

PHYSICAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN- A NEGLECTED PROBLEM

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Abstract

This article aims to describe the main problems and characteristics that can lead to physical abuse of children in Bihor County. In this purpose, we present several cases of physical abuse of children during the years 2013-2017, during a larger research conducted with the support of the Institute of Legal Medicine in Oradea, trying to find out the cause and the problem of this phenomenon. Regarding the physically abused child, the theoretical understandings of child abuse supervision should be explored and how these understandings could help provide practical answers in assisting these children, using a public health approach to child protection. So the question will be raised: How this phenomenon is perceived in Romania? And how it can be stopped?. Studies that have attempted to outline a personality profile of abusive parents have shown that adults who mistreat their children, as opposed to those who do not subject their children to such abusive treatment, have a distinct set of attitudinal, behavioral, emotional and cognitive attributes.

Keywords: physical abuse, behavioral, children, child protection.

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, there are more and more cases of physical abuse of children, the society does not know or cannot stop or receive the education needed to understand the phenomenon.

The purpose of the present study is to raise awareness and familiarity with society about the importance of the phenomenon, how serious it is and where it can be reached if it does not intervene immediately.

OBJECTIVES

To study these cases of physical abuse of children for a better understanding of the traumas and experiences perceived, in order to integrate children back into society.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study participants are victims of physical abuse on children, the data were processed from the Institute of Legal Medicine in Oradea. Female and male children were included, who presented specific injury criteria for physical abuse. It was taken into consider the criteria for inclusion and exclusion in the present study. Data were collected during the

years 2013- 2017. In this study, measures and outcomes regarding physical abuse were included, as well: (1) relative importance of physical abuse in society, (2) challenges associated with integration of children, (3) decision-making process associated with understanding and stopping the phenomenon, (4) awareness and concerns about growing incident of child physical abuse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The sex of the abused children between 0 and 18 years, for the period 2013-2017

Regarding the sex of abused children, we can see a higher incidence in female children (54.0% for female and 46.0% for male), more than half of the victims studied in our research, reflects a relevant aspect regarding the fact that female persons are more vulnerable and much more predisposed in the context of being physically abused.

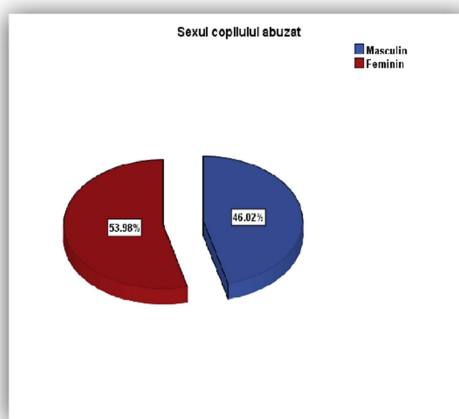


Chart 1. The sex of the abused children between 0 and 18 years, for the period 2013-2017

Boys are sometimes victims of physical abuse, and parents are often identified as perpetrators, the phenomenon can lead to their own transformation from victim to aggressor, thus becoming themselves abusers, this fact being considered conjectural.

In the present case, there is no significant difference between the two sexes, ($\chi^2 = 2.246$, $p = 0.1339$). Between the two sexes, the highest risk is female (RR = 0.85).

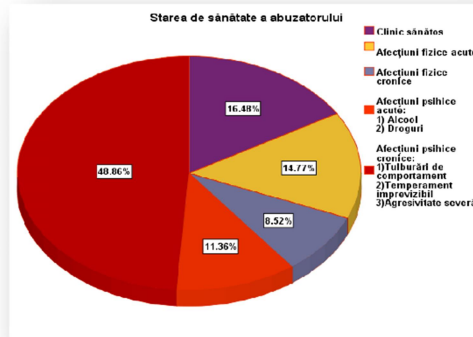


Table 1

The sex of the abused children between 0 and 18 years, for the period 2013-2017

	Masculin	81	46.0	46.0	46.0
Valid	Feminin	95	54.0	54.0	87.5
	Total	176	100.0	100.0	100.0

This conclusion may also be due to the fact that female persons are sometimes more sensitive and defenseless, thus being prone to abuse, as compared to male persons.

2. Health status of the abuser in physical abuse of children which occurred in 2013- 2017

The state of health can influence in a negative or positive way the state of a person, as well as his actions. Severe aggression, as well as behavioral disorders, may be the root cause of many child abuse cases, a percent of 48.9% (n = 86) what concerned the abusers had present severe aggression regarding the mechanism of physical abuse, a significant difference compared to 16.5% (n = 29) who were clinically healthy.

