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## Subject Area - Sociology

### Child Abuse and Neglect

#### Introduction

In today's society, especially in U.K, we fail to address a number of issues that need to be solved. Unfortunately, child abuse is one of the major issues that our country is plagued with, yet we neglect to bring this to the attention of the entire nation. Every year millions of children suffer some form of child abuse. It is often overlooked because everyone has a different view of what exactly defines child abuse. More tragically, many people hesitate to report suspected cases of abuse, perhaps because they think the child may be lying, or they have difficulty believing that a respectable neighbour could be a child molester.

Physical Abuse, which is 19% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is the most visible form of abuse. Sexual Abuse is the very difficult one for most people to talk about. It's even more difficult for society as a whole to acknowledge that the sexual abuse of children of all ages including infants happen everyday in the United Kingdom.

#### Research Question

What is the main facto which should be considered in order to decrease the societal problem of child abuse?

#### Child Abuse

Child abuse is the intentional infliction of physical, moral, and sexual pain and suffering on a child. Hence, there are four basic forms of child abuse which are neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Neglect accounts for the majority of cases of maltreatment and it can severely impact a child's psychological or physical development. Emotional Abuse, which is 8% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, can be the cruellest and most destructive of all types of the abuses (National Exchange Club Foundation, 1998).

In most child abuse cases, the offender does not really want to hurt the child. Most abuse happens when adults have a hard time controlling their anger and/or the stresses that their lives bring. However, even if they don't mean to, a parent, family member, friend, or stranger who abuses a child might do it again, especially if other stresses are not handled. The most common form of child abuse children endure is negligence. (Bagley, 2005, p683)

#### Neglect

According to Webster's dictionary, neglect is to disregard, to leave unattended especially through carelessness ("Neglect"). Child neglect is often ignored in professional research because the indicators of this form of abuse are usually not clear at first. Neglect is usually typified by an ongoing pattern of inadequate care and is readily observed by individuals in close contact with the child. Physicians, nurses, day-care personnel, and neighbours are frequently the ones to suspect and report neglect in infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children. Relatives, police officials, and close friends are frequently the ones to suspect neglect in teens and young adults.

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Once children are in school, school personnel often notice indicators of child neglect such as poor hygiene, poor weight gain, inadequate medical care, or frequent absences from school. Many excuses for parental neglect can be heard, such as "They lost their jobs and have no money," "They are young and didn't know," and "They couldn't find a baby-sitter and had to go to work or would have lost their jobs." As these examples illustrate, neglect is viewed as a less harmful form of child abuse yet, according to Bagley, "Neglect is not only the most frequent type of maltreatment; it can be just as lethal as physical abuse". Neglect can also be physical, educational, or emotional. (Bagley, 2005, p684)

Physical neglect accounts for the majority of cases of maltreatment. According, to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System it estimates that 7.1 of every 1,000 U.K children experience physical neglect. Physical neglect generally involves the parent or caregiver not providing the child with basic necessities for example, adequate food, clothing, and shelter. Failure or refusal to provide these necessities endangers the child's physical health, well-being, psychological growth, and development.

According, to Turney, physical neglect also includes child abandonment, inadequate supervision, rejection of a child leading to expulsion from the home, and failure to adequately provide for the child's safety and physical and emotional needs. Physical neglect can severely impact a child's development by causing failure to thrive; malnutrition; serious illness; physical harm in the form of cuts, bruises, burns, or other injuries due to lack of supervision; and a lifetime of low self-esteem. (Turney, 2005, p193)

Educational neglect involves the failure of a parent or caregiver to enrol a child of mandatory school age in school or provide appropriate home schooling or needed special educational training, thus allowing the child or youth to engage in chronic truancy. Educational neglect can lead to the child failing to acquire basic life skills, dropping out of school, or continually displaying disruptive behaviour. Educational neglect can pose a serious threat to the child's emotional well-being, physical health, or normal psychological growth and development, particularly when the child has special educational needs that are not met.

Emotional Neglect includes actions such as engaging in chronic or extreme spousal abuse in the child's presence, allowing a child to use drugs or alcohol, refusing or failing to provide needed psychological care, constantly belittling the child, and withholding affection. Parental behaviours considered to be emotional child maltreatment include ignoring the child which is consistent failure to respond to the child's need for stimulation, nurturance, encouragement, and protection or failure to acknowledge the child's presence.

