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WHY DO BATTERED WOMEN ABUSE THEIR CHILDREN? EXPLORATION AND DISCUSSION

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OBJECTIVES: A strong association between the occurrences of imitate partner violence and child abuse is confirmed in studies. This study therefore aims to explore the associated factors of battered women being violent towards their children and its implication on the service development for the family at risk. The different characteristics among abused women without and with children at different ages will be examined. This study can enrich knowledge on child protection, especially in families with multiple types of violence.

METHODS: A quantitative study was carried out in three women's refuges and a victim support project in Hong Kong, from 2012 to 2013. Trained interviewers interviewed 126 abused women. Of those interviewed 20.6% had no child(ren) aged below 18; 40.5% had one child below 18; 38.9% had two or more children and at least one aged below 18.

RESULTS: According to the self-reports of abused women the prevalence of physical child abuse was 47.0% in their life-time and 60.0% in past 6-months. The prevalence rate was also computed and compared in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. A relationship between child maltreatment and different family characteristics was found using logistic regression. Significant results showed the prevalence of child abuse is different among families with different number of children. Some socioeconomic characteristics related to child abuse were also identified.

CONCLUSIONS: This study can enhance our awareness and understanding on the risk of child abuse in intimate partner violence, especially on the support for the abused women. In order to protect children in families with violence, the need of these high-risk families should be examined. The in-depth investigation on the different needs of families with different characteristics can give use important information to make comprehensive child protection assessments.