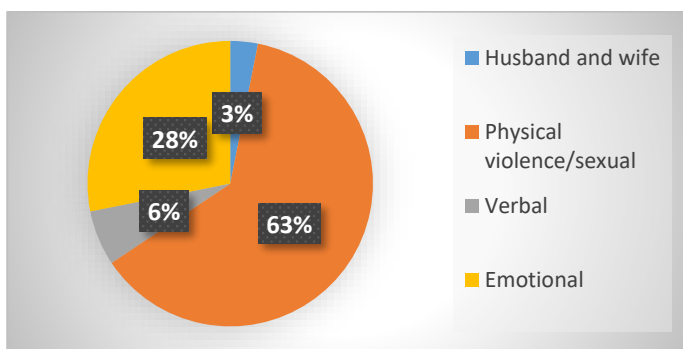
Answer	Frequency	% Total
Breadwinners failure to provide	1	2.27%
Community's failure to render help	1	2.27%
Unforeseen challenges	1	2.27%
Negative socio-cultural norms	3	6.82%
Poverty	3	6.82%
Marital disputes	1	2.27%
Extra marital affairs	1	2.27%
Differences in personalities	2	4.55%
Growing in an environment with domestic violence	1	2.27%
Unresolved trauma/stress/depression	2	4.55%
Alcohol/drug abuse	4	9.09%
Limited legal protection	3	6.82%
Illiteracy/ lack of sensitization on DV	10	22.73%
Lack of sensitization on mental health problems	1	2.27%
Lack of sensitization on places people can go to for help	1	2.27%
Lack of self-control	1	2.27%
Gender inequality	2	4.55%
Fear of reporting	3	6.82%
Socialization and upbringing	1	2.27%
Dysfunctional families	1	2.27%
Victims become perpetrators of violence	1	2.27%

Figure 2.4: Which category of people are involved in domestic violence?



Answer	Frequency	% Total
Less privileged/vulnerable	3	10.00%
Those that have grown in environments with domestic violence	1	3.33%
Drunkards	2	6.67%
All categories	9	30.00%
Those above 20	1	3.33%
Between ages 18-50	1	3.33%
Women and children	7	23.33%
Orphans	1	3.33%
People from broken homes	1	3.33%
Youth	1	3.33%
Husband and wife	3	10.00%

Figure 2.5: What type of domestic violence is most likely to occur?



In order to investigate the effects of domestic violence on the copying and problem solving skills of a child the following questions were asked and the following are the themes that were extracted from the responses given by the participants.

Figure 2.6: How do children cope with domestic violence?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Close up	3	6.67%

Become unruly/hostile/arrogant /social deviance/repeat violence	7	15.56%
Develop low self-esteem	4	8.89%
Run away from home/not want to return home	4	8.89%
Feel guilty	2	4.44%
They withdraw	3	6.67%
Live in fear/become anxious	3	6.67%
Pretend nothing happened/ rush to say they've forgiven	2	4.44%
Become manipulative to avoid consequences	1	2.22%
Counselling	1	2.22%
Report the violence	7	15.56%
Cry	1	2.22%
Apathy	1	2.22%
Rock to sooth themselves	1	2.22%
Don't report	2	4.44%
Emotional expression through drawing, writing, talking	1	2.22%
Regression and aggression	1	2.22%
Substance abuse	1	2.22%

Figure 2.7: How does domestic violence affect a child's problem solving skills?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
They may resign	1	2.70%
May seek help become dependent on others	2	5.41%
May try but with errors	1	2.70%

Lack self-confidence most times so they don't try	5	13.51 %
Use violence to solve problems	6	16.22 %
Avoid problems/confrontation/form cocoon	8	21.62 %
Respond depending on their trauma	1	2.70%
Become slow	4	10.81 %
Become aggressive	1	2.70%
Respond in a way that is different from their experience	1	2.70%
Enhance problem solving skills as children grow faster than their age	3	8.11%
They start to look after themselves	2	5.41%
Limited problem solving skills/poor conflict resolution	2	5.41%

Become susceptible to violence	4	8.89%
Lose trust/become insecure/ become fearful	8	17.78%
Become subdued	1	2.22%
Don't like people of the opposite sex	1	2.22%
Have attachment issues	1	2.22%
Become antisocial/withdraw/isolate	5	11.11%
Communication difficulties	1	2.22%
Develop personality disorders	2	4.44%

## 4.2 Discussion

From the research results we can see similarities in the responses which give us a clearer picture into how children are affected by domestic violence. The causes of domestic violence that have been presented in figure 1.7 give insight into the fact that domestic violence is a pattern that is greatly influenced by perceptions and behavioral patterns, in other words, violent behavior is behavior that can be learnt. For example, if a child displays violent behavior and the behavior is not validated or reinforced and the child even receives punishment for it, the child will soon learn that violent behavior is not accepted and shouldn't be done. But if the child experiences violent behavior, either by witnessing it or by being victimized the child learns to normalize violent behavior.

