

## The effect of the permanence in day-centers on adolescents' affective and behavioral problems

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### Introduction

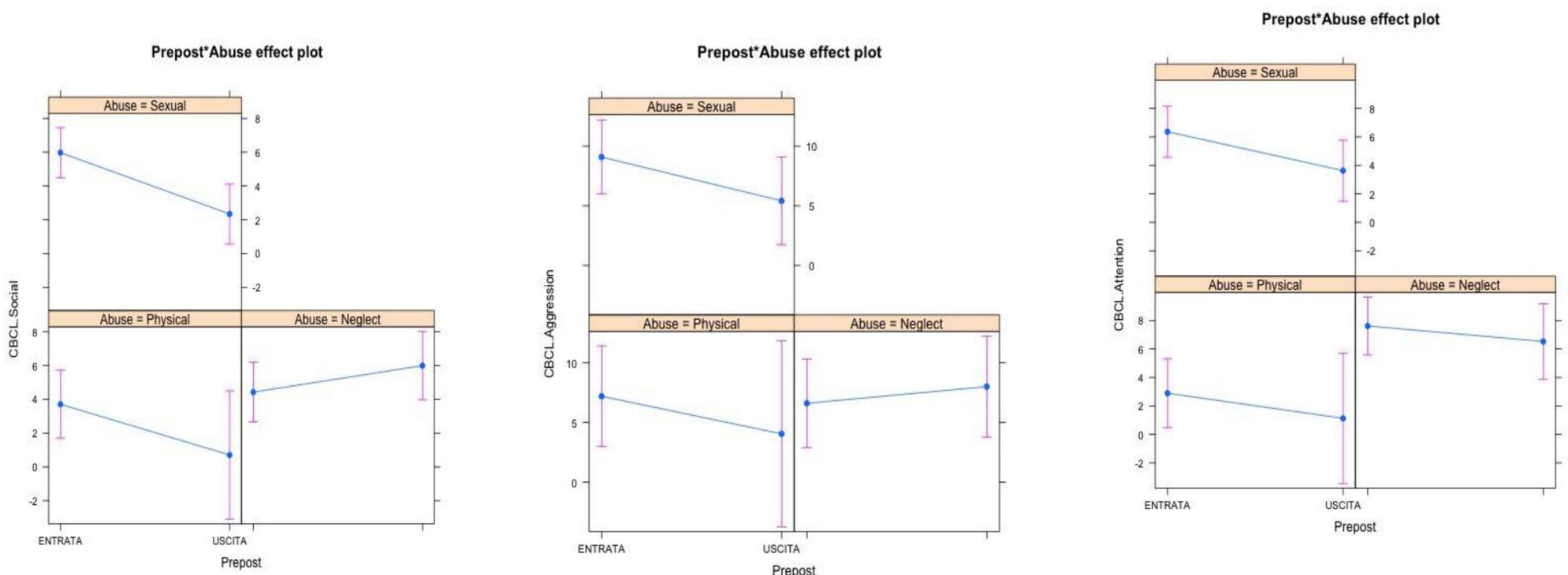
The treatment of child abuse and neglect is multifaceted and involves coordination of many different forces (e.g., medical, legal, child protection, mental health). While a great deal of treatment is delivered to abused and neglected children, there is a relative scarcity of published work that has evaluated the effectiveness of various treatment approaches (Finkelhor, D., Berliner, L., 1995). Cognitive-behavioral approaches have received the most scientific support (Cohen, J.A., et al. 1998; Saunders, B.E. et al., 2003). Attachment therapy is a diverse field, and the benefits and risks of many treatments remain scientifically underinvestigated. Both empirical and clinical findings suggest a few clear conclusions about treatment of child abuse and neglect. Furthermore, the research in the field of child maltreatment studies is relatively underdeveloped and it is influenced by a lack of funds as well as the methodological difficulties of research on topics with a complex etiology, above all in Italy. Therefore, no consensus has yet been attained on the most effective treatment in the field of abuse.

### Hypothesis

We hypothesized that the permanence in the centre had beneficial effects on the Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) outcomes under examination. Exploratory analyses were performed in order to understand whether these effects might occur in interaction with the typology of abuse. In other words, we aimed at ascertaining whether the permanence in the center could be more beneficial for some typologies of abuse rather than others.

### Methods

We focused our analyses on the following scales from the CBCL: Social problems, Attention problems, and Aggression behaviors, as they are the ones that appear as the most reliable in terms of inter-rater agreement and internal consistency. Furthermore, we collected measures demographic measures such as gender, age and socio-economic status. Importantly, we also coded for the type of abuse: physical, sexual or neglect.



### Results

Our results on a sample of 40 teenagers (22 F, mean age = 11.09, SD = 3.01) showed a significant interaction between type of abuse and the permanence in the day-center on attention, social and aggressive behaviors (Multilevel Models' Type III Wald chi-squares > 7.99  $P$ s < .05). Indeed, it appears that the permanence in the centre is selectively beneficial for the guests victims of sexual abuse and, limited to Attention problems, for the guests victims of neglect, as compared to guests victims of physical abuse (see Figure X).

**Conclusion:** this results will enhance the ability of child protection professionals to recognize a need for mental treatment and to establish appropriate treatment to cure of child victims of physical abuse. In generally, is very difficult to establish if the treatment should be abuse-focused, it should include an educational component or if it should address the child's relationship with other family members and the community or if it should be directed to both offending and non-offending caregivers as well as toward the child.

### References:

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- Saunders, B.E., Berliner, L., & Hanson, R.F. (Eds.). (2003). *Child physical and sexual abuse: Guidelines for treatment. (Final report: January 15, 2003)*. Charleston, SC: National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center.
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