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Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 5 (2010) 738–740

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**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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WCPCG-2010

## Childhood abuse history among male addicts in comparison with non-addict population

Reza Rostami<sup>a</sup>, Jamileh Zarei<sup>b</sup> \*, Somaye Zamiri nejad<sup>c</sup>, Roja Larijani<sup>d</sup><sup>a</sup>University of Tehran, Jalal- Al- Ahmad, Tehran, 11455/6456, Iran<sup>b</sup>Allame Tabatabayi University, Olampic square, Tehran, 1489684511, Iran<sup>c</sup>University of Tehran, Jalal- Al- Ahmad, Tehran, 11455/6456, Iran<sup>d</sup>Tarbiat Moallem University, University square, Karaj, 31971-37551, Iran

Received January 11, 2010; revised February 15, 2010; accepted March 23, 2010

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### Abstract

Child abuse is an important social and health problem in the world. Behavioral and psychological problems in adolescence and adulthood are the long term psychological effects of physical abuse. Behavioral problems such as aggression in adolescence and drug abuse are common in individuals who were abused in childhood. Nevertheless, there is no integrative study of childhood abuse in Iranian addicts. Therefore, this study investigates the childhood abuse in addicts with the purpose of planning a psychological treatment for these patients. The purpose of this study is the investigation of sexual, physical, emotional and verbal abuse in childhood in male addicts in comparison with non addict population. For this purpose, 100 male addicts who were referred to therapeutic institutes in 2009 and 100 non male addicts answered to Child Abuse Self Report Survey( CASRS). Data have been analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics by SPSS 16. The results show a positive and significant relationship between child abuse experience and addiction in adulthood, and it can be concluded that The experience of abuse and neglect in childhood is one of the effective factors of addiction in adulthood.

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### 1. Introduction

Thousands of children and adolescents are burnt, beaten, starved and sexually hurt by their caregivers every day. According to the third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect(Hagele, 2005), almost 2 to 35 percent of children are misbehaved and suffering from a serious physical or psychological -emotional hurts as a result of such experiences. The prevalence of child abuse and increase in the number of reports on hurts and torments of such children has caused countries to have more serious attention to the issues of children rights. The ratification of international treaty of children rights as an international agreement in 1989 is an evidence of such endeavors for the assurance of survival, development, education, health, and also support against different kinds of physical, sexual abuse of children or exploiting them in work or wars ( Law et al, 2004).

\* Jamileh Zarei. Tel.: 0098- 021-84012102; fax: 0098-021-84012101.

E-mail address: [jamileh.zarei@gmail.com](mailto:jamileh.zarei@gmail.com).1877-0428 © 2010 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.175

A lot of studies have shown that child abuse has many damaging emotional, behavioral and cognitive affects (on children) (Hagele, 2005). Long-term psychological effects of physical abuse are the incidence of major behavioral and psychological problems in adolescence or adulthood (Hagele, 2005).

there is not a distinct border between misbehavior and violence but we better use the terms violence or hurt when there are more serious cases with the purpose of physical hurt of child rather than cases of weak or medium punishment that happen for most children (Emri and Lowman- Bilings, 1998). The fourth edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of psychological disorders (DSM IV) describes child abuse as having various physical and sexual dimensions and defines the application of this category in the cases when the clinical attention is concentrated on severe misbehavior of one person to a child (Sadock and Sadock, 2009). Special issues considered in DSM IV are physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Physical abuse due to behavioral disorders, aggressiveness, substance abuse and finally inner and outer behavioral problems are among long-term effects of abuse of children (Raeisi et al, 2008). Drug addiction is one of noteworthy domains of study for clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, since this issue has negative and long-term outcomes for different classes of society (Carr, 1999).

Studies show that lack of closed relationships in families of addict patients is common (Rahimi and Ghasemzadeh, 2002). Furthermore, the results of various researches show intervention of childhood abuse in drug addiction (Hagele, 2005). Nevertheless, up to now no research has been conducted in Iran for studying the experience of abuse and negligence in childhood of addict patients. Therefore, This study has been done with this purpose.

