

# ***Connection Between Child Maltreatment and Adult Criminal Involvement***

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**Abstract:** Child maltreatment can significantly impact an individual's development and increase their risk for criminal involvement later in life. This article explores the link between child maltreatment and adult criminal involvement. It examines various studies that highlight the adverse effects of maltreatment on a child's development and their increased risk of becoming involved in criminal activity later in life. The article suggests that preventing child maltreatment can reduce adult criminal involvement's prevalence. It concludes with a call for increased awareness and action to address child maltreatment and its long-term impact on society. The results of this study provide scientific research evidence for the positive development of children. In future studies, the results of this study can be used to correct and defend the maltreatment suffered by children scientifically. In the future, we urge researchers to pay more attention to the problem of child abuse. Overall, this article, whether in practice or research, has great significance.

**Keywords:** connection, crime, child maltreatment, adult criminal involvement

## **1. Introduction**

Research has shown that child maltreatment can have long-lasting effects on individuals, including an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour as adults. Studies have found that individuals who experienced child maltreatment are more likely to struggle with mental health issues, substance abuse, and social problems – all factors contributing to criminal activity involvement. Additionally, those who experienced maltreatment may suffer from a lack of trust in authority figures, leading to a cycle of delinquent behaviour and criminal involvement. Overall, child maltreatment can significantly impact an individual's development and increase their risk for criminal involvement later in life [1].

## **2. Possible Connection Between Child Maltreatment and Adult Criminal Involvement**

One possible explanation for the link between child maltreatment and adult criminal involvement is early trauma's impact on brain development. When children experience traumatic events like abuse or neglect, it can disrupt normal brain development, leading to mental health and behavioral problems that can put them at higher risk for criminal behavior later in life.

Another possible explanation is that child maltreatment can lead to social and economic disadvantages that can increase the risk of criminal involvement. For example, children who experience abuse or neglect may struggle in school or have difficulty forming healthy relationships, leading to social isolation and an increased risk of involvement in criminal activities.

Finally, child maltreatment can also contribute to developing negative coping strategies like substance abuse or aggression, increasing the likelihood of involvement in criminal activities later in life [2].

### **3. Defining Child Maltreatment and Criminal Involvement**

Child maltreatment is any negligence or abuse towards a child that results in harm, injury, or trauma. Several types of child maltreatment exist, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. The impact of child maltreatment on children is devastating both in the short term and long term. Researchers have been exploring the connection between child maltreatment and adult criminal involvement in the past few years. Evidence suggests that childhood maltreatment increases the likelihood of criminal behavior among adults. This report explores the connection between child maltreatment and adult criminal involvement [3].

Criminal involvement refers to any participation or association with criminal activities. This can range from minor infractions such as petty theft to more serious offences such as robbery, drug trafficking, or murder.

Individuals who engage in criminal involvement may have different motivations for doing so. Some may be driven by financial gain, while others may be influenced by peer pressure or a desire for excitement. Others may be motivated by social or political causes or suffer from mental health issues impairing their judgment [4].

The consequences of criminal involvement can be severe, including imprisonment, fines, and damage to personal and professional reputations. Additionally, criminal involvement can have long-term psychological effects on individuals' self-esteem, relationships, and future opportunities [5].

#### **3.1. Types of Child Maltreatment**

**Child maltreatment:** child maltreatment is a widespread problem that can take many forms. Research has shown that maltreatment can negatively affect a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. In this essay, we will explore the different kinds of child maltreatment, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. Physical abuse is one of the most recognizable forms of child maltreatment. It involves the intentional use of force that results in injury, pain, or impairment. Physical abuse can take many forms, including hitting, punching, kicking, shaking, throwing, or burning. Bruises, cuts, and broken bones are some of the common physical injuries children may experience due to physical abuse.

**Sexual abuse:** sexual abuse is another form of child maltreatment that involves using a child or forcing a child to participate in sexual activities. Sexual abuse can take many forms, including genital contact, non-contact abuse, pornography, and prostitution. Children who have been sexually abused may experience physical symptoms such as genital pain, bleeding, and urinary tract infections. They may also suffer from psychological symptoms like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Neglect:** neglect is another form of child maltreatment that involves failing to fulfil a child's basic needs. Neglect can take many forms, including physical neglect, emotional neglect, and educational neglect. Physical neglect can involve failing to provide a child with food, shelter, or medical care, while emotional neglect can involve failing to provide a child with love, affection, and attention.

