

LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

Children abused by children



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

Nicole Billington, BA, BEd & Tracey Curwen, PhD

CHILDREN WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS (SBP)



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Under 12 years of age
- Both males and females²
- History of
 - Sexual abuse
 - Maltreatment
 - Sexualized environment
 - Family violence¹
- Most will stop the behaviour after treatment¹

CHILDREN WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS (SBP)



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Developmentally inappropriate¹
- Harm to self or others¹
- Examples:
 - Tries to have sexual intercourse with another child
 - Puts mouth on another child's sex parts
 - Touches an animal's sex parts
 - Forces to get sexual contact
 - Bribes to get sexual contact

VICTIMS OF CHILDREN WITH SBP



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Children with sexual behaviour problems account for up to 30 % of cases of child sexual abuse⁴
- Age of perpetrator is not related to mental health of child sexual abuse victim^{4,5,6,7}
 - Mental health: sexual distress, sexual preoccupation, anxiety, depression
- Children abused by children are less likely to consider their experiences abuse⁷ and to think that would be supported if they disclosed the abuse⁶

PURPOSE



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Only 1 published study focused on victims of child sexual abuse
- NonCanadian sample
- Exploratory study to answer:
 - Do trauma symptoms in adults who experienced childhood sexual abuse differ based on the age of the individual who perpetrated the abuse?
 - Are victims of abuse perpetrated by a child more or less likely to believe the incident was abusive?

PROCEDURE



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- University students
- Online survey
 - Demographics (age and gender)
 - TSC40
 - Other trauma
 - Childhood sexual abuse experiences
 - Follow up (sexual abuse, mental health disorders, therapy)

PROCEDURE



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

Before you were 12 years old, did someone touch you even though you did not want them to OR did you touch someone in a sexual way even though you did not want to?



Initiated by a
child



Initiated by an
adolescent



Initiated by an
adult

PARTICIPANTS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- 435 participants aged 17–59 years
 - ($M = 20.2$, $SD = 3.5$)
- Sexually victimized under 12 years of age
 - No: 89% ($n = 386$)
 - Yes: 11% ($n = 48$)
- Gender:
 - Female 84%
 - Male 14%
 - Other 2%

PARTICIPANTS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

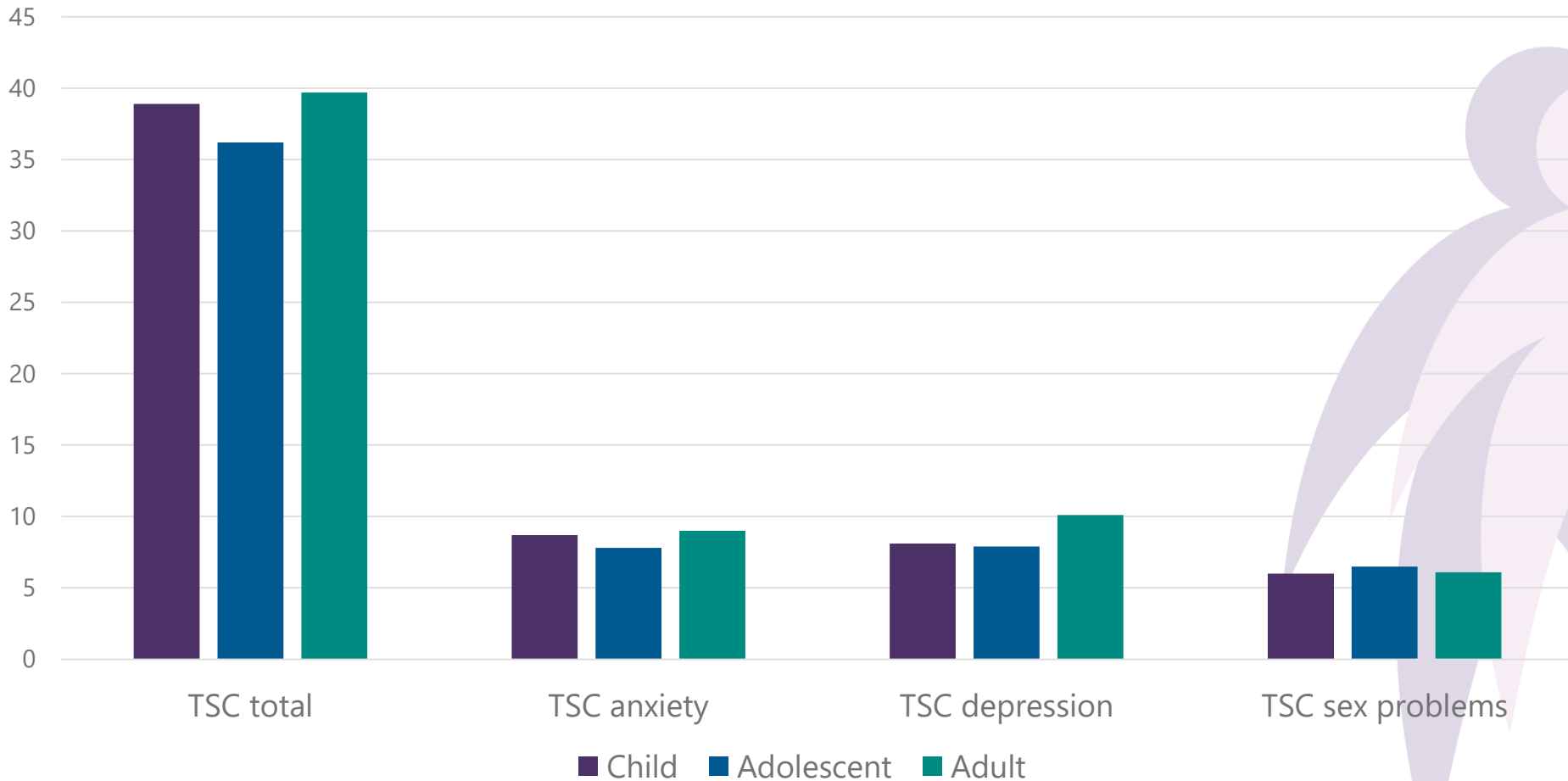
Perpetrator age group	Sample size	% of abused group
Child only	12	25.0
Child & adolescent	2	4.2
Child & adult	4	8.3
Adolescent only	15	31.3
Adolescent & adult	3	6.3
Adult only	10	21.0
Child, adolescent, & adult	2	4.2

