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An Exploratory (Field) Study of Parental Abuse in a Sample of Adolescents in Light of Certain Variables

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the degree and level of parental abuse experienced by adolescents, as well as to explore the potential influence of variables related to parents' social and educational background. The primary research question posed by the researcher is: *What is the level of parental abuse from the perspective of adolescents?* Employing a descriptive methodology, data were collected using a parental abuse scale designed by the researcher. The study was conducted on a sample of 1,130 students aged between 15 and 17 years, attending high schools in the First District of Tissemsilt. The results revealed that students experience a low-to-average level of parental abuse.

Keywords: *parental abuse, level of parental abuse, adolescents, parental social status, parental educational level*

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Valideyn zorakılığının bəzi dəyişənlər baxımından yeniyetmələr nümunəsində tədqiqi (sahə tədqiqatı)

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat yeniyetmələrin yaşadıkları valideyn zorakılığının dərəcəsini və səviyyəsini araşdırmaq, həmçinin valideynlərin sosial və təhsili ilə bağlı dəyişənlərin potensial təsirini araşdırmaq məqsədi daşıyır. Tədqiqatçının verdiyi əsas tədqiqat sualı belədir: Yeniyetmələr baxımından valideyn zorakılığının səviyyəsi necədir? Təsviri metodologiyadan istifadə edərək, tədqiqatçı tərəfindən hazırlanmış valideyn sui-istifadəsi şkalası ilə məlumatlar toplanmışdır. Tədqiqat Tissemsilt birinci rayonunda orta məktəblərdə oxuyan 15-17 yaş arasında olan 1130 şagird nümunəsi üzərində aparılıb. Nəticələr göstərdi ki, şagirdlər aşağı-orta səviyyədə valideyn zorakılığı ilə üzləşirlər.

Açar sözlər: *valideynlərin zorakılığı, valideyn zorakılığının səviyyəsi, yeniyetmələr, valideynin sosial vəziyyəti, valideynlərin təhsil səviyyəsi*

Introduction

Parental abuse is a widespread phenomenon affecting both males and females across all age groups. International studies estimate that nearly one billion children under the age of 18 experience some form of abuse, varying in degree across different societies depending on social, economic, and cultural factors. For instance, a study by Aber and Allen (1987), conducted as part of the Child Abuse Project at Harvard University, compared 91 abused children with 175 children from high social classes and 20 children from middle social classes, aged between 8 and 15. The findings showed that abused children were more dependent on others and exhibited higher levels of abuse.

The World Health Organization estimates that 40 million children under the age of 15 worldwide suffer from severe forms of parental abuse and require social and health care. Despite the global prevalence of parental abuse, reliable data on its magnitude remains scarce. Measuring the extent of the issue typically involves tracking incidence and prevalence rates.

For instance, in the United States, in 2012, 12 out of every 1,000 children were recorded as victims of parental abuse, with approximately 160,000 children suffering life-threatening injuries annually and 1,200 fatalities.

In contrast, developing countries report lower incidences due to the absence of dedicated reporting agencies and inadequate social services. Data from the National Child Abuse Center in the United States (2016) indicated that 180 cases of abuse are reported daily for every 1,000 children. Among these cases, 4.2% involved psychological abuse, 7.6% sexual abuse, 10.8% physical abuse, and 66.4% neglect, with 17.4% involving medical neglect. A 2011 report by the center highlighted a rise in child mortality due to physical abuse and neglect from 3.33% in 1995 to 4.82% in 2007.

Research

In the United Kingdom, 6,000 children were reported as victims of parental abuse in 2016. In India, 36% of mothers admitted to hitting their children with an object, 28% with their fists, 10% by kicking, and 29% by pulling their hair. Similarly, in the Arab world, the World Health Organization reported that 1.2 million children experienced some form of abuse in 2004. A UNICEF survey in Egypt found that 37% of children under 16 reported being hit or tightly bound by their parents, with 26% reporting injuries such as fractures. In Jordan, between 2000 and 2006, there were 2,290 documented cases of severe physical abuse. In Saudi Arabia, children face psychological abuse at a rate of 33.6%, followed by physical abuse at 25.3%, and neglect at 23.9%. Parental abuse in Algeria is one of the most alarming social issues, posing a severe threat to the fabric of society. Evidence suggests the increasing prevalence of this phenomenon, which is sometimes misconstrued as a method of upbringing within Algerian families. The danger is amplified by the high proportion of children in Algeria's population, with nearly two-thirds of the population under 16 years old, amounting to approximately 9.6 million children—about 30% of the total population. Experts argue that such a significant demographic requires proper care and attention as it represents the future generation.

Despite its existence, parental abuse remains a hidden issue in Algeria due to societal norms that tolerate parental physical and psychological discipline. As Dr. Amal Ben Dali aptly described, this "law of silence" continues to overshadow the plight of abused children, creating a barrier to addressing the issue.

Statistics reveal a worrying trend. In 2017, 3,000 children were reported as victims of abuse—a figure indicating the alarming scale of the problem. By 2018, cases had surged to over 16,000, including approximately 11,000 children who suffered physical violence (Bouredji, 2018, p.33). A study by the Ministry of National Solidarity recorded 3,124 cases of children exposed to physical and psychological harm in 2009, with 2,165 boys and 1,059 girls affected. By 2014, this number had risen to 6,151 cases, including 3,533 physical abuses, 663 sexual assaults, and 1,000 cases of neglect (Bouredji, 2018, pp.22–23).

