FLE Research Summary

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For our project, we are researching physiological abuse on children as well as emotional abuse. We want to specifically target parents who have a family or want to start a family and bring awareness to how detrimental this form of abuse can be. Psychological abuse is tricky when understanding when it is occurring. Some parents may not realise the psychological effects they have on their children or their family, or we want a partner of one of the parents to recognise if there is psychological abuse occurring. Educating new or existing parents on how harmful psychological abuse is to bring awareness and to hopefully stop it from occurring. We plan on designing a pamphlet to quickly grab attention to a larger audience. On the pamphlet it will have signs to look out for in children, ways to prevent it and tips for parents and guardians. We will use our resources and include facts, statistics, and data on how to prevent psychological abuse. We’ve decided on this resource in order to educate mothers and soon to be mothers to catch it right at the source and prevent any future psychological abuse on children. This brochure will be available at doctors offices, and OBGYN offices for soon to be mothers.

According to Paxson, C. & Waldfogel, J. the most common form of maltreatment is neglect, which contains 58 percent of reports. Physical abuse makes up 22 percent, and emotional neglect makes up the other 20 percent. 20 percent is a large number for children that receive emotional neglect. There is hope that by educating mothers and families, the chances of a child receiving emotional neglect will be lowered.

Throughout the Article *ABC of Child Abuse,* Skuse goes into detail about various ages of children and the effects of emotional abuse and neglect have on them. He explains that infants are the most easily recognizable in this treatment towards them because of how dependent they are on their caregivers. If not changed properly, they will contract regular infections, and if those are not treated properly it can cause scarring. If the infant is not fed regularly, it can lead to failure to thrive syndrome. This is when the weight and height of an infant is abnormally lower than those of the same age in the same population. With serious emotional neglect social and psychomotor skills will likely be affected and the child will not be adapted to sitting, crawling and walking which can lead to developmental delay. Infants who have been emotionally neglected will also lack secure attachments. They lack the ability to confidently explore their surroundings and cling to their caregiver who often responds with irritability. Preschool children often suffer with language development and in some cases can virtually become mute. Behavioural problems are frequently a distinction on emotional neglect like characteristic disorders. Low attention span can be caused by this and usually results from few attempts to engage with the child at home. In pre-school aged children their relations with their peers are suffering and this may be attributed to aggression and or social withdrawal. Lastly, school aged children suffer the consequences of lack of self-esteem. They usually feel worthless and carry the burden of their guilt and project onto others. This can lead to emotional unavailability and patterns of self mutilation like skin picking and self injury. Long term emotional neglect also causes school aged children to have unnatural patterns of urination and defecation; which is a major sign. If a child does this in class or around their peers, they may be shunned which further contributes to their social isolation habits.

Skuse concludes his article stating that while emotionally neglected children are not in immediate danger, that does not mean they do not need direct attention and protection. It needs to be acknowledged by both doctors and caregivers and treated as soon as it’s recognized to prevent further development, behavioural, social, and cognitive problems.

Lewit discusses his data findings on the trends in reported child abuse. It was found that neglect was the number one reported type of maltreatment against children. Generally, as children grow, the various types of abuse seem to slightly decline. The highest age group that was reported was under one year-of-age and the smallest percentage was at 16. He found that most victims of maltreatment were 56% female and 44% male and also predominantly white. A major contributor to this article is the trends in abuse fatalities, and while this is relatively inconsistent, it still shows the most intense form of abuse and shows valuable trends that can be used as protective factors for others. 86% of maltreatment deaths were under the age of 5 while 46% were under the age of one. This coincides with the earlier findings on the intensity of maltreatment on younger aged children.

Young child abuse can be catastrophic for the development of an individual. According to an article by Zlotnick, Grouper, and Pud they looked into ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores of individuals and found that adults with a lower score of ACEs had healthier relationships and stable families and were less at risk for mental illnesses. Whereas those with a high score of ACEs were more at risk for mental illnesses, unstable relationships and negative views towards family dynamics. The studies found that childhood abuse was related to greater negative effects in the future. Especially in difficulty in regulating daily aspects, vs. someone who was not exposed to childhood abuse. These research results support our educational approach to educating parents on the negative effects of abuse during adolescence.

Becoming emotionally mature and intelligent is crucial for someone's development to function in society. Having emotional intelligence helps individuals create bonds within society and function in everyday life. According to Sun, Liu, and Yu, the effects of child neglect and psychological abuse directly correlates to addictions, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and creating unhealthy bonds. The article explains understanding how childhood neglect creates the negative relationships will better help understand how to educate and understand the risk factors within children at a young age. This research strengthens our project by contributing to the risk factors and pointing out how to catch early signs of neglect within children. Understanding the risk factors will better help strengthen our research when educating specifically parents who have a family or want to start a family and bring awareness to how detrimental this psychological and emotional abuse can be.

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