

Criminal Victimization of Physically Disabled Children in the Rural Areas of Eastern Cape Province

¹Dr. Ephraim Kevin Sibanyoni* & ²Prof Shanta B Singh

^{1,2}Full Affiliation University of KwaZulu Natal, Department of Criminology and Forensic Studies, South Africa

Corresponding Author: Author's Name, Ephraim Kevin Sibanyoni E-mail: SibanyoniE@ukzn.ac.za

ARTICLE INFO

Received: September 15, 2019

Accepted: October 17, 2019

Published: November 30, 2019

Volume: 1

Issue: 6

KEYWORDS

Violence, abuse, crime, children physical disability, victims, victimization,

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on crimes committed against physically disabled children in the rural areas of Eastern Cape. The research sample comprised of 100 physically disabled children from two special need schools (50 from each) based in the Eastern Cape. These respondents were chosen according to their knowledge of the research content and their experience in the context studied. The researcher used available/convenient sampling for selecting respondents. The questionnaires were used to collect data and the collected data was analysed by using SPSS Version 22, and thematically where narrative writing was utilised. Findings: the study finds that most physically disabled children under study experienced various forms of crime such as sexual assault, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and bullying, and they are victimized due to their disability. Most of the crimes committed against these children is not reported to the police rather to their teachers instead. Recommendation: future research to explore the attempt of infanticide of infants with disabilities due their disabilities conditions.

1.INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the crimes committed against physically disabled children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. The rationale to embark on a study of this nature is due to many physically disabled children become victims of crime and the amount of research available on this population is extremely limited, particularly for physically disabled children in developing world such as South Africa particularly in the rural areas such as Eastern Cape. Little attention has been paid to studying the crime committed against physically disabled children on a day-to-day basis, more so in rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Most studies available are conducted/focus on adults who are disabled and those that focus on disabled children are conducted in first world countries (Sibanyoni, 2018). Less attention has been paid to children who are disabled and reside in destitute, impoverished rural communities, where there is minimal care and attention afforded to these children. The researcher, by conducting this study seeks to contribute, or augment the gaps in knowledge about rural physically disabled children becoming victims of crime. The researcher aims to fill gaps in the literature by providing empirical insights of the personal experiences of children living with physical disability and crime committed against them. These experiences include all forms of crimes in their rural communities committed against them and investigate whether they reported to the authorities.

Historically, research into the causes, types and incidence of disability has been prioritised, while studies into personal experiences of children living with a disability have been largely neglected in South Africa, particularly in the rural areas. Thus, the researcher decided to embark on this study. The focus on crime as an ultimate damaging force to the livelihood of the physically disabled children in rural areas have been widely and largely neglected. A study conducted by Neille (2013) in South African rural areas of Mpumalanga, provided a narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of adults with disabilities living in rural areas of Mpumalanga. While the focus was on rural areas, her study did not highlight the children and does not interrogate the criminal victimization disabled children experience. She focused on the experiences of adults with disabilities living in rural areas, whereas the current study focuses on disabled children who reside in rural areas and their victimization. Another study conducted in South Africa on the issue of violence crime and disability was Biccard (2002) cited in Sibanyoni (2018). She focused on the needs and experiences of persons disabled through crimes of violence. Her study focused on older people who became disabled as a result of violence crime in Durban whereas the current study focuses on the experiences of physically disabled children on

violence committed against them. Even a study conducted in the deep rural areas of the Eastern Cape by Wogqoyi (2012) cited in Sibanyoni (2018) has gaps, she focused on the parents of disabled children, their knowledge and attitude towards the violence experienced by disabled children. With all the cited studies it is evident that this current study is necessary to be carried out to provide insights on the criminal victimization of rural physically disabled children in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: What crimes do physically disabled children experience in the Eastern Cape? and do those crimes reported to the police?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

for the purpose of this paper, the researcher utilised a theoretical framework to try to explain the personal victimization of physically disabled children in rural based context. A victimological model guided the explanation of the victimization.

2.1 OPPORTUNITY MODEL DEVELOPED BY COHEN, KLEUGEL AND LAND

Opportunity model developed by Cohen, Kleugel and Land (1981) cited in Peacock (2014) combines elements of both the lifestyle and routine activities approaches. According to these theorists, there are five factors that may increase a person's victimization risk, namely: exposure, proximity, guardianship, target attractiveness and properties of specific offences (Burke, 2005:47; Davis, 2005:42) cited in Boynes (2008).

2.1.1 Exposure

This element is the physical visibility and accessibility of persons and property to become victims. The risk of victimization increases if the motivated offender comes into regular contact with the potential victim (Cohen, Kleugel & Land, 1981, cited in Peacock, 2014). The physically disabled children are physically visible as vulnerable victims to be victimized due to their nature of their disability. In addition, they are easily accessible because they often stay with the victimizers and/or become in contact with them on a regular basis. (Fattah, 1991).

2.1.2 Proximity

This refers to the physical distance between potential victims and offenders. The closer the residential area of the potential victim to that of the motivated offender, the higher the risk of victimization (Peacock, 2014). There is often no physical distance between physically disabled children and their offenders. They usually stay with them at school hostels, home or in the community. The offenders are confined in the space of the disabled children. Offenders are community members, other disabled children from school, family members, extended family members and/or neighbors are in close proximity to the physically disabled children. As a result, the disabled children experience violence. (ACPF, 2014).

