



Childhood experiences of sexual abuse and later parenting practices among non-offending mothers of sexually abused and comparison girls[☆]

Kihyun Kim^{a,*}, Penelope K. Trickett^b, Frank W. Putnam^c

^a Sungkyunkwan University, Department of Social Welfare, Soosun Hall #61608, 53 Myongryun-Dong, Jongro-Gu, Seoul 110-745, Republic of Korea

^b University of Southern California, School of Social Work, Los Angeles, CA, USA

^c Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, University of Cincinnati, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology, Cincinnati, OH, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 May 2008

Received in revised form 7 January 2010

Accepted 7 January 2010

Available online 11 June 2010

Keywords:

Child sexual abuse

Parenting

Non-offending mothers

Intergenerational cycle

ABSTRACT

Objective: The primary goal of this study was to explore the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and parenting practices among non-offending mothers of sexually abused girls. Guided by a developmental-ecological perspective of parenting, several models with different potential pathways starting from the mothers' childhood experiences of sexual abuse and culminating in their parenting practices (e.g., direct, spurious, indirect effect) were hypothesized and explored in the context of the mothers' past and current psychosocial risks and resources. Two dimensions of parenting were considered: providing positive structure (i.e., ratings of how consistent, fair, easygoing), and using punitive discipline.

Methods: This study utilized a sample from a longitudinal, multigenerational study in which sexually abused girls, demographically similar comparison girls, and the mothers of both groups of girls participated. For the current study, the data regarding the mothers of the two groups of girls was of primary importance.

Results: The results from a series of model comparison tests supported the spurious effect of mothers' childhood sexual abuse on the positive structure dimension. A direct, inverse relationship was found as the most accurate model with the punitive discipline dimension. Overall, childhood experience of punitive discipline, current dissociative symptoms, and satisfaction with social support were indicated as possible correlates of parenting practices among the mothers.

Conclusions: The significance of these findings is discussed in the context of theories concerning childhood trauma and parenting, as well as the intergenerational process of child maltreatment. Practice implications of the findings are also presented and discussed in terms of intervention programs for families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurs.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

This study aims to examine the relationship between mothers' childhood sexual abuse histories and their parenting practices in a sample of non-offending mothers of sexually abused girls. Parenting practices among these mothers are

[☆] This program of research was supported by a Dissertation Fellowship Award granted by the University of Southern California Urban Initiative to the first author as well as federal and foundation research grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, 90CA1549 and R01 MH48330 (Trickett, P.I.); the DHHS Children's Bureau; ACYF 90CA1686 (Trickett, P.I.); the WT Grant Foundation; the Smith Richardson Foundation; and the COYDOG Foundation.

* Corresponding author.

frequently viewed as a strong protective factor preventing the abused children from maladjustment (Deblinger, Steer, & Lippmann, 1999; Hazzard, Celano, Gould, Lawry, & Webb, 1995). Moreover, the mothers' parenting has been implicitly or explicitly suggested as being an important intergenerational mechanism in child sexual abuse (Burkett, 1991). For prevention and intervention purposes, it is important to understand the nature and determinants of these mothers' parenting practices.

Non-offending mothers of sexually abused children

The existing child sexual abuse research strongly suggests that parental support following the victimization is particularly influential in predicting the victim's adjustment outcomes (Fromuth, 1986; Johnson & Kenkel, 1991; Tremblay, Herbert, & Piche, 1999). In fact, Spaccarelli and Kim (1995) suggest that support from primary caregivers is the single most important determinant of sexually abused children's resilience.

At the same time, emerging evidence reveals that non-offending mothers confront considerable psychosocial challenges upon the disclosure of their child's sexual abuse, and may subsequently need support themselves. So far, the known challenges include psychological distress (e.g., Lewin & Bergin, 2001; Newberger, Gremy, Waternaux, & Newberger, 1993), the mothers' own childhood abuse histories (e.g., Kim, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2007), and dysfunctional family environments (e.g., Avery, Hutchinson, & Whitaker, 2002). However, despite the acknowledgment of the important role mothers play in these situations, only recently have there been research efforts to understand their particular psychosocial challenges.

