

Child Abuse: Characteristics of the Victims and the Perpetrators

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Abstract - Discipline in the Filipino culture is often carried out as a corporal punishment, which, if carried to the extreme would constitute an abusive situation. The study sought to make an accurate picture of child abuse. The study used the descriptive research using documentary analysis. Results of the study revealed that the greater incidence of child abuse occurred most commonly in female children between the ages 12 – 18 years old, in families with low socio-economic level and to parents whose highest educational attainment were high school level. These abuses lasted for 1 – 5 years before being reported to the proper authorities for intervention. Most perpetrators of the abuses were the male neighbors followed by the female neighbors and the cohabiting husband; adults whom the parent/s entrust the care of their children. The study revealed that the most common form of abuse was physical abuse in the form of hitting, followed by child-rape, spousal abuse in the presence of the child and verbal assault, respectively. The study concluded that child abuse damages the child not only physically but also psychologically. The parents' low socio-economic status contributed to the stress and trauma of the child.

Keywords - child abuse, perpetrators, child and victims, socio-economic status, stress and trauma, sexual exploitation, child rape

INTRODUCTION

Children are little reflections of their parents. They learn how to live in this world through imitation without discrimination. Most Filipino adults, if not all, commonly hold the belief that children know nothing and can do nothing (Carandang, 2004); therefore, discipline is important to let the child know the difference between right and wrong.

Discipline through physical inflictions or through other means, as viewed in Filipino culture, is part of childrearing. Discipline, if carried to the extreme can constitute an abusive action/reaction to the child's sense of curiosity and quest for discovery and occasional naughtiness.

Every day, children find themselves in situations where discipline practices are carried to the extreme, yet only few cases get reported to proper authorities. According to the 2007 – 2009 Statistical Data of Child Abuse cases served by Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Philippine National Police (PNP) and Child Protection Unit – Philippine General Hospital (CPU – PGH), there are 2,955 cases of abandoned children, 6,631 neglected, 6,506 were sexually abused taking various forms as rape (3,838 cases), incest (2,096) and acts of lasciviousness (572) while sexual exploitation numbered 474 cases (victims of prostitution-296, pedophilia-89, pornography-14, cyber pornography-75) as recorded by the DSWD.

The Philippine National Police recorded a total 29 neglected and abandoned cases; 11, 701 sexually abused (rape-8,522, incest-683 and acts of lasciviousness-2,496) and victims of prostitution numbered 40 cases. The Child Protection Unit – Philippine General Hospital recorded 272 cases of neglected children and 10,372 cases of sexually abused children.

The situation reflects the belief that in majority of Filipino households, adults view children as chattels, items of property with which they can do as they please (Sviluppo, n.d). It is the purpose of this study to increase the awareness that children endure and live in fear in an abusive situation because of their ignorance to alternatives and their dependence on their perpetrators. Thus, the profile of the victims and the perpetrators were characterized.

FRAMEWORK

This study utilized victimology, social learning and sociological theories. The victimology theory explains the universal rejection of the victim. Individuals when exposed to an abusive situation appear to resist believing the innocence of the victim who felt helpless and vulnerable. These individuals need to find a rational explanation for the incident, thereby blame the victim for the occurrence of the incident. There is also an irrational fear of being contaminated by the victim therefore; rejection becomes a defense mechanism (Haber, 1992).

Social learning theory suggests that children raised in an abusive family are at risk of mimicking abuse or violent behavior. This theory postulated that role modeling, identification and social interactions simulate aggression, thereby making it a learned behavior (Bandura, 1973). When kids get hit, they learn something in that process. They learn that when frustrated or angry, it is okay to take out that frustration and anger on someone else. They learn that violence is okay. Violence then becomes a learned behavior (Dougherty, 1996).

Sociological theory suggests that when children grow up in a family context of violence and aggression, they learn that it is a form of legitimate communication. This concept often results in an intergenerational transmission of violent behaviors (Fonagy, Target & Gergely, 2000). Children who grow up witnessing violence in the home and on television are sensitized to believe that it is "right" behavior and will very likely continue into adulthood retreating these childhood memories and resorting to abuse when they are stressed (Neeb, 1997).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to make an accurate picture of Child abuse for both the victims and the perpetrators.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Document analysis was implemented. This method involves the assessment of document for quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of data gathered from the document review (Balihar, 2007).

