

Research Article

# Knowledge and Attitude of Teachers and Parents Regarding Child Abuse

Seema Rani

Assistant Professor, Rufaida College of Nursing, Jamia Hamdard, Delhi.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24321/2349.2880.201904>

## I N F O

**E-mail Id:**

seema9rani@yahoo.co.in

**Orcid Id:**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3133-448X>

**How to cite this article:**

Rani S. Knowledge and Attitude of Teachers and Parents Regarding Child Abuse. *Ind J Youth Adol Health* 2019; 6(1): 21-27.

Date of Submission: 2019-05-08

Date of Acceptance: 2019-06-14

## A B S T R A C T

**Introduction:** Child abuse and neglect practices are as old as human civilization. Educators and parents play a vital role in providing a safe place, protecting children from harm inflicted in their home and community.

**Objective:** A study was taken up to assess the knowledge and attitude of the teachers and parents on child abuse with a view to develop and evaluate the self-instructional guidelines on child abuse in selected government schools of Delhi.

**Methodology:** The present study was conducted in two phases. Pre-experimental one group pretest, posttest design was opted for the study. Structured knowledge questionnaire and attitude scale were developed to assess teachers and parents knowledge and attitude towards child abuse. Sample size for each phase was 80 selected through multistage sampling.

**Results:** It was revealed that knowledge deficit and negative attitude was present about child abuse among teachers and parents. The guidelines for teachers and parents on child abuse were found to be effective in increasing the knowledge and positive attitude of teachers and parents.

**Keywords:** Child Abuse, Teachers, Parents, Guidelines on Child Abuse

## Introduction

Every child has a right to a family of his own. She is entitled to love and affection and to grow up in the care and protection of her parents in a proper atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security. The International Year of the Child, 1979, reaffirmed the concern of the world community "to provide an opportunity to emphasize the intellectual, psychological and social development of children (in addition to their physical welfare) - with special attention to the cause of the disadvantaged children group" (Bose, 1992).

A child is recognized as a person less than 18 years (UNICEF - The Convention of the Rights of the Child). The child has a right to express his or her views, obtain information and freedom of thoughts. Also it is the government's responsibility to protect the child from maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child. Maltreatment of the children reflects the moral sensibilities of societies.

The interplay of personal, situational and socio-cultural influences combine to create the conditions for abuse to occur. Child abuse and neglect is a major threat to the

health and well-being of children throughout the world. This may occur at homes, in the neighborhoods, schools, public places, residential care institutions and work places but primarily in the family setting and is a problem firmly rooted in the societies.

Child abuse & neglect practices are as old as human civilization and even now a large number of children are made disabled mentally and physically due to such practices. Throughout history, girls & boys have been kept or sold for sexual purposes, sacrificed, maimed, enslaved and exploited by adults. The concept of child abuse came into prominence, when soon after World War II pediatric radiologists discovered the problem of physical abuse of children by their parents. This led to a large number of public exposures of such problems. In 1962, Kempe and his associates published an article on the 'battered child syndrome' (Reference).

Educators and other school staff are important people in the lives of children. They provide children with knowledge and learning skills that are vital for their psychological and social development. They also serve as role models for normative behavior and social skills. The importance of a supportive and caring role-model may be especially critical to the development of at-risk children who come from abusive or neglecting families. Educators thus play a vital role in providing a safe place, protecting children from harm inflicted in their home and community, as well as from victimization in school by their peers. In some cases, however, educators themselves become the source of emotional, physical and sexual maltreatment of their students. They may insult and humiliate their students, assault them and behave in inappropriate sexual manner.

Children, being the future of the nation and constituting a large portion of the entire population, are at stake. Teachers and parents are two significant role models for children. So, it is important to find out their knowledge and attitude towards child abuse. And it is equally important to intervene, for the betterment of children and to develop self-instructional guidelines on child abuse.

A study was taken up to assess the knowledge and attitude of the teachers and parents on child abuse with a view to develop and evaluate the Self-Instructional Guidelines (SIG) on child abuse in selected government schools of Delhi.

