

Research paper on child abuse

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



Child Abuse

Child abuse predates human history. However, it is only recently that societies have come to appreciate its significance. Although it can occur outside the home in places like schools and playgrounds, most of it takes place within the home setting and is instigated by other family members or someone known to the child. Child abuse occurs in various forms, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and psychological and emotional abuse. This paper will explore the following aspects of child abuse, forms, incidence and prevalence, risk factors, signs and symptoms, treatment, and prevention.

Body

Child neglect may assume the form of physical neglect such as failure to provide basic necessities, emotional neglect like failure to show a child love and affection, and medical neglect which refers to the failure to provide needed medical care. Physical abuse occurs in instances where a child sustains physical injuries due to the use of force such as kicking, hitting, shaking, and burning (Newton & Geritts, 2010, p. 7). Sexual abuse refers to sexual activity that a child cannot consent to or comprehend. It involves acts such as genital or anal intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling, voyeurism, and exhibitionism. Emotional or psychological abuse results from the other forms of abuse (Corby, 2005, pp. 85-91).

The true incidence and prevalence of child abuse is not known. This is because most of the available statistics are based on cases reported either by the abused child, parents, social workers, teachers, health professionals, and anonymous persons. Appreciably, majority of abused children and their

guardians never come forward because of fear of the abusers, being blamed, refusal to face the truth, or feelings of shame. Therefore, government statistics represent only a small proportion of abused children. Surveys done to determine the prevalence and incidence of child abuse, on the other hand, usually have methodological flaws hence their findings are not entirely accurate (Newton & Geritts, 2010, p. 7).

The risk factors for child abuse include parents who have depression or any other mental illnesses, domestic violence, and parental childhood abuse. The behavior is also common in poor families, families whose parents are teenagers or those who abuse alcohol or other drugs (Corby, 2005, p. 155).

The signs and symptoms of child abuse can be physical or behavioral.

Behavior changes reflect anxiety resulting from a stressful situation (Newton & Geritts, 2010, p. 35). Caregivers and teachers should always be alert to signs of any form of abuse. Physical signs include unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, abdominal and head injuries, and fractures. A sexually abused child may present with genital pain or bleeding or physical signs of a sexually transmitted infections. Behavioral signs that should raise concern include fearful behaviors such as depression, nightmares, and unusual fears; complains of abdominal pain, headaches, and stomachaches without medical cause; bedwetting; abrupt changes in self confidence; extreme sexual behaviors inappropriate for age; attempts to run away; sudden drops in school performance; excessive affectionate behavior or social withdrawal; extremely aggressive or passive behaviors; sudden gains or drops in weight; unusual increase in appetite; and stealing food (Corby, 2005, p. 196).

Child abuse or neglect has serious adverse physical and psychological

consequences. Most abused children suffer more emotional than physical damages. They are unable to develop the skills necessary to cope with life stressors. Therefore, they tend to have dysfunctional coping and may become depressed, suicidal, withdrawn, or violent. As they get older, they may abuse drugs and alcohol, refuse discipline, run away, or abuse others. In adulthood, they tend to have sexual and marital difficulties, depression, and suicidal behaviors (Sturt, 2006, pp. 1-5). Notably, not all children have such adverse reactions. Younger children tend to be more affected than their older counterparts. More emotional damage results if the abuser is very close to the child (Corby, 2005, p. 196).

Abused children have special support and treatment needs. They should be managed by a pediatrician and a local child protective agency. The pediatrician treats the child for any medical ailments or injuries and provides information to investigators (Palusci & Fischer, 2010, p. 36). Abused children should also be managed by qualified mental health professionals. The family of the child is usually counseled so that it is able to provide the necessary psychological and emotional support the child needs. If the abuse is occurring within the family setting, the child protective agency ensures that the child is placed in a safe environment (Newton & Geritts, 2010, p. 37). Parental feelings of stress, isolation, and frustration are the major causes of child abuse and mistreatment. Parents should thus be provided with the necessary support and information on how to raise their children responsibly. They also need training on how to cope with their feelings of frustration or stress. Additionally, they need companionship from other adults particularly in times of crisis. Parents with feelings of isolation can be advised to join

community support groups. Parents who were victims of childhood abuse should seek help in confronting, addressing, and healing their old wounds (Newton & Geritts, 2010, p. 37).

In order to prevent abuse that occurs outside the home, parents should supervise and express interest in their children's lives. They should enroll them in programs that permit unrestricted parental access. They should also be attentive to children's reports of their school experiences and investigate claims of being mistreated or abrupt changes in behavior. They should also teach children to keep away from strangers, not to go to unfamiliar places, to say no if someone wants them to do something against their will, and to report if someone hurts them in any way. Parents must always have open two-way communication with their children so that they are free to report instances of abuse. They should also tell their children that they are ready and willing to keep them safe (Corby, 2005, p. 196).

Conclusion

In conclusion, child abuse may occur in various forms that is, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and psychological and emotional abuse. The true incidence and prevalence of child abuse is unknown due to underreporting. The risk factors for child abuse include parental depression, alcoholism and drug use amongst others. The signs and symptoms of abuse may be overt or subtle, behavioral, or physical. Victims of childhood abuse have special support and treatment needs hence they should be treated by a pediatrician and a mental health specialist. The family should also be counseled on how to offer support to the child. Prevention of childhood abuse addresses etiological factors such as parental depression. Prevention of abuse

occurring outside home contexts entails parents educating children on safe practices, expressing interest in their child's experiences, and establishment of open and trusting parental-child relationships.

References

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