



KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE REGARDING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG STUDENTS IN SELECTED COLLEGES OF KAMRUP, ASSAM: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

LILYCIA KHONGSIT¹, SOMA DEBNATH², MANALISHA AHMED³

¹M.Sc Nursing, Department of Child Health Nursing, Asian Institute of Nursing Education, North Guwahati, Assam, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Child Health Nursing, Asian Institute of Nursing Education, North Guwahati, Assam, India

³Lecturer, Department of Child Health Nursing, Asian Institute of Nursing Education, North Guwahati, Assam, India

ABSTRACT BACKGROUND

Child abuse is a public health problem that leads to lifelong health consequences, both physically and psychologically. It is important to have a high index of suspicion for child maltreatment since early identification may be lifesaving.

It is especially important that students have knowledge about this issue in order to be able to identify abused and neglected children and to not be hesitant to report as "The greatest wealth and strength of any nation is its Youth".

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students.
- To assess the level of attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students.
- To correlate knowledge and attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students.
- To associate the knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students with the selected demographic variables.
- To associate the attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students with selected demographic variables.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A descriptive design was used in the study to accomplish the objectives using multistage disproportionate stratified random sampling technique for obtaining adequate sample for the study. The study was done on 252 students in selected colleges of Kamrup, Assam. The participants were selected on the basis of the inclusion criteria. Self-structured questionnaire was used to assess the level of knowledge and 5-point Likert scale was used to assess the level of attitude among the participants regarding Child abuse and neglect.

RESULTS

The study reveals that out of 252 students, majority of the students i.e. 208(82.5%) had moderately adequate level of knowledge, 40(15.9%) had adequate level of knowledge and 4(1.6%) had inadequate level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect. The study also revealed that majority of the students i.e. 219(86.9%) had desirable attitude, 33(13.1%) had moderately desirable attitude and none of the students had undesirable attitude towards tackling child abuse and neglect.

On assessing the correlation between knowledge and attitude regarding child abuse and neglect, the „r“ value is 0.342 and „p“ value is 0.0001 and was found statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ level of significance, which clearly infers that when knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students increases their attitude towards it also increases.

The demographic variables such as age, year of studying, type of family, number of siblings and family income per month had statistically significant association with the level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students. The demographic variables such as type of family had statistically association with the level of attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, the investigator concluded that the students have moderately adequate knowledge and desirable attitude towards tackling child abuse and neglect. Therefore, the study recommended that effective structured teaching programme on knowledge, prevention and legal issues regarding child abuse and neglect among undergraduate college students will enhance more knowledge, create more awareness on prevention and prompt reporting of CAN cases which will save many precious lives.

KEY WORDS: Knowledge, Attitude, Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN), Students.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, about 25 percent of the population is under 15 years of age and 10 percent is over 65 years of age. Children are the most vulnerable section of our society and are at the mercy of their care takers to look after their basic needs of nutrition, health care, education and protection. It is an unfortunate fact that a large number of children in less developed countries are living in poverty and are deprived of their rights of survival, optimal health, nutrition, education and protection from exploitation and discrimination. Over the years, the concept of Child abuse and neglect (CAN) has been widened to include physical, emotional, social, political, sexual abuse and neglect (health care, nutrition, education, love).

Child abuse, also known as maltreatment, is common. It is important to understand and reduce the risks of abuse the child and be familiar with the signs of abuse and neglect. About 4 million cases of child abuse and neglect involving almost 7 million children are reported each year. The highest rate of child abuse is in babies less than one year of age, and 25 percent of victims are younger than age three. The majority of cases reported to Child Protective Services involve neglect, followed by physical and sexual abuse. There is a lot of overlap among children who are abused, with many suffering and a combination of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect.

Child abuse and neglect is a public health problem with lifelong consequences for survivors and their families. Experiences in childhood have a significant impact on the long term physical and mental health outcomes of adults.

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METHODOLOGY

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DESCRIPTION OF TOOLS:

The tool used for the study consisted of three sections, it includes:

SECTION-I

- Demographic data: age, gender, course, educational qualification, monthly family income, type of family, number of siblings, residence and previous information about child abuse.