An important observation is that most abused children receive no formal care or intervention from government institutions. Many cases, particularly those involving sexual abuse, neglect, or "mild" physical abuse that leaves no visible injuries, go unreported and undocumented. This lack of reporting is exacerbated by the stigma, shame, and secrecy surrounding such incidents. Victims, especially minors, often refrain from seeking help from healthcare, psychological, or judicial institutions.

Even when abuse cases are brought to the attention of care institutions, not all are officially documented or reported to authorities, such as the police or social services. Consequently, these institutions fail to provide the necessary protection, medical care, or legal actions against perpetrators (Abdul Latif, 2008, pp.13–15).

Addressing parental abuse in Algeria requires a multi-faceted approach, including awareness campaigns, strengthening legal frameworks, and improving reporting mechanisms to ensure the protection and well-being of vulnerable children.

Since only difficult and severe cases, which can have their causes and/or the identity of the abuser proven, are usually documented—cases that align with the legal and criminal definition of parental abuse, which often restricts itself to such extreme cases of abuse—official government statistics

represent only "a drop in the ocean" (Saad, 2013, p. 172). When compared to the true magnitude of the problem of parental abuse in many countries, Algeria's reality does not deviate from this framework.

Researchers have differed in defining the concept of parental abuse due to the ambiguity surrounding it, as it is a concept that lacks theoretical and procedural clarity. Al-Badayneh (2002) highlights several factors influencing the definition of parental abuse. The first factor is the determination of the social culture that defines behaviors deemed socially acceptable and deviant. Socially acceptable behaviors vary from one culture to another and even within the same culture. The second factor concerns the evolution of socially acceptable behaviors over time. Behaviors that were once deemed acceptable may now be unacceptable and vice versa. For instance, harsh corporal punishment in schools was previously considered acceptable but is now pedagogically prohibited. The third factor is tradition, which serves as a reference framework for judging behaviors as socially acceptable or unacceptable. Behaviors that gain social consensus are judged based on this consensus rather than any other objective criteria (Ahmed, 2008, p. 26).

Although young children represent the age group most vulnerable to parental abuse, experts emphasize the need to also focus on adolescent minors, who are often victims of this type of domestic violence. The highest rates of physical violence occur among infants and toddlers, followed by adolescents. Adolescence is a critical stage in human development as it serves as the foundational period shaping an individual's personality. Al-Sherbini and Mansour (1998) note that:

"Parental experiences in an adolescent's life leave a significant impact on most aspects of their social, emotional, and even physical development. These years are critical, particularly in the relationship between the adolescent and their parents, as they are still dependent on them. The experiences gained during this period determine future attitudes and relationships with others" (Al-Sherbini and Mansour, 1998, p. 355).

Gelles and Cornell (1990) argue that the lack of attention to adolescent victims of parental violence may stem from societal perceptions that adolescents are active participants in some complicity regarding the violence directed at them. They also note that the physical size, strength, and challenging behaviors exhibited by most adolescents provoke violent behavior from their parents (Al-Badayneh, 2010, p. 19). Consequently, such violent interactions, rather than being perceived as abusive, are often viewed as legitimate methods of parental control.

Thus, adolescents who carry the accumulation of parental abuse experiences face relatively new challenges, situations, and conflicts during this period. Adolescence involves significant psychological, social, and physiological changes that generate needs, aspirations, and goals requiring fulfillment, as well as a pressing desire for independence, individuality, and the pursuit of self-identity as an autonomous being.

1. Concept of Parental Abuse: Child Abuse

The term **parental abuse** has undergone significant development, starting with the article by Dr. Kempe (1960), which addressed the "battered child syndrome" caused by parents. Subsequently, various definitions and theories emerged to understand and explain the phenomenon:

1.1. Linguistic Concept of Abuse

In *Al-Mu'jam Al-Waseet*, the term "**to abuse**" (*asa'a*) refers to committing something bad or doing harm. It is defined as failing to act properly, causing harm, or bringing disgrace. Both *Al-Mu'jam Al-Arabi* and *Lisan Al-Arab* agree that:

- **To abuse** (*asa'a*) means to perform a wrongful act.
- **Abuse** signifies causing harm or disgrace to others.
- **Abuse** is the opposite of kindness and refers to ugliness and hatred (Abu Jado, 2007, p. 86).

In this study, the term "abuse" refers to **maltreatment** (*maltraitance*) as per *Le Petit Larousse*. This term emerged recently, describing the mistreatment often directed at children and the elderly. It is derived from the French verb *maltraiter*, which originates from the Latin root *tractare* (Le Petit Larousse, 1987, p. 69). The term *maltreatment* is complex, and its diagnosis is often challenging. The Latin verb *tractare* was initially used in poetry to mean "drag violently" or "act harshly" and first appeared in 1550 in the sense of "treat violently" (Morrison, 1999, pp. 33-34).

1.2. Definition of Parenthood

Linguistically, parenthood derives from the verb *walada* (to give birth). It refers to a mother delivering a child or nurturing and raising them. According to *Al-Mu'jam Al-Wajeez*, **parent** refers to the father and mother, while **mother** refers specifically to the female parent (Muslimati, 2009, p. 681).

The term *parenthood* in its broader sense encompasses all actions, behaviors, and attitudes attributed to parents. In English, the term **Parenthood** signifies creating and maintaining relationships between parents and children. It represents the key to providing emotional security and a safe foundation for children, helping them regulate their emotions and develop desired growth patterns. It enables them to face life challenges (Al-Assali, Mohamed Adib, 2008).

In psychology, parenthood refers to:

"The emotional and secure responsiveness of parents in discovering and understanding the nature of their children's emotions, cooperating with them, valuing their identities, and allowing them to be themselves. This fosters children's progress across various life domains" (Pieron, 1999, p. 14).

