

## CHILDHOOD MALTREATMENT AS PATHWAY TO DELINQUENCY

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## ABSTRACT

## OBJECTIVE

To explore the predictive relationship of childhood maltreatment towards the involvement in delinquent behaviors in their later life and to figure out the most significant form of childhood abuse that predict the delinquency.

## STUDY DESIGN

Correlational Research Design

## PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

Study was completed from Feb-2017 to Feb-2018. Data was collected from the four prisons of District Punjab (Lahore, Sialkot, Gujrat, Rawalpindi) Including District Jail Lahore, District Jail Sialkot, District Jail Gujrat, and from the Central Jail Rawalpindi.

## SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Total sample of 517 was gathered from prisoners with age range of 18 to 60 years old. Data was collected through the purposive sampling technique. Child maltreatment was measured through child abuse self-report scale including the four sub domains of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect while delinquency was investigated through the self-reported delinquency scale.

## RESULTS

Simple Linear Regression and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis were used to measure the predictive effect of childhood maltreatment towards the involvement with delinquency. Results revealed the positive predictive relationship of childhood maltreatment with delinquency.

## CONCLUSION

Findings revealed the childhood maltreatment as a significant predictor towards the involvement in delinquent behaviors. Further, it was explored that the prisoners who experienced the sexual abuse and neglect were more involved in delinquent behaviors in their later life as compare with physical and psychological abuse.

## KEY WORDS

Childhood Maltreatment, Delinquency, Prisoners, Regression Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood maltreatment is a combine form of abuse and neglect that children get experience in their childhood under the age of 18 years. Childhood maltreatment included all types of physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse as well as physical and emotional neglect that could cause visible or latent harm to the child's mental as well as physical health. World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> reported the childhood maltreatment in four forms of abuse the including the Physical abuse as deliberated harm for the child, including punching, biting, strangling or kicking tendencies toward child while emotional abuse is the ongoing harm or emotional neglect for a child. It involved deliberately gazing, humiliation, isolation or deprivation of the child from basic needs. Child sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity intentionally performed by other persons towards child involving the form of sexual conduct forcing a child to have sex or perform a sexual activity.

World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> gave the detailed account on childhood maltreatment. According to the facts approximately 20% of women and 5–10% of men gave account of being sexually abused as children, while 25–50% of all children reported being physically abused. According to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information<sup>2</sup> that childhood maltreatment is any act or failure to act towards child that leads toward the physical injury, emotional exploitation, sexual or psychological harassment, or even child death.

The situation of childhood maltreatment in Pakistan is devastating day by day. A significant study<sup>3</sup> contributed the Pakistan situational analysis with respect to child abuse and neglect. It was concluded that in Pakistan child has to encounter with childhood maltreatment at much as compared with any other South Asian country. It reported that under age of 5 years almost 40% children suffered from malnutrition and approximately 63% of children between the ages of 6 months and 3 years have compromised growth. The percentage of feeble and underweight children was reported around 42 percent. Furthermore in educational sector conditions were reported much more poor<sup>4</sup>, about 23 million children have to face the parental educational neglect. Parents did not send them to school to acquire formal education. In Pakistan parents used the physical punishment to train their children.

Delinquency is defined as 'the expression of any behaviors typically considered being delinquent, verbally or physically aggressive<sup>5</sup>. Another significant study looked into the distinction between delinquent and antisocial behaviors and concluded the distinction in severity could be made: delinquent behaviors are less severe in nature than antisocial behavior.<sup>6</sup>

A study examined the relationship between childhood maltreatment and the later involvement in delinquent behaviors in adulthood. Results indicated that childhood maltreatment leads to the delinquent behaviors which ultimately move a child to commit crime. They concluded children who suffer from physical abuse are significantly more likely to commit violent and nonviolent crimes<sup>7</sup>.

One study<sup>8</sup> revealed that childhood maltreatment leads to the adult imprisonment due to the involvement in different criminal activities. Result indicated that 19.6% abused or neglected group of individual were imprisoned as compare with control group who had no history of abuse or neglect. Gender effect was explored with particular to the abused or neglected male or female experienced adversities in their childhood. Males had more imprisonment record as compare with females<sup>9</sup>.

The study of Widom also based on the adverse effects of childhood maltreatment. He postulated the idea from previous researches and find out the likelihood of arrest records, suicide attempts, psychological problems, drug abuse and/or dependency in those who were maltreated in their childhood. Result revealed that the 31.2 % individual who were abused in their childhood had most arrest record as to those who were no maltreated, 18.8 % abused children had suicide attempts; 18.4% maltreated respondent had the antisocial personality disorder in their later life. While a large portion, 54.5% of abused or neglected community was indulged in alcohol or has substance dependence record<sup>9</sup>.

