



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL NEGLECT IN CHILDHOOD AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN ADULTHOOD AMONG MALE ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the connection between early emotional neglect and substance abuse in adulthood. A sample of 292 participants having age between 20-60 years living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were selected through purposive sampling technique. The study's variables were measured using, the Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-10), and the "Emotional neglect" subscale of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form. The findings showed a strong positive connection ($r = .172, p < .01$) between emotional maltreatment in childhood and substance dependence. Additionally, results indicated that there was a positive relationship between emotional neglect and substance abuse. These findings suggest that those who were emotionally neglected as children may be more likely to abuse substances as adults, and that this association may be accounted for in part by issues with controlling one's emotions. The study's findings have implications for treatment and prevention of substance misuse. Specifically, they emphasize the value of early intervention and focused therapeutic techniques to address emotional neglect and enhance emotion regulation abilities.

Keywords: Emotional neglect, Substance abuse, childhood trauma.

INTRODUCTION

One common form of maltreatment that can have detrimental long-term effects on a person's development and well-being is childhood neglect. Child neglect occurs when parents or other adults fail to meet a child's fundamental requirements, including supervision, health care, food, shelter, clothes, and other necessities for their physical, mental, emotional, social, emotional, and safety development (Goldman et al., 2020). Neglect can be physical, emotional, medical and educational. A person's emotional and psychological health are significantly shaped by their experiences during childhood and continue to do so throughout their life (Farahani et al., 2019). Among the various

factors that can influence an individual's development, emotional neglect during childhood has emerged as a significant area of concern in recent years.

The chronic failure of main care givers to offer the emotional support, validation, and nurturing required for good psychological growth is known as emotional neglect (Masten, 2013). A person's emotional and psychological environment is left with unseen but long-lasting impressions from emotional neglect, as opposed to the commonly obvious scars left by physical and sexual abuse (Garber & Dodge, 1991).

Due to the absence of attention rather than overt abuse, it is frequently a subtle kind of abuse. Caretakers may fail to address a child's emotional needs, be emotionally aloof, or invalidate the child's feelings and experiences as examples of how this neglect can appear. A child's emotional and psychological wellbeing can be greatly impacted by the lack of emotional support at this crucial growth stage (Webb & Musello, 2012).

Substance abuse is a prevalent public health concern worldwide. The use of psychoactive substances including alcohol and illegal drug in a detrimental or dangerous way is referred to as substance abuse. (Medicine et al., 2016). The relationship between abuse as a kid and substance abuse is complicated and may be impacted by several factors, such as genetic predispositions, stressors in the environment, and psychological mechanisms (DiBartolo & Helt, 2007). People who experienced emotional abuse as youngsters may be more prone to developing substance use disorders as adults (Sanchez-Samper & Knight, 2009).

A significant link has been shown between emotional maltreatment as a kid and unfavorable adult result, including a higher likelihood of substance abuse problems (Benson & Haith, 2010). The fundamental mechanisms that underlie this association, nevertheless, are still intricate and complicated.

However, it is crucial to understand that the link between emotional maltreatment in childhood, and substance misuse is nuanced and influenced by a number of different circumstances. As an illustration, additional personal and environmental factors like genetic predispositions, social support, and cultural considerations may combine to influence the trajectory towards substance misuse.

To get a thorough understanding of the connection between and early emotional abuse, and substance misuse in adults, thorough research that takes these complex variables into account is required. This study's goal is to provide light on the underlying mechanisms, risk factors, and probable routes that may contribute to the complicated association between early emotional maltreatment and later substance dependence.

We intend to contribute to a deeper knowledge of how bad childhood experiences might affect adult behaviors by separating the threads that connect these two occurrences. This will serve as the basis for more effective interventions, support networks, and preventive measures. By doing this, we want to improve the mental and physical health of people who were neglected emotionally as children and so lower the prevalence of substance misuse in adulthood

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong link between emotional neglect as a child and a higher likelihood of substance dependence as an adult. The mechanisms behind this link are still not completely understood, though.

The link between emotional maltreatment as a kid and the likelihood of developing substance misuse disorders is well known, but numerous studies have demonstrated a strong link between further investigations is required to ascertain the precise mechanisms involved. Which includes issues with successfully controlling and regulating emotions and may influence the use of drugs as a maladaptive coping technique, emerges as a potential mediator.

This research aims to investigate the intricate link between emotional mistreatment as a kid and substance misuse as an adult.

This study advances our knowledge of how early experiences, emotional regulation issues, and substance misuse interact. The research findings can help shape public health policies and programs that aim to stop and lessen substance abuse issues, thereby enhancing the general wellbeing and functioning of people who experienced emotional neglect as children.

By exploring these relationships in depth, this study aspires to accomplish several significant objectives. It would provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between childhood emotional neglect, and substance abuse, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature on these topics, assisting in the creation of therapeutic approaches and tailored interventions aimed at preventing substance abuse in people who suffered from emotional neglect as children and to Promote the need for more thorough evaluations and interventions that address emotional neglect as a risk factor by contributing to evidence-based policy initiatives and recommendations for child welfare and mental health program

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researchers have discovered a strong correlation between emotional maltreatment in childhood and an increased risk of substance abuse in adulthood (Briere & Spinazzola, 2005; Dube et al., 2003; Griffin et al., 2002). Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong link between Addicts who were emotionally neglected as children are more prone to turn to drugs or alcohol to help them manage their emotions or cope with emotional discomfort. (Teicher et al., 2003).

The association between emotional neglect in childhood and substance abuse in adulthood has been linked to emotional dysregulation. It can manifest as difficulties in emotion recognition, emotion regulation strategies, and impulse control (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005). Studies have suggested that people who have experienced emotional dysregulation are at a higher risk of engaging in substance abuse as a maladaptive coping mechanism (Berking et al., 2011; Koob & Volkow, 2010).

The relationship between emotional dysregulation and early emotional deprivation has been explained by a number of different theories. These mechanisms include abnormalities in the development of brain areas including the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, which are important in the processing and control of emotions. (Teicher et al., 2006). Additionally, Emotional regulation difficulties in later life may be intensified by the absence of secure attachment bonds and emotional validation in childhood. (Bowlby, 1988; Siegel, 2001). The association between early emotional and physical abuse and the emergence of SUDs may be explained by emotion dysregulation. (Wolff et al., 2016).

The study's findings suggested that different forms of misuse might be linked to certain consequences and can help with substance users' treatment planning (Barahmand et al., 2016). The study's findings suggest that emotion dysregulation could be a significant mechanism that connects a history of emotional maltreatment in childhood to issues with eating and substance use later in life. As a result, it could be a valuable target for treatment for people who struggle with both eating disorders and substance use disorders (Hodgdon et al., 2013). Research on the negative impacts of childhood stressors and trauma on health clearly indicates a connection between ACE and risk behaviours that start early in life (Green, 1993b).

The study examined the unique contributions of five categories of maltreatment (sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect) on adult health behaviours, as well as the additive effects of exposure to different types of maltreatment during childhood. 221 women were selected from a VA general care clinic and asked to complete questionnaires about their exposure to childhood trauma and adult health behaviours. Regression models were used to look at the relationship between childhood maltreatment and adult health-related behaviours. Childhood experiences of emotional neglect as well as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse have been

connected to a number of adult health behaviours. Participants were more likely to experience drug abuse issues and engage in hazardous sexual behavior as adults if they had experienced more forms of maltreatment as children.

Studies indicated a strong and hierarchical correlation between adverse childhood events and substance abuse during adulthood. This study's objective was to ascertain how common unfavorable childhood experiences were among patients with substance use disorders and how they related to substance use. The study included 134 patients, all over the age of 18, who were undergoing inpatient treatment for drug use problems. Adverse childhood experiences are highly prevalent in patients with problems related to substance usage. Individuals who have experienced emotional abuse, physical abuse, physical neglect as children, or who are living with a mental illness are at a higher risk of developing substance use problems.

This study examined how a self-reported history of childhood maltreatment (physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as physical and emotional neglect) and poor adult physical health are related. Health risk behaviours (obesity, substance dependence, and smoking), adverse life events, and psychological distress were examined. The correlation between perceived physical health and maltreatment in childhood was shown to be partially mediated by psychological distress and negative life experiences, which accounted for 42% of the association. A quarter of the correlation between childhood abuse and chronic illness was explained by adverse life events.

Study examined the connections between child abuse, trauma exposure, ED, and current drug use using an already-existing dataset. Participants (N = 2,014 adults, 90% African Americans) were selected from an urban hospital for a parent study. Studies revealed a strong positive correlation between drug and alcohol use and ED, later trauma exposure, and emotional, physical, and sexual maltreatment of children.

A common kind of child abuse that frequently goes unreported or unacknowledged is emotional neglect. Emotional neglect can have significant and enduring impacts on people's psychological well-being, even if it is more subtle than physical or sexual abuse (Briere & Runtz, 1990). Comprehending its consequences on adult outcomes such as substance abuse is crucial for focused preventive and intervention approaches (Berking et al., 2011).

