

Title: The Effects of Abuse on Childhood Development: A Biopsychosocial Model

Program of Study: Clinical Mental Health Counseling

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Abstract: In this research, the widespread tragedy of child abuse—including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse—is assessed from a biopsychosocial perspective. To best understand the significance and impact of this issue, the prevalence of child abuse in the United States is presented. The comparison between healthy childhood development and development post trauma is examined, exposing the dramatic effect of abuse on the development of the individual in this stage. The first aspect of development assessed is the biological effects on the brain regions, HPA Axis, and epigenetics of the victim. With an understanding of the physiological impact of abuse, the implications of child maltreatment on identity formation, emotional regulation, and relational attachments are discussed in relation to Erikson's psychosocial stages. Stemming from this psychological foundation, the attachment theory is used to understand the impact of childhood abuse on social skills and peer relations. Finally, various techniques used in counseling sessions with victims are explored, including trauma-focused art therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, video therapy, and rational cognitive emotive behavior therapy. Throughout this research, a Christian worldview is utilized as a rationale and motivation to care for and best

serve childhood abuse survivors. The purpose of this review is to equip the counselor and strengthen the therapeutic alliance by promoting empathy through increased understanding while highlighting appropriate counseling techniques.