



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



Family Violence: Through the Lens of Power and Control.

REFERENCE

Straka, S.M., & Montminy, L. (2008). Family Violence: Through the Lens of Power and Control. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 8(3). 255-279.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Literature reviews

THEMES COVERED

Definition, forms of mistreatment at home, risk factors, vulnerabilities, concept of gender, profile of the mistreated person, perpetrators of mistreatment, consequences, explanatory theories, law, organization of services, burden and stress, family violence, intimate partner violence, mistreatment against children, power and control.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This purpose of this article is to explore the issue of family violence with a wider vision, i.e. through the field of intimate partner violence, mistreatment of older adults and children in order to develop an overall understanding and thus better respond to situations forgotten between these fields.

PROBLEM

Family violence includes several phenomena including mistreatment against children, which was first discussed in the 1960s, intimate partner violence that rather emerged as a social problem in the 1970s and mistreatment against older adults in the 1980s. The fields may sometimes overlap, as it is the case in situations of intimate partner violence within older couples. Interventions then become slightly more complicated, because two different understandings of a problem necessarily lead to different solutions.

METHODOLOGY

A critical review of literature was initially carried out by using PsycINFO and Social Work Abstracts databases, and then supplemented by Scholars Portal Search. All articles were read and the most relevant ones were selected through an iterative process or some articles brought in additional questions and sophisticated research.

RESULTS

In the field of intimate partner violence, a study has allowed us to distinguish between two types of violence, either with or without the presence of power dynamics. It was also demonstrated that psychological abuse is often a way for the abuser to exert power and control over the victim. Regarding mistreatment of older adults, it is mainly explained by the caregiver stress and will focus on risk and vulnerability. The authors suggest the use of the term «elder abuse» when it refers to a situation where the dynamic of control and power is present and the term «elder mistreatment» when this dynamic is absent. Regarding mistreatment of children, power and control also have an important role. However, a one-dimensional analysis of power cannot explain this phenomenon. Psychological abuse would be the most harmful form for children. Given these three fields of study, power and control seem to play an important role in situations of mistreatment. In addition, it was shown that situations of mistreatment have an impact on the family structure as a whole. Finally, in a long-term scale, psychological abuse appears as being more harmful than physical abuse.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is included in the results presented above.

CONCLUSION

Practitioners must develop a better understanding of dynamics related to mistreatment and be able to detect and respond quickly to their clients. In order to have a global vision in such situations, it is essential to observe the dynamic of control in relationships.

PRACTICE OR RESEARCH AVENUE

More qualitative research is required for psychological abuse, in order to develop tools for effective detection. Any training on intimate partner violence should also put the emphasis on this type of mistreatment and its connection with other forms of violence. The treatment of the pathology should be part of the intervention, without however replacing any specific interventions on violence. Seen from another angle, in order to reduce the gap between research and practice, it is essential to seek approaches and models adapted to integrative research. More qualitative research is needed to explore the experiences of people who were victims of mistreatment. Structures must also be implemented to help facilitate the interdisciplinary and intersectoral discussion and between researchers and practitioners as well. Other research is also required to understand how power can be part of abusive relationships.

DRAFTING DATE

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