1.3. Related Terms to Parental Abuse

The term **parental abuse** (*Child Abuse*) lacks a stable and universally agreed-upon Arabic translation. Some use the term **child harm** (* إيذاء الأطفال *) (Swain, 1988, p. 45), while many researchers previously used **child maltreatment** (*Child Maltreatment*). However, this term is considered less emotionally impactful than *child abuse* and is more general, describing all forms of mistreatment by parents.

Other terms include:

- **Neglected Child**, referring to a child deprived of care.
- **Psychological Battered Child**, referring to a child subjected to emotional torment.
- **Battered Child Syndrome**, used in psychiatric dictionaries and diagnostic manuals to denote maltreatment crises.
- **Domestic Violence** or **Violence Against Children**, which emphasize specific aspects of abuse.

Pieron (1999, p. 19) noted that these terms are synonymous and broadly describe the same concept, with each discipline emphasizing a particular aspect. Ahmed (2007) adds that the term **parental abuse** or **maltreatment** is commonly used in family studies to describe the various patterns of abuse children experience from their parents (Ahmed, 2007, p. 29).

The term **parental abuse** is widely used and is synonymous with **parental violence**, which is a form of domestic violence specifically targeting children under the age of 18 (Gustave, 2003, p. 112). Al-Badaineh (2002) confirmed that parental abuse refers to parental violations against children within the family. Some studies have limited the concept of child abuse to physical harm only, while others recognize it as encompassing various forms such as physical abuse, neglect, psychological abuse, and sexual abuse (Abu Jado, 2007, p. 99).

In this study, the term "parental abuse" will be used interchangeably with "parental maltreatment," as both address abuse originating from parents in its various forms.

1.4. Defining Parental Abuse linguistically

The concept of parental abuse has evolved significantly, with various definitions attempting to understand and interpret it:

- **Collmer and Park** define it as any physical harm caused to a child that is not accidental and results from parental actions violating societal norms regarding child treatment (Abdel-Moti & Qanawi, 2001, p. 282).
- The **Wipiste dictionary** describes it as physical or psychological cruelty intended to harm the child. This harm could involve physical acts, such as beating, or emotional abuse, such as deliberate humiliation or verbal insults (*Wikipedia*, "Maltraitance").

1.5. Operational Definitions of Study Variables

1.5.1. Operational Definition of Parental Abuse

Parental abuse refers to intentional or unintentional harm inflicted repeatedly upon children (minors under 18 years) within the family context, affecting their physical and psychological health. The following are the key types of abuse included:

- **Physical Abuse:**

Includes injuries like scratches, bruises, fractures, burns, or internal damage. Such harm may not necessarily result from a deliberate intention to cause injury but rather from harsh disciplinary methods or strict physical punishment. Indicators include bruises, cuts, marks from blows, strangulation, biting, violent grabbing, pulling hair, pinching, bone fractures, or burns. Even when injuries are not visible, such actions constitute abuse, reflecting excessive discipline or physical punishment.

- **Psychological Abuse:**

This involves repeated extreme or destructive behaviors from parents, making the child feel devalued, unloved, or unwanted. It disrupts emotional growth, mental health, and self-esteem. Examples include:

- Verbal abuse, such as insults, ridicule, or humiliation.
- Emotional neglect or rejection.
- Excessive criticism, threats, isolation, or indifference.
- Overindulgence or imposing responsibilities beyond the child's capabilities.
- Discrimination, degradation, or character assassination.
- Any form of behavior based on hatred, rejection, or isolation.

In the current study, parental abuse is measured through a scale that evaluates abuse across these dimensions, with scores ranging from **64 to 192**.

Physical Abuse: This refers to any injury inflicted on a child that is not the result of an accident. Indicators include bruises, scratches, signs of beating, punches to the body, strangulation, biting, violent gripping, pulling hair, pinching, broken bones, burns, or internal injuries. Such abuse does not necessarily stem from an intentional desire to harm the child but is often the result of harsh disciplinary methods or strict physical punishment that leads to physical harm. Even if these practices do not result in visible wounds or fractures, they are considered abuse in themselves, reflecting excessive control and physical punishment.

- **Psychological Abuse:** This involves a repeated pattern of extreme and destructive behavior or actions by parents, which conveys to the child that they are flawed, unloved, unwanted, or worthless. This behavioral pattern attacks the child's emotional growth, psychological well-being, and sense of self-worth. It includes verbal abuse, discouragement, intimidation, isolation, rejection, overindulgence, mockery, criticism, neglect, devaluing, restricting freedom, damaging reputation, overburdening with responsibilities beyond their abilities, belittlement, and discrimination. Any form of ill-treatment that stems from hatred, rejection, or isolation falls under this category.

- **Neglect Abuse:** This is the failure of parents to provide developmental needs in areas such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, housing, and safe living conditions, despite their ability to do so. It results in or has the potential to cause harm to the child's physical, mental, moral, or social development. This includes failing to provide proper supervision and protection from harm whenever possible.

1.5.2. The Operational Concept of a School-Age Adolescent (in the current study): This refers to the stage during which an adolescent is enrolled in school and receiving education in the first or second year of high school, while still experiencing middle adolescence with its physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. This study targeted the age group of 15–17 years, corresponding to the middle stage of adolescence.

