

Child Maltreatment

Child Sexual Abuse and Risk of Revictimization: Impact of Child Demographics, Sexual Abuse Characteristics, and Psychiatric Disorders

Nina Papalia , Emily Mann, James R. P. Ogloff

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Abstract

Approximately half of child sexual abuse (CSA) victims report sexual revictimization later in life; however, there is limited rigorous evidence concerning factors contributing to sexual and nonsexual forms of revictimization. This article investigates the relationships between CSA and a range of revictimization experiences. It also examines the role of other individual-level factors (demographics, CSA characteristics, psychiatric disorders) in the risk of revictimization. The study compares data from a prospective-longitudinal study of 2,759 Australian children (<17 years old) alleged to have experienced contact-CSA between 1964 and 1995, and a comparison group matched on sex and age. In each case, CSA was deemed likely to have occurred according to expert forensic medical opinion. Abused children and comparisons were followed to age 35 years on average, and their lifetime official crime victimization histories and public mental health service records were extracted from statewide population-level administrative databases. Relative to comparisons, CSA victims experienced significantly higher rates of revictimization, with marked elevations in odds for interpersonal revictimization (i.e., sexual assault, physical assault, threats of violence, and stalking). The CSA–physical assault relationship was moderated by sex, with a stronger association for female victims. Among CSA victims, victim sex, age at index abuse, and several psychiatric diagnostic categories were independently associated with revictimization risk, with different patterns of vulnerability emerging depending on the nature of revictimization. Overall, CSA victims are vulnerable

to a range of revictimization experiences later in life. Findings have implications for the identification of particular groups of sexually abused children at heightened risk for revictimization and the role mental health services may play in mitigating risk.

Keywords

[child sexual abuse](#), [maltreatment](#), [revictimization](#), [mental health](#), [psychiatric disorder](#)

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