



Unveiling The Shadows: Exploring Child Abuse Incidence In Brunei's Adult Population

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ABSTRACT

The article describes a quantitative research study that examined the prevalence of abuse and neglect present in the life histories among a sample population in Brunei Darussalam. Data were gathered using the most standardized inventory in the field which was adapted to Bruneian context and used to measure incidents and types of abuse and neglect. A sample population of 112 participants drawn from two educational sites completed the Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ) with a 100% return data. The findings show that the most prevalence abuse and neglect among the participants were emotional and physical abuse as well as neglect. The study concludes that participants who reported any single form of abuse and neglect were likely to have suffered other types of abuse and neglect, and the most consistently strong correlations were between abuse of alcohol intoxication and several types of abuse, including sexual abuse with intercourse reported by the participants. The findings conclude that the most prevalence abuse was emotional abuse (91%), followed by physical and emotional neglect (59%) and physical abuse (46%). The lowest prevalence of abuse reported by the participants was sexual abuse (26%).

Keywords: Child Abuse; Alcohol Intoxication; Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ); Life Histories

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menjelaskan sebuah studi penelitian kuantitatif yang meneliti prevalensi kekerasan dan penelantaran yang ada dalam riwayat hidup di antara populasi sampel di Brunei Darussalam. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan inventaris yang paling standar di lapangan yang disesuaikan dengan konteks Brunei dan digunakan untuk mengukur insiden dan jenis pelecehan dan penelantaran. Populasi sampel yang terdiri dari 112 peserta yang

diambil dari dua lokasi pendidikan menyelesaikan Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ) dengan tingkat pengembalian data 100%. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelecehan dan penelantaran yang paling banyak terjadi di antara para partisipan adalah pelecehan emosional dan fisik serta penelantaran. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa peserta yang melaporkan satu bentuk pelecehan dan penelantaran cenderung mengalami jenis pelecehan dan penelantaran lainnya, dan korelasi yang paling kuat secara konsisten adalah antara pelecehan keracunan alkohol dan beberapa jenis pelecehan, termasuk pelecehan seksual dengan hubungan seksual yang dilaporkan oleh para peserta. Temuan ini menyimpulkan bahwa pelecehan yang paling banyak terjadi adalah pelecehan emosional (91%), diikuti oleh penelantaran fisik dan emosional (59%) dan pelecehan fisik (46%). Prevalensi terendah dari pelecehan yang dilaporkan oleh para peserta adalah pelecehan seksual (26%).

Kata kunci: Pelecehan Anak; Keracunan Alkohol; *Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ)*; Riwayat Hidup

INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, violence has been a major problem affecting all age categories. Adults who ensuing abuse and neglect experienced adverse outcomes and there has been a recent surge of studies examining potential risk factors that may be related to the development of callous-unemotional traits (Joyner & Beaver, 2021). Adolescents with a report of child maltreatment exhibit risk factors that may affect their future and recent study suggests that as child maltreatment increases, so too do scores on the callous-unemotional traits scale (Joyner & Beaver, 2021) which affects both emotional and physical health.

Few, if any, studies exist in Brunei that document the existence and types of abuse that may be experienced by Bruneians during childhood. Thus, it is necessary to study the prevalence of child abuse and neglect. This is appropriate because the government is showing great concern. The aim of the present research was to collect data on childhood exposure to adverse childhood experiences. According to Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (2020), in recent years, Brunei Darussalam has witnessed an increasing trend in receiving referrals for cases involving child abuse victims. Authorities and agencies have devoted their energy and time in developing programs. Brunei's government is trying to reduce the prevalence on the child abuse by implementing the protection of children's rights

affiliated with the Community Development Department of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, and other relevant government agencies and non-government bodies. Several legislations have been introduced to ensure the protection of human rights in Brunei as mentioned by the same source above.

