“Child abuse and Neglect: Will it Effect their Adulthood in Relations to Drug or Alcohol Dependency”

Soc 3338: Family Problems

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The question, “how many children are getting abused and neglected today,” is not one that we often consider. In 2014, it appeared that an estimated 1,580 children had died from child abuse and neglect; that was approximately 4 or 5 children a day (Children’s Bureau, 2016). When abuse is present in a home, a child suffers from more than just a black eye. The children that are fortunate enough to become survivors can sometimes still suffer as adults. Brems hypothesis in his 2004 study that the more severely a child is abused, then it would correspond with overhead rates of substance dependencies as adults (cited in Banducci 2014). Over the past decade, researchers have focused in on the correlation between reported child and adolescent abuse and their outcome in adulthood in relations to drug and alcohol dependency. This paper will reveal the different statistics on child and adolescent abuse in regards to their parent’s personal life, the individual’s gender, and the environment they grew up in.

“90% (of children) are abused by someone they know, love or trust.” (Children’s Bureau, 2016). The more access someone has to another individual, the more comfortable they will be and feel as though they have the power to manipulate. Since the parents are typically closest to the child it is important to dissect their background. The personal life of parents can sometimes be a variable to child abuse and neglect. Victims becoming victimizers is the result of a child being abused and then growing up and abusing their very own (Srivastava, & Ahbay 2015: 38). Research suggests that children who are exposed to maltreatment and violent abuse between their guardians learn to use physical punishment; as a result, one-third of those individuals will subject their very own children to the same maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2007). There are many other factors that contribute such as mental disorders, work problems, poverty, and divorce, which can result in a dysfunctional relationship between the child and parent. According to Srivastava and Abhay, abusive households typically have at least one parent that is dependent on either alcohol or drugs and sees the child as an easy target to manipulate (Srivastava, & Ahbay 2015: 38). This supports the question of what are the correlations between abused children and the likely hood that they will become substance abusers as adults.

The gender ID can sometimes determine the preferred types of substance dependence that adults can acquire. In a previous Canadian survey that was based on individuals with a history of child abuse, found that men were 16.8 times more likely to be heavy drinkers compared to the 7.6 times for women (Tonmyr, M. Shields, 2016: 288). When evaluating other illicit and off-label drug use, women reported 3.7 times more likely to use compared to 3.1 times for men (Tonmyr, M. Shields, 2016: 288). Sexual abuse is also a leading factor. It has found that women who are dependent on drugs were almost two time more likely to have reported sexual abuse compared to women who are not dependent on drugs or alcohol (Langeland and Hartgers, 1998(3):336-43). Based on the research, when it comes to substance abuse and gender differences for these particular individuals, it can be tested that both males and females are more likely to encounter drug dependency. Individuals that are abused as children suffer from experiences that could potentially traumatize them for the rest of their lives. They may grow up with a sense of disconnection from others because they may believe that no one else can understand them, unfortunately, they turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with life.

The location of an individual in a society plays a major role on their social structure. Data that has been complied shows that children who live in households with an annual income below $15,000 are 22 times more likely to be involved in child abuse and neglect compared to households that make an annual income higher than $30,000 ([Houshyar](https://firstfocus.org/about/staff/shadi-houshyar/), 2014). Probabilistic nature of developmental psychopathology indicates that neighborhoods that suffer from low-income and high-crime intensify the likelihood of injurious outcomes for children (Voith, 2016: 767-784). In lower income homes a parent might be unemployed which leaves them with extra time on their hands. With day-to-day frustrations rising, a parent may conclude to taking their frustrations on their children by abusing and neglecting them. It appears that the rates of physical abuse made by unemployed males was higher than those compared to females. (Gillham, Tanner, & Cheyne, 1998: 79-90). This research is helpful for the questioning of the impact and relevance an environment, which a child lives in, has on their chances of being a victim of abuse.

This research has shown that characteristics such as parent’s personal life, an individual’s gender and the environment they are socialized in can all be variables as to why parents abuse their offspring. It has been found that adult men who had reported being abused as children are more times than women to suffer from heavy drinking (Tonmyr, M. Shields, 2016: 288). Societies with high unemployment rates also contribute to the abuse and neglect levels that can partake in a household (Gillham, Tanner, & Cheyne, 1998: 79-90). All of these findings are helpful for the research when describing factors that could be integrated with substance abuse as an adult.

The general agreement is that if a guardian abuses a child, they have a higher risk for becoming drug and alcohol users as adults. It is important to understand that not all children who are abused will continue this cycle with their offspring’s. Not all children who are abused will turn to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with life. For many of these traumatized children, it will be a barrier that is overcome with the help of family members, social workers, and programs established for survivors. “In addition, relapse and treatment complications may be more likely if issues related to maltreatment are not identified and treated” (Brown, 1991; Rose, 1991; Young, 1995). Often not recognized, maltreatment is still extensive and the children who suffer through it will not be treated or protected (Wendland,2016). Research will continue to analyze and search for factors that could explain what exact effects living in an abusive home can do to a child.

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