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Madison Welch

Fort Hays State University, [mkwelch@mail.fhsu.edu](mailto:mkwelch@mail.fhsu.edu)

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# Does Childhood Trauma Correlates with Criminal Behavior in Adulthood?

Madison Welch

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology University of Fort Hays State University  
Research Mentor: Dr. Park



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## Abstract

Though not every individual who has experienced childhood trauma will grow up to commit crime in their adult or adolescent years, research supports a strong correlation between childhood trauma and the likelihood of committing crimes in the future. Through this literature review, we hope to bring light to understanding the relationship between the two factors and propose a method to increase mandated reporting training through college classes.

## Research Questions

- What is child abuse and childhood trauma?
- Does childhood trauma have correlation between criminal behavior in adolescents or adulthood?
- Is there a benefit in adding a course about adequate knowledge and training related to childhood trauma and mandated reporting?

## Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to study the relationship between childhood trauma and criminal behaviors in adulthood.

**Trauma:** Type I trauma is characterized by traumas that have a singular occurrence, whereas type II traumas involve a chronic experience of the traumatic event (Allen & Lauterbach, 2007).

### Childhood abuse and its effect:

Child abuse has numerous behavioral signs and symptoms. Some of the behavioral signs on the list are anxiety, social withdrawal, fear, and aggressive behaviors with others (Child Abuse, Stanford Medicine (n.d.)).

Individuals who experience various forms of childhood trauma are at a higher risk for engaging in criminal activity and behavior (Baron, & Forde, 2020).

## Literature Review cont.'

### Correlation between trauma and criminal behavior:

- Baron and Ford argue that the main contributor to the the correlation between childhood trauma and criminal is the “internalized representations of the patterns” during past experiences of these individuals.
- Low maternal care is shown to cause criminal behavior in both males and females in their adult life. Criminal behaviors such as, anti social personality disorder and molestation charges (Schorr, Tietbohl-Santos, De Oliveira, Terra, De Borba Telles, & Hauck (2020).

### Importance of mandated reporting:

- Approximately 695,000 children a year were victims of maltreatment in 2010, of those children 17.6% were categorized under physical abuse, because of these numbers mandated reporting is very important (Reece, Hanson, & Sargent, (Eds.). 2014).

### Benefit of adding a course about mandated reporting:

- Kenny argues that physicians have a more adequate preservice and professional training in the terms of child abuse reporting (Kenny, 2001)
- Table one indicates that educators in their academic term did not have adequate training, unlike physicians (Kenny, 2001)
- Smith argues that university students who are entering a major and discipline that lead to careers that fall under the mandated reporting category do not have enough confidence in what does or does not constitute maltreatment (smith, 2006).

□ **Table 1: Physicians and Teachers Evaluations of Training in Child Abuse**

	Physicians		Teachers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did preservice address child abuse	52%	48%	36%	64%
It was not covered in courses/classes	30	70	40	60
Not sure of legal requirements	58	42	57	43
Never practices these skills in class	58	42	54	47
<b>Level of Preservice Training</b>	<b>Physicians</b>		<b>Teachers</b>	
Adequate	25		37	
Minimal	57		48	
Inadequate	18		14	
<b>Level of Professional Training</b>	<b>Physicians</b>		<b>Teachers</b>	
Adequate	60		26	
Minimal	33		60	
Inadequate	7		15	

## Conclusion

Based on the past studies, it is clear individuals who have experienced childhood trauma are more likely to commit criminal behavior in their adulthood. Thought this is distressing findings, there could be a solution in preventing criminal behaviors before the individuals reach their adulthood. Kenny and Smith showed that mandated reporting could be the solution to prevent criminal behaviors in adulthood. Because of the findings in these past studies one can infer that there needs to be more adequate knowledge and training related to childhood trauma and mandated reporting offered to pre-professionals (e.g., college students) who fall into the mandated reporter category. Adding a course about adequate knowledge and training may lead to a less likely chance of criminal behavior in the future.

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