

Impacts of Physical and Psychological Abuse of Children on Family Demographic Variables

Lama M. Al-Qaisy

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Tafila Technical University
P.O. Box (179), Tafila 66110, Jordan

Abstract: The aims of this study was to show relationship between physical and psychological abuse of children and family demographical variables. A random sample of study representing TTU students has been selected for that purpose; it was consisted of (279), of whom were (127) females and (170) males. The findings show that there are various types of abuse but psychological abuse is the most common type. Also, females are more exposed to psychological abuse than males. In addition, the findings proved a relationship between abuse and the number of family members. Therefore, the higher the family members, the more probable abuse becomes.

Keywords: Child abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse can be defined as the adverse treatment of children under the age of 18 by parent, caretaker, or someone living in their home^[1]. Child abuse is anything that causes injury or puts the child under threat especially physical injury^[2]. Further, child abuse can be physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child^[3]. Sexual abuse includes activities administered by a parent or caretaker such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials^[4]. Psychological abuse is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. This kind of abuse is often difficult to detect. To prove this, I will illustrate the major causes that play a primary role in child abuse, firstly, mentally disordered people^[5]. Many people have difficulty in understanding why any person would hurt a child. The public often assumes that people who abuse their children suffer from mental disorders, but fewer than 10 percent of abusers have mental illnesses^[6]. Most abusers love their children but tend to have less patience and less mature personalities than other parents. These traits make it difficult to cope with the demands of their children and increase the likelihood of physical or emotional abuse. However, there is no single explanation for child abuse. Secondly, Child

abuse results from a complex combination of personal, social, and cultural factors. These may be grouped into four primary categories: (1) intergenerational transmission of violence; (2) social stress; (3) social isolation and low community involvement; (4) family structure^[7].

Although experts are quick to point out that abuse occurs among all social, ethnic, and income groups, reported cases usually involve poor families with little education. Young mothers, single-parent families, and parental alcohol or drug abuse are also common in reported cases.^[8] remarked that "More than 90% of abusing parents have neither psychotic nor criminal personalities. Rather they tend to be lonely, unhappy, angry, young, and single parents who do not plan their pregnancies, have little or no knowledge of child development, and have unrealistic expectations for child behavior."

The impact of child abuse and neglect is often discussed in terms of physical, psychological, behavioral, and societal impacts^[9]. In reality, however, it is impossible to separate them completely. Physical impacts (such as damage to a child's growing brain) can have psychological implications (cognitive delays or emotional difficulties, for example). Psychological problems often manifest high-risk behaviors. Depression and anxiety, for example, may make a person more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol or illicit drugs, or overeat. High-risk behaviors, in turn, can lead to long-term physical health problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, cancer, and obesity^[10].

In addition, the immediate physical effects of abuse can be relatively minor (bruises or cuts) or severe (broken bones, hemorrhage, or even death). In some cases the physical effects are temporary; however, pain and suffering they cause to children should not be

discounted. Meanwhile, the long-term impact of child abuse on physical health is just the beginning to be explored. The immediate effects of shaking a baby (a common form of child abuse in infants) can include vomiting, concussion, respiratory distress, seizures, and death. Long-term impacts can include blindness, learning disabilities, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, or paralysis^[11, 12]. Child abuse has been shown to cause important regions of the brain to fail to form properly, resulting in impaired physical, mental, and emotional development^[13, 14]. In other cases, the stress of chronic abuse causes a "hyper arousal" response by certain areas of the brain, which may result in hyperactivity, sleep disturbances, and anxiety, as well as increased vulnerability to post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, and learning and memory difficulties^[15, 16, 17]. A study of 9,500 HMO participants showed a relationship between various forms of household dysfunction (including childhood abuse) and long-term health problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease^[18, 19].

The immediate emotional effects of child abuse-isolation, fear and an inability to trust-can translate into lifelong impacts including low self-esteem, depression, and relationship difficulties. To support our debate, a study is conducted for this purpose. In this long-term study, as many as 80 percent of young adults, who had been abused, met the diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder at age 21. These young adults exhibited many problems, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide attempts^[20, 21]. Other psychological and emotional conditions associated with abuse and neglect includes panic disorder, dissociative disorders, cognitive difficulties, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and reactive attachment disorder^[22, 23]. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being recently found children placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect tended to score lower than the general population on measures of cognitive capacity, social difficulties, language development, and academic achievement^[24]. Children who are abused and neglected by parents often do not form secure attachments to them. These early attachment difficulties can lead to later difficulties in relationships with other adults as well as with peers^[25, 26]. Studies have found abused and neglected children to be at least 25% more likely to experience problems such as delinquency, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement, drug use, and mental health problems^[27]. A National Institute of Justice study indicated being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59%. Abuse and neglect increased the likelihood of adult criminal behavior by 28% and violent crime by 30%^[28, 29]. Research consistently reflects an increased likelihood that abused and neglected children will

smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, or take illicit drugs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, as many as two-thirds of people in drug treatment programs reported being abused as children^[30]. To add, abusive parents often have experienced abuse during their own childhoods. It is estimated approximately one-third of abused and neglected children will eventually victimize their own children^[31].

