

Child neglect: its cause and its role in delinquency

People



Physical neglect of the child could lead to malnutrition and a general failure to thrive, serious infectious diseases and potential harm to the child in the form of cuts, bruises or burns that may occur when there is lack of supervision. When children are not receiving school education and training at the mandatory age they are subject to educational neglect and this could have damaging effects later in life as such children lack the basic skills for survival, quickly drop out of school and easily indulge in delinquent activities. Children suffer emotional neglect in homes where there is repeated spousal abuse, lack of affection and psychological care, allowing children to use drugs and other narcotics and constantly chiding the child saying that he is useless for anything. Such neglect could cause serious damage to their self-esteem and could also lead to suicidal tendencies. Medical neglect even when parents are educated and well employed could lead to poor overall health and complicate existing medical problems of the child. All the above forms of neglect could result in potentially harmful consequences for the child and in many cases, they encourage children to indulge in risky and violent activities (Perry, Colwell, and Schick).

Parental neglect of children has been found to be one of the most powerful predictors of juvenile delinquency. There have been several studies which have studied the link between parental support and monitoring and delinquency in children and all of them have concluded that a high rate of delinquency was observed among children who faced parental neglect, lack of parental supervision and care. The delinquent behavior ranged from skipping classes in school, drug abuse and indulging in violent and criminal activities. The low emotional attachment found between children and their

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neglectful parents was found to be a major factor that influenced delinquent behavior in these children. In addition, the failure of parents to adequately spend time and monitor their wards increases the child's access to deviant peers. When parents fail to impart the necessary life values and help in character building of the child early on in life, children tend to fall prey to such deviant activities as they find them more attractive and easily accept them as a way of life. Parental neglect right from a young age combined with other factors such as lower socioeconomic background, age and gender of the child collectively influence the deviant behavior in children (Salmelainen).

Thus studies have clearly shown that the more interest parents show on the growth and welfare of the child and treat the child with love and care the lesser are the chances that the child will get involved in delinquent or other risky activities later in life. Thus one of the best ways to address the problem of delinquency in children is to eliminate parental neglect if any and provide suitable counseling for both the child and parents involved and help the child come out of the problem.