



VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN – STATISTICAL STUDY FOR THE PERIOD 2008-2010 BY MATERIALS OF DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC MEDICINE AND DEONTOLOGY, UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL “ALEXANDROVSKA” - SOFIA

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ABSTRACT

It is presented a statistical research based of 1332 cases of individuals at the age 1-17, examined at The Department of Forensic Medicine and Deontology, “Alexandrovska” University Hospital – Sofia. The examined children by request of their parents, guardians and teachers or by a decree of the trial were victims of various forms of violence. They are 19.58% of all individuals examined.

Key words: child abuse; physical, sexual and psychical violence

INTRODUCTION

Violence against children with its different forms (physical, sexual, psychological, etc.) committed by parents, relatives, other adults and children, has its origins since the beginning of human history, and leaves mark on every generation. Whether child abuse is done by parents at home, at school or on the street, the result is always the same - tearful and frightened children. The stress affects children's fragile psychic and when these actions are multiply committed sooner or later lead to severe and irreparable consequences for the child or teenager, the family and society in which they live.

Very often children who are continuously abused and/or live in this kind of environment in which child abuse is part of the daily life, also start acting abusively and/or develop severe psychical disturbances which determine their lives and status in society. There is a variety of different reasons in every single case. While the reasons of child abuse

within the family are well-known in the majority of cases (the economical situation of the family – lack of funds, differences in opinions), the problems with the child abuse cases at school and on the street are more complex and difficult to be classified. The aim of this study is to provide certain key indicators relevant in assessing aspects of the problem posed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There were deduced some general statistical parameters about 1332 cases of individuals at the age 1-17, examined at The Department of Forensic Medicine and Deontology, “Alexandrovska” University Hospital – Sofia for the period 2006-2007. The examined children by request of their parents, guardians and teachers or by a decree of the trial are 19.58% of all individuals examined.

RESULTS

General distribution by gender shows a relatively steady number of affected boys and girls – **Fig. 1**.

According to variations of the incidents there are the following major situational case studies: abuse of children in school, at home, in the street, which is also true for sexual offenses. In the affected children in school (26% of total surveyed), most often it

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was a beating by classmates (97%) and a relatively low percentage(3%) among

children are affected by violence exerted on them by teachers –Fig. 2, 3.

