

# Prevalence of Child Physical Abuse among School Children in Mosul City\North of Iraq

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## Abstract

**Background and Aims:** Physical abuse is the most critical problem in Mosul city children and the extent of physical abuse is currently unknown. Aim of this study to determine the prevalence of physical abuse among sample of Mosul schoolchildren, aged 12–18 years.

**Material and Method:** A cross-sectional study was carried out from 1<sup>st</sup>, December 2018 to 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The settings chosen by multicultural sampling with a systematic sampling technique of 800 child (396 male and 404 female) using a self-reported questionnaire.

**Result:** A total of 800 intermediate school children, age group 14-15 years represent 43.6%, male to female ratio 1:1, 36.1% of these had experienced physical abuse and 32.6% abused by mothers. The relationship between the parent educations and father's job shows high significant rate 0.000, 0.004.

**Conclusion:** physical abuse Mosul city had high prevalent in comparison with others. Psychological and physical problems of children were the main predictors.

**Keywords:** *Physical abuse of children, violence against children, Mosul City.*

## Introduction

Our children are often faced with choices that affect their development and safety. One way we do this is to talk with our children<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Child abuse defined as physical injury, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or non-accidental injuries or trauma inflicted on a child by another person were an active act of maltreatment of children, which can take place in several settings: at home, at school, in the streets, in the workplace<sup>[1]</sup>. A safe environment that supports and promotes children, dignity and development. More than 3 million reports of child abuse are received each year, including half a million reports of child sexual abuse. As a major youth-serving organization<sup>[1]</sup>. Parental intimate and partner violence is strong evidence for an overlap between child physical abuse and intimate partner. Child physical abuse (CPA) injuries can include bruises, broken bones, burns, and abrasions. CPA happens in all age groups; however, youth ages 12 to 17 have the highest rate of injury from physical abuse<sup>[3,4,5,6]</sup>. The youngest children are

the most sensitive to violence and injuries can become severe and cause lifelong consequences or even be life threatening. Shaken baby syndrome and Munchausen by proxy are examples of such severe types of CPA against small children<sup>[1,3,7,8]</sup>. Factors associated with the CPA are: The proportions of male/female perpetrators are often equal in survey studies<sup>[5,9,10,11,12]</sup>. Addiction and mental disorders/mental functional disorders could lead to poor impulse control. Parent's own history of abuse as a child now seems to be partly broken in Sweden<sup>[13]</sup>. Parental support for corporal punishment has a powerful predictor of violence against children<sup>[3,4,5,6]</sup>. Financial difficulties, parental educational level, unemployment, low socioeconomic status, traumatic experiences of war, medical health problems and single-parent households are all well-known conditions that have been reported as risk factor<sup>[4,5,6,7,8]</sup>. Younger children are more often subjected to abuse than older children are: Disability/chronic disease, behavioral problems are aggressive outbursts, disobedience, attention deficits and other externalizing problems, poor

health status, poor mental and/or physical health in adulthood<sup>[8,9,10,11,12,13,14]</sup>.

The objectives of this survey was to measure and describe the CPA aged 12–18 years old, assess differences in the abused children by gender, age, socioeconomic status, parental education, to distinguish the type of response of the child to the insult.

### Methodology

Prior to the actual collection date, a formal administrative approval was obtained. A descriptive cross sectional design was carried out from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018 to 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The data was collected from intermediate school (boys and girls). The setting chosen by multicultural sampling taking the most crowded schools in public low and high socioeconomic discrete overall of the left and right sides of Nineveh province. A systematics amp ling technique (every three child)

were chosen from the school setting's consisted of(800) child. This divided into(396) male and (404) female through interviewing with children. Data collection form is constructed after reviewing many articles written on this topic. To ensure the validity of the study questionnaire,method and procedures proposed to carried out before the beginning of collection of sample so 6 experts in different specialists related to the field of the present study were chosen. They were asked to review the questionnaire for clarity and adequacy in order to achieve the present study objective. Most of them had agreed that the questionnaire were clear, relevant and adequacy, certain modification were employed based on the experts recommendations and suggestions. Collection and data analysis is done by the researcher manually. Tabulated and presented in a descriptive form. Percentage and chi square are used in calculation and description of the results by SPSS Program version 25.

