

## Prevalence of Physical Abuse at Primary School Level in District Faisalabad

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### Abstract

*Physical abuse in schools is quite visible in developing countries like Pakistan; it is being covered by maintaining discipline in schools which instigated to conduct this study as a dire need of the time to cope with physical abuse at the primary school level. A multi-stage sampling technique was used. Two*

*hundred and forty-five teachers and 23 head teachers and 500 students were selected from the Primary Section of Higher Secondary Schools of two tehsils (City & Sadar) of District Faisalabad. A Likert type scale for teachers and headteachers and a dichotomous questionnaire for students were used as research instruments. Mean, Standard Deviation, ANOVA, t-test, frequency, Mann-Whitney u test were applied to analyze data. Teachers and headteachers' perceptions indicated that physical abuse exists moderately whereas students' responses explored the presence of a high level of physical abuse by the teachers in the schools.*

### Key Words

Physical abuse, Primary school level, School teacher, Head teacher

### Introduction

Physical abuse is a global issue which has disturbed social well-being of children globally, as children have to spend a maximum of their time at schools, teachers must take up the responsibility to recognize behavioral changes among children. Over the past 20 years, millions of children have suffered trauma which has affected many children physically (DeYoung, Kenardy & Cobham, 2011). There is a variety of such children who get into such conditions due to physical maltreatment. In case of failure of teachers in assessing children's behavior, there may be a gap among teachers and the students.

If a child is mistreated or abused, it not only affects the life of this particular child but the life of the family also. It has social, emotional, physical and psychological dangers involved in the process. It is also seen that parents having a lack of concentration were prone to abusing their children physically (Rodriguez, 2013).

It has been observed that physical abuse incidences are taking place among the students of schools frequently. Teachers take physical punishment as a sake Of maintaining classroom discipline. According to the Chief Secretary of Punjab corporal punishment was banned in 2005 by giving the slogan of '*Maar nahi pyar*' (No beating, but affection). Boards of these slogans were fixed inside and outside the public and private schools' buildings. Some news of disciplinary actions taken against the school heads and teachers were also observed on media. It is an open secret increasing number of drop out of students from school is also due to corporal punishment. The imbalance between the increasing number of enrolment and slow pace of classroom resources, teachers have less capacity to intervene in peer violence when classes are very large and may report to penal management strategies such as corporal punishment. The gap between teachers and taught should be patch up with a friendly conducive environment. This is the pivotal responsibility of the teacher.

This study based on a quantitative survey of child abuse and help the child to come out of this trauma. Teachers' training is important because teachers have direct contact with students than any other person. Children also spend more time in schools with teachers more than their family members. So their opportunity to help, protect the health and safety of their students through intervention is great. Teachers have more opportunities to identify abuse. This study aims to groom teachers' professional knowledge and skills regarding physical abuse for protecting students from an unsafe and

abusive situation in and outside of the school. It helps the teachers how to respond positively and supportively to students who may be experiencing physical abuse.

The present study was investigating the prevalence of physical abuse at the Primary school level in district Faisalabad.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the perception of teachers and headteachers regarding the prevalence of physical abuse at the primary school level.
2. Assess the perception of students regarding the existence of physical abuse at the primary school level.

### **Research Questions**

Followings are the research questions of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers and headteachers regarding the prevalence of physical abuse at the primary school level?
2. What are the perceptions of students regarding the existence of physical abuse at the primary school level?

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is commonly taken as an act of hitting, punching, kicking or strangling. It may include driving recklessly and invading the physical space of someone (What Is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms, 2019). Abuse can be considered as a risk factor for weaken personalities and gives birth to psychiatric disorders, declared by Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG, 2013). Abuse is also taken as an injury resulting from punching, striking, beating and kicking or harming a child in any way. Any injury resulting in death makes the matter severe (DePanfilis & Salus, 1992). Two possible causes are corporal punishment or uncontrolled anger of the caregiver. Various forms of child abuse have been observed in educational institutions and public parks (Islam & Ara Akhter 2016). The empirical evidence revealed that existence and prevalence of child abuse in public and private schools were on high rate but the government cannot reduce it until the strong proof would be provided against their claimers (Ray, 2018)

The physical punishment has also a direct link with physical abuse. This may also be due to the fact that the caregiver is doing so with the intention of giving discipline. They are detrimental to the physical and mental health of a child (Durrant & Ensom, 2012). Even it's being exercised in schools and homes for discipline and obedience as well (Alokan, 2015).