## 2. Method

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The addict sample was include 100 patients (Mean= 33.70, SD=0.94) who were referred to drug therapeutic centers in Tehran and Bojnourd , in April to June, 2009 .100 non-addict men (Mean=35.40 and SD=1.320) that were matched to addict group have been chosen as the control group .

in addition to filling the demographic form( including age, marriage status, job and education) , The participants of this study answered to the self-reporting scale of child abuse. this questionnaire was created by Mohammad khani et.al (2003) and has 38 items .It evaluates a range of child abuse, from sexual abuse to emotional abuse and negative atmosphere of family and negligence to child .Cronbach Alpha coefficient has been reported 0.92 for this scale that reveals high contingency of that ( Mohammad khani et al, 2003). In the present study, Alpha has been calculated as 0.76 .The scoring is doe according to lickert spectrum (from 0=never to 3=always.The verb tense of the items of this questionnaire is simple present (for example :My parents disrespect my character). Since this is a post-event study, the verb tenses are changed into simple past (for example :My parents disrespected my character).

The data are analyzed according to 16<sup>th</sup> edition of SPSS and in addition to descriptive analysis of data, The T-test is considered for evaluation of the hypothesis of research.

## 3. Results

Among the 100 addicts, 31 are single and 62 are married (7 without any response). In non-addicts 40 are single and 58 are married (2 people without any response). 38 percent of addicts were under 30 and 53 percent of them are above 30 and 9 percent did not indicate their age .44 percent of non-addicts were under 30 and 59 percent were above 30, 4 percent did not indicate their age .Among addict people, 58 percent had not graduated from high school and 35 percent did so (6 percent not specified) and among non-addict people, 15 percent had not graduated from high school and 83 percent did so (2 percent not specified). In addition, 81 percent of addicts were employed and 9 percent were unemployed (10 percent not specified); while 89 percent of non-addicts were employed and 6 percent were unemployed (5 percent not specified).

The comparison of the addict group with non-addict group according to the incidence of the experience of abuse and neglect in childhood by T-test suggests that there is a positive and significant relationship between the amount of experience of abuse in childhood and addiction ( $P < 0.05$ )(Table1).

Table1 -The comparison of the addict group with non-addicts group according to the incidence of abuse and neglect in childhood

Groups	Average	Standard Deviation	df	T	Significance Level
Addicts	36.88	12.39	198	3.604	0.00
Non-addicts	31.22	7.17	198	3.604	0.00

In addition, there was a significant difference between the addicts group and non-addicts group in having the experience of affective abuse ( $\alpha=0.05$  and  $t=5.53$ ) and sexual abuse ( $\alpha=0.05$  and  $t=5.42$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the experience of child abuse and drug addiction. This study confirms the studies of Brems et al (2004).

For beginning and continuing of substance abuse there should exist some unhealthy developmental background and a special readiness that is based on the family system and then the society at whole. Inefficient family characteristic can increase the rate of incidence of disorders due to consumption of addictive products (Besharat et al, 2008). While there was statistically significant association between the substance abuse and the age group of adolescents and size of their families, variables such as religion, socioeconomic status, place of residence were not associated with substance use. Most of the addicts reported initiation of substance use at 14 years of age due to peer pressure (Zeinali et al, 2008).

Projected behavioral problems such as adolescence crime, aggressiveness, violence, substance abuse, and internalized behavioral problems such as suicide, deliberate self-damaging actions, anxiety and depression, physical symptoms and long-term compatibility problems have been reported frequently in people have child abuse experience. One of the supplementary results of the present study is the need for supervision on the psychological hygiene of families, especially on those which have high risk of child abuse due to factors such as financial pressure, parent's addiction or psychological disorders. Furthermore, this research is illustrative of the need for serious support of children rights and creating the possibility of provision of psychological services to abused children for the prevention of more hurts. Among the limitation of the research we can mention the sexuality of the participants (males). It is suggested that in future studies the child abuse experiences among female addicts be compared to the result of the present study.

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