



CHILD NEGLECT AS A SEVERE FORM OF ABUSE: - A RESOURCE GUIDE

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ABSTRACT

Child neglect is among the severe forms of child abuse. Neglect is an act of omission, where people, typically caregivers, fail to provide adequate care to another person dependent on them. It is a pattern in which the child's basic needs, which include sufficient food, garments, security, sanitation, or care is denied. Child neglect affects physical as well as psychological health and well being of the child. Preventive measures at the family level as well as the community and Government level should be taken in order to tackle the problem of child neglect. This research study gives some of the guidelines of the basic and true effect of child neglect and importantly how to manage it at the larger level.

KEYWORDS : Child; Abuse; Neglect; Prevention; Child welfare**INTRODUCTION:**

Children make up that subdivision of a community which is the most weak, susceptible, and wholly dependent on adults. It is the mistake of adults when children end up in areas of natural disasters and catastrophes or zones of military combat operations and become the hostages and victims of physical, sexual, and emotional violence (Alekseeva 2007).

Every aspect of the child needs to be accepted, valued, and cherished by the child's major caregiver or a parent. The desecration of or malfunction to value any of these fundamentals of the child's psychosocial being comprises categories of child abuse and neglect (Barnett, Manly, & Cicchetti, 1993). According United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), any person who is under the age of 18 years is a child. This is a generally acknowledged explanation of a child and it comes from an international legal organization which is accepted by most countries around the world. However in India defining the age of a person has been a constant disagreement. The Census of India considers children to be any person below the age of 14, as do most government programmes.

What is Child abuse?

Child abuse is any action, behaviour and gestures by another person adult or child that causes considerable damage to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of affection, care and attention. WHO (2002) defines child abuse and neglect, or child maltreatment, as all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or neglectful action, or commercial or other mistreatment ensuing in definite or possible harm to the child's health, continued existence, growth or self-esteem in the circumstance of a relationship of accountability, trust or authority.

Different Forms Of Child Abuse

Abusive or offensive behaviors or an act comes in various forms, but the most common result of abuse is the emotional effect on the child. There are mainly four forms of child abuse that has been defined i.e. physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. It is very essential to remind that if a child is suffering from one type of abuse, it is most likely that the child is suffering from other form of abuse as well. In this present paper we will be discussing only one form of Abuse that is Child Neglect.

Child Neglect:-

Neglect is an act of omission, where people, typically caregivers, fail to provide adequate care to another person dependent on them. It is a pattern in which the child's basic needs, which include sufficient food, garments, security, sanitation, or care is denied. Child neglect is not always easy to identify. In cases of serious illness or injury, or untreated depression or anxiety, sometimes, a parent might become physically or mentally unable to care for a child. Other times, substance abuse including alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe. Child neglect can manifest as failure to thrive, failure to seek basic health care,

immunizations, deprivation of education and basic nutrition needs. A neglected child could be exposed to environmental hazards, substance abuse, inadequate supervision, poor hygiene and abandonment (Seth R, 2013). There are various forms of neglect including physical, medical, emotional, and educational. According to Gaudin (1993), defining neglect includes analysis of the following items:

- Minimally adequate types of care that are required by children.
- Actions that would constitute neglectful behavior. Intent of the action (or lack of action).
- Effects or potential effects on the child's health, safety, well-being, development, and so on.
- Situational factors (poverty, etc.).

In general, the four most common forms of neglect are defined as follows, according to American Humane Society.

Physical Neglect:-

Physical neglect accounts for the majority of cases of neglect that are reported. Physical neglect generally involves the parent(s) or caregiver(s) not providing the child with basic provisions needed for survival such as adequate food, clothing, supervision, and/or shelter. Because these are important to our survival, failure to provide these necessities can have long-term consequences including developmental concerns, cognitive deficits, and/or mental health issues. For example, a father/mother who eats all of the food in the household and does not provide food for his/her children may be neglecting a need related to physical neglect.