In both developing and developed nations, children are subject to poor prenatal and postnatal care, malnutrition, disease, and poverty. Every year, 3.5 million children in the United States are reported for suspected maltreatment, with a yearly substantiated maltreatment rate of 9.1 per 1000 children (Strathearn et al., 2020; Kisely et al., 2018), and according to Lippard and Nemeroff (2020) & Chen et al. (2023), child abuse or neglect affects one in four children, with 676,000 children reported to child protective services in 2016, indicating a high prevalence of child maltreatment and in 2023, report in the U.S confirmed that child maltreatment risks increased from 3% to 27% (Yi et al., 2023). With the high prevalence in developed nations, it is necessary to look at the prevalence of child maltreatment in Brunei as a developing country. However, unhindered access to a child population to study abuse and neglect in Brunei is difficult because of access problems, therefore, an adult population was studied to look at the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Brunei. This abuse and neglect study also lacking in Brunei. The United Nations Children's Fund (2012) stated that Brunei has a lack of data regarding the frequency of child abuse.

It is vital to view the child abuse and neglect cases in Brunei with concern. This is not only because of its impact on the victim's immediate adjustment and development but also because of its long-term influence on the adult as stated by Strathearn et al. (2020) and Crouch et al. (2019) that child abuse, particularly psychological maltreatment, is linked to a wide range of unfavorable long-term health and developmental effects that last into adolescence and early adulthood, in line with previous article by Matthew et al. (2020) which stated that child maltreatment, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence, has long-term negative health, educational, and behavioral implications. It is critical to collect reliable data on the frequency and features of child maltreatment in national populations to plan and evaluate public health initiatives to reduce maltreatment. In addition, to achieve UN Agenda 16's goal of reducing child abuse, countries should invest in national prevalence studies

measuring domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, and capturing past year incidence and childhood prevalence (Matthew et al., 2020). Thus, there are two main objectives of this study namely: (1) to find out the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Brunei and, (2) to examine if there are any factors that might exist between the types of abuse and neglect reported by the participants.

Gu et al. (2022) stated that childhood and adolescence are two critical stages of rapid physical and mental development, according to the self-development paradigm. Children are more sensitive to trauma because of their immature physical and mental development, low stress resistance, and limited flexibility and tolerance in childhood. Meanwhile, the events that occur during this period of trauma can have deep and long-lasting effects on the individual. According to Brown et al. (2023), approximately one in four children experience child abuse or neglect in their lifetime. 18% of maltreated children are physically assaulted, 78% are neglected, and 9% are sexually abused. Child maltreatment has a fatality rate of 2.2 per 1000 children per year, making homicide the second largest cause of death in children under the age of one.

Brunei Darussalam is not an exception. In 2019, Royal Brunei Police Force reports increased child abuse cases from 43 in 2014 to 56 in 2018 (Scoop, 2019) and according to Bakar (2022), a total of 251 children and young people in Brunei have been placed on the newly created child protection register after being assessed as being at danger of abuse, neglect, or other welfare issue. The alarming trend in child abuse cases were also recorded in Malaysia as part of Brunei's neighbour. Shaari & Mahadi (2021) wrote that according to the Department of Social Welfare in Malaysia, over 2,000 child abuse incidents are recorded each year, with a total of 6,061 reported in 2019 and in the first four months of 2021, there were reports of up to 2,040 incidences of child abuse. This data shows the increasing rate of their child abuse and neglect in that country. The prevalence of child abuse also recorded from another region. Almazeedi et al. (2020) through their cross-sectional study in Kuwait revealed that among 2508 respondents (70.9% female), 35.6%, 53.5% and 19.8% experienced at least one form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, respectively. The National Child Abuse Statistics (2023) reported that an estimated 1,750 children died from abuse and neglect in the United States.

Child abuse is not only about bruises, ruptured bones, spanking and others. Physical abuse could be more visible compared to other kinds such as emotional abuse and neglect. No matter what type of abuse the child had experienced, it surely gives a big impact toward their entire life with long lasting scars which will influence their behaviours. A large body of empirical research has documented the negative effects of childhood maltreatment on adult psychological well-being, with adult victims demonstrating adverse psychological well-being in terms of anger proneness, self-esteem, acceptance, autonomy, sense of purpose in life, happiness, and life satisfaction (Kong, 2018).