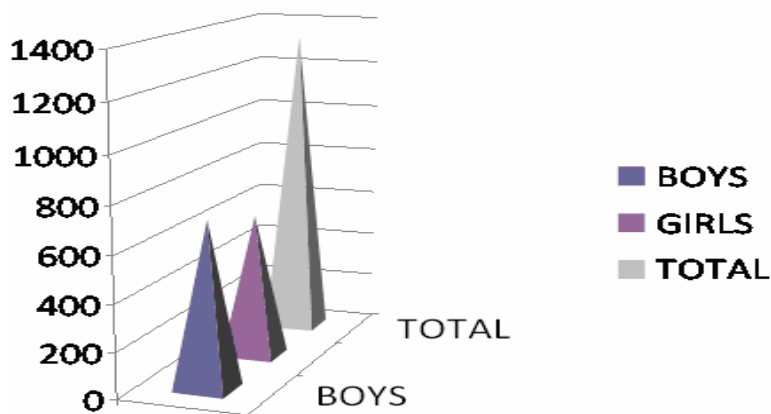


Fig. 1. General distribution by gender of affected boys and girls

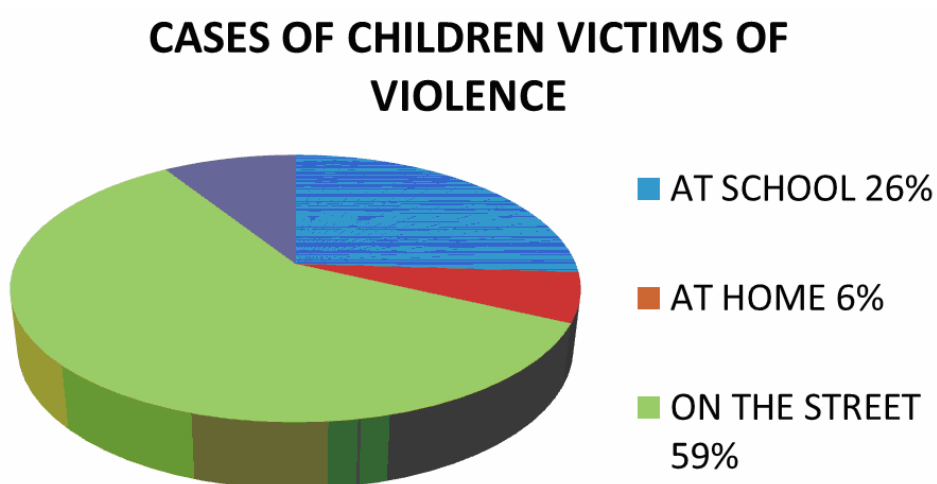


Fig. 2. Cases of children victims of violence

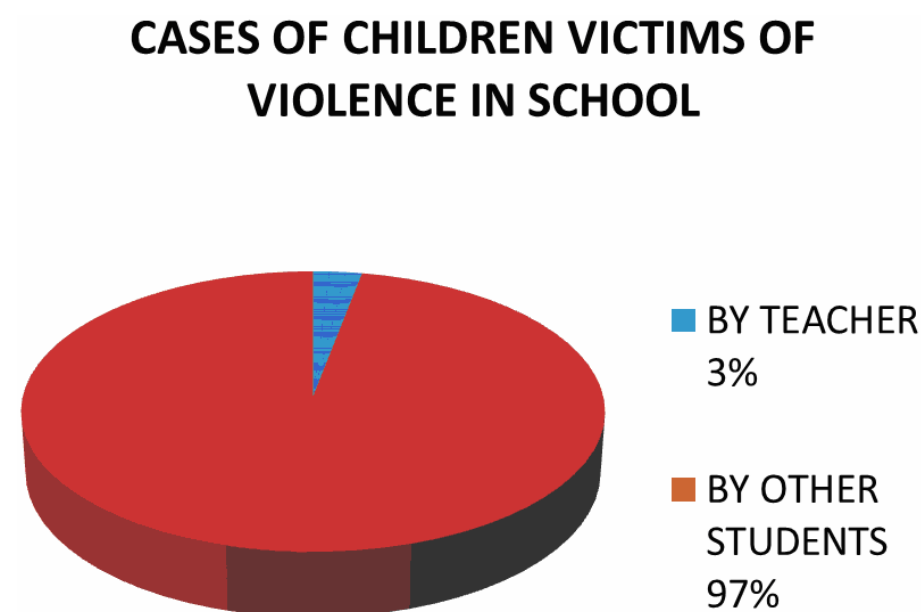


Fig. 3. Cases of children victims of violence in school

Compared to the total number of examined children, victims of violence at home are only 6%. This fact is explainable with the so called "hidden abuse" in the family, when the victims were not taken to be examined by a forensic pathologist. In the majority of cases the abusers were the fathers (65%) followed by mothers (25%), and more rarely some other relatives (10%) – brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, uncle – Fig. 2, 5.

The largest share of violence is committed on the street (59%), with a predominance

of cases of domestic incidents (56%), but there is also a significant number of abused children in cases of robbery (44%) most common concerning the withdrawal of valuable objects and money accompanied by beating. Violence in the street is most often committed by strangers in the cases of robbery. The cases of beating in domestic incidence are committed by familiar persons, including children at the same age as the victims – Fig. 2, 4.