2.1.3 Guardianship

Guardianship refers to the presence of people or monitoring equipment (close-circuit television [CCTV] cameras) to prevent the occurrence of crime (Cohen, Kleugel & Land, 1981) cited in Peacock (2014). There is minimal guardianship to these physically disabled children. Their parents, caregivers from school hostels and guardians, are neglecting most of them and thus, they fall prey to ruthless offenders. Some of them they tend to suffer the violence at the hands of their guardians. The researcher is of the view that in many South African special need schools, more especially those in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, there are no cameras that are actually monitoring the violence being inflicted on these physically disabled children. Some of the schools in the Eastern Cape do not even have security guards.

2.1.4 Target attractiveness

This element includes two dimensions, namely the desirability of people and objects as well as the perceived ability of potential victims to offer resistance. This means that the greater the attractiveness of the target, the greater the risk of victimization. If the motivated offender identifies a victim as a desirable target, due to age or physical characteristics, he or she will approach this victim (Cohen, Kleugel and Land, 1981) cited in Peacock 2014). The physically disabled children are often viewed as attractive targets due to their physical condition and/or lack of guardianship. These children are not resistant to violence because they cannot defend themselves and the violence inflictors are of the view that these children will not be believed due to their conditions such as being unable to speak nor identify their abusers. The physically disabled children have a greater target attractiveness due to their physical appearance or make up hence, they have a greater victimization. Children with physical disabilities, they are often at

risk of being victimized; their physical conditions render them attractive and vulnerable to offenders. Often, offenders regard them as vulnerable because they form part of the ‘forgotten members of the society’ (Hessenlink-Louw et al, 2003).

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a mixed method on this study. Teddlie and Tashkkori (2006: 12) are of the view that mixed methods can be used as the process of integrating the qualitative and quantitative approaches and procedures in a study to answer the research questions. The flexibility of using mixed method allowed the researcher to achieve the research objectives effectively and answered the research questions.

3.1 Sampling

The research sample comprised of 100 physically disabled children from two special need schools (50 from each) based in the Eastern Cape. The respondents had to satisfy the following conditions: reside in special need school hostel, be below the age of 20 years and above the age of 13 years, be physically disabled, and from any racial and socio-economic group. These respondents were chosen according to their knowledge of the research content and their experience in the context studied. For this study, the researcher made use of accidentally sampling for selecting the respondents. Accidentally means that any respondent who is willing to meet with the researcher and has any knowledge of the research topic will be included in the sample until saturation is reached (Booyens, 2008). Thus research participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to take part in the research (Strydom & Venter, 2002:207).

3.2 Data collection

A questionnaire was used as an instrument of collecting data. It enabled the researcher to overcome pitfalls such as disclosure of sensitive personal information and experiences regarding violence committed against them. The researcher held the questionnaire and asked the respondents questions and wrote down the respondents’ responses, ticking an appropriate answer selected by the respondents. The rationale for this, was that most of the physically disabled children had difficulties such as writing or reading due to their impairments hence, the researcher opted to hold the questionnaire and ask them the questions from the questionnaire. The researcher did not alter any answers from the respondent responses; he recorded the answers exactly as the respondents’ were answering. Since the study involved the vulnerable children (respondents) the researcher explained to them the purpose of the study, how the study would affect them, the risks and benefits of their participation in this study, and the fact that they had the right to decline to participate if they choose to do so, the researcher ensured the respondents a right to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and the right not to be harmed in any manner (physically, psychologically or emotionally). The researcher had further explained what was required of them in terms of their participation.

3.3 Data analysis

The data in this study was analysed by using SPSS Version 22 system, and by thematically analysis. SPSS Version 22 helped the researcher to generate trends, descriptive statistics and tabulated reports, charts, and plots of distribution.

After the fieldwork had been completed and before the researcher conducted the analysis and interpretation, there was need to prepare the data for the following steps:

Step 1: The questionnaires were organised by first checking whether the respondents correctly completed each. In total, 100 questionnaires were used in the study. Secondly, each questionnaire was given a unique number in the space provided under the ‘Questionnaire number’ on the ‘For official use’ side of the questionnaire. Thirdly, the coding was done by transferring the number or numerical value of the response to each question in the block provided on the questionnaire for data entry (for capturing of the data).

Step 2: Data capturing. The researcher captured the data into the SPSS Version 22

Step 3: Cleaning the data. Mistakes in data coding and entry (capturing) are common so the researcher needed to check these carefully. The researcher had to examine those questionnaires where there was missing data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher will also use interchanging terms of perpetrator, offender, abuser, victimizer in this paper, the research will provide few verbalisms to express the views of the respondents.

4.1 SECTION A: FORMS OF CRIMES PHYSICALLY DISABLED CHILDREN EXPERIENCE IN THE RURAL AREAS OF EASTERN CAPE

The respondents were asked about forms of crimes they had ever experienced in their lives. They provided various responses according to what they have experienced.

The following discussion pertains to the types of crime experienced by physically disabled children:

4.1.1 Sexual assault

Physically disabled children reported to have experienced sexual assault as well. Sexual assault according to Section 5 of the Criminal Law (sexual offenses and related matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 define sexual assault as following:

- (1) A person ('A') who unlawfully and intentionally sexually violates a complainant ('B'), without the consent of B, is guilty of the offence of sexual assault.
- (2) A person ('A') who unlawfully and intentionally inspires the belief in a complainant ('B') that B will be sexually violated, is guilty of the offence of sexual assault.