In addition, abused children faced high possibility of depression, insecure relations with others, anxiety, personality disorder and other sort of problems. The most severe problems result in childhood fatalities, which sequelae can be mild symptoms of triggered emotional or personality disorders along with the range of an extensive probable issues. (Borger et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2023). Above all, the survivors must cope with terrible physical and emotional scars. Childhood violence jeopardizes not only their health, but also their ability to learn and grow into individuals capable of creating stable families and communities. Some may be hesitant to trust, others may act out, and still others may retreat from family and friends (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018).

In conclusion, this research also meant to indicate the potential long-term effects of child abuse and neglect that may extend into adulthood as suggested by some authors that child abuse and neglect lead to adverse outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood which led to long-term health repercussions including cognitive and mental health issues, substance use, sexual health issues, and physical health limitations (Strathearn et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2023).

Lastly, the purpose of this study is to examine if there are any correlations between the types of abuse and neglect reported by the participants because the multiple forms of maltreatment can increase the risk of more damaging adverse consequences in adulthood.

METHODS

A descriptive research methodology and questionnaire was chosen for this study. A survey was administered to a convenience sample from two educational sites. Consequently, it was determined that permission to study and free access were a likely and possible. For

this study, 112 educators from two educational sites were identified as a convenience sample. Benaquisto (2008) define convenience sampling as a “sample in which research participants are selected based on their ease of availability.” Convenience sampling is popular because it is less expensive, takes less time than other sampling procedures, and is simpler as well as beneficial when utilized to generate a prospective hypothesis or study objective (Stratton, 2021). Before the implementation of the study, a pre-test exercise was conducted including 15 educators.

In this research, a standardized inventory, the Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ) was used. The ACE-IQ is about records experiences of childhood abuse and neglect in study’s participants. Dube et al. (2001) reported extensive use of the instrument and a reliability of $r = 0.78-0.93$ which is high inconsistency but inconsistent test-retest reliability.

The ACE-IQ was translated to Malay and back translated to determine linguistic accuracy. This was intended to overcome language barrier (if any). The instrument was well suited to determine the prevalence of the child abuse in Brunei. The translation was triangulated with a Malay scholar who had been teaching Malay Language and Literature for almost 20 years in Brunei. There are ten Adversed Childhood Experience (ACE) categories were included in the survey. In this inventory, the adult respondents were asked if they had experienced the ACE category prior to their 18th birthday. The experiences included verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, parental separation, or divorce, and four types of household dysfunction (exposure in the household to drug abuse, mental illness, suicide, or criminal behaviour). Questions on demographic information were adapted according to the cultural differences.

The study sample included 112 educators from two educational sites with 100% return rates. Out of 112, 19 of them were excluded due to excessive missing data. Only 83% (n= 93) respondents completed the questionnaire included 78 (83%) women and 15 (16%) men. The age range of the sample population was between 22 and 57 years with mean age of 38 years. Subsequently, the race included 90% (n=84) were Malays, 3% (n=3) were Chinese, 1% (n =1) was Iban, and 5 % (n =5) were unstated. The education levels included 62% (n =55) were post graduate degree, 35% (n =31) were college graduates and 3% (n =3) were high school graduates. The work status included 96% (n=88) worked as the government

employee and this is because the sample was taken primarily from schools. The marital status included 73% (n=61) respondents were married, 17% (n=15) were single, 6% (n=5) were widow and 4% (n=4) were divorced.

The main findings have been divided into three main sections derived from the three research questions, which are; (1) the total prevalence and the significant difference between the types of child abuse and neglect in Brunei reported by the participants, (2) the influence of the life factors as described by the demographic information, marital status, education level and work status on the abuse and neglect, and (3) the correlation that exist between the parental neglects and peer violence with the various types of abuse reported by the participants. All the findings were documented as below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect Reported by the Participants.

A standardized adverse childhood experienced international questionnaire used in this research assessed ten categories with thirty types of abuse and neglect of traumatic childhood experiences. These included emotional childhood abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, growing up in a seriously dysfunctional household as evidenced by witnessing domestic violence, alcohol or other substance abuse in the home, mentally ill or suicidal household members, parental conflict (as indicated by separation or divorce, peer violence (being bullied and involved in fight), collective violence (beaten up by military/gang, forced to move out from house) and crime in the home (imprisoned household member). The analysis identified ten types of childhood abuse and neglect out of thirty experiences possible. A statistical analysis was performed to determine which of these experiences were significantly prevalent in a Bruneian sample.

