



International Journal of Research In Paediatric Nursing

E-ISSN: 2664-1305
P-ISSN: 2664-1291
IJRPN 2020; 2(1): 90-91
Received: 28-11-2020
Accepted: 02-12-2020

Vidya V Thokal
Assistant Professor,
Supriyadidi Sule College of
Nursing Srirampur,
Ahmednagar, Maharashtra,
India

Child abuse: A review

Vidya V Thokal

Abstract

The term child abuse has come to mean any intentional act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including acts of negligence, committed by a person responsible for the care of the child.

According to UNICEF violence against children can be "physical and mental abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. Violence may take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential care facilities, on the streets, in the workplace, in prisons and in places of detention." Such violence can affect the normal development of a child impairing their mental, physical and social being. In extreme cases abuse of a child can result in death.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as: "at a minimum, any of recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

Keywords: Child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, battered child syndrome

Introduction

What is child abuse?

Child abuse can be defined as causing or permitting any harmful or offensive contact on a child's body; and, any communication or transaction of any kind which humiliates, shames, or frightens the child.

Child abuse: The term used to describe child abuse includes battered child syndrome and non-accidental injury to children.

Abuse is considered as an act in which intentionally physical, mental or emotional harm is inflicted on a child by parent or any other person. It may include repeated injuries, unexplained cuts, fractures, burns, scars, harm, punishment, sexual abuse, etc.

Levels of child abuse

- **Home:** Abusers are parents or parents' substitutes.
- **Institutions:** Schools, day care centres, boardings, hostels, residential centres.
- **Society:** Which allow children to live in poverty or to be denied of basic necessities of life.
- **Discipline and neglect:** Discipline is a purposeful action to restrain or control child behaviour and not intended to hurt the child or result in injury. Neglect is an act of omission and refers to child failure to meet dependent basic needs of food, shelter, clothing and rights of them.

Causes of abuse

- Marital problems
- Financial difficulties
- Frustration
- Stress due to illness
- Parent child conflict
- Losing control over anger

Corresponding Author:
Vidya V Thokal
Assistant Professor,
Supriyadidi Sule College of
Nursing Srirampur,
Ahmednagar, Maharashtra,
India

Types of abuse

1. Physical abuse
2. Neglect abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional abuse

1. Physical abuse

In this bruises, burns, injuries, rope lying, fracture may be included.

Characteristics

1. Fear of parents,
2. Extremes in behaviour,
3. Learning problems,
4. Fatigue,
5. Sleep in the class,
6. Injuries, etc.
7. Truancy and tardiness in school,
8. Hurting other children, etc.

2. Neglect

It is condition in which child's basic human needs are neglected. Financial status, cultural values, parental capacity should be considered before a parent is accused of neglecting a child.

3. Sexual abuse

It is not easy to identify because the physical/signs of sexual abuse are not seen outside a clinical or hospital setting. The child victim is usually, reluctant to share information about abuse.

Characteristics

- Itching, pain, bruises or bleeding in the external genitalia,
- Bloody or stained undergarments,
- Stretched hymen at very young age,
- Urinary bladder infection,
- Changing sleeping patterns,
- Nightmares,
- Use of drugs/alcohols, etc.

4. Emotional maltreatment

It may consist of verbal assaults or threats that provoke fear, poor communication in the child. Parents that foster love, belonging and enhanced self-esteem.

Characteristics

- Stuttering enuresis,
- Delinquency,
- Truancy,
- Overeating,
- Childhood depression, etc.

Prevention of child abuse

1. Never leave child unattended especially outside home.
2. Beware of changes in child's behaviour or attitude.
3. Teach child the difference between good touches and bad touches.
4. Participate in child's activities and know about child's friends.
5. Never discipline child when you are extremely angry.

Management of child abuse

- Protective services for children: Emergency shelter, day care centre, telephone hot lines etc.
- Parent education.
- Counseling.
- Financial assistance.
- Foster home care.
- School guidance.
- Assertiveness training.

Role of nurse in child abuse

- The nurse can meet the family therapeutic needs in variety of ways.
- Nurse often teach mothers children-care skills such as proper-feeding, effective discipline and constructive communication.
- The nurse demonstrate good communication skills and discipline by teaching both parents and children in calm, respectful and informative manner.
- Nurse can show how to physically and psychologically care for relative during home visits.
- Advise parents not to neglect or ignore their children.
- Nurse should have to advise parents to fulfill all the basic needs of their children.
- Nurse should have to advice teachers to treat the students with love in school, and provide health care programmes.
- Nurse should advise the parent that they should not send their children alone.
- Nurse should have to advise parents that they should not send their girl children with strange person. Send them in auto and never send them alone. If they send them with any other person then that person should be known to them.
- In school health programmes, the nurse should have to advice the teacher that they should have to give education about activities like snorting to save themselves.
- Nurse should have to advise the teachers in school to give them sex- education.
- Nurse should have to advise mother to be-franks with her girl children to know their feeling so that she does not feel alone.
- Community health nurse should have to advice the mother to take proper care of their children like bathing, brushing, etc.
- CHN advice the family members not to abuse the child in case of wrong work instead of abusing and scolding, teach them in a right way to do the household work.

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