



International Journal of Advance Research in Nursing

Volume 5; Issue 2; Jul-Dec 2022; Page No. 223-228

Received: 19-10-2022
Accepted: 22-11-2022

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

A study to assess the perception of child abuse among care takers of children with a view to develop an information pamphlet on child abuse in a selected hospital, Bangalore

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Abstract

Child abuse or child maltreatment is any kind of physical, sexual or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or other caregiver. The prevalence of child abuse globally is estimated up to 1 billion children aged between 2-17 years have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect as per the statistics of 2020 by WHO. It is the responsibility of the caretakers to protect their child and be aware of all the legal aid which is available for children afflicted with child abuse. So the study was conducted with the objectives as follows:

1. To assess the perception of caretakers regarding child abuse.
2. To determine the association between perception regarding child abuse and selected demographic variables.

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among the caregivers of children below 15 years of age visiting paediatric OPD of SJMCH, Bangalore. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess the perception of child abuse. The data was analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

In our study, the perception of caretakers regarding child abuse was good in many aspects. 75.15% of subjects strongly agreed to the statements that parents have the responsibility to teach children to differentiate between good touch and bad touch. 64.24% of the caregivers strongly agreed to the statement that children should report to their parents if they are ill-treated by others. There was a positive weak correlation between perception and attitude with an r value of 0.267.

Keywords: Child abuse, perception, information pamphlet

Introduction

"Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven, it feels like the heavens are calling for you when a child smiles at you"

Childhood is a time full of innocence, love, light and freedom with little to no worries. Children are the asset of the nation. Children have the right to be taken care of by their parents or guardian, to be treated with kindness and affection and their well-being looked after. Although childhood is a modern-day universal subject recognized, not all children get to live their lives the way they are meant to. Not all of them experience smiles but some suffer silently with tears and wounds. One of the most shameful evils that society faces in the 21st century is child abuse.

The prevalence child abuse globally is estimated up to 1 billion children aged between 2-17 years have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect as per the statistics of 2020 by WHO.

Need for the study

India is home to over 19 percent of the world's children, making it the country with the largest child population in the world. It inherently defines the country's role in becoming a safe haven for children in this ever-changing society. The nation therefore provides its children with a host of rights -

fundamental and legal while enshrining the importance of their protection, care and development

Karnataka reported highest child abuse cases amid Covid pandemic among the southern states of India. As per the data available with the department of women and Child welfare gathered through child line, Karnataka witnessed 312 child abuse cases, highest among the southern states.

According to Interpol data, India reported over 24 lakh incidence of online child sexual abuse during three years of period between 2017-2020 with 80% of girls below the age of 14 years ^[10].

Parental awareness on perception of child abuse and parenting techniques are very much essential for the child to grow up in a healthy manner without any distress or developing any abnormality. Therefore, the investigator had a keen experiencing interest to assess the perception of caregivers regarding child abuse.

Problem statement

"To assess the perception of child abuse and knowledge regarding legal impact on child abuse among the caretakers of children with a view to develop an information pamphlet on child abuse in a selected hospital, Bangalore."

Objectives

1. To assess the perception of caretakers regarding child abuse.
2. To determine the association between perception regarding child abuse and selected demographic variables of caretakers.

Inclusion criteria

- Care takers of children below 15 years of age.

Exclusion criteria

- Care takers with physical and mental illness

Hypothesis

H1: There will be significant association of perception regarding child abuse and selected demographic variables of caretakers with 0.05 level of significance.