A chi square test was performed to consider if the overall report of abuse and neglect was significant. The analysis revealed that the overall result of abuse was $\chi^2 (3) = 14.24$, $p < .00$, $n = 83$ and overall neglect was $\chi^2 (3) = 21.11$, $p < .000$, $n = 92$. Having determined an overall significance of abuse and neglect in a sample population, another chi square analysis was performed on individual types of abuse and neglect to determine which specific type were significantly prevalent. Table 1 lists the significant types of abuse and neglect revealed by the statistical analysis.

Once significance was determined of certain types of abuse and neglect that were present in a Bruneian sample, as supposed to types of abuse and neglect that are reported in other societies, actual numbers and percentages of the sample reporting these types of abuse and neglect became important.

Table 2 lists the prevalence of the ten categories of childhood experiences reported by study's participants. These included emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and marital discord. The total percentage of the prevalence on the emotional abuse is 91 % (n=80), physical abuse is 46% (n=41), sexual abuse 26% (n=23), physical and emotional neglect is 59% (n=52) and parental marital discord is 12% (n=11). The result of the prevalence was documented in Table 2.

The Influence of the Life Factors on the Abuse and Neglect

After looking at the prevalence of abuse and neglect, another analysis was performed to determine if there is an overall effect of participant's life factors on the thirty types of abuse and neglect experienced during the childhood. There were thirteen life factors based on the participant's personal demographics. A nonparametric analysis was performed to determine which life factors were related to study's participants experiencing various types of abuse and neglect. A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed and the analysis determined that there were six life factors were related to the types of abuse and neglect that significantly existed in a sample population. These relationships are document in the following tables.

Table 1

The Significant Existence of Types of Abuse and Neglects Experienced by the Participants

	N	x²	df	p
Household members being verbally abused	87	41.77	3	.000
Household members being beaten	90	21.00	3	.000
Household members being cut or hit	90	24.73	3	.000
Participant being verbally abused	88	21.74	3	.000
Participant being threatened	91	8.58	3	.035
Participant being beaten	88	10.00	3	.019
Parents did not understand the child's problems	90	24.26	3	.000
Parents ignored their children	92	21.11	3	.000
Participant was bullied	87	23.46	3	.000
Participant involved in fight	83	14.24	3	.003

Table 2

Participants Reported on the Prevalence of Several Types of Abuse and Neglect during Childhood

Types of abuse and neglect		%	n
Emotional abuse	Family verbally abused	39	34
	Participant verbally abused	31	27
	Participant threatened	21	19
Total		91	80
Physical abuse	Family being beaten	23	21
	Participant being beaten	23	20
Total		46	41
Sexually abuse	Participant was being fondled	11	11
	Participant was forced to touch	5	4
	Participant molested	6	5
	Participant molested with intercourse	5	4
Total		26	23
Parental neglect	Parents did not understand problems	7	6
	Parents ignored	5	5
	Parents neglected adequate nutrition	13	11
	Parents did not send to school	13	11
	Parents too drunk to take care	21	19
Total		59	52
Parental marital discord	Parental separation/divorce	7	6
	Caretaker's die	5	5
Total		12	11

Table 3

The Participants Overall Effect of Life Factors on the Parental Neglect and Peer Violence during Childhood

Incidence		Gender	Marital status	Age at marriage	Parents divorced
Parents did not understand problems	χ^2	5.61			
	df	1			
	p	.018			
Parents neglected adequate nutrition	χ^2	10.99			
	df	1			
	p	.001			
Parents too drunk to take care	χ^2	8.60			
	df	1			
	p	.003			
Parents did not send to school	χ^2		11.65		
	df		3		
	p		.009		
Participant was bullied	χ^2	10.09	7.86	23.27	6.67
	df	1	3	13	1
	p	.001	.049	.039	.010

Table continue

Participant involved in fight	χ^2	19.82	10.16	26.44	12.47
	<i>df</i>	1	3	14	1
	<i>p</i>	.000	.017	.023	.000

Table 4

The Participants Overall Effect of Life Factors on the Emotional Abuse during Childhood