2. The Problem Statement:

Parental treatment is a crucial factor in determining whether a school-age adolescent experiences psychological well-being or distress. When parental treatment is characterized by violence, harshness, humiliation, ridicule, disdain, and rejection, it poses a threat to the adolescent's psychological adjustment both at school and in life. This leads to a world filled with anxiety, fear, tension, cruelty, violence,

deviance, and extremism. Conversely, when parental treatment embodies mutual respect, upholds the adolescent's humanity, safeguards their rights, helps them recognize their responsibilities toward themselves and others, fulfills their desires, and satisfies their psychological, social, cultural, health, and educational needs, it fosters psychological well-being, satisfaction, happiness, reassurance, and security (Ghazali, 2012, p. 39).

In this context, Hajjaj's study (2012) emphasized that the feeling of psychological adjustment among adolescents is strongly linked to parental treatment, and this relationship does not differ by gender. Secondary school students often exhibit behaviors that indicate they have not yet achieved full maturity, meaning they are still dependent on their families to meet their psychological, social, and academic needs. They face numerous challenges that hinder their academic performance, particularly during exam periods, which manifest as reduced performance, low self-confidence, and diminished self-efficacy. These issues prompt students to evaluate their academic results critically. If their results are poor and do not reflect their true potential, their self-esteem suffers, leading to heightened feelings of fear, insecurity, and anxiety about their surroundings and their families' high expectations. In such situations, and with other challenges that negatively impact students' mental well-being, the need for familial support to tackle these problems and cope with difficult circumstances becomes evident (Al-Munla, 2012, pp. 149–150).

Given the significant role of parental abuse in shaping the psychological and academic adjustment of secondary school adolescents, the researcher aims, through this study, to determine the extent of parental abuse experienced by students and its relationship with certain variables related to parents, such as their educational and social background, and students' characteristics, including age and gender.

The study was built upon a specific problem and research question outlined as follows:

Do school-age adolescents suffer from parental abuse?

This main question leads to the following sub-question:

1. What are the levels of parental abuse from the perspective of school-age adolescents?

3. Hypotheses:

One of the significant negative factors that profoundly affect an individual's mental health is parental abuse in its various forms. Despite the lack of societal attention to this issue, this dangerous phenomenon still affects children in different patterns, with long-lasting effects that extend into advanced stages of an individual's life, primarily due to the nature of the abuser, who is typically one or both parents. The impact of parental abuse is often more severe than that of any other person, as parents are expected to be the primary source of protection and care, not fear and threat. The feeling of safety, protection, and love is essential for the healthy psychological and social development of adolescents. It fosters self-confidence, belief in their abilities, and the potential for academic success. Constant protection from parents is a key requirement of adolescence, allowing the adolescent to develop a positive self-image and view of the outside world.

Based on this understanding, and given the researcher's interest in this field, the study emphasizes that achieving psychological well-being and academic adjustment for adolescents depends on proper parental treatment. There is no doubt that school-age adolescents, particularly those in the middle stage of adolescence, are the most vulnerable to the psychological, social, and cultural conditions resulting from parental abuse. Additionally, insights drawn from previous studies and the researcher's professional experience as a guidance counselor, dealing with students who face psychological issues, academic difficulties, and poor performance, led to the following hypotheses for the study:

1. Do the study participants suffer from a high level of parental abuse?

4. Study Methodology:

The researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, as the nature of the topic requires gathering information to assess the level of parental abuse and its impact on certain variables among students. Through this approach, we can closely examine and analyze the reality of the situation.

5. Time and Spatial Boundaries of the Study:

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5.1. Time Framework of the Study:

The study was conducted starting from the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic year.

5.2. Spatial Framework of the Study:

The study was conducted in secondary educational institutions within the Tissemsilt province (Algeria). It included students from the first and second years of secondary school across all specializations. To facilitate access to the sample in these schools (Mohamed Bouras Secondary School, Ikhwan Ma’akib Ammari Secondary School, and Nadhir Abdelkader Secondary School), guidance counselors working at these schools were consulted for distributing the questionnaires. Additionally, the researcher met with the sample group members at the school library and auditorium where she works.

5.3. Procedures for Implementing the Basic Study:

The current study was carried out in four secondary schools within the first district of the Tissemsilt Directorate of Education (Abdelhamid Mehri Secondary School, Bouras Mohamed Secondary School, Ammari Secondary School, and Nadhir Abdelkader Secondary School) after obtaining permission from the Directorate of Education, District No. 1 (see Appendix No. ___) starting from 04/02/2022. The application was conducted as follows: after printing a number of questionnaires, they were distributed and applied according to the agreed schedule (with the school principals and guidance counselors) in group settings within classrooms. The application process lasted for approximately 43 days.

The population involved in this study was a sample of first- and second-year secondary school students from Tissemsilt province. After confirming the psychometric properties of the study tools, the sample was selected purposively.

5.4. Characteristics of the Basic Study Sample:

The basic study sample consisted of 1,130 individuals. This was after receiving all completed questionnaires that met the requirements of the study. The following table illustrates the distribution of the sample based on the following characteristics: age, gender, student grade level, father's educational level, mother's educational level, parents' economic status, and family situation.

