

MGG2602: SEXUAL TRAUMA WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

Sexual abuse is not an uncommon phenomenon – especially not in South-Africa. Although we hear about incidents regarding sexual assault and rape on a daily basis, not many survivors come forward to seek help, mainly because they feel too embarrassed and even responsible for what happened to them.

In this assignment, we will take a closer look at sexual abuse and learn more about the brutal truth that are hidden from the public eye. We will also get in contact with organisations that deal with sexual abuse.



“Sexual abuse of children now presents society with the ultimate crisis of patriarchy, when children refuse to protect their fathers by keeping secrets.”

— Beatrix Campbell

(Unofficial Secrets, ch. 2 (1988)) (www.poemhunter.com)

Question 1:

- 1.1. I would interpret this behaviour as normal. Sex play between peers is common between same-age pairing. This only suggests curiosity, playfulness and discovery and it is nothing to be worried about.
- 1.2. I would recommend that Sue gently stops her daughter and the boy; she should handle the situation in such a way that the children don't feel inhibited to ask questions later on. She should tell them about the importance of respect toward other people's bodies and their right to privacy.
- 1.3. This is also a normal behaviour as children explore their own bodies and they enjoy the pleasure that comes from genital touching.
- 1.4. Priveshni should not interpret this behaviour as an indication that her child has the same intent as a 23-year old while playing with his genitals. She should teach him about his body in a way that the three-year-old would easily understand.
- 1.5. This behaviour can indicate that the child is dealing with emotional anxieties that either have nothing to do with sex, or that the boy is a victim of sexual or emotional abuse and neglect.
- 1.6. I would recommend that Christine visit his home to see what his living conditions are like and she should tell his parents about what she observed. His behaviour should be carefully monitored to see that his needs are appropriately met and to see that he is not being sexually abused in any way.

Question 2:

- 2.1. ☒ Frank experienced peer pressure from his classmates who dared him to have sex; he is introverted, so he used his little sister.
- ☒ Frank could never talk to his parents about life and certain situations; therefore he could not talk to them about the pressure he experienced from his classmates to have sex.
- ☒ Frank witnessed his father forcing sex on his mother; his actions may be sexually reactive; he also witnessed his father beating his mother. This showed him that it is acceptable to force a woman to have sex with you.
- ☒ Inadequate socialization; Frank was not allowed to socialise much after school. He was afraid to talk to girls.
- 2.2. ☒ Frank's sister will be protected from repeated sexual abuse and she can now receive counselling to heal emotionally.
- ☒ Frank will receive the necessary help a counsellor to learn to stop copying his father's actions.
- ☒ Frank's mom will be able to divorce her husband and be freed from an abusive relationship.
- ☒ Frank's father can also receive counselling and rehabilitation from sexually and physically abusing woman.
- 2.3. By reporting the matter to the authorities, Frank's mother protected his needs, his sister's needs as well as her own needs.
- Frank will receive the necessary counselling to improve his social skills, his Sister will be protected from repeated sexual abuse and his Mom will be rid of the abusive relationship.
- 2.4. I think that she felt an immense feeling of heartbreak and a sense of betrayal when she learnt of the incident. The truth being that her husband's actions caused her son to imitate his behaviour in forcing himself on his sister, must have broken her heart. I don't think she felt good when reporting the matter, but she knew that it was for the best of both her kids.

Question 3:

3.1. I think that the child testifying in a court case, would be very anxious, feel scared to face the perpetrator in court, and embarrassed to tell the court about what had happened to him/her.

3.2. ☒ You can take the child on a guided tour through the court before the hearing.

☒ Encourage the child to verbalise any fears that they might have about the procedure of the hearing and reassure them that they are in a safe environment.

☒ Give the child some hints on how to give evidence in a hearing.

☒ The child must be given a play-by-play of how the procedure will take place; the sequence of events can be enacted using puppets.

☒ The child needs to understand the court process; explain it to them in simple language which they will easily understand.

3.3. **PATCH HELDERBERG CHILD ABUSE CENTRE**

3.3.1. PATCH was established in 1992 and deals with every aspect of child sexual abuse. One of the offered services is the Court Prep Program.

The Court Prep Program of PATCH spends time to prepare child witnesses for the reality of the courtroom and cross-examination. They believe that if unprepared, a child can be easily confused by the defence and they may also be led to believe that the Court believes them to be lying and the perpetrator will get away with what they have done.

