

# KNOWLEDGE REGARDING SCHOOL PHOBIA AMONG PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN SELECTED WARDS OF NAYARAMBALAM PANCHAYAT, ERNAKULAM, KERALA STATE, INDIA

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**Abstract:** School phobia or school refusal is an emotional disorder of the children who are afraid to leave the parents, especially mother, and prefer to remain at home and refuse to go to school absolutely. The title of the study is "Knowledge regarding school phobia among parents of children in selected wards of Nayarambalam Panchayat, Ernakulam." Objectives: to- 1) assess the knowledge regarding school phobia among parents. 2) find out the association between knowledge regarding school phobia among parents and selected demographic variables. 3) prepare an information leaflet on school phobia in children and its management and prevention. Methodology- non-experimental descriptive research design, among 80 parents of children between (4-10 years), using non-probability convenience sampling technique and the data was collected using structured knowledge questionnaire on school phobia. Results - Out of 80, majority of the subjects 45(56.3%) had average knowledge regarding school phobia. 33(41.3%) of the subjects had good knowledge and 2(2.5%) of subjects had poor knowledge. The maximum score was 26. The mean score of overall knowledge on school phobia among parents was 16.39 and standard deviation was 3.563. There was no significant statistical association between parents knowledge on school phobia and selected demographic variables. Conclusion- The parents knowledge regarding school phobia is only average. Therefore interventions need to be planned to enhance their knowledge so that they will be in a position to prevent the future occurrences of school phobia and manage a child with school phobia with minimum complications.

**Key words:** SP-School Phobia, SR-School Refusal

## 1. Introduction

School phobia occurs in children of all ages, but it is more common in children 10 years of age and older. School avoidance behavior occur in both boys and girls and in children from all socioeconomic levels.<sup>1</sup> School phobia or school refusal is a common manifestation of separation anxiety disorder. The prevalence of separation anxiety disorder is estimated at 4% of school-aged children.<sup>2</sup>

Estimates suggest that about 4.5 percent of children ages 7 to 11 and 1.3 percent of children age 14 to 16 are school refusers. School phobia is an international problem, with an estimated rate of 2.4 percent of all school-age children worldwide refusing to attend classes.<sup>2</sup> School phobia or school refusal is an emotional disorder of the children who are afraid to leave the parents, especially mother, and prefer to remain at home and refuse to go to school absolutely. The contributing factors of school phobia are anxiety about maternal separation, overindulgent, over protective and dominant mother, disinterested father, intellectual disability of the students, uncongenial school environment, fear of examination, etc. The child may complain of recurrent physical complaints like abdominal pain, headaches, which subside, if the child is allowed to remain at home.<sup>3</sup>

School refusal is not a formal psychiatric diagnosis. However children with school refusal may suffer from significant emotional distress, especially anxiety and depression.<sup>4</sup> It leads to some consequences such as poor educational attainment, reduced employment prospects, social isolation/relationship problems.<sup>5</sup> Many preventive and therapeutic interventions are now available. But the existing measures need to be better co-ordinated and more effort need to be directed to the early recognition and treatment for school phobic behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Objectives

1. assess the knowledge regarding school phobia among parents.
2. find out the association between knowledge regarding school phobia among parents and selected demographic variables.
3. prepare an information leaflet on school phobia in children and its management and prevention.

## 3. Methodology

### Study design:

Non-experimental descriptive study design.

### Study area:

Selected wards of Nayarambalam Panchayat, Ernakulam

### Study Population

- Target population: Parents of children between the age group of 4-10years.
- Accessible population: Parents of children in the age group of 4-10 years residing at wards 7, 8 and 9 of Nayarambalam Panchayat, Ernakulam.

### Inclusion criteria

- Parents who are having children in the age group of 4- 10 years.
- Parents who are willing to participate in the study.

- Parents who are available during the time of the study.
- Parents who can communicate in English/Malayalam.

**Exclusion criteria**

- Parents who are having cognitive impairment.
- Parents who are health professionals.

**Study period:**

October 2015-December 2015

**Study tool:****Tool I:** Socio demographic data:

This includes age of the parent, relationship with the child, educational status, occupation, area of residence, age of the child, gender of the child, number of siblings, order of birth, type of the family.

**Tool II:**

This tool has got two subsections. Section A and Section B.

Section A:- Knowledge regarding school phobia among parents (5 items).

Section B:- Knowledge regarding factors contributing and management of school phobia. (21 items).

**Sample size:** 80**Sampling technique:**

Non probability convenience sampling technique.

**Data analysis:**

Data entry and analysis done using Microsoft excel and SPSS version 21. The quantitative variables are expressed as percentage, mean and SD. Fishers exact test was done to find the association.

**Ethical clearance:**

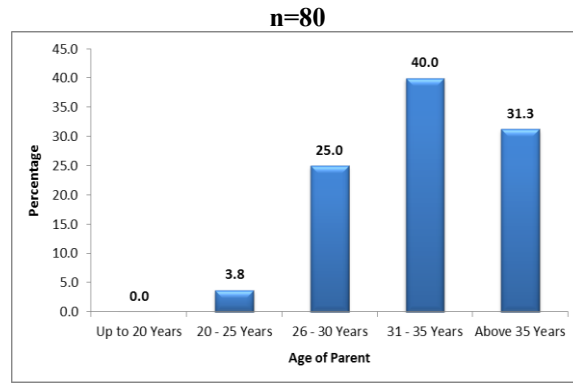
Authorization for the research was obtained from the thesis review committee of AIMS Hospital, Kochi. The importance of the study was explained to the participants and participation was voluntary. Full confidentiality and participant's rights were maintained.

**4. Results**

Regarding relationship with the child; 14(17.5%) were fathers and 66(82.5%) were mothers. Regarding occupation; 45(56.3%) were unemployed, while 5(6.3%) were self employed, 5(6.3%) were daily wagers, 7(8.8%) were government employees and 18(22.5%) were private employees. Regarding area of residence; all the subjects were from rural area. Regarding the gender of the child in the school going age, majority 41(51.3%) were males. Regarding number of 55(68.8%) siblings; Majority of the children of the subjects were having one and 18(22.5%) were having two siblings and none where having more than two siblings. Also majority of the subjects (71.3%) were from nuclear families. The results are given in Table 1.

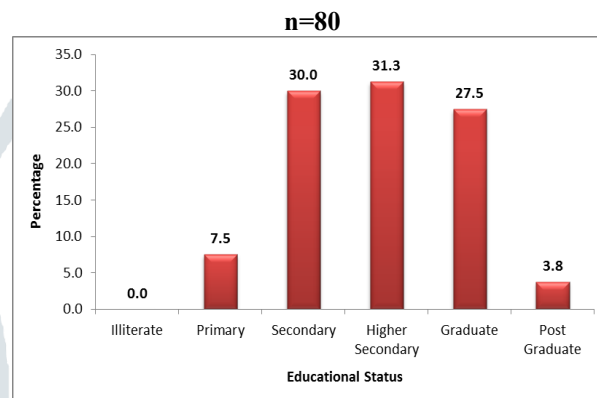
**Table 1:- Frequency and percentage distribution of sample based on socio demographic variables.**  
n = 80

Sl.no.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<b>Relationship with the child</b>		
	Father	14	17.5
	Mother	66	82.5
2.	<b>Occupation</b>		
	Unemployed	45	56.3
	Self employed	5	6.3
	Daily wager	5	6.3
	Government employee	7	8.8
	Private employee	18	22.5
3.	<b>Area of residence</b>		
	Urban	0	0.0
	Rural	80	100.0
4.	<b>Gender of the child</b>		
	Male	41	51.3
	Female	39	48.8
5.	<b>Number of siblings</b>		
	0	18	22.5
	1	55	68.8
	2	7	8.8
	3	0	0.0
	More than 3	0	0.0
6.	<b>Type of family</b>		
	Nuclear	57	71.3
	Joint	23	28.8



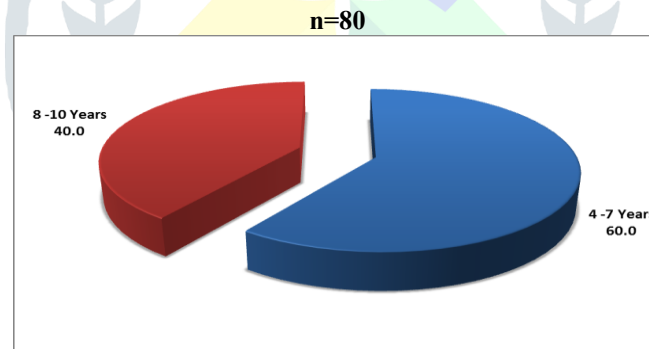
**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of sample based on age**

Figure 1: depicts that majority of the subjects, 32(40.0%) were from the age group of 31-35 years, 25(31.3%) were above35 years, 20(25.0%) were 26-30 years and none were from below 20 years.



