



Adulthood Psychological Anomalies In Kerala Society Caused by Childhood Abuses

KEYWORDS

child abuse, somatization, psychosis, phobic anxiety

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ABSTRACT *A plenty of divergent features have been appraised to elucidate adult emotional and psychological problems like drug abuse, stress and frustration. Nevertheless, in addition to these features a significant contributing factor that may cause to various psychological anomalies and adaptive intricacies in adult life can be of abuse in childhood. The important source of a lieu of emotional and psychological problems that fatally diminishes the adaptive behaviors and even debilitates the adult later in life is child abuse. The abuse can be physical, verbal or sexual in nature. The abuse of children occurs during a period in life where complex and hopefully ordered changes are occurring in the child's physical, psychological and social being. This state of instability leaves the child vulnerable to sustain damage that may retard or prevent the normal psychosocial developmental processes.*

Introduction

The Kerala society, like most societies across the world, is patriarchal in structure where the chain of command is definite and inviolable. In such a power structure parents, both fathers and mothers, consider their children as their property and assume a freedom to treat them as they like. Thus, when the parents and teachers adopt harsh methods of disciplining children, there is little opposition to this harshness. The underlying belief is that physical punishment encourages discipline in children and it is inevitable for their betterment in the long-run. Some parents or caretakers feel that punishment is necessary to maintain discipline, build character and facilitate learning in children. Whenever a child does not follow the instructions the way adult or caretaker wants, they try to use appropriate disciplinary techniques or the punishment so as to get relief from the child's problem. Parents or caretakers have been using different punishment for ages mainly for disciplining a child. Sometimes it is difficult for them to draw a line between abuse and rise of disciplining methods. Since the children are dependent on their parents or other caretakers they are compelled to bear and tolerate all sorts of abusive measures adopted against them.

According to the study, more than 80 percent of young adults who had been abused in childhood met the diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder. These young adults exhibited many problems, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide attempts (Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996). Other psychopathological and emotional conditions associated with abuse and neglect include panic disorder, dissociative disorders, attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, depression, anger, posttraumatic stress disorder, and reactive attachment disorder (Teicher, 2000; De Bellis & Thomas, 2003; Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007).

A plenty of researches reveal the gruesome fact that adults who were abused verbally or physically or sexually in their childhood are in the grip of psychological anomalies. Recent findings prove that the psychological consequences they suffer are multifaceted ranging from mild to severe. This issue needs extensive investigation of various abuse patterns and the specificities of the consequences in relation to the Kerala society. On the other hand, this research

findings reveal that adults may suffer various psychological problems i.e., anxiety, depression, OCD, phobia, hostility, interpersonal sensitivity, somatization, paranoid ideation and psychosis as a result of abused childhood. It is safe to say that the abused childhood hinders healthy psychological, behavioral and emotional development of an abused victim and later on make his or her approach maladaptive and abnormal towards life.

The present research has proved that the psychosis ideation, paranoid ideation, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, phobic anxiety, somatization, OCD, depression and anxiety mean scores of abused groups are significantly higher than the non-abused group. This is supported by the results and is significant at $p = 0.000$, which is less than 0.05 level of significance.

The Methodology

The research has been carried out at three selected areas in Malabar zone of Kerala where the availability of adult participants from various socio economic statuses were at ease. Data has been collected from various selected areas in Malabar zone in Kerala. Areas were randomly selected. A purposive sampling procedure used to identify adults who were abused and not abused in their childhood. Equal numbers of participants who were abused and non-abused in childhood, have been selected in the same area. In this way the researcher endeavored to match the various aspects related to the participants. The sample consisted of two hundred and forty six male and female participants belonging to various socio-economic statuses. Their age ranges between 18 to 26 years with a mean age of 21.4 years.

In order to measure abused childhood a check list questionnaire was prepared after conducting two pilot studies using Symptoms Assessment -45 Scale for measuring psychological problems of adults. Check list questionnaire and SA-45 Scale have applied on a large population in order to identify the cutoff scores of non-abused groups. The data has been analyzed with the help of descriptive statistical methods.

Descriptive statistics was also carried out i.e., mean, standard deviation and standard error to see the level of differ-

ences of psychological problems of all respective groups i.e., non abused group, verbally abused group, verbally and physically abused group, verbally, physically and sexually mild abused group, verbally, physically and sexually severe abused group. Furthermore 95 percent confidence interval for mean was calculated that shows upper and lower bound of the values.

One way ANOVA was computed to test the significance of differences of psychological problems of all concerned groups and 0.05 level of significance was set for interpreting the data. On the other side Tukey's post hoc analysis was computed to compare the mean of psychological problems of non abused group to all concerned abused groups and analyzed the data at 0.05 level of significance. Tukey's HSD (Homogenous subsets) of all respective groups i.e., non abused group, verbally abused group, verbally and physically abused group, verbally, physically and sexually mild abused group, verbally, physically and sexually severe abused group were computed in reference to the scores of various psychological problems. Furthermore means for all concerned groups in homogenous subsets were displayed that uses harmonic mean sample size = 49.481 and the group sizes were unequal (the harmonic mean of the group sizes was used).

Conclusions

It is found that abused childhood causes significantly higher level of anxiety in adult life as compare to non abused childhood. So it is found that abused childhood i.e., verbal, physical and sexual may be a determinant in the development of anxiety symptoms later in life (Higgins and McCabe (2000).

Furthermore the people with adverse childhood experiences (i.e. . , verbal, physical and sexual abuse) were four to twelve times more likely to display a range of health risk factors including suicidal attempt and depressive symptoms, long bouts of sadness, social withdrawal (Mian, Mar-ton & Le Baron, 1996).

Phobic anxiety that is linked to a specific abusive event in a person's life becomes a long-term problem later in life. The most commonly seen long-term effects of childhood abuse includes depression, anxiety, Phobic anxiety, sexual problems, self-destructive behavior, substance abuse, low self-esteem and a tendency towards later victimization.(Ca-hill, Llewelyn and Pearson, 1991).

Children who have been physically abused tend to behave in more aggressive ways than non-abused peers (Cicchetti, 1989 and Widom, 1989). These abused children have been noted to develop a hyper-vigilance to misinterpret their surroundings and most importantly to lash out when they perceive ambiguous stimuli as threatening (Dodge et al., 1984).

Child maltreatment can interfere with a person's ability to develop meaningful and appropriate relationships from childhood through adulthood. Abused and neglected children are consistently rated by their peers as demonstrating socially undesirable behavior (Feldman, Salzinger, Rosario, Alvrado, Caraballo & Hammer, 1995).

Significantly more paranoid ideology was found among adult people who had been abused in their childhood. (Bryer, et al 1987) and with paranoid ideology, they are distrustful and hostile; their interpersonal behavior may involve overt argumentativeness, complaining or aloofness.

They can be guarded, secretive or devious; they appear to lack tender feelings and engage in stubborn and sarcastic exchanges with others (Ekleberry, 2000).

It is evident that history of abused childhood may contribute to the symptoms and course of illness of chronic psychoses (Goff et al, 1991).

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