Prevalence of Sexual abuse its predictors and the efficacy of a school based sexual abuse prevention programme on knowledge regarding prevention of sexual abuse among adolescent girls, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Background: Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is one of the India’s largest open social secret that leaves enormous physiological and psychological impact on the health and development of children. A survey by United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) on demography and health conducted in India from 2005 to 2013, reported that, nearly 42% of Indian girls have gone through the trauma of sexual violence before their teenage. Kerala, India’s Southernmost State has been an eye opener with an increase in number of rapes registered over the years in the country. The researcher during her registration for doctoral study in 2013 was impelled to select Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala state as the study setting owing to the highest incidence of reported cases in Kerala in 2012.

Objective: The overall objective was to estimate the prevalence of sexual abuse; to identify the perpetrator’s characteristics; to explore its predictors and to assess the efficacy of a school based sexual abuse prevention program on knowledge regarding prevention of sexual abuse among adolescent girls.

Methods: An Explorative Cross-Sectional design was adapted in the Phase I of the study to estimate the prevalence of sexual abuse; to identify the perpetrator’s characteristics and to explore its predictors among 1087 adolescent girls of the eighth and ninth standard. In the Phase II of the study, to assess the effect of school based sexual abuse prevention program, a Solomon four group design was amended among 195 adolescent girls of fifth, sixth and seventh standard. Multistage
sampling technique was used in both phases of the study. The questionnaire consisted of a standardized tool modified for Indian setting and a pretested predesigned questionnaire which included Yes/No type questions, checklist, a few multiple response questions and closed type questions. The tool was validated by experts and content validity index was 0.92. Translation and back translation was done and Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient was 0.85. An interventional package covering the concepts of sexual abuse prevention was given to the study participants.
Results: The **prevalence rate of sexual abuse** among adolescent girls was **17.15%**. Majority (66.12%) of the victims of sexual abuse has faced kissing/rubbing/caressing their body as the type of sexual abuse while only (04.3%) had penetrative abuse. Majority of the perpetrators (23.65%) were a known family friend in victims of sexual abuse. Maternal support and Paternal substance abuse were found to be the true, strong predictors of sexual abuse. There is a statistically highly significant improvement in the post-test knowledge score in the experimental group with pretesting and the experimental group without pretesting (F value= 36.683, p value=<0.001**) as compared to the control group with pretesting and control group without pretesting which ascertains the effectiveness of the school based sexual abuse prevention programme. As the experimental group without pretesting, which received intervention alone had a greater post test score as compared to other groups, it determines the effectiveness of intervention alone and the absence of pre-test sensitization.

Conclusion: There was an exponential increase in the number of reported cases of sexual abuse over the past few years and the researcher firmly believes that the increase in the number of POCSO cases being reported in Kerala Crime Records Bureau was owing to the mass health awareness campaign conducted in the twenty schools from June 2015 – March 2017 nearly among two thousand adolescent girls of fifth to ninth standard. Child Sexual Abuse won’t increase exponentially; if there is an increase in awareness among the subjects and immediate intervention are enforced by adults who are vested with power. As a preventive measure to minimize the aftermath of being abused the researcher is impelled to add on child sexual abuse in the life sciences of SCERT curriculum.

Keywords: Prevalence; Perpetrator; Predictors; Sexual abuse prevention program; Child Sexual Abuse; Adolescent girls