



The Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ)

OVERVIEW

The Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) is a comprehensive questionnaire designed to gather information on a broad range of victimizations. It can enhance the assessment of any child or adolescent by providing a quantified description of all of the major forms of offenses against youth. Either youth or parents can complete the questionnaire. It covers victimizations that are unique to childhood, such as neglect and statutory rape, as well as crimes that can occur to youth as well as to adults, such as assault and theft. The JVQ includes state-of-the-art techniques for assessing very sensitive victimization. These techniques include specific questions to target victimizations by parents, peers, and other perpetrators that are less likely to be identified through generic questioning, and behaviorally-specific wording that clearly defines the types of incidents children should report.

The JVQ has undergone one of the most exhaustive conceptual and wording screenings of any victimization questionnaire. Extensive attention has been paid to translating clinical and legal concepts such as “psychological abuse” and “aggravated assault” into language that children can understand. The scale has been reviewed by victimization specialists, focus groups of parents and teens, and administered in an in-depth cognitive version to young children in order to determine the appropriateness of its language and content. As a result of this process, the JVQ can also be administered to children as young as age 8, which is substantially lower than most other victimization questionnaires.

Increasingly, professionals who work with children are expected to perform a variety of tasks that require standardized assessment of victimization, including documenting clients' experience of child maltreatment and other harms and evaluating intervention and prevention programs ranging from school-based violence prevention programs to therapy for traumatized children. These professionals include (but are not limited to) child and family therapists, trauma counselors, child abuse evaluation team members, juvenile court intake workers, forensic interviewers, violence prevention specialists, police officers (especially those who work in units with a focus on juveniles, such as gang units), and researchers. The JVQ can assist any professional wanting a thorough record of victimization assessment for their client population.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The JVQ obtains reports on 34 forms of offenses against youth that cover five general areas of concern: Conventional Crime, Child Maltreatment, Peer and Sibling Victimization, Sexual Assault, and Witnessing and Indirect Victimization. Each of these five areas is a module of the JVQ. Although comprehensiveness is an important goal of the JVQ, these modules have been developed to take into account important conceptual categories that characterize current work with children. They are designed to be usable individually in stand-alone form for situations that call for a more focused assessment. All modules should be administered if a comprehensive picture is desired of all forms of victimization that an individual has experienced.

The questionnaire begins with Conventional Crime for several reasons. This module is more general than the other modules and includes many questions which are less sensitive than those in some other modules. This is followed by Child Maltreatment, next because it is a conceptually distinct but very important domain of child victimization. Peer and Sibling

Victimization follows because it continues the theme of known perpetrators. Sexual Victimization, while more stereotypically considered criminal than peer and sibling violence, is placed fairly late in the questionnaire due to the sensitive nature of the questions. Witnessing and Indirect Victimization is last because it moves away from direct experiencing. (Note that there is intentional overlap of some offenses among modules, because they fall in multiple categories. Such items would not be repeated when the whole questionnaire is used.)

A few brief, closed-ended follow-up items can be administered whenever a child or caregiver reports that a victimization occurred. Follow-ups include the number of times a child has been victimized, who victimized the child, whether the child was hurt, and questions specific to the victimization reported (for example, value of stolen items).

The questionnaire is usable in interview format with children as young as age 8 and as old as age 17. It can be used in a self-administered format for juveniles 12 and older. There is also a "Caregiver version," by which a caregiver could be interviewed as a proxy for a child, especially a child under age 8. Additionally, it can be adapted for retrospective reporting of childhood events by adult respondents.