Bad People or Harmful Pasts?

A Look into How Abuse Effects Deviance

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Abstract

Using data from the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, an analytical sample of 3,277 prisoners were used to examine the gendered relationship between suffering abuse and engaging in deviant acts. The study found differences between genders of the types of crimes committed and between those who have and have not been abused. Those who have been abused have greater odds of showing deviant behaviors than those who have not, and males have higher odds of both committing violent offenses and using hard drugs than females. When examining the findings, there is a much larger gap between the genders on violent offenses than on drug use.

Introduction

Suffering physical or sexual abuse, or talking about the abusers, has become a sensitive but widely mentioned topic in our current society. Though multiple victims are still quiet about their experiences, more victims are coming out with their stories every day.[1] Studies have shown that multiple abuse victims develop anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, among others (Anda et al., 2006; Hayes, 2015; Moeller, Bachmann, & Moeller, 1993; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996; Sanchez, Luna, & Mundt, 2016; Zhang, Zhao, Zhao, & Ren, 2016), which can be harmful to a victim's future. Research has shown that those who have been physically or sexually abused are more likely to be deviant than those who have not (Benoit & Kennedy, 1992; Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Dudeck

[1] Current 2017 celebrities accused of sexual misconduct: Sen. Al Franken, Charlie Rose, Louis C. K., Roy Moore, John Besh, Kevin Spacey, Jeremy Piven, and Richard Dreyfuss (Scott, 2017).

et al., 2012; Fagan & Wexler, 1988; Freeman-Longo, 1986; Hanson & Slater, 1988; Jennings, Zgoba, Maschi, & Reingle, 2014; Zhang et al., 2016). Furthermore, previous studies revealed a gendered difference in the type of crimes committed; males are found to be more likely to partake in serious crimes such as robbery and assault, while females are found to mostly partake in minor property crimes such as larceny-theft, fraud, and embezzlement (Friedman & Rosenbaum, 1988; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998; van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009).

Though these topics highlight important findings in the area of crime, there are few studies showing the gendered effect of abuse on the types of crime committed for those who have already been imprisoned. This leads to the main objective of this study: the impact of suffering physical or sexual abuse on deviance across genders using a prison sample.

Literature Review

The key theory this study focuses on is Travis Hirschi's Control Theory. His key assumption was that delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken (Hirschi, 1998). The four elements in his study are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Attachment to others that follow the rules, commitment to conforming to society, involvement in other activities, and the belief that they should obey the rules of society. The two main elements this study focuses on are commitment and belief. My ideology is that those who have suffered either physical or sexual abuse will have the mindset of not wanting to conform to societies rules because, societally, we tell victims that we do not care about them.

Most of the time abusers do not get the punishment they deserve, which makes it both hard for victims to recover and leads to less victims speaking out.[2]

To address the gendered difference in crime, I explore the notion of gender norms. From a young age we are socialized into two different sexes: males and females. Males get blue rooms, with monster trucks and action figures, while females get pink rooms with dresses, tea parties, and dolls. This carries over to the way we are taught as children; while males are told they need to stand up for themselves and to be a man if anyone is being mean to them, females are told to shy away from it and to get an adult. Sharkin's paper on anger and gender goes over the differences between anger expression in males and females, finding that women are socialized to show emotions more than males, but not anger (Sharkin, 1993). Anger is the one emotion where it is acceptable for males to express it, but females are told to suppress it. A study by Sandra Thomas shows similar findings, and a study by Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, and Peltonin show similar findings in young children (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988; Thomas, 1989). Males are told to externalize their anger and that it is socially acceptable to lay hands on another if they deserve it, but females are told to internalize it and instead that it is not socially acceptable to lay hands on others. I believe this carries over in the way crimes are committed.

