



CHILDHOOD MALTREATMENT AND TRAUMA: CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

Childhood abuse and trauma can cumulatively become interpersonal stress in adulthood. Trauma that often occurs includes emotional abuse, physical violence, and other trauma. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a critical assessment to determine the research method used in a study so that the results obtained are reliable. The research article conducted by Malcom in 2017 entitled Childhood maltreatment and trauma are common and serious in body dysmorphic disorder. This critical appraisal needs to be done to assess the research conducted using the correct method and the results are reliable. The method used is the Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies from JBI (Joanna Briggs Institute) which consists of 8 question items, namely (1) inclusion criteria in the sample (2) Population description and demographic data (3) Risk factors and interventions (4) Valid measuring instruments (5) Confounding factors (6) Factors that influence variables (7) Measurement results (8) Statistical analysis. The results of the critical appraisal conducted in the article mention that it has many advantages such as the use of validated measuring instruments and appropriate statistical analysis, but there are inputs that can be used as considerations for further research, namely the control of confounding factors and limitations in the cross-sectional study design which only shows associative relationships.

Keywords: childhood; critical appraisal; maltreatment; trauma

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals who experience childhood maltreatment, especially emotional, sexual and emotional neglect, will have a psychological impact on development (Fuchs et al., 2021). Traumatic childhood experiences will be associated with impaired personality function (Bertsch et al., 2024). Physiologically, childhood trauma can trigger a chronic stress response in the body, resulting in an increase in stress hormones such as the hormone cortisol. These hormones can interfere with emotional regulation, maladaptive coping mechanisms (Lawrence et al., 2017). It is very important to discuss childhood trauma that will have an impact on mental development and physical disorders in individuals (Cheng et al., 2023). One of the studies related to childhood trauma conducted by (Malcolm et al., 2021) entitled Childhood maltreatment and trauma are common and severe in body dysmorphic disorder. This is the largest study comparing childhood maltreatment experiences between individuals with BDD and healthy people.

The article explains that childhood trauma events are a known risk factor that is quite influential in psychopathology. Especially if the trauma occurs simultaneously, it increases the risk for someone to experience mental disorders (Alhowaymel et al., 2023). It is also explained that childhood trauma is an important risk factor in the development of body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), a mental disorder where someone is too obsessed and disturbed by physical deficiencies that do not actually exist or are insignificant. The results of the study stated that there was a significant correlation between the severity of maltreatment (both

overall and its subdimensions) with the severity of clinical characteristics in the BDD group and the healthy control group. These findings support the hypothesis that childhood maltreatment, especially emotional abuse and emotional and physical neglect, is more common in people with BDD than in mentally healthy people. It shows that people with BDD are more likely to grow up in a risky family environment in childhood, characterized by aggression, conflict, lack of affection, and cold, unsupportive, and neglectful relationships, supported by research (Rahmalia & Laeli, 2020). Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood, which is full of physical, psychological and social changes. These changes often cause emotional stress and inappropriate behavior (Nurjan et al., 2019; Palupi & Tjahjono, 2016). The study was very useful as a reference, therefore it is very important to conduct a critical appraisal to assess the quality of an article. Research that is right in its methodology will provide accurate results and can be used as a reference for further research. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a critical appraisal using the Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies from (Joanna Briggs Institute) JBI (Moola et al., 2020).

METHOD

This article is a Critical Appraisal adopted from JBI (2006). The title of the article is Childhood maltreatment and trauma is common and severe in body dysmorphic disorder conducted by Malcolm, A (2021). Using 8 components that are criticized, including (1) inclusion criteria in the sample (2) Population description and demographic data (3) Risk factors and interventions (4) Valid measuring instruments (5) Confounding factors (6) Factors that influence variables (7) Measurement results (8) Statistical analysis.

RESULT

Table 1.

Critical Appraisal Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies from the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) article title "Childhood maltreatment and trauma are common and severe in body dysmorphic disorder"

Question Items	Explanation In Article
Are the inclusion criteria for participants clearly explained?	Based on the method in the article, the inclusion criteria can be identified. The participant group with BDD (Body Dysmorphic Disorder) was confirmed using the DSM (Pereira et al., 2023) the average age of respondents was 31 years, obtained from public advertisements and BDD-specific clinics. The participants were undergoing treatment. The healthy control group did not have a mental disorder based on the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) and did not report significant mental health problems in the past. All participants were over 18 years old, spoke English and did not have intellectual disabilities as evidenced by a score of > 70 on the Wechsler Test of Adult Reading). Participants also had no history of neurological disorders.
Is the description of the sample population detailed enough to understand who was involved in the study?	The population in this article appears appropriate for research on the relationship between childhood maltreatment and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants with a diagnosis of Body Dysmorphic Disorder consisted of 52. Validated using the DSM, this population represents a relevant target group of the study, namely those with BDD. BDD participants also included a variety of groups both undergoing treatment and not, thus reflecting variation in the severity of BDD. Healthy control group consisted of 57 participants with no history of mental disorders. Demographically, it is important to match age and gender, this is important to reduce bias and ensure group differences. Suitable for psychopathology research, focusing on experiences of maltreatment and childhood trauma which are important risk factors for the development of BDD. The population consisting of individuals with BDD compared to healthy controls allows researchers to investigate the extent to which childhood maltreatment contributes to BDD specifically. The coverage of a diverse range of participants is sourced from public

