

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children: How School Leaders Can Transform the Outcome

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Abstract

The topic of Domestic Violence has gradually come into the light. Domestic violence has become part of student awareness campaigns and presentations to employees. October has been designated as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month since 1981; but has become more known in recent years. Domestic Violence happens at an alarming rate in many families of all socio economic statuses and racial identities. Sadly, children are many times witnesses and sometimes suffer as victims. Educators are in a great position to effect the outcome of the child victims. Educators should be aware of the signs that victim children display, have the ability to identify victims of domestic violence, and most important create interventions that will positively affect the outcome of a student's life.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Domestic Violence Indicators, Domestic Violence Statistics, Educator Guidelines, School Policies, Prevention Intervention Support

1. Introduction

The interest in the topic of Domestic Violence (DV) stems from experiences by one of the authors, who was the subject in three previous articles. The victim tells how she lived “In the Dark Shadows” (Alaniz & De Los Santos, 2015), how she escaped after “The Final Blow” (Alaniz & De Los Santos, 2016), and how she has persevered in “From the Voice of a Teacher—A Domestic Violence Survivor: The Importance of Employer Support” (Alaniz & De Los Santos, 2017). The authors are teachers and educational leaders at a public university in south Texas. Their experience and the lack of studies in the field of education in this area has motivated them to make the connection between domestic violence and the educational setting.

1.1 Research Questions

The three questions that should be examined by instructional school leaders, managers of schools, and other school professionals are: (1) What is domestic violence and what are the indicators exhibited by students, who are witnesses or victims of domestic violence? (2) What type of interventions in schools can be implemented that can serve to intervene and support a student who is a child of domestic violence? This information is essential for instructional school leaders, managers of schools, and other school professionals in order to extend help and support to students who may be a child of domestic violence.

1.2 Definition of Terms

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), domestic violence (DV) is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, emotional abuse and stalking. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can span from a one-time occurrence to many chronic and severe incidences over a number of years. The one relentless factor of DV is the perpetrator's unflinching efforts to maintain power and control over the partner (NCADV, 2015). In simple terms, domestic violence is a form of coercive behavior, including acts or threatened acts, used by a perpetrator to obtain power and control over the person with whom the perpetrator shares a close relationship. This coercive behavior includes, but is not limited to, physical intimidation or injury, verbal mistreatment and insults, emotional and/or psychological coercion, economic control, harassment and stalking (Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence, A National Resource, 2017).

1.3 Domestic Violence in the News

Domestic violence also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) caught national attention in 2014 (Binder, 2014). The matter of domestic violence drew attention when a video tape surfaced showing then-Baltimore Raven football player Ray Rice punching his fiancée, Janay Palmer, unconscious in an elevator. The video was made public on September 8, 2014 and Ray Rice was fired from the team shortly after (Frantz, 2014). High profile cases create awareness, but domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportion. A "haunting" 30-second commercial viewed by millions of people during the Super Bowl XLIX in 2015 sought to bring awareness to the issue of DV through an anti-domestic violence campaign titled, *No More* (Lacey-Bordeaux, 2015). This advertising campaign was a good start for educating and making others aware of this social epidemic. Domestic violence did not always make the headlines before this incident brought domestic violence to the spotlight. Since the high profile domestic violence case involving Ray Rice in 2014, stories of domestic violence in the news appear to be more common especially among athletes and celebrities.

1.4 Rationale

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students, addresses the need for school leaders to help students, who are negatively impacted by DV (NPBEA, 2015). Standard 5 follows:

Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student. Effective leaders:

- a) Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets that the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.
- b) Create and sustain a school environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.
- c) Provide coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.
- d) Promote adult-student, student-peer, and school-community relationships that value and support academic learning and positive social and emotional development.
- e) Cultivate and reinforce student engagement in school and positive student conduct.
- f) Infuse the school's learning environment with the cultures and languages of the school's community (NPBEA, 2015, p. 13).