Due to this externalization/internalization of anger that we teach children from a young age, I believe the crimes that a person commits will differ as well. Studies have looked at gendered differences between delinquency but many of them deal with those who have not been incarcerated and youth, finding mixed results. A study by Christopher Uggen found that there

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[2] Famous cases of abusers who got away: Woody Allen, Sean Penn, Casey Affleck, R. Kelly, Charlie Sheen, Brock Turner, Snoop Dogg, Kobe Bryant, and many more (Bhattacharya, 2016; Shugerman, 2016; Virgil, 2017).

were differences between genders in terms of the risk to offend, and a study by Jennifer Friedman found that there was no difference between the genders for shoplifting or committing robbery or assault (Friedman & Rosenbaum, 1988; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998). The current study tries to untangle the contrasting results found from previous studies, and give an explanation as to why these results are shown.

Statement of the Problem

This analysis focuses on the relationship between suffering abuse and engaging in deviant acts, as well as the gendered difference. More specifically, I will be testing two hypotheses. The first one tests if those who have been either physically or sexually abused are more likely to commit violent crimes than those who have not been, and is there a difference between males and females? The second one tests if those who have been either physically or sexually abused show a difference between the types of drugs they have ever used compared to those who have not been abused, and is there a difference between males and females? These two acts of deviance were chosen because they show two different ways to express deviance, physically and internally, which I believe will show a difference between males and females due to being socialized in different ways. While physical deviance affects another person, and is external in nature, internal deviance simply harms the user. From the theories mentioned above, I believe that males will be more likely to express violent deviance than females, but females will be more likely to express internal deviance. I also believe that those who have been abused will be more likely to engage in deviant behaviors overall.

Method

Data

The data used in this analysis comes from the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (SISFCF). The SISFCF is a nationally representative data set on inmates in multiple correctional facilities throughout the United States, collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is a partner of the Bureau of the Census and is responsible for collecting national level crime statistics.[3] The data set was created using a two-stage sample design: prisons were selected in the first stage, inmates within the chosen prisons in the second stage. The original data set started with 1,758 prisons, chosen from various states throughout the U.S, ranging from minimum to high security and including those in an administrative security prison. Out of that prison population, 40 were chosen and only one prison chose not to participate. Of those prisons, 4,253 inmates were chosen to participate with 3,686 choosing to respond, making the sample size of this data set 3,686 prisoners.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The table shows descriptive statistics for the analytical sample in this paper. Of those in the sample, 81% have never been abused, 66% have never had a violent offense, 51% have used hard drugs, with 25% who have used soft drugs and 24% who have never used drugs, 74% of the sample are men, 29% are non-Hispanic white, 40% are non-Hispanic black, 24% Hispanic, and 7% of other races. Every person in the sample has had at least one incarceration, with the mean being 2.29. The average age for this sample is around 37 years, and the average highest education is about junior year of high school (11 years).

Measures

[3] The SISFCF has been used to study multiple areas in crime (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Mumola, 2000; Mumola & Karberg, 2007)

Dependent Variables. The first dependent variables for these analyses include if the inmate has ever committed a violent offense. With the information from the SISFCF, I create an indicator of whether the inmate has ever committed a violent crime. I created a binary variable that is coded 0 if the respondent has not committed a violent offense, and 1 as they have. This measure was created from two separate question in the study. The first was an open-ended list of criminal offenses, that is, offenses that can cause you to become incarcerated. I code violent offenses to include only those crimes that involved physical danger for the victim. For example, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, rape, sex offenses, robbery, and assault are all coded as violent offenses in this scheme. The data set also has a response labeled 'other sexual assault', which included any form of sexual abuse[4] that I coded with the violent offenses. The data set also had a response labeled 'other violent offense'[5], which was also coded with the violent offenses. Those labeled as not violent were property crimes, drug crimes, and public offense crimes. In the variable in the data set, there were offenses coded 'other' for property offenses[6],

[4] List of the other sexual assault categories: aggravated sexual abuse, fondling, gross sexual attempt, gross sexual imposition by force, indecent assault, molestation, sex by deception, sex offenders act, sexual abuse, sexual assaults (attempted and conspiracy), sexual misconduct, and indecent liberties.

