

Childhood Trauma and Its Consequences: A Review of Maltreatment Effects

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Abstract: *Child maltreatment (CM), which includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect, is a global problem characterized by acts or omissions by a caregiver that result in harm or an imminent risk of harm to a child. It is a significant public health concern with complex terminological and definitional challenges. This review synthesizes the current evidence on scope, definitions, risk factors, and outcomes of CM, which determines a sense of urgency in early detection, prevention, and intervention. The review also focused on the various categories of CM, including physiological abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect, and neglect is the most frequently identified form of maltreatment. Effective prevention strategies, such as home visiting, parent education, and child maltreatment prevention, reduce risk factors for CM. CM causes stress associated with disruptions in early maturity level of development, and as adults, maltreated children are at increased risk for behavioural, physical, and mental health problems. Future research should involve the development of assessment instruments, implementation of prevention programs, knowledge of the neurobiological impact of abuse and neglect, and addressing the effect of trauma in children and families. This review makes a point to call for thorough research that could be used as a basis to establish effective prevention and intervention plans for this important public health concern.*

Keywords: Child Maltreatment, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Effect of Trauma, Prevention Strategies

1. Introduction

Child Maltreatment or Child Abuse (CM) is world - wide issue which has grave, long - term consequences [1]. In the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power, it encompasses any form of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, carelessness, and commercial or other forms of exploitation that result in actual or potential harm to a child's survival, development, health, or dignity [1]. Any abuse or neglect by a parent or caregiver whether emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is described as CM [2]. Somewhere around 25% of children will experience CM during their lifetime [3].

According to the World Health Organization, WHO, Child - maltreatment (CM) is the maltreatment and neglect of children who are less than eighteen years [1]. 400 million children younger than age five, or six out of ten, are systematically exposed to physical and/or psychological maltreatment by their parents or guardians [1]. One in seven males and one in five women report they were sexually assaulted as children [1]. Stress caused by maltreatment interferes with early brain development [1]. The development of the immune and neurological systems can be altered by extreme stress [1]. Children who were adversely exposed to violence through their early years have a 13% chance of dropping out of school.

“Various form of Childhood Maltreatment”

Child Maltreatment or Abuse have various forms of abuse and negligence that can affect or harm significantly to the child's Emotional, Physical, Psychological state of child [4] [5]. It is a very complicated issues which are influence by various factor's including Family environment, Economic conditions,

Systemic Structure. Determining which children are at danger, putting protective measures in place, and creating successful therapies all depend on an understanding of the many forms of childhood maltreatment. Physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect are the main types of childhood maltreatment that are categorized and discussed in this section [5] [4].

1) Physical Abuse

Purposeful use of force against a child that eventually results in physical detriment or increases the threat of it is appertained to as physical abuse [3] [4]. An act by a parent or other caregiver eventually results in fleshly detriment or poses a real threat to the life, health, or weal of the child or adolescent [6] [7]. Any fleshly detriment done to a child that is not the result of accident is considered physical abuse [4]. Only non - accidental injuries fall under the order of physical abuse [4]. This can involve physical detriment similar as striking, remonstrating, scorching, shaking, hurling, poisoning, parboiling, or burning, drowning, smothering, or other analogous situations. According to the legislation, fleshly detriment can range from more serious injuries to severe or frequent bruising [4]. Physical abuse can take numerous forms, including punching and beating a sprat, slighting a child with an instrument like a belt or a stick, remonstrating a child, burning a child with hot water, a cigarette, or an iron, putting a child under water, tying up a child, or violently shaking a baby [8].

Physical abuse can have wide - range of injuries from minor hurt to major life threatening injuries. It can also affect for longer period in life from physical and psychological aspects which includes diseases associated with substance use and violence, re - victimization, personality diseases, symptoms and consequences of PTSD, dissociative diseases, sadness,

anxiety, and suicidal studies, among other effects. It has been demonstrated that children who witness physical violence in their early times come homeless adults [4]. Children progressed 0 – 3 times are the most susceptible to physical abuse and severe physical harm [7] [9]. Children which are physical abused can suffer from child traumatic stress [9]. They are at major risk for getting depression and anxiety [9].

2) Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse (also known as psychological abuse or mental abuse) is defined as any behaviour by one or both partners that undermines the other partner's psychological development, well - being, or self - worth [62] [10] [11] [12]. It is an abuse in which an abuser uses the feelings of someone else [13]. It is often ignored but as damaging as physical abuse [10]. Emotional abuse is not as recognizable as physical abuse but can - do grave damage to our mental health, such as anxiety, chronic depression or PTSD [12]. It is defined as a repeated series of behaviours over a period.

List of emotional abuse types:

- a) **Humiliation and Name - Calling:** publicly humiliating, mocking, or calling the victim derogatory names such as “stupid,” “disgusting,” or “worthless” [10] [13] [14]
For example: An abuser might disparage their partner's intelligence in the company of friends or family daily.
- b) **Control and Intimidation** — Trying to scare, control or isolate a person through intimidation, threats of harm, or destruction of property [12] [14] [11].
Example: A person who abused may deny even that an argument occurred, or say that the victim is “too sensitive” or “crazy” for reacting to their behaviour.
- c) **Emotional Blackmail:** Using guilt, fear, or humiliation to pressure the victim into acquiescing to requests or demands [13]. Withholding tenderness and using the silent treatment
- d) **Emotional Invalidation:** Refusing to admit or accept the victim's passions or feelings, making them look like a stupid or fool when they are expressing their opinions or thoughts. Due to the abuse child often experience challenges like Low self - esteem, severe anxiety issue, Depression, harming them self, Suicidal Thoughts [12] [10], Difficulty to form a relationship, extreme aggression, struggle in academic [10], Stress for longer period due to emotional abuse which can alter brain function, emotionally unavailable, Diminishing memory

2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is committed against a child or a minor by an adult or an older child. This is an act of violence which is perpetrated by people who want to dominate and degrade other people and often exploits some form of power imbalance [15] [11]. Sexual abuse includes touching, non - touching, contact and non - contact forms of abuse. It is physical or virtual in nature [16].

Definition

Sexual Abuse is a term where any method of sex or meeting an individual without the consent of other individual this kind of such act is classified as a sexual abuse. It includes use of sexual activity to control and humiliate any person, victims, often using the imbalance of power [16]. Sexual abuse can

happen in the various forms including contact and no - contact, which can happen both in person or online [11].

Various forms of Sexual abuse

2.1. Contact abuse

Contact abuse is form of sexual abuse where it involves any kind of physical contact with any individual without his/her consent. It includes Deliberate touching, caressing, penetration of intimate parts by the offender to satisfy the sexual desire of offender [16].

Types of contact abuse

2.1.1. Sexual Touching: It involves touching any part of the child's body, whether they are clothed or naked with ill intension like Kissing, hugging, or any form of unwanted sexual contact [16].

Some examples of Sexual Touching: Touching a child's private parts, Breasts, Buttocks, Engaging the child in games like you show me yours, and I will show you mines [17].

2.1.2 Rape: It involves intentional penetrating into any body part without consent. Rape is form of sexual assault that includes penetrating body parts like vagina, oral, anal, without consent [18]. This act leaves psychological and physical impact on the victim

Legal Definition of Rape

Rape: In many jurisdictions, rape is considered as the intentional penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth with a penis, without the person's consent [18]. Assault by penetration: It involves penetration of the vagina, anus with any body part other than a penis or with an object, without person's consent [19].

