



ARE YOUNG ADULTS NOW WERE AWARE OF CHILD ABUSE WHEN THEY WERE CHILDREN?

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ABSTRACT

Background: In India, one of the foremost growing public health problems is Child abuse and neglect. The current lot of youngsters and young adults are the core elements of the social care system and all the services and programs that fall under the traditional human services umbrella to fit the needs of the real world, like understanding and eradicating child abuse is a responsibility to be taken up by the young adults and society by large. **Aim:** The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge and awareness regarding child abuse and neglect among young adults and to evaluate their understanding to identify and prevent child abuse and neglect. **Material and Methods:** The participants of the study included 550 individuals from the age group of 15-26 years, approached by google form to get their response on the 13 item scale of child abuse. **Results:** The young adults fortunately have fair share of knowledge about child abuse. An ample of unreported cases from past have been seen. It is now amiable to know that higher number of individuals are there to voice against such heinous crime. **Conclusion:** To prevent and reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, proper steps have to be taken by the parents and each member of society as a whole which requires the understanding and attitude of the young adults toward child abuse, their knowledge of the emotional and psychological neglect, and the steps they are willing to take or have taken to prevent it in order to make future for the children better, was well evaluated in the study participant.

KEYWORDS : Child abuse and neglect, POCSO, Child helpline

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse, a reprehensible act pervading undifferentiated between all classes and masses of society. Somewhere in the world, a child is suffering deliberate harm, inflicted by someone who is supposed to care about them, at this very movement is rightly quoted by Hinchliffe. Over the years, this heinous indulgence has been defined several times, corroborated by various agencies. As per the WHO, child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligence treatment or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health or survival development in the context of a relationship, responsibility, lust or power.^[2] The five main types of child abuse are : Physical Abuse , Sexual Abuse , Emotional Abuse , Emotional Maltreatment, neglect and witnessing domestic violence.^[3]

In the current scenario, there is an increasing frequency of both the father and mother of a children working, which leads to a decrease in the quality time spent with their children. This leads to an unsupervised window of time which plays a vital role in the child's growth and development as, any form of neglect or abuse during this span may it be emotional, physical, or mental will cause a significantly far reaching consequence on the child.^[4] Also, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, influx of societal issues are on continual rise. Thus, these untoward consequences can be prevented by proper knowledge and awareness and require early identification and intervention by the parents and family.

AIM

The aim of this study is to assess (i) the knowledge and awareness regarding child abuse and neglect among young adults and (ii) to evaluate their understanding of the steps and methods taken to identify and prevent child abuse and neglect keeping up with pandemic scenario, utilising the most assessible mode of information gathering, internet.

METHODOLOGY

1. Sample

The participants of the study included 550 individuals from the age group of 15-26 years . Every individual was approached by google form to get their response on the 13 item scale of child abuse between 18th January to 20th January 2022 after getting approval from the Institutional Research and Development Committee.

2. Research Instrument

The understudy construct was assessed by the 13 items selected on the basis of theoretical basis.

A structural questionnaire in English was used to collect the data . The questions were asked to measure the knowledge among the housing subordinates :

1. Sensitization and exploitation present
2. Reporting incidents of child abuse and neglect .
3. Knowledge of the policies against abuse and neglect .

The questions were framed according to their relevance in the populations elected for study along with content validity. Enlisting of questions are as follows :

1. Were you aware of child abuse when you were a child ?
2. If yes, who sensitized you about the same ?
3. Were you a victim of child abuse ?
4. If yes did you complain to elders ?
5. Did they take any action ?
6. As an individual, if child abuse case comes across you , will you be able to take action ?
7. Are you aware of any organization against Child Abuse and Neglect ?
8. If yes, which among the following ?
9. Are you aware of National Government Policies of India against Child Abuse ?
10. If yes, which among the following ?
11. Are you aware of Child Helpline Numbers ?
12. If yes, which of the following ?
13. What is the right age to talk about child abuse to a child ?
14. Are you aware which age group is most susceptible to undergo abuse ?

RESULT

In this study, 550 participants were reputed. Most of the respondents were females (60%). The highest respondents were in the age group of 22-26 years, which is 54.2% followed by the age group of 18-22 years, which stands out as 39.3% . More than half of the respondents have a bachelor's degree.

