



Pergamon

Child Abuse & Neglect 28 (2004) 1321–1337

Child Abuse
& Neglect

General population norms about child abuse and neglect and associations with childhood experiences

Lillian Bensley^{a,*}, Deborah Ruggles^b, Katrina Wynkoop Simmons^c, Cynthia Harris^e,
Kathy Williams^d, Tammy Putvin^e, Melissa Allen^e

^a *Office of Epidemiology, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA, USA*

^b *Injury Prevention and Safety Programs, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA, USA*

^c *Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA, USA*

^d *Office of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Systems, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA, USA*

^e *Maternal and Child Health, Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA, USA*

Received 13 February 2003; received in revised form 8 July 2004; accepted 23 July 2004

Abstract

Background: A variety of definitions of child abuse and neglect exist. However, little is known about norms in the general population as to what constitutes child abuse and neglect or how perceived norms may be related to personal experiences.

Methods: We conducted a random-digit-dialed telephone survey of 504 Washington State adults. Respondents were asked whether they believed each of 34 behaviors, identified in focus groups as possibly physically, sexually or emotionally abusive or neglectful, constituted abuse or neglect. Then, they were asked whether they had experienced 33 of the behaviors.

Results: Five of the six behaviors with the highest levels of consensus were for sexual abuse, whereas only one emotionally abusive behavior had a high level of consensus (95% agreement). Consensus that spanking constituted abuse increased with severity. Those respondents who reported experiencing a particular behavior were significantly less likely to believe the behavior abusive for 11 of the 33 behaviors and more likely to believe the behavior abusive for two of the behaviors. Where comparisons were possible, there was a high level of consensus that behaviors identified as abusive in Child Protective Service operational definitions constituted abuse.

* Corresponding author.

Conclusions: Self-reported childhood experiences were associated with perceived norms about child abuse. A better understanding of community norms about child abuse and neglect may be helpful in communicating with the public or allow for better targeting of educational messages through the media, parenting education classes, and so forth. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Child abuse; Risk factors; Norms; Intergenerational; Maltreatment

Introduction

Child maltreatment is a relatively common factor affecting the health of children. In a survey of Washington adults, we found that about one in five report having been physically or sexually abused in childhood (Bensley, Van Eenwyk, & Simmons, 2000). However, information is limited on what precisely this means; that is, what behaviors community members interpret as being abusive. Identifying abuse may be a necessary first step in reporting or otherwise addressing abuse. Beliefs about what constitutes abuse may also play a role in the intergenerational transmission of abuse: if an individual experiencing an abusive behavior in childhood does not recognize the behavior as abusive, he or she may be more likely to perform the behaviors with his or her own children. We conducted a survey to address community norms about abuse and to examine the role of personal experiences in perceived norms.

Defining child abuse and neglect

A variety of definitions exist, including legal definitions, operational definitions used by Child Protective Service (CPS) personnel, definitions used by researchers, and others. Definitions vary in several ways. These include whether they require harm to the child or also include children who have been endangered but not yet harmed; whether they require an intent to harm the child or also include harm that is not intended, but might have been prevented; the type of behavior or damage involved (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or neglect); and characteristics such as the severity and frequency of a behavior (Garbarino & Eckenrode, 1997; Loue, 1998; Portwood, 1999). The developmental level of the child is an important factor in whether some behaviors constitute abuse; an example would be bathing a small child compared to a teenager. Also, cultural views vary, and although some may be legitimate differences, other behaviors are inherently harmful to the child (Garbarino & Eckenrode, 1997). In one study, only 23% of elementary school teachers surveyed on the island of Palau said they would recommend professional help or intervention for a parent who tied a child's leg with a leash to the door (Collier, McClure, Collier, Otto, & Polloi, 1999). In a recent and controversial (e.g., Dallam et al., 2001) effort to change definitions, Rind, Tromovitch, and Bauserman (1998) asserted that adult-child sexual contact is not necessarily abusive. Although several studies of the way particular professional and cultural groups define abuse have been conducted (Burnett, 1993; Collier et al., 1999; Hong & Hong, 1991; Korbin, Coulton, Lindstrom-Ufiti, & Spilsbury, 2000; Portwood, 1999), we know little about what the general population believes constitutes abuse. Because of the wide range of possible abusive and neglectful behaviors, we did not attempt to construct a comprehensive taxonomy of behaviors, but rather to identify some examples of social norms that might be useful in communicating with the public about child abuse and neglect.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات