

# MALTREATMENT AND SEXUAL ABUSE AT HOME CONCERNING SCHOOLING ADOLESCENTS

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## RESUMEN

El presente estudio consistió en determinar la presencia del maltrato infantil y abuso sexual en el hogar en adolescentes escolarizados con edades comprendidas entre 14 y 16 años, matriculados a 2010 en colegios públicos de la de la ciudad de Santa Marta. Los participantes fueron 229 jóvenes. Las variables medidas fueron la edad, el tipo de maltrato y el género. Los resultados indican que la tendencia al maltrato psicológico fue de 29.3%, de maltrato físico 13.3% y de abuso sexual de 32.3%. Con relación al género se halló que las mujeres han sido objeto en mayor porcentaje de maltrato físico y abuso sexual que los hombres y éstos han sido objeto de mayor maltrato psicológico que las mujeres; respecto a la edad los jóvenes de 14 años presentaron mayor porcentaje de maltrato y abuso que en los otros rangos etarios. Se concluye que tres (3) de cada 10 estudiantes ha sido objeto de abuso sexual, tres ha sido objeto de maltrato psicológico y uno de maltrato físico. (DUAZARY 2011 No. 2, 262 - 269)

**Palabras Clave:** maltrato, abuso sexual, género, adolescentes.

## SUMMARY

The present study was to determine the presence of child maltreatment and sexual abuse at home, concerning schooling adolescents, aged between 14 and 16 years enrolled in public schools belonging to the city of Santa Marta. Participants were 229 young persons. The variables were age, abuse and gender. The results point out: 29.3% for psychological abuse, 32.3% for sexual abuse, and 13.3% for physical abuse. Concerning the gender it was detected that women have been at a higher rate aim of physical mistreatment and sexual abuse than men, but on the other hand men are aim of psychological abuse. With regard to age, young people of 14 years, revealed a higher percentage of maltreatment than the elder ones. We conclude that three of each schooling boy has been object of sexual abuse; three of them have been injured of psychological mistreatment and one of physical abuse.

**Keywords:** abuse, sexual abuse, maltreatment, gender, adolescents, schooling pupils.

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## INTRODUCTION

Abuse can be defined as any type of injury and physical or psychological abuse, neglect, omission, neglect treatment, exploitation, including sexual harassment and abuse, torture or other means of abuse, of which most are caused through parents or due to babysitting persons, because of non-accidental intention. Therefore every day it becomes a health public problem<sup>1,2</sup>. In addition<sup>3</sup>, abuse hinders the integral development of the child<sup>4,5</sup>. International institutions, such as OMS, OPS, and UNICEF declare about the consequences related to children environment, families and also local inhabitants<sup>6</sup>.

The diversity of thought and behavior of individuals, will allow family problems, and a result of it, is domestic abuse that affect directly the children who are victims or eye witness of it. To this effect, child mistreatment<sup>7</sup> it does exist since ancient times and just recently the society has become conscious of it. During the last decades of the past century gradually emerge answers about cruelty and violence toward children, and taking into account that laws on this matter were enacted all over the world.

Some authors state that because of violent behavior that children experience at home, in the future they will also injure their own kids<sup>8,9</sup>. On this matter we determine that children maltreatment can allow dangerous consequences concerning the physical and psychological development of a child, and due to these consequences, we are able to detect the home maltreatment.

A few of the signs<sup>4</sup> that allow to detect children maltreatment are their delayed development, big motive problems, emotional deficit, lack of knowledge between sadness and fury, language deficit associated to anxiety, poor academic performance, cognitive difficulties, that hold up the information process and besides social problems.

The characteristics of mistreatment cause that the real knowledge of its frequency is unknown, due to its nature, and due to the fact that large numbers of cases occur within the family and the fear of the complaint determine the current lack of knowledge about the exact number of cases<sup>7, 10</sup>.

