

Understanding Child Neglect And Its Consequences On Well Being Of Children

Dr.K.Maheswari¹, Dr.A.Sivagami² and Dr.T.Unnamalai³ and Dr.S.Rajeswari⁴

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli.

² Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli

³ Assistant Professor of Commerce, CDOE, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli

⁴ Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli

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Abstract

One of the most prevalent types of child abuse is child neglect. India is a home to the largest child population in the world, with almost 41 per cent of the total population under eighteen years of age. But in this scenario, According to the Times of India 2023, 90% of children are abused in one way or the other before they attain the age of 18. The health and security of the country's children is an integral part of nation's progress and development. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) define that child maltreatment as harm experienced by a children under the age of 18 years by an adult or child that is in the form of physical, sexual or emotional but can also involve a lack of love, care and attention. Child neglect is very common serious public health problem and it has adverse effects on childhood experiences. It affects the health, opportunity, and wellbeing of children in their later life. Any form of neglect of a child under the age of eighteen by a parent, caregiver, or any person acting in a custodial capacity is considered child neglect. The important contributing factors of child neglect are socio-economic conditions of the family, living arrangements and living with domestic violence, parental mental health and drug and alcohol use. The prevalence of child neglect can be reduced through creating awareness of their rights among the children, especially the right to protection, among parents and other stakeholders, must strictly follow the laws (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act) to punish those who abuse /exploit the children and take action to strengthen accountability on the part of government, NGOs and the civil society.

Keywords: Child Neglect, Child Labour, Protection of Children, Sexual Offences, Act,

INTRODUCTION

India has numerous child protection laws, and it is becoming more widely acknowledged that safeguarding children is essential to social progress. The difficulty in putting the legislation into practice stems from a lack of qualified preventative and rehabilitation programs as well as human resource capability on the ground. Millions of children are thereby vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, violence and child neglect. Child neglect is an area where much emphasis is not given in families and the neglect starts from the primary groups members and understanding about child neglect makes a person to be aware about childhood and it helps a child to grow strong in all dimensions of life.

Child neglect is an unending problem if a child's basic needs are not met and it is the most common form of child abuse. If the basic needs of a child are not fulfilled it may put them into dangerous situations and it can also have long term effect on the children's physical and psychological health. A number of variables, including ineffective parenting, inadequate coping mechanisms for stress, dysfunctional family structures, and demanding life situations, can contribute to neglect. Poor families under financial and environmental hardship are more likely to experience neglect, especially if one or both parents suffer from an untreated mental illness (usually schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or depression), abuse drugs, or are not as bright as they may be. Single-parent households may have fewer resources and a lower income, which puts their children at danger of neglect.

Child Neglect is understood as an inattention or omission by the caregiver to provide for the child such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions and it led to different causes which are harmful to the child's physical health, mental well-being, and social development. 'Child Maltreatment' is referred as child neglect and it includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity. In terms of a nation's overall approach to child

and family policy, the initiatives which are taken shape the child protection system and will have the potential to be quite significant in terms of the welfare of children. Simultaneously, there exists a significant disparity in child protection initiatives throughout nations and, frequently, even regions within a nation. In order to alleviate some of the loneliness or annoyance parents may be experiencing, support groups offered by neighbourhood associations are frequently beneficial initial steps. Parents who experienced abuse as children themselves are especially in need of assistance. The best defense against physical and/or sexual abuse of your child outside of the home is personal monitoring and involvement in their activities.

CONCEPT OF CHILD NEGLECT

Child neglect refers to omissions or negligence in meeting the basic needs of a child. Repeated acts of child neglect can result in major health issues, including the death of the kid. When a parent is able to provide for their child's growth in one or more of the following areas such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, that is considered neglect, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999).

Child neglect can be manifested in various ways of meaning, such as failure to comply with health recommendations, lack of seeking health care, denial of food, child abandoning, poor hygiene, denial of education, inadequate supervision, child exposure to the drugs and dangerous environment. Allnock (2016) revealed about the various types of neglect on children are seen and parental supervision plays a key role in avoiding such neglects among the children.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND NEGLECT

Child development is collective in nature and the accomplishment of new developmental tasks is depending upon the achievement of previous developmental milestones. If the children are neglected in their early life may suffer from impairment and thus leads to struggle with subsequent developmental tasks.

