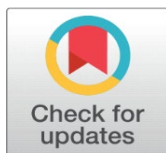
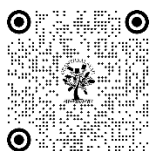


# A STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING SEXUAL ABUSE

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## ABSTRACT

This section presents research on psychological risk factors related to adolescent sexual abuse. Due to the complexity of the subject matter, many retrospective studies have identified risk factors associated with sexual abuse. It was not possible to achieve random orientation of relationships in these studies. Not only do memories change over the years, but the experience of sexual abuse and its aftermath can be altered by familial, relational, emotional and personal factors. There are several prospective studies that have identified risk factors in adolescents. Thus, the available reviews are divided into two sections: (a) Reviews of adolescent sexual abuse and (b) Reviews of risk factors in adolescents and adults. Risk factors are listed in the next section

**Keywords:** Psychological Risk, Adolescent, Sexual Abuse, Emotional, Personal Factors



## 1. INTRODUCTION SELF-ESTEEM

Self-Esteem refers to a girl's "general self-esteem". Also the feeling that others appreciate and appreciate her and the sense of her ability and skill to do the work and solve the problem.

A Study on Adolescent Self-Esteem Kim, Park and Park (2017) looked at the relationship between sexual abuse and self-esteem in adolescents. The subjects were 695 middle and high school students (413 males and 282 females). The results showed that adolescents who had been sexually abused had low self-esteem. Additionally, sexual abuse has been shown to predict lower self-esteem in adolescents.

Study of Mundukottackal and Ravindranadan, (2018) found that sexually abused adolescent girls are experiencing significantly lower self-esteem than sexually non-abused girls. Further, the cross sectional study of Cecil and Matson (2001) found that, the longer duration of childhood sexual abuse predicted lower self-esteem among female adolescence. Further, the study suggested that adolescent girl's with CSA history attained lower on measures of self-esteem than the non-abused girls.

Similarly, study of Jóhannesdóttir (2017) revealed that those who were not experienced CSA have higher self-esteem than the adolescence with sexual abuse. In addition, sexually abused boys are having better self-esteem than sexually abused girls.

Good parental support also improves self-esteem in abused youth. Similarly, a study by Mutavi, Obondo, Mathai, Kokonya, and Dako-Gyeke (2018) also investigated the relationship between sexual abuse and self-esteem in adolescents. A total of 191 participants (168 girls and 23 boys) were included in the study. The average age of the participants was 13 years old. As a result of the study, it was found that adolescents who had been sexually abused had low self-esteem, which was significantly related to the frequency and severity of sexual abuse experiences.

Swanston, Plunkett, O'Toole, Shrimpton, Parkinson, and Oates (2003) investigated the psychological effects of CSA after 9 years in adolescents and young adults (14 to 25 years old). The results showed that participants who had been sexually abused experienced low self-esteem.

## **2. RESULTS ALSO SHOWED THAT CSA WAS A SIGNIFICANT PREDICTOR OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM.**

**Adult Self-Esteem Study** A retrospective study by Lamoureux, Palmieri, Jackson, and Hobfoll (2011) found reduced self-esteem in adult women with a history of CSA, averaging 21 years. Structural equation modeling showed that reduced self-esteem in abused women increased psychological stress, interpersonal problems, and risky sexual behavior.

Another study found that college students who were sexually abused as children had lower self-esteem than those who did not (Cortés, Cantón, & Canton-Cortes, 2011). Similarly, Timraz, Lewin, Giurgescu, and Kavanaugh (2018) investigated the long-term effects of CSA on adult Arab women. Ten women participated in the study. The results showed that all women experienced negative psychological effects, such as decreased self-esteem.

The above studies showed that adolescents and adults' histories of sexual abuse lead to a decrease in their self-esteem. Although the self-esteem should be changed through the longer duration, increased frequency, length and severity of childhood sexual abuse.