## Methodology

The present study was conducted in two phases. In phase I, a descriptive survey was conducted to assess knowledge and attitude of teachers and parents regarding child abuse. Based on the assessed knowledge and attitude of the group in phase I, a Self-Instructional Guide (SIG) was developed on child abuse. In phase II of the study, evaluative research

was considered appropriate to determine the effectiveness of the developed self-instructional guidelines on child abuse for teachers and parents i.e., quasi-experimental one group pretest, posttest design. The study was conducted in two different settings in both phases. For teachers it was government's co-education senior secondary school. And for parents their homes. Samples were teachers and parents of children studying at schools in Delhi. In each phase sample size was 80 i.e. 40 teachers and 40 parents selected through multi-stage sampling. Structured questionnaire was developed to assess knowledge of teachers and parents regarding child abuse and attitude scale to assess teachers and parents attitude towards child abuse. Section I of the structured knowledge questionnaire consisted of background data of teachers and parents. Section II comprised of questions pertaining to knowledge about child abuse including 31 multiple choice questions and 30 activities related to the type of abuse. All the items in the knowledge questionnaire were scored and one point was assigned to each item for a correct response. A score 0 was allotted for each wrong response. Section III consisted of five point attitude scale with 33 items on it. The scale consisted of both positive and negative statements. The score for attitude scale ranged from 33 to 165.

To ensure the validity of the content, the tools were submitted to the thirteen experts from the field of nursing, pediatric medicine, community medicine, psychology, sociology, pediatric nursing and community health nursing. Their suggestions were incorporated and tools were modified accordingly. The reliability of structured knowledge questionnaire was established by using K.R -20 formula and was found to be highly reliable i.e. 0.87. The reliability of structured attitude scale was established by using Cronbach Alpha test and was found to be highly reliable i.e. 0.89. In phase I the investigator herself administered the tools. Average time taken to respond to both the tools was 20-25 minutes. Based on the findings, SIG on child abuse was developed. In phase II on day one the tools were administered to the teachers and parents followed by distribution of SIG on child abuse to them. After six days of distribution of SIG i.e. on 7th day, tools to assess knowledge and attitude were administered again.

## Result

### Findings of Phase - I

Description of the sample characteristics is given in table 1.

Description of the knowledge and attitude of teachers and parents regarding child abuse is given in table 2.

Data showed that 43% of teachers had knowledge score below mean where as 57% of teachers had scores above mean. Also data show 45% of parents had knowledge score

below mean whereas 55% of parents had scores above mean. This shows that a fairly large proportion of teachers and parents had inadequate knowledge about child abuse.

Further data revealed that 38% of teachers and 58% of parents had attitude score below mean whereas 62% teachers and 42% of parents had scores above mean attitude score. This shows that a fairly large portion of teachers and parents had negative attitude about child abuse.

**Table I. Distribution of teachers and parents of children studying at co-ed. Government senior secondary school by their characteristics**

(n=80)

S. No.	Sample characteristics	Teachers (n <sub>1</sub> =40)		Parents (n <sub>2</sub> =40)	
		f	%	f	%
1.	<b>Age in years</b>				
	21-30	2	5	5	12.5
	31-40	19	47.5	18	45
	41-50	14	35	14	35
	51-60	5	12.5	3	7.5
2.	<b>Sex</b>				
	Male	14	35	23	57.5
	Female	26	65	17	42.5
3.	<b>Religion</b>				
	Hindu	36	90	37	92.5
	Muslim	01	2.5	0	0
	Christian	0	0	3	7.5
	Sikh	3	7.5	0	0
4.	<b>Marital status</b>				
	Married	36	90	40	100
	Unmarried	4	10	0	0
	Divorced	0	0	0	0
	Broken family	0	0	0	0
5.	<b>Type of family</b>				
	Nuclear	26	65	15	37.5
	Joint	14	35	25	62.5
6.	<b>Size of the family</b>				
	2-4	20	50	15	37.5
	5-6	10	25	15	37.5
	7-6	5	12.5	5	12.5
	More than 8	5	12.5	5	12.5
7.	<b>Family's monthly income (In Rupees)</b>				