As children maltreatment is a universal phenomenon it is considered that its spread disclosure, learning and education to the general population, are main strategies that can raise awareness about the magnitude of this problem. Therefore it is necessary to make known that not only the physical trauma injures a child, but also other types of abuse such as emotional, psychological and neglect, which deteriorate the character of kid, and this is the reason of identifying each one of the indicators<sup>11</sup>.

Furthermore, the lack of notification to the competent authorities, through professionals, has also contributed to the ignorance of reality, but now it is a duty to report children's maltreatment. The known cases would be only a small part of the real cases (10% -20%)<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, every year 200.000 children are sexually abused in Colombia, according to the public prosecutor's office. But this problem not only concerns the public prosecutor's office, but also to international organizations<sup>12</sup>. In accordance with some research made in Colombia about child abuse, the number of victims is very high, and an exact number of it is unknown, since not everybody reports this social crime.

In Santa Marta according to data supplied by the House of Justice, the complaints lodged before the family commissioner concerning child abuse during the period of January to December 2008 summed 64 cases. Now, during the first semester of 2009 in the city of Santa Marta were lodged 126 complaints of not defined sexual acts. In fact, this figure is really alarming and worthy of study<sup>13</sup>. In accordance with the ICBF (Colombian Institute of Familiar Welfare) at the office attention number 3 were lodged 18 victims of sexual abuse aged of 6 till 11 years, and 23 complaints related to victims of 12 till 18 years<sup>14</sup>. The CTI (Technical Body of Investigation) informed that in the first semester of 2009 26 complaints were lodged, and they all were related to sexual crimes concerning kids of 14 years old. The research indicates that 65% of the sexual crimes are perpetrated with children of 14 years. The 94% related to females and 100% of the criminals are male. A 90% of the victims are schooling children, and 64% of the criminals are known by the victims, and on the other hand 11% of the criminals have familiar relations with the victim. Finally, 13% of the criminals have good relations with the victim<sup>15</sup>.

However, you may notice the discrepancy of the available statistics in the city on the same problem, but also in government agencies, that may increase the real information and due to the numbers of sexual crimes that are not included in the official statistics<sup>16</sup>.

In the last four years, the Social Services of the Community of Murcia (Spain) detected 150 cases of child abuse and 2,500 were investigated on suspicion of child mistreatment. The kind of maltreatment with the highest incidence of sexual abuse is on the level of 82.6%<sup>17</sup>. In the United States three (3) million cases are reported requesting child protection, 896,000 were detected as maltreatment and sexual abuse. It is estimated that the rate of victimization is 12.3 per 100,000 inhabitants. From the reported cases were found that 60% were due to neglect, 20%, due to physical, and 10% due to sexual abuse, 7% due to emotional or psychological mistreatment, 20% related to other kind of maltreatments<sup>4</sup>.

The proof obtained through Mexican publications and other Latin American countries suggests that a great number of young fellows and young girls are victims of domestic violence. The statistics points out that in Latin-America and the Caribbean area an amount of six millions of children suffer any sort of violence, and every year eighty thousand kids die because of domestic violence<sup>18</sup>.

Each day, the sexual abuse is more frequent and its yearly implication in Spain is of 0.5 cases per 1000 children, and it occurs during the stage from 0 to 18 years of one of each six male kids, and one of each four girls<sup>19</sup>. The sexual crime involves violation (to penetrate into the vagina, the mouth or anus with the penis, finger or any kind of object without the agreement of the person) the oral genital contact, caress (to touch or to caress the genitals of a person in order to get sexual contact without penetration) and also child sexual exploitation<sup>20</sup>. The purpose of this study was to determine the presence of child maltreatment (physical and psychological) and sexual abuse at home by schooling young people, between 14 to 16 years old, registered during 2010 in three public schools in Santa Marta.

## METHODOLOGY

The design used is the analytical transversal, and the population was formed by 1450 schooling pupils, between 14 and 16 years, registered during 2010 in three public schools in Santa Marta.

