

THE EFFECTS OF CHILD MOLESTATION AND CHILD EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING.

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Abstract

Child molestation is a form of abuse regarded as a crime which involves a series of lustful and erotic happening between an adult and a child. It is the act of taking undue advantage of a child age below 14years by an adult of over 18years for sexual pleasure. It is an unapproved sexual activity between an adult and a child done by force or by intimidation. There are various types of child molestation which includes rape, Alcohol and Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault, Cat Calls, Child Sexual Abuse, Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Exhibitionism, Female Genital Mutilation, Incest, Sex Trafficking, Intimate Partner Sexual Violence, Obscene Phone Calls, Voyeurism. Counsellors should make themselves available to parents and community members to help vulnerable children and their families, abuse is not just physical, words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Counsellors should show examples that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling. It is however recommended that, there should be an on-going evaluation of communities by professionals and Communities with high report of molestation would be sanctioned, counsellors are also accepted to protect the feelings of the children who have been molested in one way or the other.

Keywords : Child Molestation, Child Exposure, Domestic Violence

Introduction

Child molestation is regarded as a crime which involves a series of lustful and erotic happening between an adult and a child. It is the act of taking undue advantage of a child age below 14years by an adult of over 18years for sexual pleasure. It is an unapproved sexual activity between an adult and a child. Child molestation is a crime and it is also referred to as child sexual abuse which is done by force or by intimidation. Child molestation, can also be said to be a form of abuse in which an adult or older person dominate an underage for sexual pleasure.

Molestation can also be said to be the act exhibited on a child which includes touching of private parts, exposure of genitalia, taken of pornographic pictures, rape, inducement of sexual acts, engaging in

sexual activities with a child whether by asking or pressuring or by other means, indecent exposure of the genitals, female nipples, pennies, sexual child grooming for financial gain and using an underage to produce pornography. Although, it is an act commonly performed by strangers as perpetrators of the crime, but not out of place for a family member or other individual with which the child is familiar. This is because the predator often engages in “mentoring” before the actual molestation takes place. The culprit increases trust by hanging around the child to reduce suspicion. When molesters are strangers, they often commit the crime at an isolated area of public places like schools, playgrounds, parks, cinema and shopping malls.

However, there is need to mention a word that is associated or commonly applied indiscriminately to anyone who sexually abuses a child, this word is called *pedophile*, but a lot of scholars have pointed out that child sex offender are not Paedophiles unless they have a strong sexual interest in prepubescent (young) children.

Child Exposure

When a child is exposed or experience violence, it can lead to long lasting physical, mental, and emotional harm, whether the child is a direct victim or a witness. Children who are exposed to violence will possibly suffer from attachment problems, anxiety, depression, regressive behaviour and to have aggression, conduct problems, health-related problems, delinquency as well as academic and cognitive problems.

Domestic Violence

This is also called family violence. It is violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. It may be termed intimate partner violence when committed by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner and can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. Domestic violence can also involve violence against children, parents, or the elderly, and may be done for self-defence. It takes many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, and sexual abuse, which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation and acid throwing that results in disfigurement or death. Domestic murders include stoning, bride burning, honour killings, and dowry deaths.

Domestic violence occurs when the abuser believes that abuse is an entitlement, acceptable, justified, or unlikely to be reported. It may produce intergenerational cycles of abuse in children and other family members, who may feel that such violence is acceptable or condoned. Very few people recognize themselves as abusers or victims because they may consider their experiences as family conflicts that got out of control. Awareness, definition, perception, and documentation of domestic violence differ widely from country to country. Domestic violence often happens in the context of forced or child marriage. In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which crises happen and an act of violence is committed. A period of reconciliation and calmness follow this. Victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations through isolation, power, and control, cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear, shame, or to protect children. Due to the result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, dysregulated aggression, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and poor ability to create healthy relationships. Victims may experience severe psychological disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems from an early age, such as avoidance, hyper vigilance to threats, and dysregulated aggression which may contribute to vicarious traumatization

Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. In some countries, domestic violence is often seen as justified, particularly in cases of actual or suspected infidelity on the part of the woman, and is legally permitted. Research has established that there exists a direct and significant correlation between a country's level of gender equality and rates of domestic violence. Domestic violence is among the most underreported crimes

worldwide for both men and women. Due to social stigmas regarding male victimization, men face an increased likelihood of being overlooked by healthcare providers.