Table (01): Characteristics of the Basic Study Sample:

Variables	Number	Percentage
Grade Level		
- First Year Students	763	67.5%
- Second Year Students	367	32.5%
Gender		
- Males	525	46.5%
- Females	605	53.5%
Total	1130	100%
Age		
- 15 years	447	39.56%
- 16 years	499	44.16%
- 17 years	184	16.28%
Total	1130	100%
Mother's Education Level		
- No Education (Illiterate)	370	32.7%
- Primary School	246	21.8%
- Middle School	218	19.3%
- Secondary School	209	18.5%

Variables	Number	Percentage
- University	87	7.7%
Total	1130	100%
Father's Education Level		
- No Education (Illiterate)	221	19.6%
- Primary School	197	17.4%
- Middle School	267	23.6%
- Secondary School	287	25.4%
- University	158	14.0%
Total	1130	100%
Parents' Family Situation		
- Not Separated (Together)	1130	100%
- Separated (Divorced)	0	0%
- Widowed	0	0%
- Remarried	0	0%
Family's Economic Level		
- Low	136	12.0%
- Medium	677	59.9%
- Good	317	28.1%

It is clear from our reading of Table (01), which represents the basic characteristics of the study sample in terms of educational level, age, gender of the students, educational level of the parents, economic level of the parents, and family status. Regarding the educational level of the sample, it varies as the majority are in the first year of secondary school, with a total of (763) students, representing (%67.50), and (367) students in the second year of secondary school, representing (%32.50). As for the gender variable, the study sample is almost equally distributed, with males making up (525) students, representing (%46.50), and females making up (605) students, representing (%53.50).

Regarding the age variable of the sample, it was divided into three categories: (15) years, (16) years, and (17) years. The (16) year-old category occupied the first position with (%44.16), followed by the (15) year-old category with (%39.56), most of whom are studying in the first year of secondary school. The (17) year-old category occupied the third position with (%16.28), all of whom are studying in the second year of secondary school. The table also shows that the educational level of the mothers in the "without education or illiterate" category ranked first, with (370) mothers, representing (%32.70), followed by primary education, then middle education, then secondary education, and finally university education, with percentages of (%21.80), (%19.30), (%18.50), and (%7.70), respectively.

From Table (34), it is shown that the educational level of the fathers was almost equally distributed between middle and secondary education, with percentages of (%23.60) and (%25.40), respectively. Fathers with no education ranked third with a percentage of (%19.60%), followed by fathers with primary education at (%17.40%), and fathers with university education ranked last with (%14.00%).

As for the family status variable, all the students in the sample live with their parents, with a percentage of (100%).

Regarding the economic level of the students, the majority belong to the middle economic class, with a large percentage of (%59.90%), which equals (677) students. This is followed by the good economic level category with a percentage of (%18.10%), representing (317) students. The low economic level category represents (136) students, equaling (%12.00%) and ranking third.

6. Study Tools:

The researcher used the parental abuse scale, which was prepared by the researcher. The scale was applied by distributing it to the students with the help of school guidance counselors working in the institutions involved in the study. The researcher observed a strong relationship between the counselors and the students, which was confirmed after conducting the exploratory and preparatory visit. The scale was filled out by the students after receiving necessary explanations and answering any inquiries they had.

After providing the necessary explanations and answering any required inquiries from the students, the researcher moved forward with the following steps:

6.1. Parental Abuse Scale: This scale was designed by the researcher and consists of (64) items, distributed across three dimensions as shown in the following table:

Table (02): Distribution of items across the dimensions of the Parental Abuse Scale (Prepared by the researcher)

Dimensions of the Questionnaire	Items	Number of Items
Physical Abuse	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25	25
Psychological Abuse	26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45	20
Neglect	46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64	19

The researcher confirmed that this tool is psychometrically valid.

Instructions for the Parental Abuse Scale: Each participant was invited to answer the items of the scale truthfully, with assurances of confidentiality and an emphasis on the purpose of the research, ensuring seriousness in the responses. Participants were informed that they had the right to accept or refuse participation.

Alternatives: A three-point Likert scale was used to answer the questionnaire items, consisting of: Always, Sometimes, Never.

6.2. Scoring Method for the Parental Abuse Scale:

The responses of the study sample on the items of the parental abuse scale were converted, taking into account the direction of the item and the number of response alternatives. The scoring was as follows:

- **Positive Item:** Always = 1, Sometimes = 2, Never = 3
- **Negative Item:** Always = 3, Sometimes = 2, Never = 1

Finally, the scores for all items were summed to obtain the total score, which reflects the general level of parental abuse, with a theoretical range between [64-192].

6.3. Levels of the Test: A higher or medium total score indicates a negative aspect of parental abuse, meaning that the parents (father, mother) tend to practice abusive behavior. A low total score indicates that the parents tend to use healthy parenting methods. The scale was applied to the children.

7. Results of the First Exploratory Question: The first exploratory question asks: "What is the level of parental abuse among students?" To answer this question, the researcher used frequencies (k) and percentages for the levels of parental abuse (low, medium, high). The results are shown in Table (03):

Table (03): Parental Abuse Levels among Students

Variable	Parental Abuse Level	Low	Medium	High
Parental Abuse	527	%	k	%
		46.63%	333	29.46%

The theoretical average of the scale: (sum of alternatives / number of alternatives) * number of items
 $(1+2+3) / 3 * 64 = 128$.

It is evident from Table (03) that the scores for the sample's parental abuse variable range from low to medium, with (527) students receiving a low parental abuse score, representing (%46.63). Additionally, (273) students scored high in parental abuse, representing (%24.15) of the total sample. Meanwhile, (333) students received a medium score, representing (%29.46). Based on these results, it can be concluded that the students in the sample suffer from parental abuse.

The researcher believes that this distribution is not sufficient to provide a clear picture of the spread of the parental abuse variable among the study sample (students), and thus suggests utilizing the theoretical average to complete the picture (Al-Seddiqi, Salwa Osman, 2003).

Table (04): Theoretical Average of Parental Abuse among Students

Variable	Number	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Theoretical Mean
Parental Abuse	311	86.94	12.96	128

The results in Table (04) show that the level of parental abuse among students lies between low and medium, with an arithmetic mean of 86.94, which is less than the theoretical mean of 128, and a standard deviation of 12.96.