Middleton, (2008) claimed that corporal punishment should only be used as a last resort, infrequently and with discrimination. Punishment should only be administered when a student also knows his wrongdoing. But most often punishments are reflective of the poor performance of their student and they do it out of frustration. Lyman, (2006) says a suggestive move of a ladder that can be adopted by the school administrations. At first, a student is given a verbal warning, then escalating through push-ups, detention, and isolation from other students are other steps. Then the next step is the consultation to the parents. They are brought to school to be a shadow to their own child. The next step is corporal punishment and finally dismissal from school. But this so lengthy and expensive a process that most of the school cannot afford nor they are ready to employ such a lengthy process. They opt for corporal punishment which is relatively cost-free, impressive and immediately result in provider and most school authorities and teachers love to opt it as a viable device for their school (Middleton, 2008; Stephey, 2009)

Physical abuse is prevalent almost everywhere. A campaign was conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was conducted under the name of 'Save The Children'. In this survey report 1231 parents, 486 teachers and 3,582 children between the age of 6 and 14 were accessed. Almost all children were reported to be suffering from physical punishment which was of several types, beating with shoes, belts, wood slabs, brooms, or whips, smacking, caning, kicking, hair pulling, ear twisting, pinching, biting, and in extreme form by electric shocks, burning and pouring cold or hot water. 43% of punishments were reported in government primary schools, thirty percent (30%) in middle schools of government, and 10% in government high schools and sixteen percent (16%) in private schools. Statistics also has been observed that children also be punished physically at their homes by their parents twenty percent (20 %) grandparents (20.04%), older siblings eighteen percent(18%) uncles and aunts twenty-seven percent (27%) and other close relative such as cousins (Mirza & Ali, 2014).

### **Symptoms of Physical Abuse**

Jirage (2018) describes that child abuse is one of the most unreported crimes. Researches' statistics showed that data about the effects of physical, psychological, sexual abuse were limited. Childhood physical and sexual abuse may appear in a child into several deformations such as depression, anxiety, psychological and physical disorder (Yehuda, Spertus, & Golier, 2001). It has also been studied that physical and social neglect may also appear in the form of social and psychological abnormality which is an increased level of depression; such physical and social neglect may result in mental disorder. But people with such abuse of social neglect have also suffered some other problems which are the effects of social neglect but these have not been observed properly (Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996). So it is very hard to determine whether the impacts of such abuse are long term or short term. The use of the statistical methodology to make research in order to find out the proper solution to the impact of this maltreatment can be called just the first strong step towards this issue. According to (Meston, Heiman, & Trapnell, 1999) the impact of social neglect and abuse has a strong association with underprivileged physical image and among male college students, it can also have an impact in the form of sexual dysfunction. In another research paper, it was examined how university female students were subjected to multiple cases of abuse. However, they found that along with other abuses paternal abuse persisted in the personality of these women as a problem (Krause, Mendelson, & Lynch, 2003).

### **Aggression**

In child-rearing literature, this theory of finding a connection between corporal punishment and aggression among children (Schwartz et al., 1998); (Steinmetz, 1981). It is an established fact that corporal punishment is very strongly creating aggression among children (Becker, 1964), (Snyder & Patterson, 1995); (Steinmetz, 1979). It studied longitudinally, as was done in the past, it has been seen that excessive physical punishment in childhood though it be producing immediate compliance but produces antagonism in him in adulthood (Cohen, Brook, Cohen, Velez, & Garcia, 1990)

### **Delinquent, Criminal, and Antisocial Behaviour**

The rate of criminal behavior, delinquent and antisocial elements among grown-ups are overwhelmingly due to inflict corporal punishment when they were children. So adult criminality has a direct and strong connection with that punishment they were given in childhood. This is a psychological rebellious behavior when goes out of check gets into criminal traces among them (Dumas, 1989) makes his longitudinal study and concludes that harsh disciplinary behavior among children creates criminality and their arrest rate increases at the age of 17 through 45 ((Sampson & Laub, 1995), (McCord, 1988) Parents being excessively punitive made their children punitive. Now here is a study of the connection between criminality and antisocial element and adulthood.

