

Childhood Neglect Leads to More Delinquency

Research Question

- Does experiencing neglect in childhood lead to higher rates of delinquency among young adults?
- Does gender have any effect on this outcome?

Significance

- In 2015, about 7.2 million children (9.8%) were reported to Child Protective Services as alleged victims of maltreatment.
- Nearly 700,000 of these children were verified as victims of maltreatment.
- Neglect is the most common form of maltreatment: ¾ of children who went through maltreatment experienced neglect.
- Almost 1,700 children died from neglect or abuse.

Background

- Childhood neglect leads to higher rates of alcoholism and violent crime in adulthood, especially for women (Widom & White, 1997).
- There is a positive relationship between parental rejection and adolescent illicit drug use for both men and women (Pires & Jenkins, 2007).
- Parental neglect is related to lower self-esteem in children, regardless of gender, which is related to a higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse (Bolger et al., 1998).

Hypothesis

- Young adults who experienced neglect in childhood will be more likely to participate in delinquent activities.
- Males will have higher rates of delinquency than females who experienced the same level of neglect.

Data

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
- Wave 3 (2001-2002) public data (N = 4,882)
- Age 18-26

Dependent Measure

- Delinquency Scale
 - Contains 12 questions (e.g., stealing, selling drugs, fights) during the previous 12 months (0 = never, 1 = 1-2 times, 2 = 3-4 times, 3 = 5 or more times)
 - The scale (0 – 36) was condensed to be dichotomous where:
 - 0 = No delinquent acts: 73.4%
 - 1 = Any delinquent acts: 26.6%

Independent Measure

- Childhood Neglect: How often had your parent or caregiver not taken care of your basic needs, such as keeping you clean or providing you food or clothing?
 - Never: 89.5%
 - 1-2 times: 5.8%
 - 3-10 times: 2.0%
 - 11+ time: 2.7%

Control Measure

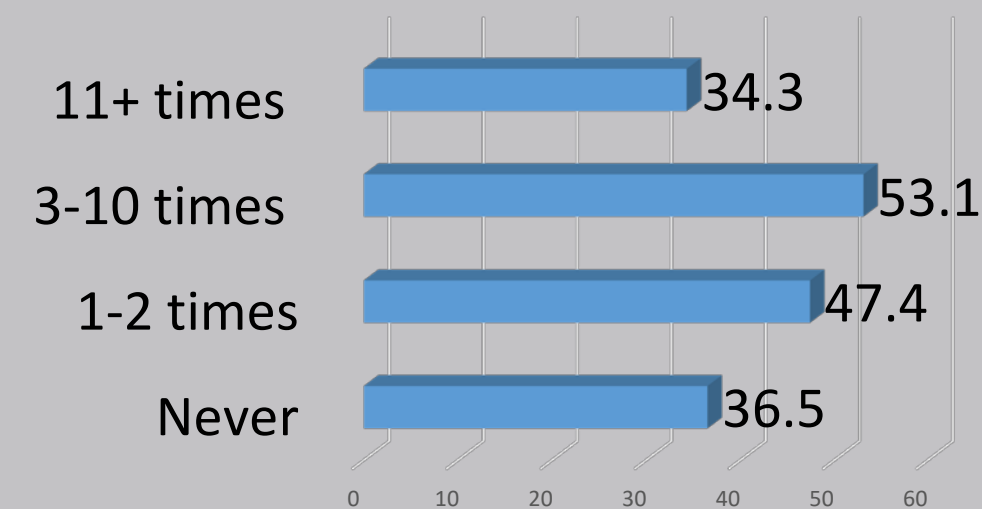
- Gender of respondents
 - Male: 46.1%
 - Female: 53.9%

Analytical Plan

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

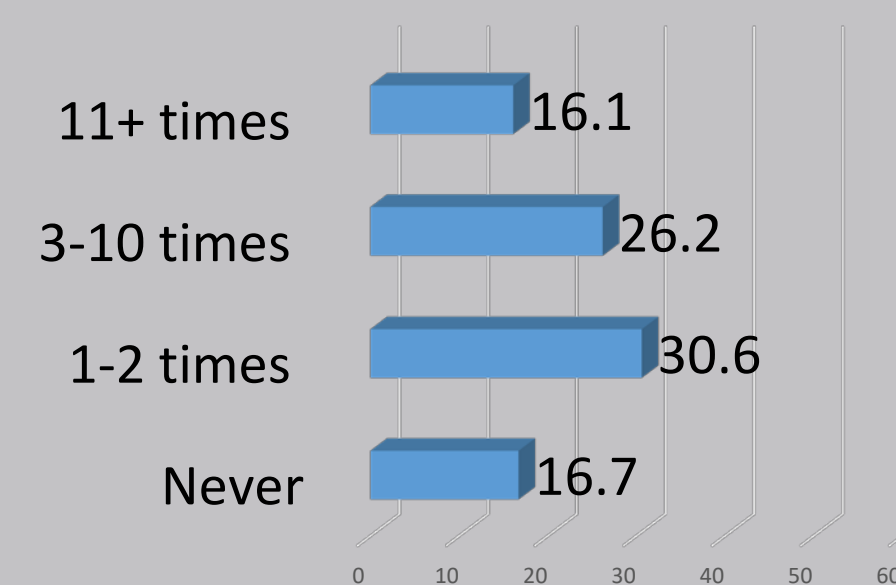
Results

Figure 1. % Delinquency by Childhood Neglect: Men



Chi-square test shows that differences by childhood neglect was significant at $p < .01$.

Figure 2. % Delinquency by Childhood Neglect: Women



Chi-square test shows that differences by childhood neglect was significant at $p < .001$.

Summary of the Findings

- Young adults who experienced neglect in childhood are more likely to commit delinquent acts, except for those who reported 11+ times of neglect.
- Gender seems to have little effect on the pattern of delinquency when looking at the effect of neglect.

Discussion and Policy implications

- It could be that young adults who experienced parental neglect 11+ times during childhood might have been removed from their parents into a more loving/caring household with better guardians.
- There should be more emphasis on the importance of school teachers recognizing early signs of neglect.

References

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