Types of Rape:

1) Penile penetration

Penetration in relation to a male member, therefore, putting a penis into someone else's vagina without her consent and going further into the anus and mouth, is basically rape and comes under very serious criminal offenses [18] [20]. So, it is understood that legally, an intentional penetration using a penis through a vagina, anal, or mouth of a person without the consent of that person would be called rape [21] [20] [18]

2) Non - penile penetration

Non - penile penetration is penetrating acts other than the penis. It can be the use of objects, one's fingers, or other body parts to penetrate and is very serious in the context of sexual assault [22] [23] Non - penile penetration, in most states, is found in distinct statutes from penile penetration, mostly occurred as of assault by penetration [24].

2.1.3 Forced Sexual Activities

This type of sexual activity refers when there is used of force to in sexual act without the explicit of consent of involved individuals. it is included range of behaviour, from unwanted touching to penetration and is considered form of sexual

assault [25] [26]. This forced sexual activities involve use of physical power, threats, or non - physical intimidation, like emotional manipulation and exploitation due to power imbalance [25] [26].

Types of Forced sexual activities

- 1) **Physical Force:** Use of physical strength or power to force someone to do sexual acts.
- 2) **No - physical Force:** Using threats, emotional manipulation, or wrong use of power to intimidate someone into sexual activities. That can include lying to someone, making false promises, or using the guilt of other to obtain consent [27].
- 3) **Emotional manipulation:** manipulating the feelings of someone to make them feel pressure to engaged into the sexual activities. Where it includes making them feel miserable or guilty or responsible for the perpetrator's feeling [26].

2.2 Non - Contact Abuse

Non - Contact Abuse is form of child sexual where the physical contact or touch does not take place between the preparator and victim. But even without the physical touch or interaction, non - contact abuse is evenly harmful and emotional devastating as contact abuse. It involves the action that can exploit or manipulate child to perform sexual activities through exposure or force, exploitation of child can be done through online or in person [16] [28].

Definition

Sexual coercion has been defined as any sexual act forced on one by way of coercion, manipulation, deception, or intimidation without consent. Use of coercive tactics without application of physical force or violence, i. e., by way of using blackmailing, guilt induction, threat, or exploitation of power, will also be enough to compel the victim to participate in sexual contact [29], [30], [31].

Sexual coercion comes in numerous different forms and is generally on a continuum of actions. Chronic verbal coercion also equals sexual coercion, and illegal activities that place someone in a climate of fear or create feelings of obligation also exist. Since it is requested under pressure and without an ability to utilize free will, coerced agreement is not to be regarded as valid consent [32], [33].

2.2.1 Various types of Non - Contact Abuse

1) Exposing or Flashing

Exposing or flashing it is a type of sexual assault when an individual shows their private part to child or another person without consent often to scare them or shock them or to sexually arouse their own self [34], [35] This kind of behaviour leaves very deep impact on the victim psychologically [34]. In many countries like England and Wales, flashing the genital or private part to other person comes under criminal offense under the sexual offenses act 2003, with the imprisonment up to two years [34].

2) Showing pornography

Adult perpetrators of child pornography and child sexual abuse who expose children to pornographic materials through

computer or television display are committing a form of non - contact child sexual abuse. This act severely violates a child's safety and welfare, even with no direct contact involved. It constitutes child sexual abuse as exposing children to matters of adult sexuality that would adversely affect their mental, emotional, and developmental health [36], [37]. In most jurisdictions, including the USA, there are federal laws that certainly forbid putting a child in the presence of any pornographic material. It belongs to the broader definitions of child sexual exploitation and abuse, since this act entails exploiting or manipulating children into viewing sexual material they should not have at their tender age [38], [39].

3) Voyeurism or "peeping tom"

This term voyeurism or peeping tom is referred deriving sexual pleasure from secretly watching others in engaging in private without their consent. It includes act like watching individuals undressing themselves, bathing, watching someone using the restroom, or watching them engaging in sexual activities [40], [41]. This act Voyeurism considered as a criminal offense in many jurisdictions, including country like India, and the United States due to violation of the privacy of the individuals and leaves very harmful effect on the psychological side of the victim's [42], [43].