Further to this definition, sexual offences are defined in the Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act (2006) (Victoria). Victoria Legal Aid (2010: 6) describes "sexual assault" as any unwanted sexual behaviour that causes humiliation, pain, fear or intimidation. It includes incest, child abuse, and unwanted kissing and touching. It includes behaviour that does not involve actual touching. For example, forcing someone to watch pornography or masturbation is also sexual assault. Physically disabled children who experienced sexual assault reported that they were compelled to touch or play with the offender's penis. Some reported that, the offender would insert fingers inside their private parts but never penetrate them.

They revealed that some of their victimizers do not penetrate them but want to be masturbated. They would compel them to play with their manhood or put their figure inside the child's private part whilst masturbating. The respondents reported to have known this offender/perpetrator and they do this frequently. Some respondents reported that fellow learners in the school and hostel toilets have touched them on their private part at school. Three male respondent alluded that their friend's mothers compelled them to touch and/or play with their private parts. The study found that both female and male physically disabled children are the victims of this crime (sexual assault). This behaviour according to Section 5 of the Criminal Law (sexual offenses and related matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 inspires the belief in a complainant ('B') that B (physically disabled child) will be sexually violated. Most of the respondents answered in a similar way when asked about what sort of crime they had ever experienced and the researcher chosen few verbatim to express the feelings of the respondents on this question.

The following are some verbatim of the respondents' responses of the incidents:

'One day I was left alone with my uncle, it was the two of us, and then he came to my room, pushed my wheel chair to his room. He asked me to play his penis when I refused he promised to beat me. I did it after some time he wanted to penetrate me but he couldn't because his penis wouldn't enter my private part'.

'My brother's friend forced me to play with his penis. He came looking for my brother the other day and found me alone at home then he took off his trouser and asked me to touch his penis and play with it. I refused and he got angry and took my hand to his penis. I did not know what to do with his penis but I did what he asked. After sometime, he wore his trouser and left. He did not threaten me or anything. He did this once'.

'My uncle back at home said I should play with his manhood. He forced me to do it. We had a traditional ceremony at home at night of that day, he was drunk. He called me next to the kraal then took off his pants and forced me to play with his penis. After he said I should not tell anyone if I did, he will poison me and my mother'.

The study finds that many of the physically disabled children experience sexual assault. They were compelled to touch or play with the offender's penis. Some reported that the offender would insert fingers inside their private parts but never penetrated. They revealed that some of their victimizer do not penetrate them but want to be masturbated. They would compel them to play with their manhood or put their figure inside the child's private part whilst masturbating. The respondents reported to have known these offenders/perpetrators and they do this frequently. The study further finds that fellow learners in the school and hostel toilets have touched some of the respondents on their private part at school.

4.1.2 Grant/Financial abuse

Most of the physically disabled children are legible for the social grant to assist with the necessities they may solicit to make life easy for them on a daily basis. They get government subsidy, similar to pension, at the end of each month. This grant is meant to assist and sustain them as a source of income since they may never receive an income by means of labour due to their physical disability. However most of the physically disabled children reported that they do not see their money and do not know where their grant goes. They say that they are not taken care of; their guardians, parents etc. make use of the money without even buying the necessities for them (physically disabled children). Most participants reported that some of their parents buy alcohol with it, others support their other abled children, some pay school fees for the abled children to go to private school/better school, some buy clothing and other materials for the abled children and abandoned them (physically disabled child). Most of the participants (physically disabled children) revealed that their fees are not paid most of the time, neither are their cosmetics, food, clothing, but they earn the social grant. In most cases when they ask, they are often subjected to physical attacks or more neglect or they endure insults such name calling which is often about their disability.

In special need school hostels, they suffer. They reported that they have nothing of whatsoever but they do get the grant in every month. Their parents use special need schools as dumping grounds and never look back. This puts more pressure on the school management to try to help these children. They are dumped in school hostels without food, stationary, clothing, toiletries/sanitary ware. On top of that, their fees are often in arrears. Most of the respondents answered in a similar way and the researcher has chosen few verbatim to express the feelings of the respondents on this question.

'All of my life, I never tasted my social grant money. They spend it on themselves, I am not taken care of with it and when I ask, they shout at me, they insult me (verbal/emotional abuse). I have no clothes, cosmetics. They do not even bath me. I go for days without a bath. They will only bath me on the pay date. After that, I will taste water again on the next month. I was so glad to be taken to special need hostel'.

'At home they took my disability money and send my able siblings to good schools using my grants while I was sent to not so good school. I do not even see a cent of my money. They do not buy me anything; they only buy for my siblings'.

'Ever since I registered to receive social grant, I have never seen it. At home, they decided to take me to boarding school without sending me any money. They eat my money at home, they don't buy me anything for me when I ask they beat me and say I fly too much'.

It is evident that financial abuse is one of the paramount type of abuse even though it is not regarded as a crime, but when looking it within the robbery lenses an understanding can be instigated. These children are robbed of their financial capabilities that supposed to make their lives easy as they cannot secure an employment due to the nature of physical disabilities. The social grant that is secure to take care the needs of these children is channelled elsewhere, and the needs of these children are not met. This leads to neglect and instigate the emotional traumatic repercussion of the victim.