[5] List of the other violent offense categories: abortion, aiding a suicide, assault, child or criminal endangerment, criminal transmission of HIV, criminal trespass (against a person), gang related violence, infamous crime, reckless endangerment, tampering with a commercial product with intent to extort or cause injury, and trespassing (against a person).

[6] List of the other property offenses: computer crimes, pirating tapes and videos, plagiary, property offenses, other property attempt, other property conspiration, escape implements (tools), possession of burglary tools (or attempt of possessing and conspiracy to possess).

drug offenses[7], public order offenses[8], and other offenses[9] that were all coded with the non-violent offenses for these analyses. The second is a question that included past criminal history (first-timer, recidivist with past violent crime, recidivist with no past violent crime), with those who were first-timers or recidivist without a past violent crime coded into not having had a violent offense, and those who were recidivists with a past violent crime coded into having a violent crime.

The second dependent variable is a categorical variable recording the type of drugs a prisoner has used. With the information from the SISFCF, I create two dummy variables for the use of soft and hard drugs, with the reference category of soft drug use. Soft drugs are those thought not to cause physical addiction, while hard drugs are those thought to lead to physical

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[7] List of other drug offenses: drug abuse or offense (offense or type of drug not specified), false prescription for controlled substance, enumerated drug, dangerous drug, or narcotic other than heroin, forging or uttering prescription for controlled substance, enumerated drug, dangerous drug, or narcotic other than heroin, fraudulent prescription of drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, drug tools, or hypo and syringe, traffic in controlled substance other than drugs, unlawfully obtaining drugs, violation of drug free zones, and writing an illegal prescription for drugs.

[8] List of other public order offenses: civil rights violation, contraband, cruelty to/abuse of animals, delay mail, disinterment of a human body, failure to appear for work in lieu of induction (draft evasion), hitch hiking, income or sales tax evasion, interest and penalties, libel, money laundering, non-payment of debts, obstructing a passageway, racketeering, sounding a false alarm, slander, taxation and revenue offenses, traffic in controlled substance other than drugs, traffic in non-controlled substance, violation of fish and game law or relocation, violation of local optional law, and conspiracy or attempted public order offense.

[9] List of other offenses: accessory, accomplice, aiding and abetting conspiracy, criminal attempt, criminal negligence, and criminal solicitation.

addiction and harm the user's health (Ninja, 2009). Following this idea, the soft drugs in this data set are marijuana and hallucinogens, and the hard drugs are heroin, crack, inhalants, methamphetamine, depressants, and stimulants. Placed in the hard drug category are those who responded yes to any of the hard drugs listed above. Soft drugs were chosen as the reference category because it included marijuana, which is widely used across the United States.[10]

Key Independent Variables. The main independent variables for these analyses are if the inmate has ever suffered abuse and gender. The first variable is a binary coded variable reporting if the respondent has ever been abused (physically or sexually), coded 1 if they have and 0 if not. This measure was created from two variables in the SISFCF separately asking if the respondent has ever been physically or sexually abused. An issue with this variable, however, is that there is no way of knowing if the respondent had been abused before or during incarceration.[11] The second independent variable is the respondent's gender. Gender is coded as an indicator variable for males (Females=0, Males=1).

Control Variables. The SISFCF collects a wide variety of information that may impact the dependent variables in this analysis. The control variables for this study include age, race, number of incarcerations a respondent has, and education. Age is coded as a continuous variable, ranging from 19 to 79 years of age. Race is separated into three indicator variables for non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, and other race individuals, with non-Hispanic white as the reference category. Number of incarcerations a respondent has includes the current incarceration and is

[10] Multiple studies have shown that between 40 and 50 percent of the American population has used marijuana at some point in their life (Green, 2015; Motel, 2015; Pappas, 2017).