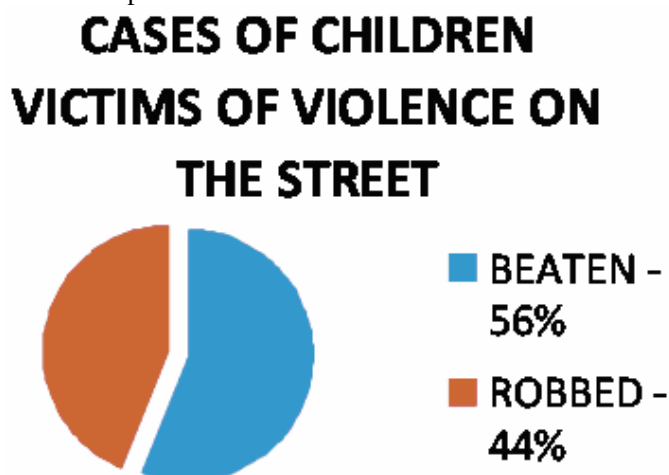


Fig. 4. Cases of children victims of violence on the street

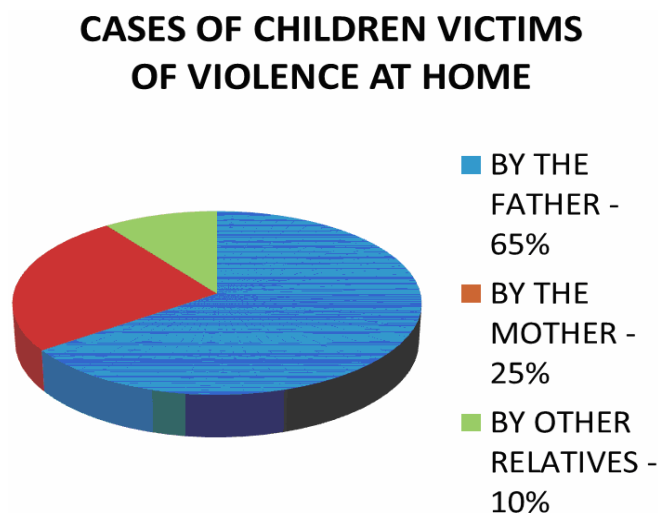


Fig. 5. Cases of children victims of violence at home

The incidence of sexual offenses with minors are 9% of surveyed children. 41% of the cases are concerned cases of rape, and 48% in examinations are performed on the occasion of lechery. The remaining cases – 11% are most often referred to prostituting juveniles – Fig. 2, 6, 7.

Analysis of the reported medical history, compared with the morphological characteristics of lesions suggests that most prevalent injuries are those inflicted with various blunt objects like punches, kicks, slaps. Isolated cases of damage are caused by acute or firearms (mostly gas guns) weapons, and tying extremities while immobilization.

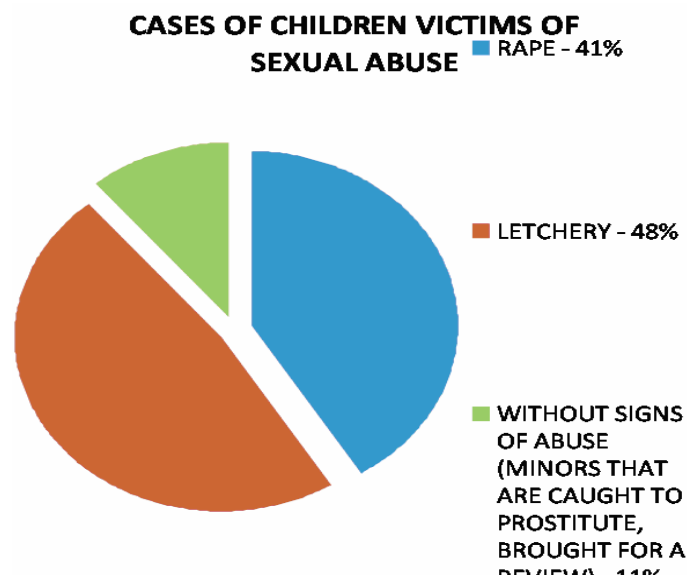


Fig. 6. Cases of children victims of sexual abuse

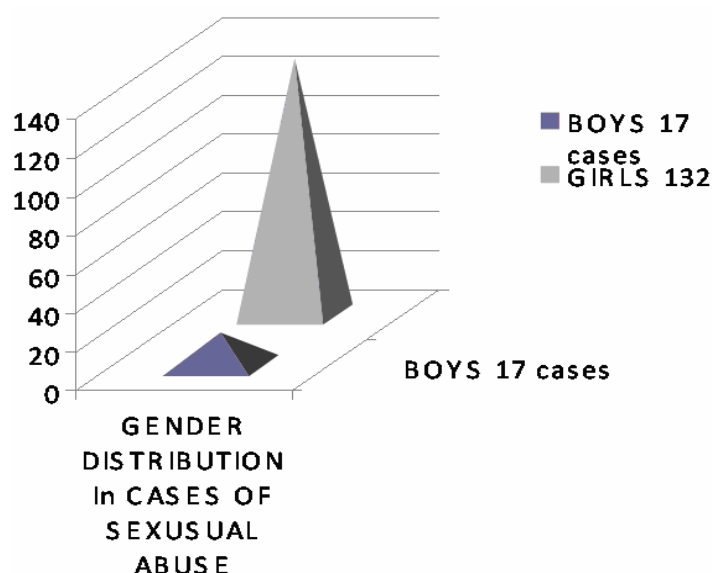


Fig. 7. Gender distribution in cases of sexual abuse

DISCUSSION

Generally it can be said that in recent years is more often openly spoken in the media and society not only about the violence of adults over children, but also about children abusing other children. As a result of this tendency abused children at home, at school or on the street more often are subject to the activities of various institutions concerned with the problem of "child abuse", and also to specialists in forensic medicine. The laws in Bulgaria, however, are still unefficient on the actual protection

of abused children, especially when violence is done by a parent. For the majority of the society it still remains a personal problem. On the other hand there is a steady trend of involvement in the discussion and the attitude of our society against acts of violence on the streets or in school yards. In this sense, the presented problem should be discussed at a national level. The activities of forensic experts will undoubtedly contribute to reasonable proposals in order to harmonize our laws with the texts of the European directives.