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## Effect of Physical Abuse, Self-Image, and Emptiness on Academic Performance of Female College Students in Pakistan

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### Abstract

The major objectives of the study were to predict the effect of physical abuse on academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students as well as to correlate the association concerning physical abuse, self-image, feeling of emptiness and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students. It was hypothesized that is physical abuse, a predictor of academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students? and is there any relationship between physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students? The sample of this study was females who were studying at the college level and were students of 12<sup>th</sup> grade or second-year students (F.A or FSc.). Data were taken from the students who were ready to participate in the study on a voluntary base. The sample size was 90 female students of 12<sup>th</sup> grade or was in the second year of their college tenure. The subscale of physical abuse from the Trauma antecedent questionnaire, Sub-scale of self-image and emptiness from the Borderline personality Questionnaire was used to collect data along with the marks percentage in the first year of F.A or F.Sc. This research study has explored the negative prediction between physical abuse and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani females. The study also remained successful in finding the significant negative relationship between the feeling of emptiness and academic achievement whereas the new findings negated the association between the self-image and academic achievement among the college level females in Pakistan. This study contributed to a potential addition in the literature related to trauma. It will be helpful for the parents, educationists, and policymakers to understand the adverse effects of physical abuse and the feeling of emptiness on child development and academic achievement. This will help secure the future of the children especially young females at the college level in Pakistan.

### Introduction

The major issue faced by the children in the present era is the maltreatment which is a globally prevalent issue. Immediate effects of maltreatment especially physical abuse feel with the passage of time but it later leaves its long term effect on the mental capacities of the

children affecting their growth and development. The treatment and prevention policies are also very expensive which are not in the hands of everyone (Norman et al., 2012). The definition of physical abuse is that “the intentional use of physical force against a 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” (WHO, 2006). Per anum rate of homicide deaths among teenagers is increasing. There are predictably 6.6 deaths per 100,000 in 2013 and in 2017, the ratio was 8.7 deaths per 100,000 teenagers (“Teen Homicide, Suicide and Firearm Deaths - Child Trends”, 2019). This increasing number of deaths is due to child maltreatment especially physical abuse (WHO, 2016). According to a huge amount of literature available on child maltreatment, it was reported that about 80 to 98 percent of the children face physical abuse at their homes, from which about one-third children faced severe physical punishment just to train them according to the norms followed at home (WHO, 2014). Moreover, according to the report of WHO (2016), among all adult participants, one quarter reported the history of physical abuse experienced in their childhood.

Many factors have been studied as predictors of physical abuse among the children. But the existence of these elements/ predictors doesn’t confirm the occurrence of physical abuse still the risk of occurrence is higher. There are elements associated with the children, for instance, remained annoying, failing to accomplish the expectations of parents, continuously crying, abnormal physical features or being incapacitated. Additional factors associated with the parents or caregiver contains bonding difficulties faced by the parents with their new-born; was a maltreated child; showed a deficiency of knowledge of child growth and development; in favor of physical penalty as a way of disciplining offspring, parents having some physical or/and psychological problems, expression of self-control deprivation in case of showing anger; alcohol abuser or drug abuser, patient of depression; and in condition of financial complications (WHO, 2006).

To explore the effects of child abuse on the personality of the children, the number of research is increasing day-by-day. It was found that maltreatment to children affects the physical and mental abilities of the children which later on affects their academic performance. It was reported that physical abuse and neglect affect school performance as well as educational accomplishment in children. In the western culture study, it was revealed that physical abuse predicted negatively associated with the academic achievement of the children and behavioral change through the establishment of shortfalls in educational engagement, social competencies, ego resiliency, and ego control (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Kurtz, Gaudin, Howing, & Wodarski, 1993; Elarousy & Shaqiqi, 2017). Moreover, maltreatment causes stress among the children is linked to the problems in the early development of the brain. Serious impairments could be the result of maltreatment such as disruption in the nervous system as well as issues related to the immune system. Therefore, adults with a history of maltreatment or physical abuse in their childhood are at higher risk of developing psychological, behavioral and physical impairments (WHO, 2016).

