

Research to Practice Summary Chris Newlin

ARTICLE:

Mills, R., Alati, R., O'Callaghan, M., Najman, J.M., Williams, G.M., Bor, W., & Strathearn, L. (2010). Child abuse and neglect and cognitive function at 14 years of age: Findings from a birth cohort. *Pediatrics*, 127(1), 4-10.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between child maltreatment (abuse and neglect) and long-term cognitive outcomes within a prospective birth cohort.

Subjects/Design:

The Mater University Study of Pregnancy is a longitudinal birth-cohort study comprising 7,223 mothers who had enrolled in the study at their first antenatal visit (18 weeks gestation) between January 1981 and December 1983. Initial demographic data was collected this time, within days of delivery, and when the children were aged 6 months, 5 years, and 14 years. Additionally, approximately 70% of the youth completed the Achenbach Youth Self-Report at 14 years of age. 52% of the youth also completed the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) Reading Test and Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM) at age 14.

Reports of abuse and neglect between 1981 and 2000 were collected from Child Protective Services. This data included the type of abuse, relationship of the offender to the child, and the date of notification.

Numerous (18) potential confounding variables were evaluated for the presence of an association with reported child abuse or neglect. Separately, an association was sought with each measure of performance (WRAT and RSPM) at age 14.

Findings:

1. Of the 7,223 mother-child dyads in the original cohort, CPS history was available for 7,214 of the dyads.
2. 11.5% (830) had been the subject of a report of suspected child maltreatment.
3. 789 of these reports were accepted for investigation (10.9% of the original sample).
4. 506 subjects (7.0%) experienced at least one substantiated abuse.
5. Of the 3,796 children who completed either the WRAT or RSPM, 298 (7.9%) had a documented history of abuse.
 - a. 258 – suspected abuse
 - b. 152 – suspected neglect
 - c. 113 – both abuse and neglect

6. When compared with non-maltreated peers, both the WRAT and RSPM scores were significantly lower for the children who had been reported to CPS because of both abuse and neglect independently.
7. Children who had experienced child neglect scored, on average, slightly lower than their peers who had experienced abuse (physical, sexual, emotional).

National Children's Advocacy Center (2014). Child abuse and neglect and cognitive function at 14 years of age: Findings from a birth cohort. Research to Practice Summary. Huntsville, AL: Author.

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