Awareness about Child Abuse in Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract:

Main focus of this research paper is to explore the awareness regarding child abuse in pre-service teachers. As we know that it is very important to spread adequate awareness to the key stakeholders - namely parents, teachers and other medical professionals - for early prevention of child abuse. The research was conducted through a close ended questionnaire as interview on 60 participants who belongs to different group of pre-service and in-service teacher. The researcher was there at the time of interview. Awareness in pre-service teacher group is good as compared to in-service teacher group and after further analysis researcher found that female participants of in-service group are less aware than all other group.

Keywords: Child abuse (Physical, Sexual and Emotional), Awareness, Pre-service Teacher and In-service Teacher

I. Introduction

Child abuse is one of the most heinous crimes designed and perpetuated by human beings against some of the most vulnerable and defenceless sections of the community. Child abuse occurs in various spaces including the home, neighbourhood, schools, railway platforms, jails and abandoned places. The problem is deep rooted and needs to prevent so that the child rights could be protected and nurtured.

It has been rightly said that children are the priceless treasures and gifts of parents and society. Young children are precious and they are the future of the nation. All children have the same rights irrespective of sex, religion, disability condition, rural or urban background, nationality, and marital status of the parents or opinion. They have the right to grow in a peaceful, caring and secure environment, and to have the basic necessities of life, including food, healthcare, clothing and shelter. They have the right to express an opinion and to be listened to, and to be consulted in accordance with his or her understanding in decisions, which affect their wellbeing. They have the right to protect health through appropriate healthcare services. As responsible members of the society, all are fully entrusted with the responsibility of caring the little ones and meeting their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs and rights.
Protecting children is everyone’s responsibility in the society. Very often, it is reported that abuse for children in most cases is done by people who are close to them, like family members, relatives or care givers. Unfortunately, even if they report abuse, many people won’t address this issue seriously or even don’t know or aware that whether it is a abuse or not; instead blame the child. Therefore; people who interact with children have to be vigilant in monitoring the children’s welfare. To do so, awareness about various forms of child abuse among all members of the society is essential.

WHO (1999), Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

**Physical Child Abuse:** (WHO, 1999), Physical child abuse involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering. Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child.

**Sexual Child Abuse:** (WHO, 1999), Sexual abuse is a sexual act that is forced on the child by another person. It can occur between two or more people of any age.

**Emotional Child Abuse:** (WHO, 1999), The emotional abuse includes humiliating and degrading treatment of a child. Acts like; name calling and bullying, constant criticism, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation among others come under emotional abuse.

In this paper, the researchers endeavour to purge out information to the public domain regarding awareness of different area of child abuse like physical, emotional and sexual in pre-service and in-service teachers.

**II. Literature Review**

(US Department of Justice 2003) studied over three million reported cases of child abuse made over the course of the year for which there were 906,000 convictions. Of the reported cases, 48.3% of victims were male and 51.7% were female. The majority of victims (83.9%) were abused by a parent (40.8% maltreated by their mother alone, 18.8%maltreated by their fathers alone and 16.9% abused by both parents). The primary form of maltreatment was neglect (61%), followed by: physical abuse (19%), sexual abuse (10%), psychological maltreatment (5%), medical maltreatment (2%), others (17%). (Shields & Cicchette, 2001) mentioned that children who are maltreated by
parents have been found to exhibit more aggressive behaviours including bullying behaviour with peers. (Witkowski Aaron, 2002) stated that Child abuse affects more than just the abused. (Glaser, 2001) published a research work and reported that emotional abuse and neglect is an under-recognized, but actually common, form of child abuse. (Perry, 2002) reported that beyond the physical trauma experienced by children is the emotional and psychological sequela of physical abuse. (Department of Justice, Canada, 1992) reported that the child abuse has devastating consequences for victims. Depending on its form(s), duration and severity, abuse may affect every aspect of a child’s life; it may have consequences that are psychological, physical, behavioural, academic, sexual, interpersonal, self-perceptual or spiritual. As per the report of (Ministry of Women and Child Development, India, 2007) report on child abuse, children between the ages of 5-12 are at the highest risk for abuse and exploitation. The study found that 69% of children reported to have been physically abused. Out of these, 54.68% were boys. 52.91% of boys and 47.09% of girls reported having been abused in their family environment. Additionally, a large percentage of child population is vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect.


III. Objective of the Study
I. To study the overall awareness of child abuse in Pre-service teacher and In-service teacher,
II. To study the Pre-service teacher and In-service teachers’ awareness about physical abuse in children,
III. To study the Pre-service teacher and In-service teachers’ awareness about sexual abuse in children and
IV. To study the Pre-service teacher and In-service teachers’ awareness about emotional abuse in children.
V. Design of the Study

The existing research is exploratory in nature where the researchers surveyed the pre-service and in-service teachers of Delhi-NCR. The research is directed towards the main questions regarding awareness about child abuse on following domain – physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. The participants are interviewed through a close-ended self-administered questionnaire in a single phase. The sample selected is purposive and belongs to the schools and training colleges of the area of National Capitol Reason (NCR), India.

