

# Unveiling Classroom Psychological Abuse: A Qualitative Study of Students, Teachers and Parents

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**Abstract:** *In school environments, psychological abuse by teachers is a serious but frequently disregarded problem that manifests itself in a variety of ways, including rejection, ignorance, terrorisation, isolation, corruption, and exploitation. Unlike other forms of abuse, this one can have a lasting impact on students, affecting both their general well-being and academic performance. Regretfully, students might not be aware of this kind of abuse, which makes it more difficult for them to confront and deal with its effects. In contrast to other types of abuse, this one may affect students' general well-being as well as their academic achievement in the long run. Unfortunately, it's possible that students are unaware of this type of abuse, which makes it more challenging for them to confront and address its effects. To gather data, a purposive sampling method was employed. Semi-structured interviews with students, their parents and teachers were conducted in order to examine their perceptions. Boys in Patna schools are still frequently subjected to corporal punishment. Although none of the potential participants were aware of psychological abuse, they have all at least once encountered it in their educational setting. 3 teachers from government school and 2 from private school teacher said they use it unconsciously to maintain their dominance in the classroom. Parents were ready to put up with psychological abuse because they thought that talking to someone about it would compromise their child's schooling.*

**Keywords:** Perception, psychological abuse, Perception, teachers, students, parents.

## 1. Introduction

Teachers are not only essential educators but also important socialisers, with their primary responsibility being to meet the socioeconomic needs of their students, including their need for belonging and value. It is the duty of educators to establish a safe environment that preserves kids' growth and dignity. Unfortunately, reports have indicated that some students encounter their first instances of psychological abuse at school from teachers.

Any form of abuse that is more emotional than physical is considered psychological abuse. It covers verbal abuse in any form as well as persistent criticism in the form of coercion, rejection, intimidation, humiliation, and name-calling. The topic of teachers abusing their students psychologically is not one that is frequently discussed. It is the form of abuse that is least investigated, least reported, and most covert. Among all forms of abuse that students encounter, such as physical, sexual, and emotional, teacher-inflicted sexual abuse has drawn the most attention (Shumba, 2001).

This could be because media attention to this kind of abuse is higher than that of psychological abuse because it is more easily justified or dubious. Based on reports, Nigeria, India, the United States, Zimbabwe, and Cyprus suffer from significant instances of psychological child abuse (Theoklitou, Kabitsis and Kabitsis 2012). In response to a 2005 American Academy of Paediatrics study, 15% of pupils confront verbal abuse at the hands of their teachers.

Many psychologists assert that psychological abuse is the most severe kind of child abuse because of the disturbing effects it has on school-age children's development. In this case, a psychological abuse preparator can abuse multiple victims concurrently. Students who receive excessive psychological abuse may find it more challenging to identify,

feel, understand, and express their emotions. Furthermore, it may severely impact students' perceptions of their own worth and abilities, as well as hinder psychological growth in areas like moral development, intelligence, recognition, perception, imagination, and attention span.

Not all educators abuse children psychologically; a good number of them strive to create healthy, supportive relationships with their students that help them succeed academically. However, some educators mistreat their students psychologically without even realising it.

## Research Objectives

- 1) To determine the occurrence of Psychological abuse by teachers among Secondary School Students.
- 2) To examine the perception on causes of psychological abuse by teachers among Secondary school students.
- 3) To evaluate the perceptions regarding the impact of psychological abuse by teachers on students.
- 4) To find the perception of teachers towards psychological abuse caused by them.
- 5) To find the perception of parents towards psychological abuse by teachers.

## Research Questions

- 1) How prevalent is psychological abuse by teachers among students in secondary schools?
- 2) What are Secondary school students' perceptions on the causes of psychological abuse by teachers?
- 3) What are Secondary school students' perceptions on the impact of psychological abuse by teachers?
- 4) What are the perception of teachers towards psychological abuse caused by them?
- 5) What are the perception of parents towards psychological abuse caused by teachers?

**Operational Definitions**

Psychological abuse: verbal abuse of any kind, involving yelling, shouting, and humiliating, threatening, and intimidating remarks.

**Method:**

A face –to–face interview method from students and teachers and a telephonic interview from parents was used for the study.

**Population**

The population of the study included teachers, students and their parents from Government and private schools.

**Sample and Sample Technique**

Data was gathered through random sampling method. Patna's public and private schools were chosen for the survey. For the study, teachers, parents and twenty-three students in grades 9,10,11, and 12 from six government and seven private schools were chosen. Face –to–face interview from students and teachers was conducted. Parents were interviewed over the phone.

**Tools**

To analyse the perception of students, teachers and parents, semi-structured interview was taken.

**Delimitation**

For this study, the sample consisted only of schools located within the city of Patna.

**Ethical Considerations**

- 1) The parents of the students gave their verbal consent after explaining the nature, goals, and purpose of the study.
- 2) The study's possible participants were given the assurance that all data gathered would be kept private. It's going to be used exclusively for research.
- 3) The decision to decline any question or quit the study at any moment was granted to the participants.