Rejection included actively refusing to respond to the child's needs such as, refusing to show affection. Verbally assaulting can constant of belittling, name calling, and the threatening of a child. Isolating a child from other children can prevent the child from having normal social contacts with other children and adults. And, terrorizing includes threatening the child with extreme punishment or creating a climate of terror by playing on childhood fears. And, corrupting or exploiting children is engaging children in destructive, illegal, and antisocial behaviour. (Tanner, 2004, p25)

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the acts or the failures to act by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause serious

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behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Emotional abuse includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. This can include parents/caretakers using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening or terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but no less damaging are belittling or rejecting treatment, and using derogatory terms to describe the child.

Emotional abuse also includes failure to provide the psychological nurturing necessary for a child's psychological growth and development -- providing no love, support or guidance (National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 1987). Emotional abuse is probably the least understood of all child abuse, yet it is the most prevalent, and can be the cruellest and most destructive of all types of abuse. According, to Turney, there are in fact some indicators to this type of abuse which are, observable indicators, behavioural indicators, and family or parental indicators. (Turney, 2005, p194)

Observable indicators are when a child demonstrate actions such as child rocking back and forth, sucking on items, biting themselves inappropriately aggressiveness, destructive to others, suffers from sleeping and speech disorders, restricts play activities or experiences, and demonstrates compulsions, obsessions, phobias, hysterical outbursts. Some, behavioural indicators in children are negative statements about self, shy, passive, compliant, lags in physical, mental and emotional development, self destructive behaviour, highly aggressive, cruel to others, and overly demanding.

A family and/or parental indicator include blaming or putting down of child, being cold and rejecting of child, indifferent to child's problems or welfare, withholds affection, and shows preferential treatment when there is more than one child in the family.

#### Physical Abuse

The statistics on physical child abuse are alarming. It is estimated hundreds of thousands of children are physically abused each year by a parent or close relative. Physical abuse, which is 19% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is the most visible form of abuse and may be defined as the inflicting of physical injury upon a child.

Turney, (2005) stated that this may include, burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child. While any of these injuries can occur accidentally when a child is at play it may, however, be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age and physical abuse should be suspected if the explanations do not fit the injury or if a pattern of frequency is apparent. Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly.

It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. It also includes holding a child under water, or any other dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint. For those who survive, the emotional trauma remains long after the external bruises have healed. And, the longer the abuse continue the more serious the injuries to the child and the more difficult it is to eliminate the abusive behaviour. (Turney, 2005, p196)

#### Sexual Abuse

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Sexual Abuse is the inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. Sexual abuse is the least frequently reported form of child abuse (6% of all cases). Experts believe that sexual abuse may be the most underreported type of child maltreatment because of the secrecy, the “conspiracy of silence” that so often surrounds these cases. It includes fondling a child’s genitals, making the child fondle the adult’s genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation. To be considered child abuse these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child (for example a baby-sitter, a parent, or a day-care provider) or related to the child.

If a stranger commits these acts, it would be considered sexual assault and handled solely by the police and criminal courts. Most children choose not to tell that they are being sexually abused. They are usually being tricked into believing that what are happening to them are normal behaviours and/or family member, pet, and friend has been threatened by the abuser. So, if a child tells you he/she was sexually mistreated and are displaying signs of being sexually abused you should take them seriously.

Greene made it clear that children will show some physical signs such as having difficulty walking or sitting. If they are too young to have stained or bloody underwear you should take this very serious. Or have genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area. Some, behavioural and emotional signs such are difficulty eating or sleeping. Soiling or wetting pants or bed after being potty trained. If they start acting like a much younger child or excessive crying and sadness and start withdrawing from school or family activities and others. (Greene, 2007, p30)

Talking about or acting out sexual acts beyond normal sex play for age. Physical Indicators are things you have to pay close attention too for example, a child is having difficulty walking or sitting, torn clothing, stained or bloody underwear, pain or itching in genital area, and venereal disease. Behavioural indicators in children often do not tell with normal words that they have been sexually abused or that they have successfully resisted an assault and don’t know quite what to do next. There are many reasons children might hesitate or be afraid to tell us about what has happened, including their relationship to the offender, fear of the consequences, retaliation or uncertainty about whether or not they will be believed. (Jack, 2005, p293)

#### How Big is the Problem

Most people do not know what, when, where, how, or why some children have changes in behaviours or attitudes. Most people just institute bad behaviour with children growing up and rebelling and they miss the signs of a child being sexually abused. Any one of the following signs could indicate that there has been a sexual assault. When a child have a sudden reluctance to go someplace or be with someone or start displaying inappropriate affection or sexual behaviours with other young children. When they start acting out in public, sudden use of sexual terms or new names for body parts, un-comfortableness.