Incidence		Gender	Marital status	Age first marriage	Age giving birth	Parents divorced	Caretaker die
Family verbally abused	χ^2	3.99				5.86	
	<i>df</i>	1				1	
	<i>p</i>	.046				.015	
Participant verbally abused	χ^2	8.99	10.58	24.68		8.11	5.45
	<i>df</i>	1	3	14		1	1
	<i>p</i>	.003	.014	.038		.004	.020
Participant threatened	χ^2	5.22	13.25	27.87	27.03	13.25	
	<i>df</i>	1	3	14	15	1	
	<i>p</i>	.022	.004	.015	.029	.001	

Table 3 documents the relationship between life factors and parental neglect or peer violence reported by participants. These factors included gender, marital status, and participant's age during their first marriage as well as whether the participant's parents were divorced. The result of this relationship was documented below.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed that the female participants were more likely to report that their parents did not understand their problems (mean difference=17), that their parents neglected adequate nutrition (mean difference=13), and that their parents were too drunk to take care of them (mean difference=12).

However, the gender also had significant difference on peer violence as evidenced by male participant being bullied with a mean rank of 59 (mean difference=18) and male participant involved in fight recorded with a mean rank of 6 (mean difference=23). This result indicates that the female participants were most likely had experienced the parental neglect more than the male participants, whereas the male participants exposed more to the emotional abuse and the peer violence compared to the female participants. The analysis also illustrates that single person was more likely to have not been send to school (mean difference=26), being bullied (mean difference=21) and involved in fight (mean difference=25). The result also shows that people who married at the early age is more likely

to have been bullied (mean difference=24) and involved in fight (mean difference=18). Whereas participant whom parents were divorced also reported that they have been bullied (mean difference=18) and involved in fight (mean difference=24).

Subsequently, Table 4 illustrates that six factors were significantly related to two emotional abuses. These factors included gender, marital status, and participant's age during their first marriage, participant's age when their first baby was born, if the participant's caretaker had died and whether the participant's parents were divorced. The one form of emotional abuse that was least effective was observing the family member being verbally abused. However, when the participant had been verbally abused or threatened, five of the six factors were directly related to have an experience on the said abuse. The result of this relationship was documented in Table 4.

The analysis also revealed that the male participants witnessed household members being verbally abused (mean difference=13), being verbally abused (mean difference=18) and being threatened (mean difference=12). Those who divorced were most likely to have been verbally abused (mean difference=29) and have been threatened (mean difference=27), the same goes to a person who married at a younger age were also reported to most likely experienced the verbal abuse (mean age=19 years) and being threatened (mean age=24 years). Participants who parents were divorced showed great significant difference on being threatened (mean difference=25) and witnessed their family members being verbally abused (mean difference=19). The participants who reported that their caretaker's had died showed significant difference on being verbally abused (mean difference=10). This result indicates that the participants without parents or caretaker were more likely to have been threatened and verbally abused compared to those who still had parents. Table 5 and 6 document the overall effect of four factors related to physical abuse reported by the participants. These factors included gender, age, marital status and whom their parents were divorced. The most reported physical abuse was on witnessing the family members being beaten. The result of this relationship is illustrated in the Table 5.

From the Table 6, age was only significant with beatings within family members. This result revealed beatings within family members were most likely reported by the participants above 30 years of age. On the other hand, the most significant results were reported by the participants whom their parents were divorced. The participants reported

having experienced all the physical abuse stated. These included witnessing family members beaten (mean difference=23), witnessing family members cut or hit (mean difference=23), the participants being beaten (mean difference=19) and the participants being cut or hit (mean difference=20). Second most significant result was gender. The male participants reported that they were more likely to witness family members being beaten (mean difference=18), family members cut or hit (mean difference=14), participant being beaten (mean difference=17) and participant being cut or hit (mean difference=19). The result clearly said that the male participants were most likely to have been physically abused compared to the female participants. The least but still statistically significant was those who were single reported that they were more likely to witness their family members got beaten (mean difference=25), being beaten (mean difference=27) and being cut or hit (mean difference=21). The last table, table 4 illustrates that three factors were significantly related to sexual abuse. The factors included participant's age during first marriage, age when first baby was born and whom parents were divorced. The result of this relationship was documented as below.

