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ABSTRACT: Using questionnaire and interview techniques, 167 children aged 11 to 18, and 213 adults were asked for information on their experiences of physical abuse, physical neglect, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse. When neglect preceded abuse in children who experienced both, the negative impact on the child's outlook was magnified. Neglect increases a child's susceptibility and vulnerability to abuse. Our data indicates neglect has a greater impact than abuse on a child's self-perception and future outlook. Being mistreated as a child and being mistreated by a spouse correlate highly with a parent's tendency to mistreat, particularly with physical and emotional neglect.

INTRODUCTION

In the research on child abuse and neglect, the study of neglect is badly overlooked. Although both clinical and research evidence indicates that childhood neglect has severely damaging effects on child development and adult psychology, abuse is more dramatic and attracts more public and scientific attention. Our study, contrasting the effects of abuse and neglect, appears to demonstrate that neglect has a more pronounced and longer lasting effect on a child's self esteem and outlook on the future. It appears that neglect makes children both more susceptible and more vulnerable to abuse. Neglected children are more easily taken advantage of. When they are abused, because they

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are more psychologically fragile, they are more deeply and more extensively hurt. The combination of abuse and neglect creates a greater impact upon all mistreated children but those who are neglected first are more damaged.

There is less emphasis in the literature on child neglect possibly because physical abuse and sexual abuse are more definable and measurable. Articles on mistreatment from developing countries might be expected to emphasize the effects of neglect, yet they also seem more interested in abuse. It is assumed that in North America neglect is less frequent and less traumatizing than abuse. However, there is evidence that with the declining value of children (Preston, 1984), more children live in poverty and are consequently more often physically neglected; with poor nourishment, housing, and medical care, etc. Emotional and intellectual neglect can take place anywhere and may be relatively more prevalent in wealthier countries. Though it is difficult to measure objectively, many patients and clients report the consequent damage to their lives.

The early studies of Dennis (1973) and Bowlby (1969) have shown that neglect interferes with the normal development of children and creates problems with early and later attachment. This has been confirmed by recent research (Crittenden, 1992; Goldson, 1991; Lyons-Ruth, Connell, Grunebaum, & Botein, 1990). Our interest is on the effects of abuse and neglect on a child's self-esteem, hope about the future and psychiatric illness.

Although only one-tenth (approx.) of the recent articles on child abuse and neglect emphasize neglect, there are some fascinating findings. Ohshima, Nakaya, Saito, Maeda, and Nagano (1991) report the autopsy findings of a neglected baby girl who died of septicaemia. They state that an immunodeficiency was secondary to thymic involution which was due to nutritional neglect. A later publication (Fukunaga, Mizoi, Yamashita, Yamada, et. al., 1992) describes the results of autopsies on forty-six children. They confirmed that there was marked involution of the thymus resulting in insufficiency of the immune system, all because of neglect.

Galvin, Shekhar, Simon, Stilwell, et. al. (1991) found low levels of dopamine-beta-hydroxylase (DBH) in a high percentage of psychiatrically hospitalized boys who had a history of abuse or neglect. They feel that the low serum DBH may be a biological sequela of seriously disrupted attachment resulting from child neglect.

Neglect appears to result in a variety of psychiatric conditions, particularly self-destructive behaviour. A study by van der Kolk, Perry, and Herman (1991) found abuse and neglect correlated with suicidal

attempts, self-injury and eating disorders. The lack of secure attachment would seem to maintain self-destructive behaviour. It appears that adolescents who experience abuse and neglect have low self-esteem and high levels of depression.

In an attempt to evaluate risk factors related to psychiatric illness, Smith and Alder (1991) found abused children were more likely to have been separated from their mothers during the first year of life. This coincides with our findings that child neglect tends to precede and accentuate abuse.

