

AWARENESS REGARDING GIRL CHILD ABUSE AMONG MOTHERS ATTENDING PEDIATRIC OPD OF A SELECTED TEACHING HOSPITAL OF KASKI

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ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a known challenging problem today. Children are exposed with different forms of abuse like and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. The consequences of these forms of discipline are learning disabilities; behavioral disorders; and depression. The objective of the study is to assess the awareness on girl child abuse among the mothers.

A descriptive Cross sectional research design was adopted .Non probability convenient sampling technique for selecting 104 mother having a girl child of less than 19 years and Semi-structured face to face interview schedule was used to collect the data.

The study revealed that very few women (22.1%) had good , 37.5 had average and 40.4% had poor level of awareness regarding the girl child abuse. Among the types of abuse, Majority (82.7%) of them, were aware of physical abuse, 66.7% of Sexual abuse, 65.4 %percent of emotional abuse and only 39.4 % of Neglect against girl child. There was a significant association between the number of child and the level of awareness ($P=0.001$).

Though different organizations have been working in the field of child abuse , the study findings reveled that very few percentage of mothers had good level of awareness regarding the girl child abuse .So it is necessary to work from the grass root level conducting awareness raising campaigns to protect our girl child.

Index Terms: Awareness, girl child, abuse

1. INTRODUCTION

Child abuse has been a global challenge and problematic condition today. Every child has a right to a safe childhood free of violence but somewhere and at sometimes in their childhood period they are experiencing different forms of abuse like infanticide, mutilation, abandonment and other forms across all stages of childhood and in all settings – at home, at school, in their communities and online too¹.

Worldwide 1 billion children aged 2–17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect. 120 million girls and young women under 20 years of age have suffered some form of forced sexual contact. Nearly three in four children or 300 million children aged two to four years regularly suffer physical punishment and/or psychological violence at the hands of parents and caregivers².

In America, survivors of sexual abuse are over 42 million and ninety percent of sexual abuse victims never tell that they are abused. 60% are abused within their own family by mothers, fathers, uncles, siblings where as 30% are sexually assaulted by the 'caregiver' community, babysitters, teachers, camp councilors, ministers, Boy Scout leaders, etc³.

Over 80 per cent of Nepali children, aged between one and 14, experience violent discipline. Majority of them were toddlers, more than half, aged between one and two, are disciplined with the use of physical force from the hands of those entrusted to take care of them. Psychological aggression accounts for over 70 per cent of children, over 50 per cent of children are subjected to general physical punishment and among them, 14 per cent face the more severe forms of physical punishment⁴.

A child who is abused is more likely to abuse others as an adult so that violence is passed down from one generation to the next. It is therefore critical to break this cycle of violence, and create positive multi-generational impacts. The ultimate consequences of child maltreatment include impaired lifelong physical and mental health, and the social and occupational outcomes can ultimately slow a country's economic and social development⁵.

Therefore the mother the first primary care giver must be aware and alert about child abuse so that they can protect their children from being exposed to different kinds of abuse as child have the right to live safely and acquire love from his parents and family without any hurts⁶.

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

Parents can play a significant role in preventing child abuse and fostering the child rights. Mothers can promote the children's efficacy, competency, self-esteem which helps the children to become less likely the target of child abuse on one hand and on the other hand helps them to respond more accurately to the abuse⁷. Uncaring parents with inadequate awareness about different forms of child abuses was found as the reason why children are neglected and thus exposed to different forms of abuse as perceived by the children⁸.

Sexual violence assessment in seven districts of Nepal revealed high prevalence (9.8%) of sexual violence in girls that is substantially higher than the rate reported in same age group in Nepal Demographic Health Survey-2011 that is 4.6 percent⁹.

Child maltreatment and related research seems to be concentrated in countries with a Western culture, whereas research in the non-Western cultures of Africa, South America and Asia is quite far behind¹⁰.

A cross sectional study conducted in Jordon in 2018 concluded that 53.3 percent of the mothers studied were not aware about the laws to protect the girl child abuse. Findings of the study also revealed that only 34% of the mothers were aware about the signs and symptoms of child abuse¹¹. A study conducted in India in 2016 revealed that 82 percent of the mothers had poor to average level of awareness regarding girl child abuse¹².

Various studies conducted in Nepal have shown a varying range of awareness regarding girl child abuse among mothers. A study conducted in Lamjung in 2016 among 288 mothers revealed that only 7.3 percent of the mothers had good level of awareness regarding girl child abuse. Age, ethnicity, educational status, type of family and age at marriage were some of the contributing factors of low level of awareness¹³. Another cross sectional study conducted among 162 mothers attending paediatric unit of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in 2019 revealed that only 23.9 percent of the mothers had an adequate level of awareness regarding child abuse among mothers¹⁴.

