

MALTREATMENT AND ITS IMPACTS ON PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND HEALTH CONDITION OF ADOLESCENTS: EVIDENCE BASED STUDY FROM DISTRICT SARGODHA, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

Saba Tubsem¹, Dr. Aaqib Shahzad Alvi ², Dr. Afzaal Afzal³

¹M. Phil Scholar, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan,

²Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

³Community Development Officer, Public Health Engineering Department, Punjab, Pakistan

¹saba.uos.sgd@gmail.com, ²aaqib.shahzad@uos.edu.pk, ³afzaal.afzal2010@gmail.com

Received: 03 August, 2023 Revised: 10 September, 2023 Accepted: 14 September, 2023 Published: 21 September, 2023

ABSTRACT

Adolescent is the most critical, sensitive and responsive time period of individual's life. Major biological, social, and cognitive changes occur, which largely stimulate the most important shift, especially personal capacities, communal affiliation, facilitating to develop and work out societal identities and discover their self-sufficiency. This empirical investigation applied mixed-method approach and the primary data was collected through semi-structure interviews for qualitative analysis and Child Abuse Scale (CAS) and Flourishing Scale (FS) were used. The cluster random sampling was applied to approach the participants (teenagers). The findings revealed that maltreatment have significant impacts on social, psychological and physical conditions of adolescent. The results of T-test analysis indicated no variance gender and community wise on mental wellbeing. Furthermore, a significant association was found between gender and maltreatment. It reveals that that female adolescents experienced more maltreatment than male. According to Pearson's correlation, maltreatment and mental wellbeing exhibited a negative significant relationship. Qualitative insights showed that physical abuse, poverty, and parental emotional abuse were common causes of maltreatment. Adolescents who had experienced abuse exhibited social exclusion, depression, aggression, and abnormal behavior. To address the psycho-social needs of adolescents and to enhance their mental health status, it emphasizes the significance of planning, legislation, and service networks.

Keywords: Maltreatment, Adolescents, Psycho-social and Health Condition of Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Because it has a significant negative impact on teenagers' wellbeing, child maltreatment is a prevalent and gravely alarming issue that is receiving more and more attention (Lund et al., 2020). Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, and it is also a time when people are most susceptible to the impacts of outside forces. Through shedding light on the prevalence of various types of maltreatment, the resulting difficulties, and the potential mechanisms through which maltreatment affects mental

well-being, this research aims to delve into the complex relationship between child maltreatment and the mental health status of adolescents (Wood et al., 2022).

Maltreatment of children and adolescents includes a variety of negative actions taken against them, such as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as neglect. Maltreatment can have lasting impacts, affecting how young people develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Cecil et al., 2023). Due to its distinct physiological and psychological changes, adolescence, which is frequently

seen as a turbulent stage, accentuates the impact of abuse. The transition between childhood and maturity, when experiences have long-lasting effects, is crucially spanned by this developmental stage.

Worldwide, child abuse is still a serious issue. Statistics show worrisome rates of mortality linked to maltreatment and a sizable proportion of teenagers who experience various types of abuse and neglect. The impact of abuse on mental health is especially upsetting since teenagers who have been subjected to it may struggle with a variety of emotional issues, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicide thoughts.

The Effects of Maltreatment Are Complex: Maltreatment doesn't happen in a vacuum; instead, it interacts with a variety of variables, including family dynamics, socioeconomic circumstances, and community influences. Maltreatment can have a variety of repercussions, including externalizing issues like delinquency and aggression as well as internalizing issues like sadness, anxiety, and withdrawal (GICHARU, 2023). In addition, variables including gender, culture, and the length and severity of abuse experiences all have an impact on the complex relationship between maltreatment and adolescent mental health.

