

Breaking the Silence on Physical and Emotional Abuse

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Abstract

Abuse is treating a person in a cruel and harmful manner. The abuse varies from one region to another, but the issue has become an important concern at the global level. It is because the abuses are increasing rapidly affecting the children. The World Health Organisation has stated that almost 3 in 4 children are regularly facing physical punishment and psychological violence, and also every year approximately 40,150 homicide deaths occur due to child maltreatment. The maltreatment includes all types of physical and emotional abuse. Emotional abuse occurs through manipulation, humiliation, negative criticism, etc. Physical abuse occurs through visible marks or scars on the body. These abuses can bring consequences to the mental health of children affecting the individual's life and development. This paper highlights the importance of discussing the physical and emotional abuse faced by children and the approaches to overcome it.

Keywords: Abuse, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse

Introduction

Childhood is very important in everyone's life. It lays the foundation for social, emotional and behavioural development. The stage of childhood helps in shaping confidence, communication, personality development and better mental health for every human being. Thus childhood plays a pivotal role and any disruption can cause severe damage. Such damage can be caused by abuse impacting the child's physical, mental and behavioural well-being. Abuse is a behaviour that causes distress, harm, or cruelty towards another person in an intentional manner. Abuser is a term used for a person who treats the other person in abusive way. The person who receives abuse is referred to as a victim or survivor of abuse. There are many forms of abuse. They are physical abuse, verbal abuse, domestic abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, negligence and financial abuse. These abuses can cause injuries like bruises, burns, cuts, scratches, marks broken bones and also affect emotions leading to trauma, low self-esteem, stress, depression, chronic pain etc... The abuse is a very deep parting an emotional and psychological scar impacting the quality of a person's life.

Comprehending the Physical and Emotional Abuse

Physical abuse is an intended act where an abuser causes injury through physical actions. The physical actions are hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, using hard objects or weapons to strike, strangling, burning, shoving, choking, poisoning, throwing, scratching and restraining. Physical abuse will lead to visible injuries and cause long-term health issues. Emotional abuse is also called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour that involves constant emotional mistreatment harming the emotional well-being of a person. It involves trying to scare, humiliate and manipulate a child through psychological means. The psychological factors include insulting a child with offensive language, gas lighting, Emotional Manipulation, constant criticism, belittling, yelling in aggressive behaviour, threatening to harm, instilling fear, restricting the interactions and isolating the child to depend on the abuser.

Types of the Abuse

The various types of physical abuse are:

1. Direct violence: it is a direct act where a person directly harms and threatens another individual and it is a physical assault.
2. Indirect violence: Indirect violence is occurs by using objects or weapons to cause harm.
3. Neglect: it involves the failure to provide essential needs for an individual.

The various types of emotional abuse are:

1. Verbal abuse: It is harming a person through words and language. The verbal abuse includes insults and name-calling.
2. Belittling: belittling means to make a person feel inferior and worthless by undermining their self-esteem.
3. Isolation: it is an act of making a person to detach from society, close relationships and the support system of a person.
4. Gaslighting: It is a method of manipulation where a person is made to doubt his/her feelings, thoughts, memories and reality perspective.

Impact of Abuse

The physical effects are caused by immediate injuries, chronic pain, somatic symptoms, physical disabilities and risk of increased illness. The person experiencing the physical abuse will experience a wide range of emotions. The emotions include anger, self-blaming, sadness, fear, confusion and guilt. The Physically abused children develop interpersonal problems. The interpersonal problems are aggressive behaviour, difficulty in forming relationships, developing dominating and controlling behaviour. The children can get into greater risk of consuming drugs, alcohol and other substance use. Added to this Mental health issues can be caused. The mental health problems consist of the symptoms of depression, emotional distress, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders and also the thoughts of committing suicide will be prevalent among them. This abused child may also be meet up with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), low self-esteem and personality disorder.

The emotional abuses have long term effects on children's social, emotional and physical development. Emotional abuse changes the behaviour of child. The behaviour changes want to grasp attention, clinging to another person, developing negative thoughts, difficulty in making decisions and developing the habit of bullying or stealing. the emotional abuse further affects the emotional development of children by controlling the emotions, finding fault on themselves, feeling emotional numbness, failure to form healthy relationship, afraid of losing people, lacking trust and facing short temper problems.

Obstacles for Disclosure

There are many reasons that children will not tell about the abusers. The children's may encounter conflicting feelings and suffer mixed confusions. The children fear that they might not be believed by others and they might also not believe the true nature of abuser. The children fear that their parents might get mad at them for telling. The children may not know that they are being abused or they do not know that the abuse is serious problem. The children are unaware about it and it shows the lack of knowledge. The children may feel ashamed and guilt on revealing the abuse because this might bring the reputation of the family and fearful of the outcome of telling about the abuse. The children might also self blame for the abuse leading to not disclose about it.