For most school leaders and educators alike, their professional duty is reinforced by a profound personal commitment to the welfare of their school children. It is understood that the major goal of the education system is to teach; however, in order to achieve this, it is at times vital to remove barriers that hamper a child's ability to learn. As a child of domestic violence, they have needs that urgently require attention from school professionals such as an unstable home environment, daily developmental needs including physical safety and emotional well-being while making attempts to maintain their schooling (Haeseler, 2006). For these reasons, it is imperative that instructional school leaders, school managers and other school professionals have established interventions to help students who are children of domestic violence. For a student, who is a child of a DV victim, school policies, guidelines and processes for interventions should be in place for support as it can be the catalyst that empowers the child to overcome domestic violence resulting in a different positive outcome.

2. Domestic Violence Background

The literature review will describe statistics associated with domestic violence, indicators that students, who are witnessing or are victims of DV may display, and some interventions that educators may implement in order to help the student persevere.

2.1 Statistics

Domestic violence or intimate physical violence (IPV) is a serious social dilemma and statistics indicate that 95% of reported incidents involve a woman victim. Statistics related to domestic violence indicate that at least one in every three women will experience physical or sexual abuse during her lifetime (CDC, 2011). The Federal Bureau of Investigations has estimated that a woman is beaten every nine seconds in the United States (LaVan, Lopez, Katz & Martin, 2012). DV is a widespread epidemic that strikes about 4 million people a year (Pyrilllis, 2014).

Published in 2011, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NIPSVS) 2010 collected data on the national prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, and stalking among women and men in the United States. The NIPSVS showed that more than one-third of women in the United States (35.6% or approximately 42.4 million) have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime. One in 3 women (32.9%) has experienced physical violence by an intimate partner and nearly 1 in 10 (9.4%) has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime. Approximately 5.9%, or almost 7.0 million women in the United States, reported experiencing these forms of violence by an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to taking the survey (CDC, 2011b). Other findings indicate that intimate partner violence causes far-reaching health issues beyond immediate injury. Its effects are massive aside from physical and psychological injuries—it affects their children, their families, their employment and productivity, as well as brings difficulties with finances, homelessness, childcare, and role disruption (Javaherian, et al., 2007). Domestic violence has profound personal, health, and economic consequences for victims.

There is a lack of research on the effects of DV on children, especially preschool children. This population of children is vulnerable because they witness the abuse on a daily bases (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Howell, 2011). Police-reported incidents of domestic violence (DV) showed that 47% of the children who were in the home where the incident occurred were 5 years old or younger (Gjelsvik et al., 2003). Police reports also showed that 81% of the children who were in the home of the DV incident saw or heard the violent incident and 60% of those were under 6 years old (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007).

Each year, over 4.5 million children are exposed to DV (Holmes, 2013). DV is significantly related to poor mental health of the mother involved. The psychological abuse and low maternal warmth associated with DV are directly related to more aggressive behavior in children (Izaguirre & Calvete, 2015; Holmes, 2013; Huang, 2010; Levendosky et al., 2003).

2.2 Domestic Violence Indicators in Students

Students, who witness domestic violence (DV) in the home may have increased aggressive and hyperactive behaviors. They may show higher rates of aggression, fighting and antisocial behaviors. The violence that they witness may cause them to feel helpless, anxious and depressed (Howell, 2011; Patterson et al., 2008; Margolin, 2005).

Students may display some of the signs listed below, when they are witnessing or are victims of domestic abuse (Baker & Jaffe, 2006, p. 8). It is important to note that these signs may have other causes such as the death of a parent or another traumatic event in the child's life.

- physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)
- tiredness
- constant worry about possible danger and/or safety of loved ones
- sadness and/or withdrawal from others and activities
- low self-esteem and lack of confidence, especially for trying new things (including new academic tasks)
- difficulty paying attention in class, concentrating on work and learning new information
- outbursts of anger directed toward teachers, peers, or self
- bullying and/or aggression directed toward peers in and/or out of the classroom
- stereotyped beliefs about males as aggressors and females as victims

In addition to the behaviors listed above, older students may exhibit some of the following signs:

- suicidal thought and action
- high risk behavior including criminal activities, alcohol and drug abuse
- school truancy or leaving home
- dating violence (Baker & Jaffe, 2006, p. 8-9)

Domestic violence may have some potential impacts on students that differ according to age. Preschool children may learn unhealthy ways to express anger and aggression. They may be confused by conflicting messages that they experience. For example, they could be told it is not okay to hit anyone at school, while they may see dad hit mom. Preschool children may attribute violence to something they have done. For example if they were told and failed to pick up their toys, they may think that this is what made their dad mad. Preschool children may learn gender roles associated with violence and victimization. For example, they may learn that the needs of a male are more important, men deserve to get what they want, or men yell to get their way. The instability in their lives may inhibit independence in preschool aged children and they may exhibit regressive behaviors. For example the child may not want to dress themselves or toilet train, may exhibit clinginess, need security objects, and may need help with previously learned tasks (Baker et al., 2002, Baker & Cunningham, 2009).

Domestic violence may impact children aged 6-11 differently. They may have more awareness of their own reaction to violence at home and of impact on others. For example, they may be worried about their mom's safety and the consequences of their father being charged. Children aged 6-11 may be more susceptible to believing rationalizations heard to justify the violence. For example, the alcohol caused the violence or the victim deserved the abuse. These children's ability to learn may be hampered due to witnessing violence. For example, they may be distracted, ignore positive feedback and evoke negative feedback. These children may learn gender roles associated with domestic violence. They may associate males with violence and woman as victims of the violence (Baker et. al., 2002).

3. Implications for the Classroom

Young children may not have developed coping skills so it is important that early childhood educators help them cope. Some of the things that early childhood educators can do:

- implement policies and procedures to promote safety of children, non-offending parents, and staff;
- recognize and act on children's signals that they are experiencing difficulties;
- use supportive strategies to assist children to cope in the program; and
- support and provide information to non-offending parents about community referrals (Baker et al., 2001).

Providing support to a child victims of domestic violence by educators is crucial. Implications for the classroom include providing a nurturing environment, supporting child adjustment when there are behavior problems, helping caregivers, and to offer special circumstances when families are in shelters (Baker & Cunningham, 2009).

3.1 Nurturing Environment

Children who are witnessing or experiencing domestic violence at home probably have a chaotic and disorganized home life. For all children; but especially for this group, it is important to maintain a nurturing classroom environment that is calm, secure predictable, and has structure (Eriksson et al., 2013). Baker and Cunningham (2009) describe ten basic principles that should constitute adult/child interactions in the classroom.

First, children need to have positive adult role models. At home they may observe a male adult who is abusive, selfish and self-centered. They may be learning power and control behaviors to get what they want. They may also be learning anti-law, pro-criminal, and anti-women attitudes in addition to lying and victim blaming (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Second, setting clear expectations in the classroom is important. The instructions should include a description of the desired behavior because it may not be taught in the home. A child may be confused if they are being taught two sets of rules, one by the mother and another by the father. Also, the rules may change at home, depending on the mood of the abuser (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001)