A social worker from Young women Christian association YWCA, said everyone in a home where there is domestic violence is a victim. This shows us that the negative outcomes of domestic violence can affect anyone living in the home. Children will be more affected by the violence because their brains are just being developed. Psychologists argue that

In order to assess the effects of domestic violence on a child's interpersonal relationships, the following question was asked and the following are the themes for the responses that were given by the participants.

Figure 2.8: How does domestic violence affect a child's interpersonal relationships in future?

Answer	Frequency	% Total
Makes interpersonal relationships difficult	5	11.11%
They are violent	6	13.33%
Fail to establish/maintain relationships	9	20.00%
Fear having a family	2	4.44%

90% of brain development happens before the age of 5. So a child growing in an environment of domestic violence will greatly influence the way a child views themselves and the world around them. A child will start to gain perspectives from this environment that will shape their behavioral patterns because the home is the primary source of socialization, what is learnt to be normal and abnormal behavior is greatly influenced by the home environment.

Negative socio-cultural norms were also said to be one of the causes (figure 1.7) as well as one of the reasons why domestic violence is prevalent (figure 2.3). These are first learnt in the home, and in societies that support these norms. Norms such as those that make men more superior to women, which participants also stated to be a cause and a reason why domestic violence is prevalent. As discussed earlier this could create early maladaptive schemas such as entitlement in boys which could cause them to be violent against girls, or a defectiveness and shame schema for girls that could make them susceptible to domestic violence.

Two of the participants in their responses discussed domestic violence affecting a child's brain development stating that a child will mostly use their downstairs brain and not their upstairs brain (figures 1.9 and 2.0). One of the participants, a psychologist, stated that children that use their downstairs brain tend to be aggressive and violent.

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The downstairs brain contains functions such as breathing, emotions, and the fight, flight and freeze responses (which were all argued to be responses to domestic violence). The job of the downstairs brain

is to keep a person safe. The downstairs brain finishes developing quickly.

The upstairs brain is the seat of social and emotional intelligence and the foundation of mental health. The upstairs brain is more complex this is where our thinking, planning and imagining takes place. The job of the upstairs brain is to think, problem solve and learn. The upstairs brain allows a person to overcome fears, it allows a person to become more flexible problem solvers, and it allows a person to think about the outside world around.

When a person can use both the upstairs brain and the downstairs brain, a person is able to think before they react, be more empathetic, and regulate emotions. How children solve problems is going to also depend on how children are able to integrate the upstairs brain and the downstairs brain.

The perspective of this psychologist that highlighted the use of the downstairs brain and failure to use the upstairs brains, explains other participant's arguments that were the most frequent response to the question of how domestic violence affects the thought process of children (figure 1.9). The participants argued that children are left traumatized, have psychological problems, such as the slowing down of the thought process and the failure to process trauma.

Some participants argued that children that are not able to process domestic violence can either shut down or block it out. Figure 1.9 shows the theme in which the failure to process trauma also appears having the highest frequency. This explains why some children have repressed memories of the trauma they experienced, and why some, as participants asserted to, are in denial of the violent events (figure 2.1). This serves as a copying mechanism, as it has been discussed that when children only use their downstairs brain they are most likely to respond in a way that they either, fight,

flee or freeze. This also explains why some children start to use violence as a problem solving skill.

Some participants also asserted to the fact that domestic violence affects the academic performance of children (figure 1.9), this argument can also be discussed in line with failure to use the upstairs brain which is also responsible for learning, and hence, when a child is unable to integrate their upstairs brain they are going to have problems learning.

And to explain how domestic violence affects the use of the upstairs brain, reference is made to an argument by Karen Pace that as a child's upstairs brain is developing, experiences of danger, fear, anger and trauma can overwhelm and block your child's access to the functions of that part of their brain (Pace, 2016).

When participants were asked how domestic violence affects interpersonal relationships majorities' response was the failure to maintain or establish relationships (figure 2.8). A number of participants also asserted to the loss of trust and the development of insecurities, which could also be ascribed to the formation of early maladaptive schemas.

One of the participants responded by saying that children will develop attachment issues. In an article by Psychalive, the author argues that "during the first two years, how the parents or caregivers respond to their infants, particularly during times of distress, establishes the types of patterns of attachment their children form. These patterns will go on to guide the child's feelings, thoughts and expectations as an adult in future relationships" (Psychalive, 2023).

