

ABSTRACT

The Impact of Physical Abuse on the Psychological and Behavioural State of Institutionalised Children in The Bahamas and Jamaica.

By
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The present study examined how a history of physical abuse affects a child who resides in a Child Safety Institution. Three hundred and forty-eight subjects, 194 males, and 155 females, ages 8 to 12 from two Caribbean countries -- The Bahamas and Jamaica were studied. Subjects completed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory for Children to investigate social and academic self-esteem; and the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale to determine levels of worry/oversensitivity and physiological anxiety. Subjects were also interviewed to determine, where necessary, the severity of physical abuse they were exposed to. The subjects' teachers completed a short form of Wickman's Behaviour checklist to determine the amount of aggressive behaviours manifested by each child. The social self-esteem, and academic self-esteem, and worry variables were not found to be significantly related to physical abuse or institutionalisation in the subjects. Physiological anxiety and aggression were however both significantly affected by physical abuse and institutionalisation, where as physical abuse became more severe, aggressive behaviours increased, and physiological anxiety increased in Bahamian and Jamaican institutionalised subjects as abuse became more severe. A Caribbean definition of physical abuse, a predictive model of aggressive behaviour, and a treatment planning programme, were developed using the results of the study.

Keywords: Lisa-Anne M. Knowles; physical abuse; child safety institution; self-esteem; anxiety; aggression.