

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

The purpose of *Journal Highlights* is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute to *Journal Highlights* by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past six months) along with a two- or three-sentence review to Ernestine C. Briggs, PhD, Duke University Medical Center, Trauma Evaluation Treatment and Research Program, Center for Child and Family Health – North Carolina, 3518 Westgate Drive, Suite 100, Durham, NC 27707 (Fax: 919 419-9353).

Sexual abuse

Study examines effects of multiple types of trauma on adult mental health

Using a national probability sample of 4,008 women (18-34 yrs. old), this study examined the associations among childhood assault (rape, aggravated assault, or both), incident characteristics, and indices of adult mental health (posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive episode). Lifetime prevalence of traumatic events, including serious physical assault, sexual assault, natural disasters, and other aversive life events were assessed via a victimization screening instrument. The results indicated that the effects of childhood aggravated assault and rapes that caused additional physical injury were particularly deleterious. The findings also highlight the importance of assessing multiple types of trauma, as well as screening for such incident characteristics as life threat and physical injury.

Hanson, RF, BE Saunders, DG Kilpatrick, HS Resnick, JA Crouch, & R Duncan (2001). "Impact of childhood rape and aggravated assault on adult mental health." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71(1), 108-119.

Sexual revictimization prevention program evaluated

This investigation tested a program to reduce women's risk for sexual revictimization. Sixty-six women with histories of sexual victimization as adolescents or adults were randomly assigned to a preventive intervention group or a no-treatment control group. Participants completed initial measures assessing history of sexual assault, self-efficacy, and psychological functioning, and returned approximately two months later for follow-up assessment using the same measures. Results indicate that the prevention program may be effective in reducing the incidence of sexual assault revictimization in this population. In addition, participants in the intervention group displayed significant improvement in psychological adjustment and self-reported self-efficacy.

Marx, BP, KS Calhoun, AE Wilson, & LA Meyerson (2001). "Sexual revictimization prevention: An outcome evaluation." *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 69(1), 25-32.

Implications of sexual violence for adolescent weight control techniques

The association between sexual violence and weight control practices among girls was assessed in this article. Survey data on dating violence, unwanted sexual contact, purging, and diet pill consumption were gathered from 2,629 girls (14-18 yrs. old) in grades 9-12. Results suggest that dating violence and unwanted sexual contact elevated the probability that girls would report practicing weight control techniques by 6-13%. Controls for family environment did not eliminate these associations. Weak impulse control did not significantly mediate these associations.

Thompson, KM, SA Wonderlich, RD Crosby, & JE Mitchell (2001). "Sexual violence and weight control techniques among adolescent girls." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 29(2), 166-176.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse linked to higher levels of suicidality and depressive symptomatology

This study assessed the nature and level of depressive and suicidal symptomatology in physically abused children, compared with neglected and nonabused children. Participants included 114 children 6-12 years old, of whom 41 had been physically abused, 38 neglected, and 35 neither abused nor neglected. Each child completed the Children's Depression Inventory and the Child Suicidal Potential Scales. The physically abused children manifested significantly higher levels of depressive symptomatology and suicidality than did the other two groups. The findings regarding suicidality highlight the importance of examining the risk for self-injury among physically abused children.

Finzi, R, A Ram, D Shnit, D Har-Even, S Tyano, & A Weizman. (2001). "Depressive symptoms and suicidality in physically abused children." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71(1), 98-107.

Differential pattern of maltreatment and adolescent adjustment investigated

This study examined the relationship among child maltreatment, clinically relevant adjustment problems, and dating violence in a community sample of adolescents (aged 14-19 yrs.) from 10 high schools in Ontario. Logistic regression was used to compare

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maltreated and nonmaltreated youths across outcome domains. One-third of the school sample reported levels of maltreatment above the cutoff score on the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire. Girls with a history of maltreatment were at greater risk for emotional distress, violent and nonviolent delinquency, and carrying concealed weapons. Boys with histories of maltreatment were 2.5-3.5 times as likely to report clinical levels of depression, posttraumatic stress, and overt dissociation, as were boys without a maltreatment history. They also had a significantly greater risk of using threatening behaviors or physical abuse against their dating partners. Maltreatment is a significant risk factor for adolescent maladjustment and shows a differential pattern for male and female adolescents.

Wolfe, DA, K Scott, C Wekerle, & A Pittman. (2001). "Child maltreatment: Risk of adjustment problems and dating violence in adolescence." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40(3), 282-289.

Other issues in child maltreatment

Study explores mediators of the relationship between child maltreatment and adjustment

In this study, maltreatment was predicted to negatively affect children's academic and behavioral adjustment through the creation of deficits in academic engagement, social competencies, ego resiliency, and ego control. Teachers' comprehensive evaluations, school records, and camp counselors' ratings were obtained for 229 socioeconomically disadvantaged children (5-12 yrs. old), 146 of whom had been maltreated. Maltreated children showed less academic engagement, more social skills deficits, and lower ego resiliency than nonmaltreated comparison children. Maltreated children manifested multiple forms of academic risk and showed more externalizing and internalizing behavior problems. The effects of maltreatment on academic maladjustment were partially mediated by academic engagement; whereas, maltreatment's effects on behavior problems were mediated fully by social competencies and ego resiliency.

Shonk, SM & D Cicchetti (2001). "Maltreatment, competency deficits, and risk for academic and behavioral maladjustment." *Developmental Psychology*, 37(1), 3-17.

Study delineates the relationship among violence, abortion, and distress

This study explored factors that should be considered by professional psychologists when treating women who have had an abortion. Analyses of responses from 2,525 women revealed that women who reported an abortion were more likely than others to report lower life satisfaction and symptoms of depression. These women were also more likely to experience rape, childhood physical and sexual abuse, and a violent partner. When history of abuse, partner characteristics, and background variables were controlled, abortion was not related to poorer mental health. The

authors conclude that these findings underscore the need to examine the effects of violence in women's lives to avoid misattributing psychological distress to abortion experiences.

Russo, NF & JE Denious (2001). "Violence in the lives of women having abortions: Implications for practice and public policy." *Professional Psychology - Research & Practice*, 32(2), 142-150

Study finds sexual or physical abuse more common than neglect among sexual offenders

This study used administrative data to compare different types of offenders within a state-level juvenile corrections system in terms of investigated reports of childhood maltreatment. Thus, unlike prior research, it compared sexual offenders with other serious youthful offenders and identified types of maltreatment without resort to retrospective self-reports of abuse or neglect. Adolescents incarcerated for sexual offenses were compared to those incarcerated for other crimes on measures of prior child abuse and neglect, serious emotional disturbance, and involvement in child welfare and the juvenile justice system. The sample included 6,082 youth between the ages of 11-18 years entering the California Youth Authority. Sexual or physical abuse was more common than neglect among sexual offenders with fewer than three prior maltreatment reports. Sexual offenders were twice as likely to be receiving special education services for severe emotional disturbance and were usually incarcerated later than other offenders.

Jonson-Reid, M & I Way. (2001). "Adolescent sexual offenders: Incidence of childhood maltreatment, serious emotional disturbance, and prior offenses." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71(1), 120-130

School-based child abuse prevention program evaluated

This study investigated the impact of a school-based prevention program by surveying students at a high school in southern California where students from feeder schools were known to have had abuse prevention programs available to them. Questionnaires were administered and data were collected anonymously on 137 high school students (mean age 15.04 years) during their health class. A quasi-experimental design was utilized, comparing the 72 students who had attended one or more school-based abuse prevention programs with the 65 who stated they had not participated in a prevention program. The results suggest that students who attended prevention programs were more knowledgeable about abuse concepts and reported fewer incidents of abuse. However, the effectiveness of students' responses to abuse, even when they used strategies taught by the prevention programs, was variable. The authors discuss the relative effectiveness of these strategies with familial and nonfamilial forms of abuse.

Ko, SF & MA Cosden (2001). "Do elementary school-based child abuse prevention programs work? A high school follow-up." *Psychology in the Schools*, 38(1), 57-66

