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Patterns of Parent Behavior Related to Childhood Physical and Mental Abuse

Cassondra J. Widrick-Phillips
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Nursing

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Cassandra Widrick-Phillips

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,

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the review committee have been made.

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2023

Abstract

Patterns of Parent Behavior Related to Childhood Physical and Mental Abuse

by

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MSN, University of Phoenix, 2012

BSN, University of Phoenix, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Nursing Education

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Abstract

The issue of child abuse is a growing concern in society. However, the limited amount of research available on parent–child relationships poses a challenge in terms of developing effective prevention strategies. The aim of the study was to analyze the connection between a parent who is abusive and their child who is being abused. The main objective of the study was to identify if the gender of the parent had a relationship with abusing the child of the same or different gender. Bowen’s family systems theory was used to support the study because of the assumption that family relationships are the fundamental cause of child abuse. Family systems theory, which involves three subsystems and eight concepts, is crucial in understanding child abuse. The study questions aimed to identify any correlations or trends in physical and psychological abuse, based on the gender of the child and the parent. Secondary data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System were used to answer the research questions. A sample size of 84 participants was calculated using $\alpha = .05$, medium effect size, and a power of 0.80. The inclusion criteria focused on people who had received services from child protective services agencies, including parents and children, abuse, maltreatment, and child relationships. Correlation, multiple regression, and statistical analysis were used for analytical procedures. The results show that if the parent is the father, there is a statistically significant predictor of likelihood of psychological or emotional maltreatment of male child ($p < .001$) For future research, it is imperative to thoroughly investigate male abusers, the timeline of abuse within the relationship, and the underlying cause of such behavior. Early detection of child abuse can lead to changes in society and positive behavior promotion, altering cultural standards, and providing interventions for positive relationships.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The quantitative study was developed to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father, and patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus the child of the opposite sex. The topic of the study concerns child physical and mental abuse related to gender and identifying any similarities and differences between the gender of the child as compared to the mother versus the father. The goal of the study was to gain an understanding of why parents physically and mentally abuse their children while identifying if there is a correlation between the gender of the parent and the gender of the child. With a greater understanding of the relationship between the child and the parent, early detection may lead to the prevention of child abuse. The variables examined were patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). Child physical and mental abuse have lifetime complications (Kinnard, 1980). With a greater understanding of the relationship between the parent and the child, early detection may lead to the prevention of child abuse. The gap in the literature lies in understanding the relationship between the parent and the child, which can provide insight to advance knowledge in the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

The aim of this study was to create knowledge and obtain new information by assessing the relationship of the parent and child, which could lead to identifying families

at risk for child physical and mental abuse. Identification of families at risk for child physical and mental abuse may lead to early intervention and support services. Early intervention can positively affect families and provide benefits to the parent and child, with improved outcomes (Shonkoff,2017). The intention was to determine if an association exists between the gender of the child and the parent with respect to physical and mental abuse. Identifying behaviors early may allow for early interventions to lessen child abuse and prevent harm.

Chapter 1 details the background of the study of child physical and mental abuse. In presenting the problem statement, I review the occurrence of child abuse as a public issue that has become a significant social problem that continues to increase (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). The purpose of the study was to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father, and patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus a child of the opposite sex. The research questions were designed to answer whether there are connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The relationship between variables to be examined involved patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). Theoretical foundations were based on the interactions and connections that family members have to each other and being an emotional unit. Methodological considerations and concerns are also addressed in this chapter, along

with the nature of the study, the study variables, definitions, assumptions, scope and limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

Child physical and mental abuse continues to be a problem that affects societies, cultures, countries, and nations. Studies have evaluated programs to determine prevention strategies (Kim, 2015; Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2012). Educating families by teaching new skills in parenting and parent–child communication was shown to be successful in reducing the incidence of child abuse (Thulin et al., 2019; Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2012). Educational programs that teach skills for managing relationships, behavior management, life skills, and stress management help individuals develop essential parenting skills. Parenting is a skill that is to be learned. Skills learned replace negative actions with positive options so that parents may be successful.

Another successful strategy in the prevention of maltreatment proven to be successful is interaction behavioral therapy (Thulin et al, 2019). In interaction behavioral therapy, parents learn effective coping and communication skills. Parents learn communication techniques and positive interactions with their child through play therapy. The parent is trained by the therapist in how to effectively communicate and interact with the child to build a more positive relationship. Results have shown a successful decrease in abuse through interaction behavioral therapy (Thulin et al., 2019).

Music therapy has been shown to be a method to explore feelings and express oneself (Kim, 2015). Musical instruments, song, sensations, and emotions through music

can be effective in learning to cope with difficult life situations. Relationships and interactions can be successfully transformed through music. Music therapy consists of connecting with the inner music in each person. Music therapy for abused children can help build new connections and relationships within themselves and others as music allows communication without words in an emotional connection (Kim, 2015).

Increasing parent knowledge through educational programs and teaching parenting skills was found to be the most successful treatment, which led to a decrease in the incidence of child abuse (Butum & Beyazit, 2019). Skills are interventions that can be learned and improved upon with practice. Similarities among successful studies in the prevention of abuse are those that include both parent and child. Parent and child can learn to develop skills in communication techniques to improve and build a positive relationship (Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2012).

An important step in prevention is identifying those families that are at risk of child physical and mental abuse by examining the relationships within the family. This study will contribute to addressing the gap by identifying associations and examining findings that compare the mother's and father's relationship with the gender of their child with respect to physical and mental abuse. Identifying at-risk families allows for early intervention and treatment in the prevention of child abuse. The purpose of the research was to identify patterns that exist between the parent and the child with respect to physical and mental abuse so that positive strategies and therapies can be initiated to strengthen and improve the parent-child relationship. Identifying behaviors early may

allow for early interventions in developing skills to improve the child–parent relationship to lessen child abuse and prevent harm. Skills training and educational programs to assist both parent and child in promoting positive behaviors can change social norms to be supportive and provide parents guidance in how to have a positive relationship with their child (Butum & Beyazit, 2019).

Problem Statement

The occurrence of child abuse is a public issue that has become a significant social problem that continues to increase (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). Child abuse affects children from all cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Researchers continue to explore the many different reasons for abuse. Housing and substance abuse have been shown to be factors of child abuse (Lipari & Van Horn, 2017), while an evidence review indicated a link between poverty and abuse (Landers et al., 2019). Within the last 5 years, the focus has been on interventions to reduce the incidence and prevention of child abuse and effectiveness of interventions (Butchart, 2009)). Despite the extensive amount of research into child physical and mental abuse, patterns of abuse in the parent and child relationship are unknown, which is where the gap exists.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the significant risk for child maltreatment (Lawson et al., 2020). Schools were closed at a time when daycare and jobs were on hold and families were confined to their homes, with the intention to control the spread of the coronavirus. Alongside the pandemic, there was a reported increase in child abuse

(Kuehn, 2020). Less contact between children and mandated reporters, such as teachers and social workers, showed a decline in abuse, yet hospitalizations related to medical conditions related to abuse rose (Stephenson, 2020). Children were quarantined and locked down with their abusers, which escalated the occurrence of child abuse and maltreatment. With the increased risk of abuse and neglect, there is even more urgency to address as a nation the incidence of child abuse.

Children's abuse and maltreatment can be prevented through educational programs that increase parenting skills (Butum & Beyazit, 2019). Established in the House of Representatives through the Ways and Means Committee is the "Family First Prevention Services Act" (Buchanan, 2017). The bill was introduced to include services and treatment programs that treat in-home parenting skills in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Addressing the problem of a negative parent-and-child relationship may prevent abuse by enhancing parenting skills and promoting healthy family relationships (Kaufman, 2017). Recognizing and intervening early in support of families and preventing harm while reducing the need for foster care and improving children's lives can improve outcomes (Casey, 2017).

The gap in the literature lies in understanding the relationship between the parent and the child, which can provide insight to advance knowledge for the recognition and prevention of child abuse. Prevention programs whose staff reach out to and identify families before there is a crisis can support child well-being while decreasing the incidence of child abuse and maltreatment. Families are safer for children with

prevention programs (Merrick, 2020). Evaluating the relationship between the parent and the child is a step toward decreasing the occurrence of child abuse and maltreatment.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this quantitative study was to determine the differences in patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The focus of the study was to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between a parent and child of the same sex and the opposite sex. The parent-child relationship affects the well-being of the child into and throughout a lifetime. Within the family, children can become estranged from one parent due to abuse from that parent and may therefore show preference for one parent over another (Bowen, 1995). The purpose of the study was to evaluate the relation of the child being abused and the parent who abuses the child and gain new insights to improve the quality of parent-and-child interactions to prevent child abuse.

The variables to be examined were patterns of abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). What I wanted to know was whether there is a difference in physical and mental abuse if the child who is being abused is the same or a different gender than the parent. The topic of child abuse has yet to be understood in greater detail so that children can be protected from abuse.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions were designed to address whether there are connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The relationship between variables to be examined were patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). The research questions for the study were the following:

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

H₀: There is no significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

H₁: There is a significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

H₀: There is no significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

H₁: There is a significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

H₀: There is no relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

H₁: There is a relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

Null and Alternative Hypotheses

The independent variable of the study was the child's gender, while the dependent variable was the gender of the parent. The null hypothesis for the study was that there is no relationship between the independent variable compared to the dependent variable.

