

The Impact of Parental, Physical and Verbal Aggression on Child Wellbeing: A Co-Relational Study

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Abstract

Parenting is one of the preeminent aspects of home environment that affects a child development in important ways. The current study examined the impacts of parents' physical and verbal aggression on the physical, mental and educational development of children. The study is based on a triangulated approach whereby multiple methods of sampling, data collection and data analysis have been utilized. A total of 163 vulnerable children in the stated capacity, were identified through snowball sampling technique and subsequently interviewed purposively through structured interview schedule in the presence of a child psychiatrist. Moreover, relevant literature was reviewed for bringing further insights and consistencies to the study's findings. Field Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively; cross-tabulation, application of correlation test and discussion of the tables in light of literary information, respectively. Results of the study show that parental physical and verbal aggression leads to physical, mental and educational problems such as poor

cognitive competency, inclination towards suicide, low self-esteem, social estrangement, palpitation, bed-wetting, poor academic performance and a lack of self-confidence.

Key words: Impact, Child, Parents, Physical, Verbal, Aggression

1.1. Background of the Study

Parental aggression is one of the larger aspects of domestic violence related to home environment. It includes both physical maltreatment such as beating and mental harassment such as cursing, yelling, and belittling the children. Statistics indicate that 10 to 20 percent of adolescents face extreme level of psychological and physical aggression from their parents (Straus and Field, 2000; Ney *et al.*, 1994). Studies show that physical and verbal aggression creates more intense problems for children in comparison to emotional and sexual abuse (Hussey, Chang, and Kotch, 2006).

Parental aggression paves way for many problems among children. Among such problems, the development of psychological problems is commonly observed among children facing parental physical and verbal aggression. Research indicates that children exposed to verbal and physical aggression in home environment are more likely at risk of developing psychological problems (Cummings and Davies, 2010; Sturge-Apple, Skibo and Davies, 2012). These problems arise in shape of mental illnesses as well as other emotional and behavioral problems, which hinders the mental development of children (Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999; Hutchinson and Mueller, 2008; Heck and Walsh, 2000). Similarly, children facing physical and verbal aggression from parents are more prone to develop depression and other psychosocial problems. Depression raises the risk of suicidal attempts, fear of being alone, poor self-concept, distrusting other, establishment of pre-mature sexual relations as well as drug use and abuse (Felittiet *al.*, 1998; Dubeet *al.*, 2003; Kaufman and Cicchetti, 1989). These mental problems often follow the development of various physical symptoms among children such as poor physical health, bed-wetting, stomachaches, sleep problems, headaches, symptoms of anxiety such as palpitations, lack of appetite and unusual

sweating(Burgess, Hartman and McCormack, 1987; Kaufman and Cicchetti, 1989; Hart *et al.*, 1998).

Studies reveal that children exposed to physical and verbal aggression from parents show a higher level of aggression towards other individuals and property (Trickett and Kuczynski, 1986; Paperny and Deisher, 1983). Consequently, such aggression leads to loneliness (Loos and Alexander, 1997),social estrangement, lack of attention as well as ostracism (Moore and Pepler, 2006).Children are at the apex of their learning during schooling years. It is therefore important to analyze factors that may derail children’s capabilities of learning. Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear that physical and verbal aggression from parents is one of the reasons lying behind educational and academic failures among many children (Hart *et al.*, 1998; Kinard, 2001; Wodarskiet *al.*, 1990; Hart *et al.*, 1998; Kinard, 2001; Wodarskiet *al.*, 1990). Children exposed to parental physical and verbal aggression tend to have a lower level of concentration, low self-confidence and self-presentation as well as a higher level of anxiety during schooling hours. These impacts are particularly noted for children aging between 10 to 12 years (Solomon and Serres, 1999).

1.2. Study Argument

Home environment is key factor in shaping human life. Specifically, children are affected more by home environment. Home environment plays a vital role in socializing the children, hence; developing the personality of children.

Status of parents and their role is a key component in home environment. In this connection, acts, attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of parents’ has significant impact on children physical and mental development. In a similar context, the current study aims to explore an important aspect of home environment related to parents i.e. the environment created in home due to parental physical and verbal aggression. Parental physical and verbal aggression is associated with many physical and mental problems among school children (see for example. Cummings and Davies, 2010; Sturge-Apple, Skibo and Davies, 2012). The current study is an effort to identify

components, explore physical, mental and educational impacts of parental physical and verbal aggression on children.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the impacts of parents' aggressive behavior on the mental development of children
- To explore the physical impacts of parental aggression upon children
- To identify educational problems of children created by parental physical and verbal aggression

