



Comparative Criminology: **CHILD ABUSE**

Some Exploratory Studies on Child Abuse in Other Countries

Unfortunately, there is no systematic global data collection regarding child abuse; however, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) estimated that there were about 31,000 homicides globally of children under 15 in just the year 2002. This study also found that perpetrators of child abuse had witnessed violence against their mothers when they were young. This is consistent with studies that repeatedly find links between childhood exposure to domestic violence and violent offending at older ages (see discussion in Van Dijk, 2008, p. 88). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “cycle of violence.” In terms of prevalence, a 2014 WHO report found that Estimates of child maltreatment indicate that nearly a quarter of adults (22.6%) worldwide suffered physical abuse as a child, 36.3% experienced emotional abuse and 16.3% experienced physical neglect (WHO, 2014).

Van Dijk (2008) points out that perhaps the most comprehensive studies of child abuse in modern times were done in Germany, surveying more than 11,000 teenagers about their experiences with domestic violence. One consistent finding was that children of immigrants reported significantly higher rates/percentages of violence against mothers, with extremely high rates among those from Turkey (32%), Yugoslavia (25%), and Russia (20%). Another interesting pattern was that the immigrant families that

had resided in Germany for longer periods had higher rates of domestic violence, which Van Dijk claimed suggested “growing tensions between spouses after a longer exposure of women to German norms and values concerning gender equality” (p. 88).

Also notable, WHO (2006) estimated that annual economic costs in the United States due to child abuse totaled about \$94 billion. And although traditionally rare, there is a growing trend to punish much more severely parents and caretakers who abuse children, which also adds to the costs in terms of processing and incarcerating offenders. For example, in October 2012, a 23-year-old Texas woman was sentenced to 99 years in prison for such abuses as gluing her daughter's hands to the wall and beating her as punishment for potty-training setbacks. (Read more about this story here: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-mom-glued-daughters-hands-wall-99-years/story?id=17436643>.)

THINK ABOUT IT

1. To what extent do you think that extreme child abuse leads to future criminality by the victims of such acts?
2. What type of parenting style is likely to be done by the child victims of such abuse when they become parents? Are they likely to continue the parenting style that they experienced?

Sources: Van Dijk, J. (2008). *The world of crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; World Health Organization. (2006).

Preventing Child Maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence. Geneva: Author; World Health Organization. (2014). *GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION 2014*.