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THE WORST COMBINATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

PHILIP G. NEY

Department of Family Practice, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada

TAK FUNG

Academic Computing Service, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

ADELE ROSE WICKETT

Research Assistant, Victoria, BC, Canada

Abstract—We have studied the impact of various kinds of abuse and neglect on the child's perception of himself and his future. We found, when considering physical abuse, physical neglect, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse, that less than 5% of these mistreatments occurred in isolation. Since the vast majority of mistreated children are subject to more than one kind of abuse or neglect, it was important to delineate which combinations have the greatest effect. We found that a combination of physical neglect, physical abuse, and verbal abuse had the greatest impact on children, affecting such things as their enjoyment of living and hopes for the future. An early age of onset for verbal abuse and emotional neglect was significantly associated with greater severity and frequency of mistreatment. Neglect appears to be a precursor to abuse in many cases.

Key Words—Child abuse, Neglect, Combinations, Effect.

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH THERE IS a great deal of literature on the mistreatment of children, there is almost nothing on combinations of various types of abuse and neglect. Most writing in this area is about one form or another, as if different abuse or neglect incidents occurred singly. Clinicians know this is not the case. Clinically, it appears that physical, verbal, or sexual abuse seldom occur without some component of other mistreatment. Various forms of abuse are frequently combined with either physical or emotional neglect.

Although a number of papers have described the impact of abuse or neglect on children, there appear to be no articles that consider the impact of a combination of types of mistreatment, or describe which combination has the greatest impact. Much of the difficulty arises from the fact that most researchers study either sexual abuse or physical abuse. Few instruments provide an opportunity for the subject to indicate how much of which kind of abuse has affected him/

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Requests for reprints should be sent to Dr. Philip G. Ney, P. O. Box 24003, 4440 West Saanich Road, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8Z 7E7.

her. In addition, most measures are categorical, providing little opportunity for individuals to indicate whether they have been abused in what they consider slight or minimal ways.

We hypothesize that:

1. various types of mistreatment seldom occur singly;
2. some combinations are worse than others; and
3. the order of onset is important.

These three hypotheses were supported by the data, although components of this research still need further clarification. In less than 5% of our subjects did any type of abuse or neglect occur singly. The worst combination of any three types of maltreatment indicates that physical neglect, physical abuse, and verbal abuse have the greatest impact on the child's perception of his present and future life. We also found that if neglect precedes abuse, the deleterious impact of abuse appears to be more extensive.

Most articles tend to lump "physical and/or sexual abuse" together (Cavaiola & Schiff, 1989; Hibbard, Brack, Rauch, & Orr, 1988), and some lump abuse and neglect together (Alperstein, Rappaport, & Flanagan, 1988; Pless, Sibald, Smith, & Russell, 1987; Powers & Eckenrode, 1988). However, Marshall, Puls, and Davidson (1988) examined 382 children in a pediatric clinic and found 51% of those suspected of maltreatment presented with sexual abuse, 34% with physical abuse, and 15% for neglect. Rosenthal (1988), in his study of the state registry file, differentiated those who were physically abused from those who were sexually abused and found a modest same sex perpetrator/victim pattern for physical abuse. Merrick (1989) did an epidemiological study from the records of Danish forensic officers and found, of the 901 children who were registered, 164 were physically or emotionally abused or neglected, and 737 were sexually abused. Pieterse and Van Urk (1989) differentiated between emotional maltreatment, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

A number of authors have noted that some children may be abused in more than one way. Hobbs and Wynne (1990) state that 16.9% of 769 physically abused children were also sexually abused and that 13.6% of 949 sexually abused children were also physically abused. This sample of 130 children was composed of 77 girls and 53 boys. Riggs, Alario, and McHorney (1990) studied 600 adolescents in high school grades 9 to 12 and found 13% of them were maltreated; 5.2% suffered physical abuse, 5.4% suffered sexual abuse, and 2.7% suffered both. A study of the southwest natives of the United States (Lujan, DeBruyn, May, & Bird, 1989) found that 65% of 53 children targeted for investigation suffered both abuse and neglect. Research in New Zealand demonstrated an overlap of different types of abuse and neglect (Ney, 1987).

