

Sexual Abuse of Children

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Abstract

This research paper deals with child sexual abuse. The main focus of this paper is to identify the causes of child sexual abuse including impacts and consequences of this obnoxious activity. This paper depicts how child sexual abuse damages the social development of a child. An abused child may become a criminal in his or her later life. This paper also suggests how the parents should treat their children, especially how they can teach their children to control their emotional feelings. In proper parenting, love, care and awareness are important factors which help in developing a child's psychological condition. Child sexual abuse may harm his or her normal mental and psychological growth. In this paper child sexual abuse and its harmful effects are described from social perspective. Social development is seriously hampered due to child sexual abuse. Researchers' tried to reveal facts in regard to child sexual abuse and to focus on the causes and effects of this problem. A sexually abused child, especially an abused female child, becomes frightened and feels disgust to having sex in her later life.

Key words: Sexual abuse of child, social development, parenting, society, timid, introvert, meek.

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Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a common problem in almost every country of the world. People related to the study of child abuse claim that unreported child sexual abuse occurs even in the developed countries like the UK, the United States, Canada and most other European countries. Furthermore, researchers argue that this rate of child sexual abuse is extremely high in underdeveloped and developing countries of the third world. The effects and consequences of child sexual abuse are far more terrific than one can imagine. A child that has been abused sexually bears the effects of this abuse throughout his/her whole life. Children who have been abused in their childhood turn into replicators who mirror those obnoxious behaviors in their later life more viciously. Among the nonaggressive signs and symptoms which grow in a child in response to ill-treatment and exploitation during childhood, a range of pessimistic personality traits such as lowered personality, lack of confidence and submissiveness are the most notable ones. Referring to the negative impacts of child sexual abuse, Dr. Kirsten (2010), a professor of Psychiatry at King's College London, says, "A history of maltreatment is related to negative impacts throughout the lifespan, as victimized children are more vulnerable to repeated abuse and are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health in adulthood" (p. 3). The question which arises here is how child sexual abuse or mistreatment affects a child's social growth. The answer of this question partly depends on the theory of socialization which foretells that a child's social growth is greatly affected and influenced by its interactive affiliation with the vicious agents of socialization. Secondly, we have to depend on the psychodynamic theories in order to identify how an abuse and mistreatment shape a child's psychology.

Background of this Study

These later life replications of children violent behaviors, along with nonaggressive impacts of sexual abuse, essentially predict greater overwhelming impacts on the society. Whereas the nonaggressive effects turn a grownup child into a static, unproductive and good-for-nothing burden of the society, the effects which are violent in nature change him/her into a grown-up devil, who subconsciously wants to treat the society in the same way he/she once was

treated during his or her early days. Child abuse harmfully affects a child's social growth, because if the child is raised in unsociable environment without love, care and awareness that children deserve that child will have poor social skills. In some cultures, it is thought that cruel punishment is a method of child's social discipline, but "a child may view punishment as an endorsement of aggression and force, and learn only that a large person has power over a smaller one" (Carlson, 2009, p. 2). Such types of punishments can lead to the encouragement of "counter-aggression", "feelings of resentment", and "deep humiliation". Most of the ruthlessly punished children may grow up having uncaring attitudes towards others' pain.

Any type of abuse harmfully affects a child's social growth because the child becomes disconnected from society. Although these are the most frightening realities of child abuse, there are hopes as well. Evidence exposes that profound speculative knowledge and insight into the constructs of child sexual abuse can help respective people and authorities come up with interference programs to deal with this problem. Indeed, child maltreatment negatively affects a child's social improvement, and there is a need to set up practical solutions and precautionary measures to eliminate the problem.

Theoretical Perspectives on Child Abuse: a Psychoanalytical Focus

There are various theoretical perspectives which can impart significant insights to the antagonistic relationship between an abused child and the society. Though various theorists have defined this relationship from different perspectives, the psychoanalytical perspective of child sexual abuse appears to be the most convenient and the most effective in explaining the impacts and consequences of child sexual abuse on the society. A psychoanalytical perspective necessarily depends on the socio-psychological theory of a child's development to clarify child sexual abuse and its impacts on the child. Child sexual abuse was formerly considered as a straight creation of parental psychopathology. However, researchers' further examination of this area has prompted the appearance of newer determinants behind the incident of child sexual abuse in human society. Psychodynamic theorists try to look deeper into the psychological nature of the impacts on children. This viewpoint is related to a child's insight and explains all types of the child's behavior formed by the environment of his/her childhood period. Such approach to

child sexual mistreatment assist in the detection of newer determinants, both visible and invisible, such as settings, surroundings, husband-wife relationship, parent-child relationship, close-relatives-child relationship, etc. which are supposed to contribute to the social development of a child.