	Less than 4000	0	0	2	5
	4001-8000	0	100	22	55
	More than 8000	40	0	16	40
8.	<b>Size of the accommodation</b>				
	Common room for children and parents	15	37.5	16	40
	Common room for siblings	7	17.5	12	30
	Independent rooms for children	18	45	12	30
9.	<b>Education status of self</b>				
	Primary	0	0	7	17.5
	Secondary	16	40	17	42.5
	Graduation/ post-graduation	15	37.5	11	27.5
	Professional	9	22.5	5	12.5
10.	<b>Education status of spouse</b>				
	Primary	3	7.5	12	30
	Secondary	3	7.5	15	37.5
	Graduation/ post-graduation	14	35	10	25
	Professional	16	40	3	7.5
11.	<b>Occupational status of self</b>				
	Service	40	100	29	72.5
	Business	0	0	0	0
	Labor	0	0	1	2.5
	No job	0	0	10	25
12.	<b>Occupational status of spouse</b>				
	Service	21	52.5	20	50
	Business	6	15	2	5
	Labor	0	0	2	5
	No job	9	22.5	1	40

The computed 'r' values 0.33 and 0.39 indicate a positive significant correlation between the knowledge and attitude of teachers and parents respectively about child abuse. Thus, it can be concluded that both teachers and parents had lack of knowledge as well as negative attitude towards child abuse. This was suggestive of preparing guidelines on child abuse (table 3).

**Table 2. Knowledge and attitude scores of teachers and parents**

Variable	Category of subjects	Possible range of score	Obtained range of score	Mean	Median	S.D
Knowledge score	Teachers	0-61	18-48	37.1	38	6.8
	Parents	0-61	17-45	34.4	35	6.7
Attitude score	Teachers	33-165	89-145	125.6	130	12.9
	Parents	33-165	84-148	124.1	123	11.8

n=80

**Table 3. Co-efficient of correlation between knowledge & attitude scores of teachers and parents regarding child abuse**

Category	Variable	Mean	R
Teachers (n <sub>1</sub> =40)	Knowledge score	37.1	0.33
	Attitude score	125.6	
Parents (n <sub>2</sub> =40)	Knowledge score	34.4	0.39
	Attitude score	124.1	

n=80

For df (38) at 0.05 level table value of 'r'=0.304

**Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of teachers and parents of children studying at co-ed. Government senior secondary school by their characteristics**

S. No.	Sample Characteristics	Teachers (n <sub>1</sub> =40)		Parents (n <sub>2</sub> =40)	
		F	%	F	%
1.	<b>Age in year</b>				
	21-30	13	32.5	9	22.5
	31-40	6	15	19	47.5
	41-50	13	32.5	11	27.5
	51-60	8	20	1	2.5
2.	<b>Sex</b>				
	Male	13	32.5	22	55
	Female	27	67.5	18	45
3.	<b>Religion</b>				
	Hindu	37	92.5	38	95
	Muslim	2	5	2	5
	Christian	1	2.5	0	0
4.	<b>Marital status</b>				
	Married	33	82.5	40	100
	Unmarried	5	12.5	0	0
	Divorced	2	5	0	0
5.	<b>Type of family</b>				
	Nuclear	20	50	26	65
	Joint	20	50	14	35
6.	<b>Size of the family</b>				
	2-4	20	50	10	25
	5-6	10	25	24	60

n=80

	7-8	4	10	2	5
	More than 8	6	15	4	10
7.	<b>Family's monthly income (in Rupees.)</b>				
	Less than 4000	0	0	9	22.5
	4001-8000	3	7.5	23	57.5
	More than 8000	37	92.5	8	20
8.	<b>Size of the accommodation</b>				
	Common room for children and parent	16	40	23	57.5
	Common room for siblings	8	20	9	22.5
	Independent rooms for children	16	40	8	20
9.	<b>Education status of self</b>				
	Primary	1	2.5	4	10
	Secondary	3	7.5	21	52.5
	Graduation / post-graduation	16	40	10	25
	Professional	20	50	5	
10.	<b>Education status of spouse</b>				
	Primary	3	7.5	5	12.5
	Secondary	3	7.5	23	57.5
	Graduation / post-graduation	16	40	9	22.5
	Professional	11	27.5	3	7.5
11.	<b>Occupational status of self</b>				
	Service	40	100	23	57.5
	Business	0	0	6	15
	Labour	0	0	2	5
	No job	0	0	9	22.5
12.	<b>Occupational status of spouse</b>				
	Service	25	62.5	22	55
	Business	4	10	3	7.5
	Labor	1	2.5	3	7.5
	No job	3	7.5	12	30

**Table 5. Mean, Mean difference and t-value from pre and post-test Knowledge and attitude scores of teachers**

$n_1=40$

Variable	Category of subjects	Mean	Mean <sub>D</sub>	S.D <sub>D</sub>	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-value
Knowledge score	Pre-test	39.28	7.25	5.36	0.85	8.53*
	Post-test	46.53				
Attitude score	Pre-test	124.78	14.25	17.74	2.80	5.09*
	Post-test	139.03				

df (39) 0.05 level 't' value=2.02

#### Section IV

Findings related to evaluation of the guidelines in terms of knowledge and attitude of teachers and parents regarding child abuse.