There is a document of all the incidents of child abuse that are recorded in the logs of various police stations in Cebu. The logs of these police stations reflected a record of incidents of child abuse from 2008 until October 2010. The data reflected in the log were considered for this study.

Environment

Cebu City is a highly urbanized community in the center of the island of Cebu. It has a land area of 291.2 km², with 80 villages and boasts of a population of 798,809 people as of 2007, (Cebu City Report 2010). Most inhabitants of Cebu City are oriented towards non – agricultural lines such as trade and services, because Cebu is home to some national and international companies and businesses (Cebu City Report 2010).

To protect the residents of Cebu City from ill-fated individuals, the Cebu City Government set up 12 police stations located at major villages within the city. These police stations have a Women and Children Protection Desk. The Women and Children Protection Desks are managed by a policewoman who caters to victims of abuse, records these incidents and teach the victims of their rights and how they can protect themselves from further abuse.

Instrument

For purposes of the study, the researcher made a statistical data collection guide which was furnished to the women's desk supervisor to be filled out by the police office statistician. This instrument was initially made as the researcher's guide in data collection and document review which contains the demographic data of the abused child and parents, the reported abuser, the type of abuse inflicted and the triggering factors for reporting of the abuse. This instrument was presented to the supervisor at the police office but due to the sensitivity of the case of child abuse, the initial data gathering instrument was not accepted by them. Thus, a new statistical data collection guide was made which would allow the police office statistician to fill out the needed data for this study without the researcher needing to meet the subjects face to face and reviewing the police officer's log of incidents. This new guide was patterned after the objectives and the specific

questions of this study. The new instrument was then presented back to the police supervisor and was approved for use.

Data Gathering Procedure

A letter was sent to the police director asking for his permission to collect statistical data on child abuse from the various police stations. A copy of the proposal was attached to the cover letter. As per agreement with the women's desk supervisor, a statistical data collection guide patterned according to the objectives of the study was given to them to be filled by the police office statistician. The filled up statistical guide was retrieved two weeks after it was furnished to the police officer. Documentary analysis was utilized.

Data Analysis

The data reflected in the instrument was quantitatively analyzed. The profiles of the victims, parents, and the abusive situation were obtained with the use of percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of the subjects

Table 1. Age distribution of the abused children (N = 455)

Age group	2008	%	2009	%	2010	%	Total	%
0 - 1 yr old			2	0.44	3	0.66	5	1.1
1 - 3 yrs old	5	1.1	7	1.54	2	0.44	14	3.08
3 - 6 yrs old	9	1.98	12	2.64	11	2.42	32	7.03
7 - 11 yrs old	39	8.57	33	7.25	30	6.59	102	22.42
12 - 18 yrs old	121	26.59	109	23.96	72	15.82	302	66.37
Total	174	38.24	163	35.83	118	25.93	455	100

Table 1 suggests that the reported incidents of abuse occurred as early as the 0 - 1 year old age group, which is the child suffered abuse as early as the early years of life or infancy period. From 2008 to 2010, the greater percentage of reported incidents of abuse occurred during the adolescent period. There is increase in number of reported abuse

incidents during the adolescent period. Adolescents explore their options concerning the abusive situation. Adolescence is accompanied by an increasing ability to think abstractly, consider the hypothetical as well as the real, engage in more sophisticated and elaborate information processing strategies, consider multiple dimensions of a problem at once, and reflect on one's self and on complicated problems. There is also a steady increase in learning strategies, in knowledge of a variety of different topics and subject areas, in the ability to apply knowledge to new learning situations, and in the awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses as a learner (Eccles, 2010). On the positive note, the reported number of abuse cases decreased steadily between 2008 and 2010.