When they start rejecting typical family affection, having sleep problems, including: insomnia, nightmares, refusal to sleep alone or suddenly insisting on a night light. Regressive behaviours, including: thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, infantile behaviours or other signs of dependency, extreme clinginess or other signs of fearfulness. In school they have a sudden change in personality, problems in school (i.e. fighting), unwilling to participate in or change clothing for gym class at school. At the home they start running away from home, having bizarre or unusual sophistication pertaining to

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sexual behaviour or knowledge, including sexual acting out, reports sexual assault by parent or guardian.

## The Care

### What Solutions Have Been Attempted With Which To Solve The Problem?

Once a child protection agency gets a report of a case of suspected child abuse, the staff initiates a series of steps to evaluate the charge, protect the child during the evaluation, and, if the allegation is true, to treat both the child and the abuser. Courts may become involved in this series of steps in two ways. At first a judge can curtail a parents right or permanently to allow protective custody of the child or placement in a foster home during the initial evaluation period. Secondly, criminal charges may be brought against the abuser. (Iwaniec, 2006, p73)

Then organizations such as the United States Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, Prevent Child Abuse New York, A National Movement, Stop It Now!, The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, and The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children were all put in place to prevent future child abuse, habilitate the abused and abuser and etc.

### Prevent Child Abuse New York

Prevent Child Abuse New York is the only state-wide, non-profit organization in New York dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect. According to Prevent Child Abuse New York website they prevent child abuse and neglect by increasing public understanding of the problem and its solutions and serving as a resource for families, individuals and organizations (Prevent Child Abuse New York). They advocate for the expanding and improving programs and policies to prevent child abuse. They also foster a state-wide network committed to child abuse prevention. (Prevent Child Abuse New York)

### Stop It Now!

Stop It Now! It is a national non-profit organization, created a ground-breaking public health approach to prevent the perpetration of child sexual abuse. Since 1992, Stop It Now, started public policy, public education, and research programs to protect our children by emphasizing adult and community responsibility. These programs reach out to adults who are concerned about inappropriate sexualized behaviour in another adult, adolescent, or child, and to adults who are concerned about their own thoughts or behaviours. (Stop It Now! U.K & Ireland, 2005)

### The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

The NSPCC is the United Kingdom's leading charity specializing in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. They have been directly involved in protecting children and campaigning on their behalf since 1884. They have 180 community-based throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They have a free, 24-hour Child Protection Helpline that provides information, advice and counselling to anyone concerned about a child's safety. They have public education campaigns, to increase understanding about child abuse and provide advice and support on positive parenting.

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They have parliamentary campaigning to persuade government, Parliament and opinion-formers to put children's issues at the top of the political agenda. They have child protection training and advice for organizations involved in the care, protection and education of children. For example, local and health authorities, sports bodies and young people's groups. They do research on the nature and effects of child abuse. They hold fundraisers through individual and corporate supporters, which provide 85% of the money needed to pay for our work to end cruelty to children. (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) (Rispen, 2004, p975)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, child abuse needs to be better recognized. In order for it to be more recognized, people need to gain more knowledge. More information needs to be presented to the public. Everyone needs to work together to decrease this problem because whether or not you think it is affecting you, it really is. Abuse affects society as a whole and that includes everyone in it. Child abuse is the number one killer of children all over the world. The four forms neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse continue to hurt children all over the world. Child abuse is both shocking and commonplace. Child abusers inflict physical, sexual, and emotional trauma on defenceless children every day. The scars can be deep and long-lasting. Unfortunately, the more subtle forms of child abuse such as neglect and emotional abuse can be just as traumatizing as violent physical abuse. Focused support can help both the victims of child abuse and the child abusers themselves.

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