



Generational Alcoholism; The association between parental alcoholism and their offspring's dependence on/abuse of alcohol

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Introduction

- Having a family history of alcohol abuse or dependence can greatly effect one's relationship with the substance in their adult life.
- There is a well established and well researched association between alcoholism in parents and adult children.
- Sources discovered differential impacts based on the gender of the alcoholic parent and the child.
- It has been concluded that familial alcoholism significantly affects drinking norms and behaviors in individuals

Research Questions

- How does a family history of alcoholism relate to alcohol dependence and abuse?
- Does this relationship differ when individuals had family history of maternal or paternal alcoholism?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=43093) were drawn from the The National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), a cross-sectional, nationally representative sample of the civilian non-institutionalized population of the United States aged 18 years or older.

Measures

- Two questions assessed participants' personal experience with alcohol abuse or dependence. One question focused on the past 12 months, while the other asked about experiences prior to the past 12 months. These variables were recoded to represent the presence or absence of abuse. For example, "abuselast12" was recoded to 0 for no abuse in the last 12 months and 1 for the presence of abuse.
- "Maternalabuse" and "paternalabuse" were recoded to 0 for no abuse and 1 for abuse.

Results

Bivariate

- Chi-Square analysis showed that an individual's history of alcohol abuse prior to the past 12 months and both maternal alcohol abuse and paternal alcohol abuse **are statistically significant**, with extremely small p-values of less than **2.2e-16**.
- **89.89%** of individuals who experienced prior alcohol abuse had mothers who also abused alcohol, while only **3.86%** of those who had not experienced prior alcohol abuse had mothers with a history of alcohol abuse.
- **69.31%** of individuals who experienced prior alcohol abuse had fathers who also abused alcohol. **16.20%** of those who had not experienced prior alcohol abuse had fathers with a history of alcohol abuse.

Multivariate

- Logistic regression showed that there is a **statistically significant** association between alcohol abuse/dependence prior to the past 12 months and maternal, paternal, and parental alcoholism.
- Those who's mothers abused alcohol had much **lower** rates of alcoholism (**odds ratio=0.304**). Those with father's who abused alcohol, similarly, had **lower** rates of alcoholism, but not as low as maternal rates (**odds ratio=0.386**).
- Another logistic regression showed (as demonstrated in *Figure 2*) an association between an individual's alcohol abuse and sex are **statistically significant** at each level of parental abuse (**p-value < 2e-16**). Further, female were shown to have lower overall rates of alcoholism across all levels of parental abuse (**odds ratio for females=0.2923**).

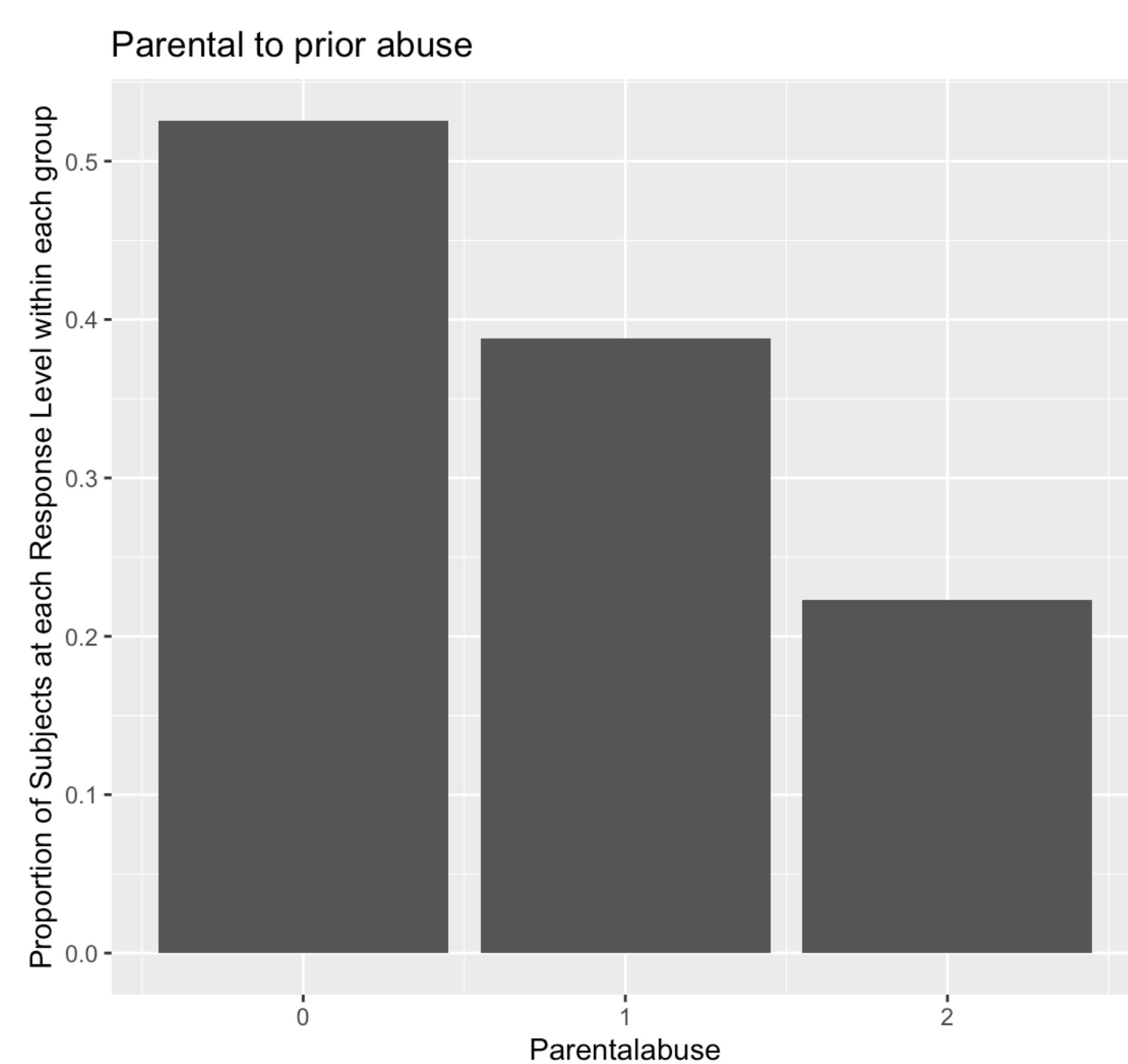


Figure 1: The proportion of individuals experiencing alcohol abuse or dependence within each parental history category.