Table 2. Gender distribution of the abused children (N = 455)

Age group	2008				2009				2010				Total			
	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%
0-1 yr old					1	0.22	1	0.22	3	0.66			4	0.88	1	0.22
1-3 yrs old			5	1.1	1	0.22	6	1.32	1	0.22	1	0.22	2	0.44	12	2.64
3-6 yrs old	5	1.1	4	0.88	6	1.32	6	1.32	8	1.76	3	0.66	19	4.18	13	2.88
7-11 yrs old	19	4.18	20	4.4	21	4.62	12	2.64	18	3.96	12	2.64	58	12.75	44	9.67
12-18 yrs old	39	8.57	82	18.02	42	9.23	67	14.73	27	5.93	45	9.89	108	23.74	194	42.64
Total	63	13.85	111	24.4	71	15.61	92	20.2	57	12.53	61	13.41	191	42	264	58

Table 2 reflects the incidents of abuse according to gender for each age group. Abuse did occur at the infancy stage regardless of the child's gender; however it can be noted that more abuses occurred among the female as the age group advances. In 2008, there were more reported cases of abuse among females belonging to the 12 to 18 years age group

in comparison to the succeeding years in the same age group reflecting a decrease of reported abuse from 2008 to 2010. The Philippine National Police(PNP) launched a campaign on police visibility and the setting up of women's and children's desk on each police station, according to Chief Superintendent Yolanda Tanigue of the PNP (Kwok, 2009). With this campaign, victims were better equipped at protecting themselves by reporting the incidents of abuse to policewomen that they can see in the streets. The police visibility campaign had empowered female victims to fight their abusers and assert for their rights through allaying fear and betrayal and the knowledge that there was a policewoman who was in a better position to understand their experience.

Moreover, the table also suggests that more abuses were inflicted among the female gender because society views the female gender as the weaker sex, according to Hope Abella, Chairperson of Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (Kwok, 2009). This society's perception of the weaker sex had left the female gender vulnerable to abuses committed by the opposite sex who are espousing the machismo image of an ideal man.

Table 3. Marital status of the abused child's parents (N = 449)

Age Group	2008				2009				2010				Total			
	M	%	C	%	M	%	C	%	M	%	C	%	M	%	C	%
0-1 yr old					1	0.22	1	0.22	2	0.45	1	0.22	3	0.67	2	0.45
1-3 yrs old	3	0.67	2	0.45	4	0.89	3	0.67			2	0.45	7	1.56	7	1.56
3-6 yrs old	6	1.34	3	0.67	6	1.34	6	1.34	7	1.56	4	0.89	19	4.23	13	2.9
7-11 yrs old	20	4.45	15	3.34	14	3.12	19	4.23	12	2.67	18	4.0	46	10.24	52	11.58
12-18 yrs old	60	13.36	60	13.36	61	13.59	48	10.69	29	6.46	42	9.35	150	33.41	150	33.41
Total	89	19.82	80	17.82	86	19.16	77	17.15	50	11.14	67	14.92	225	50.11	224	49.89

Legend: M – Married C – Cohabiting

Table 3 reflects an almost equal occurrence of incidents of child abuse between those whose parents are married and those whose parents are cohabiting. In other words, the parents' marital status had

no direct influence on the incidents of abuse occurring among children. It was consistent however, that as the child's age advances reports of abuse also increase.

Table 4. Socio-economic status of the abused child's parents (N=454)

Age Group (yrs.old)	0 – 1		1 – 3		3 – 6		7 – 11		12 – 18		Total	
SE Status	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2008												
Low income			5	1.1	4	0.88	12	2.64	50	11	71	15.6
Middle Income					5	1.1	20	4.41	55	12.11	80	17.62
High Income							6	1.32	24	5.29	30	6.61
2009												
Low income	2	0.44	7	1.54	9	1.98	21	4.63	56	12.33	95	20.93
Middle Income					3	0.66	12	2.64	34	7.49	49	10.8
High Income									19	4.19	19	4.19
2010												
Low income	2	0.44	1	0.1	8	1.76	15	3.3	42	9.25	68	15
Middle Income	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	8	1.76	24	5.29	35	7.71
High Income					2	0.44			5	1.1	7	1.54
Total	5	1.1	14	3.08	32	7.05	94	20.7	309	68.1	454	100

