

## Assessing the Child Abuse Potential of Public and Private High School Teachers

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### Abstract

Assessing the teacher's mental health as the most important indicator of his personality competence, has a significant role in students' mental health and is an undeniable necessity. Using psychometric tools to identify child abuse potential can help identify high-risk individuals in this area. The sample group was stratified randomly selected and the Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory (BCAPI) was used to measure child abuse potential. The inventories were scored according to the instructions after collection. Then, the inventories that were invalid in terms of the two credit scales of the test were excluded from the analysis process and finally 481 inventories were analyzed. Data were analyzed using t-test, correlation and ANOVA. The child abuse potential score in 42% of the surveyed teachers was higher than the average. Examination of the mean difference between male and female teachers showed that the score of child abuse potential inventory in male teachers was significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) higher than female teachers. There was a significant negative relationship ( $P \geq 0.01$ ) between child abuse potential and age. The child abuse potential score of public school teachers was significantly ( $p \geq 0.01$ ) higher than that of non-public school teachers. Considering that according to the results of our study, 42% of teachers scored higher than average in the test of child abuse potential, and this group is mostly engaged in public schools, it is necessary to take preventive and therapeutic measures to reduce the risk factors of child abuse more seriously in the education organization.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, Teacher, School, Education, Social harm

### 1.Introduction

Dimas sees child abuse as a process that has changed over time. He says that child abuse begins with the period of infanticide and is a period in which the child experiences severe inhuman behavior as a sexual object and a victim and ends with a period of socialization. A period in which the child still faces a significant level of violence in the home and education system. He believes that this process will lead to a safe process called the helping period when parents help the child to achieve his own goals instead of helping him achieve his own goals. Systematic scientific attention to child abuse has taken on a different form since the 1800s with the importance and attention paid to parenting skills (Lanius, 2010).

Mills (2000) defines child abuse as doing or allowing others to cause physical, sexual, or emotional harm to a child and to cause physical and emotional pain (Mills, 2000). Scher (2004) also recognizes any act of physical, psychological, or neglect toward a child as child abuse (Scher, 2004). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as misbehavior, neglect, and harm that leads to physical, sexual, emotional, and child abuse (WHO, 2006). Types of child abuse include physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and violence abuse that will cause different harm to the child depending on the type of child abuse, its length and age (Marvasti, 2000).

## **2. Significance of the Study**

Cattanach (2008), citing a 2006 report by the World Health Organization, attributed neglect of emotional needs and lack of love for children to the main cause of severe emotional and psychological child abuse, which can make him/her an aggressive, angry, stubborn, undisciplined and disregard person to moral values of the family and society (Cattanach, 2008). According to the World Health Organization in 2019, one in four children between the ages of 2 and 4 will be punished by their parents or caregivers, and one in two children between the ages of 2 and 17 will experience violence (WHO, 2019). On the other hand, the results of a study showed that children who face violence at school are more likely to abandon school than other children (Sherr, 2016).

## **3. Review Of Related Studies**

Our field surveys in Iran also showed that in the first six months of 2017, more than 16,000 cases of child abuse were reported to the social emergency system, and according to statistics from the Welfare Organization, 3% of these abused children were under 12 years old (magiran, 2017). Findings from a study of 907 students aged 14-13 showed that 5.4% of the sample were constantly facing physical harassment and that the most prevalent form of physical harassment was being slapped. 7.3% of these samples were permanently emotionally harassed and 5.5% were permanently neglected. According to the results of this study, there was a significant relationship with harassments and education, job, addiction, and parents' divorce (Malekshahi F, 2014). In a similar study of 410 students aged 14-15, 78% reported harassment, 56% reported physical harassment, and 39% reported neglect (Torkashvand F, 2013). There seems to be a relationship between child abuse and poverty, domestic violence, experiences of child abuse, psychological characteristics of parents, and lack of support systems (National Research Council., 1993). Studies showed that child abuse is associated with physical and psychological problems, poor school performance, substance abuse, and criminal behavior in adulthood (Gilbert, 2009). A study of 23,395 people who experienced abuse and violence up to the age of 16 found that men and women who were abused as children had significant differences in adulthood in suffering from mental disorder, and were more at risk of alcoholism (Meng, 2016). Research results on 13494 adults with at least one type of abuse experience, indicates a significant relationship between high-risk behaviors and the experience abuse in childhood. Those who experienced various forms of abuse were 4 to 12 times more likely to develop alcoholism, substance abuse, depression, and suicide than those who did not experience any harm (Liel, 2019).

