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Precis: The Effects of Traumatic and Abusive Relationships

Topic. The journal article, “The Effects of Traumatic and Abusive Relationships” (2009), analyzes data on reported types of abusive relationships and the resulting emotional, physiological and cognitive effects of these traumatic experiences.

Methods. Tricia Orzeck, Ami Rokach, and Jacqueline Chin collected data, using an open-ended response method, from 101 participants (*42 males, 59 females*) who had reported experiencing an abusive and traumatic relationship. The researchers define six main categories of *Relational Abuse*, including physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and infidelity. The researcher’s examination of the data establishes four themes categorizing the effects of the abusive relationship: internal turmoil (*emotional distress*), interpersonal affect (*effects on future relationships*), dysfunctional coping (*negative internal/external coping methods*), and empowerment (*positive developments resulting from abuse*).

Results. An analysis of the results concludes that participants suffered from a “wide array of stressful psychological reactions such as concentration difficulties, stress, sleep disturbances, and anxiety” (Orzeck et al., 2009). The researchers find that self-harm behaviors and substance use were frequent methods of coping. The researchers note various negative relational changes resulting from abusive relationships. In particular, participants who reported sexual abuse experienced difficulties with isolation and social withdrawal. A significant effect of abuse, across

all subtypes, was the impact on an individual's perceptions of the world as "a safe and benevolent place" (Orzeck et al., 2009). Lastly, the authors analyze the theme of *empowerment* and conclude that six percent of participants (4 out of 69; 3 female and 1 male) believed their abusive relationship led to significant personal growth and was "an experience to learn from and to become a stronger person" (Orzeck et al., 2009). All types of abuse were present in the *empowerment* theme aside for individuals who had experienced sexual abuse and infidelity.

Conclusion. The topic study concludes that several domains were found to be significantly impacted by traumatic and abusive relationships: relational, affective, somatic, behavioral and self-attributional. The researchers also conclude that specific categories related to the effects of abuse were more salient for men and women. Specifically, the authors find that men were more likely to use drugs as a method of coping while women were more likely to engage in self-harm behaviors. The study also concludes that women were more likely to suffer from internal turmoil and relational changes as a result of the abusive relationship than men.

Analysis. The researchers effectively explain the purpose, methods, results, and conclusions of their research study. The journal identifies and explains all features of the research and provides clear definitions for thematic variables. The study successfully demonstrates validity and generalizability by including a mixed-gender sample (42 males, 59 females), using an open-ended questionnaire to collect qualitative responses, and applying a mixed-method approach for content analysis.

Reference

Orzeck, T. L., Rokach, A., & Chin, J. (2010). The effects of traumatic and abusive relationships. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 15*(3), 167–192. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1080/15325020903375792>