

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Regarding Child Abuse Among School Teachers: A Cross-Sectional Study

Research Article

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Abstract

Objectives: Child abuse and neglect is still a serious social and public health problem. The damage to a child from maltreatment can range from minor to extensive physical, psychological, and behavioral problems. In the most severe cases, child abuse and neglect results in the tragic death of a child. Teachers are in a unique position to identify and report abuse because of their daily contact with young children. The aim of this study was to investigate school teacher's knowledge, attitude and practices regarding child abuse.

Methods: The questionnaire consisting of 10 questions was sent to teachers in government schools and private schools. Questionnaire was framed to assess teachers' knowledge about child abuse, their attitude towards reporting child abuse and their practices involved regarding child abuse.

Results: 36.3% were government school teachers, 21.8% were private sector CBSE and 41.9% were private matriculation teachers. 82% of the teachers agreed that it should be mandated to report about child abuse. 64.7% of the teachers made report of child abuse cases and 35.3% of the teachers failed to report child abuse cases. 57.7% of the teachers have planned to report of child abuse cases when they suspect it, 18.2% of the teachers have not planned to report child abuse cases and 24.1% of the teachers have not decided yet to report child abuse cases when they suspect it.

Conclusion: Within the limits of this study, it can be concluded that majority of the teachers have knowledge about child abuse, they are aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and child neglect but they are not reporting child abuse cases.

Keywords: Knowledge; Child Abuse; Teachers; Parent; Children; School; Attitude.

Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, neglect of a child especially by a parent or other caretaker [1]. This can lead to interference with the child's normal social or psychological development leaving the child with lifelong psychological scars [2]. Child abuse and neglect is motionless serious social and public health problem. Various signs to look out for child abuse are bruising, traumatic primary teeth fractures and unhealed scars [3-5]. The harm to a child can vary from slight to large physical, psychological, and behavioral problems. In the most serious cases, child abuse and neglect results in the devastating death of a child [6, 7].

Teachers are in an eccentric position to identify and report child abuse because of their daily contact with children. Several studies revealed that teachers receive nominal training in identifying child abuse [8, 9]. Due to their absence of sufficient training, many teachers are not aware of the foremost symptoms of child abuse. Thus, child maltreatment may go unknown and confidential by many school personnel [10, 11].

A large-scale national study conducted in 2007 by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), to assess the range and nature of child abuse in India, exhibited some alarming statis-

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tics. It revealed that among the 12,447 children interviewed, more than half (53 percent) reported experience of sexual abuse [12]. Child abuse can also be in the form of emotional abuse involving shaming, humiliating a child, making negative comparisons to others, constant yelling, threatening, rejecting and ignoring the child as punishment, having limited physical contact with the child [13-15]. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the knowledge, awareness and practice on child abuse against children among all school teachers in Indian population.

Material and Methods

An online survey was developed in google forms that contained 10 questions. The questionnaire was sent to teachers in government schools and private schools. The survey developed for this study contained 2 sections. The first section assessed the knowledge and their attitude toward child abuse reporting. The second section was about child abuse reporting experience during the past years. The survey was answered by 100 teachers. The results were collected and pie charts were obtained and interpreted.

Result

According to this survey, Figure 1 shows that 36.3% were government school teachers, 21.8% were private sector CBSE and 41.9% were private matriculation teachers. Figure 2 shows that 52.7% of teachers agreed that child abuse is a serious problem in our society while 47.3% of teachers disagreed. Figure 3 shows that 82% of the teachers agreed that it should be mandatory to report about the child abuse and 18% of the teachers disagreed with the statement. Figure 4 shows that 95% of the school teachers agreed to know the school procedures for reporting child abuse and 5% of the school teachers did not know the school procedures for reporting child abuse. Figure 5 shows that 98.8% of the school

teachers were aware of the signs of child abuse and 1.2% of the school teachers were not aware of the signs of child abuse. Figure 6 shows that 70.9% of the teachers agreed that it is parents right to discipline their children and 29.1% of the teachers disagreed. Figure 7 shows that 35.2% of the teachers agreed not reporting child abuse because of the possibility of being sued and 64.8% of the teachers disagreed. Figure 8 shows that 64.7% of the teachers made report of child abuse cases and 35.3% of the teachers failed to report child abuse cases. Figure 9 shows that 35% of the teachers have noticed an abused child but failed to report and 65% of the teachers disagreed. Figure 10 shows that 57.7% of the teachers have planned to report of child abuse cases when they suspect it, 18.2% of the teachers have not planned to report child abuse cases and 24.1% of the teachers have not decided yet to report child abuse cases when they suspect it.

Discussion

A study conducted by Crenshaw et al reported that teachers make good observations of children on a regular basis and compare present and past behavior [16]. The studies reported increased risks for psychiatric disorders including compulsive disorders, suicidal behaviors and also depression. The victims of child sexual abuse were also established to have increased risks for temperamental problems, poor social adjustment, lack of trust, and insecure relations with parents [17]. Research showed that the majority of teachers received minimal instruction on identifying, reporting, and intervening in suspected cases of child abuse and neglect [18].