To choose the sample was determined to use the stratified probability sampling, in order to maintain from the population the characteristics that were sought to fulfill the research. After applying the statistical formula to decide the sample, 235 schooling pupils were invited, but only 229 accepted to take part in the research.

From the group of 229 pupils, 23 were rejected, as their answers were inconsistent or not studied thoroughly. (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Sample

| Sample object of analysis |            |                 |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Educational Institution   | Population | % Participation |
| 1                         | 158        | 69,00%          |
| 2                         | 43         | 18,78%          |
| 3                         | 28         | 12,23%          |
| <b>Total</b>              | 229        | 100,00%         |

The former sample is represented through ages according to the table 2.

**Table 2.** Sample per ages object of analysis

| Age          | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | Total |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| 14 years     | 56       | 18       | 14       | 88    |
| 15 years     | 48       | 21       | 6        | 75    |
| 16 years     | 54       | 4        | 8        | 66    |
| <b>Total</b> | 158      | 43       | 28       | 229   |

The instrument used in this study was the ISPCAN, created for the Screening of child abuse-version for boys and girls (ICAST-C), survey for children exposed to violence; Spanish version applicable to ages between 11 to 18 years. This instrument was promoted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN). The instrument used consists of 88 items.

This instrument has been recognized in more than 60 countries, under the direction of the United Nations (ONU), so that it is in the process to be accepted as the international instrument to measure the child

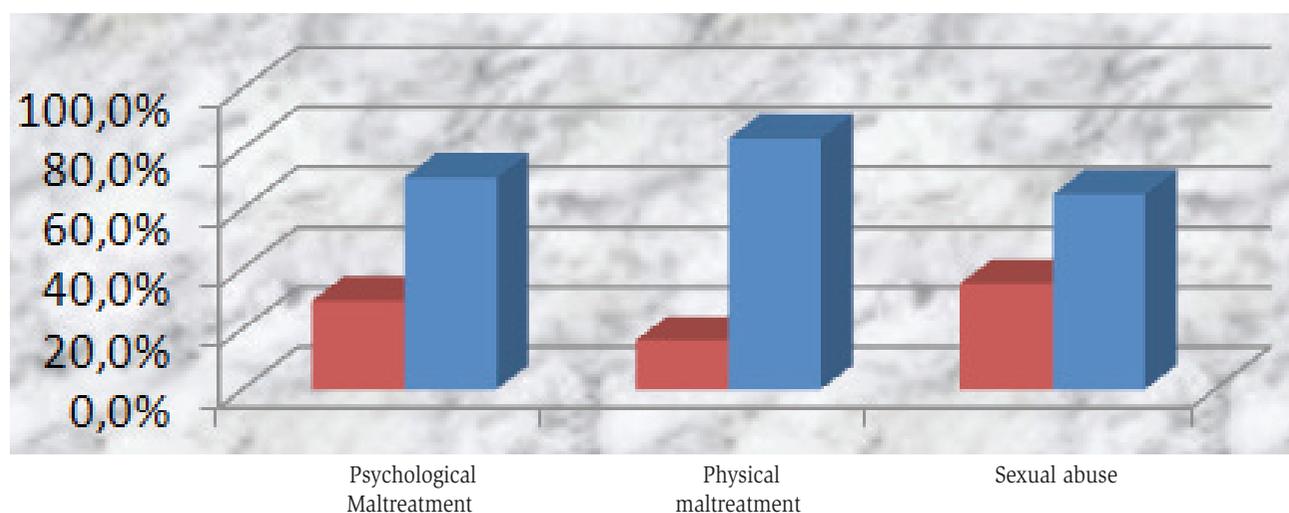


maltreatment and sexual abuse. Likewise the validation of the instrument was made in the city of Santa Marta, using a sample with the same characteristics, that took part in the present research, and obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha f 0.83, valid to be used in the present study.

## RESULTS

The results are shown in the following graphics.