[11] There is a long literature on inmates being abused during incarceration (Davidson-Arad, 2005; Kubiak et al., 2017; Shermer & Sudo, 2017).

coded as a continuous variable, ranging from 1 to 54. Education is collected as the highest grade of school attended prior to incarceration and I treat this measure as a continuous variable, ranging from 0 years of education to 17 years. Those who responded that they had two or more years of graduate school (single category in the original variable), attended either kindergarten or never attended (single category in the original variable), or attended school in a different country or system were omitted from this analysis (*N*=237).

Missing Values

212 respondents were omitted from the analysis from the education category mentioned above. One respondent was omitted for having replied being 34 with 101 incarcerations (extreme outlier and highly unlikely). No other cases were omitted. Listwise deletion was used for the analyses, making the final analytical sample 3,277 respondents.

Analytical Approach

To analyze the effect of abuse on violent offenses and drug use, this analysis uses logistic and multinomial logistic regressions. Since the outcome variable, violent offense, is coded as binary (Violent Offense=1, Non-Violent Offense=0), a logistic regression is used. The equation is: $ln\left(\frac{\Pr(y=1)}{1-(\Pr(y=1))}\right) = \alpha + \beta(x)$ where *y* is the dependent variable (committing a violent offense in this analysis), making the equation $ln\left(\frac{\Pr(Violent\ Offense)}{1-(\Pr(Violent\ Offense))}\right) = \alpha + \beta(x)$ with this data.

Since the outcome variable, drug use, is coded as a categorical variable (Soft Drugs=0, No Drugs=1, Hard Drugs=2), a multinomial logistic regression is used.[12] The equation is: $ln\left(\frac{\Pr(y=j_i)}{\Pr(y=m)}\right)$, where y is dependent variable (drug use in this analysis) with J outcomes (three in this analysis: no drugs, soft drugs, hard drugs, and m is the base category (soft drugs in this analysis). The equation becomes: $ln\left(\frac{\Pr(\text{Drug Use}_i)}{\Pr(\text{Soft Drug Use})}\right)$.

Results

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 2 shows the results of the binary logistic regression model presented in odds ratio. We can see that there is a positive significant effect on being abused (compared to those never being abused) and the action of committing a violent offense; the odds for those who have been abused to commit a violent offense is 1.9 times that of those who have never been abused, holding a number of other variables constant. It shows that there is also a gendered difference; the odds of males to commit a violent offense is 3.3 times that of females. To make these coefficients easier to interpret, I convert them into predicted probabilities.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 1 shows the results of the binary logistic regression model presented in predicted probabilities. We can see that there is a difference between those who have and have not been abused in predicting violent offenses; 32% of those who have never been abused are predicted to

[12] An ordered logistic regression could have been used as the progression of harm to the user (no drug use, soft drug use, hard drug use). When tested, the parallel line assumption was violated, resulting in using the multinomial logistic regression instead.

commit a violent offense, compared to 46% of those who have been. This is a 14-percentage point difference in the predicted probability of committing a violent offense between the abuses showing that those who have been abused have a higher probability of committing a violent offense than those who have not been abused.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 2 shows the results of the binary logistic regression model presented in predicted probabilities separated by gender. We can see that there is a difference between the genders of committing a violent offense for those who have or have not been abused. Of those females who have never been abused, 16% are predicted to commit a violent offense compared to 37% of males. Of those females who have been abused, we see an increase in the predicted probability of committing a violent offense; 26% of females who have been abused are predicted to commit a violent offense, compared to 54% of males who have been abused. This is a 28-percentage point difference between the genders of those who have been abused, meaning males who have been abused have a higher probability of committing a violent offense than females who have been abused. It also shows that males who have not been abused have a higher probability of committing a violent offense than females who have not been abused.

Looking between the abuses, males who have never been abused have a lower probability of committing a violent offense than males who have been abused (17 percentage point difference). We see the same with females, those who have never been abused have a lower probability of committing a violent offense than those who have been (10 percentage point difference).