A Psychoanalytical Approach: How Abuse Affects Child's Social Development

According to the psychodynamic approach, a child's character starts developing when the child is born. However, the most vital stages of the character development are during childhood. Thus, childhood experience of maltreatment disgustingly hinders the psychological growth as well as social development of a child. Indeed, Sigmund Freud's theory of psychodynamic personality development is widely used to explain this phenomenon. According to Freud, there are three components of personality, such as Id, Ego and Superego; they are the most significant traits of a child's development as a social being. A child receives the Id when he/she is born. Explaining the role of the Id in a child's personality, Daniel K. Lapsley and Paul C. Stey (2011), professors of the University of Notre Dame, state "the Id is the oldest and most primitive psychic agency, representing the biological foundations of personality...It is the reservoir of basic instinctual drives, particularly sexual (libidinal) drives, which motivate the organism to seek pleasure" (p. 1). Apart from the Id, the other two, Ego and Superego, can be considered as, more or less, two social constructs of a child personality. The Ego is the "modification of the id that emerges as a result of the direct influence of the external world...the "executive" of the personality in the sense that it regulates libidinal drive energies so that satisfaction accords with the demands of reality" (p. 1). In a normal setting, the ego part of a child's personality is assisted by his/her spontaneous communication with his/her parents and others in the social surroundings. In return, the child becomes rational by internalizing rules, norms and regulations of the society.

Anyhow, if the balanced relationship among these components is broken, then growth of a man's social personality becomes abnormal. When a child is maltreated, these two social constructs (or components) of the child's personality are largely affected. The child becomes either timid, which means that the ego fails to rely on his or her ability to face a particular situation, or aggressive. This aggressiveness means that the child's ego has developed a standard

that makes the child rely on his/her bodily strength instead of the rules. The Superego of an abused child is affected in such a way that either it cannot create any ideal or it creates negative ideals such as lifelong abhorrence of a particular person or people such as parents, teachers, etc. or any system such as church or school, etc. Afterwards, the results of the malformed Id, Ego and Superego are tremendous. An abused child will suffer from submissiveness, lack of self-confidence, individuality, personality, courage, etc. For instance, a sexually abused girl, perhaps, will show her abhorrence of having sex throughout her life. On the other hand, a boy, who was punished and rebuked by his teachers, will supposedly have a lifelong hatred for school, education and learning. Indeed, these indications become amplified in his social personality. Even various reports demonstrate that abused children pose a threat of becoming juvenile offenders.

Abused Child's Social Development: A Sociological Explanation

The influences and consequences of sexual abuse on a child's social development can be elucidated by the theories of socialization. In order to explain how mistreatment affects a child's social maturity, social scientists use Freud's psychodynamic theory of personality to some extent. Though social scientists adopt Freud's psychoanalytical approach to a child's social development, they keep Freud's theory limited to the initial discussion of a child's psychological development. However, in a broader social perspective, they classify and focus on a child's psychological connection to his/her environs. According to the theory of socialization, children's social progress is assisted by various social elements in their environment. A child's sociological imagination, a sociological term for social maturity, is formed by his/her frequent interactions with other social elements. Lisa McIntyre (2009), a professor of Sociology at the Washington State University, says that the term "sociological imagination" refers to a child's "cognitive ability to imagine or see himself through other people's eyes" (p. 158). It is a method which involves a person's capacity to imagine his/her personality features such as shape, size, figure, behavior, etc in terms of other people's response. It is the first element of Cooley's theory of anticipatory socialization. McIntyre (2009) further says that George Herbert Mead believed that a well-organized self emerges when the child's "I" adopts a view of the "me" that resembles the attitudes of significant others (p. 159).