**2. Results and Discussion****1) Occurrence of psychological abuse by teachers among Secondary school students.**

For the purpose to collect data on the occurrence of psychological abuse among Patna's secondary schools, face-to-face interviews were conducted. The following were the conclusions:

- a) Among the twenty –three participants, none were aware of psychological abuse, but they have all acknowledged having witnessed it at least once in their lives.
- b) Of the 13 boys in the study, 9 were still subjected to corporal punishment in both government and private schools by educators and administrators. The act of slapping was most frequent.
- c) Girls are spared from corporal punishment in either government or private schools.
- d) Shouting and screaming were the most frequent forms of psychological abuse that students report witnessing; other common forms include calling with derogatory names, humiliating them, and threatening to have them expelled from school.

- e) In three private schools and one government schools, male teachers frequently use abusive language directed at boys.
- f) Teachers frequently express preference for students based only on appearance, particularly for female students. There was no evidence of caste, class, or religious discrimination.
- g) Teachers frequently give preference to outstanding pupils over others, which leave average and weaker students feeling unappreciated.
- h) Teachers call students with bad names to make them feel inferior when they can't answer a question in class. This usually happens to weaker students.
- i) Almost all of the male participants under study agreed that female students receive more preference in the classroom.
- j) Female students are given preference by male teachers, and male students are given preference by female teachers.

**2) Perception on the causes of Psychological abuse caused by teachers.**

Through content analysis, conclusions from the students' experiences were drawn and their points of view were examined. The content analysis's results are as follows:

- a) All of the study's participants agreed that when teachers are overworked, they yell and scream more in class as a way to vent their anger and frustration.
- b) Teachers who are not well-versed in the subject matter try to frighten students by asking difficult questions.
- c) Additional reasons mentioned by students included arguments in class, talking during lectures, doing poorly on an exam, turning in assignments late, and routinely missing school.

**3) Perception of students on impact of psychological abuse on students.**

After a review of the student interviews, it was found that

- a) Students who receive the most reprimands in class tend to have a bad attitude towards the subject and the teacher.
- b) Teachers' excessive threats and intimidation of their students hinders their capacity to perceive, comprehend, and focus on their academic work.
- c) Apart from feeling anxious and insecure, students who are subjected to psychological abuse by teachers or administrators also grow afraid of going to school.
- d) Students try to avoid such teachers and treat them with disrespect. Behind their backs, they call them insulting titles.
- e) Boys will sometimes attempt to exact revenge on such teachers when they feel humiliated and insulted.
- f) To avoid the unfavourable atmosphere of schools, 4 of 13 boys have chosen to skip the class.
- g) The low achiever boys and girls in the class who have experienced psychological abuse are teased and bullied by their intelligent female classmates.

**4) Perception of teachers' towards psychological abuse among Secondary School Students.**

6 teachers from private schools and 4 from government schools participated in a face-to-face interview.

- a) The majority of teachers used psychological abuse unintentionally since they were ignorant of the negative impacts it had on children.
- b) The most frequent reasons for teachers behaviour in both public and private schools was stress and burnout.
- c) 3 teachers from government school and 2 from private school teacher said they use it unconsciously to maintain their dominance in the classroom.
- d) Two educators from private schools and three from government schools claimed to use it unintentionally to uphold their authority in the classroom.
- e) Teachers agreed that they used the tactics of psychological abuse to ensure better and high performance among students.

### 5) Perception of parents towards psychological abuse by teachers.

Five parents participated in the telephonic interview. Out of which two were highly qualified and rest three belonged to lower socio-economic background.

- a) Almost all parents expressed great respect for teachers and agreed that whichever approach a teacher uses is in best for the child's development.
- b) In an extremely competitive academic environment, parents relied on the school to ensure their child's future success. They therefore disregarded and put up with psychological abuse because they thought that talking to someone about it would compromise their child's schooling.
- c) Lower socioeconomic background parents were afraid that their child would become even more marginalised or that their concerns would be disregarded, so they felt helpless to confront the teacher or school.
- d) Two highly qualified parents who were aware of this problem expressed their disapproval and concern about psychological abuse and its effects on the mental health of their children.

### 3. Recommendations

- a) The administration of the school ought to ease the teachers' workloads.
- b) Teachers should have an equal attitude towards all students.
- c) It is not appropriate to use corporal punishment as a form of discipline.
- d) The education ministries and school boards ought to arrange awareness campaigns, including conferences, seminars, and workshops, for educators, parents, and students. These events should cover the different aspects of psychological abuse, its root causes, and its long-term detrimental impacts.
- e) School counsellors ought to constantly educate instructors and students on the traits and red flags of psychological abuse in educational settings.
- f) It is possible to draw attention to this problem through the Indian media, NGOs, and motivational YouTubers.
- g) YouTube videos and various television channels have programs that discuss the detrimental effects of psychological abuse on child psychology. In this way, future events can be improved and greater awareness raised.

### 4. Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded from the research's above-mentioned results that, despite being outlawed nationwide, corporal punishment is nevertheless frequently used in classrooms. Though they are unaware of it, students have at least one experience with psychological abuse during their time in school. The issue of physical punishment in schools has far too long been covered in academic literature, by educators, and by researchers; however, psychological abuse of teachers is rarely discussed. Teachers, counsellors, parents and students should be trained in effective methods for identifying cases of psychological abuse and prevention-focused interventions should be adopted.

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