INFANCY

Neglectful mothers may not be responsive to their child's needs or feelings and not attentive and ineffective communication or less positively interact with their child and they think that their child as irritating and demanding, and fail to engage emotionally with their child when feeding.

TODDLERS (1-3 YEARS)

The child experiencing poor parenting style may be facing lack of affection or empathy and positive social interactions with child.

CHILDHOOD TO EARLY ADOLESCENCE (5-14 YEARS)

In this stage parental relationship is most important because they need support from their parents. Relationships between neglected children and their parent(s) may be characterized by lack of information exchange, inadequate emotional warmth and lack of response by a parent to their child's requests for support. Neglected children expected less support from their mothers than non-neglected children.

ADOLESCENCE

Neglected adolescents experienced rejection and abandonment from their family members. Parental caring responsibilities are depended upon their mental health condition or substance abuses that impact on their parenting capacity, or experience overly restrictive parenting. Due to the focus shifting from familial to peer and romantic connections, as well as changes in socio-emotional functioning there arises the need to investigate about adolescent neglect and interpersonal functioning (Burnett, Thompson, Bird, & Blakemore, 2011; Lam, Mchale, & Crouter, 2014).

TYPES OF CHILD NEGLECTS

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

When parents do not provide essential food, adequate clothing or adequate shelter results in hunger, malnutrition and failure to thrive. Parents not having concern on their children's hygiene for example a child may have not taken bath for several days and it leads to severe nappy rash and skin diseases, improper care, poor hygiene and show disregard for child's safety and welfare.

MEDICAL NEGLECT

The parents deny or delay to provide health care needs at the required time and fail to comply with health care recommendations, or fail to seek appropriate health care results in medical neglect.

EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

Parent or caregiver fails to provide formal education to their children in an appropriate manner. For example, a school-aged child is not regularly attending school and this may be a result of chronic truancy and also includes inattention to special education needs.

INADEQUATE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OR AFFECTION BY PARENTS

The inadequate emotional care experienced by children in form of feeling insecure, unwanted, unloved and unworthy. Because of poor parent-child contact with their children such as not receiving hugs, affirmations of affection, or assurances that they are loved, are symptoms of emotional neglect. It is possible to isolate children, allow them to use drugs or alcohol, or allow them to participate in other maladaptive behaviors. Neglect models The three main models of causal neglect are the ecological-transactional model, the parental deficit model, and the environmental deficit model (Blumenthal, 2015).

In the parental deficit model said that the parental characteristics are play a vital role (psychopathology, cognitive distortions or experience inappropriate care) for developing a mentally healthy child in the future. In this model social and economic factors are not concentrated by the author (Smith & Fong 2004). The environmental deficit model point out the material deficiency is the primary cause of child neglect. The model emerged from sociological theories of explaining the causes and effects of intergenerational poverty. According to this paradigm, poverty causes stress, which prevents parents from meeting their child's requirements on a material and emotional level. According to an ecological-transactional paradigm, the interplay between environmental influences and family features is what leads to neglect. The degree of stress and coping strategies were the main topics of this model. Neglect may happen when family stress levels rise over the capacity for coping (Daniel et al. 2011).

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING FOR CHILD NEGLECT

Child factor

A child may be neglected if they exhibit aggressiveness, attention impairments, challenging temperaments, or behavioural issues, or if their parents believe they do. Sometimes a child's behaviour might indirectly result in their physical, emotional, and academic neglect.

Economic factor

A parent's negligent attitude towards their child may be influenced by the family's financial situation as well as that of the parents and carers. A parent in poverty or with limited income can engage in child neglect by not giving their child's educational or skill-acquisition needs enough thought; instead, they may be more concerned with finding the money for other expenses like rent and food. A decline in income and other economic downturns lead to a rise in the number of neglected children.

