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Prevalence of Physical Abuse Among School Going Adolescents In Belagavi. A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction & Background: Every child has a virtuous to a safe childhood and a life free from cruelty. The experience of child abuse and neglect violate that right. Child misuse is a huge global problem with a serious smack on the victim's physical and mental health, well-being and development throughout their lives and, by appendage, on society in common.

Objective: The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of physical abuse among school going adolescent students (11 to 16 years age) in Belagavi city.

Material and Method: 139 school going adolescents aged between 11 to 16 years were selected for the study using stratified random sampling. The data was gathered by using WHO modified adverse childhood experiences International questionnaire scale (ACE-IQ).

Results: Approximately 84% of study subjects faced one or the other form physical abuse, common being among the age groups of 11 to 12 years. The most persistent perpetrator of physical abuse was guardian/ family member, followed by the friends and neighbors. Also the abuse was prevalent among the study subjects whose mother had low or no education, joint family life style, working mothers and those living with siblings, (*p<0.05)

Conclusion: It is important to give the education to school and health authorities to identify these signs and enquire about physical abuse from children and adolescents so as to protect and nurture them as healthy individuals and responsible citizens.

Keywords: Adolescents, Perpetrator, Physical abuse, school going adolescents

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Every child has a virtuous to a safe childhood and a life free from cruelty. The experience of child abuse and neglect violate that right.¹ Each year millions of children around the world are the victims and witnesses of physical, sexual and emotional violence. Child misuse is a huge global problem with a serious smack on the victim's physical and mental health, well-being and development throughout their lives and, by appendage, on society in common.²

Child abuse is a global problem with serious life-long consequences.³ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse and child maltreatment as "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."⁴

In general worldwide 40 million children subjected to abuse each year.⁵ It is estimated that 1 in 14 children have been physically maltreated in UK.⁶ Physical abuse often does not occur in separation, but as part of a sort of behaviors including autocratic dominance, anxiety-provoking behavior, and a lack of parental warmth. **The WHO defines physical abuse as:** Intentional use of physical forces against the child that results in-or has a high likelihood of resulting in-harm for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing.⁶

The ministry of women and child department, Government of India explored study in 2007 across the 13 states in India, and the study stipulated that an critically high percentage of children in state run schools i.e., 53.8% faced corporal punishment. This was followed by Physical abuse of girls in organizations was also very high. Higher percentages of children in the age group of 5-12 years were subjected to physical abuse in organizations.⁷ Over 6,000 children were identified as needing protection from physical abuse as per 2015 report in UK.⁶

B. Meenakshi. et. al, conducted study to document the prevalence of physical abuse during childhood among college students the study revealed that 56% (524/936) of the participants reported that they were beaten during their childhood, of which 13.4% (70/524) required medical treatment.¹⁶ K. Sebind, et. al, conducted study to estimate the prevalence of physical abuse in a school environment in a developing country; this study revealed that more males than females reported being victims of abuse.¹¹ All ages, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backdrops are at risk for physical abuse. Physical abuse affects both boys and girls across locality, communities, and countries around the world.

India is home to almost 19% of the world's children. More than one-third of the country's population, throughout 440 million, is below 18 years of age.¹¹ There are many matters that may contribute to child abuse, but some factors increase the threats to children and make them more unsafe to abuse. They can be found in the scenario of parents, in the substantial situation and in virtues of the child themselves. Parental considerations include Parent has already ill-treated a child, it was unwanted pregnancy, Parent has a background of abuse when growing up, Young, unsupported mother often with lack of education, Parents have impractical assumptions of the child and lack of parent education, Parent is confined and has few substratum, Parent has a mental disorder or is abusing drugs or alcohol. Environmental factors include overabundance in the house, inadequacy or lack of opportunity to improve the family's resources, Family violence is present.¹²

A basic presumption of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of The Child (CRC) is that the family is the essential environment for the growth and prosperity of all its members—particularly for children.¹¹ A United Kingdom based national survey confessed that mothers and fathers were most often guilty for physical maltreatment, although violence by siblings was also reported.¹¹

Very few studies have been carried out in India about nature and magnitude of physical abuse experienced by the children in families. In Karnataka, no similar study has been conducted on the issue till date. Therefore, the present study will attempt to understand the prevalence of physical abuse experienced by the adolescents (11 -16 years age) in Belagavi.