A number of studies have shown there are distinctive symptoms determined by the effect of one type of abuse or another. Although both sexually abused and physically abused groups of children demonstrate dissociative symptoms, the sexually abused children show a higher rate of inappropriate sexual behavior (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Deblinger, McLeer, Atkins, Ralphe, & Foa, 1989; Swett, Surrey, & Cohen, 1990). Ney, Moore, McPhee, and Trought (1986) discovered that different types of abuse or neglect result in different patterns of self-blame, anger, and pessimism. Green (1988) found that physically abused children had difficulty experiencing and modulating aggressive impulses while sexually abused children had difficulty integrating sexual feelings. The physically abused child had greater risk for cognitive and CNS impairment. Both had problems of depression and low self-esteem, and a striking similarity in the tendency to re-enact their victimization.

Various populations have been studied to determine the relative preponderance of different kinds of abuse or neglect. Powers, Eckenrode, and Jaklitsch (1990) studied 233 adolescent runaway youth, 15 to 16 years, and found that 60% were physically abused, 40% emotionally abused, 47% neglected, and 21% sexually abused. On the other hand, Ludwig and Anderson

(1989), who studied chemically dependent women in the criminal justice system, found that 19.7% were sexually abused and 27% were physically and/or sexually abused. Among multiple personality disorder patients (Ross, Norton, & Wozney, 1989) 79.2% were sexually abused and 74.9% were physically abused.

METHOD

These data come from a long-term research project that followed 167 children and adolescents from 7 to 18 years of age. Eleven children were selected from a private psychiatry practice, 107 from the Arbutus Society Adolescent Unit in Victoria, British Columbia, 23 from the Calgary Young Offenders Centre, and 26 from a Victoria high school. Each child was interviewed, or, if older, asked to complete the Child Experience Questionnaire himself. The answers involved checking the appropriate selection on a list, or drawing a mark across a 9cm Visual Analog Scale (VAS), for example:

My enjoyment of living is: very low/very high

Questions touched on the child's feelings of enjoyment, purpose in life, future expectations, chances of having a happy marriage, and being a good parent, perspectives on world problems and nuclear war, and reflections on his/her childhood. For each of five types of mistreatment, the child was asked to indicate the nature, severity and frequency of abuse, and by whom (s)he was victimized, as well as the age of onset and duration of mistreatment. The five types of mistreatment were: physical abuse (choked, burned, punched, broken bones, etc.), physical neglect (lack of food, lack of shelter, inadequate hygiene, etc.), verbal abuse (threatened, blamed, shamed, cursed, etc.), emotional neglect (lack of verbal affection, no encouragement, lack of intellectual stimulation, etc.), and sexual abuse (exposed, forced intercourse, incest, used for pornography, etc.).

In addition, the child estimated the effect on him/her, whose fault it was, how abnormal it was, and the reasons (s)he was treated like this. The questionnaire concludes with a few questions the parents' marriage (Do they love? Do they fight? Are they split up? etc.). Results were analyzed at the Academic Computing Centre of the University of Calgary, with the visual analog scales being coded into 9-point numerical scales. For many of the children, similar questionnaires were completed by their parents, and by trained staff observers.

RESULTS

Physical and verbal abuse were the most frequently noted types, both in their severe and milder forms. Sexual abuse was the least frequent.

Associated Types of Mistreatment

Table 1 shows the various correlations between the types (e.g., physical and verbal abuse are likely to be associated). Sexual abuse is frequently associated with physical neglect. Emotional neglect is significantly correlated with verbal abuse. In most types of mistreatment, a higher frequency correlates with greater severity.

How Different Kinds of Mistreatment Affect a Child's Outlook

Table 2 indicates the effect on the child's perception of his/her present and future life of the five types of mistreatment. All forms seem to have a significant impact and reduce the chances of "developing into the person I could have been." None of these types of abuse or

