

# PATTERN OF CHILD ABUSE IN A DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Child abuse is an important social problem all over the world and in Pakistan too but unfortunately very little research work had been done in Pakistan on this topic. In Southern Punjab the situation is even worse. **Objective:** To determine the pattern of child abuse in Rahim Yar Khan, a district of southern Punjab. **Methodology:** Study Design: Cross sectional study. Place & Duration: Emergency Department, Sheikh Zayed Hospital, Rahim Yar Khan for the period of one year from 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016. A total of 105 victims of child abuse were included in the study by non probability consecutive sampling technique. All cases of abuse between 3-14 years of age, who gave consent were included while already diagnosed cases of bleeding disorders, Osteoporosis and those didn't give the consent were excluded from study. Help of X-rays, Ultrasound and blood tests was taken when required. SPSS 16.0 was used to analyze the data. **Results:** Out of 105 cases, males were in majority (59%) than female (40%) and most common abuse type found was physical abuse (47.6%), then emotional abuse (21.9%), followed by sexual abuse (22%) and neglect (17%). Educational status of the parents/guardians and their monthly income showed that majority of those were illiterate (56%) and 43% having their income up to Rs. 10000/- per month. **Conclusion:** We concluded that male gender was major victim of abuse and most common pattern of abuse in males was physical. These facts need to be communicated to Law enforcement agencies, media, civil society, NGO's and awareness programs especially for teachers and parents should be arranged, so that effective control can be achieved in minimum time and resources by precise policy making. **Key words:** Pattern, Child Abuse, Southern Punjab.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence against children is a recognized growing public-health and development problem labeled by a WHO consultation.<sup>1</sup> By their definition "Child abuse and maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and / or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting 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".<sup>1</sup> Hence comprehensively, it is either an act of commission or even omission which is originated by humans themselves either by creating or tolerating such conditions which either hinder or make impossible the growth of natural hidden abilities of children.<sup>2</sup> About 3.3 million cases of abuse or neglect were reported in an US state during 2008 and 71% of these children were labeled as victims of child neglect, 16% fell in category of physical abuse, 9% were abused sexually, and 7% were suffered emotional abuse.<sup>3</sup> The imposition of any physical injury on a child can constitute physical abuse. A non insignificant injury inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker can be defined globally as child abuse. Although many distinctive definitions are phrased according to different religions and cultures.<sup>4</sup>

In Pakistan, it is not unusual that the cases of child sexual exploitation or even sexual abuse are concealed even denied openly to maintain the false piety or for a planned retaliation. A very rare number of cases, filed against the sexual perpetrators, is its tragic outcome.<sup>5</sup> The incidents, which are reported and reach print or electronic media, are mostly the cases where abuse and exploitation have led to death or serious casualties or have taken some other heinous or sensational turn. Only those case of abuse and exploitation get access to media which have end in death or serious casualties.<sup>6</sup> The actions or speech of a carer, which halt the normal social and personal growth of a child can be labelled as emotional abuse.<sup>5</sup> Emotional abuse can be the immoderate, hostile or unreasonable parental behavior that actually demands from children to perform more than their actual abilities or separation of children over long periods of time or locking them in dark closed places and use of scary maneuvers to stop children from complaining of sexual exploitation. The worldwide estimation of WHO says that child abuse or neglect, among children younger than 15 years, constitutes 13 percent of the 1.2 million deaths due to injury.<sup>7</sup> Perpetrators of girls and boys both are males commonly. It is less likely that homosexuals sexually abuse more children than other men do.<sup>8,9</sup>

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In Southern Punjab very little work had been done on child abuse and no published data and statistics regarding this issue are available, that's why we planned this study for determination of the pattern of child abuse in Rahim Yar Khan so that the awareness programmes can be planned accordingly.

## METHODOLOGY

The study setting of this cross sectional research was the Emergency Department, Sheikh Zayed Hospital, Rahim Yar Khan for the period of one year from 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

A total of 105 study subjects, victims of child abuse, both male and female gender between 3-14 years of age, who came to Emergency Department of Sheikh Zayed Hospital, Rahim Yar Khan, for treatment of injury, were included in the study. Consent was taken from parent/guardian before taking data. The pattern of each type of abuse i.e. physical, sexual, emotional neglect was recorded with gender, ages and area of residence.

All the data was entered in computed software SPSS version 16. Percentage and frequency was calculated for qualitative variables like gender, pattern of child abuse, area of residence and educational status of the parents/guardian. Mean and standard deviation were calculated for quantitative variables like age of child and monthly income of parent/guardian.