It is very important to understand and improve public awareness of girl child abuse prevention, especially for the mothers. Child neglect is a problem of considerable extent, but seems to be a neglected type of maltreatment in scientific research. Assessment of awareness level of the mothers and working towards reducing the identified gaps in awareness on girl child abuse helps to promote knowledge and a healthier physical and mental health of girl child, However; there are few published reports on the awareness on girl child abuse among parents in Nepal. Hence the researcher is interested in assessing the awareness regarding girl child abuse among mothers.

Research Design and Methodology

Research Method; Quantitative

Type of study: Descriptive Cross-sectional Study

Study site and it's justification:

The study was carried out in Gandaki Medical College Teaching Hospital and Research Center Private Limited (GMCTHRC) Kaski in province number 4 i.e. Gandaki Pradesh. This hospital is a tertiary 550 bedded health care centre which was established since 2008 A.D with all activity of clinical and medical facilities, thus providing excellent health care facilities. The hospital provides different advanced health facilities with

laboratory service and diagnostic service of advanced technology such as CT-Scan, MRI etc. It also provide different treatment modalities with Health insurance service. It has got sufficient patient flow with wide coverage of patients with different socio-demographic characteristics. The setting is feasible and appropriate; hence, the setting is selected for the purposed study.

Study Population

The study population consists of mothers of girl child attending the pediatrics department of Gandaki Medical College Teaching Hospital and Research Centre.

Samples was collected from the accessible population using Cochran's equation

A study conducted in a community of Lamjung Nepal assessing mother's awareness on girl child abuse concluded that only 7.3 percent of the mother's had good level of awareness regarding girl child abuse¹⁴.

Using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation:

$$n = z^2 pq/d^2$$

With 95% Confidence interval and 5% margin of error,

p= proportion of mothers having good level of awareness

$$q = 1 - p$$

$$n = 1.96^2 * 0.073 * 0.927 / (0.05)^2$$

$$= 103.98$$

Hence the precise sample size was 104

Criteria for sample selection:

Mothers attending the Pediatric OPD of GMCTHRC and willing to participate in the study was be selected as samples.

Mothers having girl child of less than 19 years will be included as samples for the study.

Data collection Method/s /Technique/s:

After obtaining the ethical clearance from Institutional review committee of Gandaki Medical College (GMC-IRC), the data was collected for 4 weeks. Taking into account of the inclusion criteria of the study, sample was selected. As subjects for the study was the mothers attending pediatric OPD of GMCTHRC, non-probability convenient sampling technique was used. Data was collected during the OPD time so as to ensure that respondents had enough time to answer the questionnaire.

Confidentiality was maintained by not disclosing information about the research participant and ensuring that the information was used entirely for research purpose only.

Data collection tools:

Semi- structured interview schedule questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire was developed based on adequate literature review and consultation with subject expertise. The questionnaire consists of two parts:

Part I: Questionnaire related to socio-demographic

Part II: Questionnaire related to Awareness regarding child abuse.

Pretesting of the data collection tools

Pretesting of the tool was done among 10 % (10) of the total sample size among mothers attending Paediatric OPD of Manipal Teaching Hospital, Kaski.

Validation and reliability of the study:

The validity of the research instrument was established by extensive literature review and consulting with subject matter expertise.

Pre testing of the instrument was done to ascertain the relevancy and completeness of the instrument. On the basis of findings of pre testing, instrument was revised and finalized for use in data collection. Cronbach's alpha was also be calculated to ensure the reliability (internal consistency) of the research instrument.

Data management and analysis tools:

Data was collected by researcher themselves using semi structured interview schedule.

All collected data was reviewed and checked for completeness, consistency and accuracy. The obtained data was edited coded and entered on the same day by the researcher herself. Collected data was transferred into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 16 for futher analysis. The entered data was analyzed and interpreted according to the objective of the study by using descriptive method which includes frequency, mean and standard deviation to describe socio- demographic data and inferential statistics for the variable association. The findings of the study was presented in tables.

FINDINGS

TABLE 1

Distribution of Respondents according to the Socio-Demographic Characteristics
n= 104

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Age		
≤30 yrs	23	22.2
>30 yrs	81	77.8
Mean (S.D)= 40.65 ±10.009		
Religion		
Hinduism	81	77.9
Buddhism	14	13.5
Islam	9	8.6
Ethnicity		
Upper caste group	58	55.8
Relatively advantaged janajatis	28	26.9
Dalit	9	8.7
Disadvantaged Janajati	6	5.6
Disadvantaged non Dalit Terai caste groups	3	2.9
Educational Status		
Literate	83	79.8
Illiterate	21	20.2
Level of Education (Among Literate, n=83)		
Primary	5	4.8
Secondary	5	4.8
Higher secondary	35	33.6
Bachelor and above	38	36.5
Occupation		
Employed	60	57.7
Unemployed	44	42.3
Occupational status {n=60}		
Business/self employed	19	18.3

