

Teachers' Impediments on Reporting Child Abuse - A Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The available evidence suggests that the severity of child abuse has the propensity to propagate and harm child's overall development, so its early detection and intervention is critical in preventing victim from suffering severe abuse. The teachers of primary school have excellent opportunity among all the professionals to notice and act promptly in response to child abuse and neglect (CAN).

Material and method: A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted among the Primary school teachers of Jammu City, J&K, India. A Structured Close Ended Questionnaire in two Languages (English & Hindi) comprising of ten questions was used.

Results: Teachers have a positive attitude toward this great problem and consider reporting CAN as their moral responsibility but face certain barriers in performing their duties.

Conclusion: There is need for formulating proper reporting guidelines of CAN for the teachers. There should be proper training programmes and continuing education programmes for the teachers for their knowledge and reporting about CAN at various levels including college curriculum.

Keywords: Teachers, Impediments, Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN), Continuing Education Programme, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

The term child abuse and neglect (CAN) includes any physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or neglect that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival or dignity, trust, or power¹. Modern society is extremely concerned about CAN as it exerts both short term and long lasting physical and psychological consequences ranging from poor academic performance, aggression, altered behavior, eating problems, sleep disturbances, depression and even suicidal attempts among youth².

Several developed countries of the world (Australia, Germany, Finland, Sweden and UK) have well developed protection system, focusing on identification, mandatory reporting and coercive actions³ about CAN. However, in this context, India needs wider and serious consideration as the child protection laws are not well developed in India. Recent statistics regarding child abuse in India signify that there is increase in the number of cases registered significantly from 8904 (in year 2014) to 149013 (in year 2015). Uttar Pradesh emerged as the state with highest child abuse cases (93708) followed by M.P. (1687), Tamil Nadu (1544), Karnataka (1480) and Gujarat (1416). Child abuse may arise as an act of failure to act by parent or other

care giver. According to NCANDS (National Child Abuse And Neglect Data System), 79.45% of child abuser were parents⁴. The upbringing of kids in India is the private concern of the parents. Physical punishment and yelling at children are considered as normal aspects of child upbringing, and child abuse cases are often hidden because of societal stigma⁵. Teachers can be crucial in identifying and reporting child abuse in this settings since they interact with kids on a nearly daily basis and have the ability to see long-term changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, and academic performance. Additionally, because of their close relationship, children might disclose things directly to them^{6,7,8}.

In order to recognize and report suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect early, teachers can play an important role. However, a number of factors, including their own attitude, knowledge, and understanding of child abuse and neglect, have an impact on their decision to do so. Therefore, a survey study was conducted to find out what barriers Jammu City's Primary School Teachers faced while reporting child abuse and neglect (CAN) as well as to assess their knowledge, understanding, and attitude towards in doing so.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Teachers at randomly chosen Jammu City schools participated in a cross-sectional survey. The official permission to conduct this survey was taken from the concerned school authorities. The teachers gave their consent to participate in the study voluntarily. Their willingness to take part in the study was expressed by the

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return of the self-administered questionnaire from them. A closed-ended questionnaire with ten multiple-choice questions was created in two languages (English and Hindi). The study questionnaire was derived from two previous studies^{11,12} with some modifications made. Questionnaire consists of two parts, Part-1 includes participants demographics characteristics such as age, qualification and experiences. Part-2 consists of questions related to teacher's view on knowledge, attitude and educational training and barriers they face in reporting CAN. A total of 303 teachers participated in the study.

Gender	N	%
Male	160	52.8
Female	143	47.2
Total	303	

Table-1: Distribution of Gender in the sample population

Age (In years)	N	%
Less than 25	38	12.5
26-36	88	29.1
36-45	71	23.4
46-55	69	22.8
Greater than 55	37	12.2
Total	303	

Table-2: Distribution of Age Groups among gender population

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. According to Burnetal^{13,70} is acceptable for the current study, reliability was 719.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Following compilation and entry into a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel 2007), therecorded data was exported to the data editor of SPSS software version 15. From the given questionnaire frequency distribution of questioned asked and responses recorded was calculated in percentage . Chi Square test was used to test the level of association between the teachers who attended training programmes with those who reported child abuse and neglect .The level of significance was set at 1% (ie P<0.01)

RESULTS

The mean Age of the sample population was 39.68± 11.6 with median 39. The distribution of male teachers was more (52.8%) as compared to female teachers (47.2%). This table shows highly statistically significant association between the teachers whoattended the educational training program and those who reported cases of Child Abuse and Neglect.