1.1 Justification for the Study

The purpose of this research is to increase the present understanding of the connection between childhood emotional neglect and adult substance dependence. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will have a substantial impact on the therapeutic implications, interventions and preventative plans, policy implications, and contribute to the advancement of the field's scientific understanding.

1.2 Problem Statement

Several research investigations have indicated a robust correlation between emotional maltreatment throughout childhood and an increased risk of substance abuse in adulthood. The mechanisms behind this link are still not completely understood, though. This study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating the relationship between emotional neglect during childhood and substance abuse in adulthood.

The problem statement also takes into account the need to comprehend the disparities in substance addiction outcomes among those who have experienced emotional maltreatment. Not everyone who experiences emotional maltreatment goes on to develop addiction problems.

METHODOLOGY

1.3 Objectives: To investigate at the relationship between emotional abuse in childhood and substance abuse behaviors in adulthood.

1.4 Hypothesis

- **H1:** There is a positive correlation between child neglect, drug use and dysregulation of emotion among male adults.
- **H2:** Childhood neglect will positively predict drug use in adulthood among male adults.

1.5 Operational Definitions of Variables

1.5.1 Emotional Neglect

In accordance with this study, emotional neglect is a pattern of relationships in which a significant other routinely downplays, ignores, invalidates, or shows little appreciation for an individual's affectionate needs. (Carey et al., 2009)

1.5.2 Substance Abuse

In this study Substance abuse is defined as the problematic use of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol or drugs that has an adverse effect on a person's social, psychological, and physical functioning. (Health, 2008).

1.6 Research Design

The proposed study utilized a cross-sectional quantitative research design, utilizing the survey method to investigate the correlation between childhood emotional maltreatment and adult substance abuse.

1.7 Sample Size

There were 292 men that took part in the current study. Purposive sampling was used in the data gathering process, and participants were chosen from a variety of hospitals and rehabilitation facilities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The age range of the population varied from 20-60.

1.8 Inclusion Criteria

- Participants aged 20 to 60 years were included to capture a broad range of adults who had experienced emotional neglect in childhood and are potentially at risk for substance abuse in adulthood.
- Participants who self-report a history of emotional neglect during their childhood were included.
- Individuals who had engaged in problematic substance use, have a substance use disorder diagnosis, or have experienced negative consequences related to substance abuse.

1.9 Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below the age of 20 or above 60 years were excluded to maintain a focused study on adults within a specific age range.
- Participants who did not report experiencing emotional neglect during their childhood were excluded.
- Individuals who did not engage in problematic substance use or did not exhibit signs of substance abuse-related issues were excluded.

1.10 Instruments

1.10.1 “Emotional neglect” sub- scale of Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form

“Emotional neglect” sub-scale of Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form developed by Bernstein and colleague will be used to assess emotional neglect in childhood. It consists of 5 items and all are reverse coded.

1.10.2 Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-10)

Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-10) created by Harvey Skinner in 1982 will be used to assess substance abuse.it is 10 item scale. The sum of the 10 item scores constitutes the DAST-10 total score. This overall score might be between 0 and 10. You receive 1 point for each "Yes" response (except from #3, which receives 1 point for a "No") on the exam. Next, add up the scores to obtain the DAST -10 score. The DAST-10 was shown to be a reliable psychometric drug abuse screening instrument with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 and excellent convergent validity ($r=0.76$).

1.11 Procedure

In the current study, a sample of 292 was chosen, covering an age range of 20-60. The participants were drawn from different rehabilitation centers and hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. To gather data, selected participants were given the (DERS-16), the Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-10), and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form, along with informed permission papers and demographic sheets.

Each responder received explicit instructions that emphasized the need for them to fill out the questionnaire on their own, making sure that all response items were included.

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1.12 Ethical Considerations

The Department of Psychology of Riphah International University's Ethical Review Board and the Ethical Committee, which consists of the institutional heads, both approved the ethical considerations. Informed consent was also given to participants along with thorough information. Ensuring the privacy and secrecy of all disclosed matters was emphasized to participants. Additionally, consent was obtained from the relevant institutes.