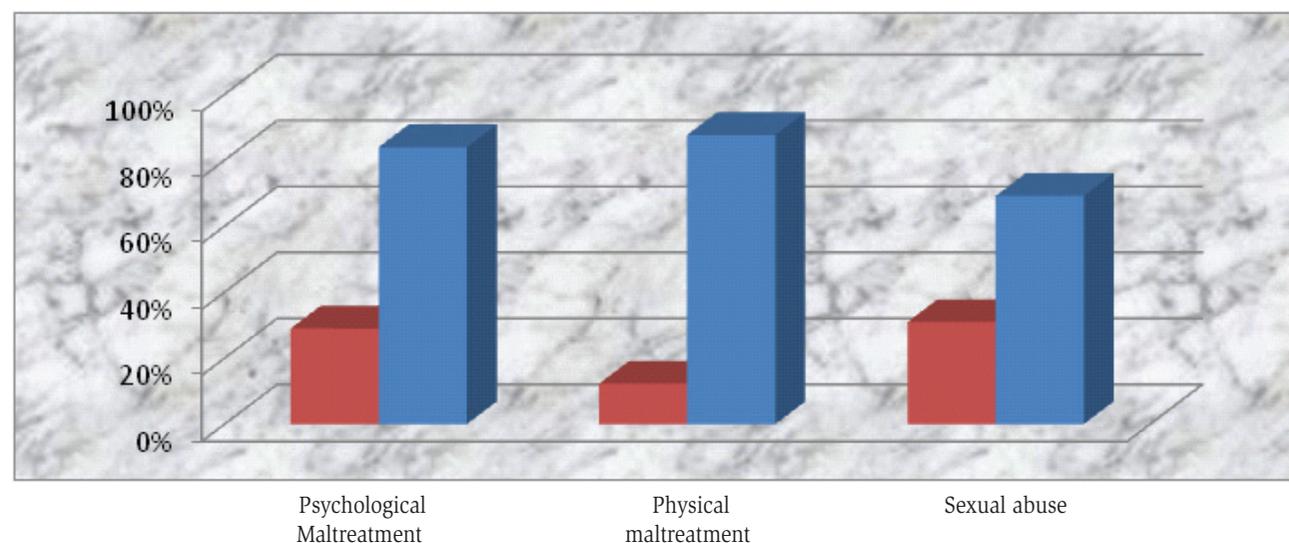
**Graphic 1.** Abstract of physical, psychological maltreatment and sexual abuse concerning schooling pupils under 14 years



colors: Blue presence Rouge: Absence

In this age group was found presence of psychological maltreatment, 30% of Psychological maltreatment, 126% of physical maltreatment and 35% of sexual abuse.