## **3. EMOTIONAL REGULATION**

Difficulties in emotional regulation imply the difficulties in understanding and regulating one's own as well as others emotional states. Difficulty in emotion regulation consists of 6 dimensions such as lack of emotional awareness (awareness), lack of emotional clarity (clarity), difficulties in controlling impulses when distressed (impulse), difficulties in engaging in goal directed behavior when distressed (goals), non-acceptance of negative emotional responses (non acceptance) and limited access to emotion regulation strategies (strategies).

Studies among adolescence on emotional regulation Chang, Kaczurkin, McLean and Foa (2018) examined the association between difficulties in emotion regulation, PTSD and depressive symptoms. Participants of the study consist of 90 female adolescents with sexual abuse history were assessed using the Child PTSD Symptom Scale-Interview, Negative Mood Regulation Questionnaire and the Beck Depression Inventory as baseline investigation.

Findings of the study demonstrated that higher emotion regulation difficulties were associated with high severity of PTSD and depressive symptoms. Moreover, the association between emotion regulation difficulties and PTSD severity was mediated by depressive symptoms. Study also indicated that, emotion regulation difficulties and depressive symptoms were mediated by PTSD symptoms. Findings of the study highlighted the importance of difficulties in emotion regulation among adolescent survivors of sexual abuse.

The study of Amédée, Tremblay-Perreault, Hébert, and Cyr (2019) evaluated the children's emotion regulation difficulties and social skills problems such as withdrawal and social difficulties.

Participants involved 283 CSA victims and 60 non abused comparisons. Emotion regulation difficulties, withdrawal, and social difficulties displayed in the school context were evaluated by teachers. Results indicated that children with sexual abuse showed increased emotion regulation difficulties and greater levels of both withdrawal and social difficulties compared to non-abused children. Findings suggested that difficulties in emotional regulation among the sexual abuse victims mediate to social difficulties and withdrawn behavior. Hébert, Langevin and Oussaïd (2018) studied the relationship between emotion regulation, dissociation, cumulative childhood trauma and internalized and externalized behavior problems in child with sexual abuse history.

Study participants were 309 sexually abused children (203 girls and 106 boys, mean age = 9.07) and their caregivers. Parents completed measurements assessing the child's ability to regulate emotions and dissociation from baseline (T1). In the second phase (T2), parents completed measurements assessing their child's behavioral problems. Analysis of sequential mediation with emotion regulation and dissociation was performed.

Findings indicated that cumulative childhood trauma among the sexually abused children leads to both internalized and externalized behavior problems through three mediation paths: emotion regulation alone, dissociation alone, and through a path combining emotion regulation and dissociation. Study suggests the importance of emotional regulation interventions for sexually abused children.

Séguin-Lemire, Hébert, Cossette, and Langevin (2017) investigated the development of emotion regulation skills in sexually abused young children. Children's emotion regulation abilities and their difficulties were evaluated soon after disclosure of sexual abuse and one year later, and match up with those of sexually non abused children. Participants involved 47 sexually abused and 74 sexually non abused children. Teachers and parents evaluated the emotional regulation and victimization history measure. Parents of sexually abused children, report lower emotion regulation skills in their child than parents of non-abused children. Teachers also reported that children with sexual abuse history showed poor emotion regulation skills, but their difficulty tends to diminishes over time. Findings of the study recommend greater need for emotional regulation interventions for sexually abused children. Similarly, the study of Langevin, Cossette and Hébert (2016) also found that sexually abused young children experiences greater emotional regulation difficulties than the non-abused.

Additionally, research by Langevin, Hébert, and Cossette (2015) found that the difficulties in emotional regulation that young children face mediate external and internal behavioral and emotional problems among them. A Study on Emotional Regulation in Adults Charak, DiLillo, Messman-Moore, and Gratz (2018) examine the characteristics of victim experiences (e.g., relationship with the perpetrator, behavior and frequency) and examine differences in emotion measures I did. Dysregulation between the latent layer and the non-victim layer. Study participants included 491 women (ages 18-25), of whom 335 participants had been sexually victimized at least once.