In another study data was collected from National Youth Survey and investigated the consequences of physical abuse that lead toward the criminal activity including theft, robbery, burglary, gang fights and sexual abuse. Results revealed that is Physical abuse is associated with an increase of 97 percent in criminal activity<sup>10</sup>.

In the same domain another significant study was carried out by Grogan- Kaylor and Otis<sup>11</sup>, They explored the tendency of being arrest due to the violent and criminal acts in the influence of their experienced by physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse. Through analysis it was revealed that 0.45 more neglected child commit crime and got imprisonment and as well as physical and sexual abuse concerned it increases the number of arrests by 0.18 and 0.09 percent respectively.

Through different researches it got evident that childhood abuse has strong long lasting effect.

With particular to this concern in Pakistan different disciplines are working and with passage of time the field of forensic psychology is becoming the incursion area for researchers. But there's a dearth of systematic research with respect to the eminent variables of study. With particular to Pakistan context, A case study was conducted in July 2015 at District Bahawalnagar<sup>12</sup> that highlight the significant results that harsh or neglected attitude towards individual by the parents, peer group and from significant others can lead toward the crime.

Same findings were explored through another research<sup>13</sup> that emphasized at the effect of family environment including restrictive behavior, negligence, improper supervision, and delinquent

behavior of their parents that leads towards the juvenile delinquency. In the same context another study<sup>14</sup>, examined the major causes of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan and concluded the childhood abuse as most significant.

In the current study the wide range of delinquent behaviors including theft, crimes against persons, index offenses, drug abuse/dependence and sexual harassment and abuse were explored and childhood maltreatment in form of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect was explored. In Pakistan most of researcher has started to work on the etiology of crime but efforts are not satisfactory. The dearth of systematic research work done in this context put the interest into explore the predictors of delinquent behaviors.

### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There has been found the remarkably large and robust effects of maltreatment towards the involvement in delinquent behaviors. Over here childhood maltreatment is considered as the integral composition of childhood disciplinary training. Parents considered the punishment as an essential part of training without considering the adverse consequences which have to face by the child in their later life. The present study purely worked on this specific domain and tried to address the effects of childhood maltreatment. Further the available Pakistani literature only addressed the statistics of child abuse and neglect, but there's scarcity of research with particular to the consequences of childhood maltreatment, so the current study will try to address this issue.

### SUBJECTS AND METHOD

#### Participants

Data was collected through Purposive sampling technique by using the cross sectional correlational research study. Only those prisoners were the part of study that experienced childhood maltreatment before the age 18 years in any form of abuse including Physical, Psychological, sexual or neglect. Sample was comprised at 517 prisoners; both male and female prisoners with age range of 18 to 60 years old were the part of study. Data was collected from the four prisons of District Punjab (Lahore, Sialkot, Gujrat, Rawalpindi) Including District Jail Lahore, District Jail Sialkot, District Jail Gujarat, District Jail Lahore, and from the Central Jail Rawalpindi.

#### Instrument

Childhood Maltreatment was measured through the adapted version of Child Abuse Self Report Scale<sup>15</sup>; it was comprised on 41 items with four subscales of Psychological, Neglect, Physical and Sexual Abuse. Delinquent behaviors were measured through 27 items, self-Reported Delinquency Scale<sup>16</sup>.

#### Procedure

This study was performed after obtaining due permission from higher police authorities as it involved jail inmates as subjects and then the subjects were approached with the police constables. The representative sample that experienced the physical, psychological,

emotional abuse and neglect in their childhood and with involvement of delinquent behaviors was drawn from prisons of four Punjab districts of Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sialkot and Gujrat. Before to get administer the questionnaire, respondents were briefed about the purpose of study and privacy was assured. The questions related to the childhood maltreatment and delinquent behaviors were asked in Urdu language so participants could comprehend statements easily and chose the most relevant option with their personal experiences.

**RESULTS**

Simple and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted to find out the predictive relationship between Childhood Maltreatment and Delinquency and the four types of temperament with delinquency. Results showed that temperament is significant predictor of delinquency.

**Table 1**  
Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Sub Types of Childhood Maltreatment (Physical, Psychological, Sexual abuse and Neglect) as Predictor of Delinquent behaviors in Prisoners (N=517)

Variables	B	SE	β	P
Physical Abuse	.212	.214	.059	.322
Psychological Abuse	-.091	.143	-.037	.525
Sexual Abuse	2.229	.390	.386	.000
Neglect	.360	.088	.164	.000
R	.458			
R <sup>2</sup>	.209			
ΔR	.202			
F	27.082			

Findings of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of four types of childhood maltreatment including physical, psychological, sexual abuse and neglect as Predictor of Delinquent behaviors in prisoners revealed that childhood maltreatment play a significant role with particular to the involvement in delinquent behaviors. Table indicated that four subscales collectively account for 20.2% variance in the delinquency.