In general, it was found that the majority of teachers had never made a report of child abuse. On the average, participants had 10 years teaching experience, but only made one report of child abuse [19]. A study conducted by Bavolek et al concluded that there are several reasons for failure to report on the part of school

Figure 1. Pie chart represents the distribution of the school teachers among different school curriculums. It shows that 21.8% of the teachers were among the private sector CBSE (yellow), 36.3% of the teachers were among the government school(blue) and 41.9% teachers were among private matriculation(red).

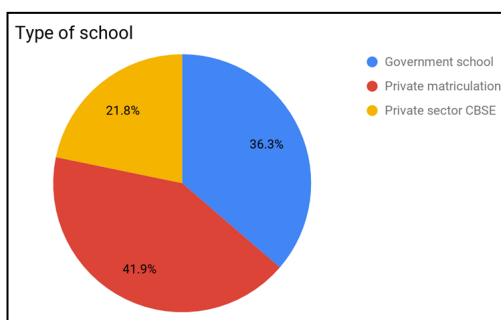


Figure 2. Pie chart represents the responses for whether the child abuse was a serious problem. 53% of the teachers agreed (orange) and 47% of the teachers disagreed (violet).

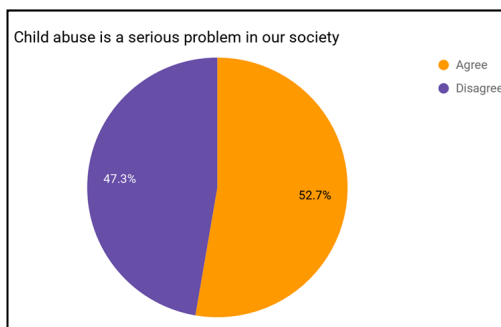


Figure 3. Pie chart represents the responses for whether the teachers should be mandated to report child abuse cases. 82% of the teachers agreed that it should be mandated to report about child abuse (orange) and 18% of the Teachers disagreed with the statement (violet).

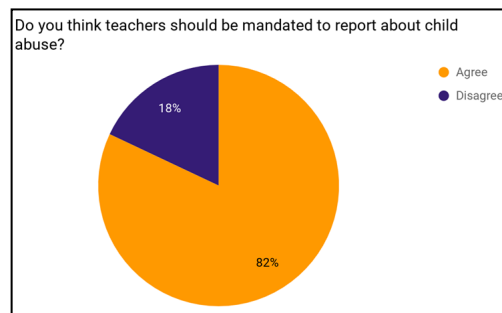


Figure 4. Pie chart represents the distribution of awareness to school procedure for reporting child abuse. 95% of the school teachers agreed that they knew the school procedures for reporting child abuse (orange) and 5% of the school teachers did not know the school's procedures for reporting child abuse (violet).

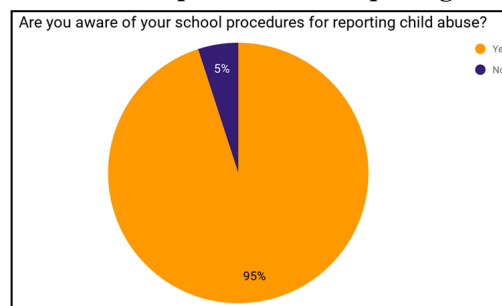


Figure 5. Pie chart represents the distribution of awareness of the signs of child abuse. 98.8% of the school teachers were aware of the signs of child abuse (orange) and 1.2% of the school teachers were not aware of the signs of child abuse (violet).

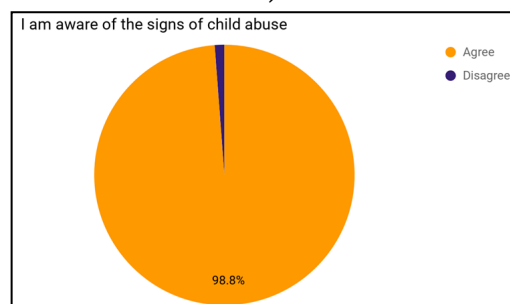
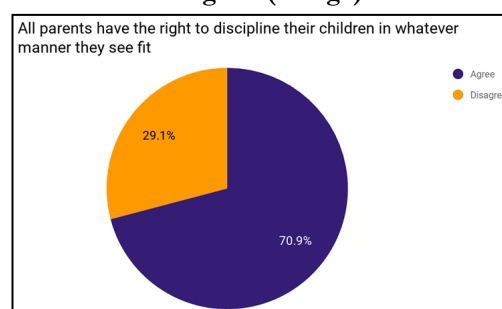


Figure 6. Pie chart represents the responses for whether the parents have right to discipline their children in any manner. 70.9% of the teachers agreed that it is the parents right to discipline their Children (violet) and 29.1% of the teachers disagreed (orange).



personnel. These include personal beliefs and biases, lack of knowledge or awareness of signs of abuse or of duty to report, and descriptions of past outcomes of previously reported cases [20]. Another study by Oberman et al reported that the most commonly cited reason for failure to report child abuse was fear of making an inaccurate report, followed by feeling as though child protective services does not offer help to maltreated children [21].

