



THE ROLE OF NURSES IN CHILD ABUSE SITUATIONS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW (2025)

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse and neglect remain major public health challenges with devastating consequences for children's wellbeing. Nurses, positioned at the frontline of healthcare, play a crucial role in identifying, preventing, and managing cases of maltreatment. This review synthesizes five recent studies (2024–2025) focusing on nurses' roles, knowledge, barriers, and interventions in child abuse contexts. Findings highlight persistent gaps in detection, underreporting, limited knowledge, and emotional distress among nurses, alongside the importance of trauma-informed and interprofessional approaches. The review concludes with recommendations for education, institutional policy, and emotional support systems to strengthen nursing contributions to child protection.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Globally, millions of children experience abuse each year, yet most cases go unreported. Nurses, due to their continuous contact with children and families in hospitals, schools, and community health centers, are in a unique position to detect early signs of abuse. However, their effectiveness depends on awareness, confidence, and supportive institutional structures. This review synthesizes evidence from five recent studies that examine nurses' experiences, barriers, and roles in the detection, reporting, and management of child abuse.

Review Of Recent Studies

1. Detecting and Preventing Child Maltreatment (Midtsund et al., 2024)
2. Managing Suspicions of Maltreatment (Midtsund et al., 2024)
3. Knowledge and Attitudes in Jordan (Abu Sabbah & Abdel Razeq, 2025)
4. Nursing Interventions for Sexually Abused Adolescents (Yosep et al., 2024)
5. Nurses as Mandated Reporters (2025)

DISCUSSION:

Across the reviewed studies, three recurring challenges emerge: limited knowledge, emotional strain, and organizational barriers. Nurses often recognize signs of abuse but hesitate to act due to fear of misjudgment or inadequate support systems. Emotional distress and lack of feedback after reporting further discourage action. Strengthening interprofessional collaboration and ensuring supportive policies can empower nurses to act decisively.

These studies also illustrate the expanding role of nurses beyond detection and reporting — toward rehabilitation and trauma-informed care. A coordinated system between healthcare, legal, and social sectors is critical to address both preventive and therapeutic dimensions of child abuse.

Implications For Practice And Education

1. Education: Introduce structured child protection and legal reporting modules in undergraduate and postgraduate nursing programs.
2. Institutional Support: Provide clear reporting protocols and confidential

CONCLUSION

Nurses are central to protecting children from abuse, yet their potential is often hindered by inadequate knowledge, uncertainty, and emotional burden. The reviewed studies emphasize that improving education, clarifying institutional policies, and providing emotional support are key to empowering nurses. As compassionate caregivers and mandated reporters, nurses must be fully equipped — intellectually, ethically, and emotionally — to safeguard children's health and rights. A stronger, well-trained nursing workforce, supported by collaborative systems and clear policies, can serve as the first line of defense in breaking the cycle of child abuse.

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