

The Impact of Child Maltreatment on School Performance in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract : Introduction: Child maltreatment was proven to negatively impact children's and adolescent's academic performances; showing less academic achievements, problems completing homework assignments, and was marginally associated with being frequently absent from school (1). Objectives: To identify the impact of child maltreatment on school performance among adolescents in National Guard Schools. Materials and Methods: The study was conducted at National Guard schools in Riyadh. Students aged 12-19 years were invited to participate. Participants (N=674) completed the survey instrument which included demographics, exposure to different types of abuse, and overall level of academic performance. Results: Participants' mean age was 15.6 ± 1.6 years and males (53%). Ninety-five percent lived with both parents, 2% with single parent, and 3% with step parents. Four percent lived with alcoholic parents or guardians, and 7% have lived with a family member who has been arrested or imprisoned. Poor performance (failure in exam) were more likely among the students who lived with alcoholics vs. non-alcoholics (33% vs. 11%, $p < 0.01$), imprisoned family member vs. non-imprisoned (26% vs. 11%, $p < 0.01$), psychologically abused vs. not abused (21% vs. 10%, $p < 0.01$), physically abused vs. not abused (19% vs. 9%, $p < 0.01$). Predisposing factors to poor performance in school included living with alcoholic parents or guardians (OR=2.8, CI=1.1-6.7), psychologically abused (OR=1.7, CI=1.0-3.0), and physically abused (OR=1.7, CI=1.0-2.8). Conclusions: The results suggest that child maltreatment may adversely impact school performance. These findings highlight the importance of increasing the awareness about the impact of child maltreatment on school performance among families, schools, and the community. Recommend to the Ministry of Education to consider counseling of students with poor performance due to adverse child experiences or maltreatment.

Keywords : child abuse, child maltreatment, school performance, Saudi Arabia

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