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Child Maltreatment and Children's Human Capabilities in Aruba.

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Abuse and the Human Capacity of children in Aruba

The level of child abuse in Aruba is high, and the best way to address this issue is by applying the Human Capability Approach (HCA). This is the argument presented by a researcher from the University of Aruba, Clementia Eugene, along with academics Tobi Graafsma and Manon Sanches. This is the first time the relationship between child abuse and the Human Capability Approach has been theorized. The theory was published in the Caribbean Journal of Psychology.

The three academics not only investigated the types of child abuse, but also analyzed them based on the 10 Central Human Capabilities proposed by philosophers Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. The 10 Central Human Capabilities include life, health, physical integrity and safety, sense, imagination and thought, emotion, practical reasoning, affiliation, other species, play, and control over the personal environment. HCA's main contribution to human development is the shift from popular economic models of development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which focuses on income, wealth, and free markets, to one that measures people's quality of life and well-being. The rationale is that performance is an achievement, whereas capability is the ability to achieve. Functioning is more directly related to living conditions, whereas capacity links to the notion of freedom and the actual opportunities available for the life that one leads.

The main definition of HCA is development as freedom. It means expanding one's freedom as a member of society. The researchers believe HCA can apply to children because studies have shown that in the context of abuse, not all parents have the competence to make the right decisions in raising their children. In addition, children have the ability to self-determine their development as they transition from one stage to the next. For example, through school activities and community projects, they may have opportunities to express their own opinions, thus empowering themselves and influencing the world around them. Given the legal and economic dependence on their parents, in addition to their physical and emotional vulnerability, HCA can be applied to children.

Child abuse is a violation of a child's rights, and there is strong evidence showing the emotional impact of behavior that continues to affect the child for the rest of their life. The need for this investigation grew particularly after the deaths of two brothers, aged three and five, caused by parental violence and neglect. The deaths of the two children shocked the community of Aruba, which reacted by demanding improved child protection services. This research contributes to the data needed to make improvements.

A total of 895 Aruban children between the ages of 12 and 17 were surveyed, using the Netherlands national study on the prevalence of child abuse as a measurement tool. The results showed a lifetime prevalence of abuse of 78.4 percent and an annual prevalence of 50.2 percent. Results reveal, among other things, that as the prevalence of abuse increases, so do the figures for human capacity, representing children's failure to enjoy the abilities required for their well-being. The researchers recommend to replicate the study in other Caribbean islands to reach a

consensus to develop the regional index on a child-friendly society, the Child Friendliness Index. Other recommendations include the introduction of HCA in teacher education, psychology, and social work training programs in the Caribbean.