

## Emotional abuse- A deterrent in child's development

ANJALI MATHUR, SHASHI SINGH AND ANSHU

### ABSTRACT

The present research was an attempt to find out the prevalence of emotional abuse among children and prevalence of gender disparities in abuse across three socio-economic groups in Allahabad district. A total sample of 180 children in the age group of 9-18 years from three socio-economic status families were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Sixty respondents and their parents from each socio-economic group (30 boys and 30 girls) were selected for the study. Socio-economic status scale was used to assess the socio-economic status of the respondents. Self-made interview schedule for parents and children was used to assess the prevalence of abuse. Results indicated that emotional abuse was more prevalent in lower socio-economic group among boys and girls followed by middle and upper socio-economic group. Socio-economic status had a significant effect ( $P \leq .01$ ) and gender had a non-significant effect on the prevalence of emotional abuse. The study indicated that parents were mostly responsible for inflicting emotional abuse on children. Hence, the study revealed that the emotional abuse was prevalent among children in all three socio-economic groups and it was suggested that awareness campaigns, role of mass media, law and policies for protection of children's rights can prove to be helpful in combating child abuse.

**KEY WORDS :** Abuse, Maltreatment, Deterrent, Prevalence, Combat, Campaigns

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### INTRODUCTION

Emotional abuse indicates verbal abuse, mental abuse and psychological maltreatment. It includes acts or the failures to act by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma. This can include parents/caretakers using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening to terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but no less damaging, are belittling or rejecting treatment, using derogatory terms to describe the child, habitual tendency to blame the child or make him/her a scapegoat.

The problem of child abuse and human rights violation is one of the critical matters on the international human rights agenda as abused children suffer long term physical and psychological damage that impairs their ability to learn and socialize making it difficult for them to perform well in school and develop close and lasting friendship.

### METHODOLOGY

Allahabad district was purposively selected for the study as the researchers are familiar with the place. Allahabad district is divided into 21 blocks, out of which 6 blocks were selected for the present study using random sampling technique. Families belonging to the three socio-economic status *i.e.* lower, middle and upper from each block were selected using stratified random sampling technique. From each socio-economic group, a total of 10 families from each block were selected, among which 5 families having an index child as a boy and 5 families having an index child as a girl were selected using purposive sampling technique.

Children in the age group of 9-18 years and their parents belonging to the lower, middle and upper socio-economic status families were selected to study the prevalence of emotional abuse. A total sample of 180 children comprising of 60 children each (30 boys and 30 girls) and their parents from lower, middle and upper socio-

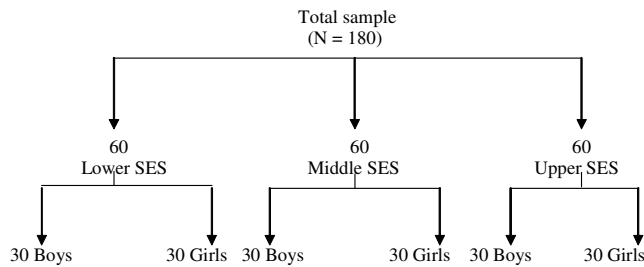
#### Correspondence to:

ANJALI MATHUR, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science and Women's Development, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agricultural, Technology and Science (Deemed University), ALLAHABAD (U.P.) INDIA

#### Authors' affiliations:

SHASHI SINGH AND ANSHU, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science and Women's Development, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agricultural, Technology and Science (Deemed University), ALLAHABAD (U.P.) INDIA

economic status families, respectively were selected. Parents of the same sample were taken to administer the schedule targeted for them.



**Procedure of the study:**

A total sample of 180 children was purposively drawn to assess the socio-economic status using Socio-economic Status Scale devised by Kuppuswami (1962). A self-structured interview schedule was developed and administered on the selected sample of children to assess the prevalence of emotional abuse. A self-made questionnaire was also developed and administered on the parents of the identified samples to assess the methods adopted by parents to deal with their children.

**OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 indicates the prevalence of emotional abuse among boys across three socio-economic strata. It is evident from the above table that children reported the prevalence of emotional abuse to be highest among boys belonging to the lower socio-economic group *i.e.* 21.2, followed by middle socio-economic group *i.e.* 17.1 and upper socio-economic group where the mean values of prevalence of emotional abuse was 12.93 which may be attributed to the fact that parents belonging to lower socio-economic status are laid down with many problems like

illiteracy, poverty and face a lot of economic hardships which predisposes them to abuse their children. The data also indicate the prevalence of emotional abuse as reported by parents which was highest (22.9) in the middle socio-economic group, followed by lower socio-economic group (20.0) and the lowest prevalence (18.2) was seen in the upper socio-economic group parents.

The result are also in accordance with the study carried out by Briggs and Hawkins (2005) who stated that child abuse affects all the social classes and there is evidence to show that the risk of abuse is higher in lower socio-economic status groups due to lower knowledge and skill base. There are differences in parental involvement across social classes. Children from low income families are least likely to reinforce safety concepts at high and low socio-economic status children were the ones least likely to trust their parents to provide protection.

The data in Table 2 reveal that the prevalence of emotional abuse as reported by children was highest in the lower socio-economic status *i.e.* 21.1 followed by middle (17.13) and upper (11.9) socio-economic status which may due to the fact that lower socio-economic group families have to struggle a lot to fulfill their basic needs, which leads to deprivation among children. It is evident also that the prevalence of the emotional abuse was highest (21.0) in middle socio-economic group followed by lower socio-economic group *i.e.* 16.7 and minimum in upper socio-economic status *i.e.* 16.7 as reported by parents.

The results are in accordance with the study carried out by Bradley and Corurjn (2002) which revealed that the socio-economic status impacts the well being of an individual at multiple levels. High socio-economic status families are in the capacity to afford their children an array of services, goods, parental attention and social connection that potentially are redirected to the benefit of their children

**Table 1 : Prevalence of child emotional abuse among boys across three socioeconomic groups as reported by children and their parents**

Emotional abuse reported by	Lower socio-economic status		Middle socio-economic status		Upper socio-economic status	
	Mean ± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation	Mean ± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation	Mean ± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation
Children	21.2 ± 0.22	1.25	17.1 ± 0.29	1.64	12.93 ± 0.32	1.78
Parents	20.0 ± 0.20	1.125	22.9 ± 0.28	1.58	18.2 ± 0.34	1.87

**Table 2 : Prevalence of child emotional abuse among girls across three socio-economic groups as reported by children and their parents**

Emotional abuse reported by	Lower socio-economic status		Middle socio-economic status		Upper socio-economic status	
	Mean± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation	Mean ± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation	Mean ± SE (N=30)	Standard deviation
Children	21.1 ± 0.30	1.73	17.13 ± 0.30	1.67	11.90 ± 0.24	1.32
Parents	16.7 ± 0.48	2.64	21.0 ± 0.37	2.04	16.1 ± 0.31	1.70

and a concern that many low socio-economic status children lack access to those same resources and experiences thus putting them at risk of developmental problems.

**Conclusion:**

It can be concluded from the study that emotional abuse is prevalent in all three socio-economic status families irrespective of the gender. Emotional abuse was found to be more prevalent in the families belonging to lower socio-economic group followed by middle socio-economic group and upper socio-economic groups as reported by children and prevalence of emotional abuse was reported to be highest in middle socio-economic group followed by lower socio-economic group and upper socio-economic groups as reported by parents which focus on the need of creating awareness about child's rights and running programme for the prevention of child abuse at a mass

level to help children to develop to their full potentialities as the effects of being abused have serious consequences during both childhood and adulthood.

**LITERATURE CITED**

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