The participants who married at younger age were more likely to have been molested (mean age 27 years) and being molested with intercourse (mean age 26 years). The minimum age was 19 years. This also related to the next analysis; participants who give birth at the young age were those who were most likely to have been molested (mean age 27 years). The participants whom their parents were divorced were most likely to have been fondled (mean difference=8), being forced to touch the molester (mean difference=3), being molested (mean difference=8) and being molested with intercourse (mean difference=2).

The Correlations between Parental Neglects and Peer Violence with Abuse

After determining the significant results from the previous test, another test was performed to see if there is any relationship between the parental neglect and peer violence with the types of abuse. As mentioned earlier, there are thirty types of abuse and neglect. The parental neglect included parents did not understand their child's problems and worries, parent's neglect, parents neglected adequate nutrition, the parents are too drunk to take care of their children and the parents did not send their children to school. The peer violence included being bullied and involved in fight. A study that was replicated in this research discovered correlations between neglect, as well as peer violence and types of abuse

experiences. Thus, a Spearman's rho was performed to determine if the same correlations exist in Bruneian sample. Table 7 documents the correlations between the five parental neglect and the two types of peer violence experiences by Bruneian study participants, and relevant with types of abuse experienced by the participants. Significant correlations are reported, and the result was documented in Table 7.

Table 5

The Participants Overall Effect of Life Factors on the Physical Abuse during Childhood

Incidence		Gender	Age	Marital status	Divorced parents
Family was beaten	χ^2	9.23	45.39	9.71	10.19
	<i>df</i>	1	31	3	1
	<i>p</i>	.002	.046	.021	.001
Family was cut or hit	χ^2	7.76			14.51
	<i>df</i>	1			1
	<i>p</i>	.005			.000
Participant was beaten	χ^2	9.06		11.70	8.87
	<i>df</i>	1		3	1
	<i>p</i>	.003		.008	.003
Participant was cut or hit	χ^2	12.03		10.33	8.74
	<i>df</i>	1		3	1
	<i>p</i>	.001		.016	.003

Table 6

The Participants Overall Effect of Life Factors on the Sexual Abuse during Childhood

Incidence of sexual abuse		Age first marriage	Age giving birth	Divorced parents
Participant was fondled	χ^2			7.73
	<i>df</i>			1
	<i>p</i>			.005
Participant was forced to touch	χ^2			8.37
	<i>df</i>			1
	<i>p</i>			.004
Participant molested	χ^2	25.94	25.81	6.50
	<i>df</i>	14	15	1
	<i>p</i>	.026	.040	.011
Participant molested with intercourse	χ^2	50.00		
	<i>df</i>	14		
	<i>p</i>	.000		

Table 7

The Correlations Between Parental Neglect and Peer Violence with the Types of Abuse during Childhood Reported by Participants

Types of abuse	Parental neglects				Peer violence		
	Did not understand	Neglect	Under nutrition	Too drunk	Not send to school	Bullied	Fight
1. Family was verbally abused		.221*	.472**	.608**	.464*		
2. Family was beaten	.299**		.540**	.720**	.422*		
3. Family was cut or hit	.365*		.497**	.731**	.488*		
4. Being verbally abused	.338**	.389**	.489**	.548**	.525**	.780**	.673**
5. Being threatened	.396**		.467**	.671**	.502**	.655**	.619**
6. Being beaten	.356**		.491**	.691**	.436*		
7. Being cut or hit	.360**		.424*	.594**	.462*		
8. Being fondled			.575*	.571**	.434*	.327*	.360**
9. Being forced to touch			.538*	.425**	.409*		
10. Being molested			.331**	.425**	.540*	.438*	.413*
11. Molested with intercourse		.304**		.606**		.395*	.414*

Note. ** Correlation is significant below 0.00 * Correlation is significant at the 0.01

The most consistently strong correlations were between abuse of alcohol, intoxications, and several types of abuse. The strongest correlations were between parents being drunk and family members being cut or hit with a followed by being beatings. The second strongest and still statistically strong were threats, general verbal abuse of family members and severe sexual intercourse of children by parents. The third most consistently strong correlations with experienced abuse were related not to family patterns of neglect, but rather to experiences of violence outside the home within peer groups. These included participants reported being verbally abused and being threatened.