4.1.3 Bullied/Bullism

Physically disabled children are not immune to bullism at school. They are susceptible to bullism just like abled children at school. They suffer at the hands of other children who tend to bully them and their bullism involves violence as well. Most of the participants have experienced bullism at school. They reported that other children, taking their money, lunch boxes and stationary, have physically bullied them. Their bullism involves a group of learners bullying one learner. The respondents reported that, their bullies go without being punish as no one helps them even though they report it. One respondent reported that he was bullied as a form of an initiation at the hostel. He revealed that this is common and serves as a rite of passage for the new learner at hostel. Some respondents reported that, bullism takes place everywhere in school, in the hostel, toilets, school ground and/or in the schoolyard. Some respondents with caring families, revealed that they become more targets when they are visited by parents who happen to buys them food (such as KFC, fish and chips etc.) and when they leave they give them money but they never see those groceries and money because the bullies collect them. Most of the respondents answered in a similar way and the researcher a select group verbatim to express the feelings of the respondents on this question. Children with disabilities are the frequent targets of physical and/or psychological teasing, name-calling, hitting, pushing, social exclusion, threats, extortion, and theft in schools (Dawkins & Hill 1995) cited in Sullivan (2009:207). Children enrolled in special

education programs associated with visible disabilities (i.e., cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness, etc.) are twice as likely to be bullied than children with disabilities not associated with visible physical conditions (i.e., learning disabilities and behaviour disorders) and some one-third of these children are regularly bullied at school with boys being bullied more often than girls (Dawkins 1996) cited in Sullivan (2009:207). These data are consistent with other research that has found children with special education needs twice as likely to be bullied as those in regular class placements (Olweus 1991, 1993; Whitney et al. 1992, cited in Sullivan, 2009:207).

'In hostel I was bullied by other three learners as a form of initiation in the hostel. It is happening even on school grounds. They beat me up, and took my money that I was given by my mother when she came to see me. They did this for couple of months until I was declared an old student. Targeted were those who come in for the first time just like me'.

'I was bullied by three learners in the toilets, they beat me, I fell down and they continued kicking me till I was bleeding but they didn't stop'.

'I was bullied at school by four boys for no reason; they took my money and lunch box. Every time my parents visit me and leave money for me, I will be targeted the next day by the bullies'.

'Two boys attacked me at the sport ground, they wanted to take my soccer ball, I refused, and then they attacked me'.

Hoover and Salk, (2003) cited in Hoover and Stenhjen (2003) found similar results as the current study, they point out that bullying, harassment, and teasing within schools are not only practiced by many students, but have historically been allowed, ignored, and even modelled by adults. Bullying and teasing have been accepted by many as rites of passage for youth—a normal part of the childhood and adolescent experience. In fact, some researchers have recently wondered whether bullying may serve some purpose for society, resulting in ambivalence toward anti-violence programs (Hoover & Salk, 2003 cited in Hoover & Stenhjen 2003). However, the fact that youth who have been bullied, teased, and ostracized continue to use violence as a means of fighting back indicates otherwise. Cawson, Wattan, Broker and Kelly (2000:6) confirmed these findings. In their study, they found that only 14-15% of respondents had been physically bullied, but large minorities had experienced threats of violence, having their belongings damaged or money or property taken from them.

4.1.4 Emotional abuse/harassment

According to the Harassment Act 17 of 2011, harassing contact may be verbal or electronic, and may involve sending unwanted communication or objects to a person. The Act define harm widely to include mental, psychological, physical or economic harm.

Physically disabled children are confronted with many challenges amongst others is the emotional abuse/harassment such as “name calling” “teasing”. The respondents reported that they have been given unpleasant names due to their disability. Some reveal that everywhere they go, due to the nature of their disability, people stare at them in an unpleasant manner. They postulate that name-calling is not a strange thing even to each other i.e. another disabled child calling another disabled child with an unpleasant name due to their physical condition. The respondents reported that they become victims of ridicule, name-calling, and teasing at home, school, in public, as well as in their communities. Some respondents revealed that they have been harassed more especially in public transport due to their disability. They revealed that when people are in a hurry they lose patience since the driver needs to pull to the side of the road and put a wheelchair in the boot. This form of abuse reduces these children to feel lesser than human and strips them off their self-confidence. It promotes a feeling of being less worthy and they question their own sense of existence. Most of the respondents answered in a similar way and the researcher a select group verbatim to express the feelings of the respondents on this question.

'I was in town, then people were staring at me and I heard them talking about me in a very uncomfortable way due to my physical appearance. They called me names. I didn't ask to be a midget; I did ask to be like this'.

'In my town some young guys call me a bad name and tell me I'm ugly because of my disability'.

'Most of the learners liked to make fun of me. It happened at my old school'.

'I was harassed by the passengers in a taxi. They refused the driver to pick me, they said there was no space for the wheelchair and I will delay them'.

Sobsey (1994:34) postulates that parents, teachers, health care providers, and a variety of other people who exercise authority can commit even psychological abuse. Although psychological abuse does not constitute a criminal offense, it is nevertheless an important issue (Sobsey, 1994:34). This form of abuse reduces the physically disabled children to be lesser than human and strip them off their self-confidence. It promotes a feeling of less worth and one questions one's own sense of existence. This finding was also found by Cawson et al, (2000: 13) who found that emotional maltreatment is particularly likely to lower the child's self-esteem as victims are especially vulnerable to being made to feel that they deserved or were in some way responsible for the maltreatment they received (Cawson et al, 2000: 13).