1.4. Hypotheses

- Parental physical and verbal aggression is responsible for poor mental development among children
- Parental physical and verbal aggression leads to physical problems among children
- Parental physical and verbal aggression is strongly associated with poor educational performance among children

1.5. Methodology

In line with the study's nature, a triangulated research approach - whereby multiple research methods are brought to work- has been utilized in an attempt to come up with most possible precise results. Consequently, a variety of both quantitative and qualitative research procedures has been implied wherever needed and applicable. The study was conducted in Chakdara, KPK, Pakistan. Snowball method of sampling was used to spotlight families, having the problem under focus, identifying thereby a total of 188 families in a time span of 23 days in which a comparatively major portion i.e. 163 units consented to participate in the research activity. Children from each family were subsequently interviewed through a structured interview schedule in the presence of child psychiatrist. The data has been analyzed as per the method stated above i.e. cross- tabulation, percentages and statistical test as well as textual explanation, linkage and analysis aligned with literary information.

1.6. Results and Discussions

Type of Parental Aggression Faced by Children from Parents

Parental aggression takes many forms. To name but a few, Physical and verbal aggression are the ones most faced by children of current time. The former refers to any act of harassment or torture that inflict a physical damage to a child well-being, while the later refers to cursing, taunting, yelling, belittling and threatening, which is tested to have even worst implications on a child personality than physical aggression (Straus and Field, 2000; Hutchinson and Mueller, 2008). In this connection, considering components of parental physical and verbal aggression, field data has been collected in resemblance to the mentioned literature. The table below includes a typology of parental aggression for an increased understanding of children miseries inflicted advertently or inadvertently by their parents.

Table No. 01: Type of Parental Aggression

Type of aggression	Frequency	Percentage
Cursing	82	50.30
Taunting and yelling	23	14.11
Belittling	07	4.29
Psychological agony	21	12.88
Physical threatening i.e. beating and slapping	30	18.40
Total	163	100

Field information given in the table shows that children are exposed to a variety of aggression from their parents. In this regard, majority i.e. 82 (50.30 %) children reported that they were cursed continuously by their parents. 23 (14.11 %) children reported to have received severe taunting and yelling while 07 (4.29%) children faced a constant

belittling by their parents. Further, 21 (12.88 %) revealed that they were faced with psychological agony. Finally, a significant number of children i.e. 30 (18.40 %) stated that they were exposed to physical harassment in terms of beating and slapping from their parents. The above data, in line with the existing literature, thus re-affirms the fact that children are still exposed to a variety of aggression mainly from parents indoors.

Parental Aggression and Child Mental Development

Parental aggression has multidimensional impacts and grave consequences for a child's mental development as revealed by a vast body of other research studies such as Solomon and Serres (1999) and Trickett and Kuczynski (1986) who found that children facing physical and verbal aggression from parents have a relatively lower level of concentration, intense anxiety and belligerence as compared to children from control families. Further, physical and verbal aggression between parents has also been observed to be one of the leading causes of mental illnesses mainly in terms of severe emotional and behavioral problems among children. (Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999; Hutchinson and Mueller, 2008; Heck and Walsh, 2000). Research also indicate that children facing physical and verbal aggression from parents are vulnerable to social estrangement, anxiety, developing suicidal ideation as well as lower self-esteem (Dubeet *al.*, 2003; Moore and Pepler, 2006). Within this perspective, the following table no. 02 enumerates the impacts of physical and verbal aggression on child's mental development.

Table No. 02: Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression on Children Mentality

Statements	Never	Sometimes	Almost always	Total
Belligerence and Low self esteem	00	15 (9.80%)	65 (39.87%)	80 (49.07%)
Social Estrangement	00	11 (6.74%)	09 (5.52%)	20 (12.26%)

and fear of being alone				
Development of Suicidal ideation	01 (0.61%)	06 (3.68%)	15 (9.80%)	22 (13.49%)
Poor cognitive development	02 (1.22%)	13 (7.97%)	26 (15.95%)	41 (25.15%)
Total	03 (1.84%)	45 (27.60%)	115 (70.55%)	163 (100%)

Field information elaborates multiple impacts of parental physical and verbal aggression upon children. A considerably large pool of respondents i.e. 80 (49.07 %) affirmed the inverse proportionality between parental aggression and belligerence / Low self-esteem among children. Out of 80 (49.07 %), however, 65 (39.87%) respondents reported that belligerence and low self-esteem were almost always the most recurring outcomes of parental physical and verbal aggression. A relatively small yet significant proportion of the respondents i.e. 15 (9.80%).however; refer to the inverse correlation between the two as sometimes or not always.