advertisements and clinics with BDD patients. These variations may include individuals who are more common to the BDD population.

<p>Are the measurement methods appropriate and standard?</p>	<p>The measuring instrument used in the article is in accordance with the research objective, namely to evaluate the relationship between childhood maltreatment (violence) and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) is a questionnaire that assesses the prevalence and severity of childhood maltreatment in five categories: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect (Jiang et al., 2018). b. Traumatic Events Checklist This checklist consists of nine items that assess other traumatic experiences, such as natural disasters, serious accidents, or life-threatening illnesses. There is also an option to write down other traumatic experiences (Veronese et al., 2024). This instrument helps complement the CTQ by identifying broader types of traumas, such as interpersonal loss or domestic violence, that may not be covered by the CTQ. This provides a more complete picture of participants' traumatic experiences in childhood, which is relevant for research on the impact of trauma on BDD. c. BDD-YBOCS (Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale Modified for BDD) This instrument was used to measure the severity of BDD symptoms in participants. It is a modified version of a scale commonly used for obsessive-compulsive disorder, which focuses on obsessions related to body appearance. This instrument is specific and appropriate for measuring BDD symptoms, making it very appropriate to use in this study. This article requires an objective measure of BDD symptom severity, and this tool provides a structured and reliable assessment (Katharine A. Phillips, M.D., Eric Hollander, 1997). d. DASS (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) This instrument was used to measure participants' levels of depression, anxiety, and stress in the past week. BDD is often associated with mood and anxiety disorders, the DASS is relevant for assessing psychological conditions that accompany BDD (Australia, 2024). e. MINI (Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview) This instrument is used to assess whether or not participants have a diagnosis of a mental disorder. This tool was applied to a control group to ensure they had no history of mental disorders.
<p>Is the measuring instrument validated?</p>	<p>The subjects in this study were assessed subjectively using valid and validated measuring instruments.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) a well-validated and frequently used research instrument to measure childhood maltreatment experiences. This instrument uses a Likert scale that provides quantitative answers based on the frequency of maltreatment experiences, allowing for a structured and objective assessment. b. Traumatic Events Checklist This instrument relies more on subjective reporting from participants, each response is taken as is and analyzed systematically. This allows for a more objective assessment of the participant's overall trauma experience. c. BDD-YBOCS (Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale Modified for BDD) This tool is a validated and widely used instrument to measure the severity of BDD symptoms. The assessment is done quantitatively based on the severity and frequency of reported symptoms, which provides an objective basis for assessing the degree of disorder. d. DASS (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) Measures the level of depression, anxiety, and stress in the past week through a 42-item Likert-based questionnaire. This allows for a quantitative evaluation of the mood symptoms experienced by the subject, thus producing objective results in relation to the psychological condition of the participant. e. MINI (Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview) a highly standardized structured diagnostic interview designed to evaluate a

