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# Black and Blue

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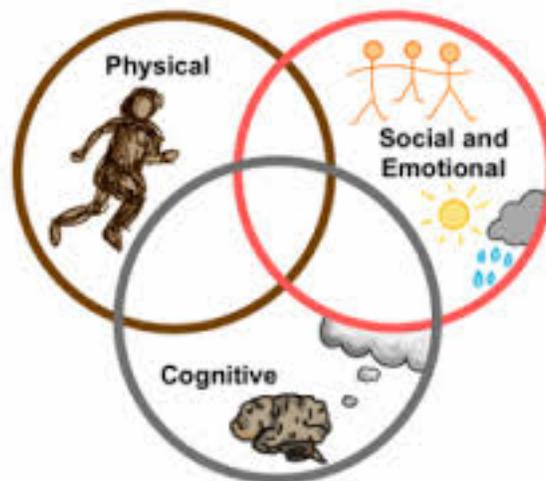
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Abstract:

This case study focuses on the psychological effects of emotional and physical abuse in childhood and how it affects the victim physically, cognitively, and social-emotionally into adulthood.



Introduction:

Child abuse is defined as when a parent or guardian causes harm to a child in any way. Physical maltreatment includes neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Abuse to a child can be a very traumatic experience and it can influence their development throughout their childhood and into adulthood. Neglect of a child is defined as a caregiver who fails to provide a child with the proper care that is necessary. According to National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), in 2005, 564,765 reported children (62.8 percent) experienced neglect 9 (qtd American Humane Association). Physical abuse is defined as non-

accidental injury caused to a child by the caregiver. In 2005, there was a report of 16.6 percent of children who experienced abuse. Sexual abuse of a child is defined as a caregiver using sexual behavior towards a child such as fondling, molestation, forcing a child to touch an adult's private organs, and penetration of the vagina or anus with a penis or any other object that does not serve a valid medical purpose. In 2005, there were 83,800 (9.3 percent) children who were victims of sexual abuse. Emotional abuse of a child is defined as when a caregiver ignores, rejects, isolates, exploits, verbally assaults, terrorizes, or neglects a child. In 2005, 899,000 children were reported to be victims of some sort of abuse.

The statistics for child abuse are far greater than they should be; there should not be any statistics at all. Parents who abuse their children especially by using them as a human punching bag should have to suffer consequences. Children who experience this kind of abuse develop adverse effects that they carry with them the rest of their childhood and into adulthood: they develop relationship problems, trust issues, they lose their sense of identity, develop behavior problems, depression, anxiety, etc. It's hard for children to overcome these obstacles because they are defenseless against evils such as abusive parents and when they do not have a superhero to turn to they deal with the pain in ways that are not beneficial to them. It's important that society recognizes that child abuse is a problem and that something needs to be done about it. It's not fair to these children. They should be given the chance to lead a normal and happy childhood so that they can develop into adulthood as a strong individual.

### Background:

Many children experience some sort of abuse whether it is physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse. The abuse is a traumatic event that they experience during their childhood and it can affect their development for adulthood.

Research suggests that such trauma can lead to depression. According to the hopelessness theory of depression (Abramson, Alloy, and Metalsky 1989), individuals who experience negative events they tend to experience negative consequences and negative thoughts and characteristics about one's self and are at an increased risk for developing depression (qtd. Abela and Gibb, 2011, p. 265). Several studies show that childhood trauma is associated with the development of depression and heavy drinking in adulthood. Traumatic events vary in their frequency and severity, but many have been associated with depression and heavy drinking later in life, including physical and sexual abuse, parental divorce, and exposure to violence. Individuals who experience traumatic events in childhood have lower tolerance for stress in adulthood, and consequently may be more likely to develop mental illness after stressful life events compared to those who do not experience trauma in childhood (Colman et al., 2012, p. 265-267). Child abuse creates a negative effect on their developing sense of self and creates poor interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Tezel, 2015, p. 226). Children who experience some sort of abuse during their childhood leads them to have problems with their social-emotional development as well as develop behavioral problems. It also leads them to have internalizing and externalizing problems which extend later into adulthood (Freeman, 2014, p. 546-546).

### Thesis:

Stress from physical and emotional abuse heightens maladaptive responses throughout a person's childhood and adulthood.