Further simple linear regression analysis was carried out to explore the significant predictive effect of sub-dimensions of Childhood Maltreatment. The results revealed that all sub-scales of Childhood Maltreatment were the significant predictor of Delinquency.

**Table 2**  
Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis, subtypes of Childhood Maltreatment as Predictor of Delinquent behaviors in Prisoners (N=517)

Variables	Δ R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	β	F	P
Physical Abuse	.111	1.202	.149	.336	65.344	.000
Psychological Abuse	.070	.666	.106	.268	39.85	.000
Sexual Abuse	.176	2.44	.231	.422	111.49	.000
Neglect	.044	.470	.094	.214	24.834	.000

In above table physical abuse sub scales sub dimension explained 33.6 % variance in delinquency and the significant p value shown that it is a significant predictor of delinquency. One-unit increase in Physical abuse will increase the relational aggression scores by 1.202.

Psychological Abuse explained 26.8 % variance in delinquency and the significant p value shown that it is a significant predictor of delinquency. One-unit increase in Psychological Abuse will increase the relational aggression scores by .666. The third dimension advantageous comparison explained the 21.4 % variance in the delinquency while one-unit increase in it will increase score in the delinquency by .470. The Significant p value showed that it is a significant predictor of delinquency. The fourth dimension sexual abuse explained the 42.2 % variance in the delinquency while one-unit increase in domain of sexual abuse will increase score on delinquency by 2.437. Significant p value revealed the sexual abuse as a significant predictor of delinquency in later life.

**Table 3**  
Pearson Correlation Matrix, Correlation between Four Sub types of Childhood Maltreatment with Eight Subtypes of Delinquency

	Theft	Drug Abuse	Lying	Non Compliance to adult	Police Encounter and Escape	Violence	Cheating and Gambling	Sexual Harassment and Abuse
Physical Abuse	.353**	.347**	.235**	.145**	.233**	.311**	.237**	.347**
Psychological Abuse	.296**	.247**	.187**	.145**	.196**	.237**	.193**	.283**
Sexual Abuse	.464**	.403**	.282**	.211**	.265**	.383**	.317**	.439**
Neglect	.203**	.218**	.174**	.088**	.145**	.183**	.176**	.233**

Note: \*\* P<.01

Above table indicated the correlation matrix between two constructs and highlighted the significant correlation within the subtypes of both constructs. Result depicted that sexual abuse in childhood maltreatment leads toward the involvement in different forms of delinquent behaviors more as compare to any other form of abuse.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the present study was to explore the predicting effect of childhood maltreatment on delinquency. It was hypothesized that the childhood maltreatment will predictor the involvement in subsequent delinquent behaviors in later life. The results of the study indicated that childhood maltreatment is significant predictor of delinquent behaviors in prisoners. It was indicated that childhood maltreatment account the 20.8% variation to predict the involvement in delinquent behaviors (R= 0.456\*\*, R<sup>2</sup>= .208\*\*, p = <.01).

The prisoners reported the different forms of maltreatment that they have to face in form of Neglect, Psychological, Physical, and sexual abuse. Subject reported that during their childhood they did not receive care from their parents, caregivers and from relatives. They used to ridicule, over criticized, taunt and used to blame in other presence. In most of the time they get hold of burden beyond their potentiality, due to this kind of dehumanization subject started to develop the strong feeling of rejection and as unwanted child and started to develop a strong desire to live with any other family instead of their own. In category of neglect prisoners reported that in their childhood they found their significant caregivers careless towards the fulfillment of basic needs and bring into being less concerned towards their wishes and intentions. Furthermore it was reported that they couldn't get proper care of hygiene, food and sleep in

childhood. This behavior gradually originated the sentiment that their parents, caregivers and other family members will not help them in emergency situations.

Physical abuse was the highlighted feature of their childhood maltreatment too. Parents, caregivers and other family members were reported to beat frequently. Sometimes they used to beat so hard that resulted in a major injury (broken bones, head injury etc). Some of respondents reported that in their childhood they have been beaten at minor things and sometimes received punishment without any mistake.

These adverse experiences eventually lead toward the involvement in delinquent behaviors. Prisoners reported involvement of different forms of delinquent behaviors including theft, drug abuse, lying, non compliance to adult, police encounter and escape, violence related to delinquency, cheating and gambling and sex related delinquent behaviors. The results are consistent with the results of previous studies<sup>18,19,21</sup>, which bring into being that the frequency of childhood maltreatment predicts the frequency of involvement in delinquent behaviors.

Furthermore results of present study highlighted the significant predictive effect of different forms of childhood maltreatment and reported 33.6 % variation delinquency by the physical abuse, abuse and 21.4% variation was reported by neglect respectively. Predictive effect of sub types of childhood maltreatment on delinquency has been identified in previous researches<sup>21,22</sup>; In that researches physical neglect, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse were found significant in individual's likelihood of committing crime in later life. Physical abuse was significant a predictor of later delinquent behavior<sup>22</sup>.

