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Knowledge and awareness among school teachers regarding child abuse

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Abstract

Introduction: Child abuse or child maltreatment is physical, sexual, or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or other caregiver. The present study was conducted to determine the knowledge and awareness among school teachers regarding child abuse.

Materials & Methods: The present study was conducted in the department of Public health dentistry. It included 110 primary teachers and a questionnaire was prepared regarding knowledge and awareness among school teachers about child abuse. All teachers were advised to score it.

Results: Most of teachers (>90%) had average knowledge and awareness about child abuse. Age group 18- 40 years had 32 males and 26 females and age group 41-60 years had 28 males and 24 females. The difference was non- significant (P-1).

Conclusion: Author found that most of the teachers had average knowledge and awareness among teachers regarding child abuse. In future more educational programmes are required for creating awareness among teacher.

Keywords: Awareness, child abuse, knowledge

Introduction

Child abuse or child maltreatment is physical, sexual, or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or other caregiver. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or other caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child, and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with^[1].

Child neglect is a form of child abuse and is a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, housing as well as their physical, emotional, social, educational and safety needs. Causes of neglect may result from several parenting problems including mental disorders, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, and poverty^[2].

Deveney (2008)^[3] 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. Educators and teachers are in close contact daily with a large number of children for a longer period as the child spends a longer duration of time in the school. So, teachers are able to observe behavioural changes in the child and thus are in a better position to detect and report child abuse, but are not equipped or are not adequately informed. Beliefs and attitudes of teachers influence the perception of abuse and consequently reporting cases.

Teachers witness social-emotional problems in their students, such as anxiety, self-harming behaviours, aggression, low self-esteem, and depression, which may be associated with divorce and other family dysfunction, but they also may indicate child abuse^[4]. The present study was conducted to determine the knowledge and awareness among school teachers regarding child abuse.

Materials & Methods

The present study was conducted in the department of Public health dentistry. It included 110 primary teachers. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institute. Informed consent was taken from the teachers.

General information such as name, age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, number of children, total years of teaching experience, previous knowledge on child abuse etc. was noted.

All teachers were supplied with questionnaire on child abuse. It had 24 multiple choice questions covering knowledge on child abuse 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. The maximum score was 24 and the minimum was 0. Scores from 17 to 24, 9 to 16 and 0 to 8 were interpreted as good, average, and poor respectively.

Attitude scale 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 statements. The scoring is 90 as the highest score and 18 as the lowest score. Score from 55-90 was categorised as favourable attitude and 18-54 as unfavourable attitude.

Results were tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis using chi-square test. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Table 1: Age and gender wise distribution of subjects.

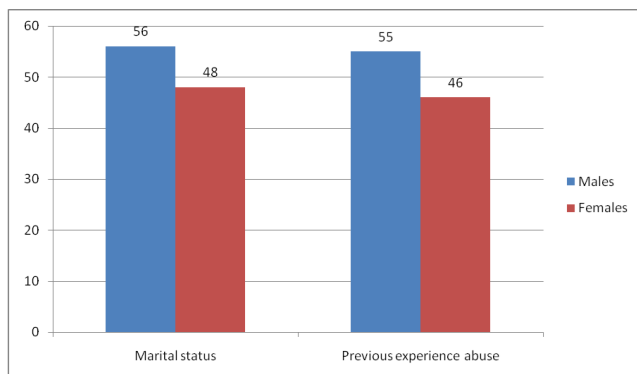
Age group	Male	Female	P value
18-40	32	26	1
41-60	28	24	
Total	60	50	

Table I shows that age group 18- 40 years had 32 males and 26 females and age group 41-60 years had 28 males and 24 females. The difference was non- significant (P=1).

Table 2: Education status of subjects.