Physically abused school students kept on working more inadequately than their non-abused companions on an assortment of academic and social and emotional measures. Children faced maltreatment, having lower grades, more suspensions, and more repetition of grades indicated less academic commitment, increasingly social abilities shortfalls and lower self-image versatility than non-abused children in comparison. Maltreated children showed various types of academic issues and indicated the existence of more external and internal conduct issues (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Elarousy & Shaqiqi, 2017). Kurtz et al. (1993)

reported that children with an abusive history had a more prominent frequency of issues with school than children in the control group of the study. Physical abuse emotionally disturbs the children by making them doubted their self-capacities such as self-image and may contribute to developing a feeling of loneliness among the students as the long-term effects. Self-image is the view of a person about one's self which may be controlled or impacted by the general public. Emotions with regards to self-worth could be related to physical maltreatment (Fairburn & Beglin, 1994) as self-image is the manner by which we consider our physical, mental and passionate qualities, the estimation of our sense of self and social position. The right self-image is basic to consider attitudinal limits and individual behavioral learning (Baban, 2001). The high school period is a perfect chance to getting sorted out one's self point of view which is determinant for mental, enthusiastic and physical progression. Self-image invigorates their sentiment of characteristics to increase behavioral prosperity and partition. Self-image as for physical appearance ends up being increasingly recognizable during high school years (Fung, & Yuen, 2003). College understudies found to have essential stresses over self-discernment about self-perception recognitions since they need to accomplish or keep up a marked weight and appearance (Yahia, El-Ghazale, Achkar, & Rizk, 2011). Disregarded self-image may diminish self-examinations, in this manner contrarily affecting scholarly accomplishments (Page, Lee, & Miao, 2005; Chen, Fox, & Haase 2008). The feeling of emptiness due to the emotional disturbance caused by physical abuse may affect the academic performance of children. As there are no studies found in this context, it was considered to be explored in the current study. Moreover, studies of the impact of physical abuse, and self-image on academic achievement are in need especially in developing countries such as Pakistan. So, the current study was aimed to investigate the effect of physical abuse, self-image, and feeling of emptiness on academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students.

### **Aim of the Study**

The study aimed to explore the impact of physical abuse, self-image, and emptiness on academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students.

### **Specific Objectives**

The major objectives of the study were to predict the effect of physical abuse on academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students as well as to correlate the association concerning physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students.

### **Hypotheses**

H1: Is physical abuse, a predictor of academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students?

H2: Is there any relationship between physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students?

### **Methodology**

For the exploration of the relationship between the variables termed as physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students, the quantitative research approach was used.

### Study Design

According to the nature of the study, correlational design was utilized to explore the relationship among variables. This research design was used to predict a relationship between physical abuse and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students as well as to explore the association between self-image and emptiness with academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students. One of the benefits of this research design is that it is an effective and operational method of gathering data from a large sample size (Kodner & Wetherton, 2013).

### Study Setting

The current study was directed in government as well as private sector colleges for females in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

### Sample

The sample of this study was females who were studying at the college level and were students of 12<sup>th</sup> grade or second-year students (F.A or FSc.). Data were taken from the students who were ready to participate in the study on voluntary bases.

### Sample Size

The sample size was 90 female students of 12<sup>th</sup> grade or was in the second year of their college tenure.

### Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used to collect data was nonprobability "convenience" sampling. As it covered the maximum voluntarily available participants with regards to the favorable sample for the study.

### Instruments

A questionnaire booklet was developed for data collection which comprised of four portions. The first portion was of demographic questions which covered age, marks percentage in the first year, family system, monthly income of the family, number of siblings, and order in siblings. The second portion was containing the questions related to physical abuse taken from the trauma antecedent questionnaire (sub-scale; physical abuse) (Luxenberg, Spinazzola, & Kolk, 2001). The third portion was containing the questions of self-image and the fourth portion was of emptiness questions taken from the scale for assessment of borderline personality (BPQ) (Poreh et al., 2006).