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Table 3 shows the results of the multinomial logistic regression model presented in odds ratio, with those who have used soft drugs as the base category. There is no statistically significant difference between those who have been abused compared to those who have never been abused to not use drugs compared to have used soft drugs, but we can see a significant difference for the use of hard drugs. The odds for those who have been abused to use hard drugs compared to soft drugs is 1.9 times that of those who have never been abused. To make these coefficients easier to interpret, I convert these into predicted probabilities as well.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 3 shows the results of the multinomial logistic regression model presented in predicted probabilities. We can see that there is a difference between the types of drugs used for those who have and have not been abused. Looking at those who have never used drugs, we can see that those who have never been abused have a higher predicted probability of never using drugs (27%) than those who have been abused (17%). Looking at those who have used soft drugs, we can see that those who have never been abused have a higher predicted probability of using some sort of soft drug (26%) than those who have been abused (20%). Looking at those who have ever used a hard drug, we can see that those who have never been abused have a lower predicted probability of using a hard drug (48%) than those who have been abused (62%). Between the abuses, this is a 10-percentage point difference in never using drugs, a 6-percentage point difference in using soft drugs, and a 14-percentage point difference in using hard drugs.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 4 shows the results of the multinomial logistic regression model presented in predicted probabilities separated by gender. We can see that there is a difference between the

genders of the types of drugs used for those who have and have not been abused. Looking at those who are predicted to have never used drugs and those who have never been abused, we can see that 40% of females are predicted to have never used drugs compared to 22% of males. Of those who have been abused, we can see that the predicted probabilities decrease; 23% of females are predicted to never use drugs compared to 16% of males. Looking at those who are predicted to use soft drugs and those who have never been abused, we can see that 20% of females are predicted to use soft drugs compared to 20% of males. Of those who have been abused, we can see that 17% of females are predicted to use soft drugs compared to 22% of males. Looking at those who are predicted to use hard drugs and those who have never been abused, we can see that 40% of females are predicted to use hard drugs compared to 51% of males. Looking at those who have been abused, we can see that 61% of females are predicted to use hard drugs compared to 63% of males. Between the genders, this is a 18 percentage point difference for those who have never been abused to never use drugs, a 7 percentage point difference for those who have been abused to never use drugs, a 7 percentage point difference for those who have never been abused to use soft drugs, a 5 percentage point difference for those who have been abused to use soft drugs, a 11 percentage point difference for those who have never been abused to use hard drugs, and a 2 percentage point difference for those who have been abused to use hard drugs.

Looking between the abuses shows a significant result as well. 40% of females who have never been abused are predicted to never use drugs, compared to 23% of those who have been abused. 20% of females who have never been abused are predicted to use soft drugs, compared to 20% of abused females. 40% of females who have never been abused are predicted to use hard drugs compared to 61% who have. We see similar results for males: higher predicted probability

of never using drugs and using soft drugs for those who have not been abused than those who have, and a lower predicted probability for those who have never been abused to use hard drugs than those who have been.

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion

Through logistic and multinomial logistic regressions, it was found that one of my hypotheses was correct: those who have been physically or sexually abused have greater odds of committing violent offenses than those who have not been, and males showed higher odds of committing violent offenses than females. The second hypothesis was half correct; those who have been physically or sexually abused have greater odds of using hard drugs than those who have not been. However, it was shown that males had higher odds of using hard drugs compared to females. Though the results showed males portraying higher deviance in terms of drugs, it is at a much smaller gap than females. While there was a 28-percentage point difference between abused males and females to commit violent crimes, there was only a 3-percentage point difference between abused males and females to use hard drugs. This may be explained by the externalization versus internalization of anger between the genders, as well as the way we are socialized to portray anger from a young age.