7.1. Discussion and Interpretation of the First Question Results:

The first exploratory question aimed to uncover the level of parental abuse among students. According to the statistical analysis, there are statistically significant differences between the arithmetic mean and the theoretical mean, with the theoretical mean being higher. These results confirm that students experience a level of parental abuse that is between low and moderate. The researcher views this outcome as unexpected, considering the rapid transformations in society today, which have affected the structure and function of the family, as well as its social and economic standing. These pressures on parents have had a negative impact on their roles and on the parenting style they adopt for their children.

With the globalization of the economy, crime, and culture, Algerian society has undergone many changes that have disrupted family structures and hindered many of its functions. Due to the pressures and responsibilities placed on families, social dysfunction has emerged. Many children have taken to the streets looking for work, many have dropped out of school, and others have resorted to deviant behavior. The abuse was not confined to external environments but also became prevalent within the family, which was once a safe haven for the children.

For example, victimization studies in the United States have shown a rise in abusive behavior toward children, particularly those aged 12-16, with rates three times higher than for adults (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994). Another study found that between 30% and 60% of families experiencing violent arguments generally have higher rates of physical and verbal abuse toward children under 16 (Goldman et al., 2003).

Furthermore, parental abuse toward adolescents is often a form of power exploitation that many teenagers struggle to resist or even express rejection toward. As minors, they typically remain silent and repress their feelings, especially in cases of verbal or sexual abuse. Since abuse often occurs in the home, a closed environment, it is easier to deny and hide. Therefore, we believe that most cases of child abuse that reach healthcare, social welfare institutions, or other official and non-official bodies in Algeria are underreported. This underreporting is due either to institutional factors (such as the lack of services available for such cases and the absence of laws that compel society to report them) or to socio-cultural factors (such as the belief that children belong to their parents and those parents have the right to use any methods they deem fit for raising them, or the conservative local community's belief in family privacy and seeing child abuse as a personal and family issue, not a public or criminal one). There is also fear of shame and reputation damage, as well as the belief that parental abuse is a legitimate method of disciplining children.

In addition to that, there are other factors such as the lack of agreement and confusion about the concepts related to abuse and violence directed towards children in general. Such behaviors are not often

considered as abusive by most people, as they are very common actions. Studies by Straus have indicated that 90% of parents use some forms of violence and physical abuse with their children, and the percentage of children who have been subjected to physical punishment ranges between 95% and 93%. Straus is considered one of the main critics of the "cultural and social acceptance of corporal punishment." In the same context, Bylinsky pointed to the rise in parental mistreatment of children, attributing it to the nature of the circumstances parents experienced in their childhood, such as deprivation and harshness. Freeman also addressed the widespread violence in society, noting that the source of this violence is the high rates of domestic violence. Physical and verbal punishment of children leads to an increase in aggressive behavior, a point confirmed by Widom (1989), who stated that "violence breeds violence." His findings showed that the high rate of parental abuse, especially neglect, is one of the main causes of the emergence of violence. These results contradict the theories explaining parental abuse, particularly those of the integrated environmental approach, which affirms that the prevailing violence in society, which is accepted by its members, constitutes a societal cultural approval of physical force to resolve conflicts among individuals, leading to an increase in parental abuse (Felitti, 1999, p. 236). This was also confirmed by Garbarino (1977) to explain domestic violence, stating that two conditions must be present in the environment for domestic violence, especially violence towards children, to occur. The first is that the environment in which the family lives must accept and approve of the use of force with children, and the family must be isolated from systems or supportive community services. The second condition is related to community environments that lack institutions and agencies that support and assist families, thus increasing the risk of violence spreading within those families. The culture of violence theory is based on the idea that violence is unevenly or unfairly distributed within societies and is more common in lower economic and social classes. Subcultures use violence and force as a response to the stimuli they face more frequently than other segments of society. This theory assumes that violence is a learned response that reflects the nature of the socialization process that strengthens violent practices or indicates the acceptance and approval of violence as an appropriate behavior (Bouregba, 2004, pp. 31-32).

This is a result that contradicts the findings of both international and national studies (within the framework of studying the true size of the problem and its prevalence), which reveal that the rate of parental abuse continues to rise in most societies. Each year, more than 41,000 children under the age of 15 are killed. This number underestimates the actual size of the problem, as a large percentage of child deaths attributed to abuse are reported as cases of falls, burns, drownings, and other causes. Around a quarter of the total adult population reports having experienced physical abuse, and one in five females and one in 13 males report having experienced sexual abuse. Many adults also suffer from emotional abuse. According to some statistics from the United States in 2014, approximately 282,000 high school students are physically abused by their parents each month (Bouredji, 2018, pp. 81-85).

In Arab societies, the situation is not very different. One study found that 38% of all cases of parental abuse in the Arab world are directed at children under 16 years of age. In Saudi Arabia, children face high rates of parental abuse, starting with psychological abuse at 33.6%, followed by physical abuse at 25.3%, and neglect at 23.9% (Ghazan, 2015, p. 39).

It is also noticeable that the statistics and studies addressing the phenomenon of parental abuse in Algeria reflect the reality faced by child victims, showing an alarming upward trend. This situation indicates moral deterioration and the collapse of values in some Algerian families, especially as abuse has become a distinguishing feature of parental behavior towards their children. According to 2018 statistics, the rate of parental abuse of children increased, with more than 16,000 victims, including around 11,000 children subjected to physical abuse, a very high percentage (Bouredji, 2018, p. 74).