### Results

**Table 1: Social and demographic characteristics of study sample**

Demographic Characteristics	Estimate	Freq.	%
Age	12-13 years	220	27.5
	14-15 years	349	43.6
	15 years and above	231	28.9
Gender	Male	396	49.5
	Female	404	50.5
Type of Family	Single Family	505	63.1
	Multiple Family	295	36.9
Number of the children in the Family	2-3	106	13.3
	4-5	254	31.8
	5 or more	440	55.0
Type of Housing	Possess	525	65.6
	Rent	275	34.4
House Rooms	1-2	169	21.1
	3-4	491	61.4
	5 or more	140	17.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>800</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1:shows that age group 14-15 year represent 43.6%. male to female ratio approximately 1:1.

**Table 2: Abuse characteristic of the study samples**

<b>The Abuse Children</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
Child Abuse	Not Abused	511	63.9
	Abused	289	36.1
Who Hits the Child	Father	230	28.8
	Mother	261	32.6
	Brothers	188	23.5
	Sisters	42	5.3
	Friends	55	6.9
	In School	24	3.0
Age of the child when started he\ she hits	1-2	150	18.8
	3-5	101	12.6
	6-8	147	18.4
	9-12	198	24.8
	13-15	139	17.4
	16 or more	65	8.1
Why the child hits	Study	332	41.5
	Bad manners	167	20.9
	Others	301	37.6
The child trust	Parents	496	62.0
	Friends	123	15.4
	None	181	22.6
Total		800	100.0

Table 2:36.1% is the prevalence of abuse in family sample and 32.6% of children abused by their mothers.

**Table 3: Psychological and medical problem of the study sample**

<b>The Problems</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
The child have psychological problem	Yes	215	26.9
	No	585	73.1
Psychological problem	Non	585	73.1
	Speech difficulty	21	2.6
	Aggressive	17	2.1
	Depression	17	2.1
	Escape from school	116	14.5
	Others	44	5.5
The child have medical problem	Yes	213	26.6
	No	587	73.4
Medical problem	Non	587	73.4
	Difficulty concentrating	120	15.0
	Disability	5	.6
	Epileptic fit	5	.6
	Hereditary	43	5.4
	Thalassemia	36	4.5
	Incontinence	4	.5

Table 3 shows that children not have psychological and medical problem in 73.1% and 73.4 respectively.

**Table 4: The child response after hits of the study samples**

Type of Child Response	Freq.	%
Social withdrawal	223	27.9
Refuse eating	203	25.4
Hostility Towards His Family	67	8.4
Hurt himself	29	3.6
Escape from school	69	8.6
Indifference	146	18.3
Other	63	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 shows the child response after hits the children for family in the study is social withdrawal in 27.9%.

**Table 5: The relationship between the parent educations, Jobs with child Abuse**

Parent Educations	Items	Not Abused		Abused		Chi-seq.	P.value
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Father Education	Illiterate Stage	49	9.5	26	9	34.95	0.000
	Read and write Stage	109	21.3	74	25.6		
	Elementary Stage	32	6.2	37	13		
	Intermediate Stage	118	23	25	8.6		
	Junior high Stage	79	15.5	40	13.8		
	Graduate Stage	124	24.5	87	30		
Mother Education	Illiterate Stage	18	3.5	30	10.3	62.27	0.000
	Read and write Stage	107	21	83	28.7		
	Elementary Stage	117	23	47	16.3		
	Intermediate Stage	75	14.6	42	14.5		
	Junior high Stage	76	14.8	69	24		
	Graduate Stage	118	23	18	6.2		
Father Job	Employee	167	32.6	131	45.5	13.45	0.004
	worker with skills	240	47	105	36.2		
	worker without skills	88	17.2	43	14.8		
	Unemployed	16	3.2	10	3.5		
Mother Job	Housewife	354	69.2	192	66.5	0.68	0.407
	Employee	157	30.8	97	33.5		
Total		511	100.0	289	100.0		

Table 5 shows the relationship between the parent educations, job and child abuse shows high significant rate 0.000.