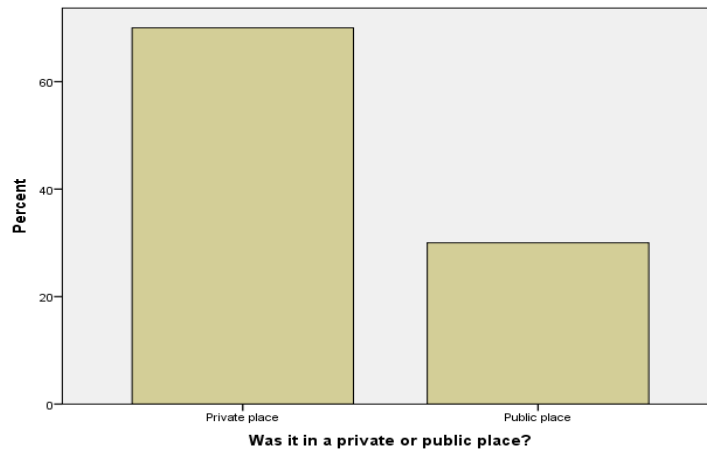


Figure 1: Place where crime/abuse was committed

Figure 2 above reveals the place where the incidence of crime committed to respondents. The majority of 70% of crime committed against respondents occurred in private places (such as home, church, toilets, showers, neighbour's house etc.) and only 30% of crime committed against the respondents occurred in public space (such as town, public transport, sport field, school yard etc.). This provides an indicative place where the crime is likely to be committed against physically disabled children. The interventions, should be deployed to these hotspots and considerable amount of resources should be available to tackle the issues of crime in this places. It is evident that most of the crimes are committed in the private space, where there is a privacy and concealment of the crime with highest possibility of non-disclosure. Private spaces such as home, toilets in school inter alia are the breeding grounds producing the crime and exploitation of these children's sense of vulnerability when confined in these spaces.

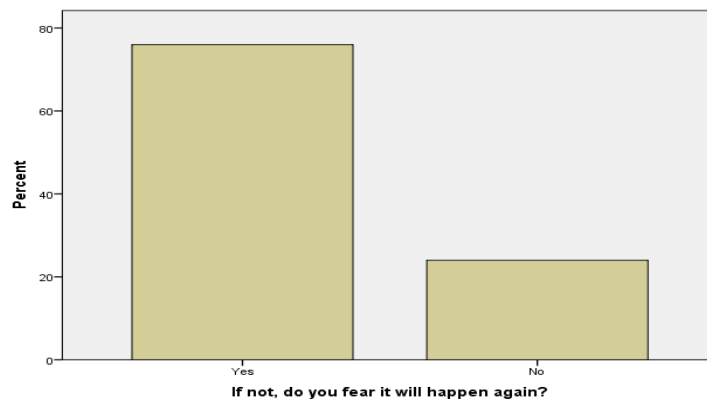


Figure 2: Fear of re-victimization

Figure 4 above illustrates the respondents' fear of re-victimization. The majority of 57% of the respondents fear that the crime might happen again to them (fear for being re-victimized), whilst 18% of the respondents demonstrated no fear at all for re-victimization. It is evident that most children that are victimized fear being re-victimized.

Children live in constant fear for re-victimization, they lost trust to people that they supposed to take care of them, and because of these people are the re-victimisers, these children are hopeless and destitute for redemption. Revictimization takes place in every sphere life of the physically disabled child. Revictimization happens in forms of insults, insensitivity and asking sensitive questions relating to the event of crime committed against them.

4.2 SECTION B: REPORTING OF CRIME BY THE RESPONDENTS' (PHYSICALLY DISABLED CHILDREN)

There are significant difficulties in conducting research in relation to violence against people with disabilities, due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the vulnerability of the subjects. Like all people who have experienced violence and abuse, people with disabilities may feel shame in reporting, and may fear that if abuse is made known to outside parties there will be violent repercussions and other consequences, such as family breakdown. There may also be other obstacles to reporting experienced by people with disabilities, such as a fear that support services will cease, and reliance on abusers for transport or communication assistance that impedes access to support services and police (Carlson 1997; Sobsey & Doe 1991; Martin et al. 2006, 824). In addition, non-disclosure may be attributable to a lack of awareness or education about what constitutes abuse or violence, one outcome of which may be an absence of appropriate language to describe what has occurred (Jennings 2003: 13; Carlson 1997). The present study arrived at the same results as reported by the authors above. The researcher sought to understand the reasons for physically disabled children tend not to report their victimization in rural communities of the Eastern Cape.

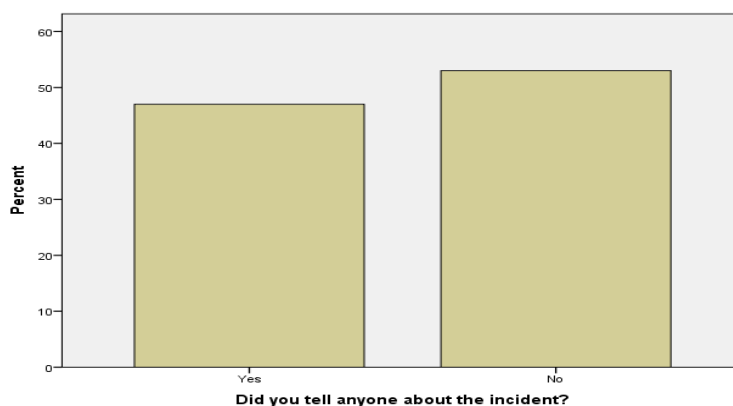


Figure 3: Disclosure of the crime

Figure 5 above illustrates the disclosure of the crime by the respondents. The majority (53%) of the respondents did not report/disclose to anyone the crime committed against them; only 47% of the respondents were able to disclose and/or report the crime incident to somebody. To some of the respondents, this is the first disclosing encounter, meaning they only divulged the crime committed to them to the researcher.

