

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN NICARAGUA:



Clinical Responses and the Impact of
Short-Term Therapeutic Treatment







Child Sexual Abuse in Nicaragua

- High incidence

Affected by:

- Extreme poverty
- Overcrowded living conditions
- Transitory family structures
- Cultural practices



Methodology:

One-group pre/post test design

Subjects:

- 14 females (6–17 years)
- 4 males (7–9 years)

Instrument: The Achenbach CBCL 4/18
(2 applications: pre- and post-therapy)

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Which groups symptoms into the following 8 scales:

- Internalizing Symptoms:
 - Withdrawal
 - Depression/ Anxiety
 - Somatic Complaints
- Externalizing Symptoms:
 - Aggressive behavior
 - Delinquent behavior
- Attention Problems
- Social Problems
- Thought Problems



Findings: Family Structure & Relationship with Abuser

60% of abused females came from households with single-parent or stepfather

- In households with stepfather: 100% of abusers were stepfathers.
- In single-parent households: 100% of abusers were someone close to family (relative/neighbor/family friend)
- In households with father and mother: 60% of abusers were fathers.

Findings: Nature of the Abuse

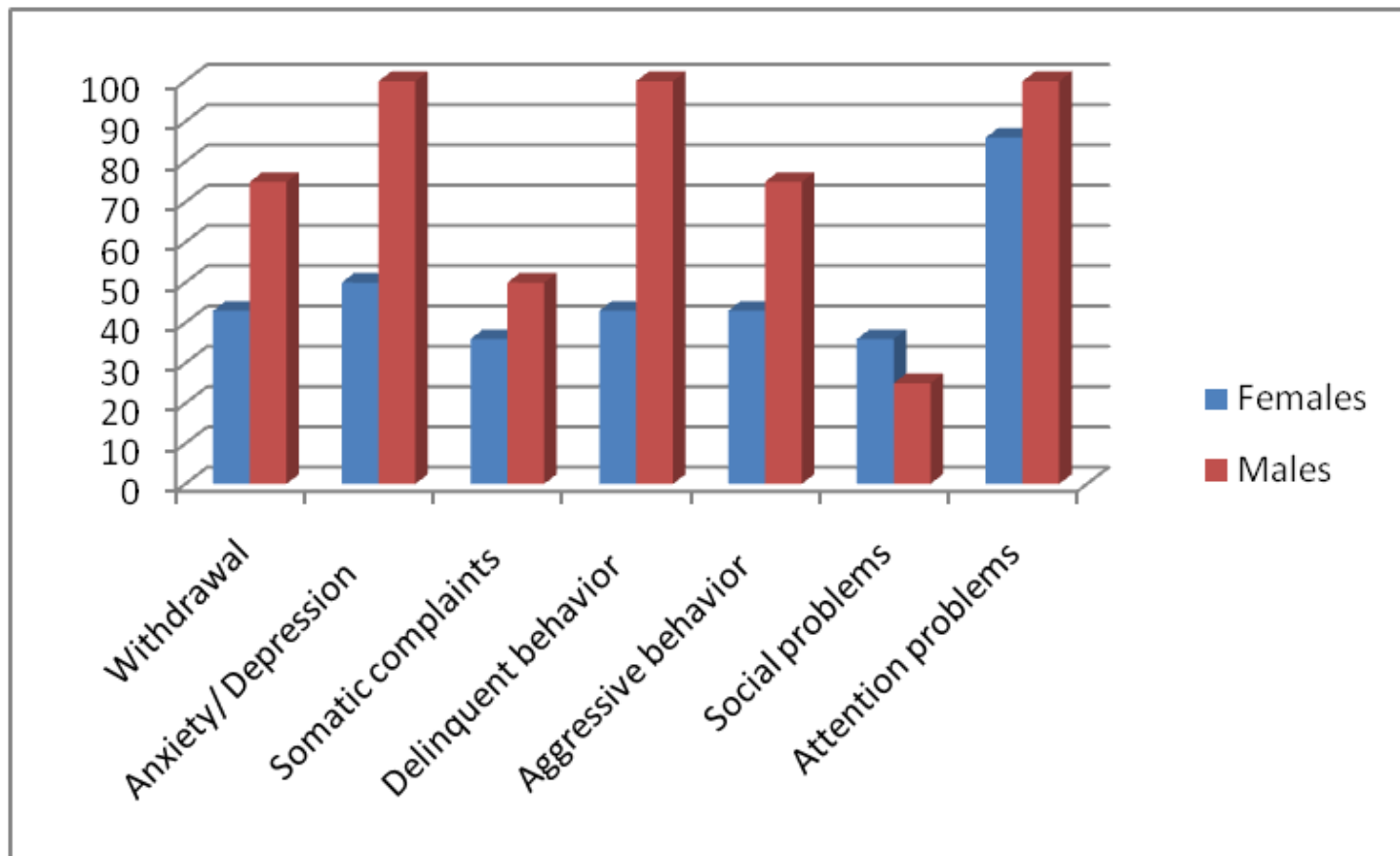
- 100% of victims knew their abuser
 - 43% of females were abused by fathers or stepfathers*
- 93% of cases with female victims involved penetration
- Onset < 8 years in 75% of all cases



Clinical Findings:

1st Application of CBCL

% of all subjects in *clinical/borderline range*



Most common clinical range scales (1st Application)

Females and Males:

- Attention Problems
- Anxiety/Depression
- Withdrawal
(*internalizing*)
- Delinquency/
Aggressive behavior
(*externalizing*)



Differences in Recovery

Significant Positive Changes

Females vs. Males

Females

Internalizing Scales:

Withdrawal

Somatic complaints

Anxiety / Depression

Males

Externalizing Scales:

Aggressive Behavior

Attention Problems

Differences in Recovery

Significant Negative Changes

Females vs. Males

Females

Externalizing Scales:

Aggressive Behavior

Delinquent Behavior

Males

Social Problems

Differences in Recovery

Younger girls (< 12 yrs) vs. older girls (> 12 yrs)

Significant Positive Changes

Younger girls: 75%

Older girls: 25%

Significant Negative Changes

Younger girls: 0

Older girls: 50%

Conclusions about Recovery

- *Most* significant positive changes:
Younger girls (< 12 yrs)
- *Least* significant positive changes:
Older girls (> 12 yrs)
- *Most* significant negative changes:
Older girls (> 12 yrs) and boys
- Successful completion of therapeutic program:
Younger girls and boys
(50% of adolescent girls dropped out)

Some questions for the future:

- How does the nature of child sex abuse vary from country to country?
- How does poverty increase the risk of child sex abuse?
- Are there significant differences in clinical responses to child sex abuse, or do children all over the world react in similar ways?
- How should treatment approaches be adapted to different cultural contexts?

SPECIAL THANKS

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