1.13 Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of participants (n=292)

Characteristics	N	%	M	SD
Age		100	2.10	.947
Young adult (20-39)	87	29.8		
Adult (40-64)	118	40.4		
Older Adult (65 and above)	87	19.5		
Gender			1.00	.000
Male	292	50.5		
Female	0			
Marital Status			1.30	.458
Married	142	51.6		
Un married	133	47.4		
Residence			1.40	.492
Rawalpindi	174	59.6		
Islamabad	117	40.1		

Note N= frequency, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 displays the frequency and percentage of several characteristics, including age, gender, residency, and marital status. The age range was divided into four i.e. 20 to 30 years (29.8%), 30 to 40 years (40.4%), 40 to 50 years (19.5%), and above 50-60 (10.3%). According to the gender distribution, there are no female participants and 50.5% of participants are men. Of the participants, 51.6% are married, and 47.4% are unmarried. 40.1% of people reside in Islamabad, and the majority (59.6%) are in Rawalpindi.

1.14 Table 2 Psychometric properties of the Scales.

Scales	K	M	SD	Cronbach's α
DAST 10	10	5.25	3.67	.64
DERS	16	4.18	10.80	.96
CTQ	5	3.94	4.409	.73

Note: DAST=Drug Abuse Screening Test, DERS=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, CTQ= Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, K=No of items

The result of table 2 indicates psychometric properties of the scales that are used to measure the variables of interest. The alpha reliability of values of all the scales were found to be reliable and in good range and these scales were efficient for data collection. The reliability of scale for DERS is $\alpha=.96$, DAST is $\alpha=.64$, and reliability of CTQ is $\alpha=.73$

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was computed in order to look at the link between the research variables. Linear regression analysis was done to further examine the predictive influence of the independent variable (emotional neglect) on the dependent variable (substance abuse).

1.15 Table 3 Correlation among study variables (N=292)

Variables	SA	EN
SA	1	.172**
EN	-	1

Note.* $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$, DAST=Drug Abuse Screening Test, DERS=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, CTQ= Childhood Trauma Questionnaire

Table 3 shows the remarkably high correlation (.942**) between DAST and DERS points to a very significant relationship between drug abuse screening and trouble regulating emotions. This suggests that people who have a higher propensity for substance usage may also have far more trouble controlling their emotions.

1.16 Table 4 Linear regression showing Emotional Neglect as Predictor of Substance abuse (N=292)

Predictors	β	B	SE	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
(Constant)	1	58.72	2.86	20.50	.000	53.08	64.36
Emotional Neglect	.172	.421	.142	2.97	.003	.142	.700
R^2	0.030						
F	12.20						

Note: Dependent Variable: Substance Abuse =8.82

To determine whether emotional neglect is a significant predictor of substance misuse, linear regression analysis was employed. With a coefficient of .172 and a t-value of 2.97, Table 4 demonstrates how emotional neglect predicts substance abuse. This leads to a p-value of .003 and a 95% confidence interval of (.142,.700).The outcome demonstrates that the predictor variable (Emotional Neglect) can account for 3% of the variance in the dependent variable (Substance Abuse), according to the R^2 value of 0.030.The model is deemed to be fit as indicated by the F value of 8.82 ($F > 2.5$).

DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to examine connection between childhood emotional neglect and adult substance misuse. A cross-sectional research approach was used in the study, and the sample consisted of 292 male participants. Suitable for a thorough investigation of the issue to meet the stated goals. Participants were chosen via non-probability purposive sampling from a variety of rehabilitation facilities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The participants' ages ranged from 20 and over. The goal of this study's design and sample selection process was to offer a comprehensive understanding of , substance misuse, and emotional neglect in the particular setting of Pakistan.

First hypothesis of the study proposed that “There is a positive significant relationship between drug abuse and emotional neglect. The study's conclusions clearly corroborate the idea that Person's Correlation Table 3 demonstrates that drug usage and emotional neglect are positively and significantly correlated. ($r=.142^{**}$, $p<.01$) which suggests that people who have a higher propensity for substance usage may also have far more trouble controlling their emotions. These results align with earlier research that states that people may turn to drugs as a coping mechanism for emotional pain. Certain substances, such as alcohol, opioids, or stimulants, can offer momentary solace from unpleasant feelings, leading to a vicious cycle of addiction Meil and Mills (2021).

Adverse events or childhood trauma can play a role in the development of emotion dysregulation. People who have experienced trauma in the past may be more likely to turn to drugs as a coping mechanism for the emotional fallout. Emotional problems brought on by drug addiction might make them worse, and this increased emotional discomfort can encourage people to take drugs more often.

Second hypothesis of the study proposed that “Childhood emotional neglect is a significant predictor of adulthood substance abuse”. The ($R^2=.039$, $p<.003$) which indicates that there is significant relationship between substance abuse and emotional neglect in childhood. The coefficients presented in the table demonstrate a strong positive causal effect between drug abuse and childhood trauma, especially when emotional neglect is present. People who were emotionally neglected as children are more likely to have drug misuse tendencies. This suggests that there is positive correlation between the risk of drug dependence and a history of emotional deprivation in childhood. Hence this hypothesis has confirmed, and this relation is significant.

