

IJVULLE/JULY1993

. . . weswglaszetyEBPLEEgNuus

1'Violence is , seen as a. way of managing stress, _-
but also as' a factor causing
Nursin g News had an article in
the May 1993 edition on violence
- its causes, the role of women,
possible solutions and the opinion
of the SANA in this regard.

In a followup to this article we
had an interview with prof Marie
Poggenpoel, professor of Nursing,
Department of Nursing Sciences
at RAU and Ms Edith Madela on
in ormation published in the Jour-
nal of Advanced Nursing, 1993,
18, 691 -700. ProfPoggenpoel was
the project leader for ms Edith
Nonhlanhla Madela, a registered
nurse, working in the Psychiatric
ward of the Johannesburg hospi-
tal. Ms Madela's research topic
was THE EXPERIENCE OF A
COMMUNITY CHARACTER-
IZED BY VIOLENCE : IMPLICA-
TIONS FOR NURSING

"In the community where my
relatives have lived, for as long as
I can remember, things were going
as smoothly as in any so-called
healthy community. However, af-
ter the onset of the violence that
took place round March 1990, I
observed a lot of changes in the
functioning of the community.
There was overall depression and
the whole community suffered
many problems. It was because of
all this that I decided to undertake ,
this very sensitive study.:.sensitive
in the sense that people I inter-
viewed were sceptical and at first
did not want to trust me. They were
also suspicious and unyieldingf
Latercn-however, their attitude
' -changed5w'hen'they realised'that I't' ' '
Twas sincere and reallthanted t_o
helpvl' them through a this survey, 1": , 1 '
' explains Edith Madela, ,who did -
her MCur at RAU. Prof Poggenpoel _ '
was the project leader.

"Social situations make a person .
vulnerable to mental illness. These
situations include .circumstances . .
such as poverty, family instability
and inadequate nutrition. A com- .
bination of these circumstances
exposed people to developing un- _
healthy ways of coping with stress.
Violence is seen as a way of man-
aging stress, butalso as a factor
causing stress. An example of un-
healthy ways of stress manage:
ment in the current South African
societyis the violence that leads to
unrest which has affected different .
communities in a short space of
time. The aim of this study was
therefore to explore the experi-
ence of a community exposed to
violence and to identify implica-

tions for nursing.'.' t i ' '

"The results of this, research indicated four types of experiences for all people exposed to violence, - namely psychological, spiritual, physical and behavioural experiences. The experiences of interactions with the internal environment (psychological, spiritual and physical experience) were predominantly negative except for only two positive experiences (improvements in the people's faith and in the employer-employee relationships). On the other hand, experiences of interactions between the internal and external environments, namely behavioural experiences, were both negative and positive. The negative experiences included pretence, thuggery, scapegoating and harassment. The positive experiences included solidarity... (people find common ground and therefore stand by one another), bravery and increased appreciation.... "I was lucky to be alive-attitude.. " The situation opened the people's minds to the fact that it was an advantage for them to have each other, and thus they started appreciating each other more than before.

"The presence of positive experiences in both environments," explains Ms Madela, "brought about new insights; that is, that even though most of their internal environment and part of their external environment is bleak and hopeless, the victims of Violence still have the will to survive and live a normal life like other people. This positive attitude supplies the psychiatric nurse with a point of entry to bring about positive change. Stress..."

that acts as a support for the community exposed to violence."

"It was interesting to note from the results of Ms Madela's research, that although we know that violence has negative effects on the victims - as also proven by a number of researchers - , it does also have positive effects. This was revealed by respondents who expressed an experience of Solidarity which had resulted from the feeling of being 'one' in suffering and ___, therefore strengthening one another..5 , I.e.,

to stand the suffering. -

Bravery as a behaviour was also revealed by respondents who noticed how helpless other victims were in the situation and became determined to do whatever was in their power to save the situation. The violent situation also brought out a behaviour of increased ap-

preciation to the victims in'that, in .
cimdp

M

Violence

continued from p.3

the midst of these helplessly over-
whelming conditions, they learnt
to appreciate what they had when
compared with otherszthe fact that
they were still alive," says prof
Poggenpoel.

But what can the nurse do to help
in situations like these? What IS
her role and function to help stop
violence? " The psychiatric nurse.
in particular, has a very important
role to play and must assess the
effects of unhealthy coping mecha-
MQ wan 311.1.

programmes for high-rish popula-
tions. The nurse must initiate sup-
port groups within the community
and educate community leaders to
carry on with these groups. The
nurse then only monitors the groups
on a regular basis. All this must be
done within the health plan that 18
set for the specific community.
The nurse can also be involveti in
lifeline projects _ already existing
in most of the cbmmunities. She
must be seen primarily as a source
andsupervisor someonethathas
the knowledge and expe-

rience..someone that can lead.."

the findings of this study when
dealing with victims of violence
when they have already developed
mental illness and have been ad-
mitted to the psychiatric wards."

"We can still talk a lot about this
very serious problem of violence
in our communities, but Without
really doing something we won't
get anywhere. We as nurses must
decide if we want to be onlookers
or if we want to render a service to
the community. We must all stand
together and build a nation. We
mhst all have one common goal
and that is to create peace in this
wonderful land of ours. We how-

"The results of this study," says
nisms as reflected in violence, and
plan and implement support
prof Poggenpoel, "deserve to be
included in the curriculum of psy-
chiatric nursing, particularly in
community psy

both at undergraduate and post-
graduate level. These results can
also be included in the curriculum
for community health nursmg, as
the community nurse is concerned
with the well-being of the comrna-
nity at all levels. The multi-dism-
plinary team can also benefit from
hands

chiatric nursing,

,... A

ever, can only do that if we hold

despite our
differences...There is hope for the
future because there is hope in
God. South Africa experiences
existential desperation. It's a men-
tal desperation. I believe that God
is there to really help us solve this
violence problem and to help us to
change this existential despair into
one of hope for the future," is the
view of prof Poggenpoel.
w ha..- Olua etnhith -
meatw n-u