Table 1. Association Between Different Types of Abuse by Frequency and Severity

	Sev Phys Abuse	Freq Phys Abuse	Sev Verb Abuse	Freq Verb Abuse	Sev Phys Negl	Freq Phys Negl	Sev Emot Negl	Freq Emot Negl	Sev Sex Abuse
Freq Physic Abuse	.870 <i>S</i>								
Severe Verbal Abuse	.564 <i>S</i>	.498 <i>S</i>							
Freq Verbal Abuse	.517 <i>S</i>	.523 <i>S</i>	.914 <i>S</i>						
Severe Physic Negl	.151 <i>ns</i>	.109 <i>ns</i>	.138 <i>ns</i>	.143 <i>ns</i>					
Freq Physic Negl	.143 <i>ns</i>	.105 <i>ns</i>	.169 <i>ns</i>	.119 <i>ns</i>	.949 <i>S</i>				
Severe Emot Negl	.280 <i>S</i>	.378 <i>S</i>	.409 <i>S</i>	.481 <i>S</i>	.203 <i>ns</i>	.262 <i>S</i>			
Freq Emot Negl	.345 <i>S</i>	.400 <i>S</i>	.519 <i>S</i>	.610 <i>S</i>	.197 <i>ns</i>	.165 <i>ns</i>	.848 <i>S</i>		
Severe Sexual Abuse	.179 <i>ns</i>	.194 <i>ns</i>	.187 <i>ns</i>	.206 <i>ns</i>	.469 <i>S</i>	.493 <i>S</i>	.257 <i>ns</i>	.256 <i>ns</i>	
Freq Sexual Abuse	.177 <i>ns</i>	.191 <i>ns</i>	.191 <i>ns</i>	.202 <i>ns</i>	.468 <i>S</i>	.459 <i>S</i>	.263 <i>ns</i>	.255 <i>ns</i>	.100 <i>S</i>

S = $p < .001$.

ns = $p > .001$.

Expressed as Spearman Correlation Coefficients.

neglect appear to have significant correlations with the young person's belief that they have a chance of having children. Using the average Pearson correlation coefficient, it appears that physical abuse and verbal abuse had the greatest impact on children's outlook, followed by emotional and physical neglect and sexual abuse. It is interesting to note the effect of physical and verbal abuse on the child's enjoyment of living. Physical abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse take their toll in the person's expectation of a happy marriage.

Worst Combinations

When we combined several types of abuse and neglect into clusters of two or three, and then measured the effect on the child's outlook, some interesting patterns developed. It appeared that a combination of physical abuse, physical neglect, and verbal abuse had the greatest

Table 2. The Effect on a Child's Outlook of Various Types of Abuse and Neglect

	Physical Abuse	Physical Neglect	Verbal Abuse	Emotional Neglect	Sexual Abuse
Low enjoyment of living	.47*	.30	.48*	.38*	.19
My own future is bad	.36*	.22	.37*	.26	.03
Poor chance of happy marriage	.40*	.14	.27	.41*	.33*
Poor chance of having children	.18	.11	.07	.23	.20
Poor chance of living to old age	.29*	.36*	.38*	.22	.14
Poor chance of developing into person I could be	.20*	.41*	.33*	.27*	.20*

Expressed as Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

$N = 88$.

* = $p < .01$.

Table 3. Worst Combinations of Mistreatments and Effect on the Child: Top 10

Effect on Child:	Combination of Mistreatments									
	PA PN VA	PN VA	VA EN	PA VA	PN VA EN	PA VA EN	PA PN	PN VA SA	PN EN	PA EN
	Ranking (1 = worst)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lack of enjoyment of living	.39*	.39*	.32*	.23*	.38*	.25*	.23*	.43*	.31*	.16
Lack of purpose in life	.22*	.21*	.22*	.18	.16	.16	.17	.18	.10	.11
Poor future for the world	.01	.08	.13	.10	.11	.12	.00	.26*	.10	.11
Own future poor	.33*	.33*	.26*	.23*	.29*	.25*	.29*	.08	.26*	.20
Poor chance of good job	.14	.05	.05	.15	-.04	.11	.10	-.28	-.09	.05
Poor chance of happy marriage	.33*	.30*	.32*	.30*	.30*	.31*	.24*	.14	.22	.24*
Poor chance of having kids	.27*	.24*	.17	.23*	.21	.20	.23*	.17	.18	.16
Poor chance of being good parent	.22*	.17	.20	.22*	.18	.22*	.15	.29*	.16	.17
N =	71	74	92	106	62	84	80	29	67	94

* = $p < .05$.