Goals and objectives for the study: The goal of this study is to conduct a thorough examination of the incidence of various forms of maltreatment among teenagers, considering the specifics of each type and any potential implications for mental health outcomes. The study also attempts to evaluate the state of adolescents' mental wellbeing, realizing that maltreatment can have impacts that go beyond its immediate manifestations. For prevention and intervention methods to be effective, it is critical to comprehend the relationship between child maltreatment and adolescent mental health. This research

advances our understanding of the mechanisms by which maltreatment affects wellbeing by examining the variables that mediate and regulate the link between maltreatment and mental health. This information can be used to design supportive systems, laws, and initiatives that are targeted to the special requirements of abused adolescents, ultimately fostering resilience and good mental health outcomes.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Growing concern and active study efforts have been made in recent years in response to the pervasiveness of child abuse and its wide-ranging effects (Reed et al., 2022). This literature review focuses on a few areas, such as cognitive development, emotional resilience, attachment theory, and long-term psychological effects, to provide a thorough understanding of the complex effects of child abuse on adolescents' mental and emotional health (Fegert et al., 2020). This section investigates the complex interplay between abuse experiences and future developmental trajectories by looking at various research projects, illuminating the pervasive consequences of child abuse on people's lives. Negative Abuse's Effect on Intellectual Development The effects of childhood maltreatment and neglect on mental development have drawn a lot of attention. Mechanisms for identifying and dealing with adolescent delinquency in the United States emerged in the 19th century from a complex social and legal context. Recent technological developments enable researchers to examine early childhood experiences, demonstrating a link between maltreatment and mental development. Formerly seen as purely an emotional problem, child maltreatment is now understood to play a substantial role in determining cognitive development (Caffaro, 2020). This understanding goes beyond the immediate emotional effects and emphasizes

how abuse contributes to the development of intellect by causing substantial changes in brain function (Herrman et al., 2020).

Childhood Abuse and Emotional Development: A child's emotional growth, intimacy, and understanding are all shaped by the relationships they have with their parents and other primary caregivers. Caregivers act as emotional pillars, affecting a child's brain development and determining their future behavior. The interactions between young people and their primary caregivers lay the groundwork for emotional development, resilience, and comprehension. The attachment theory, which Jiang, & Koo (2020) first proposed, emphasizes the crucial role that caregiver response plays in fostering strong emotional ties. Neglect or abuse can result in maladaptive emotional patterns, whereas positive interactions promote healthy emotional responses (Sándor et al., 2021).

Resilience, which is defined as the capacity to overcome obstacles and bounce back, is crucial in the context of childhood maltreatment. The adolescent brain demonstrates a remarkable potential for flexibility and adaptation, even though child abuse can have severe impacts. Resilience is the capacity to bend without breaking, responding to difficulties while keeping core integrity, as opposed to strength, which implies resistance (Salehi et al., 2019). Adolescence is a time when resilience is essential since the brain can continue to develop despite challenges thanks to its plasticity.

The psychological effects of abuse over time: The long-lasting impacts of child maltreatment can be seen in a variety of areas of psychological and emotional health. Abused adolescents are more likely to have a variety of psychological issues, such as anxiety, sadness, mood disorders, and suicide thoughts. According to (Wang et al., 2022), the cycle of abuse can cause feelings of

helplessness and vulnerability, which can lead to skewed self-perception and poor social interactions. A person's ability to trust, build healthy relationships, and participate in society can all be impacted by child abuse in ways that go beyond the immediate emotional anguish that it causes (WHO, 2022).

The ecological systems theory, put out by (Arthur et al., 2022), offers a useful framework for comprehending the intricate relationships that exist between people and their environments. It draws attention to how diverse systems, ranging from small-scale interactions to large-scale social effects, are interrelated and influence human development. To further extend this idea, Zhou (2022) emphasizes the importance of social support and family setting in shaping an individual's results. This is particularly relevant for comprehending how child maltreatment affects adolescent development. Comprehensive research and efficient therapies are required due to child abuse's significant and long-lasting effects on teenagers' mental, emotional, and cognitive development. This research review highlights the significance of addressing child abuse to promote healthy developmental trajectories and attenuate long-term psychological effects by examining the link between abuse experiences and subsequent outcomes. The methodological approach, results, and conclusions of the study will all be covered in the subsequent sections of this research paper, which will further shed light on the complex connection between child maltreatment and teenage mental health.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

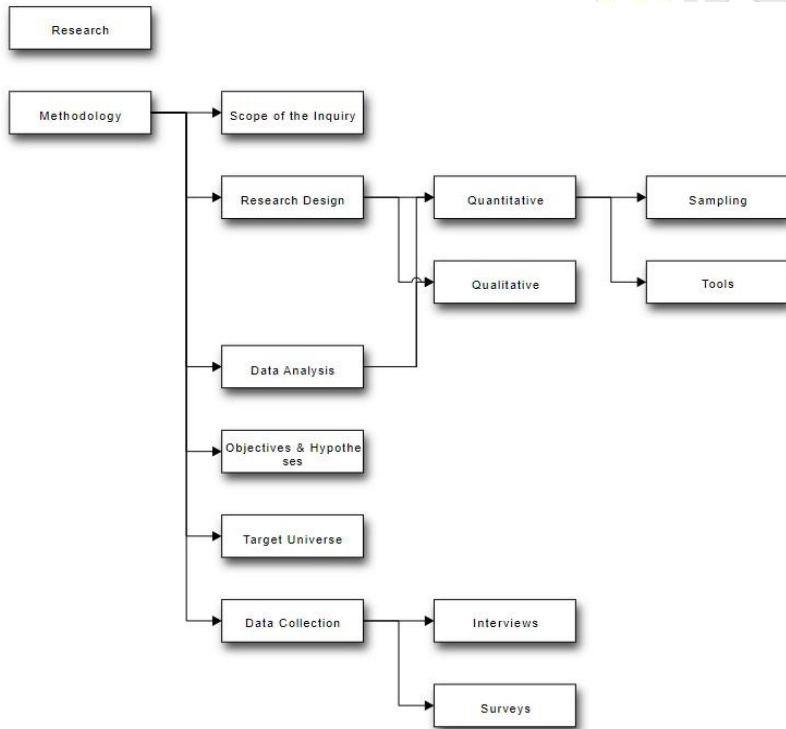
- To assess the prevalence of different types of maltreatment among adolescents.
- To evaluate the mental well-being status of adolescents.
- To examine the potential impact

of various forms of child maltreatment on adolescent mental health.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- Female adolescents experience higher levels of maltreatment compared to males.
- Maltreatment prevalence is greater in rural communities compared to urban settings.
- Adolescents in urban areas exhibit higher levels of mental well-being than those in rural communities.
- Female adolescents have higher levels of mental well-being than male adolescents.
- A significant relationship exists between child maltreatment and adolescent mental well-being.

MATERIAL AND METHODS



RESEARCH DESIGN, SCOPE AND APPROACH

The research aims to comprehensively explore the prevalence of maltreatment and abuse among adolescents and its implications on their mental health. It seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to adolescent mental health issues and the role of familial dynamics in this context. The study employs a mixed-method research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design allows for a holistic exploration of the research questions, combining the strengths of both methodologies to enhance the validity and depth of the findings.

Universe and Sampling Methods

The research focuses on the geographical area of Punjab, Pakistan. Specifically, the central district of Punjab is chosen due to its population density, urbanization, and accessibility. This area provides a representative sample for the study's objectives. The study employs a three-stage cluster random sampling technique. Initially, two tehsils are randomly selected from the district. From each selected tehsil, four union councils are chosen. Finally, adolescents are conveniently sampled from families, social centers, and well-being facilities.

Data Collection Tools, Pre-Testing and Data Collection

- Interview Schedule: Captures demographic information, family dynamics, and past medical history.
- Child Abuse Scale for Adolescents (CASA): A Likert-scale questionnaire with 43 items gauging various forms of maltreatment.
- Flourishing Scale (FS): An 8-item

questionnaire assessing mental well-being.

- Interview guide

The interview schedule undergoes pre-testing involving a smaller group of respondents. This process ensures the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of questions. Data collection involves conducting interviews with 200 respondents over a span of fifteen days. Interviewers are organized into subgroups to streamline the process and ensure uniformity in approach.

