

Qualitative Inquiry for Understanding Factors Associated to Intergenerational Transmission of Child Maltreatment

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Abstract : People who have experienced maltreatment in childhood subsequently face many parenting issues of their own, in particular when it comes to distancing themselves from the abusive behaviors they were exposed and had access to positive role models. Few studies have explored the factors explaining the ability to break the generational cycle of child maltreatment. However, deeper knowledge of the factors associated with intergenerational discontinuity could facilitate the development of innovative interventions and increase the preventive potential of existing programs. This poster presentation will be about a better understanding of the intergenerational transmission of maltreatment (IGTM) from the perspective of both youth protection workers and parents receiving child protection services. The data used to meet this goal were collected from a group interview with eight youth protection workers whose caseloads involved IGTM situations and through semi-structured interviews with four parents with a history of child protection services and who were currently receiving such services for at least one of their children. In the view of the youth protection workers, the IGTM refers to everything that is transmitted and not transmitted from one generation to the next within a family. The study participants painted quite a bleak portrait of the families affected by IGTM. However, three main avenues of intervention were mentioned by the participants: working within the network, favoring long-term interventions and being empathic. The results also show that the mothers were in a trajectory of intergenerational discontinuity in child maltreatment. Support from their families and friends as well as from formal support services brought out some possible explanatory factors for intergenerational discontinuity in child maltreatment. From a prevention perspective, developing meaningful and trusting relationships seems a source of resilience for parents who were placed in the care of the child protection system as children. The small number of participants limits the generalizability of these results. The difficulty of recruiting parents is a substantial challenge regarding gaining knowledge on the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment. Future studies should examine this question and seek to develop effective strategies to help recruit study participants.

Keywords : child maltreatment, intergenerational transmission, prevention, qualitative data

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