The respondents were asked to express their feelings and share reasons for reporting or not reporting their victimization to anyone.

The researcher wishes to understand what prompt physically disabled children not to report their incidence of abuse/crime in rural areas. The respondents gave various reasons for not reporting. Some respondents reported that they saw no need to report the crime because nothing will happen even if they reported. They strongly believed no one would help them. Some were of the view that they are afraid of not being believed. They allude that, they (the one who the crime is reported to) will believe the perpetrator more than them. Other respondents reported that the perpetrator threatened them not to report the incident. They alluded that the perpetrator threatened to kill them or do something bad if they were to report the incident to anyone. Other respondents reported that, they did not report the incident due to fear (fear of being neglected more, fear of being physically and sexually abused more, fear of being reprimanded that she/he asked for it (respondent), fear of causing conflict within the family). Those who fear causing conflict within the family maintain that they want to keep good relations within the family. Other respondents reported that they have forgiven the perpetrator so they do not see a need to report the crime.

‘What is the point of reporting, because no one will do anything about it? I don’t see a need because this is done by people who supposed to protect me, who supposed to take care of me, so no one will care of doing anything about it’.

‘What is the point of telling on them, even if I did, who will look after me?’

‘Nothing will be done even if I report it. She is known of abusing us at hostel, she was reported several times but they do nothing about the situation, so I don’t see a need to report my situation’.

‘There is no need, no one will help me, no one will believe me. No one can’t do anything about it’.

‘He threatened to kill me and my family if I tell on him and he said he will deny everything’.

Various authors attest to this finding in their studies. Mudaly and Goddard (2006) report various thoughts and concerns children faced when disclosing abuse, all of which have the potential to contribute to their delaying disclosure. Children reported feelings of hesitancy and ambivalence concerning disclosure to their parents. There was also the experience of receiving less support with detail of the abuse, of feeling embarrassed, and of people not believing the child’s story (Mudaly a&nd Goddard, 2006). Ullman (2007) share the sentiment with Mudaly and Goddard (2006), and in her study she found, amongst a sample of college students, that disbelief of their stories was more likely in cases where the perpetrators were relatives compared to when they were acquaintances or strangers, particularly when their disclosure occurred during childhood (Ullman, 2007).

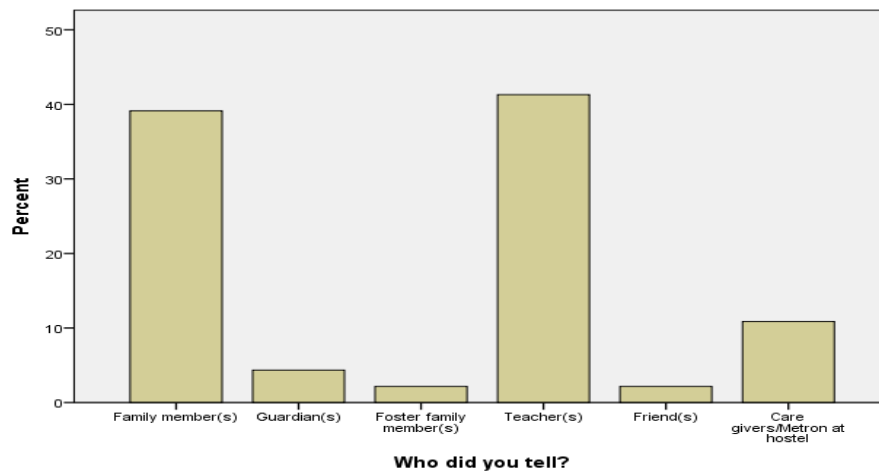


Figure 4: A person the respondent disclosed the crime too.

Figure 6 above portrays different people whom the respondents had disclosed the crime too. The majority (19%) of the respondents had disclosed the incident to the teacher, followed by 18% to the family member(s), then 5% to the caregiver(s)/hostel matron, 2% had disclosed to guardian(s) whilst 1% to the foster family and another 1% had told a friend.

The respondents were asked to clarify and express the motive of disclosure to certain individuals. The respondents who experienced different forms of abuse/crime provided various reasons for divulging their abuse to the people they had chosen to tell. Most respondents reported that they needed help and/or intervention for their abuse hence they opted to report it. They alluded to the fact that they were severely injured, bleeding, and wounded so they needed prompt medical care. Some reported that they (bruises) were obviously visible to anyone, so people would ask, and then they would divulge.

They alluded that they did not have a choice because of the physical evidence so they had to report. For example, there will be a bruise on the face as a result of physical abuse or emotional assertiveness as a result of emotional abuse, then someone will perceive then ask. Some reported the incident simply because they wanted protection. They wanted the abuse to stop; they could not take it anymore. They wanted to be removed from the source of abuse. Some reported that they wanted the perpetrators to be punished; they wanted redemption. Some respondents reported the incident due to trust. They alluded that they trusted the person will do something about their ordeal.

'I chose to tell someone because I wanted help and I wanted not to happen again'.

'I wanted my family to change me from the school where I was abused'.

'Because I was badly burnt in my both legs and I needed an urgent help'.

'I told my teachers, I wanted them to help, I wanted the abuse to stop'.

'I told my teachers at school because I wanted them to intervene, since I was neglected, I was stinking, not well looked after, so I wanted my teacher's intervention'.

'I told my teachers at school because I wanted to protect me from the abuse, I needed their help'.