Types of Molestation

- i. Rape: According to RAINN (2015) is the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim. If you're unsure if you've been raped, there are 3 main considerations in judging whether a sexual act was consensual:
 - a. Are the participants old enough to consent?
 - b. Do both people have the capacity to consent?
 - c. Did both participants agree to take part?
 - d. However, other types of Rape include the following categories: Acquaintance Rape, Date Rape, Gang Rape, Marital Rape, Serial Rape, and Statutory Rape. While other forms of molestation include Alcohol and Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault, Cat Calls, Child Sexual Abuse, Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Exhibitionism, Female Genital Mutilation, Incest, Sex Trafficking, Intimate Partner Sexual Violence, Obscene Phone Calls, Voyeurism.
- ii. Alcohol and Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault is sexual assault that is considered alcohol and drug facilitated when the survivor is unable to give consent because she or he is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. These substances have been proved to inhibit the survivor's ability to resist the sexual act, and sometimes even prevent them from remembering the event.
- iii. Cat calls are verbal advances that include whistling, shouting, and/or saying sexually explicit or implicit words, phrases or adjectives that are unwanted by the survivor. It covers all forms of verbal harassment on the street. Many perpetrators of this type of sexual harassment believe it is a form of flattery, but survivors do not conceptualise it the same way. Instead, it is an unwanted sexual advance.
- iv. Child Sexual Abuse includes sexual intercourse. However, touching sexual offenses, non-touching sexual offenses, and sexual exploitation are all considered child sexual abuse acts.
- v. Commercial sexual exploitation happens when individuals buy, trade, or sell sexual acts from unconsenting participants. This is a global problem that particularly victimizes girls, boys, and transgendered youth. These groups are targeted as vulnerable victims by pimps and traffickers, and are lured into both prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation using drugs and violence.
- vi. Exhibitionism is an act by which a person derives sexual satisfaction by exposing genitals to non-consenting strangers. In most of cases, the perpetrators of exhibitionist acts are men and the survivors are women. This is done primarily to masturbate or to promote ejaculation.
- vii. Female genital mutilation is the partial or complete removal of a girl's external genitals. These procedures are considered sexual assault because they are physically and emotionally harmful to the girls and women who undergo them, and the survivors are often not able to consent to the practice. In extreme cases, the female entire external genitals will be removed, and the wounds will then heal over time.
- viii. Incest is sexual contact between family members. Many of the cases of sexual abuse are perpetrated by family members and that is why it is very difficult to talk about incest. Many survivors keep their experiences to themselves. Who to trust is very difficult after incest experience.
- ix. Voyeurism occurs when a perpetrator derives sexual pleasure from looking at sexual objects or acts, specifically people who are naked. Voyeurs are usually male. Some voyeuristic activities include spying on people who are taking showers, looking through binoculars for people undressing by their windows, or watching people from hidden cameras.

Indicators to Possible Children and Adolescents Sexual Abuse

American Humane Association (2015) opine that children prefer to show things rather than tell us things. There are many reasons for changes in children's behaviour, but if we notice a combination of worrying signs it may be time to call for help or advice.

What to watch out for in children:

- a. Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects
- b. Nightmares, sleeping problems
- c. Becoming withdrawn, very clingy or unusually secretive
- d. Sudden unexplained personality changes, mood swings and seeming insecure
- e. Regressing to younger behaviours, e.g. bedwetting and unaccountable fear of places or people and outburst of anger
- f. Changes in eating habits and uses of adult words for body parts and unexplained money or gifts with Self-harm such as cutting, burning and other harmful activities.

Note: Anyone sign doesn't mean that a child was or is being sexually abused, but the presence of several suggests that you should begin to ask questions and consider seeking help.

Signs That An Adult May Be Using Their Relationship With A Child For Sexual Reasons

Kendall-Tackey, Williams, & Finkelhor, (1993) stated that signs that an adult is using their relationship with a child for sexual reasons may not be obvious. We may feel uncomfortable about the way they play with the child or seem always to be favouring them and creating reasons for them to be alone. There may be cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult or young person if they:

- a. Refuse to allow a child sufficient privacy or to make their own decisions on personal matters, they insist on time alone with a child with no interruptions even though the child is not interested.
- b. Spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people of their own age, by most times regularly offering to baby-sit children for free or take children on overnight outings alone.
- c. Buying children expensive gifts or give them money for no apparent reason and engaging in frequent talking with children/teenagers in the bathroom.
- d. Treat a child as a favourite, making them feel 'special' compared with others in the family and Picking on a child.

What Are The Long-Term Effects Of Childhood Sexual Abuse?

Levitan, Rector, Sheldon & Goering (2003) postulated that childhood sexual abuse includes direct sexual contact such as intercourse and groping, and non-physical activities such as indecent exposure and the display of pornography in the presence of a child. The parents of abuse victims often wonder about the long-term effects of such conduct.