## RESULTS

Age distribution of the abused children was recorded which showed that number of children between 3 to 5 years was 11, between 6 to 8 years was 18, between 9 to 11 years was 32 and between 12 to 14 years was 39. The mean and SD calculated were 10.54+3.63 years. Gender distribution of the children showed that 62 (59%) were males and 43 (41%) were females. Frequency of educational status of the patients/guardians of the children was recorded which showed that 59 (56%) were illiterate, 30 (28.5%) were up to primary, 12 (11.4%) were up to matric and 4 (4%) were up to the graduation. Monthly income of parents/guardians of the children shown in table I. Pattern of child abuse in children was recorded which revealed that 50 (47.4%) children were physical abused, 14 (13.3%) were sexually abused, 23 (22%) were abused emotionally and 18 (17%) had neglect. (Table II)

**Table I: Monthly income of parents/guardians (n=105)**

Monthly Income of Patients	No (%)
Up to 1000	46 (43.8)
10000 to 20000	31 (29.5)
20000 to 30000	19 (18 %)
>30000	10 (9.5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>105 (100 %)</b>

**Table II: Pattern of child abuse in children (n=105)**

Type of child abuse	No (%)
Physical abuse	50 (47.6%)
Sexual abuse	14 (13.3%)
Emotional abuse	23 (21.9%)
Neglect	18 (17.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>

## DISCUSSION

In this study, males of 12-14 years were the major victim and more vulnerable to physical abuse followed by emotional abuse and neglect. Educational status of the parents/guardians and their monthly income showed that majority were illiterate and having their income up to Rs. 10,000/- per month. The scenario of Pakistan about child abuse is not better than other countries of same status but it has become more crucial due to non availability of the official statistics about this widespread situation of child abuse.<sup>10-13</sup> We notice in our study that physical mistreatment is not confined only inside family but also the outer scenario, e.g. bodily punishments in schools and at work places.

The reasons of physical abuse could be low income stresses, low educational status and emotional state of the parents/guardians of the child, who is a soft and available target for the anger and frustrations. The same goes with teachers in schools, trainers at workshops and every other person resorting to physical abuse of children.

However, it appears that physical abuse is more prevalent in our society as our study showed it in 47.6%. Corporal punishment is considered as a basic technique to control the behavior by teachers and parents as they had learned the same from their own teachers and parents. The use of abusive language by the parents; due to lack of knowledge about its effects; is hurting for the children; negative attitude of parents might be resulting in lower self-respect and inferiority complex in children.<sup>14-15</sup> It is already mentioned by the researches that verbal abuse or

expression of the intent to abdicate a child might constitute a distinct form of abuse i.e. emotional abuse.<sup>4</sup> or in association with other forms of abuse.<sup>10</sup> The occurrence of parental hatefulness, neglect and rejection was more common than love, acceptance and trust. The history of adolescents with difficult behaviors had common happenings of parental aggressiveness, neglect or rejection.<sup>11</sup>

Surprisingly, in region of study the percentage of sexual abuse found significantly lower, only 13% contrary to number of the cases of child sexual abuse in United States per year, 150,000 cases estimated and verified by CPS agencies, for a rate of 1.1 cases per 1000 children. 15% of boys and 30% of girls approximately experience some type of sexual abuse in childhood.<sup>1</sup> In 6 boys and 1 in 4 girls approx are sexually abused before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>12,13</sup>

Many abused children never come to the attention of professional services, government agencies, or the criminal justice system. No doubt, in some cases even career remains unaware of child abuse. Because of the concealment, the actual incidence of child sexual abuse is difficult to determine.<sup>15</sup> Sexual abuses is the advantage of the abuser always, without any consideration of choices or reaction of the child and its results on the behavior of the child. However, going through the results of the study, we conclude that evident cases of physical child abuse are in higher proportion than other child abuse types followed by emotional abuse, neglect and sexual abuse.

## CONCLUSION

Our study showed that male children were more facing abuse and in most of the case it was physical in nature. Considering the facts and figures of the study, there is a pressing need to focus on issues about Child Protection in district Rahim Yar Khan. These facts must be conveyed to Law enforcement agencies, teachers, civil society and especially parents/guardian, to aware them and to avoid such abuses in children as they may have negative impact in upcoming future of the children. For rehabilitation and intervention supports system should be established in Southern Punjab. Youngsters should be encouraged to take responsibilities against the child abuse. Media should take responsibility by not only giving

priority in highlighting the child abuse cases but also promote awareness about child abuse.

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