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The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in school children in a black township

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ABSTRACT

Aims

The study was based on the premise that the many children in South Africa had been subjected to a number of violent crimes. It was, therefore, assumed that these children would react negatively to the exposure to traumatic events. The researcher thus set out to determine the degree to which crime and other traumatic events were affecting children, particularly those living in the black townships. It was hypothesized that due to the level of violence and other traumatic events occurring in the townships on the one hand and children's vulnerability on the other, there would be a heightened prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Method

797 children from 18 schools in Sebokeng Township, south of Johannesburg, were administered questionnaires to assess the presence of PTSD. While children were selected on the basis of age and availability, selection of schools was random. Children were administered the questionnaires in groups in their classrooms. The researcher, together with an aide was present in the administration in order to help children understand and answer the questions.

Findings

The study revealed a higher presence and prevalence of PTSD. Significant proportion of children reported to have been suffering from all PTSD criterion groups. Although there

were gender differences in the proportion of children who met various PTSD criterion groups, no gender differences existed in the scores obtained by the children. Age was shown to have no relation to PTSD. Using the ANOVA, significant differences existed across schools.