For the knowledge of awareness about child abuse among youths now, 58.9% were aware. When they were younger, 41.1% individuals unfortunately had no clue about child abuse. Among the 58.9% of aware individuals, sensitization was done mostly by their parents (44.2%) followed by 39% at school. Other family members and

siblings play pivot role in sensitizing, contributing to 9.8% and 7.1% respectively. (Figure :1 & 2) 21.1% of respondents have faced abuse and neglect in the past, while a fortunate 78.9% of individuals were not a victim of child abuse and neglect. (Figure :3)

Out of the lesser percentage of victims, only 28.8% complaints to elders. A larger population of the victims didn't even report to the elders, which is 71.2%. (Figure :4)

Among the informed cases, 68.3% cases passed on without any action being taken by the elderly. Only 31.7% of the elderly took action against child abuse. (Figure :5) An imperative shift seen in the youth toward taking action on any such case if they come across them with 78.8% and 16.9% though not sure but had a mindset of taking action . Unfortunate in today's time, 9.2% of the gathered respondents are not going to take any action. (Figure :6)

By now 62.1% of respondents have an idea about the organizations working against child abuse and neglect. SAVE THE CHILD, an NGO, had been the most known among the young . Less than a quarter of respondents were aware of CRY. (Figure :7)

Many are sensitized about government policies existing against child abuse and neglect, accounting for 79.1%. More than a quarter of individuals are still unaware of any existing policies on child abuse and neglect. (Figure :8)

CHILD LABOUR AMMENDMENT ACT seems to be the most known policy of the Indian government followed by CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE and POCSO ACT. (Figure :9)

3/4th of the respondents who are aware of CHILD HELPLINE NUMBERS, know the correct number. 23.4% of the respondents were not aware of the helping numbers. (Figure :10)

Regarding the prospect of educating a child at the right age, 44% of respondents prefer to keep the conversation regarding abuse and neglect on pace with the child's development. While a near quarter (26.8%) respondents think of age group 6-10 as the appropriate age to talk about the issue. (Figure :11)

A group of individuals have the notion of sensitizing children at the age of 6-10 years, while another lot of 16.1% respondents want the age of 4-6 years to be the correct age to talk about child abuse, keep the conversation regarding the abuse and neglect in pace with the child's development ,which is the key according, to Child Abuse Prevention Society,Roslyn. (Figure :12)

Out of the 550 respondents, 41.3% of individuals have the notion that children in the age group of 8-12 are the most vulnerable and susceptible to undergoing child abuse. Secondary to this, 31% of individuals have the thought that children in age group 4-8 years are most susceptible to undergoing abuse. (Figure :13) 18% of the respondents somehow felt that, 12-11 years, children are most susceptible to abuse . While, 10.4% individuals had a clear idea that 0-4 years of age is most susceptible to child abuse and neglect. (Figure :14)

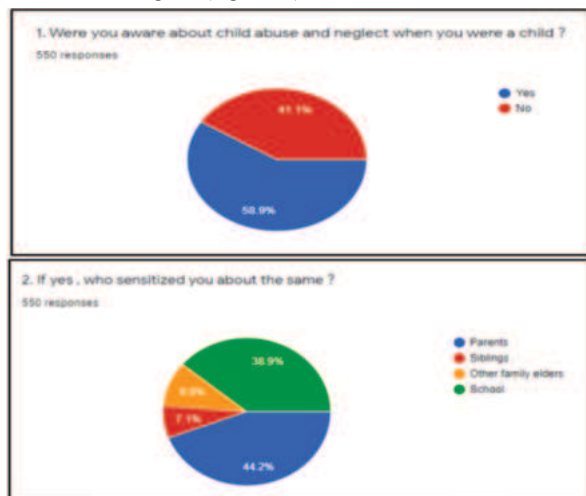


Figure :1 Were you aware of child abuse when you were a child ?
Figure :2 If yes, who sensitized you about the same ?

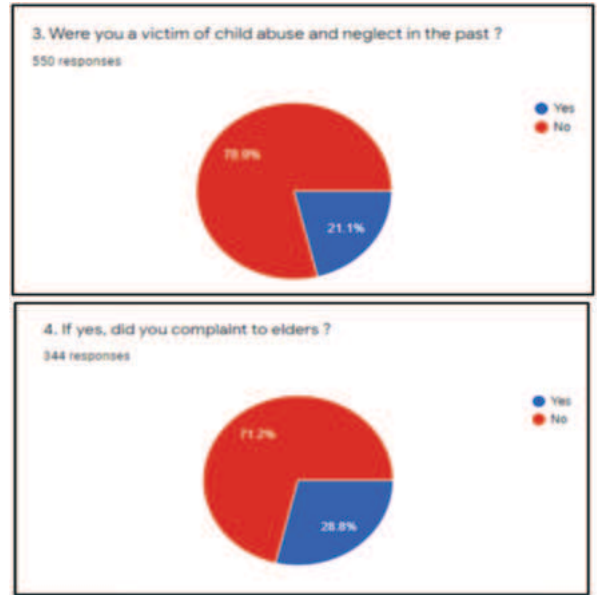


Figure :3 Were you a victim of child abuse ?
Figure :4 If yes did you complain to elders ?