It is evident from the findings given in table 5 and table 6, the obtained differences between mean pretest and post-test knowledge and attitude scores of teachers and parents were statistically significant.

**Table 6. Mean, Mean difference and t-value from pre and post-test Knowledge and attitude scores of parents**

Variable	Category of subjects	Mean	Mean <sub>D</sub>	S.D <sub>D</sub>	SE <sub>MD</sub>	t-value
Knowledge score	Pre test	29.68	6.05	8.76	1.38	4.38*
	Post test	35.73				
Attitude score	Pre test	114.78	16.08	17.19	2.72	5.91*
	Post test	130.85				

n<sub>1</sub>=40

df(39) 0.05 level 't' value=2.02

**Table 7. Co-efficient of correlation between knowledge & attitude scores of teachers and parents**

Category	Variable	Mean	S.D	r
Teachers (n <sub>1</sub> =40)	Post-test knowledge scores	46.53	7.34	0.5*
	Attitude score	139.03	11.61	
Parents (n <sub>2</sub> =40)	Post-test Knowledge score	35.73	10.45	0.65*
	Attitude score	130.85	12.08	

n=80

df (38) at 0.05 level , r=.304

### Section V

Correlation between knowledge & attitude scores of teachers & parents regarding child abuse.

The computed 'r' value indicated that there was a positive significant correlation between post-test knowledge scores and post-test attitude score at 0.05 level for both teachers and parents. Hence, it can be concluded that guidelines on child abuse were found to be useful for enhancing knowledge and developing positive attitude towards child abuse among teachers and parents.

### Discussion

The finding of the present study showed that 45% of parents had inadequate knowledge regarding child abuse as they had knowledge score below mean. 55% parents had knowledge score above mean though highest score obtained was very low i.e. 45 as against the maximum possible score of 61. The results are in partial agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Devi and Yadav,<sup>1</sup> which revealed that only 8% parents had good knowledge regarding abuse. Findings of the current study are also supported by other similar studies conducted by Gurung, Bhattarai<sup>2</sup> and Khanjaris et al.,<sup>3</sup> in Nepal and Iran respectively and results showed that significant number of parents had poor knowledge regarding the issue of child abuse particularly child sexual abuse.

Studies conducted by Khanjaris et al.<sup>3</sup> and Asadollahi et al.<sup>4</sup> suggested that large number of parents' attitudes towards child abuse were negative. Current study results shows similar results. 58% of parents' attitude score was below mean attitude score.

The results of the current study showed that 43% of teachers had knowledge score below mean. A similar study was conducted by Sadoon and Salih<sup>5</sup> and result showed that around 50% of the teachers had either no knowledge or ability to detect the signs of child physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Also the present study revealed that 38% of teachers had attitude score below mean and this finding is in contrast to the findings of the study conducted by Deb and Mathews<sup>6</sup> which showed that most teachers and parents had positive attitude about children's rights. The national center on child abuse prevention research<sup>7</sup> suggest that great responsibility is placed upon teachers to involve themselves in child abuse prevention, education and detection as majority of the teachers confront child abuse among their students, though they are provided insufficient education on how to address it. As a part of the current study a self-instructional guideline on child abuse was developed and evaluated for its effectiveness which was administered to teachers and parents.

### Conclusion

On the basis of finding of the present study, it can be concluded that knowledge deficit and negative attitude existed as regarding child abuse among teachers and parents. The guidelines for teachers and parents on child abuse were found to be effective in increasing the knowledge of teachers and parents. Teachers and parents developed positive attitude towards child abuse after exposure to guidelines. Teachers' and parents' knowledge gain was positively correlated to the attitude developed after exposure to guidelines suggesting that teachers and parents gained knowledge as well as developed positive attitude

towards child abuse. Guidelines had high acceptability and utility among teachers and parents.

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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