

Gender Difference in Childhood Maltreatment among Government and Private School Students

Pallavi Bharti

Department of Psychology
Vasanta College for Women, Rajghat Fort
(BHU)

ABSTRACT

Child abuse has many forms and especially childhood abuse plays a vital role in later life development of mental health. Social environment is major determinant of child development and school environment plays a vital role for that. The present study examines gender difference in the association of childhood abuse and trauma among government and private school students. Sample of 60 adolescents aged between 13-15 years (30 students from private school and 30 students from government school) were randomly selected for the study. Also, they were equally distributed in terms of gender. One tool had been used for data collections of the present study, i.e. Child Abuse Checklist by Shushma Pandey. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for this study. The obtained results cleared that government school students scored higher than private school students on all five areas of childhood maltreatment except sexual abuse. On the basis of this study following conclusion was made that, there is a significant statistical difference in childhood maltreatment among government and private school students. In terms of overall gender difference, boys suffer more physical abuse and emotional neglect than girls while girls suffer more emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical and educational neglect than boys. It should be major concern. It is necessary to use appropriate intervention for the aforesaid problems. Because, today's preparation will make a better tomorrow.

Key words: Adolescents, Abuse and neglect, Childhood maltreatment, Gender difference, Government school, Private school, Students.

Hurlock defined Childhood as the age when relative dependency of babyhood is over and extends to the time when the child becomes sexually mature. Subdivisions of childhood are early childhood (2-6 years) and late childhood (6-13 years). According to Robert Havighurst, developmental tasks of early childhood are learning to- walk, taking solid foods, talk, controlling elimination of body wastes, sex differences and sexual modesty, forming concepts, language to describe social and physical reality, getting ready to read. Developmental tasks for middle or late childhood are learning physical skills, building

wholesome attitudes toward oneself, getting along with age-mates, appropriate social role, developing fundamental skills in reading, writing, and calculating, developing concepts necessary for everyday living, developing conscience, morality, and a scale of values, achieving personal independence, developing attitudes toward social groups and institutions.

The term adolescence came from a Latin word **adolescere**, meaning 'to grow to maturity' including mental, emotional and social maturity with physical maturity. 13-17 years of age is adolescence age. Piaget said that, "psychologically, adolescence is the age when the individual become integrated into the society of adults, when the child no longer feels that he is below the levels of his elders but equal, at least in right..."

Childhood maltreatment has a vital role in later life development of mental health. **WHO (2016)** defines child maltreatment as 'the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age.' It includes all types of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Exposure to intimate partner violence is also sometimes included as a form of child maltreatment. Critical factors that influence the way of child maltreatment affects includes the frequency and duration of maltreatment and the co-occurrence of multiple forms of maltreatment. Child maltreatment has enormous immediate and long-term repercussions. Beyond death, physical injury and disability, violence can lead to stress that impairs brain development and damages the nervous and immune systems. This in turn is associated with delayed cognitive development, poor school performance and dropout, mental health problems, suicide attempts, increased health-risk behaviors, re-victimization and the perpetration of violence.

When we talk about only child neglect, we can notice neglected children at schools. Many studies showed that, neglected children may be malnourished, always sick, or never at school. Neglect comes in different forms and more girls suffer than boys, with younger children neglected most. Signs of neglect can also be seen during later life development like- frequently absent from school, lacks sufficient cloths for the weather, alcohol/drug abuse, states at there is no one at home/school to provide care, is consistently dirty and has sever body odor.

These all types of maltreatment had linked with psychological disorders in previous studies. Cathy Widom (2007) have found that, childhood physical abuse or multiple types of

abuse increased the lifetime risk for depression. Sexual abuse did not appear to increase risk of full-blown depression, but person with a history of childhood sexual abuse reported more depression symptoms than people who did not experience such trauma. Laura C. Bruce (2013) found that emotional maltreatment was most strongly linked to dysfunction in Social Anxiety Disorder and Social Phobia. Charak and Koot (2014) found that childhood abuse and neglect increases the risk for psychiatric disorders, including mood and anxiety disorders. And also, there is a high risk of sexual abuse among females in India. These all above studies are on school going adolescents.

According to WHO, **1 in 4** child is physically abused. **12%** of children were sexually abused in 2017, whereas, reports by Ministry of Women and Child Development (India) (2007) says that, “Two out of every three children were physically abused, and most of them were boys. 53.22% children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse. 21.90% child reported facing severe forms of sexual. Every second child reported facing emotional abuse.”

Objectives:-

- 1) To examine gender difference in childhood maltreatment among adolescents.
- 2) To examine difference in childhood maltreatment among private and government schools students.

Hypotheses:-

- 1) Girls would score higher in overall childhood maltreatment.
- 2) Government school students would score higher in overall childhood maltreatment.

Method

Sample -A group of 60 adolescents, 30 males and 30 females (13-15 years of age) were randomly selected from different government and private schools of Madhupur (Jharkhand), India. All of them were students of class 8th and live in rural areas. They were equally divided in terms of gender. It means, among 30 government school students, 15 were males and 15 were females. Similar division of sample was present in case of private school students.

Tool:

- Child Abuse Checklist – Developed by Dr. Sushma Pandey in 2012. Its coefficient α is .89 and test-retest reliability is $r = .79$. It has total 110 items including items for sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, emotional neglect, educational neglect and physical neglect. Scoring of each item is done by 4-point Likert scale (from very rarely to respectively).

