

Problems of Abuse Among Children in Our Society

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon. However, in India, as in many other countries, there has been no understanding of the extent, magnitude and trends of the problem. The growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes brought about by socio-economic transitions in India have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to various and newer forms of abuse.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Emotional, Physical, Economic, And Sexual Maltreatment

INTRODUCTION

Abuse is a commonplace event in modern times, taking on many different forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse, occurring in many different contexts, including the home (domestic violence, spouse rape, incest), the workplace (sexual harassment), and in institutional (elder abuse, bullying) and religious and community (hate crime) settings. It touches victims across the lifespan from children through elders. Abuse is a serious social and cultural problem affecting everyone whether as a victim of abuse, a perpetrator, a friend or confidant of an abused person looking for ways to be helpful, or simply as someone who is angered by injustice and wants to work for positive change.

Child Neglect: It is the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. Physical neglect can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or cold). It may include abandonment. Educational neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs, allowing excessive trancies. Psychological neglect includes the lack of any emotional support and love, never attending to the child, substance abuse including allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use.

Factors Affecting the Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect

Not all abused and neglected children 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.)
- Frequency, duration, and severity of abuse

- Relationship between the victim and his or her abuser (**Chalk, Gibbons, & Scarupa, 2002**).

Short-term consequences of child abuse

Short-term consequences for child abuse may be hard to pinpoint. Children may not be aware of emotional problems they are having or that they are connected to neglect. Since neglect is sometimes very difficult to detect the short-term consequences may also not be easily noticed.

As a short-term consequence, the child may be distant from playmates or a teacher, possibly effecting their happiness, which may turn into depression. A short-term effect of physical abuse could be something like a broken bone, bloody noses, or burns. Another short-term consequence of sexual abuse is having a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Long term consequences of child abuse

If a survivor of child abuse has not been in therapy or been helped along the way to cope with his/her abuse history, there is a range of effects that stem from the abuse. Depending upon each individual survivor's trauma history, the following list provides the common effects many survivors must deal with as a result of their abuse, Anxiety, Dissociation, Depression, Eating Disorders, Impaired self-capacities, Impaired "self" and other boundaries, Interpersonal and relational difficulties, Parenting difficulties, Memory impairment, Personality Disorders, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Re-victimization, Self-blame, Self-harm including suicidality, and Sexual difficulties

Impaired brain development: Child abuse and neglect have been shown, in some cases, to cause important regions of the brain to fail to form properly, resulting in impaired physical, mental, and emotional development (**Perry, 2002; Shore, 1997**). In other cases, the stress of chronic abuse causes a "hyperarousal" response by certain areas of the brain, which may result in hyperactivity, sleep disturbances, and anxiety, as well as increased vulnerability to post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, and learning and memory difficulties (**Perry, 2001; Dallam, 2001**).

Poor physical health: Relationship between various forms of household dysfunction including childhood abuse and long-term health problems has been identified. The abuse may result in to conduction such as sexually transmitted diseases, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease (**Hillis, Anda, Felitti, Nordenberg, & Marchbanks, 2000; Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998**).

Cognitive difficulties: The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being recently found children placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect tended to score lower than the general population on measures of cognitive capacity, language development, and academic achievement (**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003**).

Difficulties during adolescence: Studies have found abused and neglected children to be at least 25 percent more likely to experience problems such as delinquency, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement, drug use, and mental health problems (**Kelley et al., 1997**).

JUSTIFICATION

An increasing number of child abuse cases are being reported worldwide as well as in India. Accordingly, social concern regarding child abuse has also grown over the last several years. Most researches on child abuse are based on the data obtained from medical and judicial agencies.

Epidemiological survey of the general population of children is required to ascertain the presence and extent of maltreatment and of abuse among children. Research on child abuse will also provide insights and knowledge that can directly benefit victims of child abuse and their families as well as it can reduce long-term economic costs associated with treating the consequences of child maltreatment. The present study also aims to provide empirical evidence to recognize the need for having strong legislation for combating child abuse and will play a key role in informing social policy decisions concerning the services that should be made available to children and their families to reduce the stress caused by the incidence of abuse.

Comparative analysis of total child abuse among boys and girls belonging to different socio economic groups.

Socio economic status	Boys		Girls		t Calculated	P Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Lower SES	141.44	5.59	152.16	4.36	10.69*	0.00001.
Middle SES	125.5	3.94	136.3	4.93	12.10*	0.00001
Upper SES	109.0	3.63	130.12	5.13	23.76*	0.00001

*significant

Table and figure 4.19 shows the total child abuse among boys and girls belonging to different socio economic groups. The table clearly depicts a significant variance in the total child abuse among boys and girls ($P < .00001$) belonging to lower socio economic group as the calculated value of t was found to be 10.69 and p value was found to be .00001. The mean values further indicate that girls experienced more child abuse as compared to boys which may be attributed to the prejudice prevalent in the Indian society which clearly shows a preference for a male child which may lead to maltreatment of the female child particularly in the lower socio economic strata of the society.

The table further shows a significant difference in child abuse among boys and girls belonging to middle socio economic group. The calculated value of t was 12.10 which was highly significant as the p value was 00001. The table clearly shows that girls are subjected to abuse more often intensely as compared to their male counterparts as the mean value of abuse for girls is found to be 136.3 which is greater than the mean value of total child abuse for boys i.e 125.5.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Child abuse is a world - wide problem that exists in all societies and cultures in various form since ages. Infanticide, sexual exploitation, slavery, abandonment. The National Seminar Organized by Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) on child abuse defines child abuse and neglect “as the intentional, non accidental injury, maltreatment of children by parents, caretakers, employers or others including those individuals representing governmental / non governmental bodies which may lead to temporary impairment of their physical, mental and psycho-social development, and disability”.

It is estimated approximately one-third of abused and neglected children will eventually victimise their own children (**Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008**). Yet the paramount reason that child abuse is unacceptable is because it violates their human rights as children. Present and future social and

economic costs are not the only – nor even the main – reason, child maltreatment and neglect should be of concern to the government and public.

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