These results show significant findings, but keep in mind that this is a prison sample, so all of the respondents have committed some type of criminal activity. Due to this, it is impossible to capture those who have been abused but have not been incarcerated. This is a problem that we need to fix in this literature; there are no studies that ask the types of questions we need in both a prison sample and a population sample, so for now it is not possible to get an accurate prediction on how much abuse really does affect a person. Though this is true, we cannot turn away from

this study and those like it. Abuse is a problem and without everyone's cooperation, it will continue to be one.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Ever Been Abused				
Never	0.81	0.39	0.00	1.00
Yes	0.19	0.39	0.00	1.00
Had a Violent Offense (Ever)				
No	0.66	0.47	0.00	1.00
Yes	0.34	0.47	0.00	1.00
Type of Drugs Used (Ever)				
None	0.24	0.43	0.00	1.00
Soft Drugs	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00
Hard Drugs	0.51	0.50	0.00	1.00
Gender				
Female	0.26	0.44	0.00	1.00
Male	0.74	0.44	0.00	1.00
Race				
White (non-Hispanic)	0.29	0.45	0.00	1.00
Black (non-Hispanic)	0.40	0.49	0.00	1.00
Hispanic	0.24	0.43	0.00	1.00
Other	0.07	0.26	0.00	1.00
Number of Incarcerations	2.29	3.07	1.00	54.00
Age	37.42	10.66	19.00	79.00
Highest Education (Before Incarceration)	11.30	2.58	1.00	17.00

Source: 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities
N = 3,277

Table 2. Logistic Regression Predicting Violent Offenses

	Coefficients	SE
Ever Been Abused[1]		
Yes	1.908***	(0.360)
Gender[1]		
Male	3.344***	(0.507)
*Abused*Male*[1]	1.103	(0.265)
Type of Drug Used (Ever) [1]		
No Drugs		
Hard Drugs	0.716**	(0.088)
Race[1]	0.858	(0.084)
Black (non-Hispanic)		
Hispanic	1.726***	(0.175)
Other	0.669**	(0.083)
Number of Incarcerations	2.644***	(0.429)
Age	1.135***	(0.019)
Highest Education (Before Incarceration)	0.998	(0.004)
N	3277	
AIC	3791.2	
BIC	3864.3	

Coefficients presented in odds ratio

Source: 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

[1] Reference groups included never abused, females, males who have not been abused, soft drugs, and non-Hispanic white, respectively

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Type of Drugs Used

	No Drugs		Hard Drugs	
	Coefficients	SE	Coefficients	SE
Ever Been Abused[1]				
Yes	0.652	(0.145)	1.869**	(0.379)
Gender[1]				
Male	0.355***	(0.055)	0.890	(0.134)
*Abused*Male*[1]	1.399	(0.474)	0.866	(0.238)
Race[1]				
Black (non-Hispanic)	0.476***	(0.070)	0.260***	(0.031)
Hispanic	2.105***	(0.356)	0.584***	(0.086)
Other	0.823	(0.199)	0.535**	(0.106)
Highest Education (Before Incarceration)	1.036	(0.024)	0.918***	(0.018)
Age	1.080***	(0.006)	1.040***	(0.005)
N	3277			
AIC	6105.4			
BIC	6215.1			

Coefficients presented in odds ratio

Source: 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Soft Drugs as the base category

[1] Reference groups included never abused, female, males who have not been abused, no, and non-Hispanic White, respectively

Figure 1. Predicted Probability of Committing a Violent Offense by Suffering Physical or Sexual Abuse