SECTION-II

KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE: Structured questionnaire to assess the knowledge. It consists of 30 questions related to knowledge on child abuse and neglect.

Scoring key: Each question had only one correct answer. For every correct response a score of 1 mark was given and a score of 0 mark for incorrect response. Hence the maximum score was 30 and the minimum score was 0.

SECTION III

ATTITUDE SCALE: This tool was prepared based on a 5-point Likert scale to assess the level of attitude. The scale consists of a total 20 statements, out of which 10 were positive statements and 10 were negative statements.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the concerned Principal of the colleges. After getting permission, the date of data collection was scheduled. On the day of data collection, the investigator approached the Head of department before meeting the samples. A brief self-introduction of the investigator and the purpose of the study was explained to the samples. Students who were willing to participate in the study and who fulfilled the inclusion criteria, informed consent was taken. Samples were given the tool and were explained about the instructions and composition of the tool. Data was collected by self-report. Each sample took around 20-30 minutes approximately. The data were entered in the excel sheet. Data analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS**SECTION I: Frequency and percentage distribution of students according to the demographic variables.****TABLE: 1****n=252**

Demographic variables	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Age(in years)		
18 – 19	84	33.4
20 – 21	112	44.4
22 – 23	56	22.2
≥24	-	-
Gender		
Male	116	46.0
Female	136	54.0
Others	-	-
Course / Stream		
Arts	84	33.3
Science	84	33.3
Commerce	84	33.3
Year of studying		
First year	84	33.3
Second year	84	33.3
Third year	84	33.3
Family income per month		
Rs. ≤ 9,226	13	5.2

Rs.9,232- 27,048	50	19.8
Rs.27,654– 46,089	80	31.7
Rs.46,095- 68,961	62	24.6
Rs.68,957 – 92,185	35	13.9
Rs.92,191- 184,370	12	4.8
Rs.≥ 184,376	-	-
Religion		
Hindu	170	67.5
Islam	71	28.2
Christian	11	4.4
Others	-	-
Type of family		
Nuclear family	164	65.1
Joint family	80	31.7
Extended family	8	3.2
Residence		
Hosteller	61	24.2
Day scholar	191	75.8
Number of siblings		
1	98	38.9

2	79	31.3
3	44	17.5
>3	-	-
None	31	12.3
Previous information regarding Child Abuse and Neglect		
Yes	63	25.0
No	189	75.0
Sources of information		
Social media	42	66.7
Family members	15	23.8
Friends	6	9.5
Others	-	-

Table 1 portrays that majority of the students, 112 (44.4%) belong to the age group of 20-21 years, 136 (54.0%) were females, 80 (31.7%) belong to the group of Rs.27,654 - Rs. 46,089 income per month, 170 (67.5%) belong to Hindu community, 164 (65.1%) belongs to nuclear family, 191 (75.8%) are day scholars, 98 (38.9%) have one number of sibling, 189 (75%) of the students had no previous information and out of the 63 (25%) students who had previous information, the majority i.e. 42 (66.7%) of the student's source of information is from social media.

SECTION II: Assessment of level of knowledge of students on child abuse and neglect TABLE**2:****n = 252**

Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate (<33%)	4	1.6
Moderate (33 – 66%)	208	82.5
Adequate (>66%)	40	15.9

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students. The data shows that, 208(82.5%) had moderate knowledge, 20(15.9%) had adequate knowledge and 4(1.6%) had inadequate knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students.

SECTION III: Assessment on level of attitude of students on child abuse and neglect TABLE 3: n = 252

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undesirable (<33)	-	-
Moderately Desirable (33 – 66)	33	13.1
Desirable Attitude (>66)	219	86.9

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of level of attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students. The data shows that, 219(86.9%) had desirable attitude and 33(13.3%) had moderately desirable attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students.

SECTION IV: Correlation between the level of knowledge of students with the level of attitude TABLE**4: n= 252**

Variables	Mean	S.D	Karl Pearson's Correlation 'r' Value
Knowledge	15.36	3.64	r = 0.342 p=0.0001, S***
Attitude	77.77	10.52	

***p<0.001, S – Significant

Table XIV shows that the mean score of knowledge was 15.36±3.64 and the mean score of attitude was 77.77±10.52. The calculated Karl Pearson's Correlation value of r=0.343 shows a positive correlation between knowledge and attitude which was found to be statistically significant at p<0.001 level. This clearly infers that when knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students increases their attitude towards it also increases.