The independent variable was the gender of the child to determine if gender plays a role in physical and mental abuse in relation to the gender of the parent. The dependent

variable being measured was the gender of the child in relationship to the dependent variable, relationship to the perpetrator. The data were obtained from national and state statistics collected and compiled in an annual child maltreatment report.

The alternative hypothesis for the study was that there is a relationship of physical and mental abuse based on the gender of the child (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable).

The data used were obtained from Child Maltreatment (2019) and analyzed by the relationship of victims to their perpetrators (Child Information Gateway, 2020). The dependent variables were measured as parent, father only, father and nonparent, mother only, or mother and nonparent. Perpetrators' sex (male, female, or unknown) was also categorized. The independent variable being measured was gender of the child measured as victim by sex (male, female, or unknown). Classification of abuse was categorized under child maltreatment, which further breaks down into descriptive categories of physical abuse, neglect, and psychological or emotional maltreatment.

Theoretical Framework

Family systems theory evolved in the 1950s through the research of Dr. Murray Bowen. Bowen's theory suggested that how a person functions is related to the family rather than the individual (Titelman, 2003). The theory is based on the interactions and connections that family members have to each other as a group rather than being viewed individually. Thoughts, feelings, and actions of the individuals in the family are shared as one. Each person in the family affects the functioning of the others as an emotional unit.

The theory created by Bowen (as cited in Kerr, 2000) is based on the cause of child abuse being within the family unit and on relationships within the family. There are three subsystems and eight concepts of family systems theory. A more detailed explanation of Bowen's theory will be given in Chapter 2.

How the Theory Relates to the Study

Bowen's theory is based upon the emotional aspect of the individual within the family unit and the relationships between the parent as well as the relationships between the parent and the child. The questions to identify are the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father and if they are different to the children of the same or opposite gender. The concept of Bowen's theory is the understanding of human behavior that is regulated by the natural process of living things. The theory related to the study in that it offers understanding of the relationships between parents and children within a family as well as how they interact and connect or disconnect with each other.

Family Systems Theory and Expanding on the Knowledge

Behavior and psychology form the foundation for how Bowen's theory describes emotional differences within the family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The hypothesis for the study was that the child and the parent are the same gender in the abusive relationship. The data from a national database were used to determine if there are connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. Expanding the knowledge for this research study meant identifying

whether the parent and the child are the same gender in the abusive relationship. Identification of the child and the gender being the same may result in early prevention of abuse and involving the parent in child abuse prevention programs.

Nature of the Study

A quantitative approach using a secondary analysis was used in this study to determine if there are connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The data were obtained from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2020). The NCANDS report is a system that compiles information from across the country about child abuse and neglect.

The secondary data from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) include datasets that show types of abuse, whether the child was a male or female, victims by age, as well as the rate of maltreatment for each state selected. The relationship between variables to be examined involved patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). The total number of victims, race, and ethnicity are also included in the NCANDS database. Specific details of the caregivers can also be obtained for analysis. Government facilities collect data for numerous reasons and purposes that are available for use in secondary analysis.

Using G*Power analysis, a sample size of 84 participants was calculated using $\alpha = .05$, medium effect size, and a power of 0.80 (Faul et al., 2007). The topic of mental and physical abuse of a child is a sensitive subject, which can make participants very uncomfortable with the potential to induce mental trauma as they remember painful situations. The use of secondary data was the best solution for this research study because the data had already been gathered and allowed the opportunity to build on research that had previously been documented. Chi-squared test was done using the secondary data with analysis using SPSS version 28 software.

Definitions

The definitions of the dependent and independent variables are clarified in this section.

Independent Variable

Gender: Defined as male or female; reflects the cultural differences determined by society; is not the same as sex (Mcleod, 2014). Gender was labeled male or female for this study.

Dependent Variable

Parents: The biological male and female who created a child (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).

Physical abuse: Occurs when a child younger than age 18 has a parent or another person legally responsible for their care who does any of the following: inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means that causes

or creates a substantial risk of death, serious or protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of physical or emotional health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ (NY.Soc. Serv. Law § 371-A 2015).

Mental abuse: “Impairment of emotional health” and “impairment of mental or emotional condition”; includes a state of substantially diminished psychological or intellectual functioning in relation to, but not limited to, such factors as failure to thrive, control of aggressive or self-destructive impulses, ability to think and reason, acting out, or misbehavior, including incorrigibility, ungovernability, or habitual truancy, provided, however, that such impairment must be clearly attributable to the unwillingness or inability of the respondent to exercise a minimum degree of care toward the child (Family Court Act § 1012).

Neglect: Occurs when a child younger than age 18 experiences impairment of physical, mental, or emotional condition or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired because of the failure of their parent or other person legally responsible for their care to exercise a minimum degree of care (NY Soc. Serv. Law § 371-A 2015; Family Court Act § 1012).

Assumptions

I assume that information and data gathered from the Child Maltreatment report that was used for the study were accurate. I assume that the workers who interviewed families were trained and nonbiased, and that they accurately recorded the information. I

assume that the data obtained from the Child Maltreatment report provided an accurate assessment of the independent and dependent variables.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was motivated by the need for research on gender and the difference that gender makes in child maltreatment and neglect between a parent and child. The study focused on the gender of the parent as well as the gender of the child to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse. In this study, I aimed to identify associations by examining findings that compare the mother's or father's relationship with the gender of the child with respect to physical and mental abuse. The scope of the research was to identify patterns that exist between the parent and the child with respect to physical and mental abuse.

The data were obtained from NCANDS through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2020). The inclusion criteria encompassed physically and mentally abused children 3 to 18 years of age, parent-child relationships, maltreatment, physical abuse, and physical and mental abuse. The exclusion criteria were sexual abuse, sibling abuse, and abuse by extended family members and stepparents.

The long-term goal of the study was to identify families at risk of child abuse occurring and provide parents guidance on how to have a positive relationship with their child. Identifying physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect may allow for early

interventions to lessen child abuse and prevent harm. Providing knowledge, education, and resources affects individuals, families, and communities in the prevention of child abuse and neglect (Butun & Beyazit, 2019).

Limitations

Secondary data use is becoming ever more popular due to the vast amount of data available that have already been compiled (Andrews et al., 2012).

Limitations of the data included not knowing how the data had been collected and the methodology and purpose of the previous study (Boslaugh, 2007). Knowing how the data had been collected and the purpose of the data collection can influence how the questions are worded and make a difference in the target population (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). Having access to the data and locating and finding data to fit the research questions are also limitations (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). A researcher making use of secondary data is not aware of details of how the data were analyzed (Andrews et al., 2012). Additionally, the data may be colored by the original researchers' own bias or faulty approach (Andrews et al., 2012).

Bias can be involved in any study outcome. One method to prevent bias is to exclude outliers that could alter the results (Polit & Beck, 2008). Using data that support the hypothesis is another type of bias that alters results. Reevaluating the data and another source testing the data can assist in preventing bias.

Limitations to External Validity

External validity is when the research can be constructed in the same manner by another researcher (Polit & Beck, 2008). External validity is concerned with whether inferences about observed relationships will hold over variations in people, setting, or time. External validity relates to the generalizability of inferences of the study participants. If the results of the research cannot be replicated, the results are considered unreliable. Data were used from the NCANDS report, which compiles information about child abuse from across the 50 states (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). When using secondary data, a review process to determine external validity should be followed. The review process includes evaluating the purpose of the data, the collector, when and how the data were collected, what was collected, and the relation of the data to other data that may be available.

Internal validity can be compromised by information bias (Polit & Beck, 2008). The NCANDS reports and documentation of child abuse and neglect are secondary data that were used in the study. The data are sent to NCANDS and reported by social workers and other mandated reporters. Information bias, as well as incomplete or inaccurate records, can alter the results of a study (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Bias in Research

Bias can influence a study and alter the conclusions of research (Simundić, 2013). Interpretation can also include bias by interpreting the data in favor of the hypothesis (Simundić, 2013). Being mindful of using the correct statistical testing is a means to

avoid interpretation bias (Simundić, 2013). Transparency and accuracy are methods to reduce inaccurate and misleading conclusions in research (Simundić, 2013).

A limitation was that the data were obtained from the NCANDS dataset, a national database gathered from child protective services (CPS) from all 50 states. Professionals from across each state are mandated to report child abuse and maltreatment, and suspicions of incidences and occurrences. There are many cases, however, that are not reported. The NCANDS report is limited to those cases that were reported to CPS. Secondary data may not include all the variables needed for the study in the database. Limitations included whether the dataset, once obtained, could fully answer the research questions (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). Secondary data had been collected for different research purposes and may be out of date or inaccurate (Houser, 2015). If used for different research purposes, the samples may not be representative of the population that researchers wish to examine or may not be sufficiently detailed (Houser, 2015). It may be challenging for researchers to obtain information specific to their needs when using secondary research. I had no control over secondary data collection and must assume that the data were entered accurately, with no data missing.