The study involved 112 educators from two educational sites, achieving a 100% response rate. However, 19 participants were excluded due to excessive missing data, resulting in a final sample of 93 respondents. The gender distribution showed a significant

majority of female participants (83%), with ages ranging from 22 to 57 years (mean age 38). Ethnic representation was predominantly Malay (90%), with smaller percentages of Chinese (3%), Iban (1%), and unstated ethnicity (5%). Educationally, the majority held postgraduate degrees (62%), followed by college graduates (35%) and a small percentage of high school graduates (3%). Most participants (96%) were government employees, reflecting the sampling focus on schools. The marital status distribution was mostly married (73%), with the remainder being single (17%), widowed (6%), or divorced (4%).

In this study, the researcher aimed to document the prevalence of abuse and neglect present in the life histories among the selected educators in Brunei Darussalam. Among the sample populations, 91% reported experiencing emotional abuse, 46% experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse is 20%, physical and parental neglect is 59% and parental marital discord (as evidenced by separation and caretakers die) is 12% which shows that they had been experiencing at least one or more ACEs, aligning with previous research where respondents reported experiencing 4 or more ACEs (Merrick et al., 2018). Similarly, research conducted by Rancher & Moreland (2023) also stated that 70% of teachers reported experiencing at least one ACE, with 20% reporting they had experienced 4 or more different types of ACEs. These rates underscore the widespread nature of these issues within the sampled population, suggesting that childhood adversity is a critical concern even among well-educated and professionally employed individuals. The findings from the sample populations in this study demonstrate that adults from both educational sites enter adulthood with serious adversity in their pasts. This unveiled dramatic fact. The discovery that educators had such a high prevalence of abuse and neglect in their histories increased curiosity of what type of data would be obtained if this study was replicated among those who are not well-educated. In view of Brunei Darussalam's Vision 2035, Brunei has its own wish to develop well-educated and highly skilled people with the quality of life as mentioned by Kifle and Low (2009). Ensuring that educators themselves are mentally and emotionally healthy is vital for achieving these national development goals. Therefore, this matter shouldn't be address lightly when the educators are involved. To be able to achieve this vision, it is vital to have healthy and high-quality educators.

The analysis also revealed that most peer violence associates with participants being verbally abused and being threatened. Logically, people who are vulnerable will become a

victim of a bully, while those who are courageous will end up in a fight if they were being verbally abused or end up bullying others in return. This result correlated with a recent study in Britain by Fraga and other associates (Fraga et al., 2022); they discovered that those who were bullied tended to bully others as they grow up, rendering them both victims and bullies at the same time.

Subsequently, the results also revealed that the violence at home was more likely to happen when the parents were divorced. This result associated with the study on Vietnam by Tran et al. (2021); they found out that single parenthood was associated with most types of child maltreatment including sexual abuse, witnessing parental conflict, neglect, and multiple types of child maltreatment.

In addition, participants who were neglected also became victims of sexual abuse. in line with previous studies which stated that physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, and other victimizations were all strongly associated with sexual victimization (Ward et al., 2018). Alcoholic parents tend to abuse their children verbally, physically, and sexually. In the findings, the most consistently strong correlations were between abuse of alcohol, intoxications and several types of abuse including sexual intercourse reported by the participants. Rubio et al. (2023) confirmed in their recent study that findings have indicated that parental alcohol abuse is associated with the physical or sexual abuse of children, where sexual abuse was the type of childhood maltreatment that is most closely associated with alcohol consumption. For the fact that alcohol abuse is associated with other types of abuse is very appalling for the country with Islamic image. This suggests that substance abuse prevention programs could play a critical role in mitigating childhood abuse. Comprehensive family support programs that address parental substance abuse and provide resources for at-risk families could help break the cycle of abuse.

The study highlights the high prevalence of childhood adversity among Brunei educators, emphasizing the need for comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. Future research should expand the sample size, explore longitudinal outcomes, and incorporate contextual factors.

Several limitations of this research need to be addressed. First, the samples are limited. The research is only focussed on the educators from two educational sites with good

education background, thus it cannot be use as a representative data to represent the Bruneian as a whole.