“Time spent in preparing a witness for the reality of the **courtroom and cross-examination**, and helping them to tell their story, is time well spent.”
(PATCH Helderberg : Child Abuse Centre)

PATCH offers the program in various ways, such as individual sessions with the child witness, allowing the child to verbalise the offence; group sessions with the witness and their parents, and also sessions with the parents separately.

The program allows the witness and parents to visit the courtroom before the trial to familiarise them with the setting and environment of the court.

The court supporter helps to keep the child relaxed and allows the child to play until he/she is called to witness. The program also offers the child snacks and keeps them stimulated with videos, music and toys to make the experience the least stressful for the child.

- 3.3.2. According to Ada of PATCH (via e-mail, dated 5 January 2016), the program is not focussed on a specific age. It depends on each child's individual age and specific case. It also depends on which court is in question.

I believe that such a program would be more effective on smaller children, as they need to be reminded that they are not in fault and that they are in a safe environment. Children tend to feel obligated to protect the perpetrator.

- 3.3.3. The program is offered in face-to-face sessions with the child witness. A Court Supporter is appointed during the case to keep the child occupied and relaxed.

- 3.3.4. When the case is referred to court, the child is prepared for the hearing. The process is explained to the child in easy to understand language and the child is given an overview of the process. To help the child orient him/herself, they are taken on a guided tour of the courtroom. The helper spends time dealing with the emotions of the witness regarding his/her role as a witness. They reassure the child that he/she is in a safe environment and they can speak openly about their fears and embarrassments.

- 3.3.5. I find this program to be very helpful. I aim to work with sexually abused children and what I learned about this program is that their number one goal is to empower victims of sexual abuse and to ensure that they have confidence when testifying in court. The advantages of this program are that through the testimony of one confident and well-prepared child witness, many other children can be spared the gruesome reality of sexual abuse by that perpetrator. Another advantage is that the child will feel empowered to talk about what has happened and avoid same situations in the future. A possible disadvantage of this program might be that the child is not completely prepared to face the perpetrator in court, as not all children testify in child-friendly courtrooms. Those children won't be as easily distracted by toys and snacks as those in child friendly rooms.

- 3.3.6. This program can be improved by means of play. I would make use of role-play or puppets to "rehearse" the court proceedings. I think that the program should spend more time to deal with emotions, and by incorporating play, the child would be more open and susceptible to the facts and their testimony. To make it more "fun" in the midst of the hardship.

PATCH Helderberg Child Abuse Centre

Help Us Help Abused Children
24 Hour Crisis Line 021 852 6110


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Welcome to PATCH / Helderberg Child Abuse Centre

Court Preparation

Appearing in a **criminal court** is a very frightening experience for an adult, even more so for a young child. However, without their vital evidence child abusers will not face prosecution.

Unprepared, counsel for defence may easily undermine and confuse the child or parent in such a way that he or she is not believed and the abuser gets away with the crime.

About PATCH's Court Preparation

Time spent in preparing a witness for the reality of the **courtroom and cross-examination**, and helping them to tell their story, is time well spent. Even if sentences are ridiculously light, as is often the case, the victim feels empowered by being able to give testimony and be believed.

Due to the fact that children experience difficulties when testifying in court, certain concessions have been made for them. A special child friendly courtroom is linked to the court by closed-circuit camera, giving the child the chance to testify without having to face the alleged perpetrator.

Court preparation sessions are offered in the following ways: Individual sessions for witnesses, group sessions for witnesses and sessions for parents. The child and parent visit the court before the court case and get familiar with the court environment.

Children should feel safe and protected in the courtroom. The court supporter can put the child at ease on the day of the court case. On the day of the court case the child can relax and play until called to give evidence in court. We offer the children a snack and keep them stimulated with videos, music and play while they wait their turn. Cases are sometimes remanded several times before the child finally testifies. We want to make this experience the least stressful for the children.



Objectives

- To prepare victims of child sexual abuse for their court case
- To provide the child witness with a greater level of confidence and empowerment to testify

3.3.8

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Question 4:

- 4.1. Stage 1: Denial (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 145)
- 4.2. People at this stage tend to block out the memories of the sexual abuse. They never deal with the pain of being abused. The victim doesn't want to admit what had happened to them. They will tell others that they are "fine", this is an indicator of Stage 1, denial. Elsabe's story confirms that she is indeed at Stage 1.
- 4.3. Stage 4: Exploration of emotive content – **Anger** (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 149)
- 4.4. When a victim of sexual abuse acknowledges what had happened, a great amount of anger is generated. Some survivors direct their anger toward their mothers for not protecting them; others direct it at the offender. In this case we see that the victim has intense anger toward her brother, but also blames her mother for what had happened. We also see that she wishes to kill her brother for what he did to her.
- 4.5. Stage 4: Exploration of emotive content – **Grief and mourning** (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 150)
- 4.6. During the healing process, survivors grieve the loss of something specific, in this scenario she grieves the loss of a family she needed whilst growing up. Grieving also leads to depression, as also seen in this scenario.
- 4.7. Stage 2: The emergency stage
- 4.8. Once the survivor acknowledges that the abuse has occurred, the emotional rollercoaster starts. Re-experiencing feelings is a painful occurrence for them ("choking in my throat"). The emerging feelings may temporarily interrupt the survivor's routine – "reverberating through the structure of everyday things". We see in the poem that the writer finally acknowledged the abuse.

- 4.9. Stage 4: Exploration of emotive content – **Guilt and self-blame** (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 151)
- 4.10. At this stage, the survivor blames him/herself for what had happened. They feel that they are in some way responsible for the abuse. They fail to recognise that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. It is very clear in this scenario that the survivor blames herself and feels guilty for what happened. She has yet to challenge her self-blame.
- 4.11. Stage 4: Exploration of emotive content – **Fear** (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 152)
- 4.12. Survivors at this stage experience either implicit or explicit fear. They may fear for their life or fear the abuse. We see in this scenario that the survivor fears leaving her house because she feels defenceless and afraid. The fear led to her putting her life on “hold”; it constricted her lifestyle.
- 4.13. Stage 2: The emergency stage (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 146)
- 4.14. This stage leads to the survivor experiencing an emotional rollercoaster. All of the suppressed emotions come back at once and it is extremely painful. We see here that NiCarthy’s experienced a number of emotions and in the end, she finally felt free.
- 4.15. Stage 5: Bottoming out and acceptance (MGG2602/102/0/2016: 153)
- 4.16. Survivors at this stage examine the extent to which the abuse impacted their lives and develop a sense of empowerment to control their future. At this stage they develop a plan of action for their recovery and take concrete steps to increase their sense of power and control. This scenario shows that the survivor took power back in his life after the abuse.

Question 5:

5.1.

The procedure of a rape investigation depends on the situation; the victim can either come into the police station to lay charges and open a case of rape, or the police can be called out to the scene of the incident.

The procedure at the scene of the rape:

When a person reports the rape, police officers are dispatched to the scene to investigate the rape and gather evidence at the scene. At first, they have to secure the crime scene to ensure that no evidence gets lost during the investigation.

A woman police officer is assigned to attend to the victim; she needs to be calmed down to ensure that she’s able to make a statement.

Firstly, the investigators look for any sign of struggle at the scene, they collect the torn pieces of clothing (if any) and place them in a paper bag.

According to Adjulant Nel of Garsfontein Police Station, if there's not a woman police officer available, they call for someone from another station to accompany the victim to the medical examiner.

The medical examiner will conduct a medical examination to collect samples from the victim's mouth, her vagina and anus for any traces of semen. They take all of her clothing and the samples collected and place it in an evidence bag for further investigation and to use in the case.

The girl is allowed to go take a shower after the medical investigation.

They police opens a criminal case. If the perpetrator is unknown to the victim, they will do an identity profile and send it to all major crime channels to make it public to the community. If the suspect is found, they will place all suspects in an identity parade for identification by the victim.

When the suspect has been identified, he will be arrested immediately and placed on trial. Some of the perpetrators are granted bail and given a date of trial, if they don't show up; they will be forcefully arrested once again until the date of the hearing.

The judge decides on the verdict by means of the evidence.

After the trial, the victim will be referred to trauma counselling if suggested by the social worker or the court.

- 5.2. Adjulant Nel said that some of the practical problems that they can experience during such investigation, is that the victim may have showered before the medical examination; if there is not a woman official available, the victim might be reluctant to talk about the incident; they may experience language barriers; the victim may be too traumatic to talk to the investigators; in very rare cases, there might not be a medical examiner available at the moment, but he said that they are usually on stand-by.

- 5.3. Contact:

SAPS Garsfontein – Trauma Centre

Adjulant Nel – 012 770 7700

References :

- MGG2602/102/0/2016 Study Guide
- Court Preparation Program: PATCH Helderberg – available at <http://www.patchhelderberg.co.za/>
- Garsfontein Trauma Centre (Adjutant Nel)