Social Factor

Parental neglect of their child's physical, emotional, and even academic needs and wellbeing is influenced by their social standing. Education has the power to change a person's perspective and behaviour. Highly educated parents are probably more aware of their children's requirements and make an effort to meet them all. In current society, domestic violence, single parenthood, and marital conflict—which manifests as parents' divergent goals, ideologies, or areas of interest—are additional societal factors that contribute to child neglect.

Cultural factor

Gender bias exists in some cultures, particularly in India. People there have a tendency to favour one gender over another, placing one in a difficult position and favouring the other. This societal perception may prevent parents from providing their female offspring with a comprehensive education about sexuality. Additionally, it is a cultural belief and practice that a girl's place in the family is in the kitchen, helping with household chores. This idea has permeated society deeply, particularly in rural regions, and it has led to the majority of female children being neglected in terms of their education. Parents are less interested in and concerned about their daughters' education because they believe it is a waste of money to send their daughters to school.

CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD NEGLECT

Maltreatment can cause stress and it leads to impairment of child development. Extreme stress can damage the development of the nervous and immune systems. Some short-term effects of neglected children may be regressive behaviors (such as a return to thumb sucking or bed-wetting) and faces various symptoms such as sleep disturbances, eating problems, performance problems at school. Teicher et al (2004) found that neglected children had a smaller corpus callosum when compared to their non-maltreated peers. Erickson et al (1996) has study the school achievements of neglected

children. The result of the study revealed that who experienced emotional neglect in their early life and its affects the school performance during the first six years of schooling and another researcher found that the neglected children performed poorly on tests of intelligence and reading ability compared to adults without a history of abuse or neglect Eckenrode (1993).

Maltreated children are at high risk of behavioural, physical and mental health problems such as: Perpetrating or being a victim of violence, problems with brain development, running away from home, mental health problems including depression, develop suicidal thoughts, getting into dangerous smoking, obesity, high-risk sexual behaviours, unintended pregnancy, alcohol and drug misuse. More work must be done to guarantee that survivors and their families receive considerate, prompt, and effective protection and services, even if progress has been achieved in raising social awareness, strengthening laws, and fostering action to end child abuse, exploitation, child neglect by different ways and violence. Families must ne sensitized to take care of their children with love , care and support.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR CHILD NEGLECT

A child who is being neglected may not realize the bad situation and blame themselves for the mistreatment and the wrong happenings. If a child talks about neglect it is important to listen carefully and appreciate them for telling the information and do not confront the alleged abuser.

- ❖ Providing safe and secure environments for young children to grow and learn builds a solid basis for their futures and for a happy and affluent society.
- ❖ Strengthening economic condition of the families in rural areas and the urban areas and support groups through local community organizations are helpful.
- ❖ Acceptance of changing social norms to support parents.
- ❖ Encouraging positive parenting especially in the areas of quality care and education in the early stages of life.
- ❖ Developing parenting skills to promote healthy child development.
- ❖ Government can develop various supportive and training programmes for new parents.
- ❖ The parents have to avoid anger or punishing language and can prevent emotional scars for a lifetime.
- ❖ Counselling, Psychotherapy and life skills training can help the neglected children to cope with difficult feelings and learn to trust others.
- ❖ School Social Workers, clinical social workers and other health care practitioners can help parents, caregivers to learn coping skills.
- ❖ Supportive services through social workers can help identify the family stressors and provide childcare, temporary assistance to families and mental health services.
- ❖ Social workers must be social change agent and advocate family friendly policies in government and institutions.
- ❖ Social workers must investigate thoroughly when maltreatment is suspected and child protection committee must work together in resolving the problems of children.

CONCLUSION

It is important to create awareness and remind the public that child abuse, exploitation and neglect are serious threats to a child's future and development, hence it must be removed from the society and persistent lack of attention and supervision are not acceptable. It is everybody's responsibility to take care of the future generations with care and protection. Child abuses cases must be tackled with severe punishments to the offenders. It takes courage and wisdom to confront, address, and restore the mental and emotional health of parents. However, this is frequently the most effective strategy to reduce the likelihood that children would experience abuse in the future.

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