A study of 82 elementary school teachers showed that emotional child abuse was related to the teacher's general health (Boroumandfar, 2015). Teachers' depersonalization has been associated with negative, pessimistic, and hostile attitudes toward students (MOHAMMADI, 2006). Assessing the

teacher's mental health as the most important indicator of his personality competence, plays an important role in students' mental health and is an undeniable necessity (Van Droogenbroeck, 2015).

Years ago, teachers were free to punish students with pen or ruler, given the facilities available, and ultimately using hand strikes. Although the rate of physical child abuse, especially in nonprofit schools, is lower than in the past, there is a common form of emotional child abuse that goes unnoticed because it is hidden. Humiliation of students by the teacher for getting low grades in school or being late for school, as well as the separation of some students as gifted from others and discriminatory behaviors of teachers and school principals towards those who succeed in passing the talented school tests, are common forms of systematic child abuse in our education system today.

#### **4. Objectives Of The Study**

Child abuse prevention programs are designed and implemented according to the purpose, budget and context in which they want to improve. In addition to parent-child education programs, identifying high-risk vulnerable groups can lead to early prevention. The use of psychometric instruments to identify child abuse potential can be effective in early prevention and guide identified individuals to treatment. One of these tools is the Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory, which is based on the Miller Child Abuse Checklist CAPI. School as a society in which the child enters and spends a lot of time has a fundamental role and influence in the process of child development and health. Therefore, teachers' mental health can provide a safe environment for children. Measuring the potential of teacher's child abuse can help identify high-risk individuals in this area.

#### **5. Hypotheses Of The Study**

How is the child abuse potential score in teachers of high school?

Is there difference between male and female teachers in the score of child abuse potential inventory?

Is there relationship between child abuse potential and age?

Is there difference between the child abuse potential score of public school teachers and non-public school teachers?

#### **6. Population And Sample**

To investigate the potential of child abuse of teachers in high schools in Tehran, a sample group was conducted by stratified random sampling. Schools were randomly selected from north-south-east-west and center schools and 110 teachers were considered from each region. According to the formula for estimating the sample size in the studies, the sample size was estimated at 99% confidence level equal to 533 people and at the 95% confidence level equal to 307 people.

The Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory BCAPI was used to measure child abuse potential based on the Miller Child Abuse Checklist CAPI. The inventory has 34 questions and was developed in 2005 by Ondersma et al. (Steven J. Ondersma, 2005). Cronbach's alpha test was used to determine the internal consistency of the Persian version of the inventory. The calculated Cronbach's alpha was 0.726, which indicates the optimal validity of the inventory for measuring the dependent variable of the target population. Also, the construct validity of the inventory was extracted by factor analysis of

the structure of 7 factors with a variance of 17.53%. The mean test was 9.60 with a standard deviation of 3.95.

### 6.1. Statistical Techniques Used in the Present Study

The inventories were scored according to the instructions after collection. Then the inventories that were invalid in terms of the two credit scales of the test were excluded from the analysis process. Based on the credit scales, a score of 6 and 5 on the lie detector scale and a score of 3 on the random response scale will indicate the invalidity of the answers. Thus, for each person, a score was obtained for child abuse potential, a score for a random response, and a score for a lie scale. The child abuse potential score was obtained from a total of 25 questions and finally 481 inventories were analyzed. To analyze the data, descriptive statistical methods such as mean and percentage, t-test, correlation and ANOVA were used.

### 6.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1:** Comparison of child abuse potential scores of public and non-public school teachers

		F	Sig.	T	df	P Value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Child Abuse Potential	Equal variances assumed	3.017	.083	-9.312	479	.000	-3.28551	.35283	-3.97879	-2.59222
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.976	318.352	.000	-3.28551	.32936	-3.93350	-2.63751

The results showed that out of 481 subjects, 79% were male teachers and 21% were female teachers. 55% of the subjects had a bachelor's degree, 32% a master's degree, 2.8% a doctorate, and 11% a diploma and associates degree. The youngest teacher was 21 years old and the oldest teacher was 74 years old and the average age of the study participants was 42 years and half of the teachers were less than the average age.