METHOD

Sample

The sample in this study comes mainly from a clinical population which includes those admitted to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit, Christchurch Hospital; children reported to the Child Help Line, Christchurch, New Zealand; patients of the Jack Ledger House (Psychiatric Unit of the Arbutus Society for Children, Victoria, B.C., Canada); patients from a private psychiatric practice; young offenders at the Calgary Young Offenders' Centre, Alberta, Canada; and twenty-eight are from a Victoria high school. The sample was designed to include "normal" young people; those who were primarily abused; those psychiatrically ill; and young persons who have been convicted of a variety of crimes and incarcerated.

One hundred and sixty-seven children and adolescents ranging from the ages of eleven to eighteen were given a self-assessment questionnaire. Some were also interviewed. Eighty-eight of these were Canadian and the rest were from New Zealand. The adult sample of two hundred and thirteen included parents of the above children, women who delivered their first child at home, and mothers who delivered their first child in the Christchurch Women's Hospital, plus a few other adults from the private psychiatric practice. Ninety-four percent of the parents responding were mothers or foster mothers. There appeared to be little difference between the groups.

Methodology

The majority of the questions in our Parent Experience Questionnaire (PEQ) and our Child Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) used visual analog scales which allowed the children and adolescents to indi-

cate anywhere on a 9 cm line (representing the continuum between two extremes) their estimation of how much they were affected; for example:

How often were you abused?
 Every day  Never

Our questionnaires were thus able to avoid the difficulties in defining and rating the extent of abuse and neglect. Guidance given to the interviewee on the subject was in descriptive words that might apply to each visual analog scale. To get a more accurate estimate on what type of abuse or neglect the subject had experienced, (s)he was asked to check one or more from a selection of possible types of abuse and neglect. For most calculations we used the variable "Extent of Abuse or Neglect", which was a multiple of the frequency times the severity.

The five types of abuse and neglect we studied were:

1. Physical abuse, e.g., hitting, burning, slapping, etc.
2. Physical neglect, e.g., insufficient food, clothing, shelter
3. Verbal abuse, e.g., blaming, criticizing, humiliating, etc.
4. Emotional and intellectual neglect, insufficient affection or intellectual stimulation, etc.
5. Sexual abuse, e.g. forced intercourse, pornography etc.

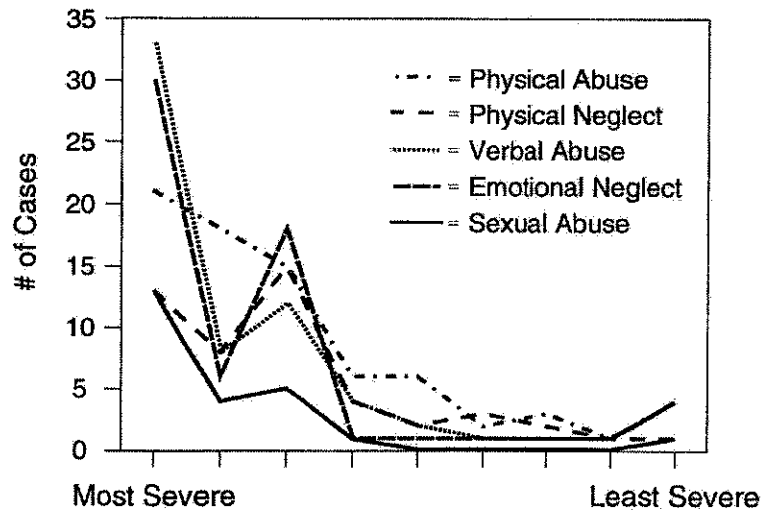
Each subject was asked to indicate on the scales, for both severity and frequency, all those who were doing the abuse. In this way it was possible to indicate the relative frequency and severity of various kinds of abuse or neglect perpetrated by different people. For each type of abuse or neglect, subjects also used visual analog scales to indicate what effect it had on them, who they thought was at fault, and how abnormal or unusual they thought it was. They were also asked to indicate, with check marks, the age it began, the duration and the causes behind the neglect or abuse. Data was collated by a research assistant and analyzed with the help of the SPSS programme at the University of Calgary. The questionnaires and the interviewing method have been described in previous papers (Ney 1986; Ney, 1987).

