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Knowledge and awareness and factors that influence child abuse reporting amongst school teachers in Chennai

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Abstract

Background: Child abuse & neglect is growing public health problems in India. Abuse refers to deliberate acts of commission while neglect refers to acts of Omission. Policies & procedures to improve reporting of child abuse cases are revised regularly but rarely based on data. Teachers play a role in child development and are in close contact with the child. School personnel play a critical function in the reporting of and discovering child abuse. Literature is scarce on factors on school teacher's knowledge of factors influencing reporting of child abuse in Chennai.

Aim: To assess the knowledge, awareness, and factors that influence child abuse reporting amongst school teachers of in Chennai.

Materials & Methods: School teachers were directed to fill out a Questionnaire, with 14 questions concerning their knowledge of child abuse and child abuse reporting protocol. Responses were recorded & analyzed.

Results: 93% knew what is child abuse 39% of teachers have seen child abuse cases, 50% had knowledge of child abuse reporting protocol, 63% knowledge was through awareness programs 39% felt that reporting of child abuse will not help family, 32% had no knowledge of where to report, 29% had fear of legal ramification.

Conclusion: Even though, more than half of the teachers knew regarding child abuse. Effect on the child's family, legal issues, and lack of knowledge on reporting protocol are preventing teachers from reporting of child abuse.

Keywords: Child abuse, child neglect, public health

Introduction

Child abuse is any type of physical, or sexual, neglect of a child especially by a parent or other caretaker [1]. It can affect a child's normal psychological or social development leaving the child with psychological stress [2]. It is a severe and important social and public health problems. Various signs like bruising, traumatic primary teeth fractures, and unhealed scars in child are seen [3]. The impact can vary from minimum to large physical, psychological, and behavioral problems. In most grave cases, child abuse and neglect can result in the fatal death of a child [4]. In 2007 grand-scale national study to assess the range and nature of child abuse in India, was conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), and it showed alarming statistics. 12,447 children were interrogated, greater than half (53 percent) reported experienced sexual abuse [8]. It can either be seen as emotional abuse involving shaming, humiliating the child, making detrimental comparability to others, consistent yelling, intimidating, rejecting, and neglecting the child as punishment, and having limited close reach with the child [9]. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights urges the school authorities to act "decisively, quickly and systematically" when faced with a complaint on child abuse [10]. Teachers play a pivotal role in identifying and reporting child abuse due to their regular interaction with children. In various studies, it was seen that the teachers received formal training in determining child abuse [5]. Due to absence of enough training, many teacher may not be aware of the primary signs seen in child abuse.

Thus, maltreatment of child can go unrecognized and undisclosed by numerous school staff [6,7], therefore, the study aims to assess the knowledge, awareness and factors that influence reporting of child abuse among school teachers in Chennai

Material and Methods

A questionnaire that contained 14 questions was developed. The questionnaire was forwarded to faculty in private schools. It consisted of 2 sections. The first few questions assayed the demographic data, awareness of child abuse and reporting of child abuse. The second section assessed factors hindering reporting of child abuse 120 teachers between 30 and 55 years of age were given the questionnaires to answer. The results

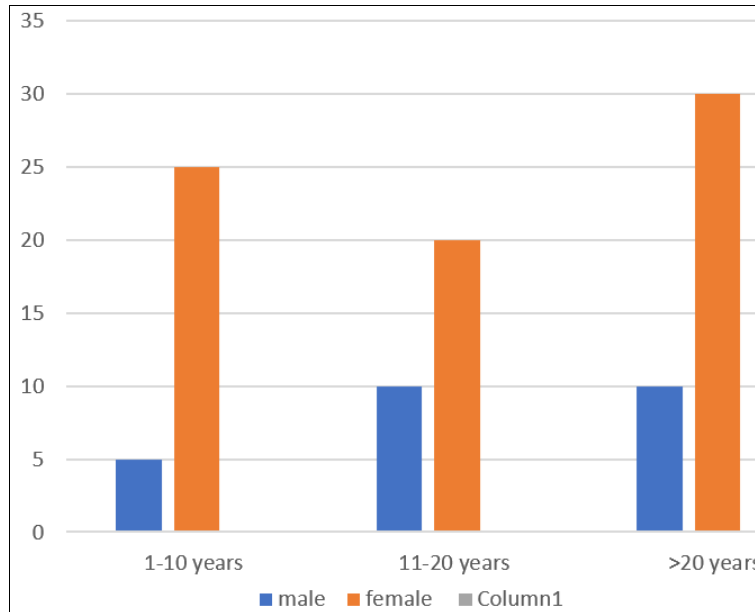
were gathered and pie charts were procured and interpreted

Results

Table 1: Age and gender wise distribution of subjects

Age group	Male	Female	P value
30-40	10	40	1
41-55	15	35	
Total	25	75	

Table 1 shows that age group 30- 55 years had 25 males and 75 females and age group 41-60 years had 28 males and 24 females. The difference was non- significant (P-1).