The involvement in delinquent behaviors due to the childhood maltreatment might be due to Freudian theory of repetition compulsion<sup>23</sup> and Bandura's social learning theory<sup>24</sup>; it would make sense for physical abuse to be more highly correlated with violent offending, especially because abused children are more aggressive than neglected children<sup>25,26</sup>. Theory of repetition compulsion suggested that maltreated children who become juvenile offenders would most likely commit offenses that mimic the maltreatment they suffered. Social learning theory, a theory of repetition compulsion is the human propensity to repeat maladaptive relationship patterns and to seek out relationships that simulate early, significant attachments with caregivers. In light of this theory, it makes sense that maltreated children would be more likely than non-maltreated children to become offenders.

According to Maslow<sup>27</sup>, the most fundamental human need is physiological; above all else, humans are driven to satisfy their hunger and thirst and need for adequate air and temperature. After these basic physiological needs are met, a hierarchy of needs including safety, love, self-esteem, and self actualization come forward. When physical neglect is present, none of these needs are met, which has severe effects on a child. Perhaps adolescents who are physically neglected become more violent because they were forced to survive on their own as children and learned to use unconventional means, such as violence, to survive. It is possible that growing up without basic physical necessities caused the children and adolescents to behave in an un-socialized manner to get their needs met.

Whereas the 42.2 % variation was reported by the sexual abuse and 26.8 % variation was depicted through the psychological abuse. In childhood maltreatment the most significant result was the tendency of sexual abuse received in their childhood. Most of prisoners reported that they became the victim of sexual harassment and abuse in their childhood. They dig up sexually maltreated from single or more than one person at one or more than one time.

Prisoners reported that they were forcefully asked to touch other's private body parts and forced to exhibit our own too. Furthermore they highlighted the occurrence of forceful relationship imposed by some adults. Study results are consistent with previous researches<sup>7, 28, 29, 30</sup> that highlighted the results in shape of psychological abuse and sexual abuse as significant predictors of delinquency and sexual abuse was the significant predictor of property damage, violent crime, and status offending. In the current study sexual abuse was more significant predictor as compare to the any other form of abuse.

Furthermore tendency to involve in different forms of delinquent behaviors was measured through the eight domains of self reported delinquency scale<sup>16</sup> including theft, drug abuse, lying, non compliance to adult, police encounter and escape, violence related to delinquency, cheating and gambling and sexual harassment and abuse. Pearson correlation results revealed that overall theft, drug abuse, violence, sexual abuse and harassment as compare to other form of delinquent behaviors were more prevalent in maltreated individuals, so it became evident that individual with abusive tendency have the greater potential to involve in delinquent behaviors. It clearly portrayed through analysis that child who received sexual abuse in their childhood has the greater tendency to get involve in negative behaviors of theft, drug abuse, violence, sex related delinquent behaviors and cheating and gambling at large than any other forms of abuse. Through individual analysis it got astonishingly evident that the strapping predictor of criminal behaviors was Sexual abuse, Physical abuse, Psychological abuse and Neglect respectively. In light of this eminent study it was revealed that sexual abuse and neglect have serious and lasting consequences on victims, especially in terms of later involvement in delinquent behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

Paper highlighted the effect of childhood maltreatment and figure out the pattern of delinquent behaviors. It became astonishingly evident that the strapping predictor of criminal behaviors was Sexual abuse, Physical abuse, Psychological abuse and Neglect respectively. Different types of maltreatment are associated with increased risk of subsequent delinquent behavior. Sexual abuse was most significant factor that leads toward the involvement in different activities.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Even though the intensive effort was put on to complete the study but still some limitations were the part of study. The participants were approached with great difficulty. Data was gathered in presence of two police officers who were appointed for safety and prisoner has to account in front of them. This condition was not suitable for illiterate respondents as they cannot read the questionnaire and have to answer the questions in front of appointed staff, it make them uncomfortable and it might cause not

to report actual account regarding the involvement in delinquent behaviors. Data was collected through the prisons of District Punjab, so the findings have the generalize ability issue as respondent from different environment/region might have different temperamental traits, so to get more accurate results study must be replicate in different provinces too. Current study has the cross sectional nature, future research must be focused on the longitudinal research design. So the temperamental effects can be studied with particular to the developmental changes.

Furthermore it has been suggested that criminology is an interdisciplinary field so authorities must have to give space to interlinked disciplines to work with collaboration and. It will enrich the literature as is dearth of available literature.


Further studies not only focused on the linkage of temperament and delinquency but also focused on the intervention or the strategies to how overcome the likelihood effect to get involved in delinquent behaviors due to the negative temperamental tendencies/traits.

#### Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest was found among authors.

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