Significance of the Study

Little literature could be located that addressed gender and parent–child interactions with respect to physical and mental child abuse. The pattern of child maltreatment remains unknown concerning whether the influence related to the gender of the child and the parent has a significance in the occurrence of child physical and mental

abuse. The aim of the study was to determine the differences in patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent and to gain new insights to improve the quality of parent-and-child interactions.

Contributions to advance practice are recognizing and intervening early in support of families and preventing harm while reducing the need for foster care and improving children's lives, which can improve outcomes (Casey, 2017). This study addressed whether there are gender differences in physical and mental abuse that occur between parents and their children of the same gender as the parent. The knowledge can be used in treatment and prevention of physical and mental abuse related to parents and their children of the same gender as the parent.

Significance to Theory

Bowen's theory addresses how families and emotional systems affect each other (Bowen, 1995). The theory reviews how families can work together. Assisting with parenting skills and family relationship training can create positive changes in lives for children as well as parents, which benefit all members of the family (Kerr, 2000).

Differences in parental behavior make for significant differences in how each child functions (Bowen, 1995). To Bowen (1995), the only effective way to resolve family problems is to change the interactions within families of origin.

The cornerstone of Bowen's carefully worked-out theory is his notion of the forces within the family that make for togetherness and the opposing forces that lead to individuality, autonomy, and a separate self (Bowen, 1995). Using the concepts of

Bowen's theory enables identification and understanding of the relationship between the parent and the child, which can provide insight to advance knowledge in the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

Significance to Social Change

Potential implications for positive social change involve intervening to lessen harm by providing parenting skills and family relationship training. Addressing conflicts of a parent-and-child relationship may prevent abuse, Kaufman (2017) suggested. Promoting a positive parent-and-child relationship affects the well-being of the child throughout life while improving outcomes for families (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017). Contributions from the study will add to the literature concerning whether there are gender differences and an association between the gender of the parent and the child leading to child physical and mental abuse. The relationship between the variables examined involved patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable).

The study's contribution for positive social change is the development and use of interventions for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Prevention programs and training may keep children out of foster care so they can remain with their biological family. Services for children typically begin after the child is removed from the home. Working with families prior to removal of the child from the home can assist with keeping children out of the foster care system. The National Center for Complementary

and Integrative Health (NCCIH) has suggested that future research focus on the development of in-depth studies to determine the causes of child abuse (Peterson & Feit, 2014). With a greater understanding of physical and mental abuse toward children, it is possible that early detection may lead to prevention of child abuse. The intention of the study was to potentially change social norms to be in support of parents.

Significance to Practice

The study will contribute to advancing practice by identifying children and parents who are at a higher risk of abuse related to the gender of the child as compared to the gender of the parent. The intention was to identify potential complications in parent–child interactions and provide parents guidance in how to have a positive relationship with their child. Identifying behaviors early may allow for early interventions to lessen child abuse and prevent harm (Kaufman, 2017). The significance for practice involved the potential to intervene early in recognition of child abuse and reduce risk.

Summary

Child abuse affects children from all cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. The problem statement reviewed the occurrence of child abuse as a public issue that has become a significant social problem that continues to increase (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). The purpose of the study was to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father, and patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent’s gender, versus a child of the opposite sex. The focus of the study was on developing a greater

understanding of the relationship between the parent of the same sex and the opposite sex. Patterns of physical and mental abuse were examined by considering the child's gender (an independent variable) compared with the parent's gender (a dependent variable). The research questions for the study were the following:

- RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?
- RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?
- RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?
- RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

The hypothesis for the study was that the children are of the same gender as the abusive parent in the relationship. The theoretical foundation for the study was based on Bowen's theory, which describes how emotions differ within a family. The definitions of the dependent and independent variables were clarified. The nature of the study consisted of a quantitative approach using a secondary analysis to determine if there were connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The significance of the study was to create knowledge and obtain new information by assessing the relationship of the parent and child that leads to identifying families at risk of child physical and mental abuse.

Chapter 2 will contain a synopsis of the current literature as well as databases and search engines used, and the scope of the literature. The literature review includes identified therapies and education strategies proven to be successful after the incidence of child abuse. Chapter 2 addresses the key words, phrases, and databases used in searching the literature for the study. The scope, types, and sources of the literature are included in the chapter. The limited literature found on the subject is noted and described leading to the need for the study. Chapter 2 includes a description of Bowen's theory and origin as well as a rationale for the choice to use Bowen's theory. How the theory relates to the present study is reviewed, including a description of how the research questions align with the study. Previous research is presented as well as relevant concepts, variables, and reasons for their selection. Review and synthesis of studies related to methodology and what is known about the independent and dependent variables leading to future research are discussed. How the present study fills the gap in the literature while advancing and contributing to knowledge is addressed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem is that child abuse continues to be a societal issue. The purpose of the study was to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father, and patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex. It is also unknown if the gender of the child as compared to the gender of the parent is a factor in the patterns of abuse.

Synopsis of Literature

Current literature related to children who have experienced physical and mental abuse and neglect identifies interventions that are successful in treatment and prevention of child abuse. Quantitative data indicate that individuals with intimate partner violence are more likely to engage in and experience child abuse. Thomas and Zimmer-Gembeck (2012) and Kim (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of parent-child interaction therapy. Interpretations of the results of both studies show music therapy to be a positive intervention and valuable tool resulting in decreased behavioral issues for abused children. Thulin et al., (2019) examined how children who had been reported to have been victims of abuse experienced combined parent-child cognitive behavioral therapy. Interventions included family skills training for both parent and child, as well as family therapy. In comparison to those not participating in therapy, the children showed decreased stress and fewer behavioral issues. It was concluded that family interaction

therapy is a valuable and successful tool with favorable outcomes in reducing the incidence of child maltreatment.

Chapter 2 Preview

Chapter 2 identifies library databases accessed and search engines used with key terms and combinations of terms. A scope of literature review in terms of years searched as well as types of literature and sources searched is also provided. The origin of Bowen's theory is discussed, along with the hypothesis and assumptions. A research-based analysis and how the theory has been applied previously are covered in Chapter 2. The conceptual framework is identified in this chapter. Studies that relate to the research variables and to the research questions are addressed. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

The databases that were searched for this review through the Walden University Library were Ebsco, ProQuest, PsychINFO, CINAHL, Medline, and Women's Studies International. The key search terms used were *child and mental abuse, children and physical abuse, child neglect and physical abuse, child and maltreatment and parent child relations/relationships, child abuse and family type, different types of family maltreatment, child abuse prevention, and child neglect and physical abuse interventions*. The inclusion criteria included physically and mentally abused children 3 to 16 years of age. The exclusion criteria were sexual abuse, sibling abuse, and abuse by extended family members, stepparents, and nonparents. Other exclusion criteria included studies

that were of abused adults. Primary sources included review articles within the past 5 years, research reports, case studies, dissertations, and government publications.

Identifying if there is a difference in abuse if the child abused is the same or different gender than the parent was the purpose of the study.

Theoretical Framework

Dr. Murray Bowen was a psychoanalytically trained medical practitioner and army physician who proposed the Bowen family systems theory in the late 1960s. Dr. Bowen's theory operates on the premise that people and families work as a single emotional unit and are simpler to understand when examined in the context of family bonds and relationships.

The three subsystems of Bowen's theory are parents, siblings, and parent-child relationships (Kerr, 2000). Bowen (1995) contended that conflict within the family can be resolved through therapy with the parent. How a parent thinks and responds to children is passed on through generations as well as learned through culture. The family in Bowen's theory is viewed as a unit, where the actions of one member affect all members of the family (Haefner, 2014). In support of Bowen's theory, a study examined how children who had been reported to have been victims of abuse experienced combined parent-child family therapy (Thulin et al., 2019). The parents and their children, ages 9 through 17 years, participated in the study. It was concluded that parent-child cognitive therapy was effective in improving the lives of children and parents.

Sibling position can predict the characteristics of a person (Bowen, 1995). If the father were the oldest child in the family and only boy with several younger sisters, there would be higher expectations of him in comparison to his sisters. Another assumption is that birth order plays an important role in personality development (Huston, 2019). The firstborn is described as a leader and watches over younger siblings in the family (Huston, 2019). The father would expect the same from a son who may be the oldest in the family with younger sisters, which could create conflict within the family if the son did not live up to the paternal expectations. Addressing the problem of the parent-and-child relationship may prevent abuse problems, Kaufman (2012) suggested. The aim of the study was to note any difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

The parent-child relationship, according to Bowen (1995), can be negative or positive. The parent making negative judgements about the child influences the way the parent responds to the child with negative behavior. The parent may presume the child is innately a bad child and expect the child to misbehave; therefore, the parent may react negatively to the child's behavior (Bowen, 1995). Each family member affects the others as a system. Changing a family member such as the parent to learn and demonstrate positive behaviors to replace negative ones will change the dynamics of the family to positive (Kaufman, 2012). As self-efficacy increases, an individual gains the ability to become a more self-reliant and solid self while staying connected to the family (Mackay, 2012). The research questions focused on the gender of the child and the parent related to

any patterns associated with gender in the relationship of the family. Building upon the existing theory, abuse is related to the function of the family (Bowen,1995).