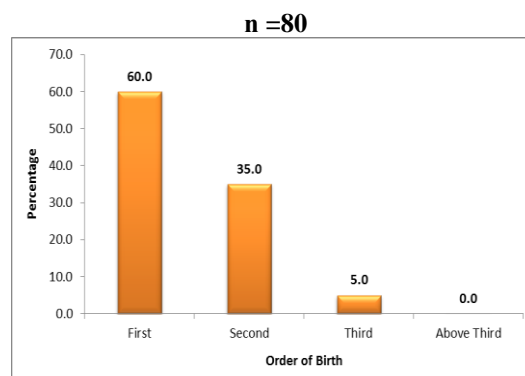
**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of sample based on educational status.**

Figure 2: depicts that majority of the subjects, 25(31.3%) were having higher secondary education, 24(30.0%) were having secondary education, 22(27.5%) were graduates and 6(7.5%) were having primary education. Only 3(3.8%) were postgraduates.



**Figure 3: Percentage distribution of age of children of the sample**

Figure 3: depicts shows that majority of the children (60.0%) were between the age group of 4-7years



**Figure 4: Percentage distribution of order of birth of the children of the sample.**

Figure 4: depicts shows that majority of the children of the subjects, (60.0%) were in the 1<sup>st</sup> order of birth. Only (5.0%) were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> order of birth.

Table 2: Area wise mean knowledge score of study subjects.

	Maximum score	Mean	SD
Knowledge regarding School Phobia	5	3.06	1.140
Factors Contributing and Management	21	13.33	3.051
Maternal Separation Anxiety	6	4.14	1.240
Unexcused Absenteeism	5	3.19	1.244
Bullying	5	2.78	1.091
Social Phobia	5	3.23	1.147
<b>Overall Knowledge</b>	26	16.39	3.563

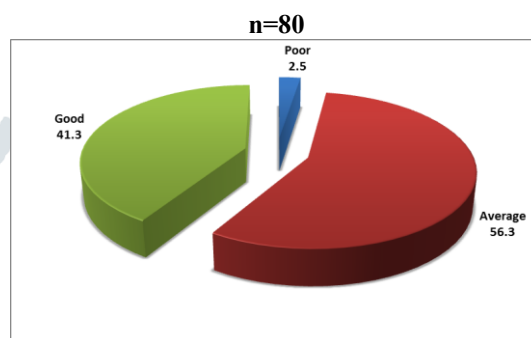


Figure 5: Percentage distribution of parents knowledge on school phobia.

Figure 5: shows that 45(56.3%) subjects had average knowledge, 33( 41.3% ) of the had subjects had good knowledge and only 2( 2.5%) of the poor knowledge had good knowledge

Table 3: Association between parents knowledge on school phobia and selected demographic variables.

Sl.no	Demographic variables	Knowledge on school phobia						Total	p-value
		Poor		Average		Good			
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Age of the parent #</b>								
	20-25 years	0	0.0	3	100	0	0.0	3	
	26-30 years	1	5.0	9	45.0	10	50.0	20	0.302 <sup>ns</sup>
	31-35 years	0	0.0	21	65.5	11	34.4	32	
	>35 years	1	4.0	12	48.0	12	48.0	25	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Relationship with the child #</b>								
	Father	1	7.1	10	71.4	3	21.4	14	
	Mother	1	1.5	35	53.0	30	45.5	66	0.115 <sup>ns</sup>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Education status of parent #</b>								
	Primary	0	0.0	5	83.3	1	16.7	6	
	Secondary	1	4.2	11	45.8	12	50.0	24	0.691 <sup>ns</sup>
	Higher Secondary	0	0.0	16	64.0	9	36.0	25	
	Graduate	1	4.5	11	50.0	10	45.5	22	
	Post graduate	0	0.0	2	66.7	1	33.3	3	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Occupation #</b>								
	Unemployed	0	0.0	24	53.3	21	46.7	45	
	Self employed	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0	5	0.085 <sup>ns</sup>
	Daily wager	0	0.0	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	
	Government employee	0	0.0	4	57.1	3	42.9	7	
	Private employee	0	0.0	11	61.1	7	38.9	18	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Age of the child #</b>								
	4-7 years	1	2.1	26	54.2	21	43.8	48	
	8-10 years	1	3.1	19	59.4	12	37.5	32	0.828 <sup>ns</sup>

Table 3: shows that there is no significant statistical association between parents knowledge on school phobia and selected demographic variables.