Results of the study suggested that severe forms of child and adolescent sexual abuse lead to greater difficulties in emotional regulation. Results also highlighted that the possible benefit of interventions aimed at improving emotion regulation among women with severe childhood sexual abuse.

The cross sectional study of Messman-Moore, Walsh, and DiLillo (2010) examined the relationship between emotion dysregulation, risky sexual behavior and sexual revictimization among adults with childhood sexual abuse and childhood physical abuse. Participants involved seven hundred and fifty two college women. Findings indicated that emotion dysregulation mediated revictimization for both childhood sexual abuse and childhood physical abuse. Study also suggested that emotion dysregulation predicted risky sexual behaviour among college women.

Findings of the studies of difficulties in emotional regulation among adolescence and adults reveal that, history of CSA increases difficulties in emotional regulation. The higher difficulties in emotional regulation probably lead to social skills problems, depressive symptoms, PTSD, dissociation, externalizing and internalizing behaviour problems. Additionally the studies document that the difficulties in emotional regulation increases risky sexual behaviour and sexual revictimization. Further the studies recommend emotional regulation interventions for preventing further sexual victimization among them.

#### **4. SELF EFFICACY**

For this study, self-efficacy refers to –the confidence a person has that she can perform specific behaviours that would minimize her chances of being sexually victimized, either by preventing a victimization attempt from occurring or by preventing victimization (rape or molestation) if an attempt occurred||.

##### **Studies among adolescents on self-efficacy**

A study conducted by Walsh and Foshee (1998) showed that the role of self-efficacy, self-determination, and victim blaming attitude for adolescent sexual victimization. Participants involved 732 girls without sexual abuse and whom studying in 8th and 9th graders in fourteen schools of North Carolina. A follow up assessment was conducted after 6 months. Girls were evaluated to find out whether forced sexual activity during the preceding 6 months was predicted by levels of self-efficacy, self-determination or victim blaming.

Findings indicated that the lower levels of self-efficacy, not self-determination or victim blaming predict the possibility of experiencing forced sexual activity among the adolescent females.

##### **Studies among adults on self-efficacy**

The retrospective study of Lamoureux, Palmieri, Jackson, and Hobfoll (2011) examined the influences of CSA on adult interpersonal functioning, resiliency resources (self-efficacy and self-esteem) and psychological distress. Women

(N=693) attending gynecological clinics within the age range of 16 to 29 years were interviewed at 2 time points, namely Time 1 and Time 2 (6 month follow up). Study found that experience of CSA reduced their self-efficacy among adult females. Structural equation modeling found that lower self-efficacy among the abused women in turn increases psychological distress, interpersonal problems and sexual risk behaviors. The cross-sectional study of Kearns and Calhoun (2010) explored the association between interpersonal effectiveness such as level of assertiveness, social perception, perceived self-efficacy and sexual revictimization in adolescence and adulthood. Study included global versus situation-specific measures of interpersonal effectiveness. Findings suggested that there was no significant difference in global measures of interpersonal effectiveness and social perception. Additionally, the study found that sexually victimized women scored lower on sexual self-efficacy than the non-victimized women. The results highlight the importance of addressing sexual self-efficacy for sexually abused women.

Studies of both adolescent girls and adult women who have been sexually abused have shown that their self-efficacy is lower than those who have not been abused. Research has shown that developing a sense of self-efficacy to prevent sexual abuse is one of the primary goals of teenage girls.

#### • Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a person's ability to express needs, desires and feelings openly, honestly and directly. Assertive girls are determined but not rude. They are probably more open to both criticism and praise. Perseverance is one of the most important social skills. It is often associated with good self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

#### Adult Confidence Study

A study by Gidycz, Van Wynsberghe, and Edwards (2008) evaluated predictors of violence-resistance strategies in female college students who were sexually assaulted. 68 participants were evaluated at Hour 1 and Hour 2. The results showed that childhood experiences of sexual abuse were associated with immobility, passivity, and coolness in later sexual abuse situations in adult women.

