



## PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE: ASSOCIATION WITH DEMOGRAPHICS AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN ABUSED AND NON ABUSED CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

#### OBJECTIVE

To compare the behavioral problems of physically and emotionally abused and non-abused children. To see the association between child abusing and factors like gender, birth order parents' education and socioeconomic status.

#### STUDY DESIGN

Cross sectional research design.

#### PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

The sample of the study was taken from Govt. High school Jaranwala and Govt. M.C. Girls high school Jaranwala during the month of May 2015.

#### SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Preliminary a sample of 600 hundred students was randomly taken for the study. Abused children and non-abused children were screened out by using a child abusing scale. 130 abused and 130 non-abused children were selected Randomly. The behavioral problem scale was used to measure the behavioral problems of abused and non-abused children.

#### RESULTS

Most abused children belong to a poor socioeconomic group, middle order birth and uneducated parents. Abused children displayed more behavioral problems as compared with non-abused children.

#### CONCLUSION

It was concluded that there was a strong association between parent education and child abusing as well as parents, socioeconomic status. Middle order birth children were more abused as compared to first born and last born child. Abused children have more behavioral problems as compared to non-abused children.

#### KEY WORDS

Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Behavioral Problems.

### INTRODUCTION

Almost forty million children all over the world are abused in each year. Abuse of children is reported at all socioeconomic levels, all ethnic and cultural groups and at all levels of education<sup>1</sup>. Abused children are at greater risk for future interpersonal problems, including violent behavior and at the adolescence years with higher risk for substance abuse. Almost one third of children who have been physically abused were also at risk to become abusive when they grew up as adults<sup>2</sup>. Symptoms of emotional distress, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, sleep disorders and suicidal ideation are common among persons who have been physically abused in their childhood<sup>3</sup>. It has been concluded from the different studies that the children who have been physically abused may suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)<sup>4</sup>

Emotional neglect also has negative longstanding effects on brain development and mental health problems. The sound and secure attachment with parents is essential for the development of resilience and healthy personality<sup>5</sup>. It supports a child's capability to cope with stress, delivers social support, normalizes emotions and establishes supporting relationships<sup>6</sup>.

General environmental aspects that are associated with child abusing involve number of children, socioeconomic status and social support<sup>7</sup>. It has been observed from different studies that children usually suffer with behavior problems by reason of having disabilities, medical illnesses, poor parenting style and child abusing<sup>8</sup>.

Local literature on child abuse and its possible risk factors is scarcely available. this study was designed to explore the relationship between physical and emotional child abuse and factors like gender, birth order, and parents' education. The study also aimed at comparing the behavioral problems of abused children with non-abused children.

### SUBJECTS AND METHODS

#### Participants

The sample of the study was taken from Govt. High school Jaranwala and Govt. M.C. Girls high school Jaranwala during the month of May 2015. Preliminary a sample of 600 hundred students was randomly taken for screening for child abuse. Abused children and non-abused children were screened out by using a child abusing scale. 130 abused and 130 non-abused children were selected for the study. The present study is based on cross sectional research design.

#### Instruments

Demographic information questionnaire, Child Abusing Scale and Behavioral Problems Scale were used as study tools.

### Child Abusing Scale

For the purpose of screening of abused and non-abused children a scale was developed with reference to the local culture. 20 items were rated at a five point scale, i.e. never, sometimes, do not know, often and always. For negative items, never was awarded with 1 score, sometimes with 2 score, do not know with 3 score, often with 4 score and always with 5 score. For positive items, never was awarded with 5 score, sometimes with 4 score, do not know with 3 score, often with 2 score and always with 1 score. Children who scored more than 75 were placed under the abused children and those scored from 20 to 40 were placed under non abused children. The cronbach alpha of the scale was calculated which was .86, showing the good reliability of the scale.

### Behavioral Problems Scale

For the screening of behavioral problems of children, a scale was developed with reference to the local culture to measure behavioral problems like quarrelling and fighting, telling a lie, short tempered, confusion, shyness, carelessness, lack of decision power, sensitivity in emotions, lack of exposure, aggression, fairness, lack of ordinary and rapid change of mood, cheating, stealing, theft and difficulties in making friends.

This scale with 37 items were rated at seven points, i.e. totally false, false to greater extent, false to some extent, do not know, true to some extent, true to a greater extent and totally true. For negative items, totally false was awarded with 1 score, false to greater extent with 2 score, false to some extent with 3 score, do not know with 4 score, true to some extent with 5 score, true to a greater extent with 6 score and totally true with 7 score. For positive items, totally false was awarded with 7 score, false to greater extent with 6 score, false to some extent with 5 score, do not know with 4 score, true to some extent with 3 score, true to a greater extent with 2 score and totally true with 1 score. High scores showed greater behavioral problems and low scores showed lesser behavioral problems. The cronbach alpha of the scale was calculated which was .79 showing the good reliability of the scale.

### Procedure

For the purpose of screening of abused and non-abused children a scale was developed in the Urdu version with reference to the local culture. For this purpose Child Abuse Potential (CAP) Inventory (Milner, 1986)9, Exposure to Abusive and Supportive Environments Parenting Inventory (EASE-PI) (Nicholas & Bieber, 1997)10 and Emotional Abuse Scale (Murphy & Hoover, 1999)11 were studied and some of the items from these inventories were culturally adopted in the present scale.