**Table 6: The relationship between the social factors with child abuse**

Social Factors	Items	Not Abused		Abused		Chi-seq.	P.value
		Freq	%	Freq	%		
Family Income	Less than 300 thousand dinars	108	21.1	90	31.1	13.1	0.004
	400-800 thousand dinars	238	46.5	108	37.3		
	One Million	114	22.4	55	19		
	More than one million	51	10	36	24.6		
The father suffers from financial loss	Yes	161	31.5	87	30.1	0.170	0.680
	No	350	68.5	202	69.9		
Presence of stress at work	Always	25	5	65	24.5	72.84	0.00
	Sometime	147	28.8	103	20		
	Never	339	66.2	121	23.5		
Absence of Father	Yes	229	44.8	86	29.7	17.53	0.000
	No	282	55.2	203	70.3		
Marital Problem	Yes	141	57.5	64	22.2	2.87	0.090
	No	370	72.5	225	77.8		
Alcoholic Father	Yes	18	3.5	21	7.2	5.58	0.018
	No	493	96.5	268	92.8		
<b>Total</b>		<b>511</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Table 6 shows that highly significant with family income, presence of stress at work, absence of father, and alcoholic father.

## Discussion

The home is supposed to provide support and safety for children but can also be the place where children suffer abuse and other adverse treatment by their parents. To the best of our knowledge, this article is the first published the extent of CPA in Mosul city. In such circumstances primary and intermediate schools provide a best numerical indicator. What is taken for granted in Iraq could not be assumed neither in western countries, higher income countries and more developed countries nor in other developing countries, because of impact of wars, embargo and disasters. Thus, the findings of the present study may differ if it is compared with other findings taken in another period of time or another place. Therefore, the figure of prevalence of CPA in student 36.1%. This study which could be quite helpful indicator of the problem of CPA in student in Mosul City. Review of the literature revealed a wide range of reports regarding the prevalence of CPA in children. Globally, prevalence of reported CPA varies from 2% to 62%<sup>[14,15]</sup>. In US In 2006, 16%. In 2008 It's very likely that many more children are physically abused than the

number that are reported<sup>[12,16,17]</sup>. In 2015, 63.4% were alleging child abuse and neglect<sup>[11]</sup>. This is correlated with the present study.

Our study shows 1:1 ratio similar gender distribution of CPA. In Sweden was stated that 50% of the girls and 28% of the boys had been exposed to CPA<sup>[13]</sup>. In US study more than one-half 54.1% of victims were female, 45.0% were men, and 0.9 percent were of unknown sex<sup>[14]</sup>. These results not correlated with the present study because of our culture that we are anxious more about female. Epidemiological studies suggest that CPA are more prevalent among children from low socioeconomic environments. 80% of this maltreatment is perpetrated by parents with poverty, in our study the association was significant in low to middle income families. Furthermore, mental health problems, low educational achievement, alcohol and drug misuse, having been maltreated oneself as a child, and family breakdown or violence between other family members are all important risk factors for parents abusing their children. These official cases are also generally skewed towards the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum<sup>[2,3,5,6]</sup>,

this is correlated with the current study according to the presence of stress at work, mother and father education and father job. Moreover, Researches have shown that abuse may impair the healthy development of the brain. Chronic abuse can have significant and broad consequences. Physical, mental, and emotional development may all suffer<sup>[12]</sup>. Sweden study showed that 70% of the children who reported self-injurious behaviors also reported history of some type of abuse<sup>[13]</sup> Physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect were also associated with an almost 3-fold increased risk of developing eating disorders and others was associated with a 5-fold increased risk of developing bulimia Nervosa. Physical abuse was associated with a doubling of the odds of childhood behavioral and conduct disorder with a significantly increased risk of suicidal behavior compared with non-abused individuals<sup>[14]</sup>. Other study indicated that abuse in childhood increased the likelihood of adult criminal behavior by 28% and violent crime by 30%<sup>[12,14]</sup>.

The investigator recommend that traumatic event often trigger the development of CPA and its sequel may be eased by mediation of many factors such as: improve socioeconomic status of families to reduce stress.

### Conclusion

This cross-sectional study aimed to determine the prevalence of CPA among sample of Mosul schoolchildren, using a self-reported questionnaire. A total of 800 intermediate school children, age group 14-15 years represent more than one third, similar male to female ratio, more than one third of these had CPA and abused by mothers. Quarter of them had psychological problem. The relationship between the parent educations and father's job shows high significant rate.

**Recommendation:** The prevalence of physical in Mosul city is high and solutions should be sought to correct the problem engaging political and social leaders, the mass media, law enforcement agencies, parents and educators through research studies done to establish what works in this field.

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**Ethical Considerations:** The ethical letter was written in Arabic language as it is an official language for writing letters in the college of nursing Mosul-Iraq.

**Conflict Interest:** Nil

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