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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Sexual violence represents one of the most severe forms of abuse against children, leaving profound and lasting psychological consequences. This study aims to analyze the effects of sexual violence experienced by children and adolescents. A semi-structured interview was conducted with 175 victims aged 3 to 17 at the Serbsky National Medical Research Center for Psychiatry and Narcology. Results revealed that 35 individuals exhibited psychogenic conditions, while 140 were recognized as mentally healthy. Victims were categorized into four groups based on symptom severity. Key findings indicated that psychogenic disorders led to more significant impairments across emotional, psychosexual, and psychosomatic spheres compared to psychogenic reactions. Children with psychogenic disorders demonstrated higher rates of suicidal tendencies and depressive states. The findings underscore the importance of early diagnosis and intervention to mitigate the long-term psychological effects of sexual violence in children and adolescents.

Keywords: Sexual violence, Child abuse, Psychological trauma, Adolescent mental health, Psychogenic disorders.

Introduction

Sexual violence is one of the most severe forms of child abuse. Children are the most vulnerable targets of violence. According to research, violence experienced during childhood leads to severe post-traumatic disorders as well as personality development deviations.

Objective. To analyze the consequences of experienced sexual violence in children and adolescents.

Materials and Methods

A semi-structured interview was conducted with male and female children aged 3 to 17. The sample includes 175 victims, whose studies were conducted at the Laboratory of Child and Adolescent Psychology of the “Serbsky National Medical Research Center for Psychiatry and Narcology.”

Results and Discussion

During the study, 35 out of 175 victims were diagnosed with psychogenic conditions. The remaining 140 individuals were recognized as mentally healthy. All victims were divided into four

groups according to the severity of symptoms: psychogenic disorder was observed in 25 individuals, psychogenic reaction in 10 individuals, unfavorable psychological condition in 74 individuals, and minimally unfavorable psychological condition in 66 individuals. After psychological assessment, 30 signs of experienced sexual violence were identified, grouped into six main areas. The frequency of the obtained data shows that victims demonstrating clinical-level consequences exhibit signs of sexual violence and abuse in all areas. Comparative analysis revealed up to eight signs in the emotional-volitional sphere and the sphere of relationships and meanings. In the behavioral and psychosexual spheres, up to four signs were noted, while in the sphere of self-awareness and psychosomatic sphere, up to three signs were observed. Compared to victims with psychogenic reactions, victims with psychogenic disorders more frequently show impairments in the psychosexual sphere ($p < 0.01$, by Mann–Whitney criterion), the sphere of relationships and meanings ($p < 0.05$), the sphere of self-awareness ($p < 0.05$), and the psychosomatic sphere ($p < 0.05$). Among mentally healthy victims with unfavorable psychological conditions, the psychological consequences of sexual violence span up to four areas.

Conclusions

Children who have experienced sexual violence are more likely to have low levels of sexual activity, negatively impacting their ability to form close relationships in adulthood. They more frequently exhibit negative attitudes towards the male gender as a whole. They fall into the high-risk group for suicidal tendencies and, consequently, depressive states, which must be taken into account during diagnosis and further treatment.

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