### **Protection Rights of a Child in Pakistan**

Pakistan is a signatory to the United Nation child Right Convention (UN-CRC) in 1990. It basically stresses the following basic needs of the child which are necessary for their survival, such as development rights, rights of protection, participation rights, and putting CRC into practice in true letter and spirit. CRC is a long section which overall encompasses all the ingredients to heighten the growth and protection of children in a well coordinating manner.

An ordinance was passed in Punjab for child protection and Act of 1955 was also presented in Sindh to protect children from all kinds of physical abuse. Although laws are available in the country there is a persisting problem of implementing them. Along with this issue, one more aspect of training individuals regarding physical abuse is also still an unresolved issue.

### **Research Methodology**

The research design of the study was descriptive in nature. The survey was conducted to collect quantitative data from respondents. Likert scale based on five points was used for teachers and headteachers further a dichotomous questionnaire was also used to know students' perceptions regarding the existing level of physical abuse Researches conducted in social sciences frequently used a Likert scale as a psychometric tool to collect data (Joshi *et al.*, 2015). A questionnaire-based on options like Yes or No, True or False is called Dichotomous questionnaire which is frequently used in surveys. (Talikota, Manasi 2019).

### The Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of: All the teachers, headteachers and students of primary sections of Higher Secondary Schools of District Faisalabad.

### Sample

**Table 1.** Sample Size of the Study

|               | N   | Location |       | Gender |        |
|---------------|-----|----------|-------|--------|--------|
|               |     | Urban    | Rural | Male   | Female |
| Students      | 500 | 222      | 278   | 218    | 282    |
| Teachers      | 245 | 150      | 95    | 84     | 161    |
| Head Teachers | 23  | 14       | 9     | 9      | 14     |

### Instrumentation

The self-developed instruments were used to collect quantitative data from the respondents of the study. Instruments were refined after the worthy opinion of five educational experts.

The reliability of the instruments for students, teachers, and headteachers was ensured through statistical analysis Cronbach’s Alpha which was 0.735 & 0.753 respectively.

### Data Collection and analysis

Due to the nature of the study, the data were collected by the researcher personally and analyzed through different statistical techniques by using SPSS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to reach reliable conclusions.

The researcher distributed 268 questionnaires among the teachers and headteachers, whereas 500 questionnaires among students of the primary section of higher secondary schools.

**Table 2.** Item-Total Statistics( Teacher’s tool) Variable Formation of Physical Abuse

|  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| For classroom discipline, corporal punishment is effective.                                  | 46.33                      | 70.686                         | .560                             |
| Domestic violence causes physical abuse.   | 45.50                      | 77.232                         | .330                             |
| Problems of students cannot be solved without corporal punishment.                           | 46.18                      | 71.526                         | .480                             |
| Parents have no objection to corporal punishment.  | 46.68                      | 76.862                         | .315                             |
| The teacher is content centered instead of focussing on students’ physical problems as well. | 45.71                      | 77.003                         | .326                             |
| Latecomers are keenly investigated by the teachers.  | 45.60                      | 82.727                         | .037                             |
| I think Physical punishment affects students’ learning abilities.                            | 45.70                      | 77.627                         | .227                             |
| Physical punishment has positive effects on students’ academic achievements.                 | 46.43                      | 72.898                         | .415                             |
| Sometimes teachers throw objects at students.  | 46.07                      | 75.931                         | .307                             |
| Physical punishment is the only way to control students in the classroom.                    | 46.85                      | 75.795                         | .351                             |
| Teachers are unaware of symptoms of physical abuse.  | 46.25                      | 71.838                         | .440                             |

|   |       |        |      |
|---|-------|--------|------|
| Physical punishment does not usually happen in schools due to a lack of professional knowledge of teachers. | 46.39 | 74.816 | .359 |
| Cases of physical punishment in schools are not frequently reported by parents.                             | 46.32 | 77.613 | .262 |
| Dirty students are not dealt with carefully in the classroom on a daily basis.                              | 46.27 | 77.193 | .245 |
| Teachers do not know about child rights under the law.  | 46.09 | 77.373 | .265 |
| Teachers are not trained through a proper training program to handle the issues regarding child abuse.      | 46.19 | 74.891 | .297 |