Figure :5 Did they take any action
Figure :6 As an individual, if child abuse case comes across you , will you be able to take action ?

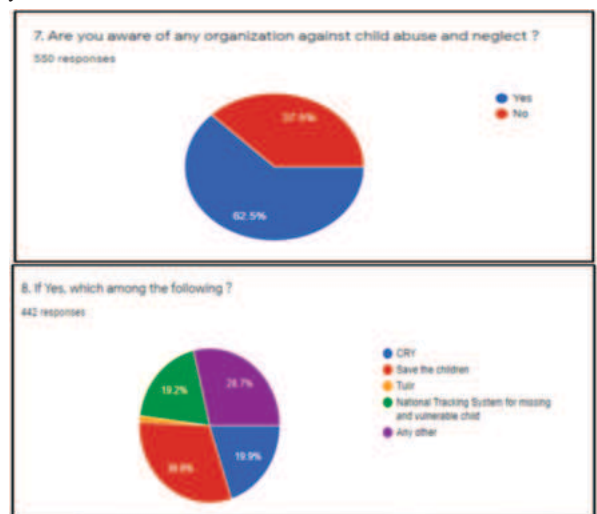


Figure :7 Are you aware of any organization against Child Abuse and Neglect ?
Figure :8 If yes, which among the following ?

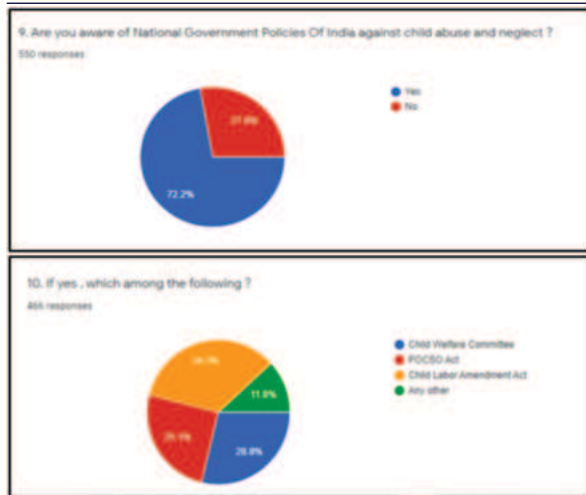


Figure :9 Are you aware of National Government Policies of India against Child Abuse ?

Figure :10 If yes, which among the following ?

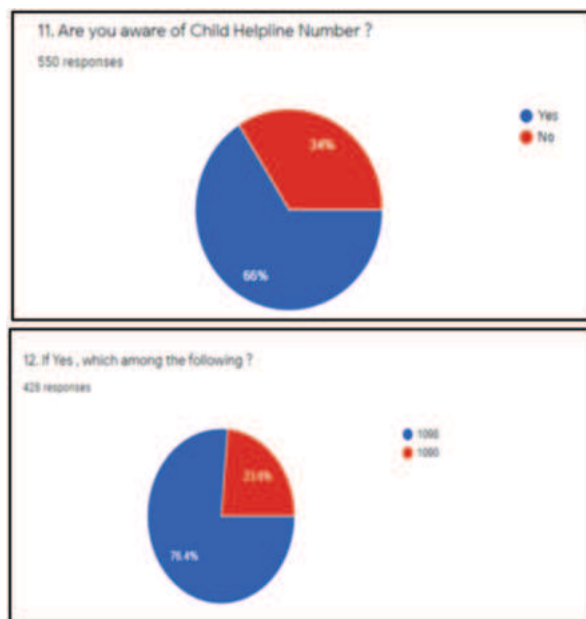


Figure :11 Are you aware of Child Helpline Numbers ?

Figure :12 If yes, which of the following ?