Based on what is mentioned above, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What is the extent of child abuse?
2. Is the physical abuse and psychological abuse influenced by gender?
3. Is the physical abuse and psychological abuse influenced by the number of family members?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population: The study included all B.A., B.E. and B.Sc. students registered at Tafila Technical University for the academic year 2006/2007. It covered 2097 students of whom 1027 were females and 1070 males. The ages of students ranged from 18-25.

Sample: The sample was randomly selected, it was consisted of (279), of whom were (127) females and (170) males.

Measurement of Child Abuse: A brief questionnaire, initial reliability and validity of a new retrospective of child abuse and neglect^[32] collected information about the occurrence of childhood maltreatment. Respondents were asked about their experiences when they were growing up. The definition of physical abuse included eight events ranging from being pushed, grabbed, or shoved (often or sometimes) to being physically attacked (often, sometimes, or rarely). The definition of psychological abuse included 12 events ranging from being rejected, ignored, criticized, or isolated, to being psychologically attacked (often, sometimes, or rarely).

Measurement of other variables: Two variables were selected to determine their relationship between physical and psychological abuse of children and family demographic variables. The variables were: gender and family size, the family size was measured by the number of individuals who lived in the same household and ate together.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the forms of Physical and psychological abuse vary according to gender. One way ANOVA was calculated to show whether the differences are statically significant at level 3.0833 or not.

Table 1: Mean and Std. deviation of child abuse according to gender

Gender	Abuse	Psychological Abuse		Physical Abuse	
		Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Male		2.9144	1.02440	1.9644	0.43770
Female		3.0833	0.94035	2.6075	0.89136

Table 2: One way ANOVA of child abuse according to gender

Abuse		Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	sig
Physical Abuse	Between Groups	0.450	1	0.450	0.460	0.500
	Within Groups	60.604	62	0.977		
	Total	61.054	63			
Psychological Abuse	Between Groups	21.566	1	21.566	44.935	0.000
	Within Groups	99.347	207	0.480		
	Total	120.913	208			

Table 3: Physical abuse and psychological abuse influenced by the number of family members

Abuse		Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	sig
Physical Abuse	Between Groups	60.155	2	30.077	2041.34	0.000
	Within Groups	0.899	61	0.015		
	Total	61.054	63			
Psychological Abuse	Between Groups	74.953	2	37.477	167.977	0.000
	Within Groups	45.960	206	0.223		
	Total	120.913	208			

Table 4: Post Hoc Test Scheffe

Dependent variable (I)	Family (J)	Family	Mean Difference(I-J)	f	sig	
Psychological Abuse						
1	2	3	-1.9458*	0.04432	0.000	
		3	-2.1385*	0.03460	0.000	
	3	2	1.9458*	0.04432	0.000	
		3	-0.1927*	0.04109	0.000	
	3	1	2	2.1385*	0.03460	0.000
			3	0.1927*	0.04109	0.000
Physical Abuse						
1	2	3	-0.1280	0.010145	0.452	
		3	-1.2797*	0.08527	0.000	
	3	2	0.1280	0.010145	0.452	
		3	-1.1516*	0.08172	0.000	
	3	1	2	1.2797*	0.08527	0.000
			3	1.1516*	0.08172	0.000

Data presented in Table 2 indicates that there are certain differences among the various forms of abuse psychological abuse, for instance is statistically significant because its value reached 44.935, and the data in Table 3 shows the effect of the family number on the physical and psychological abuse. The results have shown that there are some negative effects.

The mean of psychological abuse in big families reached 3.6927 contrasted with 3.5, and 1.5542 in small

families. This indicates that the number of family members influences the rate of physical and psychological abuse. The result presented in the Table 4 shows that after Cheffe test and the results indicate that whenever the number of family members increases, the physical and psychological abuse accordingly increases. Further, multiple regressions were analyzed to investigate the effect of sex and family members and educational level on the physical and psychological

abuse. Results indicate that 86% of the physical and psychological abuse is due to the variables of sex and family members while 14% are attributed to other reasons. We can deduce from the above mentioned data that there are similarities between this study and other studies,^[33, 34, 35] as the present study pointed out to the following results: the existence of a relation between the kids' gender and the abuse, and that females are more vulnerable to abuse than males,^[35, 36] and that the life stage over than 18 is more vulnerable to psychological abuse,^[37, 38, 39]. Other studies have also indicated that the number of family members influences child abuse. it was shown that the family whose members are over five practice more abuse on kids as a result of the overburdens of life and caring,^[40, 30]. Not only does this reason aggravate child abuse but also poverty, parents disputes, educational level and psychological disorders as well as social pressures^[8].

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results reported in this study, it can be concluded that there were various types of abuse, but psychological abuse was the most common type. Also, females are more exposed to psychological abuse than males. In addition, the findings proved a relationship between abuse and the number of family members. Therefore, the higher the family members, the more probable abuse becomes.

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