Perhaps the most significant difference in our study is the health status of the abuser, between clinically healthy people and those with mental illnesses having a 3 times higher risk for those with mental illnesses to be predisposed to commits child abuse, (RR = 2.96, RA = 32.4), ($\chi^2 = 41,858$, $p < 0.0001$).

Chart 2. Health status of the abuser in physical abuse of children

Table 2
Health status of the abuser in physical abuse of children which occurred in 2013- 2017

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Clinic sănătos	29	16.5	16.5	62.0
Afecțiuni fizice acute	26	14.8	14.8	55.6
Afecțiuni fizice cronice	15	8.5	8.5	32.0
Afecțiuni psihice acute:				
1) Alcool	20	11.4	11.4	42.8
2) Droguri				
Afecțiuni psihice cronice:				
1) Tulburări de comportament	86	48.9	48.9	183.8
2) Temperament imprevizibil				
3) Agresivitate severă				
Total	176	100.0	100.0	100.0

These types of behavior can be a sign of a mental disorder, in psychology the term aggression refers to a series of behaviors that can lead to physical or mental injury to a person.

3. The incidence of the number of injuries

A worrying result related to the number of multiple injuries, so that almost 60% of the cases of physically abused children were found to have multiple injuries.

From here we can understand that the level of aggression with which most cases of child abuse occur is alarmingly high and the phenomenon is constantly increasing.

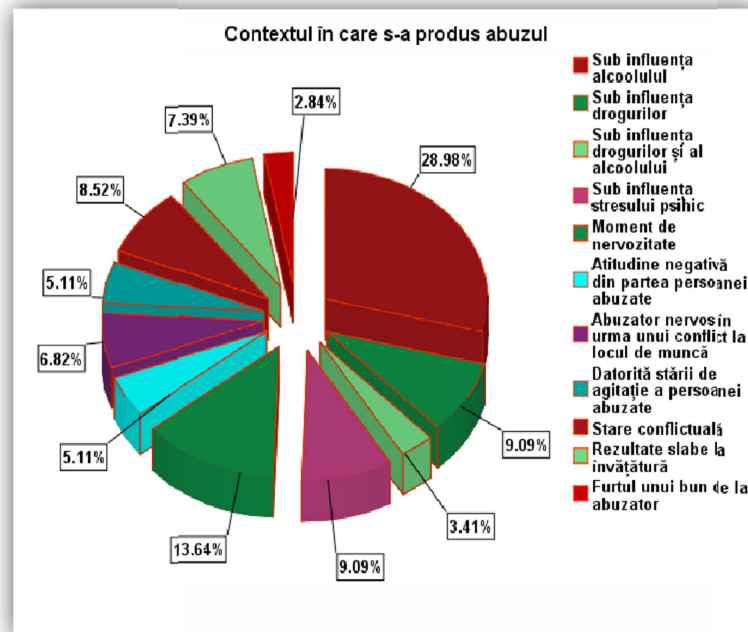
There is a significant difference between the cases of injuries ($\chi^2 = 10.144$, $p = 0.0014$), and the risk of the injuries being multiple is higher by 17.0%, than in the case of incidents with a number of single injuries, (RR = 1.40).

Table 3
The incidence of the number of injuries

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unic	73	41.5	41.5	156.0
Valid Multiplu	103	58.5	58.5	220.0
Total	176	100.0	100.0	100.0

The biggest significant difference is between the persons who were under the influence of alcohol, 29% (n- 51) among the aggressors, and the theft of a good from the abuser, 2.8% (n-5), for the physical abuses committed, ($x^2 = 45.046$, $p < 0.0001$), with a difference of 26.2%, with a relative risk of almost 10 times higher for people who have consumed alcoholic beverages compared to a theft from an abuser, (RR = 10.35).

Chart 3. The context in which the physical abuse occurred



CONCLUSIONS

In this study, many victims of child physical abuse were victims of close relatives. The age of abused children is an important factor because if the younger the child is the greater the emotional impact. For abused children who are not investigated in time and do not have adequate therapies, significant consequences have questioned their safety in social life. The 176 cases of child abuse in the current study represent only a small part of the total number of cases in our country.

Increased education of the family and citizens and the support of the competent authorities and specialists in the field can be effective strategies for preventing this phenomenon and integrating into society in good health conditions for physically abused children.

There is a risk that physical abuse is not seen as an acute situation

for the child's safety and health as events of, for example, other types of abuses, and thus not given the same priority in clinical work. Health care plays a key role in protecting children from physical abuse through primary preventative work and early detection of physical abuse.

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