Another important ramification of parental aggression on children was supposed to be social estrangement. As the table show, majority of respondents i.e. 20(12.26 %) as a whole regarded this perilous condition as an outcome of parental aggression. The stated number of respondents split, however in their assessment of it being the case through times. For instance, Respondents who see it to be the cases almost always are 11 (6.74 %) while those who view it as a conditional correlation orsometimesmakes 09 (5.52 %).

Another proposed impact of parental aggression was suicidal ideation being affirmed by a significant number of respondents i.e. 22 (13.49 %) within which 06 (3.68%) pointed it to be the case sometimes and

15 (9.80 %)almost always. Lastly, 41(25.15 %) childrenreported that parental physical and verbal aggression leads to poor cognitive development among them.

Correlation between Parental Physical and Verbal aggression and Child Mentality

Parental physical and verbal aggression and Child mental development		Parental physical and verbal aggression	Child mental development
Parental physical and verbal aggression	Pearson Correlation	1	0.815**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.29
	N	163	163
Poor mental development among children	Pearson Correlation	.815**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.29	
	N	163	163

(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.815^{**}$; $p<.01$. $r^2=0.86$)

(Since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The correlation as shown in the table above elucidates that parental physical and verbal aggression does have a strong correlation with poor mental development among children. The correlation is highly significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.815^{**}$; $p<.01$. $r^2=0.86$); since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one.

Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression and Physical Problems among Children

Research shows that mental problems and the apprehension of parental physical and verbal aggression is mostly followed by certain

physiological symptoms among children. Main of them include poor physical health, bed-wetting, and stomachaches, sleep problems, headaches, and symptoms of anxiety such as palpitations, lack of appetite as well as unusual sweating (Burgess, Hartman and McCormack, 1987; Kaufman and Cicchetti, 1989; Hart *et al.*, 1998). In this regard, table no 03 contain certain proposed indicators that were re-examined in their relationship with parental physical and verbal aggression among children.

Table No 03: Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression and Physical Problems among Children

Statements	Never	Sometimes	Almost always	Total
Palpitations	00	16 (9.81 %)	70 (42.94%)	86 (52.76 %)
Bed wetting	00	14(12.26%)	00	14 (8.58 %)
Stomachaches and headaches	00	05 (3.06 %)	05 (3.06 %)	10 (6.13 %)
Lack of appetite and poor physical health	00	13 (7.97%)	40 (24.53%)	53 (32.51 %)
Total	00	48 (29.44%)	115 (70.55%)	163 (100%)

Field information and statistical analysis of certain proposed indicators show a stark resemblance with the facts already existent in secondary research archives. For example, majority i.e. 86 (52.76 %) respondents reported that their heart beat fast (palpitations) while they anticipated any physical and verbal aggression from parents. Furthermore, 70 (42.94%) respondents said that it was almost always the case while 16 (9.81 %) respondents regarded it to be the case sometimes. Another important dimension or impact of parental aggression was supposed to be bedwetting. A significant portion of the sample i.e. 14 (8.58 %) respondents reported that they encountered the

problem of bedwetting due to the actual or implied fear of parental physical and verbal aggression. This case was however, regarded as sometimes by almost all the respondents i.e. 12 (8.58%). Another interesting revelation made by respondents was Stomach and headaches, reported by 10 (6.13 %) as one of the aftermaths of parental physical and verbal aggression. The given number of respondents split, however, into equal halves in their opinion of it being the case i.e. 05 (3.06 %) conditionally (Sometimes) and 05 (3.06 %) unconditionally (Almost Always). Finally, majority of the respondents' i.e. 53 (32.51 %) respondents reported the lack of appetite and poor physical health as one of the impacts of parental physical and verbal aggression. The given number of respondents differed however in their assessment of it to be situation overtime. 13 (7.97%) respondents for example regarded this impact to prevail sometimes while 40 (24.53%) respondents pointed it to be almost always.

Correlation between Parental Physical and Verbal aggression and Development of Physical Problems among Children

Parental physical and verbal aggression and development of physical problems among children	Parental physical and verbal aggression	physical problems among children	
physical problems among children	Pearson Correlation	1	0.921**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	163	163
Parental physical and verbal aggression	Pearson Correlation	.921**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	163	163

(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.921^{**}$; $p<.01$. $r^2=0.91$)

(Since 91% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The above measure shows that parental physical and verbal aggression is strongly correlated with the development of physical problems among children. The correlation is highly significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.921^{**}$; $p<.05$. $r^2=0.91$); since 91% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one.

