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**CHILD ABUSE: A PLAQUE EATING DEEP INTO THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIETY**

“The first time I had issues with my abuse and raising my son was when he was five. This was the same age when I remembered my abuse beginning. I freaked out the whole entire year. I was afraid to give him a bath or touch him in anyway. I would have thoughts about abusing him”. Gwen explains how child abuse affects her thoughts as a mother. Even though the abuse happened many yeas ago, she still exhibits some effects which can otherwise be termed the “long term effect". Gwen is not the only person who still feels the effect of her abuse long after it has happened. In fact, most victims of child abuse may not show symptoms at the time of the abuse but they may later exhibit its effects well into their adulthood especially when they do not seek professional help. Sadly, if people like Gwen do not learn to control their emotions -which is most likely -these effects begin to interfere with their life activities, they may end up engaging in a social vice or be at risk of health problems. Thus, putting themselves and the society at risk . For victims who start to feel the effects at the time of the abuse, they may end up to become a juvenile offender.

In recent surveys completed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 19% of State prison inmates, 10% of Federal inmates, and 16% of those in local jails or on active probation told interviewers they had been physically or sexually abused before their current sentence. Most victims go through terrible effects that ultimately lead to trauma which could cause them to engage in vices. This was what happened to Sasha. She was raped as a high school student. When news of the rape was circulated in social media, she was ridiculed by her classmates, making it impossible for her to feel safe at school. Sasha immediately became truant. Because of her extensive, unaddressed trauma and fear for her own safety, Sasha refused to go to school and ultimately dropped out. After two years out of school and without receiving trauma-related services, she was arrested on petty theft charges. Only after her arrest was Sasha referred to a therapist who identified her trauma as the cause of her truancy. With the assistance of an educational advocate, Sasha applied and was accepted to an alternative school that provided a small therapeutic setting and a second chance at graduation

Most people may not be as lucky as Sasha and they may end up not living up to their potential. It is important to help child abuse victims by creating a safer and accepting society for them. Sasha might not have become truant if the school had provided some sought of therapy for her after the rape. Unlike what most people think child abuse goes beyond sexual assault. Infact, it is way beyond that. It entails domestic assault, verbal assault , emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect, witnessing a domestic violence against loved one , separation of parents as a result of divorce or death and so on. The effects of the various child abuse are closely related and could be long term or short term depending on the time at which the abuse lasted , the relationship with the abuser and so on. In subsequent paragraphs, I would look into the different types of child abuse and the effects it has on the society.

Firstly, child sexual abuse. This is the most studied form of child abuse. It includes all forms of sexual harassment ranging from fondling, to oral, vaginal or anal penetration. According to WHO, **A child who is abused is more likely to abuse others as an adult so that violence is passed down from one generation to the next.** Anybody that has experience sexual abuse as a child, the child would have a low self esteem and find it difficult to maintain interpersonal relationships and relate with people. “And the trust issues that have come from that: I hated anybody touching me. I couldn’t hug my kids” a victim of sexual child abuse says. This is one of the many effects of sexual child abuse. For some, it affects their relationship with their wife “I’ve been embarrassed all my life over this. I’ve never, ever told any of my family. I told my wife last year, about 66, 67 ‒ 70 years later, I told my wife. To be honest with you, when I got married, for the first two years, instead of going to bed and making love to my wife, I used to go down to the hotel and get drunk and come home and go to bed, because every time I had sex with my wife, I used to think about [the woman who sexually abused him], and it’s upset me all my life”. This is an account of a man that was sexually abused as a child. For others it affects their sexuality. A survivor of child sexual abuse Craig Hughes-cashmore says “The bulk of perpetrators are male, so if you’re a boy and are sexually abused by a same-sex person and you have a physical response, you’re left very confused about your sexuality,” he says. These individuals would be left confused and emotionally unbalanced. It would cause them to be unproductive and restrict them to live up to their full potential. Savage, a victim explains “ I didn’t love myself and I didn’t want to burden anybody else. I self medicated myself with drugs, alcohol, sex and rugby". Savage is not the only one in this category. A lot of victims seek drugs , alcohols and other vices as a coping strategy.

Furthermore , Physical abuse is another form of child abuse that can be inflicted on children. It could come in form of verbal abuse, battering and others. Although, children ranging from all ages can be physically abused, children below age three are most vulnerable. Physical abuse is the most common form of abuse and mothers are most likely to inflict physical abuse on their children. Siblings could also inflict physical abuse on one another. Physical abuse is often accompanied with sexual abuse as sexual abusers tend to be violent. Victim of physical abuse could suffer from deformity. Studies have shown that deform mothers would not be able to give their children adequate care and attention. Victims of physical abuse also tend to become abusive.

Notwithstanding, Neglect is another form of abuse faced by children. It occurs when the child is not properly cared and attended to. Children are dependent on their parents psychologically. They need to be shown love and acceptance . However, when this is missing, they would go look for it somewhere else. Most of this children would be unlucky and fall into the wrong hands. As a result of peer pressure and immoral influences, some of them would be forced to engage in social vices or take drugs and alcohol. Some of the children who experience this form of abuse may not go seeking for it else where but they may become depressed and withdrawn. They would be dealing with low self esteem which would affect their relationship with their family and peers. Neglect may also occur when one or both parents are absent in a child’s life. It could be as a result of death, divorce or even infectious illness that could prevent visitation. It could result in a stress disorder where the child would be scared to be left alone. “Many times we don't know why we feel so strongly on an issue, like parenting. I never really thought about why I chose to give up a promising career and stay home with my three children. It was made easier since it was economically feasible for us. But, later as I thought about my own mostly happy childhood, I am still saddened by the one dark time I encountered”. Suzanne a mother of three explains her plight. She had to give up a career to stay with a children because of her experience of been left alone as a kid. This could pose a threat to the society because it would reduce the economic impact she could have given to the society.

In conclusion, Child abuse can come in various forms and can have short term or long term effect. It is important to stop in now so that we can create a safer and friendly environment for children and leaders of future generation. The best treatment for child abuse is to stop it before it begins . However, if it has already started, it is important as a victim to speak up and seek justice. As adults, we should be watchful for any symptoms of abuse so that we can encourage the child to speak up.

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