Third, giving the child victim positive feedback and praise in the classroom is very important. The child may not be used to receiving positive feedback, so it may be difficult to accept at first. The child may be emotionally abused, called negative names, often corrected and insulted, and may not be encouraged or praised at home (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Fourth, focusing on the behavior rather than on the child when providing feedback in the classroom is essential. Reprimands at home may have focused on personal attacks such as calling the child stupid or other demeaning names. The focus is not to hurt the child's self-esteem; but to encourage the desired behavior (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Fifth, explaining a request is important because it gives the child a sense of self-worth. At home, the child may be used to authoritarian demands where the parent gives orders and the child is expected to obey immediately (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Sixth, avoiding emotional reactions and yelling is essential because this is probably what the student is facing at home. Children who are exposed to anger and yelling develop coping mechanisms such as tuning out the noise, escaping through fantasy or emotional numbness, or they may learn to yell themselves (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Seventh, using "givens" and choices as appropriate in the classroom is essential. While there are "givens" in the classroom, such as sitting while taking a quiz, the child may be given choices, such as sitting at their desk or on a rug while taking the quiz. Children with an abusive parent, may not be used to having opinions or making choices at home (Baker & Cunningham 2009; Perry, 2001).

Eighth, setting reasonable expectations in the classroom helps the child feel worthy and develops the child's logical thinking, depending on the age of the child. At home the child may have been given commands to keep quiet, don't move, or don't get dirty and when they were unable to live up to those expectations, may have experienced feeling of inadequacy (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Ninth, setting boundaries around adult matters is important. Children who live in homes where domestic violence is prevalent, have probably been exposed to adult conversations that should be private (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Tenth, spending time with children is important for children who come from abusive homes. These children may be isolated from family and friends and may not have the social skills to interact with their peers (Baker & Cunningham, 2009; Perry, 2001).

Eriksson et al, (2013) note that students, who come from homes where DV occurs, may have to change homes and schools often and may experience frequent absences from school. This makes the need for schools to provide a nurturing environment very important for these students.

3.2 Student Adjustment

In a meta-analysis by Chan and Yeung (2009), children's adjustments were categorized. Children exposed to domestic violence adjusted by internalizing problems, externalizing problems, the effect on perceptions/cognitions of the exposure, interpersonal relationships and competence, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The negative impact of DV on both internalizing and externalizing problems was significant. Children's perceptions/cognitions affected by DV was low as was the effect on interpersonal relationships and competence. The highest negative effect of DV was on children's post-traumatic stress disorder (Hungerford et al., 2012; Hungerford et al., 2010; Chan & Yeung, 2009).

Bowen (2015) studied the effects of intimate partner violence on preschool boys and girls. Resilience "requires that there is evidence of positive adaptation/development in the context of adversity, threat, or risk" (Bowen, 2015, p. 141). The results showed that girls were more likely to be identified as resilient, than boys. Girls who showed attributes of resilience were less emotional, more sociable, and their mothers reported less depression. Resilient boys were less emotional and were more secure in their attachments to their mothers than non-resilient boys. Family characteristics were a greater predictor for boys and temperament was a greater predictor for resilience in girls. There is little research on positive outcomes in resilience for children, who witness DV (Howell, 2011; Margolin, 2005).

Emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment for students is as important as their academic preparation. Children who cannot pay attention, get along with their peers, or control their behavior usually have a problem being successful in school. The school psychologist can educate and guide teachers and school staff on the role of attachment and use interventions to help the child regulate their behavior (Schwartz, E. & Davis, A.S., 2006).

3.3 Impact on Schools

An area that has been neglected in the research is the impact of domestic violence (DV) upon schools (Eriksson et al., 2013). Children who come from a home where DV is present, usually view school as an escape and safe haven from the violence. When students are questioned at school about what is happening at home, they may not want to cooperate because they do not want to lose the peace they feel at school.

School faculty and staff may feel the process, of getting information related to student health, development, and school performance, quite intrusive. Teachers and staff may feel overwhelmed when they have to respond to law enforcement, family law, child protection service people, etc. (Eriksson et al., 2013).

When the law prohibits contact with a parent accused of DV, school staff may have to communicate with both an abuser and a victim parent. The schools sometimes serves as a handoff of the child, when the child is dropped off by one parent and picked up by another parent. School staff need to be informed and trained to participate in these types of tasks (Eriksson et al., 2013).

