

Violence Towards Parents: Current Research and Debates

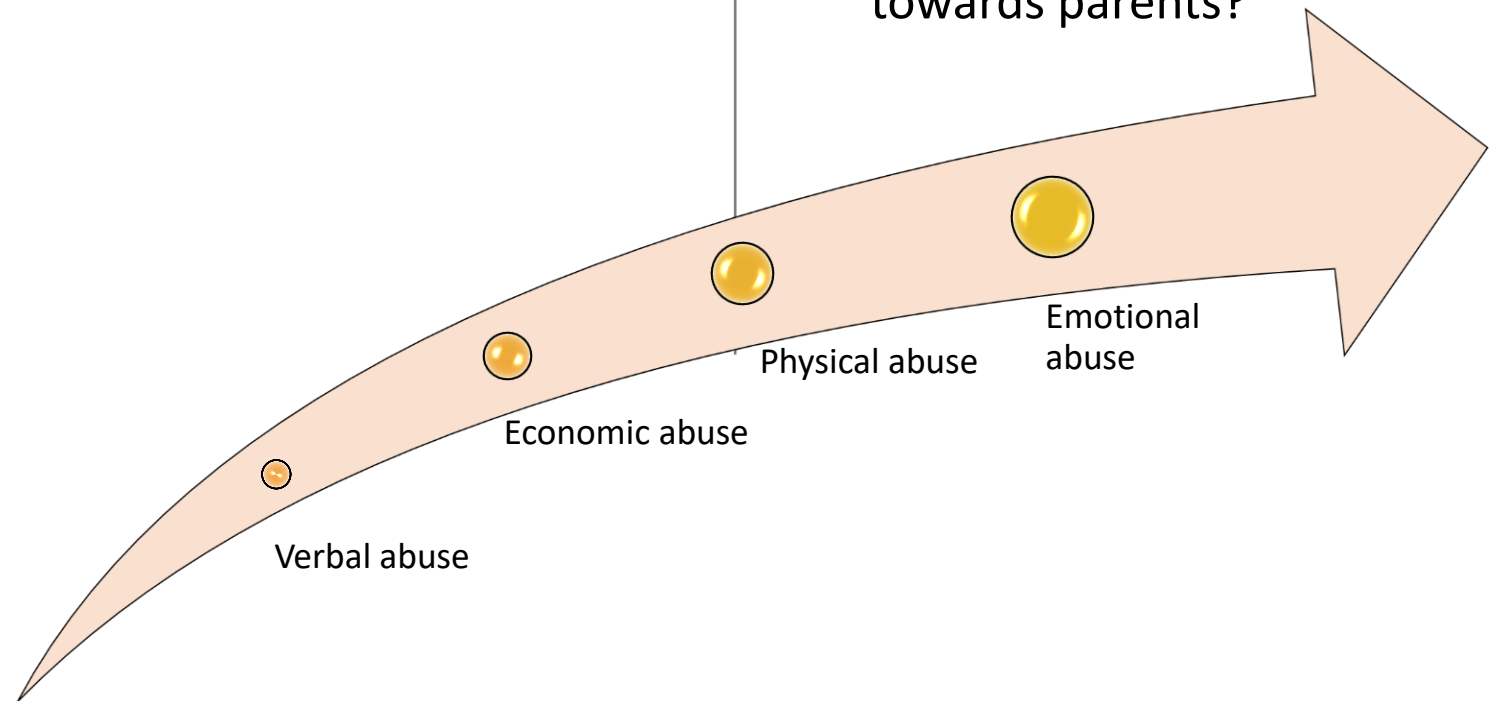
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Violence towards parents:

Overview

- 'a *pattern of behaviour* that uses verbal, financial, physical or emotional means to practise power and exert control over a parent' (Holt, 2013:1)

- Should it be considered as 'domestic abuse'?
- To what extent is child/adolescent violence distinct from adult-instigated violence towards parents?



Child/ Adolescent family violence:

Prevalence

Self-report surveys

UK school survey (n=819)
(McCloud, 2018):

- 4.3% - 'any physical aggression'
- 64.4% - 'psychological aggression'

International surveys:

- 4.6% (Spain)
- 20% (Chile)
- **Victims:** Mothers (80:20)
- **Instigators:** Gender symmetry

Criminal Justice Data

MPS data (Holt et al, unpub.)

