

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IMPACT ON ADULTHOOD

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REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction – Child sexual abuse (CSA) occurs when a kid or younger person is forced or persuaded to engage in sexual activity, whether the child is conscious of what is taking place. According to global databases, in one-third of countries in the world, at least 5% of young women reported experiences of sexual abuse in childhood. Mental health issues, behavioral manifestations, and interpersonal outcomes are a few impacts of CSA. This study aims to discuss the CSA's impact on adulthood.

Methods – The researcher used a total of 13 works of literature, articles, and journals that discuss CSA and its correlation with some mental health issues impact on an adult.

Results – Adults with a history of CSA are more likely to suffer from early onset depression, borderline personality disorder, and suicidal tendencies than someone without a history, that is why emotional support seems very important to the CSA survivors.

Discuss – As children are sexually abused, it may lead to a variety of difficulties with relationships in general, as well as a host of poor intimate relationship consequences such as adult sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and reduced happiness in romantic relationships.

Conclusion – Childhood sexual abuse is still a major problem among children and has several psychological impacts on adulthood, and emotional support is one of the great therapies.

Keywords: childhood, sexual, abuse.

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INTRODUCTION

Many forms of child abuse can cause both physical and psychological impacts in the long term, one of them is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse of children occurs when a kid or younger person is forced or persuaded to engage in sexual activity, whether or not the child is conscious of what's taking place. Physical (penetration or non-penetrative actions) or non-physical contact and non-contact activities may be involved in the activities, involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, exploitation, etc.¹

According to UNICEF 2021 global databases, in one-third of countries in the world, at least 5% of young women reported experiences of sexual abuse in childhood.² Child sexual abuse is still a major problem. An adult abused or assaulted 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys under the age of 18, with 66% of victims being between the ages of 12 and 17, and 34% of victims under 12. The fact, 93% of perpetrators are known to the victim, 59% are associated, even 34% among them are family members,

and only 7% are strangers.³ Meanwhile, in Australia, about 54% of children were sexually abused by their parents.⁴

Mental health issues, behavioral manifestations, and interpersonal outcomes are a few impacts of CSA. Someone who has suffered CSA is more likely to develop depression, shame, guilt, and denial or self-blame as adults. They are also more likely to have somatic issues and eating disorders, dissociative tendencies, repression, relationships, and other sexual problems.^{5,6}

METHOD

The author used a total of 13 works of literature, articles, and journals that discuss childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and its correlation with some mental health issues impact on an adult.

RESULT

Childhood Sexual Abuse and The Psychological Impact

It is believed that CSA, or childhood sexual abuse, can lead to long-term mental and physical issues that may persist into adulthood. Children's mental, social, and psychological development may be adversely affected by abusive conduct.⁴ An adult with a history of CSA is more likely to suffer from early onset depression, borderline personality disorder, and suicidal tendencies than someone without a history, which is why emotional support seems very important to CSA survivors.⁷

There are many long-term symptoms that we can find among CSA survivors, the most common is depression and anxiety. Often, they will experience guilt, shame, and self-blame. Many of them also cited body issues and eating disorders as long-term effects. Some sexual assault survivors may have detached to protect themselves and may have difficulty establishing interpersonal relationships due to the trauma.⁶

Adult-onset Depression and Anxiety

Depression is the most common mental health issue among CSA survivors. Based on a study, women who were sexually abused by family members are more likely to develop depression and anxiety when they think about the assault, compared with a woman who experienced non-familial sexual abuse. More abusive conduct, more sexual abuse experiences, and a younger age at the time of the first sexual abuse are the other variables that increase the risk of distress.⁶ The issues reported in the consultation were 33% depression and another 28% anxiety, and another research shows that 30-40% of victims have a history of depression, compared with just 10-20% of individuals with no history of CSA.^{1,7} An association between CSA and rates of mental health problems is higher at attempted/complete penetration of CSA, 40.9% of survivors age 21-25 experienced major depression and 45.5% experienced anxiety disorder.⁸

Guilt, Shame, and Self-blame Phenomenon

In case the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the victims, sometimes it is hard to see the sexual abuse happened because of the perpetrator's fault and take it as a personal responsibility instead. Victims often blame themselves and internalize negative thoughts about themselves.⁶ They may feel guilty because they enjoyed some aspect and feel they got something from the abuser such as attention, gifts, or cuddles.⁹ When remembering the assault, victims can blame themselves and think that it happens cause of their behavior or situation such as not being careful enough and being a reckless person.¹⁰

DISCUSS

Eating Disorders of The Victims

Children who have had sexual abuse as children make up about 30 percent of eating disorder patients and most of them suffer from binge eating disorders and bulimia nervosa. According to research, women with a history of intrafamilial abuse had a higher number of suffering serious eating problems (47%) compared with those who reported extrafamilial abuse (36%) and who had no history of CSA (21%). Even though the condition itself is not a risk factor for the disorder, those who had one episode of CSA had a 2.5-fold increased probability of developing bulimia nervosa and a 4.9-fold increased probability among those who reported at least two episodes. Otherwise, there are up to 83% of binge eating disordered patients reported some childhood maltreatment, including sexual abuse.¹¹

Interpersonal Relationship Problems

As children are sexually abused, it may lead to a variety of difficulties with relationships in general, as well as a host of poor intimate relationship consequences such as adult sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and reduced happiness in romantic relationships. The psychological distress CSA victims go through makes them feel unworthy, they may feel ineligible for healthy romantic bonds and may oversexualize romantic ties.¹² For women, pregnancy, delivery, and parenting can trigger difficulties, emotional anguish, and lack of confidence and pride. Meanwhile, when it comes to raising children, fathers following the CSA report certain issues, such as being over-protective, anxious about physical contact with their children, and fear of becoming abusers themselves.⁵

The Importance of Counseling and Emotional Support

Besides medications, emotional support has a positive impact on mental health by instilling and increasing an individual's feeling of self-worth and acceptance. It is very relevant for CSA victims who feel isolated and stigmatized because of the abuse trauma.⁷ Essential points for effective therapeutic involve unconditional positive regard or non-possessive warmth, a non-judgmental attitude or accurate empathy, and sincerity. The victim's families may have a significant effect on the treatment progress, nevertheless, a counselor can not pressure clients to talk about the abuse with their family before they are ready. The counselor should help them realize that their history of CSA may have contributed to some of their confusion and not right decision-making, that they are not alone that resources are always available to help, and that they can learn better ways to cope and deserve to live a happier life.¹³

CONCLUSION

Childhood sexual abuse is still a major problem among children in the world and has several psychological impacts on adulthood, including depression, shame, guilt, denial or self-blame as adults, anxiety, eating disorders, and interpersonal relationships. More abusive conduct, more sexual abuse experiences, and a younger age at the time of the first sexual abuse are variables that increase the risk of impacts. The emotional support from families, friends, and counselors brings a positive impact on the victim's mental health, besides medication treatment for depression. It is important to help them realize that they are not alone and always have resources to help them and that they deserve to live a better happier life.

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