



Child Abuse Precursor of Criminality

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Abstract

Diverse medical, and criminal sciences, highlights the child abuse, as precursor of later criminal behavior. The findings aim to unify the criterion that there is a triad invariably present in serial killers: Brain damage or mental illness: Psychopathic, antisocial personality; Social rejection; A history of abuse and abandonment during childhood. Some other correlate the variants of two genes - MAOA and CDH13 - with the propensity to commit violent crimes. The brain of an infant can be morphologically altered when at young stages the victim had suffered chronic stress and prolonged abuse, due to an excessive release of cortisol and norepinephrine, hormones which instigate a decrease in the size of the hippocampus. Alterations that will damage the limbic system, which is the brain area most implicated in emotions and memory. These brain harms, may explain why an individual with a history of child abuse, is at risk of criminal life. The sensibility, empathy, and remorse will cease to be a regulating valve to mediate their behavior.

Keywords: Brain; Alterations; Limbic system; Child abused

Introduction

During my fieldwork path on child abuse, I have been in a constant pursuit for answers that clarify the root of this social scourge, I have explored as many possible components that offer medical, scientific, sociological, criminological, and even religious theories, explaining this phenomenon. Amid this boardwalk of scientific deliberation, I had to delve into the genesis of crime and formulate the challenging and eternal questions of whether a murderer is made, or it is born.

Science has shown that many individuals are born psychopaths, with a predisposition to his own excessive personal pleasure, lacking the ability to feel remorse for their actions, due to dysfunction in the brain reward area by an exacerbated release of dopamine, [originated in the Nucleus accumbens, the interface limbic-motor system] these individuals are carriers of the Gene MAO, however, they are entrepreneurs or compulsive gamblers, but not murderous..

A review of countless criminological cases and various expert theories, allow me to conclude that by consensus, there is an

invariable triad in the serial killers; Brain damage or mental illness, antisocial personality; social rejection, or adverse social conditions; a history of child abuse. Some academics, allude to another factor; To be a carrier of the MAO gene (monoamine oxidase "A") however, this asseveration is not conclusive, whereas it is true, some researches do not found genotypes associated with high levels of MAOA, though most agree that the antecedents of abused and neglect, increase the risk of becoming violent and/or antisocial in later life [1].

The Monoamina Oxidasa A (MAO) produces an enzyme that regulates the levels of neurotransmitters involved in impulse control. The enzyme breaks down neurotransmitters called monoamines (noradrenaline, serotonin and dopamine), and a dysfunction in its reaction in certain areas of the brain may disturb the regulation of emotions and behavioral control. The Karolinska Institute in Stockholm leads an investigation published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry which links the variants of two genes - MAOA and CDH13 - with the propensity to commit violent crimes. The CDH13 gene contributes to the development of neuronal connections in the brain [2].

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A team of researchers at the Institute Universitaire en santé mentale de Montréal, carried out a longitudinal study on 327 young men who live in Quebec, whom were exposed to child violence relating the –MAOA y CDH13– with the propensity to commit violent crimes. Notwithstanding, it concludes that non-linear interactions between the MAOA gene and violence were detected, suggesting that the genetic moderation may come about once a certain level of violence is experienced [3].

Then science clarifies, that this gene can be activated when they combine various components; adverse circumstances, brain damage, and violence background, remaining inactive whenever the social, and biological conditions are not adverse.

Despite the phenomenal of criminality is multifactorial and multicausal, scientific evidences lead us to ask about its origin. The German neurologist Gerhard Roth claims to have found the biological origin of evil, called it "the stain of evil." [Research funded by the German government] through neuroimages scrutiny. Roth describes the convict's brain responses by measuring the brain waves while exhibiting a short movie with brutal scenes, the criminals showed no hippocampus cerebral activity. [The hippocampus, is a determining organ in the regulation of emotions located within the intermediate temporal lobe of the brain, part of the limbic system] the scientist observed that in the scanners, invariably showed a dark spot on the front, which suggests that some criminals have a "genetic predisposition" to violence, according the neurologist.

Taking as a starting point, the research of the Center of Developing Child of Harvard, "The stain of evil", named after Roth, could have a scientific explanation that could partially clarify this scientific findings revealed by Dr. Shonkoff, Director of the Center, who evidences that the brain of a three year old victim of recurrent abuse, stress or abandonment, is morphological altered, it grows to an extent that reaches the size of an adult brain. Likewise Dr. Shonkoff graphically shows neuronal decrease connections in children victims of chronic stress and suffering. This phenomenon is due to cortisol and noradrenaline hormones, which are segregated in excess by the kid's adrenal medulla into the bloodstream, amidst terror and suffering, inducing imminent impairment in the tender stage of developing brains. This organ is made up of billions of cells interconnected, form circuits, sending electrical signals, therefore, anguish provokes chronic stress, which induces fewer connections and evident reduction in neuronal ramifications, which translates into innumerable physical, motor, neurocognitive and emotional affectations in a fragile baby's brain. In summary the abuse will modify the infant's brain structure.

The Center on the Developing Child of Harvard, highlights a research on how neuronal branching decreases occur, before the age of five in child victims of abuse. Dr. Shonkoff, demonstrates how the cortisol and norepinephrine, hormones when secreted in

excess, cause imminent damage in the prefrontal area where emotions are regulated to the infants' tender brains, as a consequence of living in situations of great stress and suffering, He concludes that excessive stress disrupts the architecture of the developing brain [4].