Medical Neglect:-

Medical neglect is the failure to provide suitable health care for a child when the means exist to provide such care. In another words, financially, a person is capable of providing access to health care services and does not do so. This is an important distinction because the law may view a lack of medical care due to poverty in a different way than a lack of medical care due to a motivation issue. If a child breaks his arm and his parents refuse to take him to the doctor because of inconvenience, this would be viewed differently than a family who does not seek medical services due to financial concerns and lack of access. Mental health professionals and Child Protection services would not necessarily look at this delay in care as neglect, but a lack of available resources. The delay in care may have harmful effects, however, as waiting many months to address a problem that is currently an issue is unacceptable.

Educational Neglect:-

Educational neglect involves the failure to provide adequate educational resources to a child of school age. Doesn't allow child to go school is a form of educational neglect.

Emotional Neglect:-

Emotional, or psychological, neglect may include engaging in unstable interactions in front of the child (domestic violence), refusing access to mental health care, withholding affection, ignoring, rejecting,

isolating the child, or exploiting. Poor emotional development can lead to severe psychological consequences, including social skill concerns, substance abuse, poor self-esteem, and/or destructive decision making. For example, a mother who calls her son names multiple times a day and withholds affection and praise may be neglecting his emotional needs. Perpetrators of neglect may lack understanding of child development (which may lead to unnecessary frustration or a lack of necessary care), may be single parents, may be in financial distress, may report greater mental health concerns, may have a history of substance abuse, may have been previously victimized, and may be younger in age (Children's Bureau, 2011).

Effects Of Neglect

Children who have been neglected may experience short-term and long-term effects that last throughout their life. Children who don't get the love and care they need from their parents may find it difficult to maintain healthy relationships with other people later in life, including their own children. Children who have been neglected are more likely to experience mental health problems including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Young people may also take risks, such as running away from home, breaking the law, abusing drugs or alcohol, or getting involved in dangerous relationships - putting them at risk from sexual exploitation.

Effects On Relationships And Attachment

A parent or carer's behaviour has a big impact on a child. It can also affect the relationship between parent and child. This relationship, or bond, between a child and their primary caregiver - usually mother or father but sometimes another family member - is described by attachment theory. When a child is neglected they don't usually have a good relationship or bond with their parent. Mental health professionals would describe this as a poor attachment. Poor attachment can significantly affect the relationships that people have throughout their lives, including how they interact with their own children. Early intervention can change attachment patterns, reducing harm to a child and helping them to form positive attachments in adulthood (Howe, 2011).

Effects On Brain Development

The initial years of a child's life have a big impact their brain development. That is why neglect can be so harmful; a child's experiences can change their thought processes and neural pathways. In malnourished child, neural cells can become feeble or damaged and this can lower the function of the brain. Poor relationship, attachment or minimal interaction with a parents or caregivers can change how their brain develops emotional and can affect verbal pathways. Neglect can alter the way a child's brain or mental functioning works. This can lead to an increased risk of mental health issues like depression in later life as well as cognitive disorders including memory impairments. Neglect can also cause panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009).

The impact of child abuse is daunting and it can severely impact the development of the child. The child abuse can affect every aspect of individual's life ranging from, physical, social, emotional and intellectual. It can lead to aggressive behaviour either towards others like fighting, hurting; harming others or it can lead aggression towards self as in the form of Self harm and Suicidal behaviour.

SIGNS OF CHILD NEGLECT

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Is excessively hungry.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty.
- Has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient weather appropriate clothing.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.

Apparent lack of supervision at home. Failure to thrive is a condition in which children fail physically to develop to their normal full genetic potential. It may be caused by medical (organic) circumstances or parental neglect (inorganic) that prevents the child from growing as expected. The cause can be determined by monitoring a child in a hospital setting to see if they put on weight

through a regular feeding schedule.