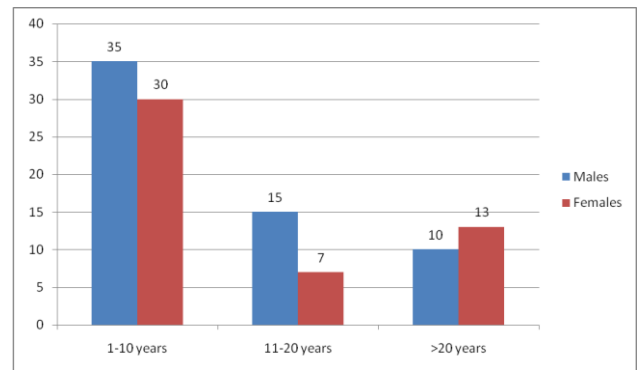
Education	Male	Female
BA B.E.D	10	14
MA B.E.D	18	12
BSc. B.E.D	22	16
MSc. B.E.D	10	8
Total	60	50

Table II shows that the education status of teachers was B.A B.E.D (males-10, females- 14), M.A B.E.D (males-18, females- 22), B.Sc. B.E.D (males-22, females- 16) and M.Sc. B.E.D (males-10, females- 8). The difference was non- significant (P> 0.05).



Graph I: Marital status and previous experience of child abuse

Graph I shows that 56 males and 48 females were married and 55 males and 46 females had previous experience of child abuse.



Graph 2: Total teaching experience

Graph II shows that 35 males and 30 females had 1-10 years of experience, 15 males and 7 females had 11-20 years of experience and 10 males and 13 females had >20 years of experience. The difference was significant (P< 0.05).

Table 3: Knowledge and awareness among teachers regarding child abuse.

Characteristic	Knowledge			P value
	Poor (0-8)	Average (9-16)	Good (17-24)	
Education				
BA B.E.D	1	22	1	
MA B.E.D	3	26	1	
BSc. B.E.D	2	32	4	
MSc. B.E.D	0	17	0	
Experience				
1-10 years	3	60	2	
11-20 years	2	18	2	
>20 years	1	21	1	
Marital status				
Married	1	100	3	
Unmarried	1	4	1	
Previous knowledge on child abuse				
Yes	2	101	2	
No	1	9	1	

Table III shows that most of the teachers of B.A B.E.D (26), M.A B.E.D (26), B.S.c B.E.D (32) and M.Sc. B.E.D (17) had average knowledge and awareness regarding child abuse. 60, 18 and 21 teachers were having teaching experience of 0-10 years, 11-20 years and >20 years had average knowledge and awareness. Most of married teachers had average knowledge and awareness and most of teachers (101) had previous knowledge on child abuse.

Discussion

The issue of child abuse has been recognized as a major social problem prevalent within and outside the homes and among all socio-economic groups of both the developed and the developing nations of whole world. The present study was conducted to determine the knowledge and awareness among school teachers regarding child abuse.

In this study, we included 110 teachers. We found that age group 18- 40 years had 32 males and 26 females and age group 41-60 years had 28 males and 24 females. This is in

agreement with the results of study by Bleich *et al.* [5] We observed that most of the teachers were M.A B.E.D (males-18, females- 22) followed by B.Sc. B.E.D (males-22, females- 16), B.A B.E.D (males-10, females- 14) and M.Sc. B.E.D (males-10, females- 8).

We found that most of teachers (56 males and 48 females) were married and 55 males and 46 females had previous experience of child abuse. We found that most of teachers had (35 males, 30 females) had 1-10 years of experience followed by >20 years (10 males, 13 females) and 11-20 years (15 males, 7 females). This is in agreement with Bruno *et al.* [6]

We found that most of the teachers (>90%) had average knowledge and awareness regarding child abuse. 60, 18 and 21 teachers were having teaching experience of 0-10 years, 11-20 years and >20 years had average knowledge and awareness. Most of married teachers had average knowledge and awareness and most of teachers (101) had previous knowledge on child abuse. This is in agreement with Butler *et al.* [7]

Child abuse and neglect is a significant global problem with a serious impact on the victims' physical and mental health, well-being and development throughout their lives. Out of the many parental causes of child abuse, the important reason is lack of knowledge regarding it among them [8]. Despite the absence of reliable global estimates for the prevalence of it as data, especially from low- and middle-income countries, various international studies reveal that approximately 20% of women and 5–10% of men report being sexually abused as children, while 25–50% of all children report being physically abused [9].

Conclusion

Author found that most of the teachers had average knowledge and awareness among teachers regarding child abuse. In future more educational programmes are required for creating awareness among teacher.

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