"I told my teacher, then later my parents, I wanted those boys who bully me to be punished".

The respondents were about the action of those people whom they divulge their abuse to. Most respondents reported that even though they have reported their abuse and/or someone saw the evidence of abuse, they did nothing. They did not do anything at all about the abuse or abusive situation. They never went to the police or act to curb the abuse. Regarding those incidents of abuse happening at school, respondents reported that school management and teacher tried to solve the incident themselves. They reprimanded the people who were responsible for inflicting the abuse, such in case of bullying, teasing or name-calling, and abuse by the caregivers. They reported that the principal and teachers called the parents of the bullies and the issue was addressed. The respondents also revealed that as for those incidents happening at home, teachers would intervene by calling the parent and trying to address the issue in such cases of physical and/or emotional abuse and neglect.

The following is the verbatim of some of the respondents who reported the incident but no one did anything about it:

'I told my foster mother because she saw blood from my clothes but she did not about it, she kept quiet about it'.

'I told my family but they did nothing about it, they saw me'.

'Told matron at hostel because I wanted those boys to stop beating me, but matron did nothing about it'.

Most respondents reported that nothing was done about their abuse and that made them feel unloved, unwanted and sometimes wished they were not born or died during pregnancy. They feel that their physical condition contributes for them not to be loved and appreciated.

The following is the verbatim of some of the respondents who reported the incident and something happened:

'I told my friends and teacher because they saw me how unhealthy and unhygienic I was, my teachers called my parents to solve the issue but nothing has changed, I am still neglected'.

'I told my teacher and matron at school because I wanted help due to financial issues; my family eat my social grant. My teacher called my parents to ask them because I needed cosmetics and other essential stuff'.

'I told teachers at school because the abuse was continuing; they called my parents and tried to solve the issue'.

'I told my parents and the whole family, because I wanted to be removed from home, they called the family meeting and reprimanded my uncle for raping me then they sent me to boarding school hostel'.

'I told teachers at school, they called the boys' parents who use to bully me'.

According to Sauzier (1989) cited in Bottoms, Kovera and McAuliff (2002) children often experience fearful fantasies of what would happen if they disclosed their abuse. It has been found that children who did not disclose their abuse themselves experienced the lowest levels of hostility and anxieties, pointing to the experience of much anxiety within children who do choose to self-disclose (Sauzier, 1989, cited in Bottoms et al, 2002). There is also a fear of the emotional impact which disclosure may have on the child, difficulty in understanding the reasons for the abuse, and anger and fear towards the abuser (Mudaly & Goddard, 2006).

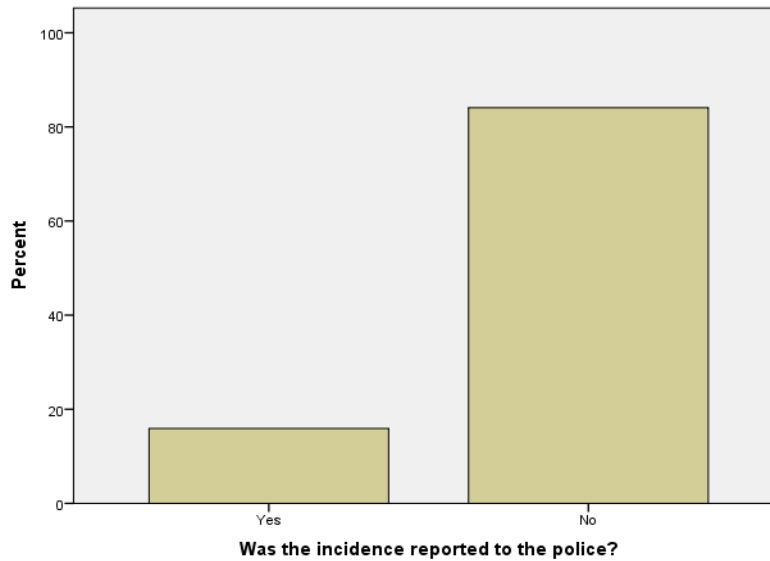


Figure 5: Reporting of crime to the police

Figure 7 above illustrates that the majority of 37% of the crime was not reported to the police while only 7% of the crime committed against disabled children was reported. This was because most people, whom the crime was disclosed to, tried to resolve the crime without involving the police and deliberately chose not to report it to the police.

The researcher is of the opinion that most cases of abuse, even though reported at home or at school, were never reported to the police hence the physically disabled children would not see justice carried out. People try to solve the issue rather than to report it to the police. This could be due to the sense of Ubuntu prevalent in rural areas. In most cases in rural areas, crimes are not reported to the police because people want to keep relations intact. Another issue is the traditional leaders. The matter needs to be reported to the traditional leader in rural areas then to the police, no matter how serious the matter is. The traditional leaders will then punish the perpetrator, the punishment ranges from fine of a cow or physical beating. In some rural areas, it is against the norms and values when one undermines the authority of the chief and reports the matter to the police. That person might be called by the chief and be in trouble. Hence, many cases never see the light of justice system.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper focused on criminal victimization of physically disabled children in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The study aimed to provide an insight into lives and experiences of physically disabled children as victims of crime in rural communities. The opportunity theory was used to delineate the victimization of disabled children and the theories factors were applied to the phenomenon under study so that an understanding of disabled children victimization is realised and intensive measure to curb this menace is needed. The study find that physically disabled children experience various forms of crime in their rural communities, homes and in special need schools. They experience, sexual assault, physical abuse, bullied, emotional abuse, and these forms of crimes are seldom reported to the police, and therefore perpetrators are never apprehended to face to full force of might law. The study finds that, these victims prefers to report their victimization to teachers in a case of the (school, parents, friends etc.) being a perpetrator. The study finds that majority 53% of the respondents did not report/disclose to anyone the crime committed against them. They have given various reasons for not reporting their victimization ranging from keeping the peace, fear of not being believed, believing that nothing will be done etc. The present study also finds that other reason for under-reporting is the threats received from the perpetrator. The perpetrator threatened them not to report the incident. They alluded that the perpetrator threatened to do something bad if they were to report the incident to anyone. Authors such as Mudaly and Goddard (2006) who report threats made by perpetrators in which the child felt compelled to keep the abuse secret for fear of what may happen if they told are also documenting this. Such threats may take various forms such as predicting negative outcomes for the child or the child's family (Paine & Hansen, 2002). Mudaly and Goddard (2006) further state that there can also be the fear of what disclosure may mean for the

