

Repercussions of childhood trauma



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“ An estimated 905, 000 children were victims of child abuse or neglect in 2006. While physical injuries may or may not be immediately visible, abuse and neglect can have consequences for children, families, and society that last lifetimes, if not generations.” (Childwelfare). We are all conceived, born and nurtured. Each individual has to mature, struggling through hardships faced by society. In these instances the world feels dark and cold, isolation is felt, yet it is through these hardships that we grow stronger. We are all born with unregulated emotions, it takes years before they can be truly governed, in this time our young and innocent minds are targets of disorders and pathologies. Parents don't understand this; even medical practitioners can underestimate it. According to researchers and specialists in child psychiatry, activities done by a child before the age of 10 will influence their future learning patterns. Therefore parenting methods have large influences on children's later life. Parenting is similar to guiding your offspring on “ a boat expedition”. Children learn through example, at a young age parents are role models for their children, who watch and learn through actions witnessed in the household. Parents help guide their children in the right direction, teaching them how to use the tools they are given. In this way they are not going to waste their talent.

As we see in *Wolf Hall* by Hillary Mantel, Thomas Cromwell the central protagonist is constantly beaten by his father he is not lead and guided through life, however instead of becoming a cowering wimp scared of his own shadow, he starts a new life, leaving his home, village and primarily his father. Thomas goes on to become one of the most famous politicians of his time, he had to learn and experience on his own, through his troublesome

childhood he learnt to become a strong, tough and imposing figure. On the other hand, Holden Caulfield, the main character in JD Slingers' controversial novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, has parents who are persistently absent but however they try as hard as possible to care for him but from a distance, this is mainly due to their hectic lives in the working world. They are trying to make enough money so that they can care for Holden and his siblings financially, so that they can have a good education amongst others. Holden's has a dream job, which is being a catcher in the rye, which entails saving little children's lives; he is more calm and caring in comparison to Thomas who had a tougher childhood. This influenced by their different upbringings.

This paper will discuss the repercussions and possible childhood trauma caused, due to parent's psychological condition and upbringing methods. As said by Keanu Reeves' in the 1989 movie, *Parenthood*, " You need a licence to catch a fish, but anyone can become apparent." Unfit parents are conceiving children, they are not ready to

The first part of the paper will discuss how parents' unstable psychological condition has effects on their offspring. The second will deal with physical abuse and domestic corporal punishment and the side effects of these violent actions. Finally sexual abuse of children will be discussed.

Parental psychopathology increases risk of the offspring developing conduct disorder. Depression, alcoholism, and antisocial behaviour from a parent can be linked directly to the development of the misconduct. The two main reasons for which the parental physiological condition has this effect is, firstly the depressed parent could misperceive their child's behaviour as

inappropriate, resulting in a scolding and missed punishment. The child knows he is going to get into trouble no matter if he/she is well behaved or not, so he/she decides to do whatever comes through their mind, without considering the consequences. This type of conduct leads behavioural problems. As said by Stratton an American Professor working as a research affiliate in the centre on human development and disability in Washington – suggested that depressed and irritable mothers indirectly cause behaviour problems in their children through inconsistent limit setting, emotional unavailability, and reinforcement of inappropriate behaviours through negative attention. The second considers the fact that depressed parents react differently towards misconduct. Studies have shown that depressed parents give a larger amount of criticism and commands towards their children, which results in turn in deviant child behaviour.

O'Connor motioned in his article – Depressed Parents and the Effects in Their Children – children of depressed parents are at great risk for depression, as well as substance abuse and antisocial activities. It has been found that depressed mothers have difficulty bonding with their offspring's. They are less sensitive to the child's needs and are less consistent in their responses to his/her behaviour. The child appears more unhappy and isolated than other children. They may also become difficult to comfort, feed and put to sleep and as they get older they become more defiant towards imposed rules. This reinforces the parents' sense of failure. Father and mother's parenting is likely to remain inconsistent, because nothing they do has any visible effect. Through analysis of the article paraphrased above, it becomes evident that growing up with a depressed parent increases a child's risk for

mental health problems, cognitive difficulties and troubled social relationships. It is for this reason, it is important that parents' are in a sane physiological state when upbringing of a child otherwise there could be irreversible damages to their child's well being later in life.

