

Effect of physical abuse on mental health



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Article summary

Research Question

It has long been known that physical abuse can put individuals at risk of having mental illness. Many studies have proved that there is a connection between physical punishment and mental disorders. A few researches have worked on a cause of particular mental disorders; however, it still lacks of evidence and no one has focused on the long-term outcomes of physical abuse on the development of mental disorders yet. In the research conducted by Tracie et al., the researchers want to find the correlation between physical punishment and mental disorders in an extensive range. The research aims to eliminate the limitations of researches that have been previously conducted. In their research, they additionally cover a range of axis I (clinical syndromes) and axis II (personality and mental retardation) mental disorders, and possible factors that are responsible for physical punishment. Furthermore, they look into the general population that is possible to be another explanation why physical abuse occur without individual having past experience of child maltreatment.

Methodology

In 2004 and 2005, the researchers conducted a survey called “ The National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions”. They randomly drew a sample from non-institutional and house hold individuals who were 20 or older in the United States. Participants were interviewed face-to-face by experienced interviewers of the US census Bureau, which gave the high response rate as high as 86. 7%. In this interview, physical punishment is the

independent variable and the increased likelihood of mental disorder is the dependent variable. Physical punishment is defined as grabbing, slapping, hitting, pushing by parents or adults. The researchers took and revised some questions from Adverse Childhood Experience Study which is based on a 5-point Likert scale. On the survey, participants who “sometimes”, or greater, experienced physical abuse as a child are considered to have had harsh physical punishment: any physical misconduct that is violent and unacceptable. Moreover, there are three continuous variables: age, education, and income received within the previous year. Also, there are three sociodemographic variables: gender, marital status, and race.

Findings and Implications

As a result, the researchers found that physical punishment can contribute to the origin of mental illness to some extent. The findings show that harsh physical abuse is related to the higher possibility of getting mental disorders in the categories of Axis I and Axis II. Interestingly, the tendency to experience Axis I disorders is decreased by 2% to 5% and 4% to 7% to Axis II disorders if the individuals did not encounter harsh physical punishment. Unexpectedly, the researchers also discovered that individuals with high level of education and income are more likely to perform harsh physical punishment. This current study is corresponding to the former researches: there is a significant correlation between physical and Axis I. On top of that, this study further examines and notices that demographic variable also contribute to physical punishment. The findings reveal that males have a higher risk to be punished. In comparison with Caucasian, black people seem to have an elevated likelihood of facing harsh punishment. Nevertheless, age

and marital status seem to be the only factors that do not increase the probability of harsh punishment.

These data have various significant implications that any health care profession practitioners should contemplate. To begin with, pediatricians or anyone whose work is related to children, parents, and family should be knowledgeable about the impacts of harsh physical punishment. This study promotes the use of other discipline methods, and does not support violence as the way of teaching children. If the use of punishment is diminished, the general population having mental illness will be decreased as well.

Research Proposal

Research Question

The research published by Tracie et al is undoubtedly an exceptional work. It reports and brings the adverse outcomes of harsh physical punishment to light. Yet, there are still some limitations that should be studied further. First, the use of cross-sectional design prevents the researchers from finding another possible result. The cross-sectional design is limited, because it only provides us information that is gathered in a short period of time. Since people's behaviours change regularly, this information can be unreliable. Given that longitudinal study is able to identify changes in behaviours and characteristics of individuals, it might be better to use a longitudinal design in a future research. Next, the question that should be discussed is whether the information that the researchers collected is accurate or not. In the previous study, researchers collected the data from the U. S. representative adults. In this process, the participants may have given wrong information

due to false recall. A confirmation call from parents would help researchers avoiding making misinterpretation of data. Last question that I would like to add on to the future research is to find the critical age for children raised with abusive parents growing up without developing mental illness, aggression, and learning disabilities.

Methodology

In a coming research, the data will be drawn randomly from young children aged from 8 to 15, who have reported of physical or verbal abuse. Participants will have an interview with a trained researcher. While answering questions, the study will also be recorded by a camera to see if there is any body language that is contradict with the given information, and also to see the level of anxiety. Researcher has to be very careful with choice of words, because young children might not understand the question if it is too technical. Also, the participants will be asked to take some psychological tests, such as Connor Rating Scale and Gray Oral Reading Test, to see if an individual has difficulty in performing, and to identify if an individual has learning disabilities. This process of gathering data will last 3 to 4 years. Participants have to do the interview every 6 months. In this study, physical or/and verbal abuse is the independent variable, while having mental illness, showing a sign of aggression, and having learning disabilities are dependent variables. Physical abuse is defined as an act of other individuals that intend to cause pain, whereas verbal abuse is defined as the use of words that can affect others welfare in both mental and emotional way.

Potential Findings and Implications

The researcher hopes to find the outcomes correlated to the past researches: supporting the idea that physical abuse can lead to the development of mental disorders, and being able to determine the critical period that gives a child a greater chance to develop mental illness. In addition, the study will reveal the impacts of physical abuse on learning disabilities and expose in what degree of the violence can affect aggression. Essentially, this will give beneficial information to not only practitioners, but also anyone who is related to children or want to know more about the effective way to raise a child.