Schools are sometimes involved with a violent parent, who is only allowed supervised visits with a child. Faculty and staff must be trained on conflict, risk and safety management so they may take appropriate action when these situations have been imposed upon them (Eriksson et al., 2013).

4. Implications for Leadership

The sad reality is that every school has students in its care who are impacted by domestic violence (DV). It should come as no surprise to school leaders that at the end of every school day, across communities in the United States, millions of American children return to violent households (Leoni, 2016). School leaders must then realize that DV will be present in the lives of some of the students at their schools and they have a responsibility to all children to help them overcome and transform the outcome.

Children of all ages, from infancy through adolescence, are susceptible to the unfavorable effect of DV exposure (De-Board-Lucas, Wasserman, McAlister Groves & Bair-Merritt, 2013).

When children see and hear too much violence in the home that is terrifying, they begin to sense that their world is unsafe and insecure. For children who live in a violent home, the terror doesn't go away. Their presence in family violence impacts children's cognitive, social, emotional, and academic development. It hurts their capacity to exhibit trust in the world and cheats them of the view that adulthood is a desirable state to reach (Leoni, 2016).

School leaders need to be aware that witnessing DV teaches children that violence is an acceptable means of conflict resolution and this is a way of dealing with family relationships (Cousins & Callary, 2009). So to make life tolerable, most children assimilate that violence into their understanding of reality. They learn that carrying out violence and suffering it, is a function of life. While some children may have strong coping mechanisms, too many do not and will escape into their pain or lash out against others (Leoni, 2016).

School leaders also need to know that whenever one child hurts as a result of domestic violence in the home, he or she brings that suffering into the classroom, regardless of how aware of his or her situation his classmates and teachers may be (Leoni, 2016). For this reason, too, it is important that interventions be in place to guide classroom teachers and other school personnel to respond in meeting the needs of children of DV. It is crucial that school leaders create a culture in their schools that provide classroom teachers and school staff professional development for interventions on how to recognize and respond to children of DV in ways that will assist in the protection of those students and enhance their ability to learn and reach their full potential (Cousins & Callary, 2009)

To achieve the goal of preventive, health-augmenting discourse for all school children, schools need policy change on district wide protocols, specific building procedural guidelines, and the proper resources in addition to the types of systems and processes school leaders can implement including curriculum that can be taught. It is essential that schools offer curricula that addresses how power and control impact human relationships and behaviors (Leoni, 2016).

Everyone in the school setting- school leaders, classroom teachers, counselors, coaches, teacher aides and other school personnel- play a role in teaching children about human relationships. Children learn about relationships through social osmosis. They see the patterns around them and internalize those behaviors as the blueprints around them and internalize those behaviors for what to expect from their own lives (Sternfeld, 2015).

4.1 What Can School Leaders Do to Make a Difference?

First of all, it is imperative that school leaders understand the meaning of domestic violence so that they can identify warning signs in children. It is a known fact that children spend a large portion of their time in school and in doing so, this gives school leaders and educators more access to them; therefore, having the opportunity to contribute in an assortment of ways to the increased well-being of children who commonly witness violence in their home and to also see changes in their appearance and behavior (Crosson-Tower, 2003).

Moreover, school leaders have a responsibility to identify and support children of domestic violence (Haeseler, 2006). School leaders play a key role for children of DV because they have an obligation to adhere to all federal and state laws surrounding reporting abuse and neglect to the respective authorities (Haeseler, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary that due diligence be carried out as school leaders have a mandated role in identifying, reporting, and preventing child abuse and neglect for the purpose of protecting all school children especially children who suffer from experiencing and/or witnessing domestic abuse in the home.

School leaders can have a positive impact on the lives of children who live in homes where DV occurs. By understanding the dynamics involved and the impacts of DV on children, school leaders will be better equipped to deal with this critical social issue (Cousins & Callary, 2009).