Now, there are no items with a negative correlation and the value of the reliability coefficient is 0.735 which is higher than the threshold. Hence, the final formation of variable physical abuse is:

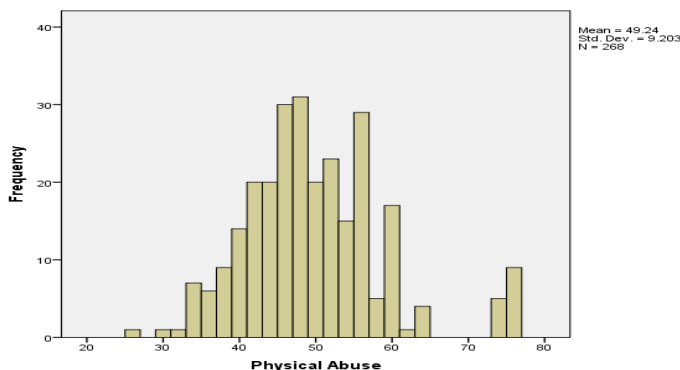
PHYSICAL ABUSE = Q.No.1Reverse, Q.No.2Reverse, Q.No.3, Q.No.4, Q.No.5+Q.No. 6Reverse, Q.No.7, Q.No. 8Reverse, Q.No.9, Q.No.10, Q.No.11, Q.No. 12, Q.No.13, Q.No.14Reverse, Q.No.15, Q.No.16Reverse

The range of physical abuse will be from 16, lowest score, to 80, highest score.

**Table 3.** Following table exhibits the descriptive statistics of physical abuse

| Variable Name      | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Physical Abuse     | 268 | 26      | 76      | 49.24 | 9.203          |
| Valid N (listwise) |     |         |         |       |                |

Table 3 delineates the descriptive statistics regarding the variable of physical abuse. Moreover, to further understand the distribution of this variable histogram is given below.



**Figure 1.** - Histogram of Physical Abuse

It seems that the distribution of physical abuse is not symmetrical but positively skewed. Furthermore, the mid-point of physical abuse is 48 and the mean score is 49.24 with a standard deviation of 9.2. This indicates that physical abuse happens moderately.

**Table 4.** Comparison of Demographic Variables like Gender, Area, and Designation regarding Physical Abuse.

| Demographic variable | Categories   | n   | Mean  | SD    | df  |
|----------------------|--------------|-----|-------|-------|-----|
| Gender               | Male         | 93  | 48.08 | 7.409 | 266 |
|                      | Female       | 175 | 49.86 | 9.99  |     |
| Area                 | Urban        | 164 | 47.87 | 8.04  | 266 |
|                      | Rural        | 104 | 51.39 | 10.45 |     |
| Designation          | Teacher      | 245 | 48.77 | 9.35  | 266 |
|                      | Head Teacher | 23  | 54.26 | 5.32  |     |

P\* < 0.05

Table 4 indicates that male and female (teachers and headteachers) do not differentiate in their opinions about existence of physical abuse, Insignificant t-values of the views of male and female about variable physical abuse (-1.5) which indicates no significant difference between male and female s' views magnitude about existence of child abuse at primary level.

The table reveals significant differences between teachers and headteachers of urban and rural areas' views about physical abuse. The mean score of physical abuse among urban area teachers is significantly lower than the teachers in rural areas.

The significant difference is present between teachers and headteachers' views on physical abuse. The above table delineates that the mean value of physical abuse is significantly lower among teachers than head-teachers.

