



The impact of childhood abuse on adult self-esteem and emotional regulation

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To cite this article: André Pereira, José P. Santos, Pedro Sardinha, Jorge Cardoso, Catarina Ramos & Telma Almeida (2021) The impact of childhood abuse on adult self-esteem and emotional regulation, Annals of Medicine, 53:sup1, S126-S126, DOI: [10.1080/07853890.2021.1896171](https://doi.org/10.1080/07853890.2021.1896171)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07853890.2021.1896171>



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Published online: 28 Sep 2021.



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The occurrence of traumatic experiences in childhood can lead to a disruption in the development of secure internal representations, with a negative impact on self-esteem [1]. In addition, child victimisation may compromise their emotional regulation skills [2] and it has been shown that individuals with lower self-esteem have less emotional regulation skills [3]. Studies with adults showed that those who suffered several types of abuse during childhood tend to have worse interpersonal relationships [4]. This research has the main goals, to identify the relationship between the impact of childhood abuse on adult self-esteem and emotional regulation, and the relationship between self-esteem and emotional regulation. This is the first study in a Portuguese sample that integrates those variables.

Materials and methods: The study design is descriptive, observational, and cross-sectional. The sample was composed of 96 Portuguese adults (over 18 years old) ($M = 27.95$ years, $SD = 11.60$). The participants answered online to a sociodemographic questionnaire, Portuguese versions of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) [5], the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) [6], and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) [7]. The link to the study was disclosed by e-mail and in social networks. The study was conducted in accordance with all the ethical principles.

Results: We found significant statistical positive correlations between the total score of the CTQ and the total score of the DERS ($r = 0.422$, $p < .001$) and the sub-scales of DERS: the not acceptance of emotional responses ($r = 0.311$, $p = .002$), difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviour ($r = 0.243$, $p = .017$), impulse control difficulties ($r = 0.431$, $p < .001$), limited access to emotion regulation strategies ($r = 0.465$, $p < .001$), and lack of emotional clarity ($r = 0.209$, $p = .041$). Furthermore, we observed statistical negative correlations between the total score of RSES and the total score of the CTQ ($r = -0.319$, $p = .002$), the total score of the DERS ($r = -0.561$, $p < .001$) and the sub-scales of DERS: the not acceptance of emotional responses ($r = -0.413$, $p < .001$), difficulties engaging in goal-directed behaviour ($r = -0.336$, $p = .001$), impulse control difficulties ($r = -0.373$, $p < .001$), limited access to emotion regulation strategies ($r = -0.508$, $p < .001$), and lack of emotional clarity ($r = -0.542$, $p < .001$).

Discussion and conclusions: In our study, traumatic experiences in childhood were associated with emotional regulation difficulties in adults, which is corroborated by other studies [2]. Additionally, we found that individuals who were victimised in childhood tend to have a perception of lower self-esteem in adult life. The relationship between child abuse and self-esteem and also between child abuse and the emotional regulation difficulties proves the need to develop psychological intervention aiming to enhance the positive self-esteem and the adaptative emotional skills in adulthood. This research highlights the importance of developing intervention programs in victimised children, to reduce the impact of victimisation on self-esteem and emotional regulation.

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DOI: 10.1080/07853890.2021.1896171

Elder abuse: the hidden face of domestic violence

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Violence against the elderly constitutes an undeniable and serious violation of human rights and affects the physical and psychological integrity of the victim. Is not a new phenomenon, is a worldwide problem that has become more pronounce in contemporary societies because of the ageing of the population. World Health Organization [1] defines elder violence as a single or repeated action, or the absence of an appropriate action, arising in the context of a relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes suffering or harm to an elderly person. Occurs through several behaviours involving psychological, physical, sexual, financial violence, neglect and self-neglect [2]. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the work developed by the Victims Information and Assistance Office (GIAV) and by Forensic Psychology Office (GPF) at Egas Moniz Higher Education School about elder abuse.

Materials and methods: The sample ($n = 14$) is derived from the domestic violence risk assessments of GIAV and GPF. We assessed 6 victims: 2 women and 4 man, aged between 64 and 95 years old ($M = 76.67$, $sd = 10.71$); and 8 defendants: 6 women and 2 man, aged between 24 and 77 years old ($M = 46.13$, $sd = 15.52$). The relationship between victims and defendants are 13 sons/daughters and 1 tenant. Data were collected from lawsuits, semi-structured interviews of the victims and defendants, collateral information and criminal record. All ethical issues have been taken due to the sensitive nature of the involved data involved and the respective informed consentient which contained the purpose of the assesses, the confidentiality limits, and information about the ethics and technician's impartiality was sign by all participants.

Results: The results demonstrated physical and psychological abuse (in all cases), followed by economical abuse ($n = 13$, 92.9%) and social abuse ($n = 3$, 21.4%). It is possible to identify several victims' risk factors, namely gender (female victims – $n = 11$, 78.6%), physical problems/limitations ($n = 11$, 78.6%), age above 75 years old ($n = 8$, 57.1%) and previous abuse ($n = 6$, 42.9%). The most relevant offender's risk factors are financial problems ($n = 12$, 85.7%), deficit in the coping skills ($n = 12$, 85.7%), others blame ($n = 10$, 71.4%), history of violence against others ($n = 8$, 57.1%), aggressiveness ($n = 8$, 57.1%), criminal history ($n = 6$, 42.9%), victim of domestic violence in the past ($n = 8$, 35.7%) and perpetrator of domestic violence in the past ($n = 5$, 35.7%). Finally external/relational factors are: offender's dependence ($n = 11$, 78.6%), cohabitation ($n = 11$, 78.6%), history of conflicts between victim and offender ($n = 10$, 71.4%), poor emotional attachment or low family cohesion ($n = 10$, 71.4%), social isolation or lack of social support ($n = 8$, 57.1%), intergenerational transmission of violence ($n = 7$, 50%), inability in the performance of caregiver tasks ($n = 5$, 35.7%) and inexperience as caregiver ($n = 5$, 35.7%).

Discussion and conclusions: Portugal it's one of the top five European Countries with higher percentage (39%) of elderly mistreated [3], however, elder abuse is still the hidden face of domestic violence. The data show several risk factors for elder abuse. These results demonstrated the urgency about elder abuse risk assessment in criminal justice system and the need of a good articulation between Forensic Psychology and Law in order to demystify the hidden face of elder abuse.

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DOI: 10.1080/07853890.2021.1896175

Inmates' empathy: relationship with childhood victimisation

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Psychological trauma can occur at any time in life [1], and when it happens during childhood or adolescence, it may have negative repercussions on mental health that prevail in adult life [2]. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between childhood victimisation trauma experiences and empathy among incarcerated males.

Materials and methods: The sample was composed of 99 incarcerated males with ages between 18 and 73 years old ($M = 37.96$; $SD = 11.6$). Some of the participants were arrested for drug trafficking ($n = 24$, 24.2%), domestic violence