Procedure:

At first I randomly selected 60 adolescent participants from different schools of Madhupur (Jharkhand). After rapport establishment by general conversation with participants, informed consent had taken and data collection was done in groups with the help of tool. Tool was self-reported scale. So, when they filled it, thanked them and analyzed the result.

Statistical analysis:

Mean, Standard Deviation and independent sample t-test were calculated.

Result and Discussion

On the basis of findings from data, the following result is interpreted.

Groups	Mean scores on different types of maltreatment						
	Physical abuse	Emotional abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional neglect	Physical neglect	Educational neglect	Total
Boys	44.17	29.63	26.07	31.07	18.6	18.87	168.4
Girls	26.97	51.83	58.73	19.03	28.6	38.33	223.5

Table 1.1- Mean scores of girls and boys on different types of maltreatment.

Groups	Maltreatment					
	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test value	significance
Boys	30	168.4	35.88	58	6.8	.001**
Girls	30	223.5	26.05			

Table 1.2: Mean, SD and t-ratio of boys and girls for maltreatment.

Groups	Mean scores on different types of maltreatment						
	Physical abuse	Emotional abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional neglect	Physical neglect	Educational neglect	Total
Government school students	39.47	41.67	40.2	26.5	24.77	30.63	203.23
Private school students	31.67	39.8	44.6	23.6	22.43	26.57	184.27

Table 2.1- Mean scores of both groups on different types of maltreatment.

Groups	Maltreatment					
	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-test value	Significance
Government school students	30	203.23	35.2	58	2024	.05*
Private school students	30	184.27	44.85			

Table 2.2: Mean, SD and t-ratio of government and private school students for maltreatment.

From tables 1.1 and 1.2, the result of the present study shows that, overall mean scores in Child Abuse Checklist is 168.4 (moderate level) for boys and 223.5 (high level) for girls. Also, t-test for childhood maltreatment shows significant difference between girls and boys at 0.01 and 0.05 level. The results indicate that boys suffer more physical abuse and emotional neglect; while girls suffer more sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect and educational neglect. So, our first hypothesis was proved and null hypothesis is rejected.

From tables 2.1 and 2.2, the results indicate that government school students suffer more physical abuse and emotional abuse; while private school students suffer more sexual abuse. In case of neglect, government school students suffer more from that than private school students. It includes emotional neglect, physical neglect and educational neglect. Overall mean scores in Child Abuse Checklist is 203.23 (high level) for government school students and 184.27 (high level) for private school students. Also, t-test for childhood maltreatment shows significant difference between government and private school at 0.05 level. So, our second hypothesis was proved and null hypothesis is rejected.

In India, research were done to find gender difference in terms of childhood maltreatment among children and adolescents. But, there is a lack of those studies which find

differences among government and private school students. As we know that, social environment is a determinant of development. Our psychological, social and cultural development are based upon the society where we live. But, now a days, even rural society changes rapidly. Therefore, we can also find these differences in school environment. As we can see in this study, difference on overall maltreatment is statistically significant at 0.05.

India has the dubious distinction of having the world's largest number of sexually abused children; with a child below 16 years raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point of time. A study by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) also showed that 53 per cent of the interviewed children reported having faced some form of abuse and boys were as vulnerable to abuse as girls.

Daral et al. (2016) studied on adolescent females from Delhi and found that 70% were subjected to at least one form of maltreatment and 27% of females reported sexual abuse. My findings in childhood maltreatment is supported by Banerjee (2001); Hasnain& Kumar (2006).Kumar, Singh and Kar (2017) that boys suffer more from physical abuse than girls and physical abuse is more severe among government school students. Daral et al. (2016) found that physical abuse is more common in rural areas and among government school student.

Now a days, government and organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children, ISPCAN, etc. collect data for childhood maltreatment and try to prevent it by making laws. India, have several laws and policies for protection and care of children like POCSO (2012), child rights in the five year plans, etc. but, very less intervention programs for the treatment of abused children and adolescents. It should be major concern.

Conclusion

The present study examines gender difference in the association of childhood abuse and trauma among government and private school students. It is based upon care and concern towards adolescents of rural and urban areas both. We can conclude from the overall results that, boys suffer more physical abuse and emotional neglect while girls suffer more emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect and educational neglect. Overall, girls suffer more from maltreatment. In case of school environment, government school students suffer more childhood maltreatment than private school students. In the rural areas of government

schools, neglect is more focused than abuse. In case of maltreatment, government school students suffer more from physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional neglect, educational neglect and physical neglect than private school students. But, sexual abuse is more focused among private school environment. Significant difference was found in overall maltreatment between government and private school students in terms of gender. Sexual abuse is higher in girls in both types of school environment. Mostly girls from government schools reported about sexual abuse from known persons, while mostly girls from private schools reported it from bystanders. It is not only a comparison, but is a matter of rapid social change. If we want to build a glorious and healthy upcoming future, then we have to teach them self-protection, parents and teachers both have to help them to fight from maltreatment. Because, it is an increasing problem for us and it is necessary to use appropriate intervention for the aforesaid problems. It's a matter of care and concern towards adolescent's health and behavior.

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