Educational neglect can involve failing to provide a child with the necessary support and resources to succeed in school.

**Emotional abuse:** emotional abuse is another form of child maltreatment that involves the intentional infliction of psychological harm. Emotional abuse can take many forms, including verbal abuse, humiliation, isolation, and rejection. Children who have experienced emotional abuse may suffer from low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, depression, and anxiety [6].

### **3.2. Different Types of Adult Criminal Involvement**

**Violent crimes:** Violent crime refers to a type of crime that involves the use or threat of physical force, such as assault or murder. It is a severe offence that can cause harm or injury to individuals and disrupt the safety and security of communities. Examples of violent crimes include domestic violence, robbery, aggravated assault, sexual assault, and homicide. These offences are typically punished more severely than others due to their potential to cause harm and trauma. Understanding and preventing violent crime is essential to creating a peaceful and just society.

**Property crimes:** Property crime is a type of crime that involves theft or damage to another person's property. This can include stealing items from a home or vehicle, vandalism, and other acts of destruction. Unlike violent crime, property crime usually does not involve physical harm to a person. Property crimes can vary in severity, from petty theft of small items to large-scale theft or destruction of valuable property. Some common examples of property crimes include burglary, theft, arson, and vandalism. These activities can cause significant financial losses and emotional distress for victims. Property crimes are often motivated by a desire for material gain or personal or political agendas.

**White-collar crimes:** White-collar crime refers to non-violent crimes committed by individuals or corporations during their professional or business activities. These crimes are typically motivated by financial gain and involve manipulating or misrepresenting financial information, corporate fraud, or embezzlement. Examples of white-collar crimes include insider trading, tax fraud, money laundering, and cybersecurity breaches. These offences significantly impact the economy and the company's and organizations' reputations.

**Drug offences:** Drug offence crime refers to manufacturing, distributing, possessing, or selling illegal drugs or other controlled substances. These substances can include narcotics, such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, and prescription drugs obtained or sold illegally. Drug offences are illegal and carry severe penalties, including fines, probation, jail or prison time, and a criminal record. These crimes typically affect individuals, families, and communities by contributing to addiction, drug-related illnesses, violence, and social instability.

**Sex crimes:** Sex crime, also known as a sexual offence, is a type of criminal behaviour that involves sexual acts or behaviours that are carried out without the explicit and informed consent of the victim. These crimes include rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse. Sex crimes can significantly impact individuals and communities, causing physical harm, emotional trauma, and long-term psychological and social effects. Victims may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues [7].

## **4. Impact of Child Maltreatment on Adult Criminal Involvement**

Child maltreatment can have severe and long-lasting effects on children's mental health, social functioning, and behaviour. Numerous studies have found that childhood maltreatment increases the risk of adult criminal involvement. The following are some of the ways that child maltreatment impacts adult criminal involvement

**Early Initiation of Criminal Behavior:** Children who experience maltreatment are more likely to initiate criminal behavior at an early age. Research has found that childhood maltreatment

significantly predicts early-onset delinquency and criminal behavior. Early initiation of criminal behavior increases the likelihood of juvenile arrests and convictions, which may lead to adult criminal involvement.

**Substance Abuse:** Child maltreatment has been linked to substance abuse, which is a significant risk factor for adult criminality. Studies have found that individuals who experienced childhood maltreatment are more likely to engage in drug and alcohol abuse, increasing the likelihood of criminal behavior.

**Mental Health Problems:** Child maltreatment can result in severe and long-lasting mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and borderline personality disorder. These mental health problems increase the risk of criminal behavior in adulthood.

**Poor Academic Performance:** Childhood maltreatment can affect a child's academic performance, leading to poor grades, school dropout, and limited career opportunities. Poor academic performance is a significant risk factor for adult criminal involvement [8].

## 5. The Issue of Child Maltreatment

The issue of child maltreatment is a pressing public health concern that affects millions of children worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 1 billion children globally suffer from maltreatment yearly. Child maltreatment can occur at any age but is most common in early childhood. Child maltreatment has numerous adverse outcomes, including mental health problems, substance abuse, poor academic performance, and adult criminality.

Several studies have found that children who experience maltreatment are likelier to exhibit delinquent and criminal behavior than adults. A study by Thornberry et al. in 2016 found that childhood maltreatment was significantly associated with self-reported delinquency and adult criminal behaviour. Similarly, a study by Widom in 2014 found that individuals who experienced physical and sexual abuse during childhood were more likely to engage in criminal behavior than adults. These studies suggest a strong link between childhood maltreatment and adult criminal involvement [3].

