

PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS RISK FACTORS FOR THOSE WHO COMMIT ACTS OF RAPE AND PEDOPHILIA

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Background: The work purpose was to examine the role physical and sexual abuse during childhood plays as risk factors for committing acts of sexual violence or child abuse once becoming adults.

Methods: We selected - from EBM literature published in the last ten years - the most significant studies, not neglecting previous studies also useful for a better comprehension about physical and sexual abuses suffered during childhood and their commission once adults.

Results: To have been victims of physical and sexual violence during childhood predisposes to perpetrate similar behaviors. The family background seems to be the greatest risk factor for the development of such behaviors. This is demonstrated by studies of twins in which only one suffers sexual violence but both experience unfavorable outcomes like the examined. In particular, pedophiles are more exposed to sexual violence during childhood (73%) while rapists to physical and emotional abuse (68%, 70%), especially by parents (78%), but both share models of pathological attachment (anxious for pedophiles and avoiding for rapists).

Conclusions: Even if with different results, we can highlight how to be a victim of violence during childhood, especially in a family context characterized by physical or sexual violence, is one of the greatest risk factors in becoming an abuser. This evidence should be a major impetus to further researches, but mainly to act measures to safeguard the victims from the consequences of the trauma they suffered and from the development of future similar behavior.