

The effects of child abuse

[Society](#), [Child Abuse](#)



Final Paper

Child abuse is a serious issue that often goes overlooked and unreported. This can often be because it's difficult to classify exactly what constitutes as child abuse/ Abuse comes in two forms, acts of omission and acts of commission. Acts of commission would include excessive punishments, beating the child, or purposefully subjecting them to harm. Acts of omission are usually considered circumstantial. It mostly includes neglect and failing to provide them proper care. This is where it gets complicated, because it is difficult to tell whether or not a parent is meaning to deny a child of proper care, or if they cannot afford it. However, it also includes forcing a child to witness violence, usually domestic abuse. Whether intentional or not, a child being abused does leave lasting physical and psychological wounds that may never heal (Delima 43).

Child abuse has many different causes. It is not always intentional, and it is not always of pure malice. For many families, the parents themselves have had abusive parents and therefore believe that abuse is how children are normally treated. However, alcoholism is the number one cause of child abuse, with a whopping 27% of all reported cases. In addition, most families that abuse their children only have one parent, and consequentially almost all cases that are reported are acts of omission. It is easier to prove that a parent cannot provide, rather than prove that they are deliberately placing their child in harms way, or physically abusing them. (Devaney 447-448).

Like having multiple causes, child abuse also has many unfortunate effects on children. Going through such a significant trauma due to someone who is

supposed to protect them is shown to have numerous neurobiological effects on them while they age. There are indisputable changes to the structure of the brain, such as buffers around the brain increasing in volume, causing the brain to lose a lot of space. When a young child is subjected to this type of development over and over, it severely changes the way they will develop for the rest of their lives. This is because of the abuse over activating their stress responses in the brain repeatedly. The damage is irreversible and causes infinite mental disorders in these children as they turn into adults (Delima 43-45).

Mental illnesses may be too stigmatized in society, but it's still better to live a life without having to jump over the extra hurdles. Mental illness is not only stigmatized and seen as either scary or lazy, but it is also horrible to live with. Unfortunately, these children who have already had so much torture to deal with may also have to suffer through mental illness for the rest of their lives as well. This poor mental health and instability can be noticed as early as middle school for some victims. Depression, a disorder that lowers energy and happiness, is one of the most common illnesses for abuse victims. These victims will often find themselves pondering if death is any better than the life they're living. Sometimes it would be more casual and they would find themselves more apathetic about death than anything else. Thoughts like, "I don't want to exist anymore" or "I would like to sleep and not wake up" are examples of casual suicidal ideation. Post-traumatic stress disorder is also extremely common in abuse victims. Post-traumatic stress disorder is often with a person for the rest of their lifespan, and can cause horrible flashbacks and nightmares. Along with these mental disorders, there are also many

behavioral developments formed, “ Behavioral pathways always link childhood abuse and adult health outcomes through health-related behaviors, such as smoking, substance abuse, overeating, and high risk sexual behavior” (Draper 263). They are much more prone to addiction and risky behaviors, which begins to cut their lifespan down.

Furthermore, many of these victims do not actually express what is going on in their heads, even after they have been removed from any sort of violence or emotional abuse. The internalization of their emotions and other disorders they have can unfortunately cause even more psychological issues to take place. Abuse, especially emotional abuse, will completely destroy the victim’s self-esteem. . They often don’t feel like they have a right to complain, feeling like “ others have it worse” and don’t talk about what’s happened to them. Male victims, especially male victims of sexual assault, are frequently found to be too embarrassed to report that abuse, feeling like it’s not manly for them to be taken advantage of or dominated by another person unwillingly. The internalization of their feelings and disorders only allows it to manifest into a larger, darker set of mental illnesses.

Unsurprisingly, this causes the victims to age poorly. Self-esteem is a key factor of successful aging. This is due to self-esteem being one of the motivations for an individual to take good care of themselves and eat healthily. It’s the internalization of these disorders that causes stress and low self-esteem (Sachs-Ericsson 489-493).

Child abuse can affect the victims for the rest of their lives. However, that doesn’t mean that there aren’t possible steps to take in order to help the

healing process. Awareness is the main key in helping victims. Knowing the signs of child abuse, and reporting it when seen is critical to helping get children out of these situations. The earlier a child is brought out of these types of abusive situations, the less permanent damage they may receive. It should always be reported when a while repeatedly has mysterious bruises, or when they aren't well clothed or fed. Emotional abuse may be harder to spot out, but by lowering the stigma of mental illness, it will be more likely for victims to seek help. It's important to recognize that child abuse is not something that can be stopped entirely. However, by focusing on it one case at a time children can be spared further assault. Along with mental illness needing more awareness, access to help needs to be more available. It's very, very difficult to get a therapist, especially if someone is a minor. They're overly expensive, sometimes costing 80-90\$ for an hour, and often aren't covered by any health insurance. In addition, medications also aren't always covered by medical insurance. The idea that mental illness isn't a real illness is an idea that needs to die, because it harms innocent people, especially abuse victims. Therapy, medication, and help out of violent homes are all things that need to be more available to victims.

In conclusion, child abuse is not a momentary act of violence. It is a long term issue that often affects a person for the remainder of their lives. It's not just something the victim can forget. It's not just something that can be gotten over. There are legitimate changes in a victims brain, due to over active stress responses. Victims have actual neurobiological responses to being abused that last a lifetime. There are severe psychological consequences as well. Most victims go through the rest of their lives with

depression, accompanied by suicidal ideation. Also common are disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder. It is also very common that behavioral developments be formed as well, commonly anti-social behaviors. Children who are abused are often living in fear, and tend to internalize everything. Internalizing their disorders is a big cause of low self-esteem. Unfortunately, the problems don't end there. Victims also don't age well, if they live that long. Child abuse needs to be fully addressed. With awareness, care, and access to therapy, society can make life easier for victims of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.