



RESEARCH ARTICLE

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE ON CHILD ABUSE AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS OF SEHORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Child abuse continues to be one of the primary threats to the child's emotional and social well-being globally. As students spend maximum time in school, teachers need to be trained to recognize physical and behavioural changes associated with abuse in order to confidently determine the cause and plan interventions appropriately. The inadequate knowledge and information lead to gap in the crucial role of teachers in identification and early assistance of an abused child.

Objectives: The objectives of the study were to assess the knowledge of the school teachers on child abuse, to determine the attitude of school teachers on identification and reporting of child abuse and to find the association between the knowledge and attitude with the selected demographic variables.

Methods: A descriptive survey design was used to conduct the study. Study was conducted among 200 school teachers from selected schools, in Sehore district. The instruments used for data collection were a structured knowledge questionnaire on child abuse and the attitude scale on identification and reporting of child abuse.

Results: Majority of the school teachers (84%) had average knowledge on child abuse whereas, all the teachers had favourable attitude towards identification and reporting of child abuse. With regard to association between knowledge and selected demographic variables, there was no significant association found except for previous knowledge on child abuse ($p < .05$).

Conclusion: Child abuse is a global issue and children face abuse in many forms and more awareness will help in combating the issues and problems with abuse. The knowledge of the school teachers needs to be enhanced by conducting awareness program on child abuse.

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INTRODUCTION

Child abuse, a global issue affects children of all ages, gender, races, ethnicities, in varied socio economic classes and is in the forefront in the line of widespread social issues and social problems (Collin-Vezina, Diagneault, Hebert, 2013). Child abuse occurs in many different forms such as physical, sexual, emotional and neglect; whereby irrespective of any form of abuse it has a traumatizing lifetime experience for the victim (Habetha et al., 2012). Deveney (2008) stressed and asserted that child abuse has both short term and long term effects not only in childhood, but also later in life thus, interfering with the child's normal development both emotionally and socially. Consequences are even worse, when the abuse goes unnoticed or continues over a longer period of time. When child is in school, the school is responsible for keeping them safe from harm and abuse. The school should create a safe learning environment,

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identify pupils who are suffering or at risk of harm and take suitable action. The school also needs to train staff in child protection. Educators and teachers are in close contact daily with a large number of children for a longer period as a child spends a longer duration of time in the school. So, teachers are able to observe behavioural changes in the and thus are in a better position to detect and report child abuse, but are not equipped and adequately informed (Goldman and Grimbeek, 2011). Beliefs and attitudes of teachers influence the perception of abuse and consequently reporting cases (Feng Huang and Wang, 2010). A survey was conducted by Wenjing, Jingii and Feng (2013) in China, to assess the knowledge, attitude, and the training education regarding child sexual abuse among 245 preschool teachers. The study was done by administering questionnaire containing 16 items. The findings showed that teachers have less knowledge on child abuse preventive measures ($M=4.86$, $SD= 2.212$). With regard to the attitude, majority (66%) of teachers believed that prevention program regarding child sexual abuse is needed. Fifteen percent of the teachers had attended training program regarding child sexual abuse and most of the teachers (85%)

expressed their willingness to participate in training program on prevention of it. The association between training program, knowledge, and attitude revealed that the teachers, who had attended training program had better knowledge ($M=5.81$, $SD=2.11$) and positive attitude ($M=2.20$, $SD=1.02$) in comparison to the knowledge ($M=4.68$, $SD=2.08$) and attitude ($M=1.61$, $SD=0.93$) of the teachers, who did not attend any training program on prevention of child sexual abuse.

Objectives

- To assess the knowledge of the school teachers on child abuse.
- To determine the attitude of the school teachers on identification and reporting of child abuse.
- To find the association between the knowledge and attitude with the selected demographic variables.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A descriptive survey design was used to conduct the study. The sample consisted of 200 school teachers, teaching in selected school, in Sehore district. Simple random sampling was used to select the subjects. The instruments used were developed by the researcher. Following instruments used for collecting the data.

Tool 1: Demographic Performa was used to collect the data regarding the characteristics of the participants. The items included in the tool were age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, number of children, tool years of teaching experience, previous knowledge on child abuse, and the source of information.

The maximum score was 24 and the minimum was zero. Scores were interpreted as good, average, and poor with the score range of 17 to 24, 9 to 16 and 0 to 8 respectively.