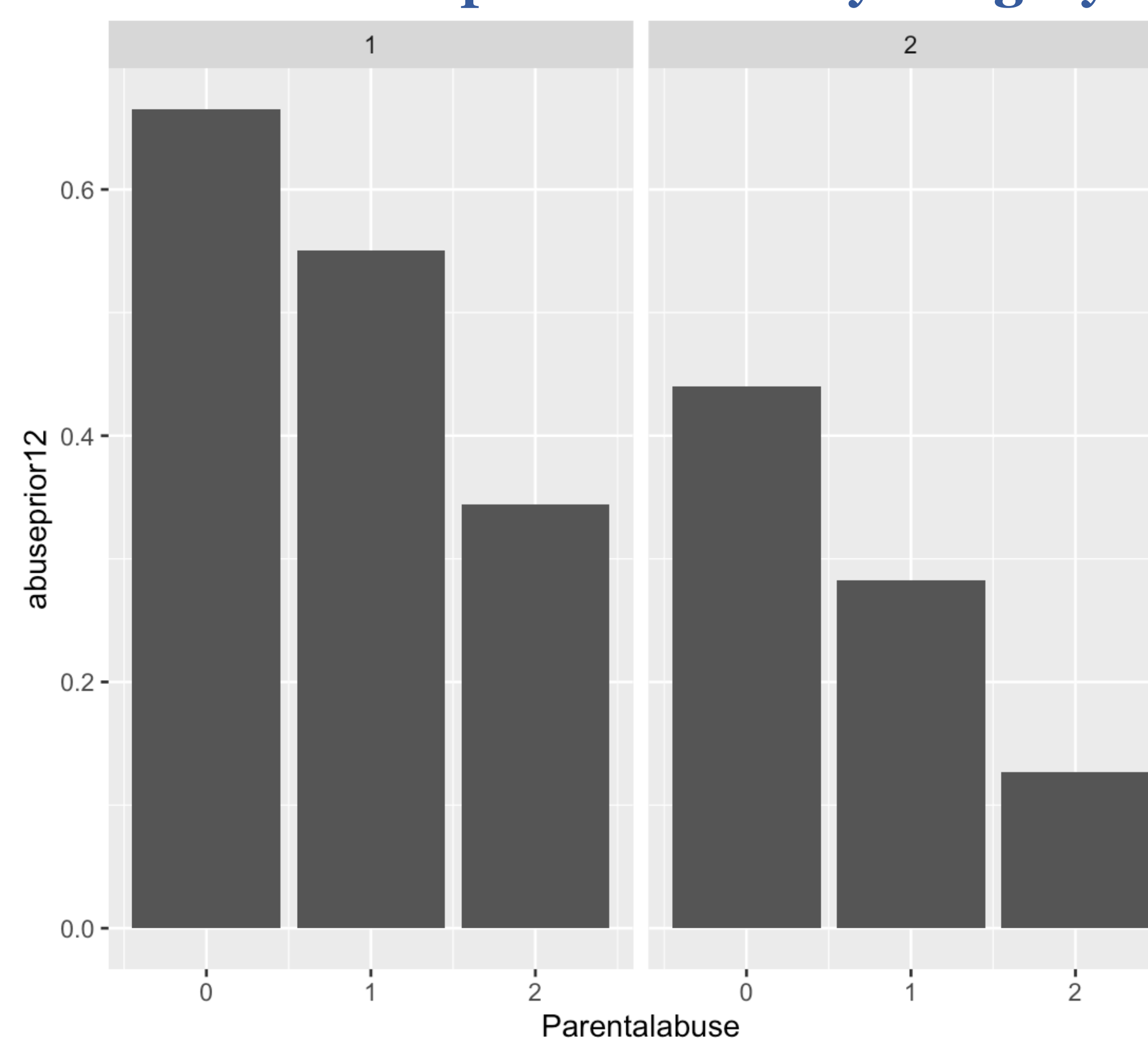


Figure 2: The proportion of individuals who experienced alcohol abuse or dependence within each parental category across genders.

Discussion

- Individuals with no parental history of alcoholism exhibited a higher likelihood of experiencing alcohol abuse or dependence compared to those with one alcoholic parent. This contradicts the common expectation that growing up with alcoholic parents would increase the risk of developing alcohol-related problems.
- The lowest prevalence of alcohol abuse or dependence was observed among individuals with two alcoholic parents. This suggests a potential protective effect, possibly stemming from witnessing the detrimental consequences of alcoholism firsthand. Children raised in households with alcoholic parents might develop an aversion to alcohol due to their direct exposure to its negative impacts.
- Further research is necessary to explore this counterintuitive finding in more detail and to examine other potential contributing factors. While witnessing parental alcoholism might act as a protective factor for some, other variables, such as genetic predispositions, personality traits, social influences, and coping mechanisms, could also play a significant role in shaping an individual's susceptibility to alcohol abuse or dependence.

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