**Physical abuse scale:** The sub-scale of physical abuse for participants between the age ranges from 13 to 18 was taken from trauma antecedent questionnaire developed by Luxenberg, Spinazzola, and van der Kolk, (2001), for data collection for the current study. The sub-scale of physical abuse comprised three items with a rating scale based on a Likert scale ranging from Don't Know to 3. DK means Don't Know, 1 means 0, 2 means 2 and 3 means 3. Average of the total sum was done to get final scoring.

**Self-image scale:** The sub-scale of self-image was taken from borderline personality questionnaire developed by Poreh et al., (2006), for data collection for the current study. The sub-scale of self-image comprised of nine items with a rating scale based on true or false

whereas true means 1 and false means 0. The sum was done to get the final scoring of the sub-scale.

**Emptiness scale:** The sub-scale of emptiness was taken from borderline personality questionnaire developed by Poreh et al., (2006), for data collection for the current study. The sub-scale of emptiness comprised of eleven items with a rating scale based on true or false whereas true means 1 and false means 0. The sum was done to get the final scoring of the sub-scale.

### Demographic Information

The first demographical variable was the age in which two age groups were found according to years, i-e 16 years old students (26.7%) and 17 years old students (73.3%). The second variable was the family system which was divided into two categories, i-e., nuclear family and joint family. From the whole data, 51.1% of participants belonged from the nuclear family system whereas 48.9 % of participants were from the joint family system. 17.8% of participants were having one sibling, 27.8 participants were having two siblings, 31.1% of participants were having 3 siblings and 23.3% of participants were having 4 siblings is shown in figure 1.

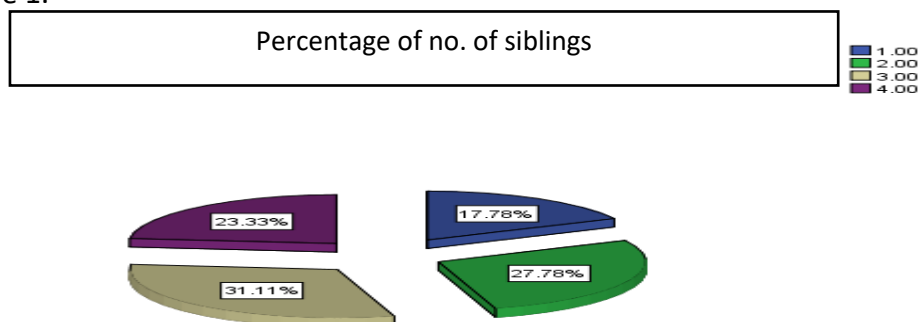


Figure 1: Percentage of no. of siblings

According to the birth order, most of the participants were on second-order (43.3%), participants with third-order were 32.2 whereas at first birth order 24.4% of participants were found.

### Procedure

For data collection, the research information sheet along with the questionnaire booklet was submitted to the head of the colleges for taking permission. The heads of the colleges allowed the researcher to collect data by engaging a staff person who went to the classrooms with the researcher and introduced her. Then the researcher explained the purpose of the study and asked for a volunteer to participate in the study by filling the questionnaire booklet. Before recording the responses, the participants were asked to sign the consent.

### Data Management and Analysis Plan

Data was manually entered in IBM SPSS 20.0 version by the researcher. Missing values were catered and outliers were removed. After screen the entered data, the variables were computed in SPSS and then multiple linear regression was applied on the data to find out the predictive relationship between physical abuse and academic achievement. Pearson correlation was conducted to explore the relationship between physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic performance. Cronbach Alpha test was used to assess the reliability of data with a significance level of 5% level (Biondo-Wood & Haber, 2010).

### Ethical Consideration

The purpose of the study along with the participant rights was clearly explained to all the participants. Participants were asked to sign consent forms before reporting their responses. It was mentioned that participants have the right to leave the research participation at any time. Codes were given to the forms rather than obtaining the names of the participants to ensure confidentiality. The questionnaire booklet was handled only by the researcher while collecting data.

