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Bradford, Casey

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Casey Bradford

393097

M.A Community-Based Counselling Psychology

Exploring Psychotherapists' Perceptions of the Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Adult Intimate Relationships

Abstract

Psychotherapists are one group of professionals that deal with cases of childhood sexual abuse. This study explores a sample of psychotherapists' perceptions of various aspects of childhood sexual abuse, with particular reference to how they perceive this form of abuse to impact on adult intimate relationships. The data was collected by using semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic content analysis. Some of the main areas that were highlighted by the sample included the effects of childhood sexual abuse on all relationships and not just intimate relationships as well as how the victim-survivor relates to themselves and to the world. Although there is varied research regarding the impact of childhood sexual abuse, this study found that most of the participants perceived that CSA had a marked negative impact on the mental health of the victim-survivor and constrained their subsequent potential to form and sustain productive adult intimate relationships.