Graph 1: Showed that 5 males and 25 females had 1-10 years of experience, 10 males and 20 females had 11-20 years of experience and 10 males and 30 females had >20 years of experience. The difference was significant (P< 0.05)

The results in our study showed that out of 120 only 100 responses were recorded, Figure 1 shows that 93% of school teachers knew what child abuse is. 7% didn't know what child abuse is. 61% of teachers saw child abuse cases, 39% didn't see any cases of child abuse. 50% of them knew child abuse reporting protocol and 50% did not know about child abuse reporting protocol. Figure 2 shows the sources of knowledge about child abuse 63% gained knowledge about it through awareness programs, and 20% gained knowledge through government bodies. 15% gained knowledge through other

sources. Figure 3 shows the sources of knowledge about child abuse reporting protocol 66% gained knowledge through awareness programs, 30% through government bodies, and 4% through any previous cases. Figure 4 showed that 82% among the teachers assented that it should be obligatory to report child abuse and 18% of the teachers disagreed with this statement. Figure 5 shows the factors that hinder the decision of whether to report child abuse 39% of teachers felt that reporting would not help the family, 32% didn't know where to report, and 29% had fear of legal ramifications.

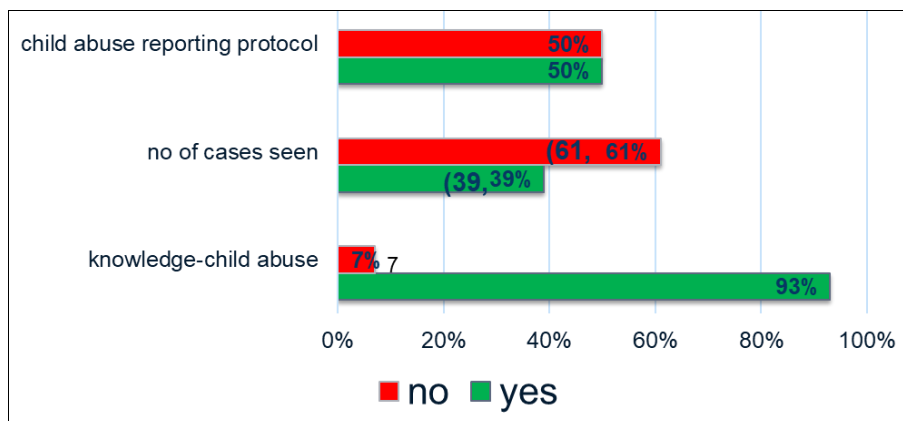


Fig 1: Bar graph represents teacher's knowledge of child abuse - 93% yes (green) 7% (red), knowledge of child abuse reporting protocol - 50% yes (green) 50% no (red), regarding no of cases seen - 61% no (red), 39% yes (green)