Concepts

The eight concepts of Bowen's family systems theory are the nuclear family, differentiation of self, triangulation, cutoff, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, and emotional processes of society (Kerr, 2000). The nuclear family concept includes single-parent families and stepparents as well as married couples. The study identified the status of the relationship, whether those involved were mothers, fathers, single parents, or stepparents, that was defined as the nuclear family.

Differentiation of self means that the person can maintain a personal identity separate from the family. The individual belongs to a group yet can stand independently as an individual and differentiate from the rest of the family. In the concept of differentiation of self, there is a connectiveness that is belonging, and a separateness as an individual, as described by Bowen (1995).

Triangulation refers to conflict between two people and bringing a third person to the dynamics. The third person can take a side within the two-person conflict or could be considered as an outsider and not be included. Bowen (1995) described triangulation as one side in conflict and two in agreement.

The next concept is cutting off, which is described as conflict or disagreement among family members. In disagreement or conflict the individual members may choose

to separate themselves emotionally from the situation. In separation, the person has removed themselves from the issue and cut themselves off. Cutting off from the family does not address the problem to be resolved. Bowen declared that cutting off is unresolved emotional attachment (Kerr, 2000).

The family projection process is centered around the parent–child relationship. The projection process is the transmission of emotions from the parent to the child. According to Bowen (1995), the projection process is not a deliberate act and is unintentional.

Multigenerational transmission involves small idiosyncrasies in behaviors that can be passed on through the generations. A behavior, whether positive or negative, may continue to grow stronger in future generations as the behavior becomes more prominent and follows the next generation (Bowen, 1995). Bowen (1995) postulates that reactions and emotions are passed consciously and unconsciously, building and transmitting to the next generation.

Sibling position can predict the characteristics of a person (Bowen, 1995). The birth order of a child makes a difference in the expected role the child will have within the family. The oldest child is thought to be a leader, while the middle child is just that, in the middle, neither the oldest nor the youngest. The middle child is known to be rebellious in nature, while the youngest child is the center of attention. According to Bowen (1995), sibling position is recognized as identifying one's sense of who they are.

The emotional process of society is the eighth concept in Bowen's theory (Bowen, 1995). Societal issues are part of a larger picture of an emotional system. Bowen (1995) discusses how increased problems in society are part of the emotional process in humans. Stepping back to look at the bigger picture, parents need to reexamine and focus on making changes within themselves (Bowen, 2021). The significance of the current study rests in the analysis of the physical and mental abuse of the child and the parent who abuses to gain new insights to improve the quality of parent-and-child interactions to prevent child abuse.

The eight concepts of Bowen's theory have been applied in previous works in numerous clinical applications. A study of weight loss and diet goals used Bowen's differentiation of self to identify shifts in the family system and association of anxiety (Havstad & Sheffield, 2018). A study of patient-centered nursing used Bowen's family systems in support of the well-being of nurses while providing care to critical patients (Jacimowicz et al., 2021). Rivera and Fincham (2015), using Bowen's family systems theory as framework, studied adults who were witness to violence and transmitted violence through generations. The aim of the current study was to note any difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex. The current study benefited from the framework of Bowen's concepts of family systems in relation to understanding families and helping them to be successful in parenting.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Studies Related to Chosen Methodology and Scope of Study

The most common research measures that quantify child abuse are cross-sectional designs that address regulation of the emotions of the parents and positive ways of responding to emotional distress (Carrington-Walton, 2014; Gross, 2013; Gross et al., 2006). A cross-sectional design of perpetrator characteristics and child abuse identified that females living with a single parent were more likely to be abused (Nepuane et al., 2018). Longitudinal analysis revealed patterns of risk factors that predicted child abuse or neglect (Brown et al., 1998; Webster-Statton, 1991). A lack of common terminology and definitions makes it difficult to understand the scope of the practice and manifestations of the problem of child abuse. Giovannonni and Billingsly (1970) conducted comparative studies between families who mistreated their children and those that did not and determined that poverty and a lack of support from the community contributed to the maltreatment of children. Polansky et al., (1985) performed a study that involved interviews with 152 neglectful and 154 non neglectful mothers, matched by race, economic status, rural/urban status, and other attributes. In contrast to the controls, neglectful mothers reported less support from informal networks and described their neighborhoods as less friendly and helpful.

Approaches to the Problem and Strengths and Weaknesses of the Approaches

Researchers have approached the topic of child abuse from different aspects to include the individual, family, society, and community (Garbarino, 1976; Gelles, 1982;

Newberger et al., 1977; Snyder et al., 1982). The positive outcomes of the research are that there have been advances in identifying interventions and successful treatments. The weaknesses associated with the literature on child abuse are the lack of consistent definitions of child abuse (Holden, 2003). The absence of common terminology and definitions makes it difficult to understand the scope of the practice and manifestations. Definitions and design issues and inconclusive results in the literature (Fowler et al., 2007) have held back progress in research of child abuse. A consistent theory is also lacking in research literature (Holden, 2003; Kitzman et al., 2003; Sternberg et al., 2006). There has been significant progress in addressing child abuse, maltreatment, and neglect, but a consistent theoretical model and concise definitions would expedite research. Research on child abuse and neglect evolved in the early part of the 20th century as a medical or pathogenic model (National Research Council, 1993). The National Research Council (1993) investigated specific factors or causal sources within the offending individual to discover, address, and prevent such abuse. Research on child abuse and neglect traditionally has followed a categorical framework in which the research is categorized based on the types of maltreatment typically documented in administrative records. Even though there are still difficulties with definitions, data collection, and study designs within different categories of child abuse and neglect, the panel concluded that there had been enough progress in integrating the four categories into a framework that can analyze the similarities and differences between research findings (National Research Council, 1993).

Rationale for Selection of the Variables

Bundy-Fazoli, DeLong and Hamilton (2013) define child neglect as the inability of parents or caregivers to provide children with their fundamental needs, putting them at risk for harm. Child neglect is a form of child abuse, and lack of resources and support systems are indicators of neglect (Bernard, 2019; Ryan, Williams, & Courtney, 2013). Interventions and treatment for neglect are dependent upon the needs of the family and the type of neglect involved (Else-Quest, 2012). Neglect is the most common form of child abuse, and social isolation is associated with neglectful families (Crittenden, 1985).

Researchers have concluded that intentional physical abuse by caregivers is child abuse (McLeod, Fergusson & Harwood, 2014; Milner et al., 2010). Social work defines child physical abuse as occurring to a child younger than age 18 whose parent or another person legally responsible for their care does any of the following:

Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means that causes or creates a substantial risk of death, severe or protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ. (Soc. Serv. Law § 371)

The most noted type of physical abuse is bruising (Gonzalez, 2021). Milner et al., (2010) concurred that cognitive deficiencies, poor academic performance, low self-esteem, sadness, anxiety, rage, psychological distress, and relationship issues are some of the outcomes of child physical abuse. Covington (2007) contended that physical abuse of children demonstrates anger and fosters a disconnect between caregivers and children.

This study proposes that child physical abuse occurs in family relationships associated with the gender of the parent.

In addition to failing to provide an appropriate atmosphere for growth and development, emotional abuse may include acts that harm emotional health (National Research Council, 1993). Among the types of emotional abuse are stifling the child's movement, denigration, ridicule, threats and intimidation, rejection, and other nonphysical forms of hostile treatment (National Research Council, 1993). Various methods and techniques used by parents to discipline their children depend heavily on their cultural backgrounds, some of which can be considered psychologically harmful by people from other cultures (National Research Council, 1993). Defining psychological abuse is, therefore, very difficult. If psychological abuse is defined broadly, its effects are likely to vary widely depending on context and age.

Gender: Defined as male or female, the cultural differences determined by society which is not the same as sex (McLeod, 2014). There is little literature that focuses on gender and parent-child interactions in the literature of child abuse. It is unclear whether the child's gender and the parent's gender being the same influences child abuse. Gender norms are social norms about the proper roles and expectations required of men and women in society which in turn justify violence in the form of child abuse (Cui, 2016). One study from China showed that abuse by the father is more common with boys while corporal punishment is more common with mothers especially boys. Higher expectations are considered for boys rather than girls in Chinese society. In the study by Cui, (2016)

parent's gender made no difference in severe punishment. Gender differences in the literature are identified in the association of victims of abuse finding females were frequently victims of abuse and neglect compared to males (Asscher et al., 2015).

Parent: the biological male and female who created the child (Child maltreatment, 2018). There is general agreement across many cultures that child abuse should not be allowed, (Doucki, et al., 2013). Cultures have different standards when it comes to parenting techniques. Family violence can refer to abuse between parents toward their children (Fernandopulle, 2003). Defining violence or abuse of parents toward their children is difficult since parent behavior is influenced by a variety of sources including a parent's own experiences (Fernandopulle, 2003).

Review and Synthesis of Studies Related to the Research Questions

Children in mother-only families suffered maltreatment at almost twice the rate of children in two-parent families (15.5 per 1,000) (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Data from the U.S. department of health and human services from 2001 till 2006 statistics report the highest number of perpetrators statistically are mothers. Mothers are deemed the person whose responsibility it is to care for the children. In American culture the mother can be charged for failure to protect, yet rarely that the father is subjected to such charges by law.

