

Prevalence of Child Abuse and Its Association with Resilience and Behavioural Problems among Urban Adolescents

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Abstract: *Child abuse is a critical concern in the urban landscape of Chennai that necessitates immediate attention on a global level. Disturbing statistics from the area reveal that a significant proportion of adolescents, approximately two-thirds, undergo physical abuse, while 53.22% report experiencing various forms of sexual abuse (Kacker et al., 2007). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines 'Child Abuse' as a serious violation of fundamental human rights, encompassing physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual harm, neglect, exploitation, and actions that jeopardize a child's well-being within trusted relationships (WHO, n.d.). Research also emphasizes the enduring impact on adults who have endured childhood abuse, leading to an increased risk of mental disorders and engagement in risky behaviours (Herrenkohl et al., 2016). To address and mitigate such significant issues, the researcher aims to determine the prevalence of abuse among children in relation to their Resilience and Behavioural problems. This study focuses on an urban setting and involves 463 participants. It employs a combination of convenience sampling and an Ex Post Facto research design. Various instruments, including the Child Abuse Questionnaire, Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, and READ tool, are utilized for data collection. Statistical analyses encompass descriptive statistics, Correlation. By delving into the intricate dimensions of child abuse, this research seeks to illuminate the prevalence of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse among adolescents. The study endeavours to raise awareness and offer practical recommendations, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding of child protection and welfare in urban environments.*

Keywords: child abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, children safety, urban environment.

1. Introduction

Child Abuse & Neglect (CAN) is a global issue with severe consequences for children in the short and long term. It leads to increased levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, aggression, and various emotional and mental health problems (Saini, 2013). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines 'Child Abuse' as a violation of basic human rights, including physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual harm, neglect, exploitation, and actions that endanger a child's well-being (WHO, n.d.). 'Child maltreatment' includes five subtypes of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and exploitation. India has a large population of children, with many facing unsafe births and survival challenges, hindering their potential (Saini, 2013). Disturbingly, a government report reveals that approximately two-thirds of children experience physical abuse, while over half report various forms of sexual abuse (Kacker et al., 2007). Adverse childhood experiences can significantly impact physical and mental development, leading to negative health consequences. Examples include abuse, domestic violence, family breakdown, and bullying. These experiences are linked to poor education, low employment, substance abuse, violence, and compromised well-being (Bellis et al., 2013). Initial stressful events can exacerbate vulnerabilities or foster resilience and coping mechanisms. These factors influence how individuals respond to early stress, shaping both internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Camargo et al., 2017; Morelato, 2017; Diaz, 2020).

The National Policy for Children, established in 1974, recognized children as a valuable national asset and committed to ensuring their well-being. It emphasized the responsible use of national resources to meet their needs and provide protection (Kacker et al., 2007). In urban areas like Chennai, various factors such as inadequate nutrition, limited access to healthcare and education, and rural-to-urban migration contribute to urban poverty. This can lead to an increase in the number of children living on the streets and resorting to begging for survival. The lack of resources and opportunities in urban areas can also result in family breakdowns, exposing children to greater vulnerability. To address these challenges, it is crucial to conduct research studies that identify targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies. These insights can inform the development of initiatives focused on improving healthcare, enhancing education, and strengthening social support systems. By investigating the root causes and consequences of child abuse, particularly in underdeveloped urban areas of India, the researcher aims to address the pressing need and alleviate significant issues. This research will also explore the prevalence of abuse among children and its relationship with their behavioural problems and resilience.

2. Methodology

The primary objective of the researcher is to determine the prevalence and occurrence of abuse among children in an urban environment. This investigation focuses on gathering data from a total of 463 participants. The research methodology employed in this study combines convenience

sampling, where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, with an ex post facto research design, which examines the relationship between variables after they have occurred naturally. To collect data, the researcher utilizes a variety of instruments. The Child Abuse Questionnaire is used to assess the different forms of abuse experienced by the children, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is employed to measure the behavioral problems (Abnormal/Normal and Internalizing and Externalizing Problems) of the participants. Additionally, the researcher utilizes the READ tool, which evaluates the resilience of adolescents, to understand how children cope with abuse and adversity. The statistical analyses conducted in this study include descriptive statistics, which summarize the characteristics of the sample and the prevalence of abuse. Pearson's product moment correlation is used to examine the relationships between different variables, such as the

correlation between the frequency of abuse and the psychological well-being of the children. Regression analysis is employed to determine the predictive power of certain variables on the occurrence and severity of abuse.