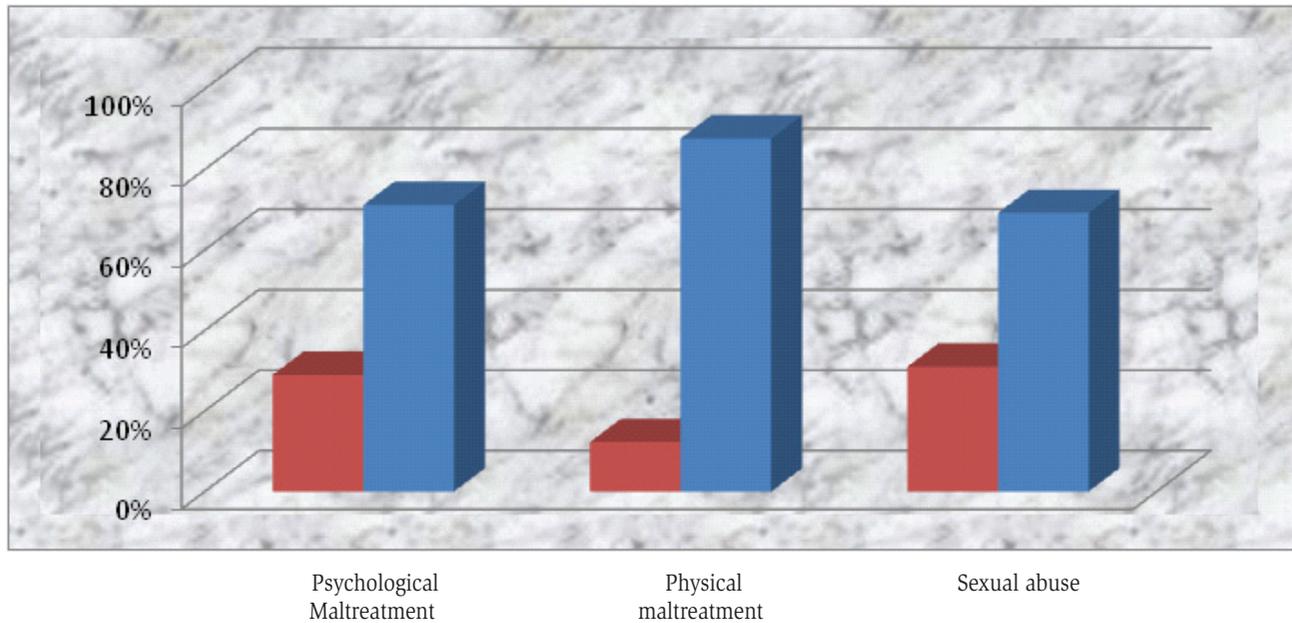
**Graphic 2.** Psychological maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse in schooling pupils under 15 years.



colors: **Blue** presence **Rouge**: Absence

This graphic shows a presence of 29% of psychological maltreatment, 12% of physical maltreatment, 31% of sexual abuse in the group under 15 years.

**Graphic 3.** Psychological maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse in schooling pupils under 16 years

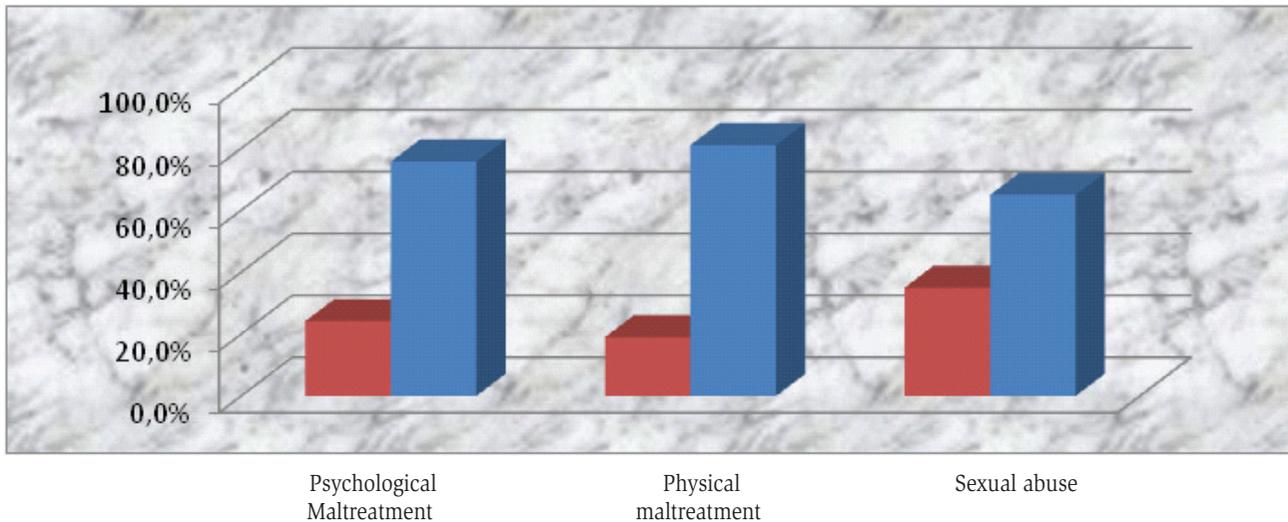


colors: **Blue** presence **Rouge**: Absence

Schooling pupils under 16 years have shown suffering as follows: 29% of psychological maltreatment, 12% of physical maltreatment and 31% of sexual abuse.