This explains why children that have experienced domestic violence will tend to experience difficulties in their interpersonal relationships. Which also corresponds to Jeffery Young's early maladaptive schemas and how they could cause one to struggle with interpersonal relationships. For example, a person struggling with early maladaptive schemas in

the domain of disconnection and rejection will face difficulties establishing or maintaining interpersonal relationships, as in an example that was discussed in previous chapters of a person with an emotional deprivation schema that uses overcompensation as a copying strategy, who might end up pushing people away because they become clingy (as a participant alluded to in figure 2.1), and show excess jealousy, and overprotectiveness. They could also overcompensate by being too busy with work because it's how they learnt to cope with the absence of affection as a child, could have been in the effort to gain their parents attention and end up pushing people away because they don't seem to pay attention to them.

The ideas of John Bowlby are consistent with Jeffery Young's ideas about the formation of early maladaptive schemas being a result of unmet core emotional needs in children. And that temperaments also determine the types of early maladaptive schemas. In this case, for example, a child with a melancholic temperament would most likely develop an insecure attachment style like avoidant attachment style or a disorganized attachment style, compared to a child with a sanguine temperament in the same situation who might develop an anxious attachment style. This could explain why some participants argued that children respond depending on their trauma while others respond in a way that is different from their experience, because children are different and respond differently even depending on their temperaments.

Neuroscience also shows how attachment can affect brain development. When a child feels safe and nurtured, a child can develop neural pathways for higher level thinking. Secure attachment plays a role in the development of the prefrontal cortex, which governs decision-making, judgment and reasoning. This presents similarities to the development of the upstairs brain.

Insecure attachment styles and stress can trigger an alarm reaction disrupting the neural biology of the brain and central nervous system. Individuals who have experienced trauma often exhibit impaired neural connections in the limbic system and altered levels of stress hormones.

When asked how the response and effects of domestic violence on a victim affect children, the highest number of participants argued that children experience emotional imbalances, mental health issues and trauma. Other participants argued that victims fail to love and nurture their children fully. These results are consistent to the arguments by both Bowlby and Young that when children do not have their core emotional needs met they will develop early maladaptive schemas or form insecure attachment styles (refer to figure 2.2 for results).

Children that experienced domestic violence or are in an environment of domestic violence and some that run away from home because of the violence are usually admitted to child care facilities for their safety. One of the participants who is a social worker argued that children are not meant to stay in child care facilities but are to be reintegrated into families. But many children admitted to child care facilities grow up in the child care facility. Another child career asked why many children in child care facilities perform poorly in school compared to children that are coming from families. The theories of schema therapy, attachment and that of the upstairs downstairs brain, give insight into why it is so. Children's core emotional needs are hardly met in child care facilities, no matter how much they try to meet their needs, the children are exposed to different caregivers who are there for a limited amount of time and are gone, hence, many of them usually have insecure attachments and develop early maladaptive schemas, and because they have experienced trauma the development of their upstairs brain which aids learning may be affected, especially that they don't always have a person to constantly

help check their performance and help them where they are struggling. This is also consistent with Vygotsky's argument on scaffolding.

Some participants attributed the cause and prevalence of domestic violence to poverty (figure 2.3). One of the participants said that the failure by breadwinners to provide is a cause of conflict that keeps domestic violence prevalent. The Zambia Police Service Lusaka province Victim Support Unit, in their 2023 second quarter report recorded a total of 119 cases classified as 'failing to provide' which validates the argument that failure to provide does cause domestic violence to remain prevalent.

Participants were asked what type of violence was most likely to occur, and 20 participants representing 62.50% of the participants said physical or sexual violence (figure 2.5). However, there is a form of sexual abuse that is hardly recognized in Zambia, this being sexual grooming.

A research by Maryn Mutaka and Mwiya L. Imasiku, on Risk Factors and Child Sexual Abuse among High School Pupils in Lusaka District, Zambia, in their analysis of the results on the grooming tactics and behaviors used by perpetrators before sexually abusing children and adolescents found that showing love and care to the target recorded the highest frequency of 55 representing a percentage of 63.2% of the respondents.

Other tactics they recorded are buying gifts and giving money to the target, with a frequency of 12 representing 13.8% of respondents; exposing the target to pornographic materials, with a frequency of 13 representing 14.9% of respondents; spending a lot of time with the target e.g., doing school work, taking walks, with a frequency of 10 representing 11.5% of respondents; favoritism, with a frequency of 6 representing 7% of respondents; playing sexual games with the target e.g. tickling, hugging, kissing, with a frequency of 11 representing 12.6% of respondents (Imasiku, 2012).

Looking at these results it can be concluded that people that never had their core emotional needs met in childhood are more likely to be victims of sexual grooming because they are most likely to be manipulated into doing what they may not want to do because they don't want to lose the person that is meeting a need that was never met before. Perpetrators of sexual grooming usually take advantage of people with these weaknesses. For example, people that developed early maladaptive schemas because they never had secure attachments in their childhood, are most likely to fall prey to toxic relationships in which they could be sexually groomed.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This research established that children's cognitive development is affected by domestic violence in a way that they develop early maladaptive schemas, as Jeffery Young argues. Early maladaptive schemas are self-defeating emotional and cognitive patterns that begin early in our development and repeat throughout life. It also established that children develop insecure attachment styles, insecure attachment (anxious, avoidant, or disorganized) tends to involve emotional distance, inconsistent reactions to intimacy and conflict, and a fear of abandonment.