Table 4 shows that child abuse occurred across socio-economic strata of the parents. It knew no socio-economic boundaries; however it can be noted, that the early occurrence of abuse, (occurring during the infancy period) happens among parents with low income socio-economic status (SES). Moreover, there is a higher incidence of abuse among the low SES family than any other SES. Review of literature revealed abuse potential among this economic group. Briggs and Hawkins (1994) found that parents coming from the low socio-economic status are least likely to reinforce safety concepts at home and children from low socio-economic status are least likely to trust their parents to provide protection.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Gelles (1992), and Trickett, Abbey, Carlson and Cichetti (1991), they found out that violence

towards children, especially severe violence, was more likely to occur in households with annual income below poverty line. Members of this socio-economic stratum experience more stress brought about by poverty. The experience of distress diminishes the parents ability to respond to the needs in a supportive way (Drucker, 2000)

Table 5. Educational attainment of the abused child's parents (N=414)

Age Group (yrs.old)	0 – 1		1 – 3		3 – 6		7 – 11		12 – 18		Total	
Educational Attainment (EA)	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2008											151	
Professional									4	0.97	4	0.97
College Graduate							5	1.2	11	2.66	16	3.87
College Level							7	1.69	13	3.14	20	4.83
High School Graduate					4	0.97	12	2.9	6	1.45	22	5.31
High School Level			2	0.48	5	1.2	7	1.69	22	5.31	36	8.7
Elementary Graduate							4	0.97	6	1.45	10	2.42
Elementary Level			3	0.72			3	0.72	22	5.31	28	6.76
Not been to school at all							1	0.24	14	3.38	15	3.62
2009											157	
Professional									13	3.14	13	3.14
College Graduate							5	1.2	24	5.8	29	7.0
College Level			2	0.48			10	2.42	15	3.62	27	6.52
High School Graduate			2	0.48	9	2.17	7	1.69	5	1.2	23	5.56
High School Level	2	0.48	1	0.24			3	0.72	23	5.56	29	7.0
Elementary Graduate			2	0.48	1	0.24	1	0.24	1	0.24	5	1.2

Continuation of Table 5

Elementary Level							2	0.48	12	2.9	14	3.38
Not been to school at all					2		5	1.2	10	2.42	17	4.1
2010											106	
Professional									2	0.48	2	0.48
College Graduate							1	0.24	13	3.14	14	3.38
College Level	3	0.72	2	0.48	4	0.97	5	1.2	6	1.45	20	4.83
High School Graduate					5	1.2	3	0.72	13	3.14	21	5.1
High School Level					2	0.48	9	2.17	4	0.97	15	3.62
Elementary Graduate							3	0.72	15	3.62	18	4.35
Elementary Level							6	1.45	8	1.93	14	3.38
Not been to school at all							1	0.24	1	0.24	2	0.48
Summary by EA												
Professional									19	4.6	19	4.6
College Graduate							11	2.66	48	11.59	59	14.25
College Level	3	0.72	4	0.97	4	0.97	22	5.31	34	8.21	67	16.18
High School Graduate	2	0.48	2	0.48	18	4.35	22	5.31	24	5.8	68	16.42
High School Level			3	0.72	7	1.69	19	4.6	49	11.84	78	18.84
Elementary Graduate			2	0.48	1	0.24	8	1.93	22	5.31	33	7.97
Elementary Level			3	0.72			11	2.66	42	10.14	56	13.53
Not been to school at all					2	0.48	7	1.69	25	6.0	34	8.21
Total	5	1.2	14	3.38	32	7.73	100	24.15	263	63.53	414	100

In table 5, most of the parents whose children had experienced abuse reached high school level. High school years in the Philippine

setting are experienced between the ages 12 to 17 years old. During this time, the individual is experiencing turmoil not only physically but also emotionally and psychologically. If a parent stopped educational formation and development during this time, this would leave one to be vulnerable, emotionally insecure, and fearful of rejection and mood swings. Thus, with the characteristics of a parent or parents, this would leave the child unsupported both emotionally and developmentally and this would also set the stage for an abusive environment.

