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THE LOST BOND: A CASE ON CHILD ABUSE AND IT'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

Dr. JUHI GARG
ASST. PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY STUDIES
DEHRADUN

RICHITA JAKHWAL
STUDENT
GRAPHIC ERA UNIVERSITY
DEHRADUN

ABSTRACT

Cases of child abuse have increased, in 2014 the number was 8904 that has increased to 14913 in 2015 (POSCO, 2016). World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. "There are four types of child abuse: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and psychological abuse; and neglect. The study will help the society to know the impact of child abuse on the victim's life and how the personality changes and life becomes a miserable journey, where family's love and support is playing a very important role. Acceptance and love nurture broken personality of the child and the absence of which can have an adverse impact on the psyche of the child. It also has long-term impacts on their intellectual health and in obtaining occupation; this leads them to destructive behavioural patterns and criminality. However, if accepted gracefully by the society they will lead a happy and fulfilling life like any normal individual in many directions like family, job, and service to the society.

KEYWORDS

child abuse, emotional abuse and physical abuse.

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INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Blakemore, Herbert, Arney, & Parkinson (2017) reported that the impact of child abuse could be seen in the child's mental health, physical health, schooling outcome, social and relational functioning.

According to a report by NSPCC (2017) on 'How safe are our children? In 2016-17, child-line had made 4,358 referrals to outside agencies for 3, 8550, which indicate that there is, the number of referrals has increased by 8 per cent as compared with 2015-16 data. The report says, the purpose of Children and Social Work Act 2017 is to mend mental health set up for taking care of children and to have sex education compulsory for the secondary schools in England. Digital Economy Act 2017 allowed blocking the sites in the UK that shows pornography to children to prolong safety from online pornography.

When Family atmosphere instead of being cosiness and protective it becomes the home of 'deprivation', 'pain' and 'violence and in result child suffer from clashes and many syndromes. He also said that if the child is misinterpreted, forbidden, it may cause unpleasantness, clash, or revolt at the psychological level. Frequently this occurs when the child's parents try to impose their ideas of educating the child. Doing some hurtful traditions like child marriage, discriminating a girl a child, child labour has a harmful influence on the children that leads to the growth in the vulnerability to exploitation and inattention. Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), Government of India (2007). According to 2001 census, people below aged eighteen years are around 440 million, which is 42 per cent of India's total population that means every fourth person out of ten.

THE CASE

Savita Rawat lived in New Delhi. She was living in a joint family with her parents, grandparents. She had two siblings, one younger brother, and one elder sister. When her eldest sister was born, the father was very disappointed, as he wanted a baby boy. When her mother was pregnant for the second time, the father desperately expected a boy but when she delivered the second girl, the father became very upset and frustrated. He did not even see his new-born face for several days. He always wanted a boy child and this fuelled the desired couple to try for the third child and incidentally blessed by a boy at the third time. The father was overjoyed. He always discriminated against his children. Savita was young around nine years when her mother died due to Brain Haemorrhage. The family member did not take the sick woman to any hospitals rather they thought there was a bad spirit inside her and they called a 'Tantric' to save her life. All the attempts to revive her failed and she died. Her life could have been saved if they had taken her to the hospital and proper medical treatment was given.

Savita was very young to understand all this. She was not even allowed to see her mother's corpse for the last time. After the demise of her mother, Savita was sent to her maternal grand- mother's place at Hyderabad. Her maternal uncle there physically abused poor girl Savita and they all tortured her because they thought she was the real culprit of her mother's death. She was exposed to some Tantric activities and black magic that had built immense fear inside her. At that tender age, when she deserved a normal childhood, her life was made hell by her own family. For a child, it was very heart-breaking and was extremely very difficult to spend time at such a negative place and she ran away from that place at midnight. She cried for help on the streets, drained, hungry, and thirsty but no one extended a hand to lend help. She wanted to escape from there. She was too young to travel down to her father's home. After a few hours, she was caught and brought back home and her grandmother and her maternal uncle decided to sacrifice her to the God to free her mother's soul. That time Savita understood that her life is going to end. Incidentally, she was saved by a neighbour and was brought back to her father's home.

Though she came back and was alive from inside she was all broken and shattered. Her faith in the God and on people was broken. She was so scared of these life incidences that she did not share it with anyone, not even with her father and siblings. Her father was a very strict man so she could never gather the courage to share all those mental tortures and physical assault. She started being depressed and isolated, her interest was lost in studies and for household work and she started committing mistakes, for which her father used to beat her brutally. For every little thing, the father imposed his own ideas on his children like how to dress up, eat, and communicate with anyone. The children were not allowed to do what they wanted or felt. They were controlled by their father and were afraid to come in front of him and discuss their problems with him.