Impacts of Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression on Children Education

Physical and verbal aggression from parents is one of the reasons lying behind educational and academic failures among many children (Hart et al., 1998; Kinard, 2001; Wodarskiet al., 1990; Hart et al., 1998; Kinard, 2001; Wodarskiet al., 1990). Studies further reveal that children exposed to physical and verbal aggression from parents predispose lower levels of concentration, confidence and self-presentation as well as a higher level of anxiety in the classroom. These impacts are particularly noted for children aging between 10 to 12 years (Solomon and Serres, 1999). In this connection, the table given below contains field information in accordance to the discussed literature:

Table 04: Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression on Child Education

Statements	Never	Sometimes	Almost Always	Total
Lack of concentration in class	02 (1.22%)	23 (14.11%)	24 (14.72%)	47 (28.83%)
Poor self-presentation in class	04 (2.44%)	02 (1.22%)	05 (3.06%)	11 (6.74%)
Lack of confidence in class	02 (1.22%)	06 (3.68%)	10 (6.13%)	18 (11.04%)

School irregularities	00	07 (4.29%)	23 (14.11%)	30 (18.40%)
Poor academic performance	00	15 (9.20%)	42 (25.76%)	57 (34.96%)
Total	08 (4.90%)	51 (31.28%)	104 (63.80%)	163 (100%)

In conjunction with the literature, particularly cited above, majority of the data from the field i.e. (95.09 %) re-affirmed the fact that parental physical and verbal aggression did have certain negative impacts on children education. In its further analysis, lack of concentration in the classroom was pointed by 47 (28.83 %) respondents within which 24 (14.72 %) regarded it a conditional (Sometimes) case while 23 (14.11 %) were of the view that it was the case almost always. Another impact of parental aggression on children education was assumed to be poor self-presentation of children in the classroom. A relatively significant number of respondents’ i.e.11 (6.74 %) reported that parental aggression adversely affects self-presentation of children in the classroom. The stated number of respondents differed however, in their view of its consistency overtime. 02 (1.22) respondents, for example, viewed it to be the outcome sometimes while 05 (3.06) respondents figured it out to be almost always. Another statistically significant figure i.e. 18 (11.04) respondents argued that parental physical and verbal aggression led to the lack of confidence in the classroom among children, further analysis of which led 06 (3.68) respondents to view it as sometimes and 10 (6.13) as almost always type of scenario. Moreover, impact of parental aggression on school irregularities of children was reported by 30 (18.40) respondents. Finally, a relatively broad spectrum of educational activities i.e. poor academic performance among children was reported as one of the consequences of parental physical and verbal aggression by 57 (34.96) respondents. Within the given statistic, 15 (9.20) figured it out as sometimes case while a significant i.e. 42 (25.76) respondents viewed it the case to be almost always.

Correlation between Parental Physical and Verbal Aggression and Child Education

Parental physical and verbal aggression and child education		Parental physical and verbal aggression	Educational problems among children
Child education	Pearson Correlation	1	0.822**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	163	163
Parental physical and verbal aggression	Pearson Correlation	.822**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	163	163

(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.822^{**}$; $p<.01$. $r^2=0.88$)

(Since 88% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The correlation authenticates that parental physical and verbal aggression is strongly correlated with poor educational performance among children. The correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r=0.822^{**}$; $p<.005$. $r^2=0.88$); since 88% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one.

1.7. Conclusion

Analysis of the field data of this study suggests that parental physical and verbal aggression is one of the major causes of complex and multi-dimensional problems among children. Field information in conjunction with other studies indicates that children exposed to parental physical and verbal aggression have poor mental and cognitive development. Children under such an abuse show belligerence, low self-esteem, social estrangement, anxiety, aggression

as well as poor problem solving skills. It becomes further evident that the actual or assumed apprehension of parental physical and verbal aggression is an important determinant of many physical problems among children. Notable among such problems include palpitations, bed wetting, headaches and lack of appetite. In its final analysis, the study concludes that parental physical and verbal aggression results in poor academic performance among children mainly in terms of lack of concentration in the classroom, poor self-presentation, lack of confidence and school irregularities.

1.8. Policy Recommendations

Know the indicators and Symptoms

It is must for any family to have awareness regarding the indicators, symptoms and components of physical aggression as well as its consequences. The awareness should be regarding observable as well as non-observable symptoms. In addition, the indicators and symptoms include aggressive statements, cursing the children, beating the children etc.

Educating the Community

Educating the families about parental physical and verbal aggression can be an important effort to reduce the problem. Educating the families can be done through various means including media intervention, welfare organization and police etc.

Providing Relief

Community and welfare organizations response to provide relief to the affected children is necessary. As it is evident from the findings of the study that parental physical and verbal aggression have many adverse impacts among children; it will be better by providing relief to exposed children which will minimize the intensity of impacts.

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