

Some Perceived Parental Undesirable Behaviours Predicting Child Sexual, Physical and Emotional Abuse: A Study Among a Sample of University Students in South Africa

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KEY WORDS Parental undesirable behaviours; child abuse; university students; South Africa

ABSTRACT This is an investigation into some perceived parental undesirable behaviours that may predict child sexual, physical and emotional abuse among a sample of university students in South Africa. 722 undergraduate students of psychology at the University of the North, South Africa, filled in a retrospective self-rating questionnaire in a classroom setting. The questionnaire asked questions about perceived parental undesirable behaviours during childhood, and childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Logistic Regression Analysis shows that among all the participants, 'parent haven gone into a psychiatric hospital for psychiatric problems' and 'parent haven had problems with drugs or alcohol' predict child sexual abuse. 'Participant's feeling of being mistreated because of parental psychiatric problems' and 'parent hitting or beating up the other parent' predict child physical abuse. Again, 'Parent hitting or beating up the other parent' predict child emotional abuse. Mental health and social workers, educators and law enforcement agencies dealing with prevention and protection against child abuse in the province should take note of the above identified risk factors while designing programmes for the eradication of child sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Respondents indicated that any of their parents or stepparent or foster parent had to go into a psychiatric hospital for psychiatric problems.	24 (3.3%)
Other than being in a psychiatric hospital, parent received psychotherapy or psychiatric medication.	26 (3.6%)
Parent/stepparent/foster parent has ever had problems with drugs or alcohol.	82 (11.4%)
The problem (of drug/alcohol) resulted in either parent having medical problems, getting divorced or separated, being fired from work, or being arrested for intoxication in public or while driving.	40 (5.5%)
Respondent ever felt maltreated because of the parent's drug or alcohol problems.	43 (6.0%)
Respondent has ever felt being mistreated because of the parent's having psychiatric problems.	21 (2.9%)
Respondent has ever seen his or her parent beat up or hit the other parent.	137 (19.0%)

Table 2: Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis (Forward) showing the relationship between parental undesirable behaviours, and child sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

<i>Dependent Variables</i>	<i>Independent Variables in the Equation</i>								<i>Overall % predicted</i>
	<i>Parental undesirable behaviour</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S. E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Exp (B)</i>	
Sexual abuse (n = 166, 25.6%)	D1	0.9896	0.4453	4.9401	1	0.03	0.06	2.69	75.48
	D4	0.7464	0.2152	12.0354	1	0.00	0.12	2.11	
Physical abuse (n = 110, 15.2%)	D3	0.9503	0.4783	3.9468	1	0.04	0.06	2.59	83.69
	D5	0.9795	0.2338	17.5495	1	0.00	0.16	2.66	
Emotional abuse (n=194, 26.9%)	D5	1.4574	0.2051	50.4886	1	0.00	0.25	4.30	73.48

D1 = 'parent haven gone to a psychiatric hospital for psychiatric problems'

D3 = 'participant haven felt mistreated because of parental psychiatric problems'

D4 = 'Parent having problems with drugs or alcohol'

D5 = 'parent hitting or beating up the other parent'