Review of literature related to perception

- A cross sectional study was conducted to assess parents' perceptions about child abuse and their impact on physical and emotional child abuse in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A sample size was 200 parents attending primary health care centers in Riyadh was selected using random sampling technique. The data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The result showed that 34% of parents reported a childhood history of physical abuse. Almost 18% of the parents used physical punishment. The risk factors associated significantly with child abuse were parents' history of physical abuse, young parent, witness to domestic violence, and poor self – control [19].
- A descriptive study was conducted to assess the knowledge regarding child abuse among mothers having children under 12 years of age residing at Karattupalayam, Tiruchengode (April 1 2012). A sample comprised of 80 mothers having children under 12 years of age residing at Karattupalayam, Thrichengode. The tool used is semi structured questionnaire of knowledge regarding child abuse and socio demographic data. The result was, among 80 samples only 1.24% respondent had adequate knowledge, 3.75% respondent had moderate knowledge, 96% respondent had inadequate knowledge [13].
- A non-experimental descriptive study was conducted on 2019 to assess the knowledge of mothers regarding child abuse among mothers of pre-schoolers in India. A sample of 30 mothers of pre-schoolers were selected for the study by convenience sampling method. The study was based on health belief model. The data collection instruments used were structured questionnaires and the data collected were analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics for the study. The research revealed that 53.3% of mothers are having good knowledge, 36.7% of mothers are having excellent knowledge and 10% mothers are having average knowledge regarding child abuse [14].
- A descriptive study was conducted on 2020 to assess the knowledge and attitude of mothers towards prevention of child sexual abuse at Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Sample consist of 100 mothers of school

going children which was selected by purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-structured demographic Performa and knowledge and attitude assessment questionnaires. As per statistical analysis 54%, 34%, 12% of mothers are having average, good, and poor level of knowledge in prevention of child sexual abuse respectively where as 52%, 27%, 19%, 2% of mothers were having negative, positive, strongly positive, and stringy negative attitude towards prevention of child sexual abuse respectively [15].

- A cross sectional study was conducted in Riyadh city from 1-05-2018 to 30-04-2019 to assess the awareness and knowledge of parents about child abuse among the general population in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the general public in Riyadh city. Study subjects included study subjects from Riyadh city with age above 18 years from both sexes, who approve to participate in the study, were included of which 4117 participants were recruited. The result suggests that majority of respondents, 82% reported that they had prior knowledge about child abuse. The types of child abuse that the respondent showed the best knowledge were physical neglect 47.8%, educational neglect 41.8% and physical abuse 40.3%. The least percentage of completed answers were in emotional abuse 28.5% and neglect of medical care 28.7% [16].

Methodology

The methodology undertook is the framework for conducting the study.

Research Approach

This research follows a quantitative approach.

Research Design

The research design used in this study is descriptive study design.

Description of Tool

Section 1: Proforma to elicit baseline variables.

Section 2: Five-point Likert scale to assess the perception of child abuse among caretakers.

Section 1: Proforma to elicit baseline variables.

A structured questionnaire was used for the collection of baseline variables of the subject.

In this study baseline variables are related to caregivers which includes Age, Marital status, Relationship with child, Type of family, educational status, Monthly family income and Occupational status.

Section 2: Five-point Likert scale to assess the perception of child abuse among caretakers.

Rating Scale for Perception

Scorings: Strongly agree – 5, Agree – 4, Uncertain -3 Disagree -2, Strongly Disagree -1

Results

Section 1: Findings related to baseline variables of caretakers.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of perception with baseline variables n=165

SL. No	Baseline Data	Perception					
		Good		Average		Poor	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Age						
	21-29	34	75.6	11	24.4	0	0.0
	30-39	75	76.5	20	20.4	3	3.1
	40-49	15	75.0	4	20.0	1	5.0
	>=50	2	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	Marital Status						
	Single	5	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Married	117	75.5	34	21.9	4	2.6
	Separated/divorced	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Widow/widower	3	75.0	1	25.0	0	0.0
3	Relationship with child						
	Grandparents	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
	Father	43	75.4	12	21.1	2	3.5
	Mother	74	76.3	21	21.6	2	2.1
	Guardian	8	88.9	1	11.1	0	0.0
4	Type of family						
	Nuclear	71	84.5	13	15.5	0	0.0
	Joint	48	65.8	21	28.8	4	5.5
	Extended	0	0.0	1	100	0	0.0
	Single parent	7	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
5	Educational status						
	Professional degree	46	92.0	4	8.0	0	0.0
	Graduate	48	75.0	13	20.3	3	4.7
	Intermediate/diploma	15	83.3	3	16.7	0	0.0
	High school	9	50.0	8	44.4	1	5.6
	Middle school	6	50.0	6	50.0	0	0.0
	Primary school	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Illiterate	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	
6	Monthly family income						
	>=Rs 19500	76	87.4	10	11.5	1	1.1
	Rs 9500-19499	26	74.3	9	25.7	0	0.0
	Rs 7500-9499	9	56.3	5	31.3	2	12.5
	Rs 2500-7499	10	76.9	2	15.4	1	7.7
	Rs 950-2499	3	30.0	7	70.0	0	0.0
	>=Rs 950	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0
7	Occupational Status						
	Professional	64	91.4	5	7.1	1	1.4
	Semi-professional	16	84.2	3	15.8	0	0.0
	Clerical/shop/farmer	18	66.7	9	33.3	0	0.0
	Skilled worker	8	57.1	5	35.7	1	7.1
	Semi-skilled worker	20	57.1	13	37.1	2	5.7