MATERIAL METHODS:

Institutional ethical clearance was obtained from Institutional Ethical Committee before the start of the study, also permission was obtained from office of the directorate of education of Belagavi District and consent from the principals and parents and assent from the study samples were collected.

A cross sectional school based study design was used for this descriptive study. 139 students from 6 schools of age group between 11 to 16 years were selected as sample using the formula $n = Z^2 pq / d^2$ by stratified random sampling. The prevalence of abuse was taken based on the study documented by Daral. S et. al in the year 2016.¹⁴

Primary and secondary school going adolescents of aged 11-16 years, students who were willing to participate and present at time of data collection were included in the study. The students who declined to participate were excluded in the study.

The data was collected by using questionnaires based on socioeconomic profile of the family characteristics of the sample and WHO modified adverse childhood experiences International questionnaire (**ACE-IQ**) for the determination of prevalence of physical abuse among the sample. The questionnaires were given both in English and Kannada language and confidentiality was maintained at all the stages of data collection and analysis. The data collected was then subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS software.

RESULTS

(Table-1) shows the socio demographic characteristics of the study subjects, the mean age of the study subjects in this study was 13.05 years with majority of belonging to nuclear families where in 70% of the sample constituted male gender and remaining 30% were females. As per educational status of the parents 45.35% had completed Secondary Schools. Nearly majority of the parents of the sample were self-employed (56.80%) and from middle class (71.90%).the majority of sample had two siblings (74.10%).

(Graph-1) represents the overall prevalence of physical abuse among school going adolescents .Among 139 adolescents the overall prevalence of physical abuse perpetrated by family was **60.43%**, friends **51%** and neighbors **50.36%**, were respectively.

(Table-2-represents the characteristics of physical abuse among school going adolescents perpetrated by family)Out of the total 139 study subjects 55 (39.57%) had not faced physical abuse, while the remaining 84(60.43%) had faced physical abuse by one or the other perpetrator. The most common form of abuse most times was being spanking (109; 78.42%), kicking, pushing or grabbing (98; 70.50%), bullied or made to feel embarrassed (102; 73%),by family members.

(Table-3-represents the characteristics of physical abuse among school going adolescents perpetrated by friends)physical abuse most of times perpetrated by friends was shouting screaming (112;80.58%), pulling of hair, (86; 61.87%) choking (75; 53.96%), having been bullied or embarrassed by friends (84;60.43%), pulling, pinching/twisting ear (83; 59.71%), spanking with hand (74; 53.24%), spanking with object (56; 40.29%),

(Table-4-represents the characteristics of physical abuse among school going adolescents perpetrated by neighbors) physical abuse most of times perpetrated by neighbors was spanking (119; 85.61%),spanking by object (112; 80.58%), screaming (87; 62.59%), pulling hair (85; 61.15%), chocking (62; 44.60%), pulling, twisting of ear (73; 52.52), having been bullied and made to feel embarrassed (55.37%).

DISCUSSION

(Table-5) presents association between socio demographic characteristics with prevalence of abuse by Guardian/family, friends, neighbors. The present study found significant association with mother education, socioeconomic status with physical abuse being family as a perpetrator among school going adolescents ($p < 0.05$), and also found significant association with type of family education status of mother, and number of siblings with physical abuse being friend as perpetrator among adolescents ($p < 0.05$), the previous studies reported greater prevalence in younger children aged 5–12 years and those belonging to nuclear families. Present study reported that Physical abuse more in 11 to 12 years adolescent girls from families of low socioeconomic status, whereas Deb and Modak¹¹ reported it more in adolescents from high-income families.

CONCLUSION:

Children of all ages, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk for physical abuse. Physical abuse affects both boys and girls across neighbourhoods, communities, and countries around the world. Children aged 4-7 years and 12-15 years are at the greatest risk of being physically abused. Very young children are most susceptible to receiving serious injuries.¹⁰

It is important to give the education to school and health authorities to identify these signs and enquire about physical abuse from children and adolescents so as to protect and nurture them as healthy individuals and responsible citizens of the future.