3. Results and Discussion

Physical abuse has a significant psychological impact on people, affecting their mental health and functioning. Research has shown that people who experience physical violence experience a variety of psychological symptoms, including but not limited to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem (Cicchetti & Toth, 2016; Wegman). According to this theory, exposure to a traumatic event, such as physical violence, can exceed a person's ability to cope, resulting in a variety of emotional and behavioral responses (Terr, 1991).

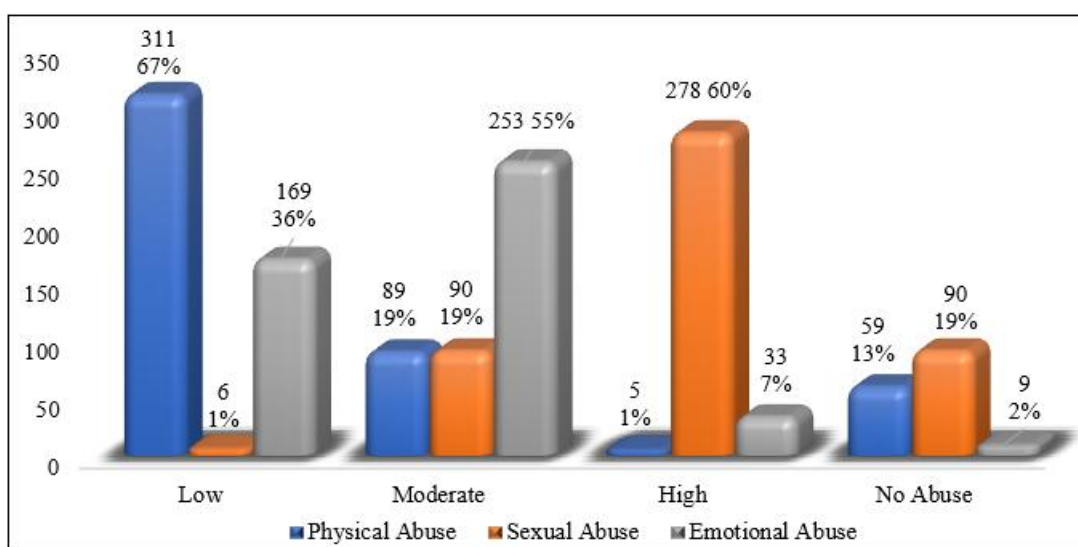


Figure 1: Prevalence of Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse

According to trauma theory, experiencing physical violence can disrupt an individual's sense of safety, trust and control, leading to symptoms of hypervigilance, flashbacks and avoidance behaviours (Courtois and Ford, 2016). Attachment theory also provides important insights into how experiences of physical violence affect relationships and attachment patterns. Research has shown that people who experience physical violence can develop a form of attachment disorder characterized by fear of intimacy, difficulty trusting others, and lack of trust (Crittenden, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). These additional signs of safety can affect the individual's Ability to build and maintain healthy relationships around the world. Beyond conflict and attachment theory, cognitive-behavioural perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding the psychological consequences of physical violence. Psychological differences and negative coping strategies are common among people who have experienced physical abuse, leading to negative self-concepts, negative beliefs, and negative behaviours (Beck, 2011; Briere & Scott, 2015).

These mental and behavioural patterns can contribute to the maintenance of psychological symptoms and make individuals vulnerable. Ability to recover from the effects of abuse. Adverse experiences such as poverty, parental drug