Thomas Cromwell is beaten and abused by his father from an early age; he becomes accustomed to the concept of violence. He flees his home town in search for a war, in order to make money " I might go and be a soldier" (5). Considering the fact that he was extremely young at the time, between the ages of 11 and 13, this is not at all normal. A child at that age should not be looking for a war in order to make pocket money. Instead they should be working as a shoe polisher or a news paper delivery boy. These are safer and more appropriate positions for a boy of his age. Thomas' life reeks with violence; he gets involved in fights with other boys in the town. All this is due to one person's behaviour, his father's.

Negativity from parents, for example " you can't do it" can result in the realization of the thought, if the person who has taught, and shown us everything we know tells say it is impossible then, it must be true. If a parent has a pessimistic personality it will rub off negatively on their child. She/he will be surrounded by a realm of negativity and will consequently not be able to achieve his/hers full potential.

In addition to developing conduct disorder, substance abuse and obesity amongst others, Parental psychopathology can not only but result in the development of disorders and pathologies but it can lead directly to death. Suicidal behaviour in offspring is largely increased by parental

psychopathology. There are tremendous possibilities for children between childhood and adulthood, but it could also be a time of great confusion and anxiety. There is immense pressure to fit in socially. Teens with adequate support networks are helped with coping with everyday frustrations.

However many teens do not have such a support system, due to physiologically unstable parents feel isolated and disconnected from family and friends. These teens are at increased risk for suicide, they develop a physiological disorder especially depression, bipolar disorder and substance abuse which leads to substance abuse. “ Approximately 95% of people who die by suicide have a physiological disorder at the time of death.”

In *The Catcher in the Rye* Holden commences by explaining his current situation; he says that his parents were occupied working in order to stratify his material needs. But they neglected his emotional state. “ My parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them.”(5-6). Judging by this statement Holden is a teen who is lacking an emotional support for when confronted with hardships. As a result, Holden has difficulty in integrating society, which he feels is phoney. He feels isolated and disconnected from friends and family. For this reason he has difficulty in dealing with everyday life situations. He cannot cope academically and his social interaction is somewhat similar.

Having dealt with parents' unstable psychological condition and its effects on children, the focus will shift towards physical abuse and domestic corporal punishment. Here the side effects of parent's actions will be discussed. As quoted in the opening lines of the paper, physical injuries may appear

immediately and disappear equally as fast; however abuse had severe consequences for children, possibly lasting a lifetime.

It is true that “ not all abused children will experience long-term consequences. Outcomes of individual cases vary widely and are affected by a combination of factors, including: The child’s age and developmental status when the abuse or neglect occurred, the type of abuse (physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, etc.), the frequency, duration, and severity of abuse.” Nevertheless it cannot be denied that no matter the case, there will be a negative effect on the child. The factors stated about will determine how long the side effects will last. Physical abuse not only has a harmful influence on a child’s behaviour but also has detrimental impacts on the psychological wellbeing of an individual. The victim could in the long-term develop undesirable behavioural patterns and will not learn the lessons parents are trying to teach.

The use of corporal punishment by parents in order to “ put their child back in line” is highly ineffective, the results may seem instant and effective yet repercussions are severe. Children become deceitful and start lying using any means possible to avoid punishment . In their eyes punishment results in physical pain. As they grow older they continue what was done at home. When they perform criminal actions, to avoid punishment, in this case imprisonment and not a spanking, they use any means possible to flee the punishment. This results in a society of adults who are incapable of assuming their own actions. In wolf hall we see exactly this, Thomas was often beaten by his father. He went on to become a successful politician, as is common knowledge most politicians’ are often deceitful, avoiding to tell

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the truth when not suited to their situation. The use of violence corrodes child's trust in his/her parent. Walter and Thomas have a horrible father son relationship. Not only Walters' children have no trust in him but they have lost all respect for him. Kat, Thomas' older sister states that " Shame was left out when God made my dad" (4).

There are several repercussions of child abuse. Victims are 1. 75 times more likely to experience posttraumatic stress disorder as adults. In addition, child victims are more likely to experience depression, attachment difficulties, and low self-esteem. A Canadian study found that a history of child abuse was one of the leading predictors of psychological problems in adulthood. Doctors at the University of McGill in Canada, studied rats with differing maternal styles – the pups who had naturally nurturing mothers were equally caring towards their pups. However, pups with neglectful parents were less attentive towards their own pups. It was found the mother rats placed in stressful environments like isolation had greatly decreased capacity for nurture.