Savita, after her mother's death, was only close to her grandparents and they lived jointly as a family. However, when she was in fifth standard her father shifted to a new house and the grandparents lived separately. After a few months, her father re-married with another woman and it was a big shock for Savita and her siblings. After some weeks, the stepmother started mistreating the kids. The stepmother often put children starving with hunger if they refuse to listen to her for any small thing. She must clean the house, wash the clothes, and all household duties along with her sister. Savita could never call her 'maa' due to her bad treatment and abusive language.

All of this impacted Savita's mind and she developed a phobia of darkness and spirits. The phobia was so deep that even at the grown-up age of 16 she suffered from the problem of bedwetting. Every moment she felt endangered and felt treat for life.

She suppressed her feelings from everyone. She could not share a normal & a healthy relationship with his parents and siblings, as she never knew and learned to manage a relationship. She only partially understood one relation and that was friendship. She made a few friends, who were badly treated by her parents as they thought friends would spoil her career and academic performance. To give regard to her parent's feelings regarding friendship, she started being friends with random people but never made a sustainable or permanent relationship. This adversely affected her psyche especially her belief in people and relationship. Savita's relative Mrs. Ravina took her to the one of the known psychologist Dr. Parvati Sharma. Ravina informed the doctor that the girl claims that she is different from others.

After establishing a good rapport, the doctor asked her about her likes, dislikes, friends, people in her life and education. Savita shared a few things initially and informed the doctor that she believes in friendship but does not know how to maintain it; she also informed that she now becomes friendly with random and unknown people to be adventurous. She is not at all close to her parents nor there exists a bonding between her siblings. She also shared that she is afraid of darkness and she becomes miserable in the dark, she informed the doctor that she has no control over her bladder and she urinates.

Savita shared her painful experience with the doctor about her past. She said that the death of her mother changed her life forever and she feels that she was the cause of her mom's death. She also said that her father and her own siblings feels the same and hence hate her from inside. Her stepmother also mistreats her on frequent occasions and she feels like ending her life. She informed the doctor that she had harmed herself many times whenever she feels breathless and in immense pain. Her faith in people and any kind of relationship has lost and now she feels like giving up life, she tried suicide by taking sleeping pills and other medicines that are very damaging. However, there also she failed.

On listing to Savita, the psychologist calmed her and convinced her to be administered on a depression test. Beck Depression Inventory was conducted and the total Score(s) came out to be 27 Cognitive-Affective 15 Somatic-Performance 12, (Total score from 0 to 9 is within the normal range from 10 to 18 indicates mild to moderate depression from 19 to 29 indicates moderate to severe depression from 30 to 63 indicates extremely severe depression).

(In a personal interview with a psychologist) Diagnosis of Depression - DSM-IV-TR Criteria for Major Depressive Episode and Major Depressive Disorder)

A. At least five of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning: at least one of the symptoms is either 1) depressed mood or 2) loss of interest or pleasure.

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated either by subjective report (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observation made by others (e.g., appears tearful) - **YES**
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day (as indicated either by subjective account or observation made by others) - **YES**
3. Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day - **No**
4. Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
5. Psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down) - **YES**
6. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day -**YES**
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick) - **YES**
8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day (either by subjective account or as observed by others) - **Yes**
9. Recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide- **YES**

(Source: Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Third Edition, American Psychiatric Association, 2010).

Savita was found to be in major depression and her score was very high. Out of nine symptoms, eight out of these were found. She also shared that she pretends to be very strong to befool people and his family and to do the same she suppresses her feeling, which becomes more painful and depressing. She was counselled by the doctor and was educated on coping strategies. Several sessions of counselling and behavioural therapy helped her to be relatively better.

The psychologist also counselled her parents and her siblings. The psychologist told her parents that it is very important to nurture their children in a healthy environment. Family support plays a vital role in a child's life and upbringing. Now she is living her life with hope and courage. Her fear of the darkness has dealt with a great extent and she does not bed wet. The psychologist also shared a story of a girl who always thought she was different from others and is not a normal girl. The doctor told Savita about her childhood experiences and how her family tortured her. Doctor congratulated Savita that she is not the victim, but she was the real survivors (www.goodtherapy.org).

FINDINGS

Savita was the victim of child abuse. She was abused physically and psychologically and mistreated by her maternal family. From the counselling session, it was clear that because of her painful past she had developed a fear of relationship and phobia for darkness. She was also diagnosed with major depression.