Moreover, table 5 also suggests that parents who are professional are not totally spared from having their children experience abuse, especially during the adolescent years in comparison to the other age group. This finding suggests that as the child grows older the professional parents does not anymore play a major role in the child's life. Typically, the adolescent's parents play a secondary role and influence in contrast to the adolescent's peer group. Children in the adolescent stage would start to make their own decisions (Child Development Institute, 2010), prefer to be with their peers in social events rather than with their parents and spend more time with them away from their parents. These developmental attributes leaves the adolescent unprotected and is more vulnerable to child abuse especially sexual in nature (i.e. date rape) or molestation, sexually or physically.

Table 6. Profile of the perpetrators of child abuse (N= 494)

Table 6.1. Profile of the perpetrators of child abuse
by age bracket, year 2008

Age group	1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
VICTIMIZER	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
BM							5	1.01	5	1.01
BF							3	0.61	3	0.61
CH			3	0.61	2	0.40	17	3.44	22	4.45
CW					2	0.40	5	1.01	7	1.42
A							2	0.40	2	0.40
U	1	0.20							1	0.20
GF										0
GM										0

Continuation of Table 6

MS							5	1.01	5	1.01
FS			1	0.20					1	0.20
MN	2	0.40	5	1.01	23	4.66	59	11.94	89	18.01
FN					6	1.21	21	4.25	27	5.47
O										0

Legend:

BM – Biological mother

MS – male sibling

U – Uncle

CH – Cohabiting Husband

MN – male neighbor

GM – grandmother

O – others

A – Auntie

BF – Biological Father

FS – Female sibling

GF – Grandfather

CW – Cohabiting Wife

FN–female neighbor

Table 6.2. Profile of the perpetrators of child abuse
by age bracket, year 2009

Age Group	0 – 1 y.o.		1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
VICTIMIZER	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
BM					1	0.20	1	0.20	4	0.81	6	1.21
BF									4	0.81	4	0.81
CH	1	0.20	3	0.61			7	1.42	8	1.62	19	3.85
CW					1	0.20			10	2.02	11	2.23
A	1	0.20							2	0.40	3	0.61
U									5	1.01	5	1.01
GF									2	0.40	2	0.40
GM												0
MS									1	0.20	1	0.20
FS					6	1.21					6	1.21
MN			3	0.61	2	0.40	14	2.83	58		77	15.59
FN			1	0.20			6	1.21	15		22	4.45
O												0

Legend:

BM – Biological mother

MS – male sibling

A – Auntie

BF – Biological Father

U – Uncle

CH – Cohabiting Husband

MN – male neighbor

GM – grandmother

O – others

FS – Female sibling

GF – Grandfather

CW – Cohabiting Wife

FN–female neighbor

Table 6.3. Profile of the perpetrators of child abuse
by age bracket, year 2010

Age group	0 – 1 y.o.		1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
VICTIMIZER	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
BM	1	0.20			1	0.20	2	0.40	3	0.61	7	1.42
BF									9	1.82	9	1.82
CH	1	0.20			1	0.20	4	0.81	9	1.82	15	3.04
CW							1	0.20	1	0.20	2	0.40
A					1	0.20					1	0.20
U					1	0.20	1	0.20	1	0.20	3	0.61
GF												0
GM							1	0.20			1	0.20
MS												0
FS					5	1.01	4	0.81	2	0.40	11	2.23
MN			1	0.20	2	0.40	11	2.23	36	7.29	50	10.12
FN	1	0.20	1	0.20	1	0.20	7	1.42	7	1.42	17	3.44
O												0

Tables 6.1 through 6.3 indicate that the most common perpetrators are the male neighbors followed by the female neighbors and the cohabiting husband, respectively. Why the incidence of these abusers? These are the people whom the parent/s trusts to spend time with their children. In modern times, due to higher cost of living in urbanized areas, parents with children usually entrust the care of their children to an adult whom they think had their children's best interest in their heart (Bland, 2006). Thus, the perpetrator is left to inflict his/her authority on the helpless child who is entrusted to his/her care.

