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**Nurturing Hope and Character Strengths in Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

Background: Studies show children exposed to violence are at an increased risk for anxiety and depression, social isolation, increased physical and psychological aggression, and propensity to perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence. The purpose of this study is to present findings of a camp-based intervention to increase hope in children exposed to domestic violence.

Sample: 793 children from 11 states in the US provided responses to a self-report survey measuring hope and character strengths across three time periods. The average child’s age was 10.84 years with ages ranging from 6 to 17 years. 52.2% of the participants were female. Additionally, camp counselors provided observational assessments on hope and character strengths for 547 children across two time periods.

Results: Increases in hope and resilience (belief in self, others, and dreams) were statistically significant. Correlational analysis demonstrated that an increase in children’s hope was associated with increases in character strengths as rated by camp counselors. More specifically, higher scores in Hope were associated with higher levels of energy (Zest), perseverance toward goals (Grit), ability to regulate thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Self-Control), an expectation that the future holds positive possibilities (Optimism), appreciation toward others (Gratitude), desire to seek out new things (Curiosity), and awareness of the feelings and motivations of others (Social Intelligence). These results are discussed as they relate to research informed interventions focused on increasing hope among children exposed to domestic violence.

\*Keywords: Children, Hope, Character Strengths, Domestic Violence

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