The case identifies how the loss of a mother, loss of trust of family members and being a victim of their hatred can bring devastating personality changes in a calm and simple girl like Savita. It was also found out that lack of love, absence of a relationship of any kind can make a child try dangerous adventurous activities of being friends with random people and try being close to them, and how loneliness can push them to depression and such people may dare to commit suicide.

CHILD ABUSE AND IT'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT (Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

1. **PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS** includes the basic requirement that an individual need. Abused children are not given proper nutrition, they are deprived of food. They are malnourished. This will lead to the poor physical as well as the mental growth of the child. Such malnourished children cannot contribute to the society in major ways and society gets deprived of the good human resource.
2. **SAFETY NEEDS:** All the tortures that the child has gone through have a great impact on the mental status of a child. The child feels unsafe. He tries to get isolated from everyone. This develops the fear inside the child. A fearful and phobic child cannot be a leader or be an entrepreneur, the society will be deprived of great leaders who could have generated employment and supported the nation in the building.
3. **BELONGING/PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS** also include the intellectual resource. Due to all the abuses that the child has gone through, the child is not able to use his/her intellectual resource. Therefore, they are not able to contribute their energy to the society instead society and Government spends a lot on the victim. Therefore, the contribution of the individual is zero but the amount spends on them are very high. The survivor of child abuse faces many difficulties in future like a problem related to the relationships of any kind be it personal or professional. If their identity is disclosed to their place of work, they face abhorrence from co-workers.
 - a) Low academic performance
The survivor is mentally unstable and hence this leads to the poor academic scores. The child is not able to focus on his study. When the child is not able to score well and hence leading to poor academic grooming.
 - b) Unemployment
When the child scores low in academic, he is not fit for any job. Hence, this will lead to the unemployment.
 - c) Anti-social nature
When the child thinks that he is not a normal child, he becomes frustrated, irritated and thus society start treating the child as an abnormal child and starts criticizing him, due to this many children develop the anti-social nature.
 - d) Criminal Behaviour
The child becomes more violent and not able to control his emotions. Therefore, the individual may harm others. This gives birth to a criminal.

e) Unawareness

Most of the families are unaware of the fact or do not accept their child's abnormal behaviour or conduct and feels no need for psychological treatment.

f) Social programme

Many groups are working for the society. They also fight for the child rights. The government also give some funds for the survivor of the child abuse but still, a lot needs to be done to tap all such cases.

4. **SELF-ESTEEM:** The survivor has a very low self-esteem. As the child is not able to score well in academic, neither is good on extracurricular activities, he gets isolated. As a result, he develops a poor self-esteem, such children will not be a proud citizen of the country, and they will underestimate self and will not be able to compete with the competent people across the globe in their professional life. In their personal life also, they will struggle with gaining perceived respect etc.

5. **SELF-ACTUALIZATION:** Self-actualization is when the person reaches its higher potential. It is very difficult for the survivor to reach this age.

Other adverse socio-economic impacts: Direct cost and Indirect Cost It refers to the cost that is spent on sustaining the children welfare system to inspect claim of child abuse and neglect and the expenses by the judicial etc. to take care of the survivor of child abuse. Indirect cost is referring to the longtime economic cost of child abuse. It involves the adolescent conduct, 'mental illness', 'substance abuse' and 'domestic violence'. It also involves the loss of efficiency because of job loss.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (VICTIM OF CHILD ABUSE)

- The person should always speak to someone who is senior/adult in the immediate family or the person who come in the safe circle of the childlike grandparents, teacher, a reliable friend etc. If the child gets no help from the said sources, the child should seek the help from child helplines/from the police.
- The child should educate herself/himself about child rights through various sources like books, newspaper, internet and others and should use it for self-support.
- Last but not the least, the child should make herself/himself strong and can raise voice against the ill treatment towards him/herself. Only a bold personality can deal with adversities, and there is no better choice than to be a strong personality who help thyself.
- An abused child should understand that the event is not the end of life and there is the solution to all the problems. In addition, there are people, organisations and Govt who are always ready to help and support.

2. **AT THE SOCIAL LEVEL:** The case educates the society for an inclusive guardianship where each member of the family takes responsibility for each other's wellbeing and welfare.

3. **AT GOVERNMENT LEVEL:** The Government has favourable policies but people and children are not aware and unsensitised of that, Government should make sure that schools and community centres should educate and sensitise children and parents about such issues so that the problem doesn't arise only and if it does, it may be solved with utmost care and grace.

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