**Table 5.** Demographic Variables wise Comparison of Teachers and Head Teachers' Opinions on Physical Abuse.

*ANOVA*

| Demographic variable       |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|
| Academic Qualification     | Between Groups | 288.184        | 5   | 57.637      |
|                            | Within Groups  | 22324.532      | 262 | 85.208      |
|                            | Total          | 22612.716      | 267 |             |
| Professional Qualification | Between Groups | 870.462        | 5   | 174.092     |
|                            | Within Groups  | 21742.255      | 262 | 82.986      |
|                            | Total          | 22612.716      | 267 |             |
| Experience                 | Between Groups | 454.133        | 3   | 151.378     |
|                            | Within Groups  | 22158.584      | 264 | 83.934      |
|                            | Total          | 22612.716      | 267 |             |
| Age                        | Between Groups | 919.875        | 3   | 306.625     |
|                            | Within Groups  | 21692.841      | 264 | 82.170      |
|                            | Total          | 22612.716      | 267 |             |

Note: \* < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

The table indicates that academic qualification –wise, there is no significant mean difference in views of teachers and headteachers on the existence of physical abuse at the primary level. Teachers and headteachers of different academic qualifications agree that physical abuse exists at the primary level. The magnitude of their views is the same about physical abuse.

The above table demonstrates that there is no significant mean difference between the variables of physical abuse on the basis of academic qualification.

The table indicates that professional qualification–wise, there is no significant mean difference in views of teachers and headteachers on the existence of physical abuse at the primary level. Teachers and headteachers of different professional qualifications agree that physical abuse exists at the primary level.

The above table demonstrates that there is no mean significant difference between the variables of physical abuse on the basis of professional qualification.

The table indicates that experience-wise, there is no significant mean difference in views of teachers and headteachers on the existence of physical abuse at the primary level.

Table 5 depicts that there is no significant mean difference for physical abuse between the levels of work experience. The table indicates that age-wise, there is no significant mean difference in views of teachers and headteachers on the existence of physical abuse at the primary level. Teachers and headteachers of all age agree that physical abuse exists at the primary level

The mean difference is significant for physical abuse between the levels of age groups.

**Table 6.** Total-Item Statistics (students' tool) Variable Formation of Physical Abuse

|  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Do you like corporal punishment?   | 5.16                       | 5.712                          | .127                             |
| Does your academic performance increase after getting corporal punishment? | 5.00                       | 4.745                          | .592                             |

|  |      |       |      |
|--|------|-------|------|
| Do you face punishment for not doing your classwork? | 4.93 | 5.126 | .422 |
| Do you become fearful when you get punishment?       | 4.89 | 5.260 | .377 |
| Are you slapped?                                     | 4.94 | 5.594 | .193 |
| Are your ears pulled fiercely?                       | 4.90 | 4.626 | .715 |
| Are your hair pulled?                                | 4.97 | 5.256 | .343 |
| Are you punched?                                     | 4.96 | 4.734 | .615 |
| Are you kicked?                                      | 4.97 | 4.827 | .558 |

So, none of the items are negatively correlated. Although the value of reliability coefficient can be increased by dropping some items is not recommended. However, the reason behind this initiative is that the value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.753 which is acceptable.

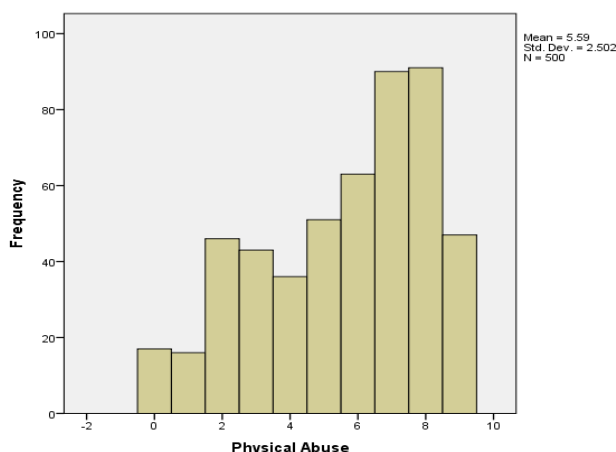
The final form of this variable is mentioned below. Also, the range of this variable is from 0, lowest response, to 9, highest response.