Table 7. Forms of abuse (N= 181)

Table 7.1. Forms of abuse 2008

Age Group	1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
PHYSICAL ABUSE	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Hitting	3	1.66	9	4.97	23	12.71	68	37.6	103	59.67
Scalding with hot water							1	0.55	1	0.55
SEXUAL ASSAULT										
Child - rape					8	4.42	39	21.55	47	25.97
Attempted rape					1	0.55	2	1.10	3	1.66
Incestuous rape							1	0.55	1	0.55
Acts of lasciviousness							9	4.97	9	4.97
NEGLECT										
Reckless disregard for the child's safety			1	0.55					1	0.55
Spousal abuse in the child's presence	1	0.55	2	1.10			3	1.66	6	3.31
Failing to enroll child in school							1	0.55	1	0.55
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE										
Verbal assault			2	1.10			7	3.87	9	4.97

Table 7.2. Forms of abuse 2009

Age Group	0 – 1 y.o.		1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
PHYSICAL ABUSE	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Hitting	2	1.10	4	2.21	11	6.1	26	14.37	64	35.36	107	59.12
SEXUAL ASSAULT												
Child - rape							5	2.76	26	14.36	31	17.13
Attempted rape									4	2.21	4	2.21
Incestuous rape									2	1.10	2	1.10
Acts of lasciviousness			1	0.55			5	2.76	13	7.18	19	10.5
NEGLECT												
Reckless disregard for the child's safety			1	0.55	1	0.55					2	1.10
Spousal abuse in the child's presence	2	1.10			2	1.10			3	1.66	7	3.87
Failing to enroll child in school			2	1.10					2	1.10	4	2.21
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE												
Verbal assault			2	1.10	2	1.10			9	4.97	13	7.18

Table 7.3. Forms of abuse 2010

Age Group	0 – 1 y.o.		1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
PHYSICAL ABUSE	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Hitting	3	1.66	2	1.10	10	5.52	20	11.0	36	19.89	71	39.23
SEXUAL ASSAULT												
Child - rape					1	0.55	5	2.76	15	10.99	21	11.6
Attempted rape							4	2.21			4	2.21
Acts of lasciviousness							2	1.10	12	6.63	14	7.73

Continuation of Table 7.2

NEGLECT												
Reckless disregard for the child's safety					1	0.55					1	0.55
Spousal abuse in the child's presence	1	0.55			1	0.55			3	1.66	5	2.76
Failing to enroll child in school									1	0.55	1	0.55
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE												
Verbal assault			2	1.10	7	3.87			9	4.97	18	9.94

Tables 7.1 through 7.3 illustrate that the most prevalent form of abuse is physical abuse in the form of hitting the victim. In Filipino culture, hitting as a form of corporal punishment is an accepted way of disciplining a child. But when does hitting become excessive as to become a child abuse? Review of literature suggests that hitting a child, especially when angry with the child is unacceptable, because a child who experiences hitting will interpret it as a legitimate way of conveying to the other person that one is angry with him/her. This hinders the expression of anger in an assertive and socially acceptable manner.

Another form of child abuse with utmost importance is child-rape, a form of sexual assault inflicted on the child. Child-rape degrades the integrity of the child who is the victim to this type of assault. A child experiencing this type of abuse views herself/himself dirty and betrayed by a trusted adult. In the heart and mind of the child predominates the feeling of shame, humiliation and anger often joined by guilt and conflict. The child may feel confused because she/he may have enjoyed the 'sex', against her/his will, and that since the abuse might have been repeated many times, and because she/he had no choice but to submit, the child might also feel that she/he colluded in what happened. This confusion, along with the threat of physical violence, leads to feelings of guilt, self-hatred and the likelihood that the victim won't tell anyone. Apart from the obvious physical damage done, the emotional, sexual and psychological scars last a lifetime (Barclay, 1987).

