

Depression and Self-Esteem Among Child Sexual Abuse Victims in Malaysia

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Abstract. This research attempt to identify the level of depression and self esteem among child sexually abused victims in Malaysia and also determine the relationship of victims' depression with their age at the onset of abuse. It also identify differences of depression between victims with different numbers of perpetrators and determine the relationship between victims' depression and their self esteem. A majority of subjects (90.7%) were victims of penetrative sexual abuse and 9.3% were molested. Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale were used to measure depression and self-esteem respectively. Results indicate that victims were at critical (32%), moderate (30.7%), mild (21.3%), and minimum (16%) levels of depression; 72% of the victims projected a moderate level of self esteem. Results also reveal a positive significant correlation between age at the onset of abuse and victims' depression, meaning that older victims were more likely to describe themselves as being depressed. There are no differences between numbers of perpetrators and victims' depression, which has a negative significant correlation with self-esteem.

Key words: sexually abused victims, depression, self-esteem, children

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tingkat depresi dan harga diri pada anak korban pelecehan seksual di Malaysia dan juga menentukan hubungan tingkat depresi korban dan usia saat terjadinya pelecehan, mengidentifikasi perbedaan depresi antara korban dan jumlah penyerang yang berbeda, dan menentukan hubungan antara depresi korban dan harga dirinya. Sebagian besar korban (90.7%) adalah korban perkosaan dan 9.3% korban penganiayaan. Beck *Depression Inventory (BDI)* dan *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale* dipakai berturut-turut untuk mengukur depresi dan harga diri. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa para korban depresinya pada tingkat kritis (32%), moderat (30%), ringan (21%), dan minimal (16%); 72% korban menunjukkan harga diri pada tingkat moderat. Hasil juga mengungkap korelasi positif yang bermakna antara usia awitan pelecehan dan tingkat depresi korban, berarti korban yang lebih tua cenderung lebih merasakan depresi. Tak ada beda antara jumlah penyerang dan depresi korban, yang berkorelasi secara negatif bermakna dengan harga dirinya.

Kata kunci: korban pelecehan seksual, depresi, harga diri, anak

The exact rate of childhood sexual abuse in the general population is not known for certain. It is because incidents were not often reported at the time of their occurrence. In 2003, there were 430 cases of childhood sexual abuse reported in Malaysia. This statistics showed that 402 were females and 28 were males. They

were sexually abused before the age of 18. According to Malaysian Penal Code (2004) and Child Acts (2001), any one below the age of 18 is considered a child. Any form of sexual acts with or without child consent is a criminal offence. Most commonly, perpetrators were someone known to the child. According to Royal Malaysian Police Headquarters, in Kuala Lumpur between 2000 to July 2003 most of the victims reported being sexually abused by their biological fathers.

There are both short and long term effects of sexual abuse. In general, the short term effects include depression, low self esteem, anxiety and sadness, school and behavior problems, powerlessness and a reduction in hope for the future (Swanston, Tebbutt, O'Toole & Oates, 1997). Meanwhile, victims also displayed nega-

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