Research Week Abstract

Title - Past is Present in Attachment: Pathways Between Childhood Sexual Abuse and Couples’ Satisfaction

Program of Study – Masters of Science in Psychology

Presentation Type – Physical Poster

Subtype – Applied.

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Abstract:

Research conducted over the past years has consistently led many to believe that any form of child maltreatment can cause a wide range of biological, psychological, emotional, and relational problems, especially for child sexual abuse. Some child sexual abuse survivors are unaffected by their traumatic experience; however, those who are affected carry their trauma into their personal life, specifically their adult romantic relationships. This article highlights the long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse and aims to fill the gap between childhood sexual abuse and relationship satisfaction by summarizing what is currently known about the impacts of child sexual abuse and by discussing the problems that arise from childhood sexual abuse. These problems range from emotional dysfunction, sexual shame, to a wide variety of relational problems. Using a sample of 717 individuals, the current study examined the relationship between childhood sexual abuse, sexual shame, romantic partner attachment, and relationship satisfaction. The results indicate that childhood sexual abuse is directly related to a decrease in relationship satisfaction, and this relationship has mediators of sexual shame and romantic partner attachment that support it. Childhood sexual abuse increased sexual shame, which led to romantic partner anxiety and avoidance, and ultimately resulted in a decrease in relationship satisfaction.