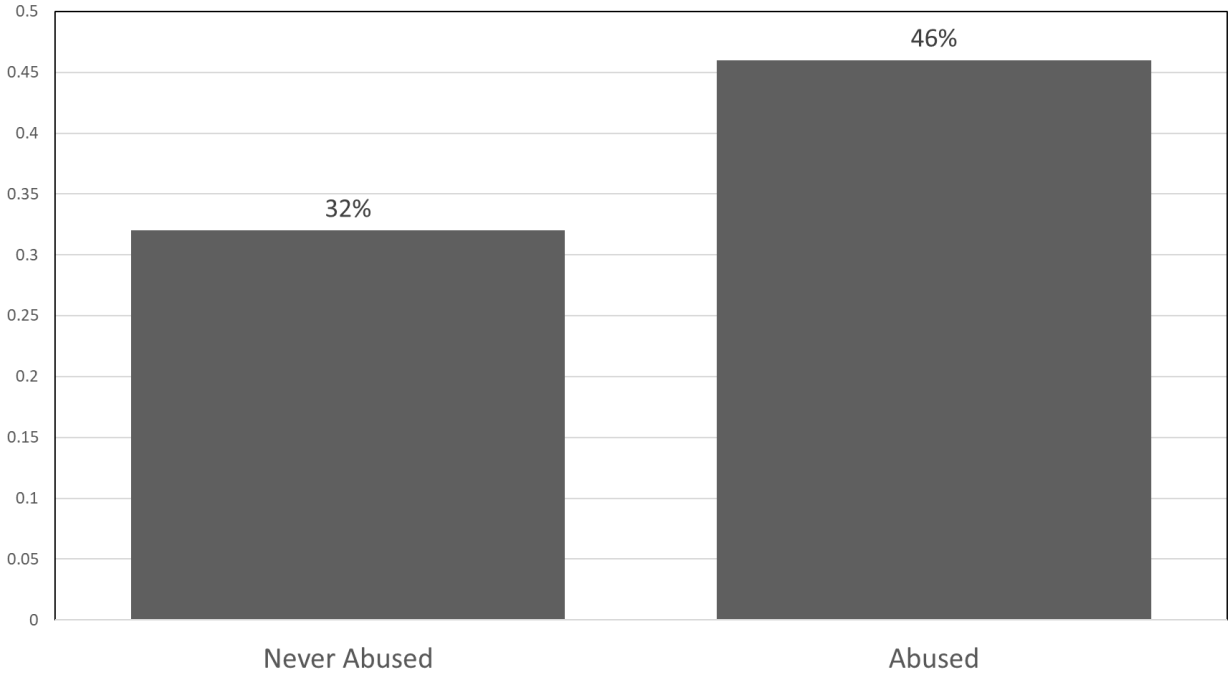

Figure 2. Predicted Probability of the Gendered Difference of Committing a Violent Offense by Suffering Physical or Sexual Abuse

