

Adverse Childhood Experience – A Leading Cause of Youth Violence?

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KEYWORDS: Adverse Childhood Experiences · Child Abuse · Youth Violence.

ABSTRACT

According to police-recorded data, youth violence has increased substantially in the UK since 2014 with the majority of crimes occurring in London. A significant trend has been in the rise in knife-related crime. Some of the drivers influencing the rapid rate of violence among youths include social and economic deprivation, poverty and austerity, poor mental health and adverse childhood experience [1], [2].

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) are experiences or stressful events in early life that lead to an increased risk of negative health or social outcomes later in life. The parameters of ACEs include being a victim of child abuse (physical, emotional or sexual), neglect, domestic violence, child maltreatment, exposure to family substance or alcohol misuse, mental ill health, local authority intervention [3].

A study in USA has shown immigrant children to suffer from ACEs as a result of being exposed to the experience of detention and deportation or threats of detention and deportation and exposure to systematic marginalisation and deprivation [4]. Another study links ACEs of abuse, parental divorce, death, mental illness or addiction to a higher morbidity or mortality in adulthood. This study also linked ACE to headaches among adults [5].

The aim of this review is to identify and synthesise evidence from UK Police data and a range of literature to identify the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and youth violence in the UK. Understanding the link between ACEs and future outcomes can support preventative action.

This study will be able to answer following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between specific ACE and being a violent offender
2. Does gender moderate the relationships between ACEs and violence among youths?

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