The results showed that adult women with a history of CSA were less assertive than women who had not been abused. A study by Ullman and Vasquez (2015) investigated CSA-related persistence in sexual rejection, emotional dysregulation, repeated sexual victimization in adults, and sexual risk behaviours. This study included 1094 adult women with CSA. The results showed that adult women with CSA were repeatedly sexually harassed due to reduced confidence in not having sex. Cortés, Cantón, and Canton-Cortes (2011) analysed the prevalence, nature, and outcome of adolescent sexual abuse. More than two thousand college students were participated in the study which involved sexually abused and non-abused girls. Results indicated that female college students with CSA showed lower self-esteem and lower assertiveness, negative attitude toward life, higher depression and anxiety scores. Findings demonstrated that female college students those who were sexually abused as children depicted lower assertiveness in comparison with sexually non abused college students. The cross sectional study of Kearns and Calhoun (2010) found that sexually victimized women scored lower on assertiveness than the non-victimized women. Further, the study of Katz, May, Sörensen and DelTosta (2010) found that self-blame and reduced levels of sexual refusal assertiveness leads to later sexual victimization among college students (N=87).

Declining confidence in avoiding sexual intercourse among college students should be addressed to reduce future risk of sexual harassment.

Research on assertiveness in adults suggests that childhood sexual abuse is likely to reduce overall assertiveness as well as situational assertiveness. This in turn can increase the risk of sexual abuse.

#### • Inferiority Complex

Inferiority complex is a psychological state that occurs when daily life is hindered by the feeling that one is not enough. They often have low self-esteem. They may consider themselves less important than others and are more sensitive by nature. They experience social isolation. A girl with an inferiority complex has difficulty creating and maintaining friendships and healthy relationships. Often they do not take responsibility for their mistakes or mistakes and blame others. Adolescent Inferiority Study Deb and Mukherjee (2009) investigated the effects of sexual abuse on personality traits in adolescent girls.

The study included 120 sexually abused adolescent girls and 120 non-sexually abused adolescent girls. As a result of the study, it was found that adolescent girls who were sexually abused had a negative self-image and were introverted



compared to adolescents who had not been sexually abused. Also, according to a study by Pati (2004), about 50.8% of girls who are sexually abused experience extreme stress due to inferiority complex.

The above studies showed that the experience of sexual abuse in adolescents has the potential to lead to an inferiority complex. Inferiority feeling among the abused adolescence increases their feelings of inadequacy which in turn reduces their active resistance during abuse situations.

#### • Self control

Girls with self-control showed strong control over their own thoughts, emotional life and behaviour. Girls with self-control are able to control impulses and possessed the capacity to delay instant fulfillment of a minor incentives for a greater reward later. They can alter their behaviour in order to prevent their impulsive response. Studies among adolescence on self-control Higgins, Jennings, Tewsbury and Gibson (2009) investigated the possible links between lower self-control and violent victimization among the adolescence using six year longitudinal studies.

The longitudinal data followed approximately 3,500 sixth and seventh graders in 22 US schools. Scales used in the study include the Self-Control Scale and the Violence Victimization Scale. As a result of the study, it was found that a decrease in self-control in adolescence leads to crime victimization. The results showed that abused adolescents with low self-control were less likely to think about the consequences of their interactions and identify them as a personal threat.

Studies on Self-Control in Adults Fox, Gover, and Kaukinen (2009) investigated the relationship between self-control and bullying in undergraduate students. A total of 1,490 undergraduate students included in the participants were asked to report their experiences of stalking, child abuse, and self-control. Logistic regression models were evaluated separately to establish differences between males and females. The results showed that women were more likely than men to stalk their victims. The results also showed that child abuse was significantly associated with stalking in both males and females. Low self-control was also significantly associated with female-only bullying.