- 42% of child sexual abuse victims reported at least 1 child perpetrator

DO TRAUMA SYMPTOMS DIFFER BASED ON THE AGE OF THE PERPETRATOR?



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH



DO YOU CONSIDER THE INCIDENT TO BE SEXUAL ABUSE?



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

Before you were 12 years old, did someone touch you even though you did not want them to OR did you touch someone in a sexual way even though you did not want to?



Initiated by a
child (n=26)



Initiated by an
adolescent



Initiated by an
adult

Do you consider the incident to be sexual abuse?

- Yes: $n=12$
- No: $n=14$

Were the acts consensual?

Was there coercion involved?

DO YOU CONSIDER THE INCIDENT TO BE SEXUAL ABUSE?



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

8 (56%) Reported no/not sure though they indicated coercion and/or non-consent

- 30.1% of sexual incidents initiated by child group
- More cases with children or adolescents were charged than with adults

6 sexual encounters between two children were reported as consensual and without coercion (23% of sexual encounters between two children)

CONCLUSIONS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Similar adult mental health outcome regardless of the perpetrators' age group
 - Supported by several other studies^{4, 5, 6, 7}
- Child perpetrators make up a notable portion of childhood sexual abuse (42%)
- Many adult victims of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a child do not believe they were sexually abused
 - Confirms Allen, Tellez, Wevodau, Woods, & Percosky (2014) results

CONCLUSIONS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- We should minimize the impact of children who were sexually abused by children
- We cannot minimize the behaviour of the child with sexual behaviour problems

APPLICATIONS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

What does this mean for...

- Child victims with child perpetrators?
- Children with CSB?
- Clinicians who work with these victims and CSB?

LIMITATIONS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Small sample size
- Potential MH influence of sexual abuse experienced after age 12 years

LIMITATIONS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Small sample size
- May be influence of sexual abuse after age 12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

- Radius Child & Youth Services
 - Bente Skau
 - Melissa Maltar
- Nipissing University

REFERENCES



Radius Child & Youth Services
PREVENTION • INTERVENTION • RESEARCH

1. Chaffin, M., Berliner, L., Block, R., Johnson, T.C., Freidrich, W. N., Lous, D. G., Silovsky, J. F. (2008). Report of the ATSA task force on children with sexual behavior problems. *Child Maltreatment*, 13, 199-218.
2. Silovsky, J. F., Niec, L. (2002). Characteristics of young children with sexual behavior problems: a pilot study. *Child Maltreatment*, 7, 187-197.
3. Allen, B (2017). Children with sexual behavior problems: Clinical characteristics and relationship to child maltreatment. *Journal of Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 48, 189-199.
4. Brown, J. C. (2000). Child-on-child sexual abuse: An investigation of behavioral and emotional sequelae. Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
5. Shaw, J. A., Lewis, J. E., Loeb, A., Rosado, J., & Rodriguez, R. A. (2000). Child on child sexual abuse: Psychological perspectives. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24, 1591-1600.
6. Sperry, D. M., & Gilbert, B. O. (2005). Child peer sexual abuse: Preliminary data on outcomes and disclosure experiences. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29, 889-904.
7. Allen, B., Tellez, A., Wevodau, A., Woods, C. L., & Percosky, A. (2014). The impact of sexual abuse committed by a child on mental health in adulthood. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 29(12), 2257-2272. doi: 10.1177/0886260513517550