Childhood experience of sexual abuse among Hong Kong Chinese college students

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to explore the prevalence rate and profiles of abusers and victims of child sexual abuse in a Chinese society.

Method: A convenience sample of 2147 Hong Kong Chinese college students completed questionnaires which included items on definitions of child sexual abuse, recall of sexual abuse experience before age 17, information about the sexual abuse incidents, and personal demographics.

Results: The overall prevalence rate for various forms of child sexual abuse was 6%, with the rates being higher for females than for males. The average age of the victims at the time of the sexual abuse was 11 years old, with a majority of them experiencing sexual abuse during their teenage years. The average age of the abusers as estimated by the victims was 24 years old, and only 28% of the abusers were strangers to the victims. Males were about three times more likely than females to be sexually abused by their friends, whereas females were about twice more likely than males to be sexually abused by strangers. Only 39% of the victims reported their sexual victimization to others, and 56% of the reported incidents were not followed up.

Conclusions: As compared to Western studies, the present study showed lower rates for more intimate or severe forms of child sexual abuse. The Chinese victims were more reluctant to disclose their sexual victimization than their Western counterparts. Limitations and practical implications of the study are also discussed. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Sexual abuse; Chinese sexual abuse

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