DISCUSSION

India hosts the largest child population globally accounting for approximately 46% of its totalpopulace. Safeguarding

S No	Questionnaire	yes n(%)	No n(%)	Not Sure/ Unaware n(%)
1	Does Child abuse represent a significantissue with in our society?	303(100)	0	0
2	Have you received educational trainingregarding CAN?	125(41.3)	178(58.7)	0
3	Are you aware of indicators of childneglect?	71(23.4)	148(48.8)	84(27.7)
4	Do you know the signs of child SexualAbuse?	69(22.8)	158(52.1)	76(25.1)
5	Do you know the signs of child PhysicalAbuse?	93(30.7)	136(44.9)	74(24.4)
6	Do you feel Reporting child abuse is crucial for safeguarding the wellbeing of children?	65(21.5)	158(52.1)	80(26.4)
7	Do teachers need clear guidelines onhow to report CAN?	151(49.8)	78(25.7)	74(24.4)
8	Have you ever reported a child Abusecase?	167(55.1)	136(44.9)	0
9	Do as a teacher, it is my obligation toreport any instance of child Abuse?	69(22.8)	138(45.5)	96(31.7)
10	Are you willing to attend any programme that discusses/ make youaware of all aspects of CAN?	149(49.1)	82(27.1)	72(23.7)

Table-3: Frequency distribution of Questions asked from teachers.

S. No	Item	Percentage
1	Insufficient educational training	58.7
2	No reporting guidelines for teachers	50.2
3.	Reporting is not our Obligations	45.5

Table-4: Perception of Impediments (barriers) that inhibits teachers from reporting CAN.

	Yes	No	P Value
Attended Training	125	178	P<0.01*
Reported CAN	167	136	
			Chi Square value-11.65
Chi Square test applied, *- Significant at 1% (i.e. P<0.01)			

Table-5: Association between distribution of teachers who attended educational programmes with those who reported CAN

the health and security of the nation's children is fundamental to its advancement and development.

Child abuse and neglect (CAN) is a serious health problem with severe outcomes if it occurs over an extended period. So, early detection and prevention is crucial for the well-being of children. The school teachers have an exceptional edge for early detection and prevention of CAN by reporting the suspected cases at the earliest. In countries like United States and Australia teachers contribute about one-fourth of the total CAN reports accounting for the second most common reporters for the same^{14,15}.

Despite being important stakeholders, multiple aspects have been documented in previous researches that hamper teachers' ability to identify and report CAN. Deficient training in child abuse cases have been reported by the teachers^{9,11}. Many teachers cited that lack of knowledge, detection skills a major impediment to report. Teacher's attitude, personal characteristics, social influences, unawareness of the legal issues related to child abuse reporting has also been cited as deterrents by the teachers. Findings of the current study indicate that teachers hold a positive attitude towards acknowledging Child Abuse as a significant societal issue and prioritize the safety of children in our society. Nonetheless they acknowledge a lack of self confidence in identifying signs and symptoms of Child Abuse and neglect (Graph 1). The results are consistent with the study done by Yanowitz et al.²²

The finding of the current study throw light on the multiple barriers perceived by the teachers that inhibit them from reporting (Graph 3). One of the most important barriers is that teachers (58.7%) reported lack of training programmes related to CAN both at preparatory education and during services did not prepare them for confronting the CAN. Findings of our study are consistent with results of most previous studies done by Abraham et al.⁹ who found that majority of the teachers received minimal instructions on identifying, reporting and intervening in suspected cases of Child Abuse and neglect. Teachers have been found to have lowest level of expertise regarding Child Abuse compared to mental health professionals and physicians²⁴. Secondly, teachers (45.5%) don't consider it as their legal responsibility to report as they are not mandated reporters for the same. This is an agreement with studies done by, Kenny M¹², Emich-Widera²³ Thirdly, teachers (25.7) have reported absence of clear reporting guidelines, regulations and accreditation to deal with Child Abuse cases. Various studies^{12,20} align with the fact that the majority of the teachers are unaware of the reporting system.

This study also reports meaningful correlation between teachers who have attended educational programmes related to CAN and those who have reported cases of CAN (table 4), suggesting that educational and training programmes for teachers are effective in increasing their awareness and ability to identify and report instances of CAN. A notable disparity has also been reported among teachers before and after attending educational programmes^{8,21}.

CONCLUSION

Current Study clearly indicates requirement of definitive educational training awareness programme for teachers to help them identifying, recognizing, reporting laws and procedures for CAN. Teachers needs to be trained to comprehend their responsibility and legal mandate regarding CAN. Teachers' response towards CAN is crucial and reporting it can lead to substantial enhancement in child protection services.

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Please provide Graph 1 & ????