Expressed as Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

PA = physical abuse; PN = physical neglect; VA = verbal abuse; EN = emotional neglect; SA = sexual abuse.

impact. Tables 3 and 4 indicate the correlations between the various combinations of abuse and neglect and their effect on the child's outlook. Ranked according to the average correlation, and beginning with the most devastating combination, verbal abuse appears seven times in the top 10, physical neglect six times, physical abuse five times, emotional neglect five times, sexual abuse once. Sexual abuse appears nine times in the rankings 11–20, usually in combination with physical or emotional neglect. The combination of physical neglect, verbal abuse, and sexual abuse (rank #8) is remarkably associated with a lack of enjoyment of living. In fact, most of these combinations of mistreatment appear to severely attack the enjoyment of living in their victims. None of the types of mistreatment appear to have a significant correlation with a poor expectation of obtaining a good job.

Table 5 shows the worst combinations of four types of abuse or neglect. Where the average correlation is calculated, the first in the rank order is physical abuse, physical neglect, verbal abuse, and emotional neglect; followed by physical neglect, emotional neglect, verbal abuse and sexual abuse. Twenty-eight young people were affected by all five types of mistreatment. The areas of major impact for this group were in their decreased enjoyment of living, and in their decreased expectation of being good parents.

Interactions Between Neglect and Abuse

Table 6 indicates correlations between the age of onset and the extent of mistreatment. (Extent of mistreatment is calculated as a multiple of the two scores on the scales for frequency and severity.) The greatest extent of emotional neglect and sexual abuse are most closely correlated with early onset.

Table 7 compares the age of onset of abuse and neglect in children who experience both.

Table 4. Worst Combinations of Mistreatments and Effect on the Child: Ranked 11 to 20

Effect on Child:	Combination of Mistreatments									
	PA PN VA	PN VA	VA EN	PA VA	PN VA EN	PA VA EN	PA PN	PN VA SA	PN EN	PA EN
	Ranking									
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Lack of enjoyment of living	.22	.24*	-.11	.31*	.21	.08	.21	.12	.02	.02
Lack of purpose in life	.06	.14	-.15	.07	.09	.02	.03	.01	-.20	-.05
Poor future for the world	.00	.19	-.23	.20	.20	.06	.11	.15	.17	.04
Own future poor	.24*	-.03	.04	.05	-.06	.05	.12	-.08	.14	-.01
Poor chance of good job	-.02	-.24	-.30	-.34	-.28	-.11	-.37	-.32	-.10	-.23
Poor chance of happy marriage	.22	.11	-.17	-.03	.09	.03	-.17	-.02	-.10	-.07
Poor chance of having kids	.18	.05	.10	.16	.05	.14	.12	.03	.04	.10
Poor chance of being good parent	.16	.16	.08	.28*	.16	.16	.29*	.15	.01	.14
N =	65	40	34	31	37	39	34	41	45	40

* = $p < .05$.

Expressed as Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

PA = physical abuse; PN = physical neglect; VA = verbal abuse; EN = emotional neglect; SA = sexual abuse.

While the neglect was typically experienced at a younger age than the abuse, this difference was only significant in the case of sexual abuse.

Table 8 shows that when the onset of neglect precedes abuse, compared to when the onset of abuse occurs at the same time or precedes neglect, the mean effect of the neglect was significantly greater (lower score means greater effect). In this measure the child was responding to the question, "What effect did the abuse or neglect have on you?" by making a mark across the line between the extremes of "ruined my life" and "no effect."

DISCUSSION

Our study tends to show a higher rate of combinations than found by others. This is possibly because we used a more sensitive measuring device, which permitted the subjects to rate all five kinds of abuse or neglect on a continuum. The visual analog scale gave opportunity, for example, for a subject to indicate that he was verbally abused moderately, but infrequently.

Our study agreed with others which indicate that combinations of different types of mal-

Table 5. Rank Order of Worst Combinations of Four Types of Abuse and Neglect

Ranking	Type
1	Physical neglect, physical abuse, emotional neglect, verbal abuse
2	Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect
3	Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, verbal abuse
4	Physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, verbal abuse

Table 6. Extent of Mistreatment and Age of Onset

Correlation with Early Onset	Extent of Mistreatment				
	Physical Abuse	Physical Neglect	Verbal Abuse	Emotional Neglect	Sexual Abuse
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.1375	0.2878	0.2649	0.3417	0.3438
Significance	$p = 0.168$	$p = 0.021$	$p = 0.007$	$p = 0.001$	$p = 0.037$

$N = 162.$

treatment are the rule rather than the exception. It raised the question of why there are so few studies on the combinations of types of mistreatment. It may be that combined variables are hard to study, or that investigators tend to be attracted to simpler explanations. Whatever the explanation, it would be useful, in our opinion, to see more work done in this area.

