

# Relationship Between Child Maltreatment by Parents and Poor Mental Health in Young Adulthood

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## Research Questions

- Is child maltreatment related to mental health issues later in young adulthood?
- Does the correlation vary between gender?

## Significance

- The ecology of an individual's childhood has the capacity to foster or hinder adaptive development over the life course (Henry et al., 2018).
- Between 15% and 30% of women have been sexually abused by a man by the age of 16 (Myskow et al., 2006).
- As many as 16% of men in the United States experience childhood sexual abuse, leading to several immediate as well as long term consequences (Mulvey, 2006).

## Background

- Maltreatment is any form of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and any form of neglect (SCAN).
- Early childhood exposure to toxic environments is related to changes in the brain making it more difficult to regulate stress (Henry et al., 2018).
- Low care from a parent is associated with increased risk for depression in adulthood (Jorm et al, 2003).
- Child sexual abuse victims reported a lifetime history of more exposure to various traumas and higher levels of mental health symptoms (Banyard et al., 2001).
- Women are more likely than men to suffer from mental health consequences of childhood maltreatment (Gayer-Anderson et al., 2015).

## Hypotheses:

- Child maltreatment by parents is negatively related to mental health as young adults..
- Females are more susceptible than males to the effects of maltreatment in childhood.

## Data

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
- Wave 3 (2001 – 2002) public data (N = 4,882)
- U.S. young adults ages 18 to 26

## Dependent Variable

- Mental Health
    - Sum of 7 questions (previous week)
      - Bothered by things
      - Couldn't shake off blues
      - Trouble focusing
      - Depressed
      - Too tired
      - Sad
      - Felt disliked
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 = No symptoms               | 17.8% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 = Some symptoms             | 56.5% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 = Symptoms all/most of time | 25.6% |

## Independent Variable

- Maltreatment in childhood
    - Sum of 4 questions
      - Left alone
      - Basic needs not met
      - Physical abuse
      - Sexual abuse
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 = No maltreatment  | 49.7% |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 = Any maltreatment | 50.3% |

## Control Variable

- Gender

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	46.1%
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	53.9%

## Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

## Results

Figure 1. % Distribution of Mental Health by Childhood Maltreatment: Men

- Most or all the time
- Experiencing Some Symptoms
- No Symptoms

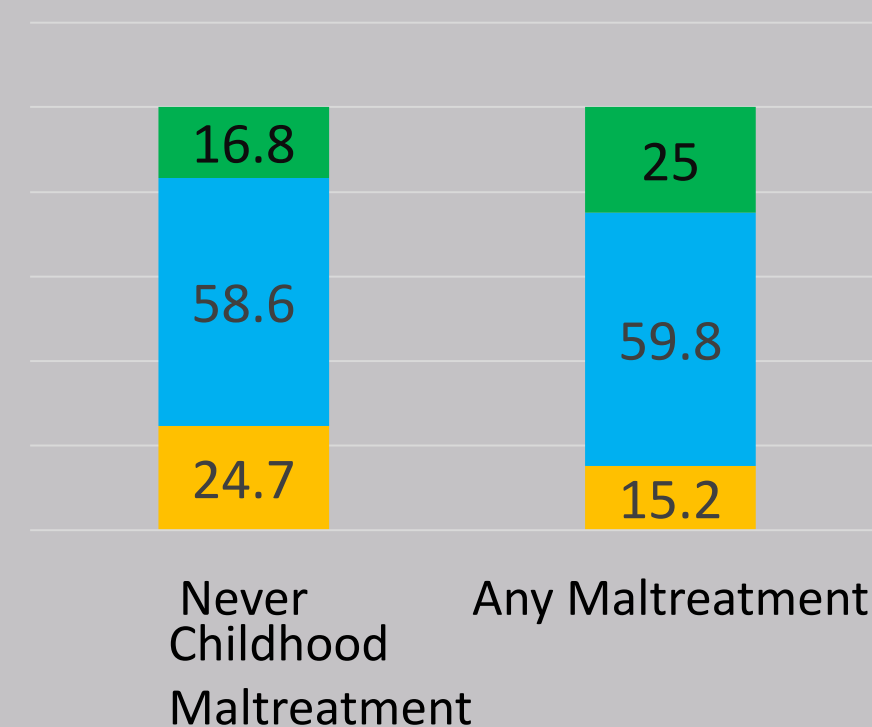
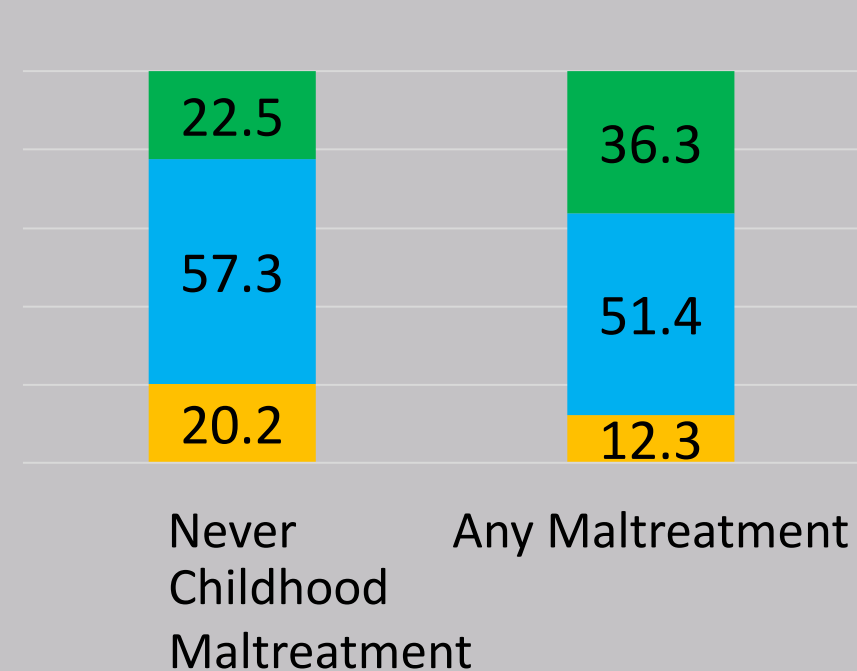


Figure 2. % Distribution of Mental Health by Childhood Maltreatment: Women

- Most or all the time
- Experiencing Some Symptoms
- No Symptoms



## Summary of Results

- Child Maltreatment has a strong impact on mental health status later in young adulthood.
- Women are more susceptible than men to the negative effects of childhood maltreatment.
- Chi-square test significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

## Policy Implications

- Initiatives to prevent maltreatment and provide mental health and social services to victims are critical (Henry, 2018).
- Issues regarding the statute of limitations may need to be further investigated; varies by situation/location.

## References

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