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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE AMONG CHILDREN.

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Abstract

Child abuse is a term used for maltreatment and neglect of children. Child Abuse may be formally described 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 (Krug, et.al, 2002) The present study aims at assessing the impact of socioeconomic status and gender on physical and emotional abuse among children of Allahabad city. A total sample of 300 children comprising of 100 children each (50 boys and 50 girls) from lower, middle and upper socio economic groups were selected using stratified random sampling technique for the study. Socio Economic Status scale by Kuppaswamy (1962) revised by Kumar and Tiwari (2014) was used to ascertain the socio economic status of the selected respondents. To assess the physical and emotional abuse a self made questionnaire was administered on the selected children in the age group of 7-12 years. The study revealed a highly significant gender variation in emotional abuse among respondents belonging to lower, middle as well as upper socio economic groups, wherein girls were subjected to higher level of emotional abuse in case of all the three socio economic groups. In case of physical abuse a non-significant difference among boys and girls belonging to lower as well as middle socio economic group was found which determined that physical abuse was not influenced by the gender of the child both in lower as well as middle socio economic groups but the mean values indicate that girls experienced slightly more physical abuse in comparison to their male counterparts.

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Introduction:-

One of the biggest social stigmas attached to a society is that of child abuse. A child can be abused sexually, emotionally, physically as well as subjected to neglect. The growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes

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brought about by socio-economic transitions in India have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to various and newer forms of abuse.

An increasing number of child abuse cases are being reported in India. Accordingly, social concern regarding child abuse has also grown over the last several years. Most researches on child abuse are based on the data obtained from medical and judicial agencies. Epidemiological survey of the general population of children is required to ascertain the presence and extent of maltreatment and of abuse among children. Child abuse has devastating consequences for victims. The long term consequences of child maltreatment appear to be more damaging to victims and their families, and more costly for society, than the immediate or acute injuries themselves. Yet little is invested in understanding the factors that predispose, mitigate, or prevent the behavioral and social consequences of child abuse.

Many forms of child abuse and neglect are treatable and avoidable, and many severe consequences of child maltreatment can be diminished with proper attention and assistance. Researches on child abuse can provide insights and knowledge that can directly benefit victims of child abuse and their families as well as it can reduce long-term economic costs associated with treating the consequences of child maltreatment. The present study also aimed to provide empirical evidence to recognize the need for having strong legislation for combating physical and emotional abuse and will play a key role in informing social policy decisions concerning the services that should be made available to children and their families to reduce the stress caused by the incidence of abuse.

Methodology:-

Exploratory research design was adopted for the present study and cross sectional survey method was used for collecting the data. A total of 300 children in the age group of 7-12 years, comprising of 100 children each (50 boys and 50 girls) from lower, middle and upper socio economic groups respectively were selected using stratified random sampling technique from different schools of Allahabad city. **Kuppuswamy (1962)** Socio Economic Status Scale revised by **Kumar and Tiwari (2014)** was used to ascertain the socioeconomic status of the sample and a Self made questionnaire on child abuse was used to assess the physical and emotional abuse among children.

Results and Discussion:-

Table 1:- Comparative analysis of physical abuse among boys and girls belonging to different socio economic groups.

Socio economic status	Boys n= 150		Girls n= 150		t, Calculated	P, Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Lower SES	35.1	3.23	35.26	3.22	0.248	0.8046
Middle SES	30.72	3.38	30.98	3.43	0.381	0.7040
Upper SES	27.26	3.51	29.08	3.48	2.60*	0.010

*= Significant

Table 1 indicates the difference in physical abuse experienced by boys and girls across three different socio economic groups. The table clearly shows a non-significant difference among boys and girls belonging to lower as well as middle socio economic groups with regard to physical abuse as the calculated value of t is found to be 0.248 and 0.381 respectively and their corresponding p value was found to be 0.80 and 0.70 respectively which indicates that physical abuse is not influenced by the gender of the child both in lower as well as middle socio economic groups. Although the mean values suggest that girls experience a slightly higher level of physical abuse in comparison to their male counterparts.

The table also reveals a significant gender variance in the physical abuse experienced by children belonging to the upper socio economic strata as the t value is found to be 2.60 which is significant at 1 per cent probability level. The table further clarifies that girls are subjected to more physical abuse as compared to boys as the mean value for physical abuse experienced by girls was 29.08 and that of boys was 27.26. Due to the Unrealistic expectations of parenthood, differences between what parents want and what they actually have, a strained relationship with marriage partner, financial problems, lack of knowledge, drug abuse, alcoholism, and a history of being abused as a child are examples of problems that can cause parents to take out their anger and frustration on their children. Even very loving parents can lose control to the point of child abuse. The results are in accordance with the study carried out by **Finlinson et al. (2003)** who examined gender and development stage differences in physical and sexual abuse

among Puerto Rican drug users. Females were significantly more likely than males to report physical abuse by a family member in childhood and unwanted sex in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Table 2:- Comparative analysis of emotional abuse experienced by boys and girls across different socio economic groups