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are between the age group of 30-39 (59.4%), 93.9% of the respondents were married, 58.8% of the respondents were

mothers, 50.9% belongs to nuclear family, (38.8%) were graduates, 52.7% has a monthly income of >/=19500, 42.4%) were professionals,

Table 2a: Range, mean and standard deviation of perception of caretakers regarding child abuse. n=165

Study Variable	Maximum Score	Range	Mean	Mean %	Standard Deviation
Perception	50	10-50	42.73	85.46%	6.408

The above table shows that the mean of perception was 42.73 and the standard deviation was 6.408.

Table 2b: Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation of perception of care takers towards child abuse

Sl. No	Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
1.	Neglect is a form of child abuse.	103	62.4	39	23.6	5	3.0	10	6.1	8	4.8	1-5	4.33	1.111
2	Black eyes and broken bones are warning signs of physical abuse.	61	37.0	57	34.5	22	13.3	14	8.5	8	4.8	1-5	3.85	1.247
3	Children should report to their parents if they are ill-treated by others.	116	70.3	41	24.2	1	0.6	5	3.0	2	1.2	1-5	4.60	0.763
4	Blackmailing a child is a form of emotional abuse.	96	58.2	51	30.9	5	3.0	6	3.6	6	3.6	1-5	4.35	1.034

5	Longterm effects of abuse can result in low self-esteem of the child.	99	60.0	45	27.3	9	5.5	9	5.5	2	1.2	1-5	4.38	0.971
6	Blaming children in front of their peers embarrasses them.	94	57.0	56	33.9	3	1.8	9	5.5	2	1.2	1-5	4.38	0.934
7	Parents should provide sex education just before children attain puberty.	82	49.7	48	29.1	13	7.9	12	7.3	8	4.8	1-5	4.08	1.225
8	Denying proper care and attention can be an indication of child neglect.	85	51.5	63	38.2	7	4.2	7	4.2	2	1.2	1-5	4.33	0.912
9	Parents have the responsibility to teach children to differentiate between good touch and bad touch.	124	75.2	36	21.8	1	0.6	1	0.6	3	1.2	1-5	4.66	0.698
10	Children who report being victims of sexual abuse are not necessarily placed in foster care following these revelations.	51	30.9	57	34.5	34	20.6	15	9.1	7	4.2	1-5	3.77	1.146

Table 1b shows the mean and standard deviation of various statements related to perception about child abuse 75.15% of subjects strongly agreed to the statements that parents have the responsibility to teach children to differentiate

between good touch and bad touch. 64.24% of the caregivers strongly agreed to the statement that children should report to their parents if they are ill-treated by others.

Section 4: Findings related to association between perception and selected baseline variables

Table 3a: Frequency, percentage, Fischer's exact value of association of perception with baseline variables N=165

