

Emotion recognition and emotion regulation in child victims of sexual abuse

Justine Caouette, B.Sc, Arianne Jean-Thorn, B.Sc, Martine Hébert, Ph.D, Louise Cossette, PhD
 Université du Québec à Montréal

Context

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is often associated with a plethora of negative consequences following the traumatic event. Impairment in emotional processes such as emotion regulation dysfunction is common. Emotion regulation competencies are crucial for social interactions and later psychosocial development. A primary component enabling this ability is facial emotion recognition which refers to the ability to label an emotion expressed by an individual. Despite the relative importance of emotion recognition, the association between this concept and emotion regulation is still not well documented in school-aged victims of SA.

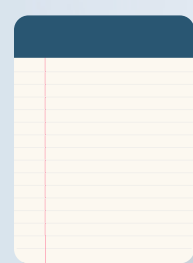
Objective

This study aimed to examine the association between CSA, age, gender and emotion recognition competencies with emotion regulation

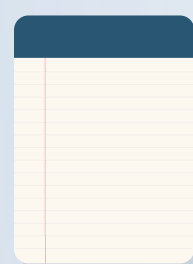
Methodology



N = 112 child victims of sexual abuse recruited in specialized intervention centers in Quebec and 99 non victims recruited in elementary schools from Montreal area
 6-12 years old



Emotion Regulation Checklist; Shields & Cicchetti (1997, 1998)



Developmental Emotional Faces Stimulus Set; Meuwissen, Anderson & Zelazo (2016)

Results

Variable	Emotion Regulation			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	β	B	β
Client	-2.87	-0.31***	-2.30	-0.25**
Age	-0.29	-0.11	-0.47	-0.19**
Gender	-0.90	-0.09	-0.70	-0.07
Emotion Recognition Scores			0.25	0.19**
R ²	0.34		0.38	
F	9.27***		8.84***	
Δ R ²	0.12		0.15	
Δ F	9.27***		6.79**	

Note. N = 211, **p < .01, *** p < .001.

A hierarchical regression showed that experiencing CSA and age of the child contributed to the prediction of emotion regulation. Once these variables were accounted for, emotion recognition abilities significantly added to the prediction of emotion regulation scores.

Discussion

These findings highlight the impact of child sexual abuse on emotion processes and support the need to assess emotion recognition abilities in this population. Since these competencies are essential for child psychosocial development, results of the present study emphasizes the need to foster emotion recognition abilities in clinical intervention intended for child victims of sexual abuse.