perpetrator, and sadness concerning a broken relationship where the perpetrator is a significant person in the child's life (Mudaly & Goddard, 2006). Further research is needed to unearth bullism occurring in special needs school, where physically disabled children bully each other. The findings of the study indicated the prevalence of bullism between physically disabled children however; more insight of the phenomenon is needed. Other researchers might explore the attempt of infanticide of infants with disabilities due to their disabilities. The present study found the existing relationship between abuses of the physically disabled due to their disabilities, however there is limited knowledge on infanticide of physically disabled children as a result of their disability. Researchers can expand on this phenomenon by using a bigger sample size.

In rural areas where the study was conducted, awareness campaigns against physically disabled children violence needs to be hosted. To educate the general community about the stigma and the damaging psychological harm happening to the physically disabled children as a result of the harassment occurring in the community. Physically disabled children need to be empowered to stand up for themselves in schools as well as in their communities. Their silent voices should be heard and form part of the intervention programme against the violence they experience. Awareness campaigns should foster to teach them about the importance of reporting the abuse.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ephraim Kevin Sibanyoni, PhD, he is a lecturer, researcher and a head of the department in the field of criminology and forensic studies from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. His research interests include human trafficking/Albino killings for the purpose of body parts to create traditional medicine (*muthi murder*); gender based violence, male on male sexual violence in correctional services, victim profiling and offender profiling, and disabled children as victims of crime.

Shanta Balgobind Singh, PhD, she is professor and a head of the department in the field of criminology and forensic studies from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Howard Campus, South Africa. Her research interests include criminal profiling, crime prevention and community policing, and corrections.

REFERENCES

- [1] ACPF (2014). *Children with Disabilities in Africa: A glimpse into a hidden world*. Addis Ababa.
- [2] American Psychological Association. 2011. *Child sexual abuse: What parents should know*. Washington, D.C: 1-5.
- [3] Biccard, P. 2002. An exploratory study of the needs and experiences of persons disabled through crimes of violence. *MA dissertation*: University of Natal, Durban.
- [4] Booyens, K. 2008. *The Sexual Assault and Rape of Male Offenders and awaiting-Trail Detainees: PhD Thesis*, University of Pretoria.
- [5] Bottoms, B.L., Kovera, M.B., and McAuliff, B. 2002. (Eds). *Children, social science and the law*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Carlson, E.B. 1997. *Trauma assessment: A clinician's guide*. New York: Guilford Press.
- [7] Cawson, P., Wattam, C., and Kelly, G. 2000. *Child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A study of prevalence of abuse and neglect. NSPCC Research Findings*. www.nspcc.uk/inform
- [8] Hesselink-Louw, A., Booyens, K. and Neethling, A. 2003. Disabled children as invisible and forgotten victims of crime: *Acta criminologica* 16(2) 2003.
- [9] Martin G, Bergen HA, Richardson AS, Roeger L. 2006 Allison S. Sexual abuse and suicidality: Gender differences in a large community sample of adolescents. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 2006; 28:491–503.

- [10] Mudaly, N., and Goddard, C. R. 2006. *The truth is longer than a Lie: Children's experiences of abuse and professional interventions*. 1st Ed. London UK and Philadelphia USA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- [11] Neille, J.F. 2013. Context, culture and disability: A narrative inquiry into the lived experiences of adults with disabilities living in a rural area. *PhD Thesis*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- [12] Peacock, R. 2014. *Victimology in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- [13] Reiter, S, Bryen, D.N, Shachar, I. 2007. Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities as Victims of Abuse. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 11: 371-387.
- [14] Sobsey, D. 1994. *Violence and abuse in the lives of people with disabilities: The end of silent acceptance?* Baltimore, MA: Paul H Brookes.
- [15] Sobsey, D., and Doe, T. 1991. Patterns of sexual abuse and assault. *Journal of Sexuality and Disability*, 9, 243–259. doi:10.1007/ BF01102395.
- [16] Sibanyoni, E.K. 2018. A victimological analysis of physically disabled children as victims of violence in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. *PhD Thesis*. University of KwaZulu Natal.
- [17] Teddlie, C., and Tashakkori, A. 2006. *A general typology of research designs featuring mixed methods*. *Research in Schools*, 13(1), 12-28.
- [18] Wogqoyi, M.N. 2012. Knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents/guardians of children with disabilities on abuse of children with disabilities in the Willowvale area, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Master dissertation*. Western Cape: University of Stellenbosch