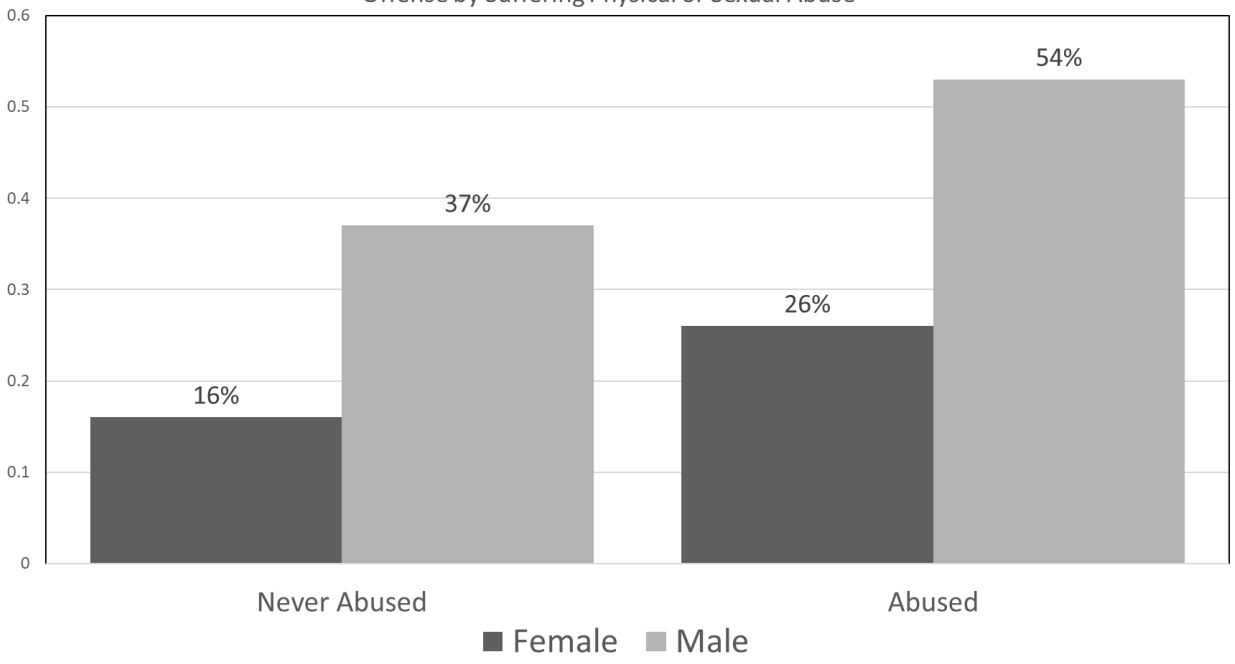

Figure 3. Predicted Probability of the Type of Drugs Used by Suffering Physical or Sexual Abuse

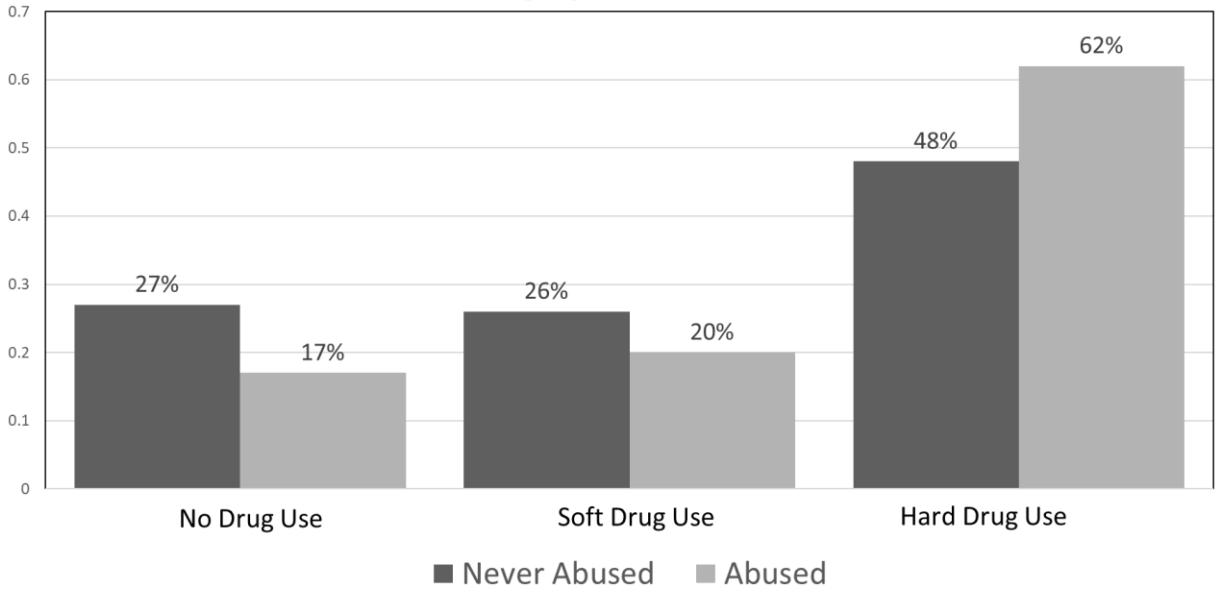

Figure 4. Predicted Probability of the Gendered Difference of Type of Drugs Used by Suffering Physical or Sexual Abuse