Table 1: Socio demographic profile of study participants (n=139)

Characteristics	Categories	No of respondents (%)	% of respondents
Age groups (Mean age ±13.05 years)	11-12yrs	28	20.10
	13-14yrs	76	54.70
	15-16yrs	35	25.20
Gender	Male	98	70.50
	Female	41	29.50
Types of family	Nuclear	91	65.50
	Joint	48	34.50
Religions	Hindu	107	77.00
	Muslims	18	12.90
	Others	14	10.10
Fathers education	Illiterates	4	2.90
	Primary	11	7.90
	Secondary	61	43.90
	Higher secondary	46	33.10
	Degree	17	12.20

	PG	0	0.00
Mothers education	Illiterates	6	4.30

Perpetrated by Family (n = 139) Characteristics of Physical Abuse	Prevalence of Physical abuse	
	Some times (%)	Most of the time (%)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by hand	21(15.11)	109(78.42)
Bullied or embarrassed	28(20.14)	102(73.38)
Shouting , screaming	31(22.30)	101(72.66)
Pushing , grabbing or kicking	6 (4.32)	98(70.50)
Pulling hair	43 (30.94)	88(63.31)

	Primary	24	17.30
	Secondary	65	46.80
	Higher secondary	44	31.70
	Degree	0	0.00
Fathers occupation	Farmer	12	8.60
	Government employee	7	5.00
	Self employed	79	56.80
	Private employed	41	29.50
Mothers occupation	Farmer	4	2.90
	Government employee	5	3.60
	Self employed	72	51.80
	Private employed	48	34.50
	House wife	10	7.20
Socio economic status	Upper class	2	1.40
	Upper middle class	31	22.30
	Middle class	100	71.90
	Lower middle class	6	4.30
No of siblings	One	9	6.50
	Two	103	74.10
	Three and plus	27	19.40
	Total	139	100.00

Characteristics of physical abuse of study participants (n=139)

Table.2: Characteristics of physical abuse perpetrated by family

Twisting or pinching of ear	42(30.22)	87(62.59)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by object	72(51.80)	62(44.60)
Locked in small place	29(20.86)	Nil
Tried to choke or drowned	25(17.99)	Nil

Table.3: Characteristics of physical abuse perpetrated by friends

Perpetrated by Friends (n = 139)	Prevalence of Physical abuse	
	Some times (%)	Most of the time (%)
Shouting , screaming	19 (13.67)	112(80.58)
Pulling hair	45(32.37)	86(61.87)
Bullied or embarrassed	49(35.25)	84(60.43)
Twisting or pinching of ear	47(33.81)	83(59.71)
Tried to choke or drowned	58(41.73)	75(53.96)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by hand	58(41.73)	74(53.24)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by object	71(51.08)	56(40.29)
Locked in small place	80(57.55)	47(33.81)

Table.4: Characteristics of physical abuse perpetrated by neighbors

Perpetrator by neighbors (n = 139)	Prevalence of Physical abuse	
	Some times (%)	Most of the time (%)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by hand	Nil	119(85.61)
Hitting , beating , and spanking by object	12(8.63)	112(80.58)
Shouting , screaming	49(35.25)	87(62.59)
Pulling hair	47(33.81)	85(61.15)
Twisting or pinching of ear	58(41.73)	73(52.52)
Tried to choke or drowned	64(46.04)	62(44.60)
Bullied or embarrassed	79(56.83)	55(39.57)

Table.5: Association between socio demographic characteristics with prevalence of physical abuse among school going adolescents