### Case Study:

Subject X is a 22-year-old female college student. She experienced several types of abuse since she was a little girl. She experienced emotional abuse from her mother. Her mother told her that she was a mistake and that she was worthless. She would belittle her and make her feel like she wasn't important. Subject X and her mother lived with her grandparents until she was seven which is when her mother got remarried. When her mother got remarried is when the severity of the abuse got worse.

Her mother married a guy who was an alcoholic. He drank a twenty four pack of beer every day. He was physically abusive. When Subject X would do something her stepfather did not like he would hit her. He hit her hard enough where there would be marks on her face that she would have to try and cover up. Her teacher's would ask her what happened and she would make up some story and blame it on sports. She started acting out in school. She started missing classes to hang out with people who were bad influences, she treated her teachers in a nasty manner by calling them names and being defiant, she got into verbal altercations which eventually led to physical altercations, and she was suspended seven times. She was able to turn her behavior around when a particular teacher became a positive influence. Having a positive influence really gave Subject X the strength she needed to rise above.

When subject X was a freshman in high school, she lost her sense of self; her interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships suffered. She did not have many friends because it was hard for her to trust someone enough to develop a relationship with them. When Subject X was sixteen, she reached out for help from her Aunt. Her Aunt called DCFS but they questioned Subject X about the abuse while her mother was in the same room, so Subject X was scared to tell the truth and she lied to the social worker and told him that nothing ever happened. A few weeks after the DCFS visit the abuse started getting worse. One night her stepfather was drunk and Subject X had fallen asleep on the couch and woke up to her stepfather's hand inside her pants. She immediately tried to explain to her mother what happened but the only thing her mother did was made him stop drinking. After this incident, Subject X became depressed. She became withdrawn in school and sports. She had no interest in developing relationships, she broke up with her boyfriend, and she started having suicidal thoughts. She thought the world would be better off without her if she was no longer around. She thought that she would not have to suffer any more if she could just end it all. But she still had a little bit of hope that her life would get better. It took a couple of years but she was able to work through her depression and she was able to graduate from high school. She managed to get a \$20,000 academic scholarship to Concordia University Chicago but her mother made her feel guilty about leaving, so Subject X decided to stay and work full time and to be the Cinderella of the household – the Cinderella before she met her fairy godmother. When Subject X turned nineteen, she had enough and moved out of her mother's house.

Subject X is now a twenty-two-year-old female college student who has moved out of her mother's house and now lives with her Aunt and Uncle who are positive and supportive. Subject X still has a hard time developing interpersonal relationships. It took two and a half years of

living with her Aunt for her to open up about what happened to her during her childhood. Her Aunt is the only person she truly trusts. It's definitely hard for Subject X to develop any type of intimate relationship with a man. She was abused and violated by a man whom she was supposed to be able to trust. Anxiety has now become a big part of Subject X's life and she is now easily stressed. The smallest problem can trigger the anxiety and cause her to become stressed within a matter of seconds. She has not been on a date since she was violated because she cannot bring herself to trust men. Subject X has lost her sense of self. She's having trouble retaining her identity. She cannot find herself. Now that she has recently eliminated all of the negative people from her life and things have calmed down, she is slowly starting to figure her life out and has hope of finding herself again one day.

#### Conclusion:

Subject X experienced a lot of the negative consequences that were mentioned earlier in the background section. She has poor interpersonal relationships, she finds it hard to put her trust in people. She has a poor intrapersonal relationship with herself, she has lost her sense of identity. She experienced depression for more than a year. She has developed anxiety and has developed a low tolerance for stress. The stress from the traumatic experiences that Subject X encountered in her childhood created maladaptive responses. If the stress from the negative experiences that she encountered was not a problem then she may have been able to develop healthy relationships with other people and she would have developed a solid and strong identity for herself. It's important that no other child should have to go through what Subject X went through. Children should be able to live a stress free life free from demons.

#### Coping

It is hard for children to experience abuse and when they do not have anyone to turn to it can be even harder to try and find ways to cope with it. Coping can be as easy as writing feelings down in a journal and maybe describe the event. They can cope by trying to find ways to stay out of the house: Sports, clubs, volunteer work. Try talking to someone like a teacher, a friend, or a social worker. Most importantly the best way to cope is to not be afraid to tell the truth. The only way to truly cope with abuse is to get away from it. Getting away from the abuse was the best decision Subject X could have made.

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