Field Experience, Editing, Coding and Ethical Considerations

Challenges during data collection include identifying eligible respondents, introducing the research purpose, and addressing sensitivities around the topic. Collected data is edited to eliminate redundant or irrelevant information. Categorized data is then tabulated for further analysis. Ethical guidelines, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants, are strictly followed throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

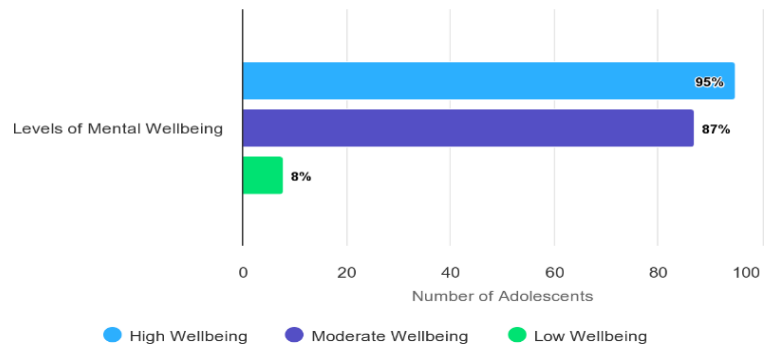
The present study utilized a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Quantitative data was gathered from 190 adolescents in Pakistan using surveys to assess their experiences of maltreatment and mental wellbeing status. Additionally, qualitative interview data was collected from 10 child protection experts to gain deeper insights into the issues of maltreatment.

Quantitative Results

Statistical analysis of the survey data revealed concerning rates of maltreatment

among adolescents in the sample. Emotional/neglect abuse was found to be the most prevalent form reported, with a mean score of 26.9 out of 52, followed by psychological abuse (mean 22.9), physical abuse(mean 9.6), and sexual abuse

Levels of Mental Wellbeing based on Flourishing Scale



(mean 7.9). In terms of severity, 42.4% of adolescents reported lower levels of maltreatment, 29.3% moderate levels, 25.7% moderately severe levels, and 2.1% severe levels of abuse.

Prevalence of Maltreatment

The Child Abuse Scale survey results revealed high rates of maltreatment among the sample of 190 adolescents in Pakistan. Emotional/neglect abuse was the most prevalent reported an average of 26.9%. The scale range of 16-52 for emotional/neglect abuse indicates that on average, adolescents experienced these acts between "sometimes" and "frequently."

Table 1
 Gender-wise Maltreatment Levels (Mean, SD)

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	66.23	13.68
Female	68.00	22.23

Psychological abuse had a mean score of 22.9, suggesting experiences between "rarely" and "sometimes." The range for psychological abuse was 15-50. Physical abuse (range 7-25) had a mean of 9.6, indicating average experiences between "never" and "rarely." Sexual abuse (range 7-27) was the least prevalent form with a mean of 7.9, also suggesting experiences between "never" and "rarely" on average.

Table 2
Maltreatment and Community Setting

Living Area	Mean	Standard Deviation
Urban	66.23	18.42
Rural	72.20	17.86

Regarding severity, 42.4% (n=81) of adolescents reported lower or "mild" levels of maltreatment. Moderate abuse was reported by 29.3% (n=56), moderately severe abuse by 25.7% (n=49), and severe abuse by 2.1% (n=4). This indicates over half of adolescents suffered moderate to severe levels of maltreatment.

Mental Wellbeing

The 8-item Flourishing Scale showed that 87 adolescents (46%) exhibited moderate mental wellbeing (range of 8-56), while 95 (50%) had high wellbeing. Lower wellbeing was found among 4% (n=8) of adolescents. The scale ranges from 8 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater self-perceived success in important areas like relationships, self-esteem, and purpose.