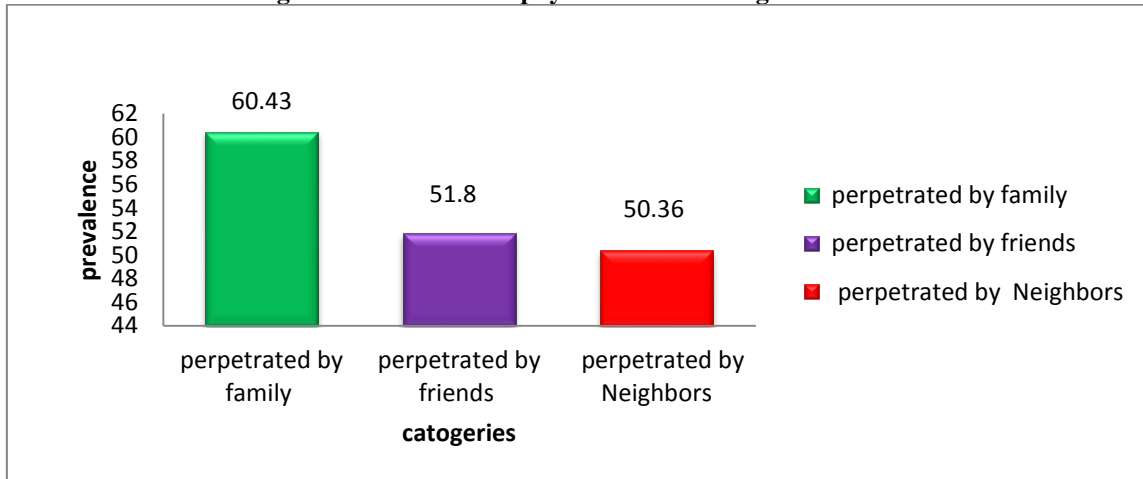
Characteristics	Categories	N	Abuse by Guardian/family			Abuse by friends			Abuse by neighbors		
			No	%	P-value	No	%	P-value	No	%	P-value
Age groups	11-12yrs	28	21	75.00	0.1560	12	42.86	0.5700	15	53.57	0.5160
	13-14yrs	76	45	59.21		41	53.95		35	46.05	
	15-16yrs	35	18	51.43		19	54.29		20	57.14	
Gender	Male	98	57	58.16	0.3980	53	54.08	0.4050	49	50.00	0.8960
	Female	41	27	65.85		19	46.34		22	51.22	
Types of family	Nuclear	91	50	54.95	0.0690	40	43.96	0.011*	35	38.46	0.001*
	Joint	48	34	70.83		32	66.67		33	72.92	

							67		5	2	
Religions	Hindu	107	68	63.55	0.2980	58	54.21	0.4800	55	51.40	0.2000
	Muslims	18	8	44.44		7	38.89		6	33.33	
	Others	14	8	57.14		7	50.00		9	64.29	
Fathers education	Illiterates	4	4	100.00	0.2050	3	75.00	0.1570	4	100.00	0.0700
	Primary	11	6	54.55		4	36.36		3	27.27	
	Secondary	61	39	63.93		26	42.62		32	52.46	
	Higher secondary	46	23	50.00		29	63.04		20	43.48	
	Degree	17	12	70.59		10	58.82		11	64.71	
Mothers education	Illiterates	6	5	83.33	0.0350*	6	100.00	0.025*	5	83.33	0.038*
	Primary	24	20	83.33		16	66.67		17	70.83	
	Secondary	65	34	52.31		29	44.62		28	43.08	
	Higher secondary	44	25	56.82		21	47.73		20	45.45	
Fathers occupation	Farmer	12	7	58.33	0.5760	7	58.33	0.6200	6	50.00	0.6800
	Government employee	7	6	85.71		5	71.43		5	71.43	
	Self employed	79	47	59.49		41	51.90		40	50.63	
	Private employed	41	24	58.54		19	46.34		19	46.34	
Mothers occupation	Farmer	4	2	50.00	0.0590	4	100.00	0.1000	2	50.00	0.9740
	Government employee	5	0	0.00		1	20.00		2	40.00	
	Self employed	72	48	66.67		41	56.94		38	52.78	
	Private employed	48	28	58.33		21	43.75		23	47.92	
	House wife	10	6	60.00		5	50.00		5	50.00	
Socio Economic status	Upper class	2	0	0.00	0.0500*	0	0.00	0.2500	2	100.00	0.0620
	Upper middle class	31	24	77.42		19	61.29		21	67.74	
	Middle class	100	57	57.00		49	49.00		44	44.00	
	Lower middle class	6	3	50.00		4	66.67		3	50.00	
No of siblings	One	9	5	55.56	0.7440	7	77.78	0.041*	4	44.44	0.8000
	Two	103	61	59.22		56	54.37		51	49.51	

Three and plus	27	18	66.67		9	33.33		15	55.56
Total	139	84	60.43		72	51.80		70	50.36

*p<0.05

Fig no 1: Prevalence of physical abuse among adolescents



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