Following Factors May Contribute To A Parent Abusing Their Children:

- Factors associated with poverty
- Being a teen parent
- Having many closely spaced children
- Experiencing high levels of conflict in one's family
- Holding unrealistic expectations about parenting and about what children are capable of doing
- Having a negative attitude towards one's children
- Using authoritarian parenting styles with lots of control but little warmth
- Using physical punishment
- Having a history of abuse
- Experiencing low self-esteem, depression, anxiety or other mental health Problems
- Having a substance abuse problem
- A lack of social support from friends, family and other networks
- Experiencing high levels of stress

PREVENTIVE MEASURES: -

The title of Klein and Goldston's (1977) text, **Primary Prevention: An Idea Whose Time Has Come**, was visionary. Primary prevention can play an important role in helping children to understand child abuse. Some of the Primary preventive measures are:-

Educating Children About Abuse

In order to educate the children about child abuse, family and school plays an important role. Empathy is a crucial skill that needs to be taught and learned by children. Children that are in abusive homes are less likely to learn these skills that are crucial to understanding people throughout their lives.

Role Of Family

As we know that family is the first educational institute for child. Parents or primary caregiver plays an important role in the life of children. It is the responsibility of the parents to educate their children about the various forms of abuse. Some of the practices that is positively associated with the development of empathetic understanding in parents:

- Responsive, nonpunitive, nonauthoritarian behavior of mothers toward their preschool children
- Explaining to children the effects of their behavior on others
- Pointing out to children that they have the power to make others happy by being kind and generous to them
- Parental modeling of empathetic, caring behavior
- Explaining to children who have hurt or distressed others why their behavior is harmful and giving them suggestions for making amends to those hurt
- Encouraging school-age children to discuss their feelings and problems with parents

Role Of Schools

The responsibility of the schools cannot be ignored. School based prevention programmes must include child abuse. In fact, each year millions of school-children throughout the United States are exposed to programs with a preventive thrust, with many receiving more than one program. For instance, over 90% of all school districts offer services to children who are at risk for academic problems (Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989). Between 72% and 77% of all districts provide programming relevant to smoking, alcohol and other drug use, nutrition, physical fitness, and sex education; between 51% and 67% of districts instruct students on such matters as AIDS, suicide prevention, physical violence, and the use of seat belts and other safety behaviors (Holtzman et al., 1992). Programme that includes awareness camps about child abuse, Good touch Bad touch, Assertive training (Assertive enough to say "No" to any form of abuse) etc can really help in preventing child abuse.

Role Of The Community

Wherever the parents are unable to take care and protect the child, the proximate community and their elected representatives must take up that responsibility. Thus, in the village, panchayat officials (local self government) and in the urban areas, the elected members must ensure that every child is in school, receives basic health care (particularly immunizations, nutrition) and protection from child abuse & neglect (Srivastava RN, 2008)

Role Of Non Government Organization's (ngo's)

A large number of NGOs are working in the field of child welfare and child protection. However, because of the huge numbers of children requiring protection, their efforts can make only a marginal impact. However, they should coordinate their child welfare activities and need to work together. They also need to oversee implementation of various government measures that are already in place. The crucial ones include basic right to health, education, infant and young child development and prevention of child abuse & neglect.

Role Of Government

The ultimate responsibility to protect its nation's children lies with the Government. By ratification of International instruments such as UN CRC & UN General comments #13, the Government's should commit appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to prevent and protect children from maltreatment. In 1992, India accepted the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In the last two decades, the government has taken several steps towards publically advance children's rights. These include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2000 (amended in 2006), Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006), the formation of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (2005), a National Plan of Action for children (2005), Right to Information (RTI) 2005, the Goa Children (amendment) Act 2005, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 (two notifications in 2006 & 2008), expanded the list of banned and hazardous processes and occupation), Integrated Child Protection Scheme (2009) and advancing various legislations such as Right to Education Bill (2009) & Prevention of children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act 2012) to protect, promote and defend child rights in the country (the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2011). However still, there is a wide gap between policy & implementation/practice & outcome, and millions of children fall through the gaps.

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