	variety of mental disorders according to DSM-IV or DSM-5 criteria. MINI provides an objective basis for assessing the presence or absence of mental disorders in participants (Sheehan et al., 1998).
Did the researchers use methods to deal with confounders?	In this study, researchers controlled for confounding factors or factors that influence variables. The use of a healthy control group using the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) measurement tool, this ensures that comparisons between participants with BDD and healthy controls can be done more objectively, so that the differences that emerge are most likely related to BDD and trauma experiences, not other unmeasured psychological factors.
Does the researcher control the factors that influence the variables?	Identifying Confounding Factors such as childhood maltreatment experiences (emotional abuse, physical abuse, physical neglect, etc.), measured with validated tools such as the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ). This helps researchers to precisely measure the type and severity of maltreatment, which is important in examining the relationship between childhood trauma and BDD symptoms. However, not all factors are controlled for, including socioeconomic status or other life experiences not directly related to childhood trauma.
How are the measurement results of the research?	Demonstrated a significant association between childhood maltreatment and severity of Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) symptoms, with participants with BDD reporting higher levels of maltreatment compared to healthy controls. The most common types of maltreatment were emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect. Correlation between maltreatment and BDD symptoms There was a positive correlation between severity of maltreatment and severity of BDD symptoms. The more severe the maltreatment experienced, the more severe the BDD symptoms reported, including anxiety symptoms and suicidal ideation. This suggests that childhood trauma may be an important risk factor in the development and severity of BDD
Is the statistical analysis used appropriate?	The statistical analysis test in the article is in accordance with the research objectives and types of data used, namely by using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Descriptive Statistics Used to provide a summary of the characteristics of the study population, such as age distribution, gender, and duration of illness. The use of descriptive statistics is appropriate to introduce and describe the study population. b. Chi-square test Used to compare the prevalence of maltreatment experiences between the BDD group and the control group, as well as to see differences in the prevalence of reported types of trauma, in this context it is appropriate, because the data being compared is categorical (Lugo-Armenta & Pino-Fan, 2024). c. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Used to compare the mean values of maltreatment scores (CTQ) and BDD symptom severity between the BDD and control groups. The test is appropriate for comparing differences in mean values between groups, such as in terms of maltreatment severity (Ostertagová & Ostertag, 2013). d. Pearson Bivariate Correlations Used to assess the relationship between maltreatment severity (CTQ) and clinical variables such as BDD symptom severity, anxiety, and depression. The test is appropriate for evaluating the relationship between two quantitatively measured variables, such as maltreatment scores and BDD symptoms (Credibility & Subject, n.d.). e. Effect Sizes Shows how big the difference or relationship is between variables, with effect sizes (Cohen's d and Phi (ϕ)). f. Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons in multiple analyses to reduce the risk of type I errors (false positives). This measure helps maintain the accuracy of the results and ensures that statistically significant results are truly meaningful (Napierala, M, 2012).

DISCUSSION

The results of the critical appraisal assessment carried out in the article, the process of obtaining respondents variedly, using the right criteria. In accordance with research conducted by (Knopf et al., 2007) that the selection of the right sample in the article is considered very important to overcome the challenges in measuring and monitoring the health status of different adolescent populations. By using data from a representative sample, the data produced can be used to formulate effective interventions. The instrument used is in accordance with the research variables, namely using the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) research conducted by (Chen et al., 2024) using the same instrument, namely assessing various types of childhood trauma, including physical violence, emotional violence, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. This questionnaire is used to assess the relationship between childhood trauma and the severity of psychopathology in schizophrenia patients. researchers can measure the level of trauma experienced by each participant and analyze how the trauma is related to symptoms of schizophrenia, including positive symptoms, such as delusions or hallucinations, as well as the level of oxytocin dysfunction associated with the trauma. So that the instrument is appropriate to be used in this article. Another instrument is the Traumatic Events Checklist to identify and assess traumatic experiences that a person has experienced throughout his life (Liu et al., 2024). Its function is to measure whether a person has experienced a traumatic event, such as an accident, natural disaster, physical violence, abuse, death of a loved one, or other terrible events that can affect a person's mental and emotional health (Yang et al., 2024).

The methodology used is in accordance with the objectives of the study, namely to determine the relationship between maltreatment and Childhood Trauma. The cross-sectional study design used in which researchers measure exposure and outcomes in research participants at the same time. In cross-sectional studies, participants are selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been set for the study. After participants are selected, researchers then assess exposure and outcomes (Setia, 2016). Based on this analysis, not only does it examine the prevalence of emotional, physical, and sexual trauma, but it also explores broader trauma, such as life-threatening illness and family violence. This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of childhood trauma experiences and their relationship to BDD disorders.

Critical appraisal is a systematic process to evaluate the quality, validity and relevance of a scientific article. The benefits of conducting critical appraisal in academic, clinical and research contexts. In the validity of the study, evaluating the quality of the research methodology including the study, data collection methods and analysis and ensuring that the research results are based on strong evidence, not weak assumptions or methods. The next benefit is to assess the relevance of the research to the research question or problem at hand, in addition to increasing understanding of the literature so as to provide insight into how research can contribute to a broader field of science. Critical appraisal helps find bias in the design, implementation or interpretation of research results, which consists of bias in selection, measurement and publication. The relevant research results can also be used as support for evidence-based decision making. Good research quality based on critical appraisal can be used as a reference for further research.

CONCLUSION

Childhood violence and trauma can have a negative impact on interpersonal distress in adulthood, with traumas such as emotional abuse and physical violence being common examples. This paper aims to conduct a critical assessment of the research methods used in these studies, to ensure that the results obtained are reliable. The article discussed uses the

Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies method from JBI, which assesses various aspects of the study such as inclusion criteria, population description, valid measurement instruments, and statistical analysis. The results of the critical assessment indicate that the study has many strengths, but there are also several inputs that can improve the quality of future research, such as controlling for confounding factors and the limitations of cross-sectional study designs that only show associative relationships.

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