To measure the behavioral problems of the children with reference to the local culture a behavioural problem scale in urdu was developed. For this purpose Behavior Problems Index (BPI) developed by Peterson and Zill (1986)12 and The Child Behavior Checklist/4-18 (Achenbach 1991)13 have been studied and some of the items from these inventories were culturally adopted in the present scale.

After taking the permission from both of the head of schools, the consent from the students was taken after briefing them about the purpose of the study.

## RESULTS

Analysis was carried out on the SPSS software version 20. Frequencies and percentage of these two groups were calculated as per gender and order of birth. It was observed that 46.92 % boys were abused and 53.08 % girls were abused, which indicate that more girls were abused in our society as compared with the boys. It was also observed that 83.85 % middle born children were abused as compared with first borns (12.30 %) and last born,(3.85 %) which indicated that the majority of the abused children were middle born (see table 1).

The chi square analysis was carried out, according to socioeconomic status and parent's education of abused and non-abused children to find out the association between these factors. It was observed that 43.08 % abused children belonged to poor economic status, 27.69 % abused children belonged to low economic status, 19.23 % abused children belonged to low middle economic status and 10.00 % abused children belonged to upper middle economic status, which indicate that more children were abused that belongs to poor socioeconomic status in our society as compared with upper middle socioeconomic status. It was also observed that there was a strong association between child abusing and socioeconomic status,  $\chi^2(3) = 62.34, p < 0.05$ .

It was observed that 46.92 % abused children's parents were uneducated, 32.31 % abused children's parents' education was under matric, 13.85 % abused children's parents' education was matric and 6.92 % abused children's parents' education was graduation and above, which indicated that more of the abused children belonged to the uneducated parents as compared with the children whose parents were educated. It was also observed that there was a strong association between child abusing and parent education,  $\chi^2(3) = 90.45, p < 0.05$  (see table 2).

The t test analysis was carried out to find out the difference between behavioral problems of abused and non abused children. t statistics has produced significant evidence to establish the differences between the behavioral problems of abused and non abused children,  $t(258) = 32.20, p < 0.05$ . Abuse children showed more behavioral problems ( $M = 170.09, SD = 13.28$ ) than non-abused children ( $M = 114.85, SD = 18.47$ ).

**Table 1**  
Gender and Order of Birth of Abused and Non Abused Children (N=260)

	Abused Children		Non Abused Children	
	n=130		n=130	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Boys	61	46.92	64	49.23
Girls	69	53.08	66	50.77
<b>Order of Birth</b>				
First Born	16	12.30	44	33.85
Middle Born	109	83.85	74	56.92
Last Born	5	3.85	12	9.23

**Table 2**  
Socioeconomic Status and Parents' Education of Abused and Non Abused Children(N=260)

	Abused Children n=130		Non Abused Children n=130	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>				
Poor (below10,000)	56	43.08	7	5.38
Low (11,000-51,000)	36	27.69	31	23.85
Middle (52,000-103,000)	25	19.23	49	37.69
Upper Middle (104,000-250,000)	13	10.00	43	33.08
$\chi^2(3) = 62.34, p < 0.05$				
<b>Parents' Education</b>				
Uneducated	61	46.92	11	8.46
Under Matric	42	32.31	21	16.15
Matric	18	13.85	29	22.31
Graduation and Above	9	6.92	69	53.08
$\chi^2(3) = 90.45, p < 0.05$				

**Table 3**  
Difference of Behavioral Problems between Abused Children and Non Abused Children on Behavioral Problem Scale (N=260)

Abused Children n=130		Non Abused Children n=130		t	p
M	SD	M	SD		
179.09	13.28	114.85	18.47	32.20	.000

df = 258, p < .05

## DISCUSSION

In this study it was observed that 46.92 % boys and 53.08 % girl were abused emotionally or physically, the percentage of abused girls is greater than boys. These results are almost consistent with the data that was collected by U.S. department of health and human services<sup>14</sup> who declared that in 2005, 47.3 % male children and 50.7 % female children have been victimized/abused.

Middle born children were abused more frequently as compared with the first and last borns. It is general observation in the society that parents pay much attention to the first born child, but they do not pay much attention to their later born children, however they pay considerable attention to their last born child. Children from lower socioeconomic status were abused more frequently as compared with middle and upper socioeconomic status. Paxson and Waldfogel<sup>15</sup> conducted a study and observed that increase in poverty level elevated the rate of physical abuse. Jabraeili, Asadollahi, Jafarabadi and Hallaj<sup>16</sup> observed that mothers who belong to lower socioeconomic status were more susceptible to child abuse.

Abuse children showed more behavioral problems as compared with non-abused children.

The results of this study reveal that the negative attitude, dealings and behavior of the parents towards their children produced negative psychological effects on the behavior of their children. Abused children noticeably had high scores on aggression and habit of telling lies as compared with non abused children. Stirling and Amaya-Jackson<sup>17</sup> observed in their study that Children who have been abused from their parents had significant behavioral problems with depression, emotional instability, a tendency to be aggressive and violent towards others.

## CONCLUSION

Parents' illitracy and low socioeconomic status are risk factors for emotional and physical child abuse. Middle order children were more abused as compared with first born and last born children. Abused children showed more behavioral problems as compared with non abused children.

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Sr.#	Author Name	Affiliation of Author	Contribution	Signature
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2	Dr. Syeda Farhana Kazmi	Hazara University, Manserha	Did statistical analysis and critically revised the manuscript	
3	Shaguffa Perveen	Hazara University, Manserha	Reviewed the literature and proof read.	