RESULTS

Figure 1 indicates the extent of various types of abuse and neglect as distributed on a nine-point rating derived from the visual analog scale. It appears there is a similar distribution of the five types of abuse and

Figure 1

Extent of Various Types of Abuse and Neglect



neglect. Emotional neglect and verbal abuse were the most frequent severe forms.

Table 1 indicates the rank order of specific types of mistreatment as determined by Pearson Correlation Coefficients. From this it appears that lack of protection, then poor environment, and then lack of food are the most significant forms of physical neglect. Lack of understanding, and lack of physical and verbal affection are the most significant forms of emotional neglect.

We asked the young people to estimate their present enjoyment of living and their anticipation of a happy marriage, etc. (Table 2). When various types of neglect are compared to various types of abuse it appears that emotional neglect has the biggest negative impact on the perceived chance of having a happy marriage. Physical neglect is likely to interfere with young people developing into the kind of persons they could have been.

Our findings indicated that less than five percent of individuals experienced a single form of abuse or neglect. When we rank ordered the impact on children of combinations of two or three types of abuse or neglect, we found that neglect occurred in combination with various

Table 1
Rank order of specific types of mistreatment
based on significance

	PHYSICAL ABUSE	VERBAL ABUSE	PHYSICAL NEGLECT	EMOTIONAL NEGLECT	SEXUAL ABUSE
MOST SIGNIFICANT	Face slapped*	Threatened*	Lack of protection*	No understanding*	Gang rape*
	Choked*	Blamed*	Poor environment*	No physical affection*	Oral sex
	Beaten with belt*	Shamed*	Lack of food	No verbal affection*	Made to masturbate
	Broken bones*	Criticized*	Lack of shelter*	No emotional support*	Forced intercourse
	Thrown around	Discriminated against*	Inadequate hygiene*	No protection*	Used for pornography
LEAST SIGNIFICANT	Burned	Humiliated*	Lack of dental care*	No mental stimulation	Incest
	Punched	Insulted*	Lack of medical care	No encouragement	Exposed
	*p < 0.01 N = 134	*p < 0.001 N = 121	*p < 0.01 N = 84	*p < 0.01 N = 105	*p < 0.05 N = 46

* Significance based on correlations with ratings of extent of abuse or neglect

kinds of abuse in nine out of the first ten having the greatest deleterious effect. In Table 3 these are ranked according to their average correlations with eight negative effects.

When we looked at the extent of abuse and neglect (severity times frequency), we found that more extensive mistreatment increases the expectation of a short lifespan. Table 4 seems to indicate that physical neglect, more than the other types of abuse or neglect, inclines the young person to believe that (s)he will die of a violent death (war, murder or accident). Physical neglect gives a young person the least expectation that (s)he will live to an old age. Approximately 15% of all young people who experienced some type of mistreatment expect they will kill themselves.

The data from the adult sample indicate there are significant correlations between the extent of various kinds of abuse and neglect experienced (except sexual abuse) and having had a psychiatric illness. Judging by the adults' own rating of the extent of their mistreatment, the earlier the age of any type of abuse or neglect apart from physical

Table 2
The Effect on a Child's Outlook of Various Types of Abuse and Neglect

	Type of Abuse											
	Physical Abuse		Verbal Abuse		Physical Neglect		Emotional Neglect		Sexual Abuse		X ²	R
<i>Effect on outlook</i>	X ²	R	X ²	R	X ²	R	X ²	R	X ²	R	X ²	R
Low enjoyment of living	26.4	.47*	16.2	.30	24.8	.48*	29.4	.38*	13.1	.19		
My own future is bad	22.9	.36*	23.6	.22	15.4	.37*	18.6	.26	8.5	.03		
Poor chance of happy marriage	22.3	.40*	17.6	.14	23.8	.27	19.6	.41*	27.0*	.33		
Poor chance of having children	22.4	.18	11.9	.11	10.34	.07	14.56	.23	19.8	.20		
Poor chance of living to old age	11.4	.29*	8.4	.36*	16.3	.38*	20.2	.22	12.3	.14		
Poor chance of developing into person I could have been	-	.20*	-	.41*	-	.33*	-	.27*	-	.20*		
Average	-	.38	-	.308	-	.38	-	.354	-	.218		