4.2 What Should School Leaders Do to Transform the Outcome?

There is no doubt that school leaders can make a difference by ensuring that their staff are trained to identify the warning signs and symptoms of domestic abuse in children, parents and colleagues, in addition to knowing how to talk to children (and parent) who disclose. The school leader should implement a clear protocol for whom to refer children and parent to in the event of a disclosure (Leoni, 2016).

School leaders can institute supportive practices that can be incorporated in the curriculum as special topics but allowing classroom teachers the freedom to determine how and when they will be taught and transferred from theory to practice in the school environment. These special topics can be educating children between right and wrong behavior; the use of positive discipline; the forms of violence and its negative effects; the role models of father and mother; the value of relationships and working in groups, and the ways to express feelings- either negative or positive (Koutselini, Valanidou, Chistolini, Secui & Valnidou, 2011).

School leaders can consider a trauma-informed approach to education that aims to execute procedures that will benefit students of DV as well as children experiencing other traumas; educators, and the larger educational community as a whole. Such a framework focuses on offering universal, tier-one interventions that give valuable support to all students. Additionally, a trauma-informed approach aborts the thought that punitive discipline or special education referrals are a front line intervention when symptoms appear. To a certain extent, such an approach supports school leaders to ask “what happened to you,” instead of “what’s wrong with you?” (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017)

School leaders can refer to a framework created for implementing a trauma-informed program that is beneficial to all students, not just those students who have experienced a trauma such as witnessing or experiencing domestic violence. This framework is comprised of several important considerations a school leader should respond to gauge the pulse of his respective school in addressing the needs of all students of his school community (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017):

1. Examine your school’s values around students. What are students responsible for in their daily lives at school? What do teacher, administrators, and other staff believe their role is in creating a supportive atmosphere for all students? These are difficult questions to ask, but you may be surprised at the differing opinions. Understanding these differences and resolving opposing viewpoints will create a stronger support network for all students.
2. Develop a list of central values and beliefs that will guide your school community as a whole. This should be considered as a guiding set of principles that take into account the cultural values of students and their surrounding communities.

3. Provide ongoing professional development that incorporates trauma-informed practices.
4. Identify ways to engage every student in some aspect of the school community. Students who have experienced trauma may struggle to create strong, lasting connections on their own.
5. Foster quality relationships between students and educators.
6. Provide reliable, consistent structure for all students. Students who are able to reliably plan out their day are also able to devote more cognitive energy to emotion regulation, social skill practice, and academic tasks (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017).

4.3 Additional Strategies for School Leaders

There are other intervention strategies that a school leader can impose. When a school leader “walks the talk” it becomes easier for others to comply with the school leader’s expectations because he is leading by example.

First, as a school leader, it is important that he “be there” for the child. This refers to be an adult in that child’s life who accepts and believes in him. Show it (Venet, 2014).

Second, children of domestic violence need frequent reminders that they are loved, smart, and valuable, so foster the child’s self-esteem by showing and telling him that he is lovable, competent and important (De-Board-Lucas, Wasserman, McAlister Groves & Bair-Merritt, 2013).

Third, as the school leader, communicate with counselors and other school professionals who can serve as excellent resources for recognizing and understanding the impacts of trauma (Venet, 2014).

Fourth, use a daily check-in to provide a solid foundation for relationship building. Take time to check in with students, either in a group format or on an individual basis. Find out whether students have gotten enough sleep, have eaten breakfast, and how they are feeling. Seek out the child and by doing so, you are developing a relationship with the child which will evolve into trust (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017).

Fifth, establish a structured and predictable environment for children. Help children know what to expect. Make the schools’ rules, policies, expectations and procedures known. This helps children feel secure in their environment because they have an idea of what is expected of them and what will happen next (De-Board-Lucas, Wasserman, McAlister Groves & Bair-Merritt, 2013; Venet, 2014).

Sixth, identify triggers of anxiety or challenging behavior. This is important to know because you can offer support during the time of need for the child. Offer the child a quiet place to stay until situations become calmer and be prepared for negative emotions and behaviors from the child in response to triggers (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017).