VI. Sample Composition

The data was collected from 30 pre-service and 30 in-service teachers. For pre-service teacher the participant were D.El.Ed., B.Ed. and M.Ed. students from both general and special courses. Teachers for In-service were selected from 3 schools. 10 teachers from each school were selected for this study. All the teachers were deputed to teach at primary level. The age range of the participants was from 17-40 years. The gender of the participants is - 50% Female and 50% Male, for both pre-service and in-service teachers. It can be visualized through the fig. 1

![Sample Composition](image)

Figure 1: Sample Composition

Tool Employed for Data Collection

The data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire, consisting of 45 questions, in a single phase. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. Section A and Section B.

Section “A” comprised demographic information related to participant’s information.

Section “B” consisted of three subsections; Knowledge, Attitude and Practices. Each of the subsections were made of 15, four points Likert scaled items, making a total of 45 items. In the
Likert scale items, the participants were to tick numeric values (1-4) indicating whether they Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the given statement.

VII. Data Collection Procedure
A brief introduction was made about the study. They were told that they had the right to leave at any point in the study, there were no right and wrong answer and that it was anonymous. They were given further instructions and were asked to fill out the questionnaire without consulting the other participants. The researcher himself contacted the respondents and collected the information.

VIII. Delimitation
The study is delimited to the following parameters.

- The data is collected from a college and school situated in Delhi.
- Information for this study is gathered using a self-administered questionnaire.

IX. Major Finding of the Study
Findings of the research are divided into five major parts depending on the objectives and each part is comprehended through a figure 2,3,4 and 5 respectively.

In Section B of the questionnaire, participants were asked to agree or disagree with a given statement.

Here researcher used 4 points Likert rating scale that is –

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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In this research Median (M) score has been taken to interpret the data because median is the most preferred measure of central tendency. The Median (M) scores are such that the higher median scores signify lack of awareness and the lower signify a higher awareness of the group.

- Overall awareness of child abuse in both groups:

![Figure 2 Overall awareness of child abuse in both groups](image-url)
Overall response shows that there is a good level of awareness in pre-service teachers, it could be due to the new curriculum at Diploma, B.Ed. and M.Ed. level. In new framework these courses emphasis more on gender sensitisation, family and adulthood issue, field work etc. But in-service teachers’ group are showing significant lack of awareness about child abuse. There should be some short of awareness program and time to time training and up-gradation program should be organised by the competent authority for in-service teachers. Overall response shows that there is significant lack of awareness in in-service female teachers about child abuse.

- **Awareness of Physical abuse among Pre-service teacher and In-service teacher:**

![Awareness on Physical Abuse](image)

Figure 3 Awareness of physical abuse in both groups

It can be seen that female participants showed a somewhat good awareness and knowledge of physical abuse. Some participants are still believing in some form of physical punishment may be because it is harder to distinguish it as abuse which shows that the line between punishment and abuse is blurred.

- **Awareness of Sexual abuse among Pre-service teacher and In-service teacher:**

![Awareness on Sexual Abuse](image)

Figure 4 Awareness of sexual abuse in both groups
It shows that both pre-service and in-service teachers’ group are showing reasonably poor level of awareness about sexual child. As sexual abuse is a taboo and a sensitive issue, some gaps in understanding can also be seen. There is a lack of awareness about non-contact forms of child sexual abuse. More research needs to be conducted on child pornography/ exposure to pornography, use of inappropriate language and contact with the child.

- **Awareness of Emotional abuse among Pre-service teacher and In-service teacher:**

  ![](chart.png)

  Figure 5 Awareness of emotional abuse in both groups

It can be seen that overall teachers have a moderate to good understanding of child emotional abuse except female participants from in-service teachers’ group. Firstly, a reasonably good majority of the teachers knew the definition of child emotional abuse and could recognise parental mental illness risk factor.

**X. Conclusion**

Most teachers showed a reasonable understanding of issues regarding child emotional abuse and exposure to violence. However, most of the teacher showed inconsistent and inadequate knowledge and attitudes about sexual abuse and emotional abuse. Cultural practices of corporal punishment, social stigma associated with child sexual abuse, social control concepts of shame and honour, lack of infrastructure for protecting children in special circumstance and general lack of awareness may contribute to teacher’s gap in understanding issues related to child abuse.

**References**


Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012)

Right to Education Act (2009)


The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (2000)