Socio economic status	Boys n= 150		Girls n= 150		t, Calculated	P, Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Lower SES	39.36	2.89	42.14	2.57	5.08*	0.00001
Middle SES	33.2	3.33	38.26	2.99	7.99*	0.00001
Upper SES	30.74	3.44	36.02	3.17	7.98*	0.00001

*Significant

Table 2 depicts the comparative analysis of emotional abuse experienced by boys and girls belonging to different socio economic settings. The table highlights a highly significant gender variation in emotional abuse among respondents belonging to lower, middle as well as upper socio economic groups as the calculated value of t is found to be 5.08, 7.99 and 7.78 respectively which is highly significant at 1 percent probability level. The table further clarifies that girls were subjected to higher level of emotional abuse in case of all the three socio economic groups as the mean value for girls belonging to lower, middle and upper socio economic group was found to be 42.14, 38.26 and 36.02 respectively as compared to boys (mean values 39.36, 33.2 and 30.74).

The results may be attributed to the fact that emotional abuse is quite different from other kinds of abuse as emotional abuse takes into account a series of incidents or a pattern of behavior that occurs over and over again which includes behavior that might be intentional or unintentional. Some parents may psychologically as well as emotionally harm their children due to stress, depression, social isolation, inappropriate parental expectations and lack of resources. As girls are more sensitive and emotional in nature they are hurt emotionally more and scars of emotional abuse become difficult to fade in the female child as compared to that of a male child. The results are in accordance with the study **Günnur and Kristin (2013)** who investigated the moderating roles of gender and age on emotional abuse. The study revealed that emotional abuse was more common in younger participants. Younger women experienced higher rates of isolation as a result of emotional abuse than that of men and this isolation increased with age.

Table 3:- ANOVA for Physical Abuse on the basis of gender and socioeconomic status.

Source of variation	df	S.S	Mean S.S	F- Calculated	F (5%)	Result
Due to Gender	1	.833	.833	2.144	$F_{1,2}=18.51$	Non significant
Due to Socio economic status	2	50.05	25.025	64.4*	$F_{2,2}=19.00$	Significant
Due to error	2	0.777	0.3885	-	-	-
Total	5	51.66	-	-	-	-

*Significant

The above table reveals the Analysis of Variance in physical abuse among respondents. On the basis of gender, the table clearly shows a non significant variance between boys and girls with regard to physical abuse as the F calculated value is 2.144 which is less than its tabulated value i.e. 18.51 at 5 percent level of significance. Furthermore on the basis of socioeconomic status the F calculated value is 64.4 which is greater than the F tabulated value ($F_{2,2}$ i.e. 19.00) at 5 percent probability level. Therefore it can be concluded that socioeconomic status has a significant influence on the physical abuse of the respondents. The results of the study are in accordance with the study conducted by **Angus and Pilott (2000)** which highlights the review published by the then Ministry of Social Policy on the physical abuse and neglect of children by family members which noted the role of poverty and the role of individuals and families ability to cope with economic and other stress to be one of the major reasons for inflicting physical abuse and neglect among children.

Table 4:- ANOVA for emotional abuse on the basis of socioeconomic status and gender of respondents.

Source of variation	df	S.S	Mean S.S	F- Calculated	F (5%)	Result
Due to Socio economic status	2	56.685	28.34	29.67*	$F_{2,2}=19.00$	Significant
Due to Gender	1	28.7	28.7	30.05*	$F_{1,2}=18.51$	Significant
Due to error	2	1.91	0.955	-	-	-
Total	5	87.3	-	-	-	-

*Significant

Table 4 depicts the Analysis of Variance in emotional abuse among respondents on the basis of their socioeconomic status and gender. The table clearly shows a significant variance in the emotional abuse of respondents on the basis of their socioeconomic status as the calculated value of F is found to be 29.67 which is greater than the tabulated value of F which is found to be 19.00 at 5 percent probability level which indicates that socio economic status influences the level and intensity of emotional abuse the children are subjected to. In case of gender, it is seen that the F calculated value is 30.05 which is greater than the tabulated value of F i.e. 18.51 which indicates the significance of gender in inflicting emotional abuse among the respondents. Emotional abuse can, and does, happen in all types of families, regardless of their background. All parents want the best for their children. However, some parents may emotionally and psychologically harm their children because of stress, poor parenting skills, social isolation, lack of available resources or inappropriate expectations from their children. They may emotionally abuse their children because the parents or caregivers were emotionally abused themselves as children. The research findings can be supported by a study conducted by **The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) (2007) which** examined the emotional abuse and neglect among girl child. The study examined two forms of emotional abuse: humiliation and comparison. Half the children reported facing emotional abuse with 83 percent of girls reporting that the abuse begins to be inflicted by the parents.

Conclusion:-

It can be concluded from the present study that there is a significant gender difference in the level of physical abuse among children belonging to upper socio economic group and a non significant gender difference exists among those belonging to lower as well as middle socioeconomic groups. The study indicates that girls are subjected to more physical abuse as compared to boys. A significant gender variation occurs with regard to emotional abuse among children belonging to all three socio economic groups wherein girls were subjected to higher level of emotional abuse as compared to boys. The result of the study clearly highlights the gender discrimination prevalent in the Indian society.

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