While men demonstrate higher aggression overall, gender is not a reliable indicator of interpersonal or psychological aggression (Moffitt et al., 2001). According to the public, partner violence is a male problem, and men attack their partners first to

dominate them. In contrast, violence by women is usually the result of self-defense (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). There is a suggestion that the gender paradigm should be replaced (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Social norms pertaining to the roles and expectations required of men and women in society result in the use of violence against children in the form of gender norms (Cui,2016).

The most damaging type of abuse is mental abuse where the child is made by the adult to feel worthless, unwanted, and unloved. Psychological abuse is considered less serious and significant as compared to physical abuse. Young women who have been abused by their fathers may develop depression in the long run (Iram, & Najam, 2014). Depression causes a sense of worthlessness and low self-esteem.

According to Bandura, it is more likely that children will mimic aggressive adults, and familiarity affects boys more than girls (Bandura,1973). Boys are likely to be victims of beatings and physical punishment more often than girls (Bandura ,1973). If a father uses aggressive behavior against his wife or child with success, the child is likely to emulate the behavior as well (Bandura,1973).

Major themes in the literature of child abuse and maltreatment focus on prevention programs, family support, and public health. Researchers regarding child abuse are looking at the problem from different aspects and new concept frameworks. Strengthening families, and prevention of mental health disorders are emerging themes in child abuse research (Iram & Najam, 2014). Stress is a common theme of why parents mistreat their children. Much of the research focuses on the long-term outcomes of child

abuse and consequences. This study aims to identify children at risk associating a connection to the parent and child gender being the same.

Summary

The theme in the literature of child abuse and neglect revolves around the family. In a home with poor relationships between the parents, child abuse and neglect often occur. Strengthening families and prevention of child abuse and maltreatment are at the heart of the research. Child abuse and neglect have been researched extensively in the understanding of the long-term consequences which includes physical damage and mental health complications; however, no literature could be located that assessed and identified the patterns in the relationship between the parent and the child associated with gender. Society and culture dictate the norms, how children are raised, and acceptable behaviors of parents. Child abuse and neglect is the absence of a positive relationship between the parent and the child which can cause long-term problems.

Strategies in the prevention of child abuse that have shown to be successful include educating parents and communities. Public policies and programs in prevention have been a priority focus regarding child abuse. Bowen's family system seeks to view the family as a group yet examine how they interact together and their individual behaviors (Haefner, 2014). The gender of the child and the parent being the same gender has not been explored in the context of child abuse and neglect. Studies have compared the differences between mothers and fathers related to maltreatment, however, there are no studies that have identified the gender of the parent and child interaction (Straus et al.,

1998). The literature does not address the gender of the parent compared to the child whether the same or different (Tang, 2006).

Identifying the relationship of the parent and child and any correlation of gender, whether they are the same or different is unknown. Abuse and neglect are preventable and identifying families at risk is the first step in prevention. Further studies are needed to explore the parent and child gender being the same in the prevention of child abuse. This study will contribute to the literature by the identification and correlation of the parent and child gender in the prevention of child abuse and identifying families at risk.

Chapter 3 will develop further the family and relationship of the parent and child with respect to correlation of gender. The research design, rationale, population and data collection, analysis and ethical procedures have been discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the study was to determine if there are patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father, and patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus a child of the opposite sex. The motive for the study was to examine child abuse, including the similarities and differences between the gender of the child and the parent, using a secondary data analysis. Another motive for the study was to create knowledge and obtain new information by assessing the relationship of the parent and child, which leads to identifying families at risk of child physical and mental abuse. Early detection of child abuse may be facilitated by a greater understanding of the relationship between the child and their parents.

The content of Chapter 3 addresses the research design, rationale, and methodology. Dependent and independent variables are acknowledged in this chapter as well, and how the design is connected to the research questions and is needed to advance knowledge in the discipline. The methodology is detailed so that the study may be replicated. The methodology section includes identification of the target population, as well as identification and justification of sampling procedures, participation, recruitment, and data collection associated with the main study. Any permissions and procedures to gain access to the data are acknowledged. The content of the chapter includes operational and data analysis, factors of internal consistency, and predictive and construct validity. Ethical concerns, issues, and confidentiality are discussed as well.

A summary of Chapter 3 is provided with a synopsis leading to the next chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Dependent and Independent Variables

The independent variable in this quantitative study was gender, defined as male or female. The variables to be examined were patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). By assessing the relationship between parent and child and obtaining new information, the study was aimed at creating knowledge and identifying patterns of physical and psychological abuse.

Research Design and Connection to Research Questions

This quantitative study was used to identify patterns of physical and psychological abuse based on the gender of the parent compared to the child. This quantitative design used secondary data from NCANDS to answer the research questions of whether there are patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender compared to the gender of the parent. I chose child abuse and neglect to research an association between the variables to gain insight and reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. The information from the study can improve outcomes and identify at-risk families in the prevention of child abuse. The purpose of the study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

H₀: There is no significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

H₁: There is a significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

H₀: There is no significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

H₁: There is a significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

Quantitative research design was chosen for this study to answer the research questions using secondary data. The goal of this quantitative research was to determine if an association exists between the gender of the child and the parent, and the pattern of abuse. The study will be useful in identifying associations, which may lead to early detection of abuse, which, in turn, may lead to preventative measures for positive social change. A greater understanding of physical and mental abuse toward children may support early detection that leads to prevention of child abuse.

Methodology

Population

For this study, the population consisted of children and parents who received services from state and national CPS agencies. Child protective services collect both state and national data. The data for the reports were provided through NCANDS, a national data and analysis program that compiles data from all 50 states on child abuse and neglect. The NDACAN is the repository for the information collected, including the NCANDS data system. The sample size to represent the population was calculated at 84

participants by using the G*Power 3.1 statistical software. The secondary data obtained from the NCANDS had been examined to determine if there were connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

G*Power 3.1 statistical software was selected to perform a power analysis and determine the sample size of participants needed for the study (Buchner, 2007). A sample size of 84 participants was calculated using $\alpha = .05$, medium effect size, and a power of 0.80. A power of .80 is the probability that a null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the population of children who received services and experienced reported child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment, the cases documented were the focus. The sample data were used from existing information from the Child Maltreatment Report (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

NCANDS data had been collected by CPS agencies in 50 states across the country (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Data had been submitted yearly from the cases that are investigated for abuse and/or neglect and include demographics of the children and the perpetrators involved; the type of maltreatment, whether physical or verbal; details of the investigation or assessment dispositions; risk factors; and services provided as a result of the investigation or assessment. Electronic files are submitted for each suspected child abuse and neglect case reported and responded to by CPS. The

sources of the reported child abuse and neglect cases are categorized as professional, unprofessional, and unclassified. Access to the Child Maltreatment report is available to the public at no charge. The report is reproducible, and permission from the government is not necessary. Access to the Child Maltreatment report can be obtained electronically from the designated website (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>). The Child Maltreatment report was used to answer research questions of whether there are patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender compared to the gender of the parent. Data were provided as an electronic file, which will be stored on my password-protected computer and destroyed after 5 years. Types of maltreatment refer to CPS response. Types include medical neglect, neglect or deprivation of needs, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, as indicated in the NCANDS annual report (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020).

Data Analysis Plan

G*Power 3.1 statistical software was selected to perform a power analysis and determine the sample size of participants needed for the study (Buchner, 2007). A sample size of 84 participants was calculated using $\alpha = .05$, medium effect size, and a power of 0.80. A power of .80 is the probability that a null hypothesis is rejected. Statistical tests that were used to test the hypotheses included correlational analysis, which can describe the relation between variables (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Descriptive analysis was used to describe and summarize the characteristics of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Descriptive analysis reviews the standard and the mean, as well as any

similarities and/or differences, in the population and the relationship between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Inferential statistics were used to make predictions about the population.

Differences between groups such as gender and relationships between variables can be determined using inferential statistics correlation, and regression analysis aligned with the data analysis plan of inferential statistics. Inferential statistics are based on a specific population, which in this case was based on the population of abused and neglected children, and conclusions that can be drawn from the population (Schneider, et al., 2010) *T* tests were used to compare the means of two groups in this study (Schneider, et al., 2010). Correlational analysis was used to understand the relationship between the variables (positive, negative, or no correlation). The relationships in the family and recorded incidents of child abuse were examined using correlational analysis. Regression analysis can show a positive or negative relationship between variables and the strength associated with a significance of the difference (Schneider, et al., 2010). Multiple regression analysis was used, which can explain the relation between an independent variable and a dependent variable (Schneider, et al., 2010). The relationship between variables to be examined involved patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender (independent variable) compared to the gender of the parent (dependent variable). Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28 software to determine if there are connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent

on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent and to evaluate the null hypothesis.