SECTION V: Association between the knowledge with selected demographic variables

TABLE 5:

n= 252

Demographic Variables	Inadequate		Moderate		Adequate		Fisher Exact test p-value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Age in years							p=0.0001 S****
18 – 19 yrs	1	0.4			27	10.7	
20 – 21 yrs	3	1.2			13	5.2	
22 – 23 yrs	0	0	56 96 56 -	22.2 38.1 22.2 -	0	0	
≥24 yrs	-	-	96	38.1	-	-	
Gender							p=0.809 N.S
Male	1	0.4			19	7.5	
Female	3	1.2	112	44.4	21	8.3	
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Course / Stream							p=0.065 N.S
Arts	0	0	70	27.8	14	5.6	
Science	3	1.2	63	25.0	18	7.1	
Commerce	1	0.4	75	29.8	8	3.2	
Year of studying							p=0.0001 S****
First year	0	0	54	21.4	30	11.9	
Second year	4	1.6	70	27.8	10	4.0	
Third year	0	0	84	33.3	0	0	
Family income per month							p=0.038 S*
Rs. ≤ 9,226	0	0		2.8	6	2.4	
Rs.9,232- 27,048	0	0			9	3.6	
Rs.27,654– 46,089	2	0.8	7 41 65 51 33	16.3 25.8 20.2	13	5.2	
Rs.46,095- 68,961	1	0.4			10	4.0	
Rs.68,957 – 92,185	0	0			2	0.8	
Rs.92,191- 184,370	1	0.4		13.1 4.4 -	0	0	
Rs.≥ 184,376	-	-	11 -		-	-	
Religion							p=0.084 N.S
Hindu	3	1.2	135	53.6	32	12.7	
Islam	1	0.4	65	25.8	5	2.0	
Christian	0	0	8	3.2	3	1.2	
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Type of family							p=0.003 S**
Nuclear family	3	1.2	127	50.4	34	13.5	
Joint family	0	0	75	29.8	5	2.0	

Extended family	1	0.4	6	2.4	1	0.4	p=0.522 N.S
Residence							
Hosteller	1	0.4	53	21.0	7	2.8	
Day scholar	3	1.2	155	61.5	33	13.1	p=0.002 S**
Number of siblings							
1	0	0	78	31.0	20	7.9	
2	0	0	63	25.0	16	6.3	
3	3	1.2	40	15.9	1	0.4	
>3	-	-	-	-	-	-	
None	1	0.4	27	10.7	3	1.2	
Demographic Variables	Inadequate		Moderate		Adequate		Fisher Exact test p-value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Previous information regarding Child Abuse and Neglect							p=0.149 N.S
Yes	0	0	57	22.8	6	2.4	
No	4	1.6	151	59.9	34	13.5	
Sources of information							p=0.385 N.S
Social media	-	-	36	57.1	6	9.5	
Family members	-	-	15	23.8	0	0	
Friends	-	-	6	9.5	0	0	
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	
No	-	-	-	-	-	-	

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, S – Significant, p>0.05, N.S – Not Significant

Table 5 shows the level of knowledge Child abuse and neglect among students with their selected demographic variables. It was observed that the demographic variables age (**p=0.0001**), year of studying (**p=0.0001**), type of family (**p=0.003**), number of siblings (**p=0.002**) and family income per month (**p=0.038**) had statistically significant association with level of knowledge regarding Child Abuse and Neglect among students at p<0.001, p<0.01 and p<0.05 level respectively. The other demographic variables did not show statistically significant association with level of knowledge Child Abuse and Neglect among students.

