



Gender and Behaviour

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Journal / [Gender and Behaviour \(/index.php/gab\)](https://www.criterianstars.com/index.php/gab) / Vol. 9 No. 1 (2011) / [/index.php/gab/issue/view/8221](https://www.criterianstars.com/index.php/gab/issue/view/8221) / Articles

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DOI:

[10.4314/gab.v9i1.67451](https://doi.org/10.4314/gab.v9i1.67451)
(<https://doi.org/10.4314/gab.v9i1.67451>)

Keywords:

IPV GBV Adolescents Exposure
Domestic violence Gender.

How to Cite

Idemudia, E., & Makhubela, S. (2011). Gender difference, exposure to domestic violence and adolescents' identity development. *Gender and Behaviour*, 9(1).
<https://doi.org/10.4314/gab.v9i1.67451>

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Issue

Vol. 9 No. 1 (2011)
(<https://www.criterianstars.com/index.php/gab/issue/view/8221>)

Section

Articles

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Gender difference, exposure to domestic violence and adolescents' identity development

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Abstract

Domestic abuse is a kind of violence common in South Africa which for most part focuses on women. Children and adolescents who witness these abuses are hardly the focus of domestic abuse research. Hence the need to understand the relationship between gender, exposure to domestic violence and identity development of adolescents. Based on a cross-sectional design, a questionnaire with three sections A, B and C was used to collect data from 109 randomly selected adolescent young men and girls from the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), Limpopo Province in South Africa. Age of participants ranged from 15-20 years with a mean age of 18.7 years (SD = .946). The child exposure to domestic violence scale (CEDV) was used to dichotomize exposed and non exposed groups while gender was defined as male/female. Two hypotheses were stated within a 2-way factorial ANOVA. Results showed a significant main effect for group exposure, ($F(1,109) = 9.395, P < .02$). In other words, the non-exposed adolescents' group ($M = 123.13, SD = 19.8$) achieved a high overall identity development than those exposed to family violence ($M = 112.59, SD = 17.5$). Gender (hypothesis 2) and the interaction of Gender and Exposure were not significant. However, mean scores of participants show that non-exposed males had higher changes in identity development ($M = 118.3, SD = 18.7$) than females ($M = 115.4, SD = 19.4$) but the difference did not reach an acceptable level of significance. These findings have significant practical implications for domestic violence and children witnessing this violence and the health and psychological outcomes for adolescent development and adult life. The study also suggests the need for more research in this direction and a need for culturally relevant programmes to help adolescents and children in abusive homes and in addition help families deal with myths that have cultural relevance to factors maintaining battering.

Journal Identifiers

eISSN: 1596-9231

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