The research questions for the study were as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

Threats to Validity

Validity refers to whether the study can be replicated following the same pattern and ending with the same results within the same identified population (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The maltreatment reports are compiled by mandated reporters in a review of a child maltreatment case. The threat to external validity comes in question if the details of the report are not true (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The record of the events of the actual occurrence to warrant a maltreatment report should be specific and detailed. Possible modification by the original researcher could be a threat to validity, as this could alter the results. Sampling bias exists, as the records may not be detailed enough to provide the necessary information researched, which also warrants a threat to external

validity (Patino& Ferreira, 2018). In using secondary data, the review process to determine external validity includes evaluating the purpose of the data, the collector, when and how the data were collected, what was collected, and what is the relation to other data that may be available. Validation can be determined by supporting the data and gathering evidence to show validation of an instrument (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Ethical Procedures

Child Maltreatment reports were used for the research study using NCANDS data (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). NCANDS is a voluntary data and analysis collection program which provides child abuse and neglect information (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Access to the data was provided to the public through the Children's Bureau website (<https://acf.hhs.gov/cb>). The data provided had been encrypted and identifiers are removed, which include the child's and perpetrator's name, the worker on the case, as well as the supervisor in each case. The definitions of maltreatment as stated in the glossary of the maltreatment report designate the type as that which received a CPS response (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Types of abuse include medical neglect, deprivation of necessities, and physical and/or psychological maltreatment (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). The data were downloaded to my personal computer, which is password protected. The computer will be kept in my private office to which no other personnel have access. Data collection began after approval was received from the Institutional Review Board of Walden University.

Summary

In this quantitative study, the variables to be investigated included patterns of physical and mental abuse based on the child's gender (independent variable) versus the parent's gender (dependent variable). This quantitative design employed secondary data from NCANDS to address the research questions of whether there are patterns of physical and mental abuse based on the child's gender versus the parent's gender. The study will be valuable in discovering associations that might lead to early diagnosis of abuse, which could lead to preventative actions for social change. The NCANDS secondary data had been evaluated to see if there are any correlations or patterns of physical and mental abuse based on the child's gender compared to the gender of the parent. The study used descriptive statistics, correlation, regression analysis, and statistical analysis using SPSS version 28 software. The data analysis plan, methodology, and threats to validity have been addressed. Data for the study were obtained from NCANDS (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Findings from the study are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The goal of this quantitative study was to determine whether there was a correlation between the gender of the child and the parent and patterns of physical and mental abuse. The research questions were designed to determine if there are links and patterns of physical and mental abuse based on the child's gender as opposed to the parent's gender and to test the null hypothesis. The research questions and hypotheses for the study were as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

H₀: There is no significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

H₁: There is a significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

H₀: There is no significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

H₁: There is a significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

The content of Chapter 4 includes data collection, time, and recruitment. Any discrepancies in data collection or the plan previously presented in Chapter 3 are addressed. Baseline descriptive and demographic characteristics have been reported. How the sample is representative of the larger population is included in this chapter. Results of analysis that include descriptive statistics and assumptions related to the study are reported here. Results also include statistical analysis findings, statistics with probability

values, confidence intervals, and effect sizes. Tables and figures to illustrate results are included in this chapter. A summarization of answers to the research questions is given. Traditional material from the findings and an introduction to Chapter 5 are provided.

Data Collection

Child Maltreatment is the annual report that provides national data regarding child abuse and neglect documented by CPS agencies in all 50 states. Data collection is an annual process that has begun on October 1 and ended on September 30 for the past 30 years. NCANDS is the repository of the analyzed information for the maltreatment report. NCANDS contains screened-in referrals from CPS in all 50 states, including the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. Screened-in referrals are reports that meet the designated criteria to initiate a response by CPS. Data can be obtained by visiting <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>. Data can then be downloaded after selecting the desired publication. The agency file is available to the public and as stated in the publication may be reproduced without government permission (NCANDS, 2020). For this quantitative research, the Child File was used, as it provides detailed information about each recorded case (NCANDS, 2020). The Child File is case-level data provided for the maltreatment reports, which are detailed for each child and are considered restricted information (NCANDS, 2020). To obtain the Child File per NCANDS policy, a researcher must fill out an application to receive the restricted information (NCANDS, 2020).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The number of participants selected for the study was determined by using G*Power (Buchner, 2007), which calculated that 84 participants would be needed to be given an alpha of 0.5, with an effect size of 0.30 and p value of .05. The dataset was collected by CPS services involving children from 0 to 17 years of age. There were 84 children comprised of 59.50% females and 40.50% males, and 84 parents, of whom 41.70% were males (fathers) and 58.30% were females (mothers). The mean child age was 5.14 years ($M = 5.14$; $SD = 4.94$), and the mean parent age was 33.71 years ($M = 33.71$; $SD = 7.17$). Eighteen fathers had male children (21.40%), and 17 fathers had female children (20.20%). Thirty-two mothers had male children (38.10%), and 17 mothers had female children (58.30%) The crosstabulations for parent gender and child gender consist of 4.80% of children who were physically abused, 61.90% who were neglected, 2.40% who were sexually abused, 27.40% who were psychologically or emotionally maltreated, and 3.60% who were medically neglected.

Assumptions

Descriptive statistics, chi-square, and logistic regression analysis were completed in SPSS software. Basic key assumptions associated with logistic regression are sample size, multicollinearity, and outliers (Wagner, 2017). Logistic regression implies that the outcomes are binary or dichotomous, that there is a linear relationship between the logit of the result, that there are no extreme values or anomalies in the continuous predictors,

and that there is no high correlation in the predictors. The chi-square test was used in analysis to determine if the variables are related. The conditions to be met for chi-square analysis are that the scores in each cell are independent of each other, and the dependent variable is assumed to be a frequency (Wagner, 2017).

Findings

Chi-Square Test of Independence Results

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

H₀: There is no significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

H₁: There is a significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father.

A chi-square test of independence was used to determine whether the parent gender (male, female) was related to a type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect or deprivation of necessities, medical neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional maltreatment). The results are significant, $\chi^2(4) = 27.78, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .58$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that parent gender (male, female) is related to type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect or deprivation of necessities, medical neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional maltreatment).

Most of the males (fathers) used psychological or emotional maltreatment (48.60%), followed by neglect or deprivation of necessities (34.30%), physical abuse (11.40%), and sexual abuse (5.70%; Figure 1). Most of the females (mothers) used neglect or deprivation of necessities (81.60%), followed by psychological or emotional maltreatment (12.20%) and medical neglect (6.10%).

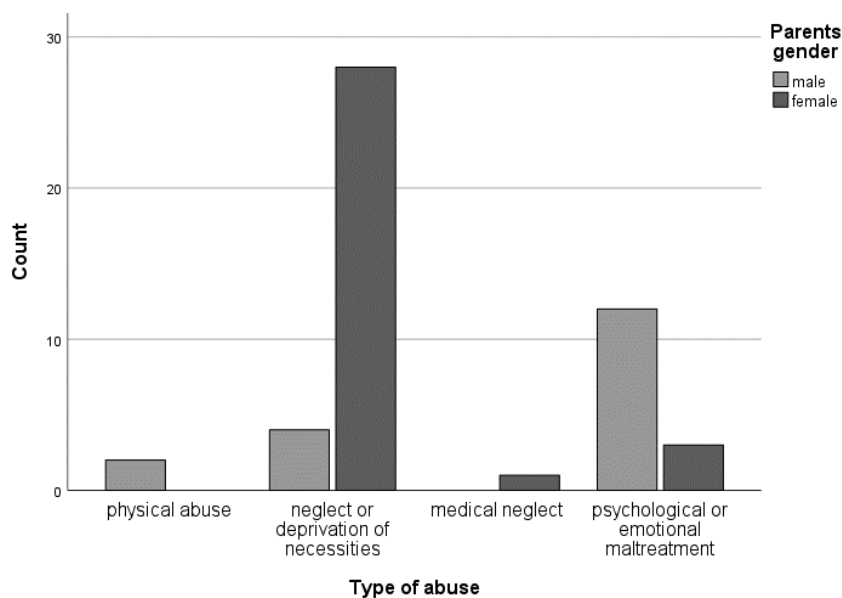
RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

H₀: There is no significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

H₁: There is a significant difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex.

Figure 1

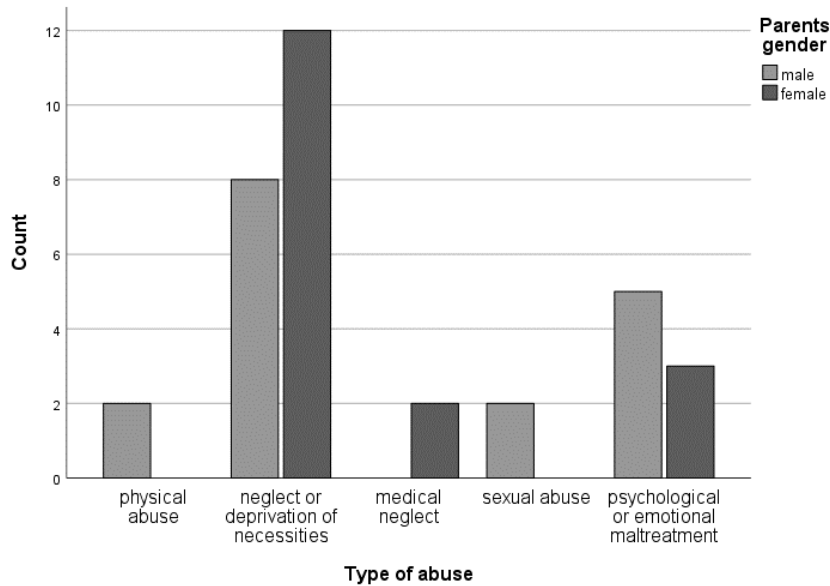
Type of Abuse by Parent Gender If Child Is Male



A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether the parent gender (male, female) was related to a type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect, deprivation of necessities, medical neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional maltreatment) if the child is male (Figure 2). The results are non significant, $\chi^2(4) = 7.30, p = .121$, Cramer's $V = .46$. I, therefore, fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that parent gender (male female) is not related to a type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect or deprivation of necessities, medical neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional maltreatment) if the child is male.

