
Breaking the Cycle of Child Abuse

Children are abused in this country every day. Studies into what constitutes abuse and the effects, both long term and short term are ongoing, and have been ongoing for many years. There are real problems both in defining abuse, as well as the potential strategies and implementations that should be in place to reduce the ongoing instances of child abuse. The abuse could be physical, emotional, or sexual. With the current barriers in defining child abuse and reporting it, as well as the privacy issues associated with investigating and stopping abuse, we are not getting very far in reducing this epidemic that is plaguing our country. More research and actions must be taken to protect the children. By turning our heads, nothing is going to change.

Introduction

Child abuse is an ongoing epidemic in the United States and has been for many years. Annually, hundreds of thousands of children are the victims of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Unfortunately, there are still many children that suffer silently, and the cases go unreported. New laws are being passed regularly to attempt to address the ongoing child abuse, however, there are still many questions as to what constitutes as child abuse, what the punishments should be for the abuse, how intrusive the law and individuals may be in investigations, how to report suspected abuse, and how to stop the cycles that may or may not be passed down through generations. This paper will discuss the facts, figures, and arguments related to child abuse.

Defining Child Abuse

There has been much controversy and speculation as to what constitutes child abuse throughout the years. Depending on what culture and religion as well as background an individual belongs to, their definition will in most cases be much different from an individual in another area, culture or religion. Punishments for unacceptable behaviors has socially been ever changing. Although it may have been socially acceptable to spank a child twenty years ago, it is not necessarily socially acceptable now. Many parents continue to spank their child, and believe this does not constitute abuse. Some families believe that their child should be able to stay home alone, or be left in a vehicle unattended, and that this does not constitute abuse. Others may disagree and may believe that children should not be left alone in a vehicle or otherwise until they are teenagers.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)

While many individuals cannot and do not agree on the right age to leave a child unattended, or which forms of discipline are acceptable and which constitute abuse, there is a large consensus that sexually assaulting or inflicting great injury do stipulate child abuse. If an individual is seen beating up a child or molesting the child, they should report the child abuse because it is not only morally and ethically wrong, but it is also against the law. The views as to what does and does not constitute child abuse have been continually changing, and will most likely continue to do so. Another example of this, is the working conditions and terms of employing minors. Not long ago, children were expected to work long hours and them doing so was not socially frowned upon. This is now, considered by many to be child abuse as well.

Child abuse cannot be easily defined. Although it is unacceptable by most if not all of society, the actual definition and stipulations of what does and does not constitute child abuse is undefined and a general consensus does not exist. Privacy matters have made identification and reporting of potential child abuse difficult as well. The study of child abuse began in the 60's and has continued thus far. Another obstacle of identifying and defining child abuse comes with the debate of whether the abuse must be physical. Emotional abuse has been studied as well. The consequences or punishments are still being defined for many aspects of child abuse. Little information is available as to what officially constitutes emotional abuse in comparison to physical and sexual abuse of children.

Reporting Child Abuse

Various community, City, State, and Federal organizations have resources for reporting suspecting child abuse. Unless a child reports the abuse themselves, or others in a community or neighborhood report abuse, there are not many ways of readily identifying it. Doctors, teachers, counselors, and family members may suspect abuse, but there may be reluctance in reporting it. The reluctance may stem from not actually seeing the abuse first hand, a child who denies any abuse occurred, or the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes or does not constitute abuse. They may also believe that nothing will be done about the abuse. There are numerous stories that appear on the news of children who were suspected of being victims of child abuse in which the situations and suspicions were reported and nothing was ever done. These stories unfortunately usually end in the child dying from the abuse or continuing the cycle of abuse with their children and grand-children.

There are also individuals who may believe that matters will be much worse if they report the abuse, with the child potentially getting taken away from the home and placed in far worse situations. The statistics show that there are hundreds of thousands of children that are abused annually in the United States, but this number cannot be accurate with all the situations that continue to go unreported. With many of the cases in which children were placed in equally or greater abusive homes after taken from their families, agencies often complain that they are

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)

underfunded and understaffed. Agencies are not able to fully investigate alleged abuse, or are not able to fully assess situations if they do not have enough resources, funding and staff. This only adds to the already ongoing problems and turmoil that the children are facing. Welfare agencies are continuously complaining that they do not have sufficient resources, funding, and staff to do all that they are tasked to do. The children are ultimately the ones that are suffering the most.

The Cycle

Statistically, individuals that are of lower income tend to be more closely associated with more frequent child abuse situations. (Eckenrode, Smith, McCarthy, & Dineen. 2014). With less income, comes fewer opportunity to provide adequate care and housing for children. If a single mother is raising three small children on her own, she cannot adequately pay for good child care services to work a full time job and provide healthy meals, and a safe clean home to live in. Child care is expensive, as is adequate housing in safe neighborhoods, and food to put on the table. Often times, a mother must choose between working or taking care of her children. If she works, there is nobody to watch her children, which may result in neglect and endangerment charges which constitute abuse. If she stays home, she must live off of help from agencies that do not have enough funding to provide enough money for good housing and enough money to feed her family. The stress of trying to figure out priorities and how to provide a families next meal also raises the tension, and parents may lash out and physically abuse the children as well. There are no excuses for child abuse, but there are underlying sources that could be alleviated thus reducing occurrences (Dierkhising, Ko., Woods-Jaeger, Briggs, Lee, & Pynoos. 2013).

Strategies

Not only does the community need to be better educated to become aware of what is child abuse and its prevalence in our society, but they also need to be equipped to identify and combat it. Investment into agencies that directly address the welfare of children must be addressed. Rather than turning our backs on the children in our own country that are being abused daily, more information and resources must become available. The correlation among victims of abuse as children and delinquency in teenage and adult years is very real. If more resources and programs become available, we will not only be saving the children, but saving future children and reducing the prison populations in later years as well. (Selph, Bougatsos, Blazina, & Nelson. 2013). The government and the citizens must take a stand to invest in combating this very real problem.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP