

# Victims Trauma & Concerning Sexual Behaviour

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## Background

- Trauma and concerning sexual behaviour (CSB) are potential negative outcomes of sexual abuse
- Sexually abused (SA) children compared to nonSA (NSA) children have an increased likelihood of developing trauma symptoms<sup>1</sup>
- Higher rates of SA are found in children with CSB
- Age, duration, and perpetrator characteristics influence the presence of trauma symptoms or CSB<sup>2</sup>
  - Younger age at the time of associated with more trauma symptoms<sup>3</sup> and greater number of CSBs<sup>4</sup>
  - SA Frequency and duration correlate with more trauma symptoms or CSBs<sup>5</sup>
- SA children with CSB scored higher in number of PTSD symptoms than children without CSB<sup>9</sup>
- The purpose of this study is to analyse the characteristics of sexual abuse within a sample of children with and without trauma and/or CSB

## Research Questions

In a sample of SA children under the age of 12 years,

1. Is there a relationship between perpetrator age and relationship and the presence of trauma and/or CSB?
2. Does age of first sexual abuse between victims with and without trauma symptoms and/or CSB?
3. Does the duration of sexual abuse differ between victims with and without trauma symptoms and/or CSB?

## Methods

Procedure:

- Trained undergraduate and graduate research assistants read and coded clinical files

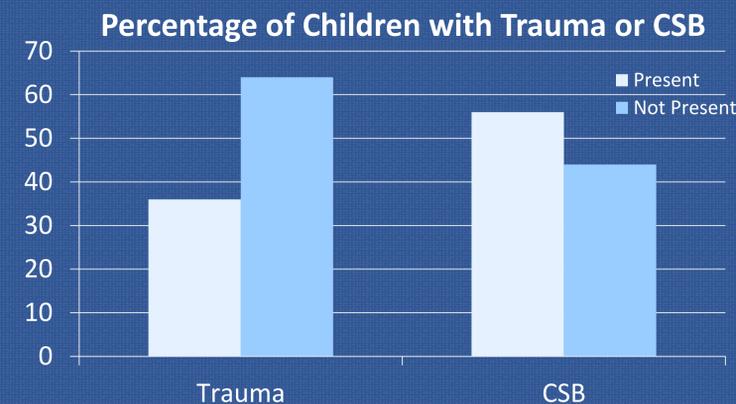
## METHODS CONTINUED

Measures

- Sexual abuse variables:
  - Age = age at first sexual abuse
  - Duration = number of times sexually abuse
  - Perpetrator relationship (intrafamilial/extrafamilial)
  - Perpetrator age group (over/under 18)
- Child variables:
  - Trauma from SA (yes or no)
  - CSB present (yes or no)
  - Dual coded; interrater agreement

Participants

- 100 children aged 4 to 12 years ( $M = 8$ )
- Victims of sexual abuse



## Results

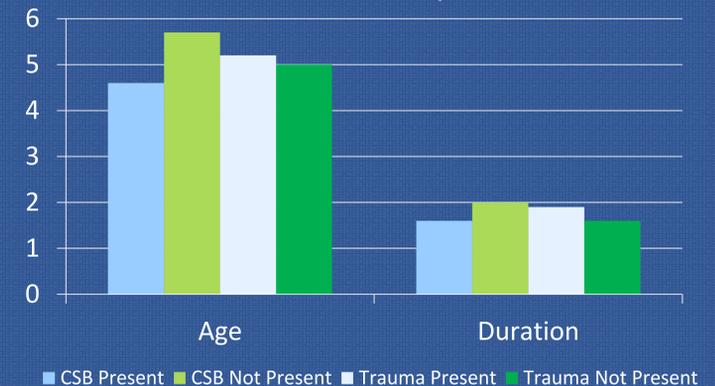
Chi-square: to investigate whether perpetrator relationship/age group were related to presence of CSB and trauma

- Trauma: not related to perpetrator relationship or age
- CSB: not related to perpetrator relationship or age

ANOVA: to compare age of first abuse and duration between victims with/without trauma or CSB

- No group difference were found
- Children with trauma or CSB have:
  - similar average durations of sexual abuse
  - average duration of their sexual abuse

Mean Age and Duration of Abuse for Trauma and CSB Groups



## Conclusion

- Age of first abuse, abuse duration, perpetrator relationship, and perpetrator age were not related to presence or absence of trauma and CSB
- Results conflict with previous research: presence/absence may be less important than extent of trauma and CSB
- Presence/absence of abuse characteristics may not be important in identifying which victims may be at risk for CSB and trauma
- A comprehensive assessment that focuses on more than abuse experiences may be important for prevention efforts
- Considerations: Data relied on accurate file information

## References

- <sup>1,2</sup>Kisiel, C., Fehrenbach, T., Liang, L., Stolbach, B., McClelland, G., Griffin, G., Maj, N., Briggs, E. C., Vivrette, R. L., Layne, C. M., & Spinazzola, J. (2014). Examining child sexual abuse in relation to complex patterns of trauma exposure: Findings from the national child traumatic stress network.
- <sup>3</sup>Hébert, M., Langevin, R., Daigneault, I. (2016). The association between peer victimization, PTSD, and dissociation in child victims of sexual abuse. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 193, 227-232.
- <sup>4</sup>Friedrich, W. N., Grambsch, P., Damon, L., Hewitt, S. K., Koverloa, C., Lang, R. A., et al. (1992). Child Sexual Behaviour Inventory: Normative and clinical comparisons. *Psychological Assessment*, 4, 303-311.
- <sup>5</sup>Ruggiero, K. J., McLeer, S. V., & Dixon, J. F. (2000). Sexual abuse characteristics associated with survivor psychopathology. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24(7), 951-964.
- <sup>6</sup>Sawyer, G. & Hansen, D. (2014). Heterogeneous symptom patterns of sexually abused children in treatment: Understanding the complexity of the problem. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 23(8), 900-917.
- <sup>7</sup>Simon, V. A., Smith, E., Fava, N., & Feiring, C. (2015). Positive and negative posttraumatic change following childhood sexual abuse are associated with youths' adjustment. *Child Maltreatment*, 20(4), 278-290.
- <sup>9</sup>Allen, B., Thorn, B., & Gully, K. (2015). A comparison of self-reported emotional and trauma-related concerns among sexually abused children with and without sexual behaviour problems. *Child Maltreatment*, 20(2), 136-140.