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SUMMARY

Incest can be defined as, “The involvement of dependant children or adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles” (Kempe & Kempe, 1978, p.60). Incest may include a multitude of activities, such as fondling, masturbation, exposing genitalia, exposure to pornographic material, as well as intercourse (Gilmartin, 1994). In our sexist patriarchal society, sexual abuse of children and women has been, and still is, a dark secret (Bradshaw, 1995). A study done by Collings (1997) at the University of Natal revealed that over 50% of all second year students had reported some incidence of sexual abuse during their childhood and/or adolescent years. Statistics from the South African Police Force indicate an increase in the number of incest cases from 7559 in 1994 to 10037 in 1995 (Tucker, 2000). Lyell (1997) emphasised that the magnitude of the problem of sexual abuse is far greater than any professionals working in this field ever imagined. Over the past 24 years many studies have been published on the psychological impact of incest (Ensink, 1992). These effects include the disruption of normal development (Doyle, 1997), emotional problems (Newman & Peterson, 1996), social problems (Newman Lubell & Peterson, 1998) and physical problems (Tucker, 2000), to name a few.

The abovementioned statistics show that incest is of concern in the South African context. It is also of international relevance because as Boyles, De Noon and Key (1999) have noted sexual abuse is a worldwide problem.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the way adult female survivors of childhood incest cope. The epistemological framework of this study is that of the Modernistic approach. Quantitative methods of research were therefore used to collect and analyse the data.

The survivors’ ways of coping were assessed through responses to the “Ways of Coping” Questionnaire given by a multi-ethnic sample containing mainly white women. Relevant biographical details were obtained with the use of a constructed biographical questionnaire. The differences regarding the different ways of coping, as related to specific factors, such as duration of therapy, duration of abuse and so forth, were discussed. Possible implications of the results have also been mentioned in this thesis.

The information obtained provides a new perspective on incest, that of salutogenesis. Previous research has focused on the adverse effects that occur because of incest. There has not been a focus on the strengths of incest survivors, or the reason why

some survivors cope better than others. It was found that incest survivors develop constructive coping skills, such as positive reappraisal, seeking social support and planful problem solving, after a minimal time period of one year in therapy. It was also found that the duration of abuse affects the way an adult survivor copes with the incest. Particular ways of coping are correlated with others, for example planful problem solving is correlated with positive reappraisal. The information which has emerged from this study may be useful for therapists working with incest survivors. Having a broader understanding of survivors' ways of coping and some of the factors influencing these, may allow therapists to direct and teach ways of coping, and more specifically to facilitate and encourage more constructive ways of coping.

Key words: Childhood incest, adult survivors of child sexual abuse, salutogenesis, coping, strengths, ways of coping, quantitative research.



OPSOMMING

Bloedskande kan gedefinieer word as die “betrokkenheid van minderjarige kinders of adolessente in seksuele aktiwiteite wat hul nie ten volle begryp nie en waarvoor hulle nie in staat is om ingeligte toestemming te gee nie. Bloedskande verbreek die sosiale taboes van gesinsrolle” (Kempe & Kempe, 1978, p.60). Bloedskande kan verskillende aktiwiteite insluit, soos liefkosing, masturbasie, ontbloting van geslagsdele, blootstelling aan pornografiese materiaal en seksuele gemeenskap (Gilmartin, 1994).

Seksuele misbruik van kinders en vroue is steeds 'n donker geheim in 'n seksistiese, patriargale samelewing (Bradshaw, 1995). Collings (1997) se navorsing by die Universiteit van Natal het gedui daarop dat meer as 50% van alle tweede jaar studente tydens hul kinderjare of adolessensie van een of ander gebeurtenis van seksuele misbruik melding gemaak het. Statistiek van die Suid Afrikaanse Polisie dui op 'n toename in die aantal gevalle van bloedskande wat gerapporteer is. In 1994 was 7559 gevalle gerapporteer en in 1995 was daar 'n styging en 10 037 gevalle is gerapporteer (Tucker, 2000). Volgens Lyell (1997) is die omvang van seksuele misbruik veel groter as wat professionele persone, wat in die veld werksaam is, van bewus is. Verskeie studies wat die sielkundige gevolge van bloedskande aanspreek is oor die laaste 24 jaar gepubliseer (Ensink, 1992). Hierdie gevolge sluit onder andere die versteuring van normale ontwikkeling (Doyle, 1997); emosionele probleme (Newman Lubell & Peterson, 1998) en fisieke probleme (Tucker, 2000), in. Hierdie faktore dui daarop dat bloedskande internasionaal kommerwekkend is. Bloedskande is spesifiek kommerwekkend in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

Die doel van die studie is om die hanteringstyle van vroue wat bloedskande in hul kinderjare oorleef het, te ondersoek. Die epistemologiese raamwerk van die studie is modernisties. Kwantitatiewe navorsingmetodes is gebruik vir die insameling en analise van die data.

Die hanteringstyle van die vroue is gemeet deur die response wat hul gegee het op die vrae van “The Ways of Coping” vraelys. Die steekproef het uit 'n diverse groep vroue bestaan, waarvan die meeste blank was. Relevante biografiese inligting is verkry vanuit 'n biografiese vraelys wat deur die vroue voltooi is. Die verskillende hanteringstyle wat verkry is en wat met spesifieke faktore verband hou, soos die duur van terapie, die tydperk van misbruik, ensovoorts, was bespreek. Die moontlike implikasies van die bevindinge wat in die studie verkry is, is ook bespreek.

Dit is gevind dat individue wat bloedskande oorleef het na 'n minimale tydsperiode van een jaar in terapie konstruktiewe hanteringsvaardighede ontwikkel. Hierdie hanteringsvaardige sluit onder andere positiewe herbetraging, die soeke na sosiale ondersteuning en planmatige probleem-oplossing, in. Dit is ook gevind dat die tydperk van misbruik die wyse waarop individue bloedskande hanteer, beïnvloed. Sekere hanteringsvaardighede korreleer met mekaar, byvoorbeeld planmatige probleem-oplossing korreleer met positiewe herbetraging.

Die inligting wat deur die studie verkry is bied 'n ander perspektief op bloedskande, naamlik salutogenese. Vorige navorsingstudies het op die negatiewe gevolge van bloedskande gefokus. Daar was nie gefokus op die sterktes van individue wat bloedskande oorleef het nie of op die redes hoekom sommige oorlewendes van bloedskande dit beter hanteer as ander nie. Die inligting wat verkry is uit die studie kan van waarde wees vir die terapeut wat met oorlewendes van bloedskande werk. Deur 'n beter begrip van die hanteringstyle en van die faktore wat hierdie hanteringstyle beïnvloed te he, kan meebring dat terapeute bloedskande beter verstaan.

Sleutelbegrippe: kinderjare bloedskande, volwasse oorlewendes van seksuele misbruik, salutogenese, hantering, sterktes, hanteringstyle, kwantitatiewe navorsing.