A study by Baxter and Beer (1990) reported that 16% of teachers were unaware of the law regarding child abuse reporting. In their study, they also found that less than one-fourth of school personnel had read the Kansas state law regarding child abuse, and only 28% of respondents knew that all school personnel were required to report suspected abuse [22].

Several studies revealed that teachers do not receive adequate

Figure 7. Pie chart represents the responses of teachers for not reporting child abuse because of the possibility of being sued. It shows that 35.2% of the teachers agreed not reporting child abuse because of the possibility of being sued (violet) and 64.8% of the teachers disagreed(orange).

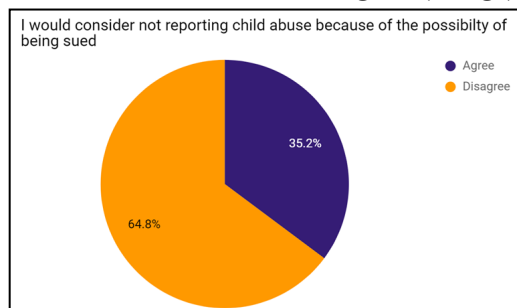


Figure 8. Pie chart represents the responses to whether child abuse reports to children’s services were made by the teachers. 64.7% of the teachers made report of child abuse cases(blue) and 35.3% of the teachers failed to report child abuse cases(violet).

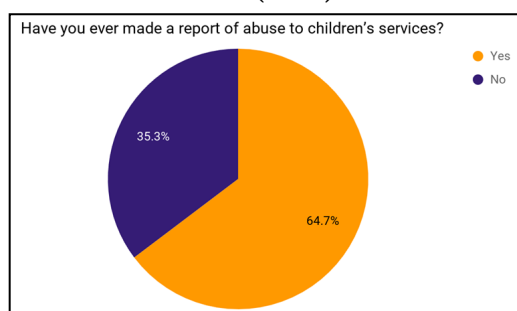


Figure 9. Pie chart represents responses of teachers regarding failure to report child abuse when present. 65%of the teachers disagreed (blue) and 35%of the teachers agreed (orange).

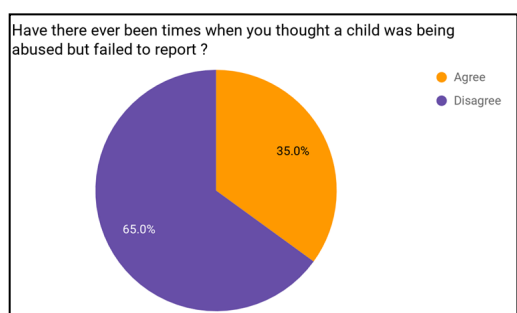
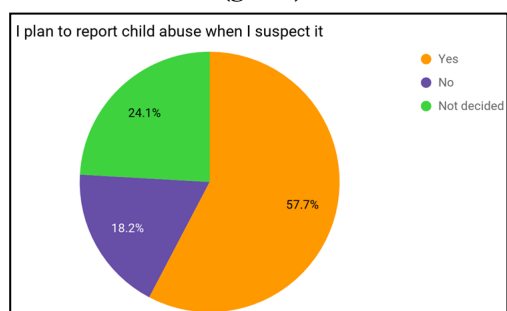


Figure 10. Pie chart represents the responses of teachers planning to report child abuse if suspected. 57.7% of the teachers have planned to report of child abuse cases when they suspect it(orange),18.2% of the teachers have not planned to report child abuse cases(violet) and 24.1% of the teachers have not decided yet to report child abuse cases when they suspect it(green).



training on child abuse during their college education or in-service programs [23-26]. McIntyre (1987) found that only 33% of the teachers reported that they knew the existence of their state law. According to their study,81% of teachers received no child abuse training during their college career,61% had not received information on child abuse or neglect during in-service training sessions and only 30% of the teachers said they were very aware of the symptoms of neglect, 21% of the symptoms

of physical abuse, 19% of the signs of emotional abuse, and 4% of the symptoms of sexual abuse [27].

Kirk A. Beck et al, reported that almost two-thirds of teachers felt that a significant obstacle to child abuse reporting was the lack of sufficient knowledge on how to detect and report cases of suspected child abuse [28]. Yashika Sharma et al, reported that majority of the parents lack knowledge regarding children’s edu-

cation and protection. Most parents were in favor of having better career prospects for Male child. Parents were also asked regarding the physical, mental, and emotional health of a child. Most of the parents were of the opinion that children should be distinguished based on academic performance. The study also recommended various measures to combat child abuse [29].

Conclusion

Within the limits of this study, it can be concluded that most of the teachers were aware about child abuse but failed to report it confidently. The education about reporting child abuse is urgently needed because of the consequences of the problem. The schools should work as a team in reporting child abuse and there should be proper communications between the principal, teacher, counsellor, social worker, child, and parents, which aids them in feeling more confident in making reports of child abuse.

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