Much has been written about the long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse. The most obvious effect is psychological harm which includes, but is not limited to, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioural problems, including sexualized behaviour, poor self-esteem, academic problems, and suicide. Victims of childhood sexual abuse can expect to incur higher future health care costs due to these effects, and it is common for victims to "victimize" others or become sexually promiscuous at an early age. Prostitutes and paedophiles often explain that their first sexual experience was being molested as a child.

The long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse can be serious and that is why victims need psychological evaluation, care, and treatment. Victims need time to deal with what has happened to them. Long term psychiatric and psychological care is expensive and often is not covered by insurance. When it is covered, the treatment periods are usually limited. Provision must be made for likely future treatment around foreseeable stressful periods in a person's adult life, including dating, marriage and having a family. Prior episodes of childhood sexual abuse can be replayed in a victim's mind at these stressful times.

Implications for Counselling

Guidance counsellors are professional trained to work with clients, whether as individuals and in groups, to whom they render professional services concerning educational, vocational and personal/social development.

Guidance counsellors value the dignity, integrity and welfare of their clients whether big or small. They work in ways which promote clients control over their own lives, and respects clients ability to make decision and engage in personal change in the light of clients own beliefs and value. To protect client interest, guidance counsellors are required to comply with this code of Ethics, which makes the values underlying their practice (Iere, 2007). However, the roles of guidance counsellors in ensuring that children are free from all sorts of molestation and exposure to domestic violence cannot be undermined. The challenges that leads to molestation can be averted with the assistance of the guidance counsellors. Many children will then be able to develop confidence and their catalogue of fear will reduce over time. Since majority of families are not professionally trained, the guidance counsellors in schools would assist children gain confidence and help them to make informed choices on their needs to avoid being victim. Differences are bound to occur in family up brining, the guidance counsellor should therefore ensure s/he helps to counsel parents and children on negative approach toward children that connote molestation. The Guidance counsellor should assist children to demonstrate a sense og belonging to diverse human family, provide stimulating environment for them to grow and learn and enable development of friendships.

Counsellors should make themselves available to parents and community members to help vulnerable children and their families. It is also important to guide parents on ways to discipline their children with love. As abuse is not just physical, words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Objectively, the counsellors should show examples that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling. Counsellors are in a better position to teach children their rights. When children are taught they are special and have the right to be safe, they will not think molestation is their fault or a way of life. They will likely report any form of molestation in respective of the offender.

Counsellors are should understand the sign of child molestation, which include unexplained injuries, depression, fear of a certain adult or places, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, withdrawal, inappropriate sexual behaviour, poor hygiene, inattention, secrecy, and hostility and other forms of family problems may suggest that a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused. The counsellor can assist to make report when a child is being harmed or see evidence of molestation, to the appropriate agency. He can also give the child assurance and affirm to the child that s/he did well to expose the abuse. In working with the community the counsellor should encourage leaders in the community to support vulnerable children and families. Ensure capacity building for lawmakers to support legislation to protect our children and improve their lives.

Recommendations

In this study the following recommendations are made. That counsellors should be provided with sufficient instructional resources, and encourage to continue their efforts to reach out to all children

- i. Government should provide shelters fro reported victims
- ii. Any adult found guilty should bepersecuted without restrictions. Agencies who fail to comply should be sanctioned.
- iii. Government should ensure proper deployment and utilisation of professional counsellors and other concerned care givers to put in place activities that are anti-child molestation and violence free.
- iv. There should be an on-going evaluation of communities by professionals, communities with high report of molestation would be sanctioned, counsellors are also expected to protect the feelings of the children who have been molested in one way or the other, since sometimes they often fell guilty or called all sorts of names even by the molesters, sometimes families, teachers and neighbours hardly accept these children as normal.

Conclusion

The effect of child molestation and child exposure to domestic violence cannot be overemphasized. The counsellors should guide students with special needs to develop their capacities to think and make them have

the awareness of their capacities of developing skills, tools, attitudes to become increasingly independent as learners.

Most times when there are intervention programmes it is after the abuse have occurred. Counsellors should put in place intervention programmes like group counselling for families. Families must be taught to desist from physical and sexual abuse which consist maltreatment, as well as neglect, failure of parents or other caregivers to provide the needed food, clothing and care for the child. Children can also be emotionally molested when they are rejected, criticized, or constantly secluded. Counsellors should support children and parents to prevent child molestation. Activities such as after-school classes, parents' education classes, mentoring programmes, are some ways to keep children safe from harm.

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