Claussen and Crittenden (1991), who studied the effects of physical and psychological maltreatment, noted that psychological maltreatment would be present in almost all cases of physical maltreatment. Our data seem to indicate that psychological conflicts can arise out of any type of abuse or neglect. It is possible that psychological mistreatment can occur alone, and it indeed may be very devastating, but our evidence supports the hypothesis that the most severe psychological conflicts arise from neglect. Having been deprived of the necessary ingredients to their normal development, children never seem to accept the loss of the childhood that could have been. They keep searching as adolescents and adults, only to find that those they search among are usually themselves deprived people who not only cannot provide them with what they needed as children, but also tend to abuse them, partly out of their own frustrations in encountering somebody who they thought would give to them when they were so hungry.

Example: Joe was brought for psychiatric evaluation because of violent altercations with his siblings, alternating with periods of morbid fascination with death. Over a 4-year period, he, together with his older brother and sister, had been sexually abused by their mother's bisexual husband. This often occurred while the mother was having an affair with her husband's lover. The mother had been sexually abused when she was very young and was frequently neglected by her mother. She was now physically and verbally violent toward her own children. Both the sexual and physical abuse had been preceded by periods of neglect when the mother was partying. Treatment required a number of hospitalizations. It was complicated by Joe's attachment to his mother's bisexual lover (that they both insisted was a father-son affection).

As this example demonstrates, there is a tangled web of neglect and abuse present in many families. The researcher is presented with confounding variables that affect the child. In

Table 7. T-Test Comparison of Age of Onset of Neglect and Abuse in Children Experiencing Both

	Physical Abuse	Physical Neglect	Physical Abuse	Emotional Neglect
Mean Age of Onset	5.89 yrs	5.77 yrs	5.89 yrs	5.83 yrs
	$N = 79$		$N = 100$	
Mean Age of Onset	5.89 yrs	5.92 yrs	6.31 yrs	5.98 yrs
	$N = 78$		$N = 100$	
Mean Age of Onset	7.21 yrs*	5.80 yrs*	7.06 yrs**	5.47 yrs**
	$N = 43$		$N = 47$	

* = $p < .005$ for 2-tailed probability.

** = $p < .005$ for 2-tailed probability.

Table 8. The Effect of Neglect Preceding Abuse

	Number of Cases	Mean Effect of Abuse	Mean Effect of Neglect
Onset of abuse precedes neglect	99	4.017	4.167
Onset of neglect precedes abuse	63	5.357	3.064

addition, transgenerational transmission of abuse is evident in the repetition of mistreatment. The grandparents mistreated their daughter who, in turn, abused her children. Joe is now violent with his siblings and, if no intervention is successful, will undoubtedly pass on the abuse to his own future children. This underlines the necessity of understanding the combinations of abuse and neglect, as well as its transgenerational aspect (Ney, 1988).

The data in this study raises a number of important issues. Why should a combination of physical neglect, physical abuse, and verbal abuse have the greatest impact on children? Is it possible that physical, biologically-based needs, including shelter and food, are so basic that without them a child feels incredibly vulnerable? A child could live without attention, but without basic biological needs being met, it is hard to exist. If, when hungry or cold, one turns to one's parents, and they attack both physically and verbally, it must do a great deal of damage. Physical abuse leaves a child wounded, in pain, fearful, and angry. This anger cannot find proper expression, because it would mean attacking the very person that one needs to rely upon, and yet who is so inadequate at meeting the child's needs. Verbal abuse creates a poor self-image, so poor, in fact, that the child can only expect more of what he has already received. Is it for this reason that children who are hungry look in garbage dumps and garbage cans when those with better self-image would seek food and help from rich people? Do such children think, "I'm such a miserable creature I only deserve garbage" versus "I don't deserve to be treated like this; come on, you well-fed rich people, share a little!"

From our study it appears that various forms of abuse have a major impact on the child's lack of enjoyment of living. This may be because so much energy and effort is spent dealing with mistreatment, surviving, and trying to develop that there is no time left for enjoyment of life's pleasures. It is not surprising that some of these children turn to more unusual, even antisocial forms of excitement. Yet even while they're lacking enjoyment in living, children do not lack a purpose in life. While they think their own future is poor, they do not think the future of the world is necessarily poor, nor do they think their experience will affect their chance of getting a job.

