

The Causes, Consequences And Prevention Of Child Maltreatment

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1.0 Introduction:

Interpersonal violence is a combination of family violence and the violence observed between intimate partners. Child Maltreatment falls under the category of interpersonal violence. Commonly known as child abuse, this kind of violence occurs to children under the age of 18 years (Gilbert et al., 2009). Emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, negligence, and exploitation of the children come under Child Maltreatment. Child Maltreatment is a global problem with various kinds of problems suggested by the ruling material throughout the world. According to the World Health Organization, there are approximately 20% of women and 5-10% of men have reportedly mentioned the sexual abuse they have faced in their childhood. Besides this, there are 25-50% of children (Gilbert et al., 2009) are physically abused every year. There are specific consequences associated with this violence, which get severe in some cases. In this research, the main causes, agents, and consequences of this type of violence, along with its prevention, will be highlighted.

2.0 Child Maltreatment:

When the children are neglected sexually, physically or even psychologically by their caregivers or a parent in the families, then this is termed child maltreatment, also known as child abuse. Often, these terms are used interchangeably. However, certain psychologists differentiate between these two terms by the contents involved in these two terms. Child abuse may occur as a result of the failure of any act by the parents or any activity that seems to be disturbing for the children at a young age. It is not necessary for the parents to be involved in this act. Often, caregivers are responsible for such violence. They utilize the place of the children in distributing their lies brutally (Gilbert et al., 2009). Child maltreatment in some countries is counted as a criminal act, and the families or the people involved in such acts undergo criminal charges and severe punishments in some cases. Several causes have been identified in this act. Some of the causes are mentioned in the section below.

2.1 Causes of Child Maltreatment:

Child maltreatment is a complex phenomenon with several causes associated with it. Certain general causes are associated with child maltreatment. According to the Non-Profit organization 'save the Children, working successfully in many different countries, children who are immature suffer from this kind of violence. Children today, aged below 18 years, indulge in so many unrealistic expectations

that they are sometimes unable to accept reality. Emotional problems are a common dilemma for today's youngsters. In this situation, they seek help from caregivers who often violently convey their care to emotionally damaged children. Lack of parenting knowledge is another reason for the increase in child maltreatment. In stressful situations for the children, the parents are often unable to cope with their mental condition. Such neglect gets the best out of them in the crisis. The social environment around a person also adds to the increase in child abuse. The increase in poverty has made the young children of the poor housework at early ages. In underdeveloped countries, this form of child abuse is so common. Physically abused children in their teenage by their parents turn into abusive parents as well. Religious beliefs are yet another reason why child abuse is increasing even in developed countries.

Besides the general causes of child abuse, there are two main causes of child maltreatment. The main causes of child abuse are domestic violence and substance abuse. Certain children grow up watching violence in their families. This violence can be in the form of an abusive relationship between their parents or any other violent act. In this case, the children end up being victims themselves. According to a recent report published by the WHO in the recent year, there is 50 to 70 per cent (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore & Runyan, 1998) of men abusing females and ending up abusing their children as well. Substance abuse, which is the intake of drugs, alcohol or any other form of addictive material, is another leading cause of child maltreatment. Substance abuse contributes up to 65 per cent of child maltreatment cases. In this 65 per cent (Belsky, 1993), the ratio of children under the age of five is abundantly present. There is a prominent increase in the number of foster children as well.

2.2 Consequences of Child Maltreatment:

The most obvious consequences of child maltreatment are present in the form of physical effects. No matter how minor or major these injuries, they leave a mark on the bodies of the children forever. Minor injuries can be present in the form of bruises. Major injuries include severe conditions like that observed in broken bones. In certain cases, child maltreatment may lead to the death of children as well. The emotional scars of such physical effects disturb the lives of the children for a lifetime. Sometimes, child maltreatment may lead to health issues that remain in the lives of the children for a long time. The brain development of such abused children is affected. The academic abilities of the children are affected in this way. In certain cases, children develop language problems as well. Children who have suffered from child maltreatment can be victims of diseases like arthritis, asthma, bronchitis, high blood pressure, and ulcers.

Child maltreatment comes with some psychological effects as well. Children who get abused are often isolated. They have a fear residing in their lives always. Besides this, the emotional effects on the children leave them children with low self-esteem. They often lose the will to stand up and fight for their rights in the future. Psychiatric disorders like anxiety, eating disorders and, in severe cases, suicide become common among teenagers who were once victims of child maltreatment. Behavioural effects are also linked to the violence of child maltreatment. Teen pregnancy and teen drug addiction

are some of the common examples of the Behavioral effects associated with child maltreatment. Over 30 per cent of abused and neglected kids eventually victimize their own children (Belsky, 1993).

2.3 Responses to Child Maltreatment:

Currently, there are many organizations working in the world to save children from the adverse effects of child maltreatment. In every country, the local authorities are responsible for following up and filing all such complaints of child maltreatment. Police have a role in keeping people safe from such violence (Wolfe & McGee, 1994).

3.0 Prevention Of Child Maltreatment:

Keeping in view the present time, there are a lot of preventions that can be done socially, economically, and culturally to stop this adherent act of violence.

3.1 Contribution of social condition to prevent Child Maltreatment:

Social conditions can contribute to the prevention of child maltreatment. When the atmosphere around the children is kept positive, there will be fewer children who will become a victim of this. To maintain the positive social conditions, parents of the children can play an active role. They should educate their children about the uncomfortable touch they get from their caregivers, education about the knowledge about protection of their private parts, and all such knowledge which highlights the importance of self-defence for the children. Besides, the parents can try to keep their home atmosphere positive (Wolfe & McGee, 1994). Parents should keep an eye on the working of their children as well. The complaints of the children in case of child maltreatment should never be ignored.

3.2 Contribution of economic condition to prevent Child Maltreatment:

There are a number of economic factors that affect the violence of child maltreatment, poverty being one of the main causes. In this case, the government can play an active part. When the economic conditions of the country are kept stable, then fewer children will have to work under the pressure of marinating the household chores. In this case, the government can organize funding for poor people.

3.3 Contribution of cultural condition to prevent Child Maltreatment:

The culture around the children contributes to the prevention of child maltreatment. In order to maintain positive cultural festivities, the government can organize seminars that promote positivity and ways through which the children can be aware of the violence (Gilbert et al., 2009) they can go through. Making children emotionally stable is one of the positive messages that can be promoted through the culture of society.

4.0 Conclusion:

To conclude, child maltreatment is one of the coming forms of interpersonal violence observed today. Child maltreatment is caused due to a number of reasons. These reasons can be major and minor as well. Minor reasons include the lack of information for the children about this violent activity. The major reasons are the conditions in the family and the substance abuse commonly observed. Substance abuse includes the intake of drugs and alcohol. Many organizations are working in response to this activity. However, this violent activity can be prevented using the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the country in a positive way.

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