Seventh, **closely** monitor attendance and immediately refer attendance to administrative staff. Many students who witness domestic violence may fear leaving their parent at home (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017).

Eighth, make an “out” plan for the child to utilize when it becomes necessary. Create a way for the child to take space if she feels triggered or overwhelmed during class. Designate a space in the school building or outside where you will know where to find her if she needs to take time for a sensory break or to regulate her emotions. It is also a good idea that there be a team involved and familiar with this arrangement so as to offer support to the child as well as to the school leader (Venet, 2014).

Ninth, help students understand available support and your role as a mandated reporter. Make all students aware of support personnel available in the school such as the guidance counselor, social worker, the nurse, and anyone else designated. The larger number of people available to listen to a student, the more likely that student is to disclose his situation (Cevasco, Rossen & Hull, 2017).

The above strategies cannot erase all the emotional and psychological pain a child exposed to domestic violence experiences; but, these strategies allow an avenue for the child to recognize that the professionals in his school community are building and maintaining a safe, caring, and healthy environment in attempts to meet his academic, social, emotional, and physical needs.

Furthermore, despite the fact that children at school learn behaviors and skills, this learning is always filtered through their experiences at home (Koutselini, Valanidou, Chistolini, Secui & Valnidou, 2011).

5. Conclusions

Domestic violence is a serious epidemic. Children of all ages, from infancy through adolescence are susceptible to the unfavorable effect of IPV exposure (De-Board-Lucas, Wasserman, McAlister Groves & Bair-Merritt, 2013). School leaders recognize that domestic violence is present in the lives of some of the students at their schools and as school leaders, they have a responsibility to all school children. Despite not being able to stop the violence, the school leader's role is vital in promoting healing in the child of domestic violence. A willingness to listen to a child's story without judgment can offer a safety where resiliency and personal strength can begin to be reconstructed. One of the most important ways school leaders can offer assistance is to provide a safe and supportive place for the child to openly discuss his fears (Kearney, 1999).

According to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students (NPBEA, 2015), "Effective leaders build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets that the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student." For most school leaders, their professional duty is reinforced by a profound personal commitment to the welfare of their school children. It is understood that the major goal of the education system is to teach; however, in order to achieve this, it is at times vital to remove barriers that hamper a child's ability to learn. As a child of domestic violence, they have needs that urgently require attention because of an unstable home environment, daily developmental needs including physical safety and emotional well-being while making attempts to maintain their schooling (Haeseler, 2006). For these reasons, it is imperative that instructional school leaders, school managers and other school professionals have established interventions to help students who are children of domestic violence. Therefore, a domestic violence prevention intervention program supported by workplace policy to respond to student victims should be developed. Instructional school leaders, managers of schools and school professionals who are proactive and prepared to address domestic violence when it involves a student could lead to empowering the child of domestic violence.

The success of student academic learning lies heavily on school professionals charged to impart quality instruction. With the statistics of DV at the forefront, instructional school leaders, school managers and school professionals should be cognizant of the domestic violence indicators among students and be prepared to offer support as responsible educators.

The best approach that instructional school leaders, managers of schools and school professionals can do is to implement school policies and guidelines on how to intervene and respond to domestic violence issues involving children of domestic violence. Domestic violence awareness and intervention information produced by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be made available to school professionals to help bring awareness of this social issue and can be used for training purposes in recognizing, reporting, and appropriately responding to student victims of domestic violence. For a student, who is a child of an IPV victim, school policies, guidelines and processes for interventions should be in place for support as it can be the catalyst that empowers the child to overcome domestic violence resulting in a different positive outcome. Caring adults such as the school leader can help children heal and thrive and in doing so, the school leader is transforming the outcome for a child of domestic violence (De-Board-Lucas, Wasserman, McAlister Groves & Bair-Merritt, 2013).

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