Studies also found children who experience abuse, neglect, or other forms of maltreatment are at higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior later in life. This may be due to various factors, including trauma's psychological and emotional effects, disruptions to healthy brain development, and social and economic challenges [9].

In Widom's article, Cathy Spatz wrote about Child Abuse, Neglect and Adult Behavior. The author examines the findings from a longitudinal study of individuals who experienced child abuse or neglect and the relationship between these experiences and later criminal behavior. The study found that individuals who experienced abuse or neglect were likelier to engage in criminal behavior as adults, including violent crime and child abuse. The author discusses potential explanations for this relationship and implications for prevention and intervention efforts [10].

### 5.1. Examples

As side before, child maltreatment is a serious issue that can have lasting effects on an individual's life. Several known criminals have suffered from child maltreatment; below are some examples. (1). Richard Allen Davis - Convicted of the kidnap and murder of 12-year-old Polly Klaas in 1993, Davis had a history of child abuse and neglect in his childhood [5]. (2). Mary Bell - In 1968, at age 11, Bell strangled two young boys to death in England. It was later discovered that she had suffered abuse and neglect from her mother, a prostitute [7]. (3). Aileen Wuornos - Known as the "Damsel of Death," Wuornos was convicted of killing seven men in Florida in the late 1980s. She suffered from physical and sexual abuse as a child and was abandoned by her mother at a young age. (4). Robert Black - A

Scottish serial killer who was convicted of murdering four young girls between 1981 and 1986, Black experienced physical and emotional abuse from his parents as a child. (5). Gary Ridgway - Dubbed the "Green River Killer," Ridgway was convicted of killing 49 women in Washington state in the 1980s and 1990s. He reportedly suffered neglect and abuse from his mother as a child [11].

Overall, these individuals' experiences with child maltreatment likely contributed to their eventual criminal activity. Addressing and preventing child abuse and neglect is essential to help break the cycle of violence in future generations [11].

## **6. Prevention Against Adult Criminal**

Early intervention is one of the most effective ways to prevent adult criminal involvement. Childhood experiences and toxic stress can have long-lasting adverse effects on individuals. As a society, we must take action to mitigate these adverse effects. One way is providing access to education, healthcare, and social services to children, especially those in poverty. Early intervention has been found to reduce the risk of crime by providing young people with the support they need to develop positive coping skills, increase their self-esteem, and build resilience.

### **6.1. Prevention Programs**

Prevention programs are designed to reduce the risk of criminal behaviour by addressing underlying crime-related factors. These programs provide individuals the tools to make positive choices and avoid negative behaviours. Some examples of prevention programs include drug and alcohol prevention programs, parenting programs, job skills training, and mental health counselling. Prevention programs effectively reduce crime risk by addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour.

### **6.2. Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs can help individuals at risk of criminal involvement by providing guidance, support, and positive role models. Mentors can help individuals improve their self-esteem, develop positive relationships, and make constructive choices. Mentoring programs effectively reduce the risk of criminal behaviour by providing individuals with a positive influence in their lives.

### **6.3. Community Involvement**

Community involvement is crucial in preventing adult criminal involvement. Communities can provide individuals with support, resources, and positive social connections. Individuals are less likely to engage in criminal activities by creating a sense of belonging. Communities can also work to reduce crime by providing safe spaces, creating job opportunities, and developing programs to address the root causes of criminal behaviour [12].

### **6.4. Criminal Justice Reform**

Criminal justice reform can also help in preventing adult criminal involvement. The criminal justice system must focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Providing individuals with education, job training, and mental health services can help them reintegrate into society and reduce the risk of future criminal behaviour [13].

After all, preventing adult criminal involvement is essential for the well-being of individuals and society. Early intervention, prevention programs, mentoring programs, community involvement, and criminal justice reform effectively reduce the risk of criminal behaviour. Working together made it possible to create a safer and more prosperous society for all.

## 7. Conclusion

Child maltreatment is a severe form of violence affecting millions worldwide. Evidence suggests that childhood maltreatment increases the likelihood of adult criminal involvement. Individuals who experience maltreatment are likelier to initiate criminal behavior early, engage in substance abuse, experience mental health problems, and perform poorly academically. Addressing child maltreatment requires a multidisciplinary approach that involves prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts. Investing in evidence-based interventions that aim to prevent child maltreatment can improve the well-being of children and reduce the risk of adult criminal involvement.

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