Child abuse harmfully affects a child's social progress. If a child is raised in an unsociable hostile environment without love, care and attention that children deserve that child will have poor social skills. While a child grows, he or she adopts his/her parents' behavioral patterns. In a responsive environment, a child learns to perceive and internalize a pattern of social relationships of his or her peers, through continuous interactions with them. Indeed, a child initiates to seriously discover his/her environment and, through this method, to increase cognitive consideration of remarkable dealings, time series, and other systems. When a child is abused by the agents of socialization, the development of a confident personality becomes seriously damaged. One of the most significant functions of the agents of socialization is to help a child's social growth by counseling him/her subconsciously and also by providing him/her with adequate backups such as love, sympathy, etc. They, directly or indirectly, shape the development of a child's "me" (McIntyre, 2009, p. 158-159). In fact, everything in the child's environment can be the agents of socialization, if it plays a role in shaping a person's "self" (I or me). In this regard, any person, group of persons, community, institutions, organization, objects, environment, etc with which a person is related are his/her social agents. Such a definition of social agents entails that a child can be victimized and abused by both a person and institution.

Child abuse, especially sexual abuse, negatively affects a child's social development, because the child becomes disconnected from society. If a child is forcedly detached from the normal environment, his/her aptitude to experience 'anticipatory socialization' does not develop. Consequently, the child becomes timid, introvert and meek. This sociological clarification of the consequences of child abuse and maltreatment further entails that abused children are unable to undergo anticipatory socialization which will affect their skills and performance in education as well as in the workplace. 'Anticipatory socialization' is a sociological term, which refers to the whole process of sociological imagination and the related actions of a person. According to Mead, anticipatory socialization is the imagination of a person's "I" about his/her "me". According to McIntyre (2009) "The Me is what you see when you put yourself in someone else's shoes and look back at yourself...the 'I' is the part of you that is uniquely you" (p. 158). In fact, it is a self-conscious and self-motivated socialization of a child in comparison to his/her subconscious socialization in his/her earlier years of life. When a person chooses to adapt to a

particular group or community of interest, he/she attempts to see him-/herself through the “looking-glass self”. Subsequently, he/she imagines other people’s reaction and endeavors to shape himself in a particular way in terms of others. Then the feelings of pride or shame come. On the other hand, if this person was abused in his/her childhood, his/her self-image in the ‘looking-glass-self’ is demeaned. Therefore, he/she instinctively cannot learn and adapt to values and behaviors of community and organizations.

Inalienability of Family and Children’s Wellbeing from Each Other

Since a child is, primarily, attached to his/her parents, parental behaviors and attitudes greatly affect the child’s social development. Therefore, social scientists believe that the parental abuse of children has the severest consequences on the children. Children’s well-being and parental behaviors are connected. Children’s wellbeing is considered as the overall psychological and social development of a child such as his/her psychological growth, social growth, socialization and moralization. Family is the smallest but the most influential producer of developmental outcomes of children. Also from the child development perspective, a family can be considered as a unitary environmental entity that contains all components of a child’s social development. Various studies, conducted in this field, show that development of a child’s personality is greatly influenced by his/her spontaneous interactions with his/her family members. Consequently, “parenting” is supposed to exert both direct and indirect influence on a child’s social personality. Marian et al in their book, focusing on the factors and vectors of parents’ behavioral influence on child-rearing and development of a child, point out two the most influencing factors: husband-wife relationship and parent-child relationship. If this one remains intact, the absence of any of other two - parental personality and psychological well-being - is not negative. Moreover, only a healthy relationship between a husband and a wife can provide the basis for optimal parenting.

For some parents and institutional authorities, generally in underdeveloped and developing countries, discipline means nothing but physical punishment, scolding and beating. Though scholars anonymously agree that ruthless physical punishment and sexual harassment are detrimental for a child’s social development, they often have various opinions regarding the

acceptable level of scolding, forcing to starve, spanking, rebuking and chastising. Parents often refuse to view these forms of punishments as child abuse, arguing that unruly children respond quickly to these types of disciplinary punishments. They argue that discipline is the “process of teaching a child the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior” (Carlson, 2009, p. 1). Since severe physical punishment is supposed to produce negative consequences on a child’s social development, as mentioned above, scholars have unanimously agreed that “the goal of good discipline is to help a child change impulsive, random behavior into controlled, purposeful behavior, and discipline should be reinforced with teaching, firmness, and reminders” (Carlson, 2009, p. 1). If viewed from a psychoanalytical perspective, the level of punitive discipline should be accepted to the extent what can grow the sense of accountability regarding their behaviors without producing much harmful impacts on the child’s psychology. Sociologists believe that the disciplinary socialization of a child is supposed to include both rewards in the form of love, sympathy, etc and punishments from the primary agents of socialization such as parents, family members, close relatives, etc. Therefore, parents must remember that the consequences of their disciplinary steps should not surpass their emotional backups provided to their children.

