

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE: EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

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Introduction: Childhood abuse is inherited in families and mainly associated with poor physical and mental health. Its association with mental health problems in adulthood is not well-studied in Jordanian women.

Aim: This study aimed at examining the relationship between history of childhood abuse and experiences of mental health problems in Jordanian women.

Objectives: To assess the prevalence of childhood abuse in Jordanian women and to examine differences in mental health problems based on type of childhood abuse.

Methods: Data about childhood abuse and mental health problems were assessed in 409 women visiting healthcare centers. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics for prevalence rates and one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for relationship between mental health and abuse experiences.

Results: Emotional abuse and physical abuse were the most frequently reported during childhood (47.1% and 46.5%, respectively). Statistically significant differences in mental health between women who experienced emotional abuse and childhood neglect and their counterparts were found (Wilks' Lambda for emotional abuse = 0.914, $p < .0001$; Wilks' Lambda for childhood neglect = 0.83, $p < .0001$). Mental health problems did not differ significantly between physically and sexually abused women with their counterparts.

Conclusions: Mental health consequences of childhood abuse last to adulthood. Emotional abuse and neglect can be more harmful and more damaging to women's mental well-being than physical and sexual abuse. Mental health consequences of childhood abuse may alter women's commitments and obligations to others. Therefore, professional health efforts focusing on mental health should be established in healthcare centers.