With regard to gender classification the result is shown in the graphic 4

Graphic 4. Psychological and physical maltreatment and sexual abuse against female sex



colors: **Blue** presence **Rouge**: Absence

The present study found that among the women that were investigated, the 24% revealed psychological maltreatment, and 19% of them physical maltreatment and the other ones, i.e. 35% showed sexual abuse.

## ARGUMENT

The present research points out a presence of 32% for sexual abuse, 29% for psychological maltreatment and 13% for physical maltreatment. Thereupon, we conclude that three of each ten schooling pupils have been submitted to sexual abuse at home, and the same number have suffered psychological maltreatment and one of each ten have suffered physical maltreatment.

Taking into account the data obtained of the participants belonging this research, we found that it does exist both physical and psychological maltreatment among young people of 14 till 16 years, which in fact is a 4 serious fact that hinders the healthy psychological development, and not any other agent of social risk has so strong relation with the psychopathology of the development such as the psychological and physical maltreatment. In addition it does exists a closed relation between the different sort of maltreatment and the bio- psychological development of the child, as it is showed in the researches made on this matter, which is developed in school problems, related both in cognitive and social aspects.<sup>22-25</sup> We also underline that suicidal feelings are have been demonstrated by some pupils schooling submitted to4mistreatment.

The results are shockingrelated to sexual abuse shown as by the schooling pupils are object of the present research, so that 32% of them have been submitted to it. This fact proves the results discovered by<sup>17, 19</sup>. We must take into account that sexual abuse is related to problems of somatology, anxiety, hostility, fear, rejection, depression and distrust<sup>26-29</sup>. Others authors point out that it does exist a greater frequency of psycho-somatology problems and several deterioration of sexual behavior among persons with antecedents of sexual abuse during childhood, while other authors assure still more personality deterioration<sup>30, 31</sup>.

In short, we can establish that at home from the pupils subject of this research, sexual abuse was detected, and therefore it is the duty of the institutions in charge of this problematic situation to take the appropriate measures to take care of

it, and to look after the preventive steps in each of the schools concerning this issue, so that the percentage of maltreatment and abuse can be solved or reduce.

We must also take into consideration that the result of the research depends on the social and economic situation where the schooling pupils come from<sup>32</sup>. It is also verified that boys and girls living in extreme want are always aim of maltreatment and abuse. This child population is vulnerable on this respect.

On the other hand, we found in the present research a difference concerning the results about gender. On this respect, adolescent women are more sensitive to be aim of physical maltreatment and sexual abuse, although the statistics do not reveal a great difference, in fact 19% of the women and 9% of the boys recognized to be subject of sexual abuse<sup>33</sup>.

In regard to the age, we could determine that the psychological, physical and sexual abuse occurred among young people under 14 years, so that it reveals that child population is more sensitive to be victim of this sort of maltreatment.

On taking into consideration the maltreatments object of the present research, we could observe that sexual abuse has more prevalence (32.3%) next to psychological maltreatment, showing 29.3% as result of the whole sample of maltreatment and abuse. In accordance with an author<sup>11</sup>, it is urgent to take measures to avoid mistreatment, as the psychological traumatism will appear during grown-up's life. In the same case, the authors express that child maltreatment growth increasingly. Although the figures are not precise at all, its presence is every time more evident.

It is recommended for future research to take into consideration schooling pupils under minority of age as maltreatment and sexual abuse occurs in our society since childhood. On the other hand we advise to increase the sample and to research in private schools, in order to establish other social agents as part of this problem, and in this way to be able to introduce prevention programs. Besides these results can only be applied to the sample concerning the population subject of this research due to the inherent restrictions of the design used for the research.

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