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EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC EVENTS IN LATER LIFE HOSTILITY

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Introduction: Interpersonal childhood traumas have been linked empirically with adults' reports of a wide range of symptoms.

Objective: This study tested the association between childhood trauma and adult hostility.

Aim: The aim was to investigate the impact of childhood trauma on hostility and aggression among individuals who had been exposed to childhood traumatic life events.

Method: 595 community individuals participated to the present study (164 men - 431 women, mean age 34, SD=12, ranged 18-75). Subjects were classified into two groups — trauma and no-trauma — based on their personal statements of experienced negative life events (300 and 295 individuals respectively). In all individuals, the Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (HDHQ) and the Aggression subscale of The Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90-R) were administered.

Results: Higher levels of hostile and aggressive attitude were observed among participants who had reported exposition to a traumatic event during childhood. In specific, the trauma group reported marginally higher levels of aggressive behavior ($p=.041$) as measured by aggression SCL-90-R. Significant differences between groups were observed on paranoid hostility ($p=.006$), self criticism ($p=.011$), Guilt ($p=.011$), intropunitiveness ($p=.007$) and on total score of hostility ($p=.040$). Finally, logistic regression revealed that, participants who had experienced childhood trauma had a higher risk of overall hostility (OR=0.92, 95% CI=.89-.99).

Conclusion: High levels of hostility may reflect difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Our findings illuminate the effect of early traumatic experiences in developing these hostile and aggressive attitudes in adulthood.