Figure 2

Type of Abuse by Parent Gender If Child Is Female



Logistic Regression Results

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child.

Logistic regression was used to determine whether the designated parent being the father predicts the likelihood of psychological or emotional maltreatment of the female child. Nagelkerke *R* square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model (Table 1). The explained variation in the dependent variable based on Nagelkerke *R*

square is 2.90%. The results show that if the father is designated as the parent, there is a non statistically significant predictor of likelihood of psychological or emotional maltreatment of female child ($p = .423$); therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 1

Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Female

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Father	.665	.830	.643	1	.423	1.944
Constant	-1.540	.636	5.863	1	.015	.214

Logistic regression was used to determine whether the designated parent being the father predicts the likelihood of sexual abuse of the female child (Table 2). Nagelkerke R square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model. The explained variation in the dependent variable based on Nagelkerke R square is 22.60%. The results show that if the parent is the father, there is a non statistically significant predictor of likelihood of sexual abuse of female child ($p = .998$).

Table 2

Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Female

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Parent is father	-19.19	9748.23	.000	1	.998	.000
Constant	-2.02	.753	7.164	1	.007	.133

Logistic regression was used to determine whether the designated parent being the father predicts the likelihood of physical abuse of the female child (Table 3). Nagelkerke *R* square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model. The dependent variable based on Nagelkerke *R* square is 22.60%. The results show that if the parent is the father, there is a non statistically significant predictor of likelihood of the physical abuse of female child ($p = .998$).

Table 3

Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Female

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	<i>p</i>	Exp(B)
Parent is father	-19.19	9748.23	.000	1	.998	.000
Constant	-2.02	.753	7.164	1	.007	.133

Logistic regression was used to determine if the designated parent being the father predicted the likelihood of neglect or deprivation of necessities of female child (Table 4). Nagelkerke *R* square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model. The explained variation in the dependent variable based on Nagelkerke *R* square is 7.60%. The results show that if the parent is the father, there is a non statistically significant predictor of the likelihood of neglect or deprivation of necessities of the female child ($p = .168$).

Table 4*Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Female*

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Parent is father	.993	.721	1.899	1	.168	2.700
Constant	-.118	.486	.059	1	.808	.889

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

H₀: There is no significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child.

Logistic regression was used to determine if the parent is the father predicted the likelihood of psychological or emotional maltreatment of male child. Nagelkerke R Square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model. The explained variation in the dependent variable based on Nagelkerke R square is 43.40%. The results show that if the parent is the father there is a statistically significant predictor of likelihood of psychological or emotional maltreatment of male child ($p < .001$) (Table 5). Since Exp(B) for the Parent is the father equals 19.333, higher than 1.0, the odds of psychological or emotional maltreatment are 19.333 times greater for male child if the parent is the father as opposed to when the parent is the mother.

Table 5*Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Male*

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Parent is father	2.962	.786	14.199	1	< .001	19.333
Constant	-2.269	.606	13.993	1	< .001	.103

Logistic regression was used to determine whether if the parent is the father predicted the likelihood of neglect of deprivation of necessities of the male child (Table 6). Nagelkerke R Square value indicates the explanatory power of the logit model. The explained variation in the dependent variable based on Nagelkerke R square is 49.10%. The results show that if the parent is the father there is a statistically significant predictor of likelihood of neglect of deprivation of necessities of male child ($p < .001$). Since Exp(B) for Parent is father equals 24.500, higher than 1.0, the odds of neglect of deprivation of necessities is 24.500 times greater for male child if parent is the father as opposed to when the parent is the mother.

Table 6*Logistic Regression Results If Child Is Female*

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
Parent is father	3.199	.779	16.852	1	< .001	24.500
Constant	-1.253	.567	4.883	1	.027	.286

Summary

Chi-square test of independence was performed as well as logistic regression to determine the answer to the research questions. A chi-square test of independence was used to predict whether the parent gender (male, female) was related to a type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect or deprivation of necessities, medical neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional maltreatment).

The research questions are stated as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father?

The results revealed a p value of $< .001$ leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative which states there is a significant difference between patterns of physical and mental abuse demonstrated by the mother as compared to the father. Males (fathers) used psychological or emotional maltreatment while females (mothers) used neglect or deprivation of necessities as the major form of abuse.

RQ2: What is the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender, versus a child of the opposite sex?

The results are non-significant, $\chi^2(4) = 7.30$, $p = .121$, *Cramer's V* = .46, thus the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. There is not enough evidence that the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus the child of the opposite sex is not due to chance.

RQ3: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse toward the female child?

The results are non-significant as there is not enough evidence that the difference in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus the child of the opposite sex is not due to chance.

RQ4: What is the relationship between the father and physical and mental abuse of the male child?

The results show that if the parent is the father is a statistically significant predictor of likelihood of neglect of deprivation of necessities of male child ($p < .001$). Since $\text{Exp}(B)$ for Parent is father equals 24.500, higher than 1.0, the odds of neglect of deprivation of necessities are 24.500 times greater for a male child if the parent is the father.

Chapter five includes interpretation of the findings and limitations of the study. The final chapter also includes recommendations for the study, and implications. Finally, a conclusion is provided in a final message.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the relationship of the child being abused and the parent who abuses them while gaining new insights to improve the quality of parent-and-child interactions to prevent child abuse. A quantitative approach using a secondary analysis was used in the study to determine if there were connections and patterns of physical and mental abuse dependent on the child's gender as compared to the gender of the parent. The data were obtained from NCANDS through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2020).

Key findings lead to the conclusion that there is a clear distinction between the mother's and the father's practices of physical and psychological abuse. Males (fathers) abuse their children psychologically or emotionally, while females (mothers) harm their children through neglect or denial of essentials. The differences in psychological and physical abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus a child of the opposite sex is not sufficiently supported by the available data to rule out chance. The differences in patterns of physical and mental abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus a child of the opposite sex cannot be ruled out because of chance, and as such, the results are not statistically significant. The results show that the parent being the father significantly predicts the risk that a boy will not have access to basic needs. The likelihood that a male

child will be neglected or deprived of necessities is higher if the parent is a father.

Females (mothers) harm their children through neglect or denial of essentials.

Interpretation of the Finding

Covington (2007) contended that physical abuse of children demonstrates anger and fosters a disconnect between caregivers and children. The differences in psychological and physical abuse toward a child of the parent's gender versus a child of the opposite sex is not sufficiently supported by the available data in this study to rule out chance. It remains unclear whether the child's gender and the parent's gender being the same influences child abuse.

Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 2001 to 2006 indicate that the highest number of perpetrators statistically are mothers. While men demonstrate higher aggression overall, gender is not a reliable indicator of interpersonal or psychological aggression (Moffitt et al., 2001). A replacement for the gender paradigm has been proposed as recommended by Rakovec-Felser (2014) to take a public health approach. A public health approach refers to a scientific approach to violence. The use of violence against children in the form of gender norms is a product of social norms relating to the roles and expectations expected of men and women in society (Cui, 2016).

Boys are likely to be victims of beatings and physical punishment more often than girls (Bandura, 1973). Cui (2016) found that the parent's gender made no difference when there was severe punishment. Gender differences in the literature are identified in the association of victims of abuse finding females were frequently victims of abuse and

neglect compared to males (Asscher et al., 2015). In comparison, my findings indicate that boys are more likely to be deprived of necessities by the father as well as neglected.

The basis of Bowen's theory is the idea that individuals and families function as a unified emotional unit and are easier to comprehend when viewed in the context of relationships and family ties (Bowen, 1995). Bowen's theory was developed to help people heal with family support. Bowen (1995) described how conflict within the family can be resolved through therapy with the parent. This study does not confirm or deny this, as it remains unclear whether the child's gender and the parent's gender being the same influences child abuse. All members of the family are connected emotionally, and to understand the dynamics within the family, one individual cannot be singled out.

According to Bowen (1995), the projection process is not a deliberate act and is unintentional. The projection process transmits emotional and mental stresses from the parent to the child. Changing a family member, such as the parent, to learn and demonstrate positive behaviors to replace negative ones will change the dynamics of the family to positive (Kaufman, 2012). Bowen's theory helps family members to understand their behaviors while resolving their conflicts within the family.

