

P1.1. Prevalence of Violence and its Correlates among Pakistani Adolescents - A Micro-Macro Analysis - Qamar Salman, Contech International Health Consultants; **Hammad Ali**, Contech International Health Consultants
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Background/Significance: Adolescence is a time of transition where physical and psychological changes make youth vulnerable to risk taking. Adolescents may experience many different types of violence - physical, verbal and sexual. The last includes sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and gang-related violence. Although all forms of violence have a significant consequence on adolescents, sexual abuse and rape directly affect young people's reproductive health. Emotional trauma can result in psychological handicap and an enormous potential of mental growth in youth go untapped.

In Pakistan, there is paucity of information on specific adolescent issues. So far only makeshift arrangements have been made to redress the important reproductive/psychological health issue concerning a large but vulnerable population sub-group. Recognizing the need for generating this type of information, National AIDS Control Program, Pakistan and UNICEF sponsored the study.

Objective: To study the prevalent types of violence against youth and their coping mechanisms.

Methodology & Data: The study area included all four provinces of Pakistan, consisting of 14 districts of UNICEF and Global fund.

Data collection techniques:

- Pre-tested personally administered questionnaire for quantitative data collection.
- Self-administered questionnaire for confidential data collection.
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) and In-depth interviews (IDIs) for qualitative microanalysis.

Sampling scheme:

Cluster probability sampling technique was adapted for quantitative survey and sample size was calculated using SPSS. The total interviews completed were 3869.

Findings: This study shows that Pakistani youth are subjected to verbal abuse more commonly as compared to physical i.e. 66% and 20% respectively. This was predictable because in largely uneducated population verbal abuse is a norm and is not recognized to have deleterious effects on the health of an individual. In addition, physical abuse is seen at the most to result in physical injuries with no regard to its psychological detrimental effects. Abuse of any sort can result in a variety of psychological disorders if not necessarily physical. Anger was the most common reaction reported (37%) followed by apathy (25%). Uncontrolled anger can lead to aggression as well as suicide attempts.

Few adolescents said that they had discussed their sexual problems or have been subjected to sexual abuse. Some females said that it was shameful and very difficult to discuss such matters with anyone. However, others mostly mentioned mothers with whom they had discussed puberty and related issues. Among the males, friends were the group with which they could talk about reproductive matters. Very few (3%) reported being touched sexually and the perpetrator identified by majority was either a family member or relative. This may be the consequence of extended family system where uncles, aunts all live together as a family. The small number may be due to the taboo attached to openly talking about sexual matters in general and abuse in particular. The reaction to sexual overtures was inability to do anything in 50% of the cases showing that adolescents are largely unequipped to protect themselves in case of sexual advances.

Knowledge Contribution: The chasm between generations is widening so is the gap between informed and ignorant. This hinders free informed decision making in matters of reproductive health and abuse that augments risk taking. In patriarchal orthodox societies like Pakistan where openly talking about sexual abuse is a taboo and physical /verbal abuse is a norm of society, youth become more vulnerable. Dearth of correct information compounds the situation that adversely affects the psychosocial wellbeing.