Physical Abuse = Q.No.1, Q.No.2, Q.No.3, Q.No.4, Q.No.5, Q.No.6, Q.No.7, Q.No.8, Q.No.9

**Table 7.** Descriptive statistics on Physical abuse.

| Variable Name      | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Physical Abuse     | 500 | 0       | 9       | 5.59 | 2.502          |
| Valid N (listwise) |     |         |         |      |                |

The range of the variable is from 0 to 9 making a clear sense that the average response below the mid-point 4.5 will report as low abusiveness and the average value of above mid-value reports high abusiveness. Thereof, it seems that students reported the presence of a high level of physical abuse.



*Figure 2 - Histogram of Physical Abuse*

The above graph shows that the histogram of physical abuse is negatively skewed. However, the average value is 5.59 which means the physical abuse occurs frequently. Therefore, the spread is pretty low and there is a chance to contain outliers. Therefore, it is not symmetrical.

**Table 8.** Mann-Whitney Test for Equality of Means Abusive Scores for Both Genders

|        | Category | N   | Mean Rank | Mann-Whitney U | Z-value | P-value |
|--------|----------|-----|-----------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Gender | Male     | 282 | 261.2     | 27721.000      | -1.900  | .057    |
|        | Female   | 218 | 236.66    |                |         |         |
|        | Total    | 500 |           |                |         |         |
| Area   | Urban    | 222 | 249.32    | 30595.00       | -0.165  | 0.869   |
|        | Rural    | 278 | 251.45    |                |         |         |
|        | Total    | 500 |           |                |         |         |

From the above table, it can be observed that the mean of physical abuse is not significantly different for both genders. It is also evident that the mean score of physical abuse is not statistically different for two locations.

### **Findings**

The followings are the findings of this study.

- In the reliability analysis of teachers' and students' questionnaires, no item was found negatively correlated in the variable formation and their reliability coefficients were (0.735), (0.753) respectively, good to assess the perception of them.
- According to the perception of teachers and headteachers, physical abuse exists moderately.
- It was found that no significant difference was observed regarding gender about the prevalence of physical abuse at the primary school level.
- It has been observed that a significant difference was existing between the perception of teachers and headteachers regarding area and designation.
- Teachers and headteachers of different academic and professional qualifications agree that physical abuse exists at the primary school level.
- The presence of physical abuse was interestingly found by different experiences and age groups of teachers and headteachers at the primary school level.
- In the perception of students presence of a high level of physical abuse by the teachers was significantly observed.
- On the basis of gender and location students exposed their views that they are physically abused frequently in schools.

### **Discussion**

Discussion is made on the basis of the present study that physical abuse happens moderately because it has been prohibited by the Government of Pakistan. The awareness level has increased about the effects of corporal punishment on personality development and grooming of the students (Durrant & Ensom, 2012). Moreover, research-oriented findings evidently discourage bodily punishment which caused psychological disabilities among children. Various studies conducted regarding this exposed relationship of physical punishment with an increased risk factor of depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse. (Afifi, Brownridge, Cox, & Sareen, 2006).

On the contrary In a study by Shumba ( 2011) on Student Teachers' Perceptions discovered that the teachers in Zimbabwean schools physically abuse their students in schools. The results of this study also endorse it. So In the light of students' perception, it can also be perceived that teachers may conceal their actual perception and opinion regarding physical abuse at the primary school level due to the Notification No. DD (M)/Child Protection/2016 dated 23/1/2018 by the government of the Punjab corporal punishment is prohibited, as a result, therefore, physical abuse at primary school level exists moderately.

### **Conclusion**

The average score of teachers' perceptions of physical abuse is higher in the rural areas, in contrast to urban sides, but the standard deviation is higher in the urban areas. In students' perceptions of both genders, physical abuse exists equally in rural and urban areas. The mean response for physical abuse is higher for males but the standard deviation is higher in females. Furthermore, it has been exposed that the teachers of all the ages and experiences and qualifications are physically abusing students in schools.

### **Recommendations**

- Physical abuse should be prohibited at the primary school level.
- Punjab Government should pass an act of child protection like the KP Government and implement it immediately.
- On the basis of the need, assessment training module for teachers must be developed to reduce physical abuse in educational institutions.
- Punjab Government should take strict action against those teachers who are found to be involved in physical abuse.



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