N=88

*p < .01

Table 4

Extent of abuse and way person expects to die

	<i>Old Age</i>	<i>Disease</i>	<i>Cancer</i>	<i>Accident</i>	<i>War</i>	<i>Murder</i>	<i>Suicide</i>	
Physical abuse	27%	5	7	22	15	8	17	100% N=60
Physical neglect	17	3	9	29	17	11	14	100% N=35
Verbal abuse	26	6	9	24	13	6	17	100% N=54
Emotional neglect	27	8	8	21	12	8	17	100% N=52
Sexual abuse	32	0	5	16	11	21	16	100% N=19

Total N=167

Table 5

Extent of mistreatment and reported age of onset

<i>Correlation with early onset</i>	<i>Extent of mistreatment</i>				
	<i>Physical abuse</i>	<i>Physical neglect</i>	<i>Verbal abuse</i>	<i>Emotional neglect</i>	<i>Sexual abuse</i>
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.1375	0.2878	0.2649	0.3417	0.3438
Significance	p=0.168	p=0.021	p=0.007	p=0.001	p=0.037

N=162

In an attempt to determine the origins of the neglect, we compared the experience of the parent who was mistreating a child with the child's own experience. In this way it appears that both being mistreated as a child and being mistreated by the spouse correlate highly with all forms of abuse and neglect. There is a particularly high correlation between being mistreated as a child and later physical neglect and emotional neglect (Table 8).

When the young people are asked what they believe are the causes of their mistreatment (Fig. 2), it appears they believe that parents' marital problems are the most important cause of physical neglect, and the parents' immaturity the most important cause of emotional neglect. Table 9 indicates the Pearson Correlation Coefficients and the probabilities of chance correlations of the five types of mistreatment with three variables: "How well has your mother looked after you", "How well has your father looked after you", and "My childhood was very

Table 12
Stepwise regression analysis of most significant factors relating to child mistreatment
(as reported by the parents)

<i>Mistreatment</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Physical abuse	- Less breastfeeding	2.974	p < 0.004
	- Husband "never around" during pregnancy	2.175	p < 0.032
Verbal abuse	- Husband unsupportive during pregnancy	6.206	p < 0.000
	- Fear of losing pregnancy	2.391	p < 0.019
Physical neglect	- Breastfeeding not enjoyable	2.341	p < 0.02
	- Husband "never around" during pregnancy	3.325	p < 0.001
Emotional neglect	- Wife affected by a death	2.533	p < 0.013
	- Breastfeeding not enjoyable	3.060	p < 0.003
Sexual abuse	- Husband unsupportive (early years)	2.680	p < 0.009
	- Loss of child(ren) by adoption	2.009	p < 0.048
Sexual abuse	- Loss of child(ren) by miscarriage	3.439	p < 0.001
	- Breastfeeding not enjoyable	3.058	p < 0.003
	- Loss of child(ren) by abortion	2.837	p < 0.006
	- Husband "never around" (early years)	2.802	p < 0.006

Discussion

Depending on the variable, emotional and physical neglect seem to have as great an impact on young people as any type of abuse. This is true even though in this population the extent of neglect, especially physical neglect, is considerably less. In combination with verbal abuse, neglect has a significantly greater effect on the child's negative perception of himself and his unhappy view of the world.

It is surprising that children and adolescents were able to state that they considered parental marital problems and immaturity to be the most common causes of neglect. Others have found that abuse and neglect are also related to pressure on the family, chaos in the family (Piasecki, Manson, Bieroff, and Hiatt, et. al., 1989) or alcohol and substance abuse (Murphy, Jellinek, Quinn, and Smith, et. al., 1991). The relative decline in the value of children might also explain why they are being neglected (Damme, 1978; Preston, 1984).

