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Matric No: 19/sms11/003

Course code: GST 112 (Communication in English II)

Assignment: Essay writing (write a perception of a problem, perceive a problem in your environment and formulate a researchable topic for it).

Topic: Child Abuse

**CHILD ABUSE**

**Child abuse** is a physical maltreatment or sexual molestation of a child or is physical, sexual, psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or a caregiver. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child, and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with.

Child abuse isn’t just about giving the child a black eyes, injuries etc. Physical abuse is shocking due to the marks it leaves, not all signs of child abuse are as obvious. Ignoring children’s needs, putting them in unsupervised, dangerous situations, exposing them to sexual situations, or making them feel worthless or stupid are also forms of child abuse and neglect—and they can leave deep, lasting scars on kids. Regardless of the type of abuse, the result is serious emotional harm.

All types of abuse and neglect leave lasting scars. Some of these scars might be physical, but emotional scarring has long lasting effects throughout life, damaging a child’s sense of self, their future relationships, and ability to function at home, work and school. Effects include:

**Lack of trust and relationship difficulties:** If you can’t trust your parents, who can you trust? Without this base, it is very difficult to learn to trust people or know who is trustworthy. This can lead to difficulty maintaining relationships in adulthood. It can also lead to unhealthy relationships because the adult doesn’t know what a good relationship is.

**Core feelings of being “worthless.’’:** If you’ve been told over and over again as a child that you are stupid or no good, it is very difficult to overcome these core feelings. As they grow up, abused kids may neglect their education or settle for low-paying jobs because they don’t believe they are worth more. Sexual abuse survivors, with the stigma and shame surrounding the abuse, often struggle with a feeling of being damaged.

**Trouble regulating emotions:** Abused children cannot express emotions safely. As a result, the emotions get stuffed down, coming out in unexpected ways. Adult survivors of child abuse can struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression, or anger. They may turn to alcohol or drugs to numb out the painful feelings.

Abusive behaviour comes in many forms, but the common denominator is the emotional effect on the child. Whether the abuse is a slap, a harsh comment, stony silence, or not knowing if there will be dinner on the table, the end result is a child that feels unsafe, uncared for, and alone.

**Emotional Abuse:** Contrary to some people’s beliefs, words can hurt and emotional abuse can severely damage a child’s mental health or social development. Examples of emotional abuse include:

* Constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating
* Calling names and making negative comparisons to others
* Frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying
* Ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving them the silent treatment
* Limiting physical contact with a child e.g. no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection
* Exposing a child to violence against others, whether it is against the other parent, a sibling, or even a pet

**Child Neglect**: A very common type of child abuse is a pattern of failing to provide for a child’s basic needs, which include adequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision. Child neglect is not always easy to spot. Sometimes, a parent might become physically or mentally unable to care for a child, such as in cases of serious illness or injury, or untreated depression or anxiety. Other times, alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe.

**Physical Abuse**: Involves physical harm or injury to the child. It may be the result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child or excessive physical punishment. Many physically abusive parents insist that their actions are simply forms of discipline. But there is a big difference between using physical punishment to discipline and physical abuse. e.g.

* Unpredictability: The child never knows what is going to set the parent off. There are no clear boundaries or rules. The child is constantly walking on eggshells, never sure what behaviour will trigger a physical assault.
* Lashing out in anger: Abusive parents act out of anger and the desire to assert control, not the motivation to lovingly teach the child. The angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse.
* Using fear to control behaviour: Abusive parents may believe that their children need to fear them in order to behave, so they use physical abuse to “keep their child in line.” However, what children are really learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave or grow as individuals.

**Sexual abuse.** Child sexual abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. It’s important to recognize that sexual abuse doesn’t always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved.

* Sexually abused children are often tormented by shame and guilt. They may feel that they are responsible for the abuse or somehow brought it upon themselves. This can lead to self-loathing and sexual and relationship problems as they grow older.
* The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward. They may worry that others won’t believe them, will be angry with them, or that it will split their family apart. Because of these difficulties, false accusations of sexual abuse are not common, so if a child confides in you, take them seriously.

While abuse and neglect occurs in all types of families, children are at a much greater risk in certain situations.

**Domestic violence:** Even if the abused parent does their best to protect their children, domestic violence is still extremely damaging. Getting out is the best way to help your children.

**Alcohol and drug abuse:** Parents who are drunk or high may be unable to care for their children, make good parenting decisions, or control often-dangerous impulses. Substance abuse can also lead to physical abuse.

**Untreated mental illness:** Parents who are suffering from depression, an anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, or another mental illness may have trouble taking care of themselves, much less their children. A mentally ill or traumatized parent may be distant and withdrawn from their children, or quick to anger without understanding why. Treatment for the caregiver means better care for the children.

**Lack of parenting skills:** Some caregivers never learned the skills necessary for good parenting. Teen parents, for example, might have unrealistic expectations about how much care babies and small children need. Or parents who were themselves victims of child abuse may only know how to raise their children the way they were raised. Parenting classes, therapy, and caregiver support groups are great resources for learning better parenting skills.

**Stress and lack of support:** Parenting can be a very time-intensive stressful job, especially if you’re raising children without support from family and friends, or you’re dealing with relationship problems or financial difficulties. Caring for a child with a disability, special needs, or difficult behaviours is also a challenge. It’s important to get the support you need, so you are emotionally and physically able to support your child.

Raising children is one of life’s greatest challenges and can trigger anger and frustration in the most even-tempered parent or guardian. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about, for both you and the child. When talking with an abused child, the best way to encourage them is to show calm reassurance and unconditional support.

Lastly, Safety comes first, if you feel that your safety or the safety of the child would be threatened if you tried to intervene, leave it to the professionals. You may be able to provide more support later. Child abuse is a very serious crime, which is against the law and therefore making us citizens to be vigilant, watchful and alert at all times to help those who have fallen victim to this crime and also those who are in need of our help in any way at any time.