

Introduction

- Sexual dysfunction is influenced by a mix of biological, psychological, and social factors (1).
- Adverse childhood events (ACEs) are known to impact adult health, including sexual function (1,2).
- This study broadens the scope by including various forms of abuse and considers life adversities occurring both in childhood and adulthood, for both men and women.

Aim

Our aims are twofold:

- to ascertain the prevalence of various types of adverse events (sexual, physical, psychological, and emotional) experienced during childhood and adulthood within a population-based sample;
- to evaluate the association between these adversities and sexual dysfunction in men and women.

Methods and Materials

Study Design: Supplementary analysis of baseline data collected from the Coevorden observational cohort study. The main aim was to monitor the occurrence and progression of pelvic floor symptoms across two years.

Participants:



Measures:

- Sexual dysfunction** was evaluated among sexually active participants using the PISQ-IR questionnaire and one item from the Sexual Health questionnaire. Men additionally completed three items from the ICIQ-MLUTS sex regarding erectile and ejaculation issues. Sexual dysfunction was defined for men by problems with erection, ejaculation, or pain, and for women by orgasmic dysfunction, orgasmic problems, vaginismus, vaginal dryness, or pain during intercourse.
- Adverse childhood events:** evaluated using selected questions from the NEMESIS questionnaire, addressing emotional, psychological, physical, and sexual abuse before age 16. Responses were scored on a four-point scale (0 = never, 3 = often), producing a scale index from 0 to 12, where higher scores indicate more frequent adverse events. A score of 1 or more on any item indicated the presence of ACEs. Adverse experiences after age 16 were recorded using the same questions.

Statistical Analysis:

- We conducted multivariable logistic regression analyses using IBM SPSS version 28. The models were adjusted for age, BMI, depression, and smoking status.

Results

Sample Characteristics

- Out of 11,724 invited, 694 men and 997 women gave informed consent, with 385 men and 584 women included in the analysis.
- Distinct gender patterns emerged in the prevalence of childhood adversity, with men (4.2-14.3%) reporting lower rates than women (15.4-21.6%) across all categories (Figure 1). A similar pattern of higher prevalences in women compared to men was observed for adverse events in adulthood (Figure 2).
- When comparing childhood and adulthood, sexual and physical abuse are generally reported more frequently in childhood for both genders. Emotional abuse rates remain relatively constant.

Logistic Regression Analysis

- Men:** No significant associations with sexual dysfunction for childhood ($p = 0.058$) or adulthood adverse events ($p = 0.283$). Significant factors: depression, age, and BMI ($p < 0.001$).
- Women:** No significant associations for ACEs ($p = 0.513$) or adulthood events ($p = 0.765$) (Table 1).