Unquestionably, these abused and neglected children believe that the mistreatment they have experienced will diminish their chance of having a happy marriage, but that it has less impact on their chance of having children, or being a good parent. It appears from these data, that mistreated children don't enjoy life, nor do they think it will get better. However, they have a strong drive to survive, even a determination to make things better for their children than they experienced themselves.

The extent of abuse and neglect has a major impact on the way in which young people expect to die. Those who are more severely abused expect violent deaths, most particularly, death by suicide. Data not presented here indicate that young people who have experienced violence by physical or verbal abuse are more inclined to expect to die in a violent way. More extensively mistreated young people do not expect to live as long. Approximately 10% expect to die before the age of 25. This corresponds to the other data, which indicate that they believe their future is poor. It may be that mistreated young people become those who struggle and succeed, but because of their negative expectations they undermine much of what they hope to achieve, both for themselves and for their family.

Among the first 10 combinations of abuse and neglect, ranked as correlated with the child's view of his/her future, 9 had a combination of abuse and neglect. This plus other data yet to be published seem to indicate that a combination of neglect and various forms of abuse makes the child particularly vulnerable. We have found that there is a significant association between the extent of abuse and whether the neglect occurred before or at approximately the same time or later than the abuse. It appears that children who are first neglected are more vulnerable to being abused. Metaphorically speaking, children who are starving will eat anything, even if it's garbage off the street. They are hungry for affection, but only look for it in those who have little to offer but more abuse. This might explain why, although sexual abuse does not appear to have a prominent effect on the measures we have used, when in combination with emotional neglect it is significantly harmful. If this is the case, it is important for clinicians to understand the effect of all types of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, in the context of the neglect which often precedes it.

Neglect appears to increase the tendency and sensitivity to abuse. Unfortunately, the measurement and study of neglect, which is less easily identified, needs much more emphasis.

LIMITATIONS

Some readers may question our data from their clinical perception of the impact of sexual abuse. It is possible we were not measuring the most important variables. It is possible that adults abused as children are attributing their difficulties to the more obvious and socially recognized types of abuse.

It may have been that we should have only studied those who had been severely abused or neglected. Yet even those who were mildly abused or neglected have an appreciation of what impact it has on them and their perception of the future. It is possible these measures of the child's self-concept and his anticipation of the future are less important than other measures of behavior or mental illness.

From data in our study of this clinical sample of adults abused as children, it appears emotional neglect is most closely correlated with later development of psychiatric illness. This is an important concept which should be pursued.

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Résumé—Les auteurs ont étudié les impacts qu'ont divers types de maltraitance et de négligence sur la perception de soi de l'enfant et sur son avenir. Moins de 5 p.c des sévices physiques, de la négligence, des abus psychiques et des abus sexuels se produisent de façon isolée. Comme la plupart des enfants maltraités sont victimes de plus d'une forme de mauvais traitements, il est important de préciser quelles combinaisons de mauvais traitements produisent les effets les plus considérables. Les auteurs ont trouvé que c'est lorsqu'il y a négligence, sévices physiques et abus verbal que les effets sont les plus nocifs. Ceci affecte la joie de vivre des enfants et leurs espoirs pour l'avenir. Lorsque la maltraitance verbale et la négligence commencent tôt, les sévices physiques s'ensuivent de façon sévère et fréquente. La négligence semble donc être le précurseur de la maltraitance dans plusieurs cas.

Resumen—Hemos estudiado el efecto de varias clases de abuso y negligencia en la percepción de los niños de sí mismos y del futuro. Hemos encontrado, cuando consideramos el abuso físico, la negligencia física, el abuso verbal, la negligencia emocional, y el abuso sexual, que menos del 5% de estos malos tratos ocurren en aislamiento. Como la gran mayoría de los niños maltratados son víctima de más de un tipo de abuso o negligencia, fue importante delinear las combinaciones que tienen el mayor efecto. Encontramos que una combinación de negligencia física, abuso físico, y abuso verbal tienen el mayor efecto en los niños, afectando cosas como su deseo de disfrutar la vida y las esperanzas del futuro. Una edad muy temprana para el inicio del abuso verbal y la negligencia emocional se asociaron significativamente con mayor severidad y frecuencia del maltrato. En muchos casos, la negligencia parece ser un precursor del abuso.