Tool 3: Attitude scale on the identification and reporting of child abuse assessed the attitude of teachers with regard to child abuse identification and it's reporting. It was a five point likert scale of 18 items with positive and negative statements on the identification of the child abuse and the reporting of the same. Reverse scoring was done for the negative statement. The scoring is 90 as the highest score and 18 as the lowest score. Score was categorized as favourable attitude (55-90) and unfavourable attitude (18-54).

Procedure for data collection

Ethical clearance was obtained from institutional ethics committee. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants through participant information sheet and the informed consent was taken from all the subjects before administering the research instruments.

RESULTS

The collected data was coded in a master data sheet and analyzed by using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) by using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage; and the association was computed using Fisher' exact test. Among the 200 sample, who participated in the study, majority i.e. 89% were females and most of them i.e. 59% were of the age group 22-40 years. With regard to education, most of participants i.e.28% had education as MA Bed. Data on marital status show that majority i.e. 91% were married and no data of divorced or separation were found from both the group.

Table 1. Fisher Exact Test computed between knowledge and selected demographic variable N=200

Sample characteristics	Knowledge categories			Fisher's exact test	P value
	Poor (0-8)	Average (9-16)	Good (17-24)		
P<0.05					
Age in years					
22-40	8	96	14	0.734	0.771
41-58	4	72	6		
Gender					
Male	-	22	2	0.366	0.000
Female	12	146	18		
Education					
BA	-	6	2	19.611	0.091
BA BEd	2	34	-		
BSc BEd	2	30	2		
MA BEd	-	50	6		
MSc BEd	-	16	4		
MSc Med	-	2	-		
Others	8	30	6		
Marital status					
Married	12	150	20		
Unmarried	-	18	-		
Total years of teaching experience					
1-10	8	78	10	1.501	0.992
11-20	2	50	6		
>20	2	40	4		
Previous knowledge on child abuse					
Yes	6	150	18	5.904	0.040
No	6	18	2		

Tool 2: Structured knowledge questionnaire on child abuse consisting of twenty-four multiple choice questions covering knowledge on child in general, sexual, and physical abuse, neglect and emotional abuse, prevention and reporting of child abuse was used to collect the data regarding the knowledge.

Most of them i.e. 48% had 1 to 10 years of teaching experience. Majority i.e. 87% had previous knowledge on sexual abuse. Fisher exact test was used to determine the association between the knowledge and selected demographic variable.

No significant association was found between knowledge and the selected demographic variables.

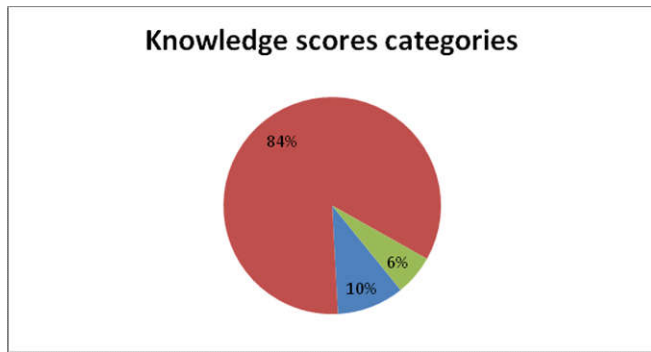


Figure 1. Pie Diagram Showing Knowledge of the School Teachers on Child Abuse

Since, all the teachers had favourable attitude, no association was found out between attitude and the selected demographic variable.

DISCUSSION

The present study findings show that there is inadequate knowledge among the school teachers in relation to child abuse, as 80% of the subjects had only average knowledge on child abuse. This supports the findings of the study conducted by McIntyre's (1987) on the awareness of the teachers on symptoms of child abuse and neglect. The finding showed that the percentage of awareness on the signs and symptoms neglect was 30, physical abuse 21, 19 in emotional abuse, and 4 on awareness in sexual abuse

Recommendation

The present study recommended that Study can be replicated on a large sample. A similar study can be conducted among parents of primary school children. A time series design could be undertaken for the present study. An exploratory study maybe conducted to assess problems faced by children. A series of training and awareness programmes can be conducted to school teachers on the same topic.

Conclusion

Present study concluded that majority of teachers were not equipped with adequate knowledge of child abuse in school children.

The study conclude that to help and protect child, the school should have staff who are trained to identify signs of abuse including what to do if they or someone else is worried about a child

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