This shows that there are long-term effects due to maltreatment. These can therefore be carried over from one generation to the next. Various studies have shown that domestic violence will inevitably increase the risk of children becoming aggressive delinquents with long-term an unstable physiological condition. " Worldwide, approximately 40 million children are subjected to child abuse each year (Child abuse effects)." Society should pose itself a question, in a decade or two the same children will be our lawyers and doctors and politicians. These same ' kids' are our future. It is vital that children have a normal childhood for the welfare of progressing

society. " Abusive parents often have experienced abuse during their own childhoods. It is estimated approximately one-third of abused and neglected children will eventually victimize their own children (Childwelfare)." As stated above the long-term effects of maltreatment can carry over from one generation to the next, this will have an exponential effect spreading through households. In the long run it will result in a negatively affect society, with rise in delinquency and increased depressed individuals. It is difficult to reach this situation, because there are many factors needed before there is long-term develop undesirable behavioural patterns become permanent.

However Physical punishment has become an increasingly serious problem in the United States, affecting the mental health of children. " Studies show that over 60% of families use physical punishment as a form of discipline." (Apsa) Ironically, research shows a positive correlation between physical punishment and the increase in delinquency, antisocial behaviour, and aggression in children, this is coupled with a decrease in the quality of the parent-child relationship. Due to the severe consequences of abuse, 24 countries have prohibited physical punishment in all settings, including the home. Approximately 100 countries have banned corporal punishment in schools. United Nations to has taken action by creating a Convention on the Rights of the Child, this is an international treaty prohibiting all forms of violence

The lack of physical contact between parent and child can also have negative effects. For example, Holden finds intimate physical contact difficult with people he is emotionally attached to. Holden states that he cannot

imagine getting to sexy with a girl he has genuine emotion for. Children need physical and emotional care to be balanced and to be able to cope in society.

Finally, the impact sexual abuse on children will be discussed. Often it is difficult to single out sexually abused children; they are often ashamed of what is happening to them and tend not to tell anyone. Children who are abused by their own parents are limited with respect to the people whom they can confide to, because normally children would go to a parent, seeking help for a difficult situation which they cannot handle alone. They find it difficult to report it to the police because of a lack of confidence in themselves and often inability to admit being abused. Stockholm syndrome is useful in explaining the victim's experiences and the relationship between victim and abuser. The abuser terrifies the victim, who cannot flee, though sexual abuse. Consequently the frightened victim searches nurturance and protection. Since the abuser is a parent, the child is isolated from everyone else and had no choice but to turn towards his/hers abuser.

There are various consequences on children due to sexual abuse the most common is post traumatic stress disorder. " This type of stress falls into three categories: re-enactment of the event, avoidance or withdrawal and physiological hyper-activity." (All about life challenges). However each human being is different, they will therefore experience these differently.

Another problem is the due to sexual abuse children engage in increased sexual behaviour in comparison to non-sexually abused children. "

Approximately 95% of teenage prostitutes have been sexually abused."

(Prevent abuse now) This could lead to premature pregnancy. The child will

be born in a stressed environment and in most cases will not be treated for adequately; due to the fact that his/hers parents cannot look after themselves let alone a child. The child could also contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, for example the Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which would in the long term result in death. Since the abuse took place on the body, the body is an enemy. Victims try desperately to forget, they want to cope with the pain leading to eating disorders such as obesity or anorexia, self-inflicting injuries, the inability to have sex, or engaging in sex too often, and gender-identity issues. There are also many emotional effects such as helplessness, confusion and pain. Often siblings blame the abused child because they believe the perpetrator's denials. Children also wonder if their mother knew anything about the abuse and did not take action to stop it, resulting in trust of both parents being lost. This results in them having difficulty to trust other human beings because if they cannot even trust their parents, who are the people children can conventionally trust, then in who can children have confidence in.

In addition to the emotional and physical immorality of the act, God makes it clear in His Word, " if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck" (Mark 9: 42). These actions spread sin throughout the world making His children suffer; for this reason that He condemns it.

The purpose of the current study was to determine the repercussions of childhood trauma. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that there can be long-term effects due to physical and mental child

abuse and they can be carried over from one generation to the next. The study showed a positive correlation between physiologically unstable parents and child abuse. The study has addressed childhood trauma with relation to parents, however they are the main individuals affecting a kid's childhood. Society should be careful because child abuse could lead to the degradation of the world as we know it.