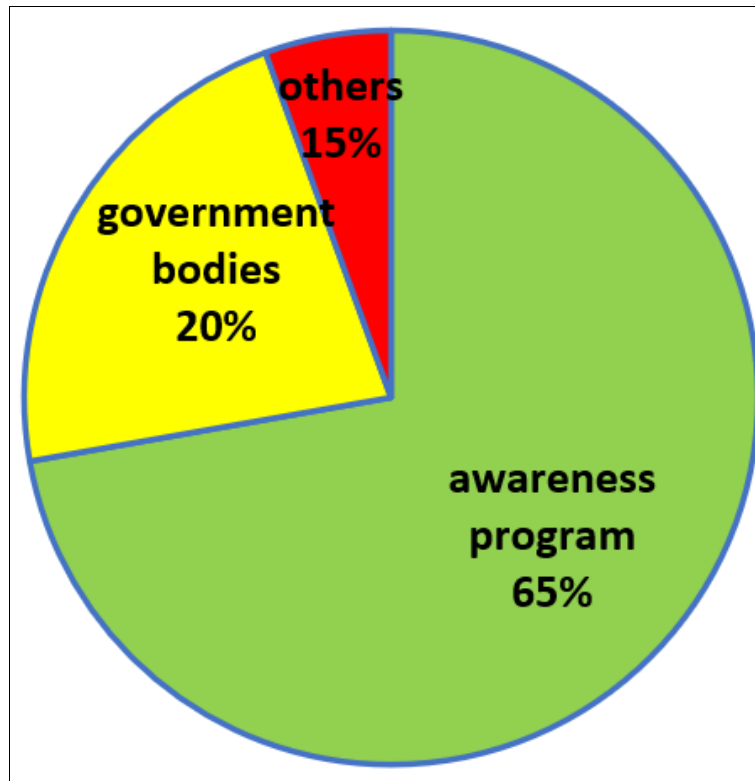


Fig 2: Pie chart represent sources of knowledge of child abuse - 65% awareness programs (green), 20% government bodies (yellow), 15% other (red)

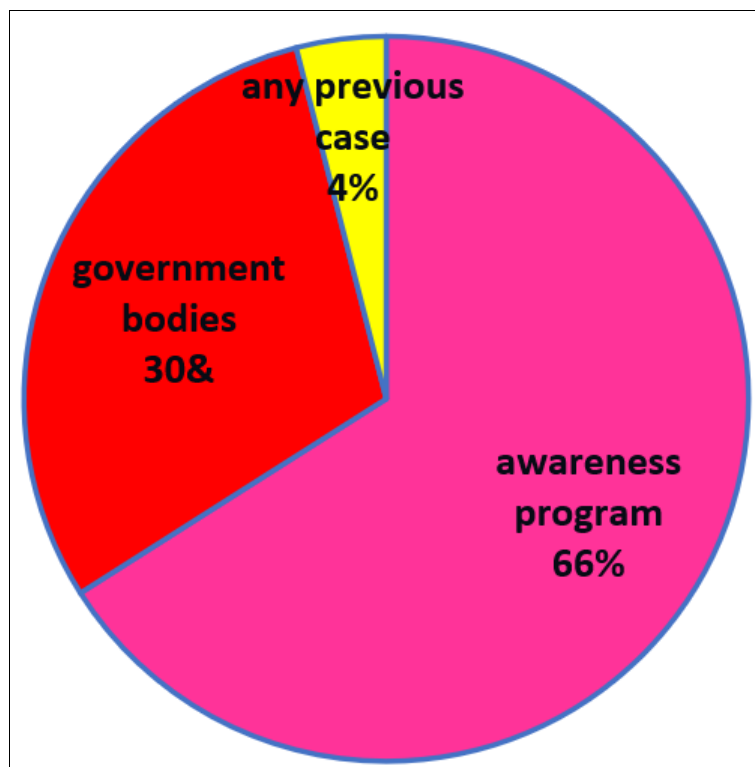


Fig 3: Pie chart represent sources of knowledge about child abuse reporting - 66% awareness programs (pink), 30% government bodies (red), 4% previous cases (yellow)

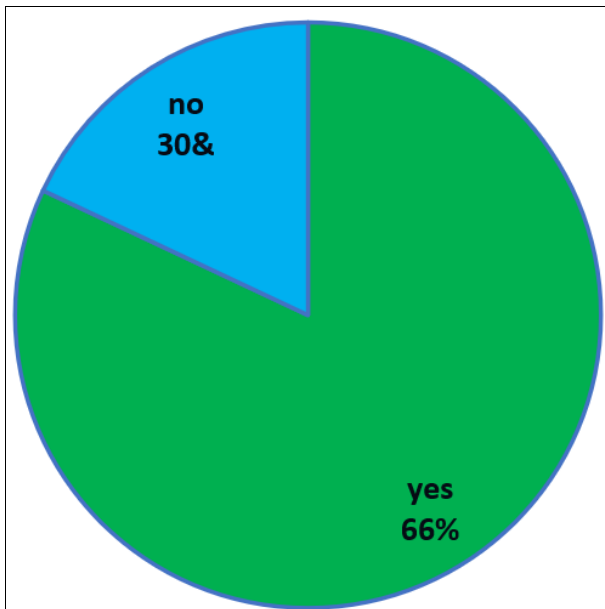


Fig 4: Piechart representing response of teachers on whether it is mandatory to report child abuse 66% yes (green, 30% no (blue)