- Year-on-year increases until 2018, then decreasing
- Most common outcome: 'evidential difficulties'
- Highly under-reported

International CJ data:

Victims: Mothers (70:30)

Instigators: Sons: Daughters (75:25)

Violence
towards
parents:

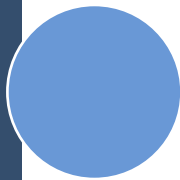
Pathways

Wider
harmful
contexts

Violence
towards
parents

History of
family/domestic
abuse

Mental health
problems/
substance
misuse



Violence
towards
parents:

Young
people's
experiences

Motivations

- Growing up in an environment where there was violence
- 'Being told what to do' a trigger point
- Wider context of loss
- Perception of unable to control their emotions
- (Papamichail and Bates, 2019)

Harms

- Physical
- Emotional
- Damage to self-worth & identity
- Financial
- Family relationships
 - Removal from family home
 - Time spent in care + legal repercussions (e.g. criminalisation) = further harms

Violence
towards
parents:

Parent/Carer
experiences

Harms

- Physical
- Emotional
- Relationships
- Social
- Financial
- Employment
- Housing

“I felt very low and very desperate. I felt like I’d gone through this massive upheaval to get their dad out, so that we could heal and mend and move forward, and that I was being consistently beaten down by the children.”

(Mother)

Violence towards parents:

Barriers to help-seeking

- “The big barriers are parents recognising it as abuse and violence. They don’t want to think of their child using abuse and violence. Equating those behaviours with something that is not the norm and not OK. Is this normal teenage behaviour, or is it something going beyond that? Recognising it’s a thing is the first barrier – that’s where raising awareness is really important.”
- (Lead practitioner – CAPVA specific service)

Personal barriers

- Shame, stigma, guilt
- Fear

Organisational barriers

- Appropriateness/ safety of setting
- Time available
- Quality of relationship

Intersectional barriers

Violence
towards
parents:

Adoptive
parents and
kinship carers

- “I was scared. I was intimidated. I think my heart was breaking for him. Because you can see the damage that’s there, but you can't put a plaster on it [...] you feel you're a failure, you feel absolutely failed, and it's a mixture of emotional turmoil. Even when he was abusive, the mothering, maternal instinct comes over the top, the need to protect them. They didn't ask to be born, their mum messed it up and Gran can't afford to.”
 - (Grandmother kinship carer)
- Children often have additional and complex needs
 - Parents/carers often don't know the child's history
 - ‘Fighting fires they didn't start’
 - Sense of being child's ‘last resort’
 - Professional assumptions that its ‘to be expected’

What have parent/carers found helpful?

Naming the abuse

- Validation of experiences produces relief

Being listened to (and listening to others)

- Articulation opens up alternatives and helps with coping

Developing strategies to establish boundaries

- Implementing 'consequences' reduces abuse over time

Developing strategies for self-care

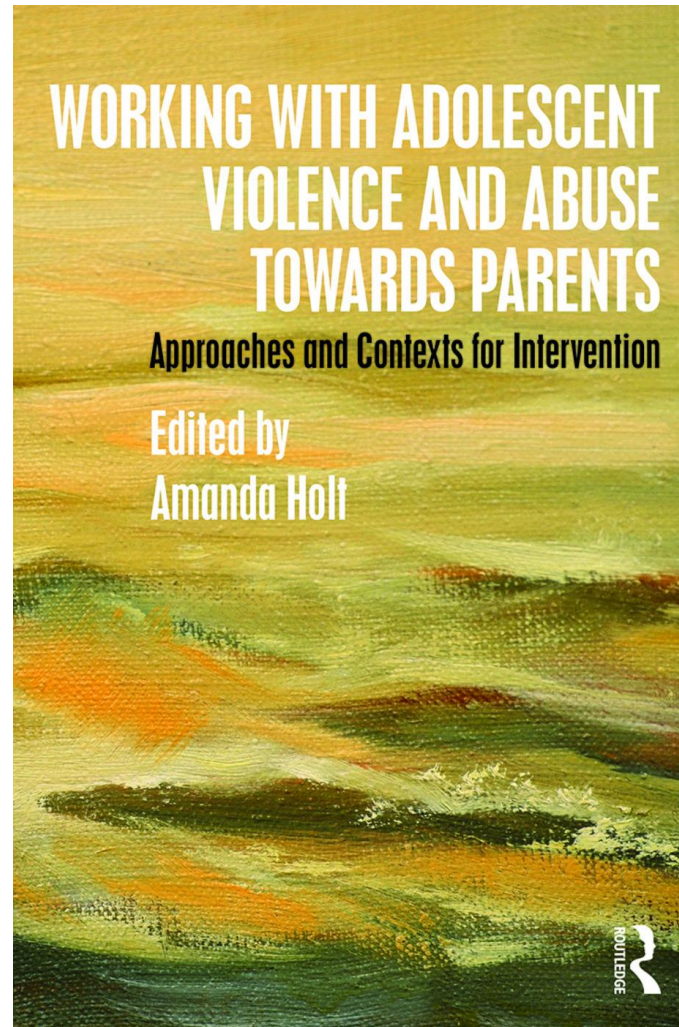
- Addressing physical and emotional needs makes parents feel stronger

Education about the dynamics of adolescent family violence

- Learning about the role of power and control useful for parents and young people



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