SL. No	Baseline Data	Perception						Fischer	P Value	
		Good		Average		Poor				
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	AGE									
	21-29	34	75.6	11	24.4	0	0.0	3.862	0.768	
	30-39	75	76.5	20	20.4	3	3.1			
	40-49	15	75.0	4	20.0	1	5.0			
	>=50	2	100	0	0.0	0	0.0			
2	Marital Status									
	Single	5	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.937	0.801	
	Married	117	75.5	34	21.9	4	2.6			
	Seperated/divorced	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0			
	Widow/widower	3	75.0	1	25.0	0	0.0			
3	Relationship with Child									
	Grandparents	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	3.887	0.786	
	Father	43	75.4	12	21.1	2	3.5			
	Mother	74	76.3	21	21.6	2	2.1			
	Guardian	8	88.9	1	11.1	0	0.0			
4	Type of Family									
	Nuclear	71	84.5	13	15.5	0	0.0	16.11	0.008	
	Joint	48	65.8	21	28.8	4	5.5			
	Extended	0	0.0	1	100	0	0.0			
	Single parent	7	100	0	0.0	0	0.0			
5	Educational Status									
	Professional degree	46	92.0	4	8.0	0	0.0	25.77	0.004 S	
	Graduate	48	75.0	13	20.3	3	4.7			
	Intermediate/diploma	15	83.3	3	16.7	0	0.0			
	High school	9	50.0	8	44.4	1	5.6			
	Middle school	6	50.0	6	50.0	0	0.0			
	Primary school	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0			
Illiterate	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0				
6	Monthly Family Income									
	>=Rs 19500	76	87.4	10	11.5	1	1.1	28.98	0.00 S	
	Rs 9500-19499	26	74.3	9	25.7	0	0.0			
	Rs 7500-9499	9	56.3	5	31.3	2	12.5			
	Rs 2500-7499	10	76.9	2	15.4	1	7.7			
	Rs 950-2499	3	30.0	7	70.0	0	0.0			
	>=Rs 950	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0			
7	Occupational Status									
	Professional	64	91.4	5	7.1	1	1.4	24.01	0.00 S	
	Semi-professional	16	84.2	3	15.8	0	0.0			
	Clerical/shop/farmer	18	66.7	9	33.3	0	0.0			
	Skilled worker	8	57.1	5	35.7	1	7.1			
	Semi-skilled worker	20	57.1	13	37.1	2	5.7			

Table 3a shows that there is a significant association between perception and educational status, monthly income and occupational status of caretakers

Discussion

Section-1 Findings related to baseline variables of caretakers

A total of 165 samples were studied. In the present study, 59.4% of caregivers belong to the age group of 30-39 years of which 58.8% are mothers and out of which 93.9% are married. In the present study 50.9% of caregivers belongs to a nuclear family and 38.8% of caregivers were graduates among which 42.4% of them were notified as professionals, 52.7% has monthly income of greater than or equal to Rupees 19500.

In a related descriptive study conducted in Delhi to assess the knowledge regarding child abuse among parents, a sample size of 100 parents were selected, out of which 45% belonged to the age group of 31-40 among which 42.5% were mothers and 57.5% were fathers. 37.5% belonged to nuclear family and 27.5% of caregivers were graduates among which 72.5% belonged to the category of service, 40% has monthly income of more than 8000.

Section-2 Findings related to perception of caretakers regarding child abuse

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the perception of caregivers amid which 76.4% have good perception and 21.2% have average perception and 2.4% have poor perception. The perception was assessed using a five points Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale consisted of 10 statements regarding child abuse. 75.15% of subjects strongly agreed to the statements that parents have the responsibility to teach children to differentiate between good touch and bad touch. 64.24% of the caregivers strongly agreed to the statement that children should report to their parents if they are ill-treated by others. The results reveal that parents strongly feel that they are responsible for teaching their children the difference between good touch and bad touch and that their children should come and report to them if they are ill-treated by others.

In a related descriptive study to assess the perception about child abuse and their impact on physical and emotional abuse among parents in a primary health centre, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, over two-thirds of the participants, almost 85%- 90% of parents, did not have difficulty in controlling their child. Rewarding them for good behaviour was equivalent to punishing for bad behaviour. More than half of the parents attempted to control their children by shouting and less than a fifth resorted to physical punishment to discipline.

Conclusion

The study findings helped to spread awareness to the public. It will help staff nurses to conduct regular health education programs in the clinical setting, distribute pamphlets to visitors in the OPD as well as display the pamphlet information on screens in the OPD foyer to educate the general public about the different types of child abuse and the current laws regarding child abuse in India

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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How to Cite This Article

BIJI BS, Binsu Sunil. A study to assess the perception of child abuse among care takers of children with a view to develop an information pamphlet on child abuse in a selected hospital, Bangalore. International Journal of Advance Research in Nursing. 2022;5(2):223-228.

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