SECTION VI: Association between the level of attitude with selected demographic variables TABLE 6: n= 252

Demographic Variables	Moderately desirable		Desirable		Fisher Exact test p-value
	F	%	f	%	
Age in years					p=0.764 N.S
18 – 19 yrs	9	3.6	75	29.8	
20 – 21 yrs	16	6.3	96	38.1	
22 – 23 yrs	8	3.2	48	19.0	
≥24 yrs	-	-	-	-	
Gender					p=0.575 N.S
Male	17	6.7	99	39.3	
Female	16	6.3	120	47.6	
Others	-	-	-	-	
Course / Stream					p=0.580 N.S
Arts	10	4.0	74	29.4	
Science	9	3.6	75	29.8	
Commerce	14	5.6	70	27.8	

Year of studying					
First year	8	3.2	76	30.2	p=0.413 N.S
Second year	11	4.4	73	29.0	
Third year	14	5.6	70	27.8	
Family income per month					
Rs. ≤ 9,226	1	0.4	12	4.8	p=0.794 N.S
Rs.9,232- 27,048	5	2.0	45	17.9	
Rs.27,654– 46,089	10	4.0	70	27.8	
Rs.46,095- 68,961	9	3.6	53	21.0	
Rs.68,957 – 92,185	5	2.0	30	11.9	
Rs.92,191- 184,370	3	1.2	9	3.6	
Demographic Variables	Moderately desirable		Desirable		Fisher Exact test p-value
	F	%	f	%	
Rs.≥ 184,376	-	-	-	-	
Religion					
Hindu	23	9.1	147	58.3	p=0.741 N.S
Islam	8	3.2	63	25.0	
Christian	2	0.8	9	3.6	
Others	-	-	-	-	
Type of family					
Nuclear family	17	6.7	147	58.3	p=0.047 S*
Joint family	13	5.2	67	26.6	
Extended family	3	1.2	5	2.0	
Residence					
Hosteller	11	4.4	50	19.8	p=0.196 N.S
Day scholar	22	8.7	169	67.1	
Number of siblings					
1	10	4.0	88	34.9	p=0.088 N.S
2	7	2.8	72	28.6	
3	10	4.0	34	13.5	
>3	-	-	-	-	
None	6	2.4	25	9.9	
Previous information regarding Child Abuse and Neglect					
Yes	6	2.4	57	22.6	p=0.394 N.S
No	27	10.7	162	64.3	
Sources of information					
Social media	5	7.9	37	58.7	p=1.000 N.S
Family members	1	1.6	14	22.2	
Friends	0	0	6	9.5	
Others	-	-	-	-	
No	-	-	-	-	

*p<0.05, S – Significant, p>0.05, N.S – Not Significant

Table 6 shows the level of attitude Child abuse and neglect among students with their selected demographic variables. It was observed that the demographic variable type of family (**p=0.047**) had statistically significant association with level of attitude regarding Child Abuse and Neglect among students at p<0.05 level. The other demographic variables did not show statistically significant association with level of attitude regarding Child Abuse and Neglect among students.

CONCLUSION

The level of knowledge and attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students was assessed by using self-structured questionnaire and a 5 point Likert scale respectively. The study reveals that out of 252 students, majority of the students i.e. 208(82.5%) had moderately adequate level of knowledge, 40(15.9%) had adequate level of knowledge and 4(1.6%) had inadequate level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect.

The study also revealed that majority of the students i.e. 219(86.9%) had desirable attitude, 33(13.1%) had moderately desirable attitude and none of the students had undesirable attitude towards tackling child abuse and neglect.

On assessing the correlation between knowledge and attitude regarding child abuse and neglect, the „r“ value is 0.342 and „p“ value is 0.0001 and was found statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ level of significance, which clearly infers that when knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students increases their attitude towards it also increases.

The demographic variables such as age, year of studying, type of family, number of siblings and family income per month had statistically significant association with the level of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect among students. The demographic variables such as type of family had statistically significant association with the level of attitude regarding child abuse and neglect among students.

Through this study, the investigator concluded that the students have moderately adequate knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect and desirable attitude towards tackling child abuse and neglect. Therefore, the study recommended that effective structured teaching programme on knowledge, prevention and legal issues regarding child abuse and neglect among undergraduate college students will enhance more knowledge, create more awareness on prevention and prompt reporting of child abuse and neglect cases which will save many precious lives.

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