

Abstract

The phenomenon of violence in urban inner city communities have become a central concern for policy makers, children, community members, academicians and the general public. The new and major feature of the phenomenon is the injuring and murder of children. Public outcry has been made for the protection of the children. Social workers are participating in initiatives to alleviate the trauma which these children suffer.

This action research was carried out to gain an understanding from the children's perspective, how violence has shaped their feelings, thoughts and worldview. It is conducted within the heuristic social work research paradigm, from a clinical activist mode. The theoretical underpinnings are an eclectic combination of the ecological and theory of meaning social work practice theories. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, multiple ethnographical and interventive techniques were used for data collection. The research site was a school in one of the oldest most violent inner city area. The entire school population was engaged in the research.

The findings reveal that the children are exposed and experience violence in the form of deliberate direct attacks and indirect attacks. The former include drive-by shoots, the latter witnessing the death of family and friends. Violence is conducted at multiple system levels example at home, with peers,

and by the security forces. Traumatic responses are categorised into biopsychobehavioural, psychosocial, and resilience. Biopsychobehavioural responses include night terrors, vomiting and headaches. Psychosocial responses include feelings of separation and loss and futurelessness. Spiritual beliefs provide the main source of resilience.

Issues such as the definitions and the defining features of community violence, the culture of violence perspective, inner city violent subculture, and youth as perpetrators of violence are discussed in light of the children's perspective.

Recommendations are made including the promoting development 'for' children, to build the church institution and to develop programmes to alleviate the disastrous effects of the violence.