The children do not disclose because they are afraid that they do not have anyone to support them. They are afraid that it might cause trouble and upset their family members. They also feel embarrassed to talk about the situation. The children worry that the information about abuse would spread to everyone and the matter would not be confidential. They fear of negative response on disclosing about the abuse is another barrier for not unveiling it. The children might be afraid of the threats given by the abuser. They also worry that if they speak out about the abuser, the abuser might cause further harm to them. The children also lack confidence in telling the information. They also find difficult to disclose because of the close emotional connection with the abuser making them to seal their mouth. Worrying of societal labelling and being stigmatized further cause fear of not disclosing it. The manipulation of abuser will also lead the children from not speaking out. If they think of speaking out, the children may not know about where, how or to whom to report the abuse.

Importance for Breaking the Silence

Breaking the silence about the abuse is very important for the well being of individuals and as well for the society. First of all it empowers the child that while speaking out it validates that the problems are heard and they are not alone. This provides emotional relief to the child. When the buses are told and reported, it brings awareness to the other people and it helps to break the stigma prevailing in the society. It further approaches other child to speak out the ill treatment and seek help to come out the abuse. Thus this helps to healing process for the child and helps them move forward in their live.

The victims will be able to receive legal assistance, counselling and safer environment. When these issues are discussed the awareness on symptoms, signs, help assistance, legal measures are addressed thus imparting the understanding and informed responses can be given. The breaking of silence helps in eradicating the social stigma and prejudice about abuse. It further encourage in supporting the victims and help for attaining justice. Awareness and discussions on this topic will prevent a child from the abuse. The speaking out will shatter the isolation and pave pathway for healing. The blaming of elf, shame, guilt and embarrassment can be broken by breaking the silence. Finally a safer society can be build by speaking out about the abuse. It helps in forming an opinion that in the society abuse is unacceptable behaviour and such act cannot be tolerated by anyone.

Therapeutic Approaches

Trauma focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

The Trauma focused cognitive behavioural therapy deals with the mental health concerns of children and adolescents. It mainly deals with early traumatic events experienced by the children. The main purpose of the therapy is to reduce the post traumatic stress disorder and mood disorder caused by the physical, emotional as well as sexual abuse. The therapy focus on helping the individual to understand their trauma, challenge the negative thoughts, then develop better coping mechanisms and finally improve relationships with family and society.

Child-Parent Psychotherapy

The Child-parent psychotherapy model is intended for young children and families for helping them to heal the emotional and psychological impact caused to them. It mainly focuses on strengthening parent child relationship, recover from trauma and improve child development.

Attachment and Bio-behavioural Catch-Up (ABC)

The Attachment and Bio-behavioural Catch-Up (ABC) is a therapeutic intervention intended to improve the young children who have experienced early life trauma such as abuse. The therapy helps in improving the emotional and behavioural functioning of the children. It enhances the attachment relationship towards their parents by helping the parents to provide nurture care and help in enhancing the positive parent child interaction.

Exposure Therapy

The Exposure Therapy is a therapeutic approach designed for the children, adolescents and adult who have gone through traumatic experiences in their life. This therapy is mainly used to help individuals to tackle with the experience and gradually reduce the fear related to traumatic experiences including abuse and other forms of violence. The exposure therapy assists in overcoming the avoidance behaviour and helps in improving the overall functioning of the children.

Compassion Focused Therapy

Compassion-focused therapy (CFT) is a therapeutic method that aid in helping people who are struggling with shame, self-criticism, depression and anxiety which result from early experiences of abuse. The approach stresses building self-compassion and being compassionate for others. This helps in regulating the mind and feeling of self-acceptance and comfort. The therapy helps in instilling resilience, emotional well-being and positivity.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is a technique for treating mental health problems. The method helps to heal the individual from trauma and other stressful life incidents. It engages in moving the eyes back and forth while processing the traumatic memories.

Somatic Experiencing (SE)

Somatic Experiencing is a body-based psychotherapy approach. The approach helps the children to identify and express the sensations. It helps to focus on the individual to heal from trauma by dealing with physical sensations and stored emotions. The main aim of the therapy is to release the energy that is stored in the body because of trauma to regulate the body's functioning and develop emotional resilience.

Family Therapy

Family Therapy concentrates on resolving issues related to abuse within the family. The main aim of the therapy is to improve family dynamics and support the family member in the healing process to overcome the abuse. The therapy focus on progressing the emotional bond and attachment within the family members. It also helps in bringing changes in the behaviour and interactions of the family members. It engages in rebuilding the trust among the family and guides the effective ways for handling the conflicts.

Conclusion

Breaking the silence on physical and emotional abuse is very essential for creating a safer and more supportive society for the people. Speaking out and openly addressing the abuse gives abundant benefits. It leads to increasing access to therapeutic interventions of counselling and aid in the process of recovering from the abuse as well as engage in the healing process. The increased awareness will enable individuals to understand the issues and to reduce the prevailing stigma and misconceptions about them. Early intervention and preventive methods will help in reducing the problem in society.

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