Other limitation is a possibility of bias due to hard time in recalling the past events. This could affect the accuracy of the reported prevalence of abuse, Furthermore, the direction of causality cannot be established while correlations between various types of abuse and neglect are identified. Lastly, the fact that most of the participants were Muslims raises issues regarding the findings' application to other religious or cultural contexts. The findings on alcohol abuse and its relationship to other types of misuse may be influenced by cultural stigmas connected with alcohol consumption in Islamic communities.

CONCLUSION

This research presents the magnitude and character of adverse childhood experiences and associations between those experiences, socio-demographic factors, socio-economic characteristics, and life factors among adult population (educators) from two educational sites in Brunei. The findings conclude that emotional abuse recorded the highest prevalence reported by the adult population in Brunei, followed by physical and parental neglect and physical abuse. The lowest prevalence of abuse reported by the participants was on the sexual abuse.

Statistically, adults who reported any single form of adverse childhood experience were likely to have suffered several other adverse experiences during childhood. Thus, control for exposure to other abuse or neglect is advisable for researchers to study the independent consequence of exposure to a specific abuse or neglect experience or those who wish to assess the cumulative impact of various childhood experience. Such co-occurrence is significant to consider when identifying and treating children who have been exposed to any abuse.

Similarly, those who were recognized as having been exposed to abuse, neglect, bullied, fight or household dysfunction should also be screened for other types of maltreatment. Thus, it is significant for Brunei to address this issue and to conduct the further studies to get more information. By doing further research, Brunei could provide support for better psychological and welfare and helps to conduct the medical diagnoses and treatment of potential victims.

This research also has both theoretical and practical contributions on guidance and counseling in schools. In terms of theoretical contributions, the study provides a detailed explanation of the prevalence and varieties of ACEs, with emotional abuse being the most common form, allowing future researchers to focus on specific types of abuse. The findings also highlight the significant simultaneous incidence of many types of ACEs. This emphasizes the need of investigating the consequences of multiple ACEs simultaneously rather than focusing on one type of abuse in isolation.

This theoretical understanding has the potential to influence future research in developing inclusive models that consider the interconnection of early traumas. Subsequently, the study supports long-term effects of ACEs, emphasizing the persistent influence of childhood trauma and neglect into adulthood as well as the connection between psychological and socioeconomic repercussions. Besides, this study explores the relationship between ACEs, socio-demographic and socioeconomic factors, and childhood trauma, thereby contributing to understanding the social determinants of health and well-being.

In terms of practical contributions, this study underscores the need for comprehensive school screening measures, requiring counselors to identify and address all forms of abuse, including co-occurring adversities. In addition, the understanding on the individuals who have experienced one type of abuse are more likely to have experienced another can aid in developing targeted therapeutic programs that address the cumulative impact of multiple adversities. The high prevalence of ACEs among educators also necessitates training programs to equip them on dealing with their personal trauma and successfully serve students experiencing similar challenges.

The findings also emphasize the importance of strategies in addressing childhood adversity, urging schools to advocate for mental health resources, preventive measures, psychological and welfare support for students along the needs on the further research on ACEs in Brunei, involving schools and researchers in longitudinal studies and extensive surveys, to enhance understanding of ACEs and their impacts, aiding in the refinement of counseling practices and interventions. Moreover, this study shows the importance of collaboration among schools, families, and the community as well as their engagement in addressing childhood adversities in accordance with literature review which shows positive

factors at individual, family, and community levels, such as high family functioning and parental engagement, are linked to favorable outcomes for children and adolescents exposed to ACEs. Schools can develop programs that involve all the stakeholders in creating supportive environments for students both at home and in school.

The research on ACEs among Brunei educators offers valuable theoretical and practical insights for schools, enabling the development of effective strategies to identify, understand, and address the interrelated nature of childhood adversities, thereby fostering a safer and more supportive environment for students.

As a conclusion, the findings of the study were discussed in relation to the study objectives and the research question. Many of the adverse events correlated with the child abuse and household dysfunction go unobserved during childhood. Yet, the lingering effects contribute to the use of support services well into adulthood. This has been noted in previous research and is verified here.

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