Similarly, a study by van der Kolk, Perry, and Herman (1991) investigated the childhood origins of self-destructive behavior. The study found that adults who were sexually abused as children were more likely than others to engage in self-destructive behavior. They couldn't control their urges. Self-Care Studies found that abused and abused children are at risk of being victimized later in life due to poor self-care due to negative childhood experiences.

#### • Tolerance

Tolerance is the ability to withstand extreme conditions. It refers to the quality of the ability or willingness to accept the actions of others. Girls with tolerance have the ability to overcome pressure and tension. They know how to relax despite the difficulties.

Study of Introspection in Adolescents Mundukottackal and Ravindranadan (2018) studied correlations between mental healths in sexually abused adolescent girls. Participants included 57 girls who were sexually abused in government orphanages, 66 girls who were not abused in poor households, and 54 girls who were not abused living with their parents.

Measures used for this study are Beck's Depression Inventory, Stress Tolerance Scale, Emotional Intelligence Inventory, Brief Resilience, Self- Esteem Scale and Psychological Well-being Scale. Results indicated that sexually abused adolescent girls were demonstrated lower levels of tolerance than the sexually non abused counter parts.

Studies among adults on tolerance Thakkar and McCanne (2000) investigated the association between daily stressors and physical symptoms among college women with and without histories of CSA. Participants involved 18 sexually abused 27 non abused women. Results indicated that, college women with CSA history may be particularly at risk for the effects of heightened daily stress, and may exhibit more physical symptoms related with it.

The study found that sexually abused women experience lower levels of tolerance. Another study found that men with a history of CSA had higher levels of stress intolerance. Adults who have been sexually abused find it increasingly difficult to resist negative mental states (Wang, Huto, Biello, O'Clery, Mayer, Rosenberger, and Mimiaga, 2017). A study found that childhood sexual abuse between adolescents and adults reduces their ability to tolerate extreme environments, thereby failing to respond to situations of exploitation. A reduced tolerance may increase the likelihood of sexual harassment in the future.

#### • Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to the presence of positive index characteristics resulting from a random combination of organic, family, community and social factors. The state of well-being "is that a person realizes his abilities and is able to

work productively and profitably and contribute to society." Girls with psychological wellbeing are able to maintain healthy relationship with others. Studies among adolescence on psychological wellbeing.

The exploratory study of Navya Shree and Manjula (2017) carried out to understand level of psychological wellbeing among adolescent girls with and without CSA. Participants of the study involved 91 adolescent girls. Findings of the study demonstrated that significant difference in the areas of environmental mastery, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance between abused and non-abused adolescence. Study suggested that adolescents with sexual abuse faced with increased difficulty in accepting one's own traits and is dissatisfied with their past experiences as compared with non-abused adolescence.

Study concluded that sexual abuse has played negative impact on the psychological wellbeing among adolescents. Likewise, the study by Mundukottackal and Ravindranadan (2018) found that sexually abused adolescent girls were experienced significantly lower psychological wellbeing than sexually non-abused girls. Similarly, study of Jacob and Ravindranadan (2017) also indicated that adolescent girls with sexual abuse were experienced lower wellbeing than the non-abused. Studies among adults on psychological wellbeing.

The study of Hasnain and Kumar (2006) investigated that the psychological wellbeing of female college students with (n=57) and without (n=93) histories of CSA. Sexually abused females were categorized into severe forms of sexual abuse (42%) and moderate forms of sexual abuse (58%). The study found no significant difference between the psychological well-being of college students who experienced moderate to severe sexual abuse. On the other hand, participants who experienced both moderate and severe abuse had significantly lower psychological well-being than participants who had not been sexually assaulted. This study found that adult women's psychological well-being may be reduced by the severity of sexual abuse. Similarly, Rew, Esparza, and Sands (1991) conducted a comparative study of sexually abused and inexperienced college students. A total of 271 students (111 females and 160 males) participated in the study. Fifty percent of the women and twenty two percentages of the men in the participants reported one or more unwanted sexual experiences in childhood. Findings of the study implied that wellbeing was lower among abused college students (both men and women) when compared to sexually non abused.