An analysis of the data seems to indicate that neglect by the spouse of the mother during her pregnancy and post-partum period has a significant effect on later abuse and neglect of the child. Our studies coincide with that of Brayden (1992), who found that neglecting mothers had poor support systems. One could argue that neglect by the spouse is a root cause for all kinds of later neglect and abuse of children. Therefore, any effort to improve the partner's care of the pregnant woman would help reduce the extent of abuse and neglect. All those factors that turn spouses against each other, especially during pregnancy and infancy, would be a major cause of child abuse and neglect.

The data appears to support a hypothesis that there is a delicate parent-infant relationship whose balance is affected by characteristics in the child, including whether they are cuddly or not. Characteristics in the mother, including whether: a) she has been neglected or abused; b) she is mistreated by her spouse or supported by him, and c) she is mourning a previous pregnancy loss, determine how she responds to the infant's cry. The infant's helpless "feed me" signal may in some mothers produce an anxious or helpless response, and this relates to later neglect of the child. If the mother responds with anger, she is more likely to physically or verbally abuse the child. From our findings it appears that mothers who are neglected are more prone to neglect their children.

If these factors are critical, as our research seems to indicate, then to prevent child abuse it is important to help the parents deal with their

childhood mistreatment. Our data suggest that to enable a mother to bond to and nurture her child, it is important that she mourn her losses, particularly lost pregnancies. It is now well recognized that all types of pregnancy losses result in grief (Lloyd and Laurence, 1985; Pines, 1990; and Mattinson, 1985). Data from our Pregnancy Outcome Study suggests that abortions are more difficult to mourn than other types of pregnancy loss. Thus to help reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, it is important to recognize that abortion losses need to be mourned. Any effort to reduce the frequency of unnecessary abortion will help reduce child mistreatment.

It is interesting to speculate why the study of neglect as a type of mistreatment is being neglected. Is it possible that researchers do not believe that it occurs in an affluent society, or that it is too difficult to measure? Jones and McCurdy (1992) found that neglect does occur in North America, and is the most predictable and distinguishable form of maltreatment. They also found, as we did, that neglect tends to occur at an earlier age than abuse.

In an age when much research is devoted to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome it is unfortunate that we give little attention to the findings that neglect can produce thymic involution and a secondary immune deficiency that can result in septicaemia and death. Maybe less severe forms of neglect result in chemical perturbations that later predispose a young person to a variety of physical and emotional illnesses.

It appears that when neglect precedes abuse the effect of the abuse is significantly greater. It is possible that neglect predisposes children to abuse by making them both more susceptible and more vulnerable. Having been cheated of the normal ingredients of their development, children are susceptible in two senses:

1. Since they continue to look for some agent or some situation that will make up for the deficits in their childhood, they are more easily seduced by any suggestion of concern or care by those who mistreat children.
2. They are more fragile, so that when they are abused, they are more severely affected.

When children are neglected they are easily used by others for political gain. Having been neglected they contain an incipient rage that is easily stirred by those who can accentuate their pain. It is not difficult to convince adults who were abused and/or neglected as chil-

dren that they are victims whose wrongs should be righted even if the method is violent. Once they allow themselves to experience the effect of the neglect they become enraged. At this point a charismatic leader might point to a Utopia and claim that he is the person to lead them to it. Because the adults are so angry they might readily volunteer for impossible tasks and thereby become cannon fodder. A false hope of regaining what they lost in childhood leads them on. When it becomes really dangerous, a charismatic leader often disappears from the scene, only to reappear if the followers are successful. Then, the leader wants to be made emperor, or president. Whether he becomes emperor or not, such leaders tend to quickly forget those upon whose efforts their successes depended. Those people were, after all, only neglected children that have grown up. This is a metaphorical expression of the many ways that people neglected as children become prey to institutions and businesses who use, then neglect them. Since they seldom learn to resolve the critical conflicts from those experiences, they will repeatedly re-enact them (Ney, 1988; Ney, 1989).

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