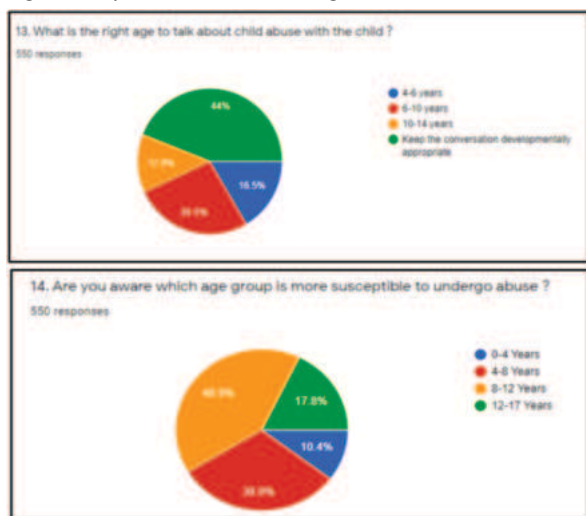


Figure :13 What is the right age to talk about child abuse to a child ?

Figure :14 Are you aware which age group is most susceptible to undergo abuse ?

DISCUSSION

More Females participated in the survey. The larger section of participants were 22-26 years of age. More than half of the participants knew about child abuse and neglect. Parents were and should always remain the main source of educating their children about child abuse and should also be available to listen to their child's issue. As, this is the only way to overcome the disparity of actual cases and the number of cases that have been informed or reported.^[5]

In our study, 21.1% of respondents have faced abuse and neglect in the past, while a fortunate 78.9% of individuals were not a victim of child abuse and neglect. These number reflect a better version of the society, though it can be speculated that child abuse and neglect is overlapped or often misinterpreted only as sexual abuse.^[6]

The present research seeks to collate and understand the shift that has occurred in the youth's psyche towards reporting and taking action towards any act of child abuse. The research illuminates the role of the social apparatus that exists to redress the heinous act of child abuse and neglect and provide education, protection of rights and psychological support that may nip this issue in the bud. These apparatus need to promote an environment of openness about child abuse and neglect, that may counter the shame and stigma associated with such a topic for their other initiatives to have a better impact. National surveys indicate that physical abuse peaks in the 4–8-year-old range.^[7]

India is home to 444 million children and 27 million babies are born each year as per Indian population clock.^[8]

Since the start of accepting obligations of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 Indian Government has been actively taking continuous steps, in the putting forward Laws and acts and their implementation.^[9] The mention of few majors are as:

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2000 (amended in 2006),
- Prohibition of Child Marriage act (2006),
- the formation of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (2005),
- National Plan of Action for children (2005),
- Right to Information 2005,
- the Goa Children (amendment) Act 2005,
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (two notifications in 2006 and 2008), which expanded the list of banned and hazardous processes and occupation, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (2009); various legislations such as Right to Education Bill (2009),
- Prevention of children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act 2012) and POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019.^[10,11]

According to Asia Pacific Conference of Child Abuse and Neglect (APCCAN) the 9th ISPCAN held in 2011, conference outcome document "Delhi Declaration," it re-affirmed and pledged to stand against the neglect and abuse of children and to make every effort necessary to achieve child rights and the building of a caring community for every child, which is free of violence and discrimination. APCCAN 10th was held in 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.^[12]

There are numerous organizations and NGOs against child abuse and neglect in India. In our survey, 62.1% participants were aware of the organizations against child abuse and neglect. In a similar survey question for parents done by Preethy NA et al in 2020, only 50% of the parents were aware of the organizations against child abuse and neglect whereas 50% were not.^[4]

CHILDLINE 1098, an emergency telephonic helpline, which helps to link children in situations of abuse or neglect with rehabilitation services. It has become an exceptional model of public-private partnership, operational in more than 602 cities, 135 railway stations and 11 bus stands across the country, a service provided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.^[13]

According to our survey, only 31% of the participants were aware that 6–8 years is the age period where a child is more susceptible to child abuse and neglect. National surveys indicate that physical abuse peaks in the 4–8-year-old range. Emotional maltreatment has been reported to show a high incidence in the 6–8-year-old range and to remain at a similar level through adolescence.^[7]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the respondents in this study displayed a fair level of awareness. Furthermore, a quintessential step in educating children about child abuse and neglect with age relevance, their rights, government laws and policies is needed at very primary level. Considering the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect, a better plan to tackle these situations is required. Also, youth now need to understand about child abuse and neglect, as they are going to lead the society.

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