Among the reported challenges, the mother's history of childhood sexual abuse has received more attention than other characteristics. Studies have reported an intergenerational association between mothers' childhood sexual abuse histories and their daughters' childhood sexual abuse experiences (Avery et al., 2002; Briere & Runtz, 1988; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Deblinger, Hathaway, Lippman, & Steer, 1993; Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Papatola, 1987; Faller, 1989; Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Kim et al., 2007; Leifer, Shapiro, & Kassem, 1993; Oates, Tennutt, Swanston, Lynch, & O'Toole, 1998; Spieker, Bensley, McMahon, & Fung, 1996; Zuravin & Fontanella, 1999). Some multivariate studies indicate that a mother's childhood sexual abuse history may be one of the most important factors that increase the likelihood that her child will experience sexual abuse during childhood (Finkelhor, Moore, Hamby, & Straus, 1997; McCloskey & Bailey, 2000).

With regard to the function of a mother's childhood sexual abuse experiences, however, there appear to be conflicting views among the extant studies. For example, some studies suggest that the mothers' experiences of childhood sexual abuse are an important factor for understanding psychosocial functioning among these mothers (Kim et al., 2007). However, no significant relationships have been reported between the mothers' childhood sexual abuse and their responses (e.g., belief, supportiveness) to the disclosure of their own children's abuse *per se* (e.g., Deblinger, Stauffer, & Landsberg, 1994; Leifer et al., 1993).

Rigorous empirical studies examining the parenting characteristics of non-offending mothers are rare. The few studies that do exist appear to support parenting differences among these mothers. Recently, Lewin and Bergin (2001) conducted an observational study and found that mothers of sexually abused children showed diminished maternal attachment behaviors compared with mothers of comparison girls on all four dimensions that have been suggested as influencing the quality of attachment (i.e., acceptance, sensitivity, cooperation, and accessibility) (Ainsworth, 1973). In a previous study using the same data as the current study (Kim et al., 2007), the authors conducted group mean difference tests in parenting measures and found that mothers of sexually abused girls provided less positive structure, and used punitive discipline more frequently than mothers of comparison girls. The function of mothers' own histories of childhood sexual abuse on their parenting practices is unclear.

Childhood sexual abuse and parenting practices

As early as the 1980s, clinicians were touching upon how childhood sexual abuse survivors expressed concerns about themselves as parents (Gelinas, 1983; Herman & Hirschman, 1981; Sroufe, Jacobvitz, Mangelandorf, DeAngelo, & Ward, 1985). To illustrate, Gelinas (1983) noted that survivors had difficulties maintaining a balance between discipline and affection with their children, and expressed a desire to avoid motherhood because of their negative growing-up experiences. Throughout the 1990s, some studies investigated the univariate relationship between mothers' childhood sexual abuse histories and their parenting practices (Burkett, 1991; Cohen, 1995; Lyons-Ruth & Block, 1996). These studies also supported the adverse association. For example, Lyons-Ruth and Block (1996) observed 45 sexually abused mothers interacting with their 18-month-old infants. They found that the maternal history of childhood sexual abuse was significantly associated with restricted maternal affect and decreased involvement with the infants.

Recently, systematic inquiry using multivariate analysis methods has emerged in this area. Using a community sample of low-income mothers, Banyard (1997) showed that mothers with childhood sexual abuse trauma had a more negative view of themselves as parents, and reported more frequent use of physical strategies to resolve conflicts with their children. The study found that these relationships held true even after controlling for other negative experiences in their families-of-origin, such as neglect, physical abuse, and poor relationship quality with their own parents. Similarly, using a clinical sample, Ruscio (2001) found that mothers with a history of childhood sexual abuse trauma tended to be more permissive in their parenting practices than mothers in the normative sample (*Parenting Practices Questionnaire*; Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995). In subsequent analyses, childhood sexual abuse trauma retained its negative association with a lower

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/345007>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/345007>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)