



## The Prevalence of Child Abuse in Patients Attending Psychiatric Outpatient Department.

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**ABSTRACT:** Various studies have identified the association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and its harmful impact on adolescent and adult mental health. Children exposed to severe maltreatment and trauma during their early childhood are at a higher risk of early onset of mental disorders. Overall studies have reported a significantly higher prevalence of childhood trauma in patients with mental disorders.

A total of 150 outpatients attending the outpatient department of a tertiary care hospital diagnosed with mood disorder, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorder, adjustment disorder and anxiety disorder were recruited. Socio-demographic information (e.g., age, gender, marital status, were collected using a structured questionnaire. The CTQ-SF Childhood Trauma Questionnaire- Short Form is a 28-item validated instrument, designed to measure childhood adversity and severity of childhood abuse and neglect suffered was administered.

The mean CTQ scores for the outpatient were 51.9 (SD=14.8). In the mood disorder group, the two most reported trauma types were emotional abuse (n=28, 60%) and physical neglect (n=24, 50%). Besides that, emotional neglect was also widely reported in psychotic disorder (n=13, 42%) and adjustment disorder (n=11, 53%) groups. Seven (15%) outpatients with mood disorder, Eight (25%) with schizophrenia or psychotic disorder, Seven (32%) with adjustment disorder, Twenty two (41.5%) with anxiety disorder reported more than one type of trauma.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Various studies have identified the association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and its harmful impact on adolescent and adult mental health [1, 2]. ACEs consists of exposure to chronic environmental stressors such as domestic violence, childhood maltreatment (e.g., emotional, physical or sexual abuse, etc.) and interpersonal loss (e.g., parental mental illness, parental divorce, or parental death) during early years of life [3,4,5,6]. Children exposed to severe maltreatment and trauma during their early childhood are at a higher risk of early onset of mental disorders [7], increased self-harming behaviors [8,9], poorer social adjustment,

functioning, educational and employment outcomes as adolescents and adults [5,10 11,12,13,14]. Overall studies have reported a significantly higher prevalence of childhood trauma in patients with mental disorders [12, 15,16,17]. Childhood trauma is established as a potential risk factor for psychosis [18, 19], it may also contribute to the early onset and severity of bipolar disorder, resulting in poorer clinical outcomes, higher prevalence of a faster cycling pattern and suicide attempts [20, 21]. The aim of this study is to investigate the prevalence of childhood trauma among the outpatients with mental disorders attending a tertiary care hospital.

### II. METHODOLOGY

A total of 150 outpatients attending the outpatient department of a tertiary care hospital diagnosed with mood disorder, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorder, adjustment disorder and anxiety disorder were recruited. Inclusion criteria (1) Age 18–50 years (2) literate. Exclusion criteria : (1) those with intellectual disabilities; (2) Illiterate; (3) patients attending the clinic for the first time. A written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Socio-demographic information (e.g., age, gender, marital status, were collected using a structured questionnaire.

The CTQ-SF Childhood Trauma Questionnaire- Short Form is a 28-item validated instrument, designed to measure childhood adversity and severity of childhood abuse and neglect suffered [22]. The CTQ-SF includes five subscales: physical abuse (PA), emotional abuse (EA), sexual abuse (SA), physical neglect (PN) and emotional neglect (EN) [22]. Each subscale was measured by rating 5 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (very often true). Cutoff scores for CTQ-SF subscales were EA score  $\geq 13$ , PA score  $\geq 10$ , SA score  $\geq 8$ , EN score  $\geq 15$  and PN score  $\geq 10$  [15, 23]. It was administered by a trained psychiatrist.

### III. RESULTS

A total of 150 participants consisting 99 males (66%) and 51 females (34%), mean age 27.4 years, 68.4% were married, diagnosed with mood disorders (31%), psychotic disorders (20%),



adjustment disorder (13.6%) and anxiety disorders (35.4%) were recruited from the outpatient sample. The mean CTQ scores for the outpatient were 51.9 (SD=14.8). In the mood disorder group, the two most reported trauma types were emotional abuse (n=28, 60%) and physical neglect (n=24, 50%). Besides that, emotional neglect was also widely reported in psychotic disorder (n=13, 42%) and adjustment disorder (n=11, 53%) groups. In the mood disorder group PA(48.1%),EA(60%),SA(24.6%),PN(50%),EN(46%). In the schizophrenia or psychotic disorder group PA(31%), EA(56%), SA(23%), PN(43.2%), EN(42%). In the adjustment disorder group PA(34.2%), EA(25.2%), SA(13.2%), PN(41.3%), EN(53%). In the anxiety disorder group PA(24.9%), EA(13.2%), SA(8.8%), PN(32.3%), EN(42.6%). Seven (15%) outpatients with mood disorder, Eight (25%) with schizophrenia or psychotic disorder, Seven (32%) with adjustment disorder, Twenty two (41.5%) with anxiety disorder reported more than one type of trauma.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The study showed higher rate of CTQ-SF total and domain scores in outpatient sample indicating the higher rate of traumatic life events in childhood. This is consistent with other studies which have showed increased prevalence of childhood trauma in individuals with mental illness[24,25,26]. While PN and EN were the two most reported types of trauma among those with psychotic, adjustment and anxiety disorders, EA and PN were the most frequently reported types of trauma in the mood disorder sample. Exposure to neglect and emotional abuse during childhood influences the mental development of adolescents [27] and is associated with mood and personality disorders during adulthood [28]. Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) interrupts the development of a child's sense of identity causing difficulties in interpersonal skills and emotional regulation which influence the development of different types of mood [23] and psychiatric disorders [12,29,30,31]. Hence, sexually abused victims are at risk of developing depression and psychotic disorder [29,32,33]

#### V. CONCLUSION

In this study we investigated the prevalence of childhood trauma in patients with mental disorders attending outpatient clinic in tertiary care hospital. The present study suggests that childhood trauma needs more attention, particularly in psychiatric clinical practices and scientific research. It is very important as it

contributes to the public education and the negative impact on child's mental health development and helps in planning the effective approaches to treatment.

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