Data analysis was performed after deleting the scores of individuals whose scores were not acceptable in the two credit scales. The maximum score of child abuse potential was 21 and the minimum was 2. The mean score of child abuse potential was 9.42 with a standard deviation of 3.85. In 42% of people, the child abuse potential score was higher than average.

The mean score of child abuse potential in male teachers was 9.68 with a standard deviation of 3.78 and in female teachers, the mean was 8.43 with a standard deviation of 3.91. Examination of the mean

difference between male and female teachers showed that the score of child abuse potential in male teachers was significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) higher than female teachers.

Statistical analysis of the available results showed that the potential of child abuse of teachers had a significant negative relationship with their age ( $P \geq 0.01$ ), i.e. with increasing age, the score of child abuse potential had decreased. Also, the child abuse bias score in non-public school teachers with a mean of 7.11 had a standard deviation of 3.12 and in public schools with a mean of 10.40 had standard deviation of 3.70. Comparison of these two groups showed that the score of child abuse potential of public school teachers was significantly ( $p \geq 0.01$ ) higher than non-public school teachers (Table 1).

## **7.Recommendations**

Given the importance of educational spaces in the growth and health of children and adolescents, and given that according to the results of our study, 42% of teachers in child abuse potential test scored higher than average, and this group is more engaged in public schools, it is necessary to more seriously pay attention to take preventive and therapeutic measures in the education organization to reduce the risk factors of child abuse.

## **8.Conclusion**

Our results showed that the score of child abuse potential in male teachers was significantly higher than female teachers. Other studies showed that children in the care of men are more likely to be physically abused (MacIntyre, 1999).

Regarding the relationship between child abuse potential and age, our results showed that there was a significant negative relationship between child abuse potential and age. In Asadollahi (2015) research, a significant relationship between very young or very old age with abuse was reported (Asadollahi M, 2015). Hockey reports also suggest that by 2020, most perpetrators of child abuse cases in the United States were between 25 and 34 years old ( Statista Research Department, 2022).

Also, the study of the difference between child abuse potential in public and non-public schools showed that teachers in public schools had higher child abuse potential scores. In a report on the difference between public and nonprofit school teachers in the United States, McMullen (1988) identified nonprofit school teachers as more consistent and responsive to students' requests and needs. It also reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with public school teachers than with nonprofit teachers. According to McMillan, teachers in private high schools expressed a more positive attitude toward school management, colleague teachers, and their students, while public school teachers generally had a more negative attitude toward their current situation, and this dissatisfaction affected the way of relationship of teachers and students in such a way that most public school teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the behavior and performance of their students and were not optimistic about their future (McMillen, 1988). In a similar report on the state of public and nonprofit schools in the United States, Choy (1997) described nonprofit school teachers as more social. When teachers in a school have a strong sense of community, they can be more effective and committed educators (Choy, 1997). This kind of positive attitude and quality of responsive and consistent communication of non-profit school teachers can be consistent with the lower potential of child abuse obtained in this study.

Research has shown that in Iran, there is a significant difference between the organizational climate of public and non-profit schools. Principal supportive behavior and committed teacher behavior are more common in nonprofit schools than in public schools. Non-profit schools in Iran have a more open atmosphere than public schools, and this has a significant role in improving their communication spirit with students. Also, non-profit school teachers in Iran have a higher morale compared to public school teachers, which in turn has been accompanied by an increase in moral and professional commitment in them. The results of a study showed that the scores of non-profit school teachers for boys in the three dimensions of belonging (attachment), rationality and similarity (empathy) were higher than public school teachers. Nonprofit school owners are more careful in choosing their staff to select more committed and responsible teachers. In order to increase the profits of non-profit school owners and attract students to continue education in these schools, attention to student satisfaction in non-profit schools is more than public schools (NAREEMAANEE, 2008). It seems that this kind of attitude of non-profit schools in selecting and attracting teachers has played a role in lowering the score of child abuse potential of teachers in these schools compared to public schools.

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