Differences Based on Gender and Setting

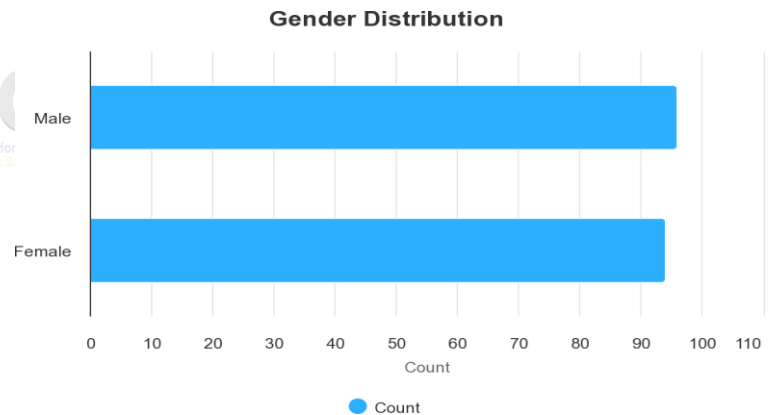
An independent samples t-test revealed females (mean 68.7, SD 22.2) reported significantly higher rates of maltreatment compared to males (mean 66, SD 13.7), with

a statistically significant difference ($t(154.06) = -1.003, p = .003$). No significant differences emerged based on community setting, indicating urban (mean 66.2, SD 18.4) and rural (mean 72.2, SD 17.9) adolescents experienced similar rates of maltreatment ($t(188) = -1.743, p = .083$).

Additionally, no significant differences in mental wellbeing emerged based on gender or community setting ($p > .05$). This suggests these factors did not impact mental health status.

Relationship Between Maltreatment and Mental Wellbeing

Bivariate correlation analysis revealed a significant negative association between



maltreatment and mental wellbeing ($r = -.577, p = .01$). This indicates adolescents reporting higher abuse exhibited reduced wellbeing.

Sample Characteristics

In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 child protection professionals in Pakistan, including social workers, nurses, teachers, and psychologists. Experts had 5-15 years of experience working with maltreated adolescents. Poverty was frequently cited as a major risk factor for maltreatment

according to experts. Financial hardship was seen as contributing to parental stress, domestic violence, neglect of children's needs, and abusive behaviors.

Lack of Awareness and Parenting Skills

Interviewees emphasized that many parents lack awareness of positive disciplinary practices and child development. Their inability to manage child behaviors appropriately often leads to abusive tendencies. Parent training was suggested to build childrearing skills.

Experts noted that maltreated adolescents often become socially withdrawn, aggressive, or engage in criminal behaviors. Diminished self-esteem, poor coping abilities, and depressive tendencies were psychological consequences highlighted.

	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Total	.499	.776
F	.276	.088
Sig.	.600	.930
T	.088	.12079
Df	188	187.466
Sig. (2-tailed)	.930	.930
Mean Difference	.276	1.37900
Std. Error Difference	.600	1.87466
95% Confidence Interval	(-2.59956, 2.59956)	(-2.59956, 4.25706)
Lower	-2.59956	-2.59956
Upper	2.59956	4.25706

Need for Prevention and Intervention

The need for comprehensive preventative methods that begin at the societal level was emphasized by experts. Poverty reduction initiatives, parent education initiatives, and school-based interventions were suggested. Individualized therapy and family-based interventions were advised for abused adolescents. Impact of Abuse on Adolescents Health, professionals shared their knowledge of the serious effects of

abuse on adolescents' mental health, including malnutrition, disturbed eating and sleeping habits, social isolation, depressive behavior, violence, and low self-esteem. Psychological anguish and a higher propensity for criminal and deviant behavior were linked to emotional abuse.

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses offer a thorough grasp of the connection between adolescent mental health and maltreatment. The results emphasize the importance of gender, community context, and the detrimental impacts of abuse on mental health. Qualitative insights also provide information on the underlying risk factors, reporting procedures, awareness campaigns, and wider social effects of maltreatment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Abuse and maltreatment of children is a serious global problem that transcends geographical boundaries. Even though numerous studies have been carried out in other nations, the evidence points to the fact that this problem exists everywhere. The effects of abuse on adolescents are, however, the subject of relatively few thorough investigations. In many areas, healthcare providers do not always recognize teenage abuse. This emphasizes the critical need to evaluate the efficacy of intervention measures, prevention initiatives, and the overall response to these concerns, particularly in developed and developing countries. Adolescents' needs, those of their caregivers, and the requirements of the larger social environment should be the main priorities of prevention methods and tactics. To stop abuse from happening and to deal with incidents that have already happened, comprehensive procedures are required. It