Several studies have demonstrated the significant and long-lasting effects of emotional neglect in childhood on people's psychological health (Briere & Runtz, 1990). Emotional dysregulation, low self-esteem, and trouble establishing healthy relationships can result from emotional neglect, which is defined by a lack of emotional reactivity and support from carers (Egeland et al., 1993).

An increasing amount of research is pointing to a connection between adversity in childhood—including emotional neglect—and a higher chance of substance abuse. The connection between using illegal drugs and the total number of adverse childhood memories as well as the ten categories of ACEs were examined. 8613 people participated in a retrospective cohort research wherein they answered questions on illicit drug use, other health-related concerns, and difficulties related to abuse, neglect, and dysfunction in their homes as children. The ACE score was highly connected with the likelihood of beginning drugs in early adolescence and continuing into adulthood, as well as problems related to drug use, addiction, and abuse (Dube et al., 2003). For example, a study by Fergusson et al. (1996) found that individuals who reported a history of childhood emotional neglect were more likely to develop substance abuse problems in adolescence and adulthood. Additionally, Anda et al. (2006) conducted a large-scale study known as the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study, which demonstrated a strong association between adverse childhood experiences, including emotional neglect, and the later development of substance abuse issues.

1.17 Limitations

Understanding the intricate interactions between early experiences, emotional functioning, and later drug use behaviors requires research on the connection between emotional maltreatment in childhood and adult substance addiction. However, there are limitations that must be considered while analyzing the outcomes. This cross sectional nature of study limits the ability to establish causal relationship i.e., they are able to recognize relationships but not prove causation. Although emotional neglect and emotional dysregulation as well as substance misuse may be associated, these correlations may also be influenced by other factors that are not evaluated. Another drawback of this study is that in order to evaluate emotional dysregulation and emotional maltreatment in children, the study used self-report

measures, which are prone to social desirability and recalling bias. Participants could not accurately remember or record their experiences, which could cause data mistakes.

Additionally research project concentrated on particular populations and data was taken only from two cities that restricted generalizability. The external validity of the research may be limited as a result of findings that do not generalize to larger populations.

1.18 Recommendations

Future studies could adopt a longitudinal study design, follow up with participants as they get older. With this method, causal links may be examined throughout time, and developmental pathways connecting emotional maltreatment, emotional dysregulation, and substance abuse can be understood. In order to fully capture the complex nature of the interactions being studied, take into account additional potential mediating and moderating variables, such as genetic factors, additional types of early trauma, and coping mechanisms. Other variables might mediate the relationship between emotional neglect and substance abuse. To improve the results' generalizability to a range of demographics and situations, I may make sure that the sample is representative and diverse in the future.

1.19 Implications of study

The results of this research underscore the urgent need for a thorough and integrated strategy to understanding and resolving this relationship. Knowing the connection between emotional neglect and substance misuse can help establish early intervention programs for populations that are considered to be at-risk. Emotional neglect can be addressed, and early emotional regulation skills support can help lower the likelihood of future substance abuse.

When working with patients who have substance misuse problems, clinicians and therapists should take emotional dysregulation as a result of emotional maltreatment as a child into account. Better treatment outcomes may result from integrated therapy techniques that address both substance misuse and emotional management. Campaigns for public health and educational programs can increase knowledge of the long-term effects of emotional neglect and its possible connection to drug dependence. Public and professional education can focus efforts on early detection and prevention. Further investigation, encompassing longitudinal studies, may yield additional understanding of the underlying mechanisms and enduring patterns of the correlation among emotional neglect, and substance misuse.

This can assist in improving theoretical frameworks and guiding intervention tactics. The results have the potential to guide the creation of policies and advocacy campaigns that enhance child welfare systems and provide assistance to families facing emotional neglect. Prioritizing early childhood development and family assistance in policy can improve people's lives in the long run and lessen the burden of substance dependence on society.

1.20 Conclusion

The study's findings shed significant light on the complex relationship between adult substance abuse, and emotional deprivation in childhood. The findings are consistent with the theory that emotional deprivation in childhood is positively and significantly correlated with substance misuse in adulthood. This study emphasizes how early experiences have a significant influence on people's psychological and behavioral consequences as adults. Long-term effects of emotional neglect in childhood may include an increased susceptibility to substance misuse as a maladaptive coping strategy.

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