The positive and supportive disciplines are more effective than punitive discipline. Parents should provide warmth, support and interactive guidance to their children through an investigative procedure as well as set suitable behavioral restrictions which the youngster can start to internalize. The positive discipline, a holistic approach to a child’s social development, is better than good discipline which involves temporal and contextual disciplinary steps. Positive control involves a long-term policy directed at developing a child’s senses of duty, accountability, self-discipline, self-confidence, competence, self-respect, etc. through a mutually respectful parent-child relationship (Durrant, 2007, p. 4). Positive parenting is indispensably related to supportive parenting which includes: parental affection to a kid, utilization of inductive punitive techniques, awareness and participation in helping the kid in his/her peer associations, and practical instruction of social skills to boys and girls.

Proper Parenting by Providing Emotional Skills and Bridging the Love Gap

Adults' behavior impacts children in the long run. Therefore, adult behavior is much important to shape a child's character. Since emotion is an inborn quality of human nature, parents should carefully teach their child how to control his/her emotions. Moreover, emotions have both productive and destructive qualities. People of any age should realize the fundamental emotional instruction and emotional understanding. Emotional understanding is a system that teaches an individual how to handle an emotional situation or to deal with his/her emotions. Esterman (2012) notes, "emotional coaching is more than helping children learn to name their feelings, but also about relating to the child" (p. 8). Emotions are part of our individuality and are tied to our morality. For instance, emotions such as understanding, appreciation, and love boost up our concern and kindness, whereas ignominy, fault, and fright keep us away from the society. Hence, the following rules and regulations of moral standards abstain from violence, unkindness, conceit, greed, etc. Therefore, emotions have an influential impact on a child's nature and prospect. In fact, these emotional factors guide us through life. According to Clinton and Sibcy (2006), "One of the most important factors in parenting is the parent building a relationship with the child". Schmutzer (2008) notes that the following:

Sexual abuse and the propensity to abuse is a larger black plague that spiritual conversion does not stamp out. It is alive in your city and in your church. The abused are the "shrieking silent," the "exit-watchers." One has to know what to listen and watch for, but they are there. But a surprising number of adult victims have already abandoned the Church—they have their reasons (p. 1).

On the other hand, unusual anxieties and pressures are common in families in the recent decades. A family's trouble means a nation's trouble. Families should learn how to love their children. It is a tradition of all parents to love their children. Even if parents claim that they love their children very much, children are not much concerned about that. It means that, in spite of parents' love and care, children do not have sympathy or love for them. This is called "love gap". However, the question is why does the "love gap" occur? Several issues may come forward to search out the answer to this question. Overprotection, which is also defined as "Mother Hen", may cause various side effects. It damages the children's spirit. A child will not become a strong, independent adult due to overprotection. It may hamper the trustfulness of a child and his/her

ability to making good decisions. It also impedes learning capability. Similarly, the over-control, which is defined as “Army Sergeant”, should be banned. Due to this type of parenting, a child supposes him-/herself to be bad, unimportant, and disliked by everyone which hinders children from developing intimacy, free mixing, normal thinking etc. Cloud and Townsend (2001) say the following about child motivation: “Your child needs to be concerned about the pain of consequences of irresponsibility, the rights and wrongs of his behavior, and what pain his actions may cause to his friends and God” (p. 133).

Conclusion

Child sexual abuse is a severe predicament in human society. It exists in almost all cultures and countries of the world. However, modern intellectuals have been able to focus on the causes and effects of this problem from special perspectives and angles. A psychoanalytical perspective of the effects of child sexual abuse on the child’s social growth discloses that personality development of an abused child becomes gravely influenced by his or her experiences of mistreatment. Consequently, such a child has to suffer from a lifelong personality disorders which badly affect his/her capability and performance in education as well as in the workplace. Child sexual abuse further may add to the child’s possibility of getting involved in juvenile or adult delinquency. These perceptions provide parents with the scopes to look into it, while being assisted with newer knowledge. Such knowledge can help them modify their behavioral responses to their kids for the sake of a better future.

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