### Result

The descriptive statistics revealed that emptiness and academic performance has the same mean values i-e,  $M = 3.722$ . This mean value is greater than mean of self-image ( $M = 2.67$ , Std. deviation = 1.98) and physical abuse ( $M = 2.33$ , Std. deviation = .41).

**Table 1 | Descriptive statistics**

	Mean (N=90)	Std. Deviation
Emptiness	3.7222	2.22361
Self-image	2.6778	1.98210
Physical abuse	2.3333	.41205
Academic Performance	3.7222	1.04964

The result of multiple linear regression revealed that physical abuse is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students ( $\beta = -.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The regression model explained the 65% of variance ( $R^2 = .65$ ,  $F(1, 88) = 162.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2 | Predictor of academic performance among college level Pakistani female students**

Predictors	Academic performance		
	B	Standard Error	$\beta$
Constant	8.51***	.381	.65
Physical abuse	-2.05***	.161	-.805
$R^2$	.65		
F	162.40***		

Moreover, the result of Pearson correlation shown that physical abuse among college-level female students significantly, negatively influenced academic performance ( $r = -.80$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). This significant negative relationship between physical abuse and academic performance has a large effect size which means that influence is strong between the two variables. Furthermore, it was revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship

between the feeling of emptiness and academic achievement ( $r = -.42, P < .01$ ). The effect size is medium which means that the two variables are affecting each other at a moderate level. Additionally, no association was found between self-image and academic performance.

**Table 3 | Association between emptiness, self-image, physical abuse, and academic performance**

	Emptiness	Academic Performance	Self-image	Physical Abuse
Emptiness	1	-.423**	.183	.258*
Academic Performance		1	-.033	-.805**
Self-image			1	.115
Physical abuse				1

Note: \*\*P < 0.01 and \*P < 0.05

### Discussion

The current study was based on the two hypotheses which were designed to explore the relationship between the physical abuse, self-image, feeling of emptiness and academic achievement of college-level Pakistani female students. The prediction was applied to know the level of changes occurs in the academic achievement of college-level Pakistani female students after having exposure to physical abuse.

The first hypothesis resulted in the presence of significant relationship between physical abuse and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani female students which was supported by the findings of the western culture study which revealed that physical abuse predicted negatively associated with the academic achievement of the children and behavioral change through the establishment of shortfalls in educational engagement, social competencies, ego resiliency, and ego control (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Kurtz, Gaudin, Howing, & Wodarski, 1993; Elarousy & Shaqiqi, 2017). This showed that cultural diversity does not have an effect on the predictive nature of physical abuse on academic achievement and it was also concluded from these results that physical abuse among college-level females in Pakistan influenced at a significantly higher level.

The second hypothesis was to explore the relationship between physical abuse, self-image, emptiness and academic achievement which showed that feeling of emptiness and physical abuse were in a negative association with the academic achievement which was the new trend found as a result in performing this study. It was also the findings of the study that self-image does not have any association with the academic achievement among college-level females in Pakistan which was contrary to the findings of western culture studies concluded that high school period is a perfect chance to getting sorted out one's self point of view which is determinant for mental, enthusiastic and physical progression. Self-image invigorates their sentiment of characteristics to increase behavioral prosperity and partition. Self-image as for physical appearance ends up being increasingly recognizable during high school years (Fung, & Yuen, 2003). College understudies found to have essential stresses over self-discernment about self-perception recognitions since they need to accomplish or keep up a marked weight and appearance (Yahia, El-Ghazale, Achkar, & Rizk, 2011).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study has explored the negative prediction between physical abuse and academic achievement among college-level Pakistani females. The study also



remained successful in finding the significant negative relationship between the feeling of emptiness and academic achievement whereas the new findings negated the association between the self-image and academic achievement among the college level females in Pakistan.

This study contributed to a potential addition in the literature related to trauma. It will be helpful for the parents, educationists, and policymakers to understand the adverse effects of physical abuse and the feeling of emptiness on child development and academic achievement which will later be helpful in making a generation with high level of self-confidence with least exposure to traumatic experiences. This will help secure the future of the children especially young females at the college level in Pakistan.

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