Indian Penal code (IPC): Section 354C of the Indian penal code states that any man who watches, or captures the image of a woman engaging in a private act in circumstances where she would usually have the expectation of not being observed either by the perpetrator or by any other person at the behest of the perpetrator or disseminates such image¹ shall be punished on first conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than one year, but which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to fine, and be punished on a second or subsequent conviction, with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than three years, but which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine [44]

4) Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual act where an individual or group exposed or exploits the imbalance or power to manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activities. Many time this can occur in exchange type either child needs or want something like gifts, money so in the exchange of that the offender commit this act [45], [46], [47]. Here children are forced to watch or to involve in the sexual activities without their consent. This act can be done through in person, through technology such as online platforms or through digital devices [45], [48]

5) Sexual Conversation

Sexual talk includes dialogue, communications, or exchanges involving sexually explicit materials. Such encounters may be person, telephone, or electronically through social media, texting, or e - mail. If these conversations are with a minor, they are frequently a type of sexual abuse even if the physical contact has not been taken place. Thios is because the minor are not fully developed or have hit that kind of maturity level legally, physically, or mentally to give the consent to sexual activities [49], [50].

6) Forcing Masturbation

Forced Masturbation is pressure or forcing an individual specially a child or any vulnerable person to masturbate in the presence of other person's or forcefully making them to watch an individual doing masturbate. This act is a serious sexual abuse or exploitation to child which invade the will and the dignity of the person, which inflict very serious psychology and emotional damage [51], [52] This act is usually followed by power situation where the offender takes the advantage of their power into submission. The intimation may involve giving threats, manipulation, or abuse of their authority [53]

7) Verbal Sexual Abuse

Verbal sexual abuse involves verbal and written statement of sexual content to harass, threaten, or exploit a person. Although physical contact may not take place in this type of abuse, it can do much more harm, emotionally and psychologically, to the victim. It normally includes suggestive comments, humorous remarks, threats, or seductive conversations towards bringing discomfort, threats, and belittlement to the victim [54], [55]. This type of sexual abuse is most common in environment like social settings, workplace, home. It mostly involves sexually explicit remarks, sexually explicit jokes, joking about body parts or features, name - calling based on insults, remarks on the physical development, sexting, stalking through an electronic communication [56], [57].

Sign and Symptoms of Childhood Maltreatment:

Physical sign

Difficulties into walking or sitting, Sudden genital injuries and infection, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Bruises, fractures, Burns, lack of proper nutrition, shelter, and not proper hygiene, untreated medical conditions [58]. Scars which do not match with the explanation given [59], [60].

Psychological Sign

Low - self - esteem, anxiety disorder, severe depression, self - harming, or suicidal thoughts

Behavioural sign

Inappropriate knowledge of sex at small age, Fear of certain individuals, withdrawal symptoms, bedwetting, sudden changes in the behaviour, displaying certain sexual behaviours which are not right at that age time, academic struggles, delay in development, stealing food, difficult in social situations [58]. flinching upon approaching, Unnecessary Aggression, Trust Problem [60]. Risk of Being emotionally unavailable, finding difficulty establishing close or romantic relationships, impact on their relationship with their own Children [59].

Long - term effects of sexual touching

Victims of sexual abuse often develops post - traumatic disorders (PTSD), personality disorder, difficulty into intimacy due to past trauma, suicidal behaviour [60], Long - term anxiety, depression, difficulty to form a healthy relationship [58].

3. Conclusion

Childhood maltreatment or issues that is so vast and deep that is involves different form of child abuse from physical to psychological abuse. Child sexual abuse also include exploitation, sexual assault and grooming as sexual tool. Offender commit such type of crime because the power imbalance and child can protect themselves from adult. The impact that child abuse creates extends upon long - time of period which can harmful to child physically and psychologically for longer period specifically psychologically which can result in severe depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and many more.

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