This information validates that early brain damage will clinically cause mentally disturbed individuals, when conjugated with genetic factors and adverse social conditions. The findings of the Center of Developing Child of Harvard, could be interlinked with Dr. Peth's conclusions, by analyzing the sequence of behavior in emotionally disturbed people.

Adrian Raine, professor of criminology and psychiatry, at the University of Pennsylvania, scanned for years the brains of diverse murderers in his lab. His research highlights a morphological change in the brain, most of them showed a reduction in the prefrontal cortex, [area of the brain that controls emotional impulses] as well an over-activation of the amígdala, a component of the limbic system, which processes emotions and directs behavior. This organ is best known for its role in the treatment of fear whose responses to the stimuli were more prone to anger with little or not impulse control. Raine's studies suggest that child abuse can generate murderers due to the physical damage at the prefrontal cortex of the brain [5].

Jonathan Pincus, professor at Georgetown University, declared that 95% of murderers have a history of child abuse or torture, that significantly impact the degree to incidence and prevalence of the violence. According Dr. Amada Ampudia Rueda, Professor of Psychology at the UNAM, women accumulate high levels of anger caused by harassment or repressed emotions that detonate hurting their husbands, children or other family members. Many of the murderers are single mothers, finding suffocation as the prevalent form of death [6].

The U.S. National Institute of Justice On its 2014 website, it publishes "Impact of Abuse and Criminal Detention", indicating that having suffered abuse, or neglect in childhood, increases the probability of arrest in adolescence by 59%, in adulthood in a 28% and by crime violence in 30%. On the same page, "The Rochester Study," published a sample of 1,000 urban youth who were followed up over time. Investigators officially recognized that child abuse is the risk factor for crime [7].

According to the FBI, the murders committed by serial killers are due to psychopathological diseases with origins in childhood. A survey by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in the prisons of the United States, showed that the serial killers come from dysfunctional homes, all of them had suffered some type of abuse in their childhood; physical, emotional, sexual and / or negligence and often all kinds of abuse at the same time. The sample indicates that the abuses received in childhood leave a deep imprint on the subconscious, shaping their personality



development. Violent impressions can mark them for a lifetime [8].

The Professor and Forensic doctor, José Manuel Reverte, presented a case study in which serial killers come from dysfunctional homes with a history of childhood abuse, 70% with alcohol and drugs, 50% showed a family history of mental illness and more than 40 % had parents involved in the crime. Scientific evidences concluded that a history of abuse during childhood is the most important precursor in criminality. Tender ages lacerated with frequent acts of sadism and torture, memories that come to life whenever remembrances reveal those brutal events.

Method

Being at the head of the foundation En Pantalla Contra la Violencia Infantil "FUPAVI", we launched a pilot program using a multidisciplinary approach to care for families with high levels of violence. Initially, the family members were submitted to a multidisciplinary evaluation by a psychiatrist, social worker, therapist, and family mediator. "The Early Intervention Center" "CIT" was a methodical, innovative and personalized program. The intention was to analyze family ties, identifying the aggressor and the victim, and to rehabilitate the family. This project was financed by the Government of the State of Mexico, through the Ministry of Security and the Municipality of Ecatepec [9-17].

The CIT, were settled in the polygon most dangerous area of Ecatepec, reporting the highest crime rates of Mexico. 231 families were evaluated, 85 violent adults were treated under psychiatric and therapeutic treatment, due to their poor control impulses. The methodology considered the family, the aggressor, the victims risk factors. The information was crossed with probable mental disorders. At 98% of the cases there was a history of child abuse, families from the first and second generation, 85% had repeated patterns of abuse. 63% of adult women reported a depression and / or anxiety problem not clinically treated.

Discussion

It is particularly interesting to have had the opportunity to launch this pilot program precisely in one of the country areas, considered among the most violent with high rates of violent families, repeating patterns of abuse. The results allowed us to corroborate the scope of this work; Child abuse causes brain damage and alters the behavior of the individual in the adolescent and adult stages.

In general terms, I could say that this program provided substantial information. Unfortunately, the pilot was not continued for political reasons and head authority change, as a result of this unfortunate situation, we were unable to make a follow up the program. Nevertheless the expected results were

satisfactory. I believe that the implementation of this concept in risky areas, it would be a valuable tool to intercept families where violence starts. It should be noted that the CIT, in addition to the multidisciplinary treatment, offered talks in the community as well at schools, with the intention of spreading positive parenting techniques.

Conclusions

It is not acceptable to justify a criminal by any circumstance, regardless of his abusing childhood history, because to the extent that the infractor has the possibility to choose how to consciously react, he/she will invariably be responsible for his actions, and must be judged for the damage caused. The point is to delve into genesis of crime, as we deepen the ontological knowledge of what underlies the human being, is where the truth is hidden, including its biogenetic, neurological, and emotional nature, how it metabolizes with its resources, antecedents and beliefs, diving into the depths of the mind and its memories, inspecting the past and present circumstances, personality, and life history, multidisciplinary procedures that would allow timely detection of those individuals of risk and timely rescue of people in risk of danger. To take a step ahead of the commission of crime, through integral prevention. As we anticipate possible pathological behaviors, we will be able to identify the perpetrators of antisocial behaviors. At the time governments formulate public prevention policies not only to contain crime, but preventing the root of felony, focusing on preventing child abuse as a public health priority program.

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SUNTEXT REVIEWS

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