Sl.no	Demographic variables	Knowledge on school phobia						Total	p-value
		Poor		Average		Good			
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
6.	Gender of the child #								
	Male	1	2.4	22	53.7	18	43.9	41	
	Female	1	2.6	23	59.0	15	38.5	39	0.824 <sup>ns</sup>
7.	Number of siblings #								
	0	1	5.6	7	38.9	10	55.6	18	
	1	1	1.8	32	58.2	22	40.0	55	0.211 <sup>ns</sup>
	2	0	0.0	6	85.7	1	14.3	7	
8.	Order of birth #								
	First	1	2.1	27	56.3	20	41.7	48	
	Second	1	3.6	15	53.6	12	42.9	28	0.942 <sup>ns</sup>
	Third	0	0.0	3	75.0	1	25.0	4	
9.	Type of family #								
	Nuclear	2	3.5	29	50.9	26	45.6	57	
	Joint	0	0.0	16	69.6	7	30.4	23	0.274 <sup>ns</sup>

# = Fisher’s exact test  
 ns = not significant

**5. Discussion**

The knowledge of parents regarding school phobia in children were assessed by using a structured questionnaire. For statistical purpose the knowledge level was categorized into good, average and poor. The study result showed that out of 80 parents, 56.3% had average knowledge, 41.3% had good knowledge and only 2.5% had poor knowledge regarding school phobia in children.

Majority of the subjects (40.0%) were from the age group of 31-35 years, Regarding relationship with the child; (17.5%) were fathers and (82.5%) were mothers. There is no similar supportive literature reviews regarding parents knowledge on school phobia.

The results of the present study is supported by a study conducted by Bhanwara P in 2011, to assess the effect of planned teaching among the school teachers regarding behavioural problem in the selected schools of PCMC in Pune city.<sup>6</sup> The aim of the study was to identify the existing knowledge among school teachers related to behavioural problems (pica, temper tantrum, school phobia, sleep disorders, stealing and lying) in school children and to determine the pre-test and post-test knowledge related to the behavioural problems in school children among teachers. Also to find the relationship between the level of knowledge of school teachers with selected demographic variables. A quasi experimental research design was used. The samples were teachers (male and female). Sample size was 60. A non-probability convenient sampling technique was used. The results showed that majority (93.34%) of the school teachers in pre-test had an average knowledge whereas in post-test majority (75%) of the school teachers had a good knowledge. The other findings were majority (45%) of the teachers were between the age group of 26-45 years and majority of samples (88.34 %) were females. The study concluded that assessment of knowledge of teachers regarding problems of children including school phobia will help them to tackle the problem at an earlier stage and to prevent complications.

Another study was conducted by Lingeswaran A in 2013 to assess the knowledge of primary school teachers on specific learning disabilities in two schools in India.<sup>7</sup> The aim of the study was to assess the knowledge of learning disability among primary school teachers in India and to investigate its psychometric properties. An observational study was carried out among 34 primary school teachers from 2 different schools. A survey design was chosen. The results revealed that 29% of the questions were correctly answered by 34 teachers. The mean total score for this sample was 14.50 ± 9 and total item score for the 50 items was 9.90 ± 4. The results of this study showed that the knowledge of primary school teachers on specific learning disabilities (SLD) was poor. In this regard, the study provides a tool to study how much these teachers know about specific learning disabilities (SLD) and also serves to plan for teacher education programs, workshops, etc., to improve the existing situation of school teachers so that they will be able to effectively make early identification of SLD which is one of the management strategies in treating SLD.

This study also is an attempt to find out the knowledge of the subjects on an important childhood problem i.e. SLD. The selected demographic variables include age of the parent, relationship with the child, educational status of parent, occupation, area of residence, age of child, gender of the child, number of siblings, order of birth, type of family and the association was found by using Fishers’ exact test. The results showed that there was no significant statistical association between parents knowledge on school phobia and selected demographic variables.

The results of the present study supported by a study conducted by Ozcan O, Kiliç B G, Aysev A on psychopathology in parents of children with school phobia in Turkey in 2006.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of the study was to examine the psychopathology in parents of children with school phobia. 2 groups of parents were selected. One is parents of children with school phobia (n = 50) and the other is parents of children free of any psychiatric diagnosis (n = 50). (44%) of the children in the study group were girls, (56%) were boys. (40%) of the children in the control group were girls, (60%) were boys. There were no significant differences between the 2 groups in terms of mean age and gender. The results showed that parental psychopathology was higher in parents of children with school phobia than in parents of normal children.



## 6. Limitations

- Sampling technique used in this study was non probability convenience sampling.
- The study was conducted only among parents of children in the age group of 4-10 years.
- Study setting was confined to three wards of Nayarambalam panchayat, Ernakulam, hence the generalization of findings was limited.

## 7. Conclusion

The researcher conducted a study to assess the knowledge of parents regarding school phobia in children. Findings of the present study revealed that maximum number of parents had average knowledge score regarding school phobia in children. There was no significant association between knowledge regarding school phobia among parents and selected demographic variables. The present study concluded that the parents knowledge regarding school phobia is only average. Therefore interventions need to be planned to enhance their knowledge so that they will be in a position to prevent the future occurrences of school phobia and/ manage a child with school phobia with minimum complications.

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