is crucial for many sectors to work together, and public health academics and professionals are key in promoting and directing these initiatives. Exploring variations in healing activities across various cultural contexts requires additional investigation. It is possible for cultures to create inclusive definitions of abuse and resolve educational disparities in rural areas by understanding patterns of educational differences in adolescent well-being. According to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's ability to develop in violent-free environments is a fundamental human right. This emphasizes states' obligations to pass proper laws, enforce them, and implement education programs to safeguard kids from all types of violence, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

REFERENCES

- Lund, R. G., Manica, S., & Mânica, G. (2020). Collateral issues in times of covid-19: child abuse, domestic violence and femicide. *Revista Brasileira de Odontologia Legal*, 7(2).
- Wood, S., Scourfield, J., Stabler, L., Addis, S., Wilkins, D., Forrester, D., & Brand, S. L. (2022). How might changes to family income affect the likelihood of children being in out-of-homecare? Evidence from a realist and qualitative rapid evidence assessment of interventions. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 143, 106685.
- Cecil, C. A., & Schuurmans, I. K. (2023). On Navigating Analytical Choices in Research on Early Life Adversity: A Commentary on Sisitsky et al. (2023). *Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology*, 1-4.
- Gicharu, E. G. (2023). *Relationship Between Family Violence And Juvenile Delinquency: A Case Of Girls At Kirigiti Rehabilitation And Training Centre, Kiambu County, Kenya* (Doctoral Dissertation).
- Reed, G. M., First, M. B., Billieux, J., Cloitre, M., Briken, P., Achab, S., ... & Bryant, R. A. (2022). Emerging experience with selected new categories in the ICD- 11: Complex PTSD, prolonged grief disorder, gaming disorder, and compulsive sexual behaviour disorder. *World Psychiatry*, 21(2), 189-213.
- Fegert, J. M., Vitiello, B., Plener, P. L., & Clemens, V. (2020). Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic for child and adolescent mental health: a narrative review to highlight clinical and research needs in the acute phase and the long return to normality. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health*, 14, 1-11.
- Caffaro, J. (2020). Sibling abuse of other children. *Handbook of interpersonal violence across the lifespan*, 1-28.
- Herrman, H., Patel, V., Kieling, C., Berk, M., Buchweitz, C., Cuijpers, P., ... & Wolpert, M. (2022). Time for united action on depression: a Lancet–World Psychiatric Association Commission. *The Lancet*, 399(10328), 957-1022.
- Jiang, M., & Koo, K. (2020). Emotional presence in building an online learning community among non-traditional graduate students. *Online Learning*, 24(4), 93-111.

Sándor, A., Bugán, A., Nagy, A., Bogdán, L. S., & Molnár, J. (2021). Attachment characteristics and emotion regulation difficulties among maladaptive and normal daydreamers. *Current Psychology*, 1-18.

Salehi, S., Ardalan, A., Ostadtaghizadeh, A., Garmaroudi, G., Zareiyan, A., & Rahimiforoushani, A. (2019). Conceptual definition and framework of climate change and dust storm adaptation: a qualitative study. *Journal of Environmental Health Science and Engineering*, 17, 797-810.

World Health Organization. (2022). Bending the trends to promote health and well-being: a strategic foresight on the future of health promotion. World Health Organization.

Wang, H., Liu, X. G., Yue, Q. R., & Zheng, M. Z. (2022). Shear resistance of a novel wet connection for prefabricated composite beams under shear-bending coupling loading. *Journal of Building Engineering*, 45, 103636.

Zhou, Y., Li, L., Han, Z., Li, Q., He, J., & Wang, Q. (2022). Self-healing polymers for electronics and energy devices. *Chemical Reviews*, 123(2), 558-612.