Spousal abuse in the child's presence ranked 64% among the forms of neglect. These children who bear witness to the power struggle reflected in domestic violence may be physically, emotionally or sexually abused by the abuser. The risk associated with these power struggles that the child witnesses may bring in the child maladjustment problems. These maladjustment problems may be reflected in higher levels of aggression, anger, hostility, oppositional behavior, and disobedience; fear, anxiety, withdrawal, and depression; poor peer, sibling, and social relationships; low self-esteem. Cognitively, the child may also suffer from lower cognitive functioning, poor school performance, lack of conflict resolution skills, limited problem-solving skills, acceptance of violent behaviors and attitudes, belief in rigid gender stereotypes and male privilege. In adulthood, the child witness may have higher levels of adult depression and trauma symptoms, increased tolerance for and use of violence in adult relationships (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2010).

Verbal assault as a form of emotional (psychological) abuse in the child is a form of control that is systematically applied on the other person. This form of control undermines the other person's confidence, worthiness, growth or trust in one. Its effect is more harmful than physical abuse because it devastates the individual and often leads the abused party to blame the self (Stosny, 2008). Moreover, children who are constantly experiencing emotional abuse may exhibit a range of serious disorders, including chronic depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociation and anger. Additionally, the impact of emotional abuse "did not differ significantly" from that of physical abuse (English, Graham, Newton, et. al, 2008), in female patients who suffered emotional abuse, there is a higher rate of gynecological problems (Johnson, Humera, Krukreja 2007). Hines and Malley-Morrison (August 2001) in their study of men, who experienced emotional abuse in the hands of their wives, partner or parent, report that victims exhibit high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, drug addiction and alcoholism.

Table 8. Length of occurrence of the abusive situation
before reporting (N=32)

Age Group	0 – 1 y.o.		1 – 3 y.o.		3 – 6 y.o.		7 – 11 y.o.		12 – 18 y.o.		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2008												
0 – 12 months							1	3.1	6	18.75	7	21.88
1 – 5 years			3	9.38	7	21.88	2	6.25	3	9.38	15	46.88
6 – 10 years					2	6.25	4	12.5			6	18.75
2009												
0 – 12 months									7	21.88	7	21.88
1 – 5 years	2	6.25	7	21.88	7	21.88	2	6.25	3	9.38	21	65.63
6 – 10 years					4	12.5	4	12.5			8	25
2010												
0 – 12 months							1	3.1	6	18.75	7	21.88
1 – 5 years	3	9.38	2	6.25	9	28.13	2	6.25	3	9.38	19	59.38
6 – 10 years					2	6.25	4	12.5			6	18.75

Table 8 conveyed that most cases of abuse go unreported for 1 - 5 years before it gets to be reported to the proper authorities. This delay, however, exemplified the victimology theory, which is the universal rejection of the victim. Individuals when exposed to an abusive situation appear to resist in believing the innocence of the victim and feel helpless and vulnerable. These individuals need to find a rational explanation for the incident, thereby blame the victim for the occurrence of the incident. There is also an irrational fear of being contaminated by the victim therefore; rejection becomes a defense mechanism (Haber, 1992). However, as the occurrence of abuse becomes repeated and its frequency increases, individuals exposed to these abuse situations begun to feel compelled to stop the abusive situation. They tend to entertain a reasonable suspicion that the abusive relationship cannot be stopped by their own intervention and also for fear of repercussion from the abuser (Myers, 1998), thus encouraging them to report the abuse to the proper authorities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that higher incidents of child abuse occurred among the female gender belonging to the 12 – 18. The most prevalent form of abuse was through physical infliction as hitting and had usually occurred from 1 – 5 years before it was reported to the proper authorities. Furthermore, the perpetrators recognized from the study were male adult neighbors followed by the female adult neighbors and finally the cohabiting husbands and individuals whom the parents trust to spend time with their children especially if the parents were under educated and belonged to the low socio-economic stratum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Public education on the mandatory reporting of abuse. Public education will allow individuals to become more aware that children in abuse situations badly need all the help they can get to prevent long term damage of abuse.

2. Crisis intervention program in support of children and their parents and the perpetrators. This program will assist the children and their parents and the abusers in recognizing the abuse at the earliest possible time, plan on stopping the abuse before damage sets in and implement strategies to stop future abuses in any form. This program would also assist the individual in finding resolution to long-term/long standing personal and psychological conflicts.

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