The above-mentioned studies on psychological wellbeing among adolescence and adults suggest that, history of CSA reduces the psychological wellbeing among them. Severity of sexual abuse is one of the prominent factors that make changes in psychological wellbeing.

#### • Social skills

Social skill refers to the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Social skills include all skills necessary for competent social interaction, including verbal and nonverbal communication. Girls with good social skills can have healthy and satisfying relationships with others.

Study of Social Skills in Adolescents A study by Blanchard-Dallaire and Hébert (2014) assessed the social relationships of sexually abused children. The study included 93 sexually abused children and 75 non-abuse children. Children who are sexually abused have shown their limits as friends.

The results showed that children who had been sexually abused had lower interpersonal trust and social skills than children who had not been sexually abused.

Research suggests that children who report having few friends become more vulnerable. Perhaps the physical presence of friends and neighbors deters potential offenders. However, children with poor social skills may be more vulnerable to being tricked by sexual abusers.

#### • Sensitivity

The Sensitive adolescent girl tends to withdraw, tenderness, insecurity, inadequacy and inferiority. They prefer to use intelligence rather than brute force to get things done. An overly sensitive girl easily thinks she is being bullied. They have a hard time maintaining close relationships. They may lack self-confidence. Sensitivity Study in Adults Luterek, Harb, Heimberg, and Marx (2004) investigated the relationship between interpersonal sensitivity to rejection and CSA. Study participants were 355 female students, 34 of whom had CSA experience. Results indicate that interpersonal rejection sensitivity mediates the association between CSA and late depressive symptoms. Additionally, interpersonal sensitivity to rejection partially mediated the association between anger suppression and CSA. Similarly, a study by Figueroa, Silk, Huth, and Lohr (1997) investigated the psychopathological effects of CSA among adults. This study showed that interpersonal sensitivity differed significantly between adults with and without a history of CSA.

The results of this study also showed that interpersonal sensitivity in adults with CSA was a predictor of a borderline diagnosis. A study by Swett, Surrey, and Cohen (1990) found that adults who experienced CSA differed significantly in interpersonal sensitivity from those who had not been abused. A sensitivity study of adults found that survivors of childhood sexual abuse had heightened interpersonal sensitivity. Sensitive adolescents tended to suppress their reactions even in exploitative situations. This may increase the risk of sexual victimization in the future.

#### • Impulsivity

In this study, impulsivity refers to tendency of an adolescent girl to act without forethought of analyzing the risk for sexual abuse in particular situation. Girls with impulsivity may find it unbearable to wait their turn while doing activities. They may probably exhibit risky behaviour and they have decreased sensitivity with long term consequences.

Studies among adolescence on impulsivity. The prospective study of Butler (2013) focused at identifying risk factors of child sexual assault for girls aged 17 years or younger. Participants were selected from the panel study of income dynamics and were derived from interviews with 1087 girls, their primary caregivers and household heads.

Data were collected from the age of 1 year to 20 years of age. This study assessed previous CSA, family background factors, and children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The results showed that girls' impulsiveness was one of the strongest predictors of CSA.

This study documented that girls are more vulnerable to sexual abuse if they are impulsive and generally do not do what they are told. Criminal justice research agrees with this study that low self-control increases sexual harassment.

Conclusion: This study examined various psychological factors associated with adolescent sexual abuse, including self-esteem, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, assertiveness, inferiority complex, self-control, tolerance, psychological well-being, social skills, sensitivity, and impulsivity. The research consistently shows that a history of childhood sexual abuse negatively impacts these psychological factors in both adolescents and adults. Lower levels of these positive psychological attributes are associated with increased vulnerability to future victimization. The findings highlight the importance of early intervention and support for sexual abuse survivors to mitigate long-term psychological effects and reduce the risk of revictimization.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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None

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