



The Relationship Between Childhood Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, and Mental Health Outcomes In Adulthood

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ABSTRACT

- Exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) leads to poor health in adulthood.
- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from the Childhood Adversity and Traumatic Stress among Inpatients at a Psychiatric Hospital in the Baltimore Area from 1993-1995 study that served both suburban and urban areas.
- The sample for the current study included participants (N=217) who were patients at a psychiatric hospital in the Baltimore Area.
- Findings showed exposure to both sexual and physical abuse lead to higher levels of psychological distress and inhibited overall functioning.
- These findings contribute to existing literature by examining how different types of abuse uniquely effect mental health outcomes in adulthood in order to better apply best suited interventions.

METHODOLOGY

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from the Childhood Adversity and Traumatic Stress among Inpatients at a Psychiatric Hospital in the Baltimore Area from 1993-1995 study that served both suburban and urban areas
- Researchers contacted patients assigned therapist to request participation (N=217)
- Participants provided their response individually via face-to-face interviews at the psychiatric hospital and completed on-site questionnaires

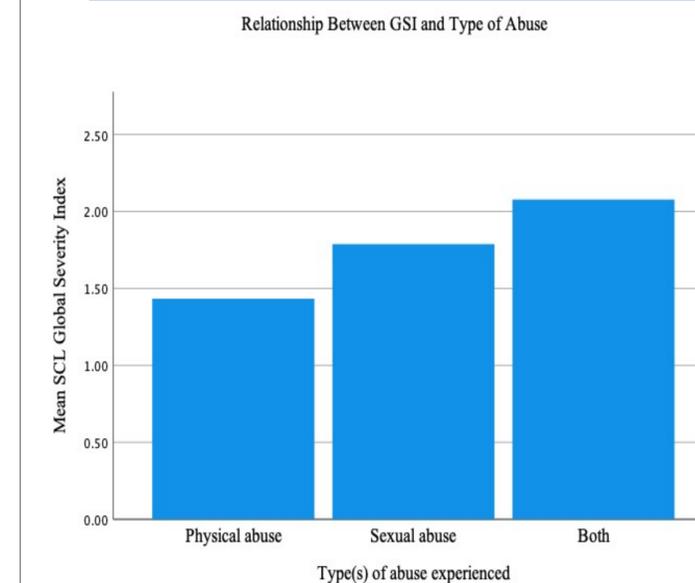
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Experiencing childhood abuse and other related early life stressors can produce brain dysfunction and thus contribute to a decline in quality of life across the lifespan
- Poor health in adulthood subsequently followed by experiencing ACEs may affect more than 60% of adults
- 50% of patients in primary care settings reporting experience with physical and sexual childhood abuse
- Research shows a dose-response relationship wherein as exposure to ACEs increases, negative health outcomes increase

GAPS

-Though research has widely established an association between childhood abuse and adverse mental and functional outcomes in adulthood, it has not extricated the varying impacts of different types of abuse and how they uniquely influence the development of psychiatric symptoms and disorders

RESULTS



-A one-way ANOVA comparing the mean GSI scores of participants who had been sexually abused, physically abused, or both was computed:
 -Participants who reported both sexual and physical abuse had significantly higher GSI scores ($M = 2.08, SD = 0.72$) than the participants who reported only physical abuse ($M = 1.43, SD = 0.81, p < .001$). Participants who reported only sexual abuse ($M = 1.79, SD = 0.80$) did not have significantly different GSI scores from the other groups

INTRODUCTION

- 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states say they have experienced at least one ACE, and another 1 in 6 report experiences of four or more
- ACEs increased a person's risk for future violence, victimization, health risk behaviors, chronic health conditions, mental illness, decreased life potential, and premature death
- The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), specifically CSA and physical abuse, and psychiatric symptoms
- It is hypothesized that exposure to childhood sexual abuse compared to physical abuse, and exposure to both sexual and physical abuse, will cause a higher level of psychological distress as well as a higher number of mental diagnoses

STRENGTHS and LIMITATIONS

-The current study lacks diversity in the sample
 -Biases in participant recall lead to over or under-reporting
 -Single questions to assess independent variables limits may skew data

The GSI evaluates a breadth of psychological problems and screens for general psychopathology while maintaining good internal consistency, validity, and test-retest reliability -

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings offer a glimpse into the intense need for early intervention for those exposed to ACEs such as childhood abuse, in order to prevent negative mental health outcomes in adulthood
- Gathering more research and implanting necessary interventions would curtail the rapidly growing public health issue childhood abuse and other ACEs have become
- Utilizing needed research to develop tailored interventions for survivors of childhood abuse would help to mitigate damaging consequences and foster resiliency