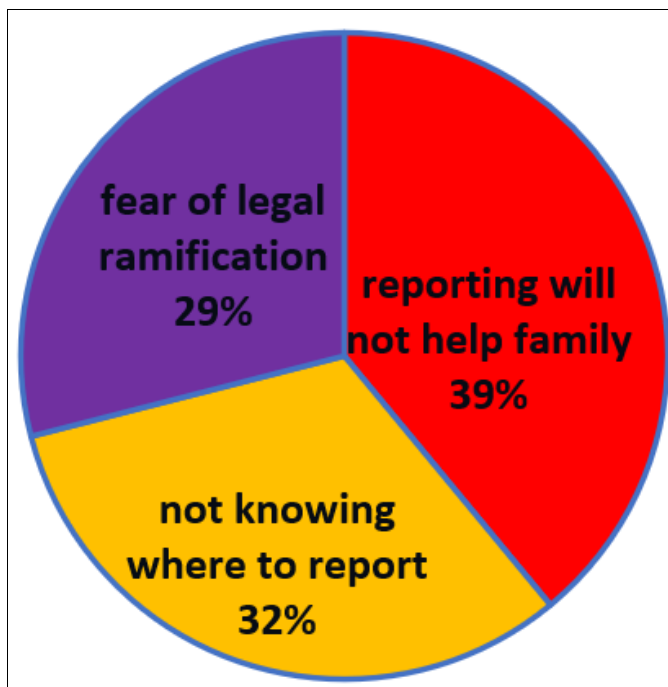


Fig 5: Piechart representing teachers's response on factors that hinder the decision of child abuse reporting 39% reporting will not help family (red), 32% not knowing where to report (yellow), 29% fear of legal ramification (purple)

Discussion

In another study done by Hershkowitz *et al.* in the year 2005, he said that child abuse and neglect are a crime that is likely to go underreported^[5]. Crenshaw *et al.* conducted a study and concluded that reported teachers make good observatncess of children regularly and equate present and previous behavior^[11]. The studies stated that there is an increased chance for psychiatric disorders like compulsive disorders, suicidal behaviors, and depression. The sufferers of child sexual abuse tend to have higher risks of temperamental problems, poor social adjustment, lack of trust, and precariously relations with parents^[12]. Research has shown that most teaching personnel received minimum training in distinguishing, reporting, and intervening suspected events of child abuse and neglect^[13]. In the present study, we saw that 93% of school teachers had

knowledge of child abuse and 61% of teachers haven't seen any child abuse cases which was similar to the study done by Butler *et al.*, 2010^[15].

Bavolek *et al.* conducted a study and stated that there are various reasons for failing to report on the part of school training on child abuse during their college education or in-service training programs^[14]. McIntyre (1987) in his study concluded that 33% of the teachers stated that they know about state law. According to their study, 81% of teachers had not undergone any child abuse training during their college career, 61% did not receive any information on child abuse or neglect during in-service training sessions and only 30% of the teachers knew about 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^[16].

In our study, 50% knew about how to report child abuse cases. a similar study done by Baxter and Beer (1990) stated that 16% of teaching personnel do not know any law about how to report child abuse. In their study, one-third of school faculty knew about Kansas state law about child abuse, and only 28% of respondents knew that all school faculty were required to report suspected abuse. Various studies have shown that teaching personrel have not received adequate training on child abuse during their college education or in-service training programs^[17].

In our study, 39% of teachers felt that reporting would not help family, 32% don't know where to report, and 29% feared legal ramifications. a similar study done by Kirk A. Beck *et al.*, saw that two-thirds of teachers reported that a momentous obstacle was the lack of sufficient knowledge on how to detect and report cases of suspected child abuse to child abuse reporting^[17].

Conclusion

It can be concluded in our study, that 39% of teachers believed that reporting would not help family, 32% didn't know where to report, 29% feared legal ramifications. Teaching personnel play a role in reporting of child abuse like identifying early signs of child abuse, keeping a tab on the child's well-being, and developing communication with the child. So teachers are alleged to have sufficient knowledge about child abuse and reporting of child abuse. As a unit school should work in reporting of child abuse and proper communication should be there between the principal, teaching personnel, counselor, child, social worker, and parents/guardian, which benefits them feel more certain about making reports of child abuse and also by conducting various interactive awareness programs, stricter laws should be implemented.

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Author's Contribution

Not available.

Conflict of Interest

Not available.

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