As for studies that differed from the results of the initial exploratory question and align with what was indicated in the theoretical part of the research, and with what is close to previous studies that addressed the topic from different angles and concepts related to the research variables:

The study by Daou (2002) in the Syrian context, titled: "A Survey Study on Physical and Sexual Abuse," aimed to identify the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse. The study was applied to a sample of females at the Forensic Medicine Center in Aleppo. The results showed that the individuals in the

sample had high levels of parental abuse, with 249 cases of sexual abuse and 1,696 cases of physical abuse being reported (Abd al-Azim, 2008, p. 77).

In a study by researcher Hamada (2010) titled "Child Abuse and Neglect and Its Relationship to Academic Achievement in Damascus," the aim was to assess the prevalence of child abuse and neglect among a sample of 240 first-year secondary students. The results revealed the following points: regarding the prevalence of child abuse, the average score of the sample on the scale was 183, and the percentage was 69%, which is somewhat high (Hamada, 2010, p. 11).

In another study by Bouredji (2017) titled "Domestic Violence Against Children in Algeria," the results showed an increase in domestic violence against children. There were 4,875 cases where children were victims of violence, including 2,803 cases of physical violence, 1,546 cases of neglect, and 365 cases of sexual abuse, with 25 reported deaths (Bouredji, 2018, p. 88).

Tir (1997) conducted an exploratory study titled "Family Violence," which aimed to understand the levels and forms of family violence in Arab societies. The study was conducted on a sample of 1,104 children under 15 from various Arab countries. The key findings were: 22.10% of the sample suffered from psychological abuse, 63.50% were beaten and kicked, and 15.40% had been expelled from their homes. The study also found an inverse relationship between family violence and age—the older the victim, the less the level of violence directed at them (Ghazali, 2012, p. 55).

A study by Ibtisam Al-Khalifa (2018) in Libya aimed to explore the forms of parental abuse against children and its impact on society, as well as strategies to mitigate this phenomenon in the city of Zawiyah. The study found that verbal abuse and neglect were the most common forms of abuse children faced daily at high levels within the family. Parental abuse negatively affects society by hindering comprehensive social development, threatening stability, and obstructing efforts made towards it (Farhat, 2011, pp. 88-89).

In another study by Al-Zahrani (2003) titled "The Phenomenon of Child Abuse in Saudi Society," a field study was conducted in three major regions in Saudi Arabia: Riyadh, Mecca, and Dammam. The study aimed to assess the magnitude of the child abuse problem, the forms of abuse directed at children, and the psychological and social factors related to the phenomenon in children and families involved in abuse. The study used a descriptive analytical method and included a random sample of 3,000 male adolescents from different education levels (primary, intermediate, and secondary) from the three regions. The study found that psychological abuse was the most widespread form of abuse against adolescents, with a rate of 9.33%, followed by physical abuse at 6.25%, and neglect at 3.23% (Masira, n.d., p. 27).

The findings of the current study align with the results of several Arab and Western studies that have focused on parental abuse among students:

The results agree with a study by Huda Abu Lamzi (2015), titled "Childhood Abuse among Primary School Girls and Its Relationship to Depression and Psychological Security in Gaza," which aimed to investigate the relationship between childhood abuse and both depression and psychological security among primary school girls. The study sample consisted of 703 female students, and the researcher used a descriptive analytical approach. The study concluded that the level of abuse among the students was between low and moderate. Psychological abuse ranked first, followed by physical abuse, then neglect, and finally sexual abuse (Al-Sadiqi, 2003, p. 20).

Similarly, a study by Gelles (1990) considered parental abuse as a social problem and a source of violence. However, statistics indicated that the level of parental abuse was low to moderate. In the same context, Gel (1997) conducted a comprehensive survey on 6,000 students to examine the extent of abuse in various forms. He found that 90% of the students had experienced low levels of abuse and that there was no severe parental abuse among the sample. The researcher attributed this result to the nature and characteristics of the group and the French society, which consists of families with material stability, high educational levels, and institutions providing social and legal support to protect children from harmful influences (Bouredji, 2018, p. 89).

The findings of this study also align with those of the study by Samad, Ta'ani, and Sayil (2014) conducted in Jordan, titled "Parental Abuse Patterns as Perceived by Adolescent Students and Their

Psychological Adjustment in Light of Some Variables." The study found that adolescents were exposed to parental abuse at a low level, and their psychological adjustment was relatively high. The results showed that younger adolescents had better psychological adjustment than older adolescents, and male students showed better psychological adjustment than female students. The study also revealed that females had higher social and familial adjustment than males. The researcher attributed this to the characteristics of the sample, as most of the parents in the study had a high educational level, which helped them cope with life circumstances and adopt sound educational principles (Ghazali, 2012, p. 137).

The results also matched those of a study by Hanan Al-Sayyad (2005) in Egypt, which aimed to assess the levels of parental abuse and its relationship to some psychological variables in children. The study sample consisted of 1,137 students. The findings indicated that the rates of parental abuse in various forms were low among the study participants, at 17% (Al-Sadiqi, 2003, p. 22).

Additionally, Gharib (2009) conducted a study to assess the prevalence and forms of violence against children in the family and its relationship to the child's birth order and parental education levels. The study sample consisted of 837 first-year secondary school students in Damascus. The study found that most children were exposed to violence at a moderate to low level (Hamada, 2010, p. 24).