Results

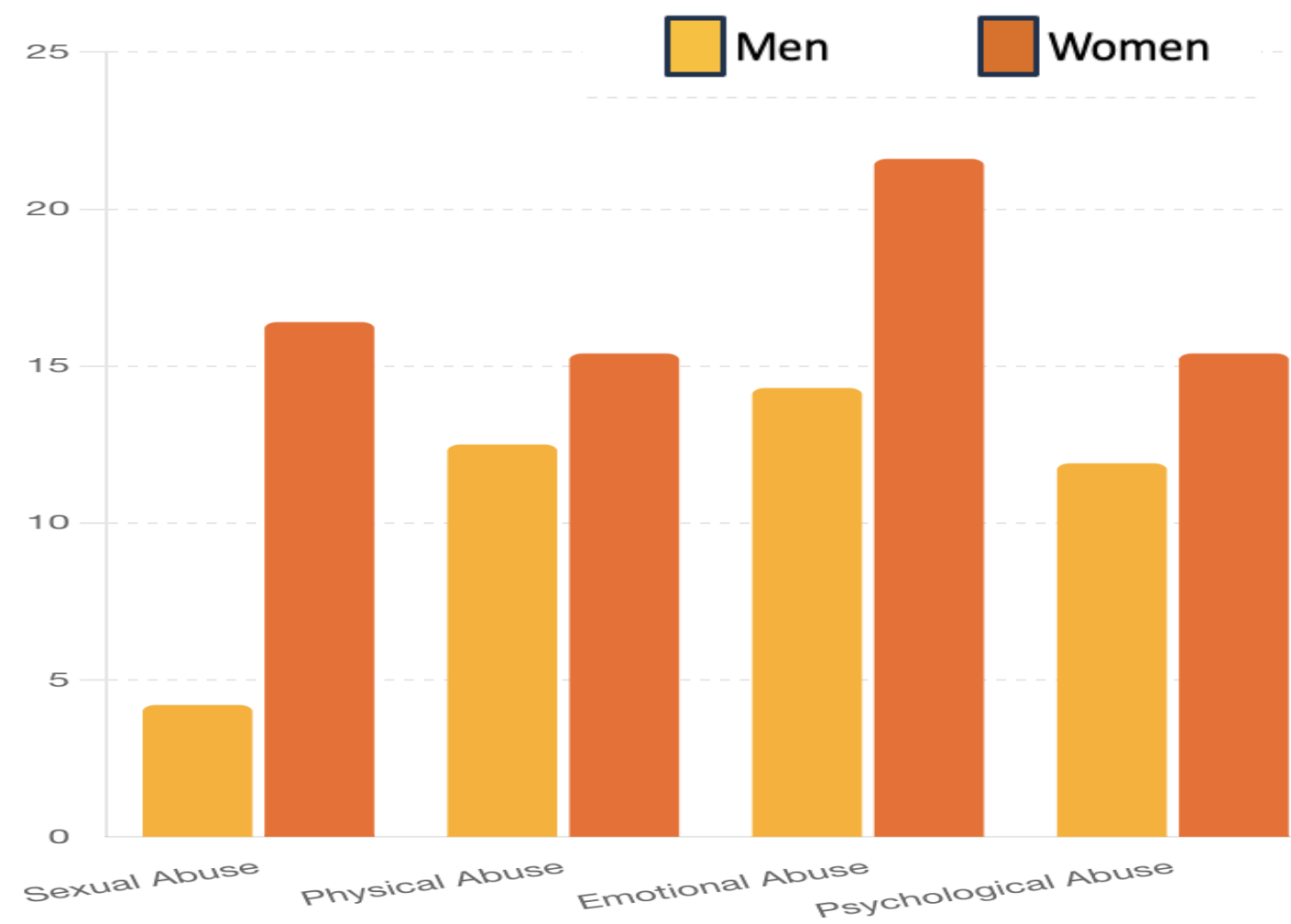


Figure 1. Prevalence of adverse childhood events by gender

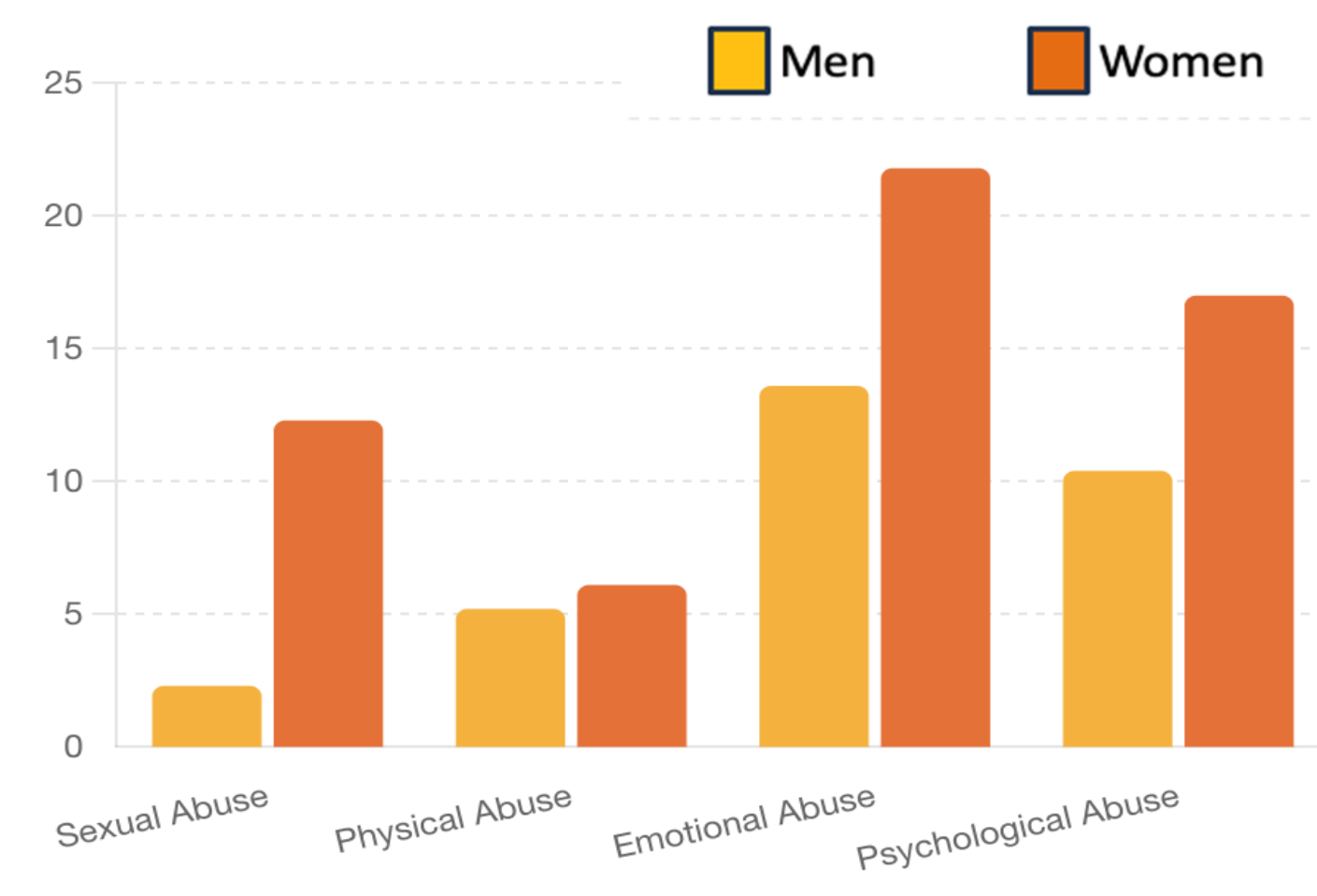


Figure 2. Prevalence of adverse events in adulthood by gender

Table 1. Multivariable logistic regression analysis

Variable	B	p-value	Exp(B)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Men					
ACEs	-0.132	0.058	0.876	0.765	1.004
Adulthood adverse events	-0.093	0.283	0.911	0.769	1.080
Women					
ACEs	0.028	0.513	1.029	0.945	1.120
Adulthood adverse events	0.014	0.765	1.014	0.923	1.115

Model adjusted for age, BMI, depression and smoking; ACEs, adverse childhood events.

Discussion

- Gender Disparities:** Higher prevalence of reported child and adulthood adverse events in women. Possible underreporting by men due to cultural norms.
- Targeted Interventions:** These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and support systems that address the specific needs of men and women. Preventive measures and support services should focus on the vulnerable groups, ensuring gender-sensitive approaches.
- Associations with Sexual Dysfunction:** No direct association with childhood/adulthood events when controlling for other factors. Depression, age, and BMI significant in men, but not in women.

Conclusions

- This study reveals higher rates of adverse childhood and adulthood events in women compared to men, possibly due to underreporting by men. While no direct link between these events and sexual dysfunction was found, depression, age, and BMI were significant factors for sexual dysfunction in men.

References

- Gewirtz-Meydan A. Sexual Dysfunction Among Childhood Sexual Abuse Survivors: The "Functional" Dysfunction? J Sex Marital Ther. 2022;48(7):694–705.
- Wang SJ, Chang JJ, Cao LL, Li YH, Yuan MY, Wang GF, et al. The Relationship Between Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Dysfunction in Adults: A Meta-Analysis. Trauma Violence Abuse. 2023 Oct 1;24(4):2772–88.