abuse, and social isolation can exacerbate the psychological effects of physical violence and personal. Difficulty accessing recovery support and resources (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1995; Dixon, Browne, & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005). Survivors of abuse may struggle to form and maintain healthy relationships. Trust issues, relationship fears, and difficulties with emotional vulnerability are common problems experienced by those in relationships (Classen et al., 2005). In addition, abuse affects survivor's Self-esteem, many survivors engage in negative self-talk and beliefs during abuse, which can lead to helplessness, self-blame, and suicidal behaviour (Ferguson et al., 2013). Furthermore, the impact of violence can extend beyond the individual survivor to social and work roles. Survivors may have difficulty learning or working because of mental and emotional problems. They may also have difficulty maintaining a stable job because the effects of abuse can affect their ability to concentrate, cope with stress, and form healthy work relationships (Paolucci et al., 2001). Survivor's Pain, shame, and psychological trauma can have profound and lasting effects on mental health, relationships, self-esteem, and overall functioning. Emotional abuse, characterized by verbal aggression, manipulation, and emotional manipulation, can have devastating and long-lasting psychological effects on a person. Numerous studies consistently show that victims of

emotional abuse suffer from a variety of psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and relationship problems (Teicher & Samson, 2016; McCrory et al., 2021).

One of the psychological aspects of emotional abuse is the pain it causes the person. Also, emotional abuse can affect people Self-esteem Over time, these negative self-evaluations become embedded and affect different aspects of a person's life, including relationships, academic or professional achievements, and life in general (McCrory et al., 2021). Even those who do not report involvement in serious or minor crimes may experience psychological distress due to the effects of trauma and the complex relationship between the individual, family, and community (Teicher & Samson, 2016).

The distribution of behavioural problems among individuals, as categorized into "Normal," "Abnormal," and "Borderline" groups, presents an intriguing insight into the prevalence and spectrum of such issues within the population studied. In our dataset, the majority of individuals fall into the "Abnormal" category, comprising 46% of the sample.

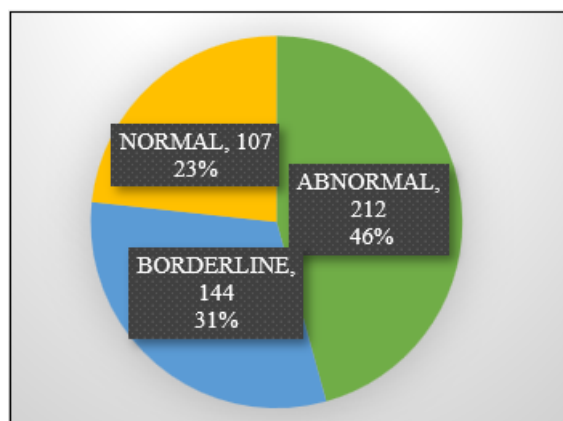


Figure 2: Prevalence of Behavioural problems among children

This finding suggests a significant proportion of individuals experiencing behavioural challenges beyond what may be considered typical or expected. Conversely, the "Normal" category comprises 23% of the sample, indicating a substantial portion of individuals demonstrating behavioural patterns within the expected range. While this may be reassuring, it's essential to consider that even within this group, individuals may experience occasional behavioural difficulties or variations. The "Borderline" category, encompassing 31% of the sample, represents individuals whose behavioural patterns lie on the cusp between normal and abnormal. This group warrants particular attention, as they may exhibit subtle signs of behavioural concerns that could potentially escalate if left unaddressed.

It's crucial to interpret these findings within the context of the population studied and the assessment tools utilized. Factors such as age, gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background can significantly influence the manifestation and perception of behavioural problems.

Correlations of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, resilience, internalizing problem and externalizing problem

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Physical abuse	463	8.25	4.08	-					
2. Sexual abuse	463	8.24	4.68	.327**	-				
3. Emotional abuse	463	11.02	5.29	.353**	.521**	-			
4. Resilience	463	89.77	10.65	.217**	.321**	.148**	-		
5. Internalizing problem	463	10.30	2.87	.100*	.131**	.252**	-.182**	-	
6. Externalizing problem	463	8.52	3.26	-.194**	-.108**	.073	-.299**	.187**	-

*p<.05, **p<.01

These findings suggest that individuals who report higher levels of one type of abuse are likely to also report higher levels of other types, indicating a potential clustering of abuse experiences among individuals. The correlation between different forms of abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual) and resilience offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between adversity and adaptive coping mechanisms. Let's delve deeper into each type of abuse and its relationship with resilience, considering the psychological implications and theoretical frameworks:

The positive correlation between physical abuse and resilience (r = 0.217, p < 0.01) challenges the traditional view of survivors as passive and passive. Resilient individuals can use coping strategies, such as seeking support, setting boundaries, and developing problem-solving skills, to overcome the challenges of physical violence. Therefore, the relationship between physical violence and resilience reflects the psychological resilience of survivors. Be a part of the healing process, not just the victim. Emotional abuse includes psychological violence, such as verbal abuse, manipulation, and control, that can have a strong impact on a person's behaviour. Self-esteem and happiness. A positive correlation

between emotional abuse and Resilience ($r = 0.148, p < 0.01$) suggests psychological abuse among survivors. Adaptive responses to psychological trauma. Resilient individuals demonstrate resilience in the face of emotional abuse by developing self-awareness, emotional regulation skills, and supportive social relationships (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Despite the brutal nature of emotional abuse, resilient survivors show a sense of agency and empowerment, challenge negative beliefs, and affirm their worth. From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between emotional abuse and resilience reflects psychological abuse in survivors. Stay strong and positive even in the face of adversity. The act of violence is sexual intercourse without consent, intercourse or sexual intercourse, which has a negative impact on the survivor's life. Physical and mental health. The significant correlation between the concentration and resilience ($r = 0.321, p < 0.01$) indicates the mental strength of the survivors. Confession and help-seeking behaviour after sexual trauma. Resilient individuals demonstrate the confidence and ability to recognize and deal with the experience of suicidality and seek support from personal or professional services. Therefore, the relationship between abuse and psychological resilience reflects the psychological resilience of survivors. By trying to save their business and support their life after suffering.

Additionally, the correlation matrix highlights the importance of taking a holistic approach when assessing and treating victims of abuse. Professionals should be aware that disclosure of one form of abuse may indicate other forms of abuse. Research shows that people who have experienced abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional, are more likely to display internalizing behaviours such as depression and anxiety. This shows that abuse can affect a person's mental health and emotional well-being. In addition, the study found that physical and sexual violence are associated with externalizing behaviours such as bullying and delinquency. This means that people who have experienced physical or emotional abuse are less likely to display aggressive or aggressive behaviour. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing the personal impact of abuse. Mental health and behavioural outcomes. This suggests that different types of violence have different effects on people's behaviour. Internal and external behaviours, as well as interventions and supports need to be coordinated.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant psychological ramifications of abuse, encompassing physical, sexual, and emotional forms. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of survivors' experiences and the need for tailored interventions. Prioritizing survivors' well-being, promoting awareness, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration are crucial steps towards mitigating the long-term impacts of abuse and promoting healing and resilience.

5. Implications

- **Comprehensive Assessment:** The results suggest the need for comprehensive assessments to understand the diverse psychological impacts of abuse fully.

- **Tailored Support Services:** Different forms of abuse require tailored support services to address survivors' specific needs effectively.
- **Promoting Resilience:** Recognizing survivors' resilience highlights the importance of empowering them to mobilize internal and external resources.
- **Prevention and Education:** Education and prevention efforts should focus on raising awareness about abuse and promoting supportive responses to survivors.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Collaboration across disciplines is essential to address the complex factors involved in abuse comprehensively.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Support services must be culturally sensitive and inclusive to meet the diverse needs of survivors from various backgrounds.
- **Long-Term Support:** Enduring psychological effects emphasize the need for long-term support and follow-up care for survivors.

6. Suggestions

- **Develop Comprehensive Assessment Tools:** Create assessment tools that consider the multifaceted psychological impacts of abuse.
- **Implement Tailored Interventions:** Offer interventions tailored to address survivors' specific psychological needs effectively.
- **Promote Resilience-Building Programs:** Develop programs aimed at promoting resilience factors and empowering survivors.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about abuse and provide information on supportive resources.
- **Facilitate Interdisciplinary Training:** Offer interdisciplinary training programs to enhance collaboration among professionals working with survivors.
- **Provide Cultural Competency Training:** Ensure professionals receive training in cultural competency to provide sensitive and inclusive support.
- **Establish Long-Term Support Programs:** Develop long-term support programs that offer ongoing therapeutic support and resources for survivors.

These implications and suggestions aim to guide efforts in addressing the psychological ramifications of abuse comprehensively and effectively.

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