My findings indicate that boys are more likely to be deprived of necessities by the father as well as neglected. Families are impacted upon by societal views, culture, and disputes within the family. Bowen's family system theory suggests that a parent may focus all their own anxieties and failures onto one child. Therapy, according to Bowen,

will assist families to develop skills for better communication, interactions, and behaviors that make for healthy relations within the family.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the large quantity of data that have previously been produced, secondary data utilization is becoming increasingly common (Andrews et al., 2012). Initially, the data that were obtained from the Child File did not contain the material needed to answer the research questions. After reviewing the Agency File containing confidential information, it was determined the data could be used to answer the research questions. The review process entailed assessing the data's purpose, the collector, the timing and method of collection, the content of the data, and the data's relationship to any other data that may be accessible. Limitations to the study were in obtaining access to the data as adhering to policies and obtaining permissions took a long while. The ability to access the data and locate and identify data that corresponded to the study objectives were additional restrictions (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). Limitations of the use of secondary data include not knowing how the data were gathered, as well as the methodology and objectives of the prior study (Boslaugh, 2007). Knowing how the data had been gathered and why the data were gathered might have an impact on the question wording and affect the target group (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). When using secondary data, the researcher is unaware of the specifics of the data analysis (Andrews et al., 2012). Additionally, the original researchers' own prejudice or flawed methodology may have tainted the data (Andrews et al., 2012). The accuracy of the data as they were

reported was another limitation to the study. Results of the study were limited by age and risk level of child abuse and neglect. The NCANDS data do not specify if the biological parents were married or shared a home; therefore, it is possible that the child was abused by the biological mother and biological father.

This study focused on child physical and mental abuse related to gender to identify any similarities and differences between the gender of the child as compared to the mother versus the father. Terminology of abuse, neglect, and words associated with child abuse have various definitions. A consistent language of child abuse and neglect would allow researchers to be more precise with an established standard. A lack of common terminology and definitions makes it difficult to understand the scope of the practice and manifestations of the problem of child abuse. Additionally, according to Holden (2003), Katzman et al. (2003), and Sternberg et al. (2006), the literature related to child abuse lacks a coherent theory. The study of child abuse, maltreatment, and neglect has advanced significantly, but research might move more quickly with a unified theoretical framework and clear terminology.

A review process was used to evaluate external validity. The process included a review of what information was gathered, who collected it, when and how it was obtained, and how it ties to other potentially accessible data. The purpose of the secondary data from NCANDS is to review trends across the country related to child abuse and neglect. The collection process for NCANDS involves voluntary information supplied from 50 states across the country provided by CPS responses. The NCANDS

data differs from other child abuse data as the information is compiled nationally, from a state level from CPS reports. Statistical analysis of NCANDS data can be used by researchers of child abuse and neglect. Reports are filled out by CPS workers; therefore, the accuracy of the data for this study is reliable compared to a personal website.

Although it is presumed that the data are valid, there is a chance that they are not because of data entry and data transmission problems. The NCANDS report is limited to those cases that are reported to CPS.

Recommendations

The literature supported my findings that boys are more likely to be deprived of necessities by the father (Shamin & Kashif, 2019). According to Luther and Legg (2010), there are variations noted in the literature regarding gender-based behavior. Specifically, boys are more prone to displaying physical aggression, whereas girls tend to exhibit more social aggression. Additionally, research by Sanchez-Rodriguez (2021) suggested that boys are more susceptible to physical punishment and beatings than girls. A son is likely to imitate an aggressive father's conduct if he successfully utilizes it against his wife or child (Shamin & Kashif, 2019). To compare the parent and child, this study concentrated on gender differences in physical and mental abusiveness toward a son or daughter while identifying any patterns of behavior. Recommendations for future research are directed specifically to boys and the primary focus on abuse and neglect.

Future research should focus on relationship dynamics within the family and aggressiveness in relationships amongst family members. Specifically, fathers and the

relationship dynamics with sons should be explored further to determine the timeline of abuse and whether abuse occurs as the child grows older. The mental health of the parent should be explored in relation to child abuse as well as the effectiveness of any interventions used in preventative measures for future research. Early intervention and support services are provided when families at risk for child physical and mental abuse are identified. Early intervention can benefit families and enhance results for both the parent and the child (CDC, 2019).

The strength of this study was the use of secondary data. The enormous quantity of data that has already been accumulated is leading to an increase in the usage of secondary data (Andrews, et al., 2012). Future research should continue to use secondary data as the benefit of secondary research is time and saved effort. Compared to collecting primary data, collecting secondary data is quicker and simpler. The use of secondary data is cost effective, organized as well as incomplete records were removed the fact that secondary data may not specifically address the researcher's study questions or contain the information the researcher would want to have is a limitation of using secondary data. Another limitation of using secondary data may be that the information is outdated. A recommendation for future research is to continue to use secondary data that are readily available. The literature supported my findings that boys are more likely to be deprived of necessities by the father (Cui, et al., 2016). Further research is required to investigate male abusers, the period in which the abuse first occurred within the context of the

relationship, and the root cause behind it. Recognizing factors leading to child abuse is a preventative measure that can decrease the occurrence of child abuse and neglect.

Implications

State and local government, communities, and families all have a stake in prevention and working toward decreasing child abuse and neglect while creating better outcomes for children. The current study has significant ramifications for positive social change in support of fathers corresponding with the National Father Initiative (Brown, 2017) to educate staff and health care practitioners to involve fathers in the lives of their children. There is a need for the system to change to include fathers and invite and encourage them to participate in their children's lives. Social stigma exists with mothers bearing the burden of blame even though they are not the offending party of abuse and neglect (Wild, 2022). Policy and practice continue to place the role of the mother as responsible for the children and their protection (Olszowy et al., 2021). Second, in-home services are losing the chance to engage fathers who abuse children but do not reside within the family (Child Information Gateway, 2020). Identifying an association between the gender of the parent and that of the child is just one piece of the bigger picture. This study filled a gap concerning child abuse and neglect, which has been an under researched aspect of society. It was vital to determine whether the parent and the child in the abusive relationship are of the same gender. Identifying risk factors; promoting healthy parenting methods that enhance children's safety, well-being, and rights; and offering parent education that includes fathers lowers the risk of child abuse and neglect

(Child Information Gateway, 2020). The objective of this study was to investigate whether there is a correlation between a parent's gender and the likelihood of them committing child abuse towards a child of the same gender. The outcome of the study revealed that boys are more likely to be abused by their father. To strengthen family, prevention programs should focus on the father as well as the mother. For example, to serve families more effectively, parenting classes could be mandated for fathers (Child Information Gateway, 2020). The occurrence of child abuse and neglect extends to the family, community, and society. The understanding of child maltreatment and neglect can be improved by evaluation of the victims and families.

The foundation of Bowen's theory is the premise that people in families operate as a single emotional unit and are simpler to understand when seen in the context of relationships and familial bonds (Bowen, 1995). Treatment for families that have abused or neglected children requires a therapeutic strategy that takes both the individual and the family into account. This study has identified that boys are more likely to be abused by their father. From Bowen's perspective, child abuse is a result of lack of emotional separation in family functioning, which leads to child maltreatment. Bowen, however, did not account for gender or power as mediators of behavior and interpersonal reactions, yet his theory does give a conceptual understanding of how an individual's functioning contributes to abuse and other forms of violence. Instead of taking steps to intervene and stop the violence created by the other parent, one family member may behave violently toward a child while the other parent responds with emotional detachment. In the

emotional dynamics of the family, abuse is engrained. The non-abusing parent compromises their standards for what is believed to be proper and protective caregiving actions. The child automatically disconnects from their body to cope with being overwhelmed by the attacker and the intense anxiety that results. When a person is exposed to their family's ongoing and extreme emotional fusion, dissociative reactions become routine. Using Bowen's theory, therapeutic treatment strategies aim to promote healing and improving the life of the family, including the children to develop positive behaviors in functioning. According to Bowen (1995), family relationships include the therapeutic treatment of the individual victim as well as the entire family.

Recommendations for practice are to include fathers in treatment plans to effectively reduce child neglect and abuse (Child Information Gateway, 2020).

Policy makers and practitioners have the power to change culture by including fathers in all aspects of a child's life from birth to adulthood. Supporting fathers involves including them from the beginning of pregnancy in childbirth preparation classes to taking an active role of participation in the birth process. Evidence supports initiatives to involve fathers in the child's well-being (Child Information Gateway, 2020). Even in places where fathers' impacts on children might be damaging, experts and governments are increasingly recognizing the need to engage fathers for the sake of their children. As a known fact, fathers generally engage in child welfare services at a low level (Brown, 2017). Services involving children are focused on the mother and discriminate against the father's involvement (Child Information Gateway, 2020). When the father is not

involved, he is blamed for the family issues and is seen as the roadblock to a resolution. Although family violence is acknowledged as a public health problem, there are minimal services that are appropriate for assisting fathers. Developing policies and adopting practice to include fathers support the future of the children and the role as a parent.

Conclusion

Raising awareness and identifying risk factors in child abuse and neglect is a step toward improving outcomes for children to have a safe and happy childhood. Research into child abuse and neglect can provide insights and knowledge that directly benefits children and families. This study focused on child physical and mental abuse related to gender to identify any similarities and differences between the gender of the child as compared to the mother versus the father. The key findings of this quantitative research indicated that boys are more likely to be deprived of necessities by the father, as well as be neglected. Fathers need to be included in learning parenting and communication skills as well as other preventative programs. Fathers should not be left out of prevention services for child abuse. Research affects policies and laws in organizations and countries on every level. Research can provide guidance and direction in reducing child abuse and neglect for the sake of the children who are the future. NCANDS data continue to be a valuable resource in advancing the understanding of child abuse and neglect.

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