

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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Is someone who violently offends also a risk for maltreating children?

What you need to know:

Many individuals who are concerned about a child's risk of maltreatment have a recurring concern about parents who have previously perpetrated violent crimes and whether those with such histories pose a risk to children in their care.

What is this research about?

Child maltreatment is a social and public health issue that has long-term consequences for individuals, families, and communities. The Government of Canada defines child maltreatment as “the harm, or risk of harm, that a child or youth may experience while in the care of a person they trust or depend on.” There are five types of maltreatment: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional harm, and exposure to family violence.

This research intends to support the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) in understanding the risk factors shared between persons who have committed a violent offence and parents or caregivers who maltreat children. This research provides preliminary insights into whether someone who violently offends is also at risk for maltreating children.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher reviewed literature exploring risk factors for child maltreatment and violent offences.

The researcher searched databases including: Academic Search Premiere, PsycInfo, ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, and CINAHL, as well as a search using Google Scholar.

The researcher reviewed the titles and abstracts for relevance, and inclusion criteria. The researcher analyzed for key themes and recommendations for practice and research.



UVic researchers reviewed literature exploring risk factors for child maltreatment and violent offences (Photo credit: RitaE from Pixabay).



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What did the researcher find?

This review included 25 meta-analysis or systematic reviews, representing over 1,400 primary studies.

The results highlighted a number of risk factors shared between parents who maltreat children and violent offenders including:

- Low levels of education
- Higher levels of unemployment
- Adverse childhood experiences, including maltreatment
- Patterns of substance (mis)use
- Poor mental health
- Antisocial and/or personality disorder
- Prior histories of violence or crime
- Large and/or non-nuclear families
- Come from, or have families with high stress and/or family violence
- Low socio-economic status

The researcher suggests that reducing or eliminating shared risk factors can simultaneously work to prevent violence and child maltreatment.

The conclusions drawn from the review suggest a need for comprehensive risk assessments that acknowledge that child maltreatment is more likely to be the product of multiple risk factors than any one single risk factor alone.

How can you use this research?

This research and its resulting recommendations identify a number of risk factors that place children at increased risk of maltreatment. This evidence-based knowledge supports the MCFD to inform policy, programs and resources aimed at prevention of child maltreatment.

This research is also relevant to other child welfare organizations in Canada and beyond for understanding the risk factors for the maltreatment of children. The evidence supports pursuing

strategies for early child intervention, and interventions that focus on promoting healthy parenting as a way for preventing child maltreatment.

About the researchers

Brian Hansen is a UVic graduate student. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and was supervised by instructors Dr. Alison Gerlach and Ms. Thais Amorim. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic.

Keywords

Risk/contributing/predisposing/factor maltreatment/sexual/physical/emotional/neglect/threat; parent/family/mother/father/caregiver; risk/contributing/predisposing factor; infant/child/youth/adolescent

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