This research also established that brain development is affected by the experience of domestic violence. It established that 90% of brain development happens before the age of 5. When children experience domestic violence at this stage of life they experience a disruption in the development of their upstairs brain which is the seat of social and emotional intelligence and the foundation of mental health. The upstairs brain is where thinking, planning, and imagining take place. The upstairs brain allows one to overcome fears, become flexible problem solvers, and think about the outside world.

Children develop copying strategies and problem solving skills depending on the schemas they develop. In psychology, a schema is a mental framework that helps individuals organize, process, and store information about their environment. Every cognitive development theory that was discussed in this research enabled us to gain insight into the kinds of perceptions a child gains throughout the cognitive developmental process in an environment of domestic violence and further enabled the establishment of the various copying styles that children develop depending on how they view themselves, others and the world around them.

Jeffery young argued that there are three problem solving skills that people develop, overcompensation, avoidance and surrender. John Bowlby argued that people employ copying strategies depending on the copying style they develop, others build walls, and others seek reassurance, and so on.

Children that have experienced domestic violence also struggle to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships because they develop insecurities that make them fear disappointment and abandonment, and lose trust.

### 4.4 Recommendations

The research findings have established that domestic violence is a serious social problem that will continue to be passed from one generation to another unless interventions are employed. As most participants in the research alluded to, there is great need to intensify sensitization on domestic violence issues to get rid of the social stigma that keeps many from reporting cases to the relevant authorities.

And sensitization on the various forms of domestic violence to help people become aware and be better able to recognize abuse when it is happening to them and to others. As mentioned in the discussion of research results, people need an awareness of what issues such as sexual assault or

sexual harassment are and the activities that are considered as sexual assault or harassment. And other issues such as sexual grooming and sexual consent. This could increase the number of cases reported and in turn reduce the prevalence of these issues.

Sensitization is also necessary to correct the negative socio-cultural norms that keep domestic violence cases rampant. Sensitization is also necessary to increase mental health awareness. Many people are not self-aware, they may not understand that certain perspectives they have are detrimental, and some of the coping strategies and problem solving skills they employ may also be disruptive to them and to their relationships. Sensitization is necessary to make people aware that mental health issues are nothing to be ashamed of and how they can get help, to create healthy adaptive schemas that are not disruptive. There's need to make people aware of the various ways they can receive help such as therapy or counselling sessions that would help them with therapy such as cognitive behavioral therapy that could help people create new experiences that can replace old maladaptive patterns with new more adaptive ones. For example, practicing secure attachment behaviors and patiently continuing with these behaviors until new secure attachment style is formed.

Another strategy that can be employed is to encourage social support from family and friends. And also the creation of social support groups for different issues, such as social support groups for people that have experienced sexual violence, or social support groups for people that went through domestic violence in their homes and have to start a life without their abuser present in their life. These groups can be kept small to encourage interaction among the members so as to enable them to help each other through their different issues.

Another recommendation is to establish stricter punishments for perpetrators of domestic violence, to win the confidence of people in the law enforcement agencies. Many people do not report cases because they have lost confidence in the law enforcement agencies because of seeing other cases come to an end without the perpetrator facing punishment, or get bail. Another recommendation is to counsel victims addressing their fears and also create empowerment schemes for those that are dependent on abusers so that the number of withdrawn cases is reduced.

Another recommendation is to reduce the ratio of children to caregivers in child care facilities and make sure caregivers are knowledgeable on the needs of children. A manageable ratio of children to caregivers will enable caregivers to be able to meet the core emotional needs of children, in order for them to form bonds with the children that form secure attachment style in the children. Social welfare officers will also have to create stricter measures in order to increase adherence. The government will have to invest more in this sector, because a lot of child care facilities already have many children, and do not all have donors to enable them provide the necessary needs of the children, including paying and training caregivers.

Social welfare under the ministry of community development and social services, needs to ensure that child care facilities conduct case studies in order to increase reintegration of children into families, so that children can have their core emotional needs met in a safe and loving environment.

And the last recommendation is to establish stricter requirements for premarital counselling, not allowing couples get legally married until they have undergone premarital counselling successfully, and restructuring premarital counselling materials to ensure they provide the necessary information even on mental health issues, different personalities and temperament types in order to improve conflict

resolution, and providing information to make sure couples are getting married for the right reasons to create a solid foundation for their marriage in order to reduce domestic violence cases and divorce cases which are also detrimental to children.

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