These results prove—according to the researcher's perspective—that families of sample individuals with parents facing life stresses are more isolated in their social relationships, less cohesive, less integrated, and less involved in family institutions and groups. They also receive less emotional support in their familial roles. These families suffer from time pressure, multiple responsibilities, and household tasks. The interaction between the mother and father with their children in the family is less ideal, with less family support and self-satisfaction. This is because most of the mothers of the sample individuals have an educational level ranging from illiteracy to elementary, with more than 54% of them falling in this category. Furthermore, the fathers here are less responsive and more neglectful of their children, as the majority of the fathers have an educational level between average and illiterate, with more than 60% falling in this range. These fathers are also full-time employees with an economic level below average. Adolescents, due to the natural conflicts they go through, become less obedient and more resistant to listening to their parents. This leads to parental reactions such as cursing, hatred, physical punishment, and refusal to meet their increasing material needs. The treatment style among the parents of the sample individuals typically involves common behavioral patterns such as: sarcastic and belittling remarks, comparison with others, calling children by hurtful words or phrases, treating the adolescent as the scapegoat of the family, humiliating and making the child feel ashamed, isolating the adolescent from others, especially from activities they enjoy and feel comfortable with, yelling, agitation, and overwhelming anger toward the adolescent, either directly or indirectly, or behaving in such a manner when with the child, or emotional and psychological inaccessibility.

Conclusion

Adolescence is one of the most important stages in society, marked by vitality, activity, and intellectual openness in various fields. Therefore, it is natural to regard adolescents as the backbone of society and builders of its civilization. However, various obstacles complicate life due to rapid developments in all fields, which may impact their natural behavior in achieving self-effectiveness and fear for their future. They may transform from active human energy to a confused spirit and mind, caught in the whirlpool of changes, anxious about the unexpected surprises the future holds. So, what does "parental abuse" as a deviant educational method cause? It obstructs success in achieving future goals, wasting energy and strength in feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and tension without solving the problem. Therefore, if an adolescent does not receive appropriate parental care and assistance, they may feel deficient and powerless, leading to the transition from anxiety and academic failure to more severe stages, such as depression. Parental abuse is often perceived as a form of discipline or good upbringing, and like many social phenomena (such as school dropout, family disintegration, etc.), many people do not consider it as parental abuse. This problem is still not accurately understood in society, and for this reason, we conducted this study on adolescents and their experiences of abuse in a scientific manner, based on accurate and documented information, to identify its dimensions, size, and effects on their personalities and mental health. This information is essential for making informed

decisions to address this issue and to raise awareness about it. Moreover, it helps identify the extent to which parents are aware of the problem of child abuse, their attitudes toward it, and their actual educational practices, as well as the possibility of many adolescents being subjected to abuse by their family members and caregivers. The goal is to develop and implement interventions and educational programs to reduce parental abuse in Algeria. Studies on parental abuse toward adolescents, as minors, are not only important for understanding the roots and causes of abuse and how to deal with offenders but also for evaluating preventive efforts within families, schools, and institutions, and improving legal and social services to provide better support for at-risk individuals and their families, strengthening protective factors among adolescents within families to reduce the effects of such practices.

In general, any definition of parental abuse should encompass all the perspectives mentioned (legal, medical, psychological) to help develop health policies and make correct decisions to address the issue. The efforts to address this problem should include educational, diagnostic, and therapeutic aspects. We must always remember that the problem often lies in the fine line between behaviors that fall under the right to discipline granted to parents and educators and behaviors that are considered violence, humiliation, or abuse toward the child. Based on the obtained results, the researcher recommends the following:

- Dealing with cases of parental abuse requires knowledge, skills, and resources that are not available to any individual, institution, or profession alone. While the judiciary and police play key roles, supporting the family and protecting the child requires cooperation from all those who provide services to the family or minor. Therefore, effective intervention in this complex issue requires integrated resources and expertise from various individuals and parties, making the responsibility of dealing with cases of abuse a shared responsibility for all members of society and all professionals and specialists involved.

- A stable and safe home is the best place for adolescent development, and the family is the best to care for its children. It is natural for children to be attached to their families and experience negative emotions when separated from them. Maintaining family unity preserves important relationships for adolescents, such as with parents, siblings, and extended family members, and allows them to develop within their environment and culture.

- When parents are unable or unwilling to take responsibility for providing care and ensuring the safety of their children, it becomes legally obligatory for society to intervene. The primary goal of such intervention is to help parents protect their children by building on the family's strengths and reducing factors that may increase the risk of abuse. Therefore, every precaution should be taken to protect the adolescent while keeping them within their family, avoiding referral to the judiciary or removal from the family unless it is confirmed that their safety cannot be ensured within the family.

- Most parents want to be good parents and have the strength and ability to care for their children and ensure their safety when they receive the necessary support. Therefore, intervention in the family's life to protect their children is based on the belief that most people have the power and ability to change their way of life. The role of adolescent protection staff and psychologists is to identify the family's strengths and use them as the basis for change within the family.

- When helping a family protect their children and meet their basic needs, respect for all involved persons must be maintained, as every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. This means that adolescent protection staff must show respect without endorsing or condemning the actions of the children, parents, or extended family members.

- Adolescent protection and service delivery should be focused on the family, utilizing available support resources. In addition to the parents, adolescent protection staff should involve the extended family and social support networks (charitable organizations, teachers, healthcare providers, psychologists, family counselors, and social workers) in developing and implementing appropriate service plans to reduce or eliminate the risk of parental abuse.

- Protection staff should respect the values, customs, and traditions of families, especially if they come from cultural backgrounds different from their own. To do so, protection staff should first

understand their own cultural background and how it affects their values, beliefs, behaviors, and judgments about others.

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