Non-Government Service	13	12.5
Government Service	12	11.5
Farmer	6	5.8
Animal Husbandry	4	3.8
Daily labour	2	1.9
Others	4	3.8
Type of Family		
Nuclear	52	50
Joint	46	44.2
Extended	6	5.8
Age of Marriage		
≤20 yrs	54	51.9
20-29 yrs	50	48.1
Recent Marital Status		
Lives with husband	98	94.2
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	6	5.8
No. of Children		
< 3	70	67.3
3 and above	34	32.7

Table-1 shows that majority (83.7%) of mothers belong to the age group of more than 30 years and follow Hinduism. More than half (55.8%) of the mothers are of upper caste group. Majority (90.4%) are literate among them, 36.5 percent had qualification higher than Bachelor degree and above. More than half (57.7%) were employed out of which 18.3% were self-employed/business, 12.5 percent Non-governmental service followed by government service(11.5%). Half of the mothers have Nuclear family and 51.9 percent were married before 20 years.20-29 years . 94.2 percent of mothers lives with husband and 67.3 percent had less than 3 children.

TABLE 2

Mother's Awareness on Girl Child Abuse and its types

n=104

Statements*	Number	Percentage
Types of Girl Child Abuse		
Physical abuse against girl child	86	82.7
Sexual abuse against girl child	69	66.3
Emotional abuse against girl child	68	65.4
Neglect against girl child	41	39.4

*Multiple Responses

Table-2 demonstrates that majority of the mothers (82.7%) were answered physical abuse as one of the types of girl child abuse followed by sexual abuse against girl child (64.5%). Whereas 39.4 percent were aware about neglect as girl child abuse.

TABLE 3

Mother's Awareness on Types of Girl Child Abuse

n=104

Statements *	Number	Percentage
Types of Physical Abuse		
Hitting with hand, stick or other Object	74	71.2
Tying and forcing to stay in uncomfortable position	73	70.2
Punching/ Slapping	67	64.4
Pulling hair	57	54.8
Kicking	56	53.8
Throwing	47	45.2
Types of Emotional Abuse		

Threatening	74	71.2
Cursing using bad words	73	70.2
Insulting in front of others	72	69.2
Isolating in closed rooms/toilets	65	62.2
Withholding communication for long time	52	50
Child rejection attitude	47	45.2
Types of Neglect		
Discrimination in education	79	76
Sex selective abortion/infanticide	72	69.2
Child marriage	68	65.4
Neglect during menstruation	66	63.5
Discrimination in work	62	59.6
Discrimination in food and clothing	6	5.8
Type of Sexual Abuse		
Forced sex	100	96.2
Touch/ make them touch in sensitive parts	87	83.7
Attempt forced sex	78	75.0
Exhibiting genitalia by others	65	62.2
Looking in inappropriate ways	63	60.6
Making fun of child sexually	50	48.1

*Multiple Responses

Table-3 reveals that 71.2 percent responded that hitting with hand ,stick or other object is a physical abuse, and threatening (71.2%) as emotional abuse. .Likewise 76 percent said that discrimination in education is a neglect whereas only 5.8 percent said discrimination in food and clothing is neglect. Similarly, almost all of them 96.4 percent said that forced sex is a type of sexual abuse followed by(83.7 %) touch/make them touch in sensitive parts.

TABLE 4

Mother's Awareness on Sign/Symptoms of Sexual Abuse in Girl Child

n=104

Sign/Symptoms of Sexual Abuse*	Number	Percentage
Bleeding from private parts)	78	75
Abuse marks appear in body parts(scratching, biting, burning etc	76	73.1
Feel lonely and stay away from people	75	72.1
Pregnancy	64	61.5
Sudden change in personality	67	64.4
Waking up during night with screaming and nightmares	63	60.6
Sudden academic problems	59	56.7
Difficulty in walking and sitting	58	55.8
Sexually transmitted diseases	57	54.8
Sudden change in appetite	47	45.2
Fear to refuse to go to particular place and stay with particular person	7	6.7

*Multiple Responses

Table 4 depicts that majority 75 percent of the mothers were aware that bleeding from private part is sign /symptom of girl child sexual abuse which is followed by abuse marks appear in body parts(scratching/biting/burning) whereas only 6.7 percent of mothers said that fear to refuse to go to particular place and stay with particular person as sign /symptom of sexual abuse.

TABLE 5

Mother's Awareness on Methods of Preventing Sexual abuse in Girl Child

n=104

Methods of Prevention*	Number	Percentage
Teach your child about privacy of body parts	85	81.7
Make sure you know where and with whom your child is spending her time	83	79.8
Not to keep child with other adults alone for long time/overnight	71	68.3
Give your child enough time so that she won't seek attention of other adults	62	59.6
Listen when your child tries to tell you something which seems hard for her to talk about it	5	4.8
Never leaving child alone	1	1

*Multiple Responses

Above table 5 illustrates that majority of the respondents (81.7%) were aware of teaching child about privacy of body parts as prevention of abuse among girl child. The least aware preventive measure was never leaving the child alone.

TABLE 6

Mother's Awareness on Person Who Can Sexually Abuse Girl Child and their Characteristics

n=104

Statements *	Number	Percentage
Sex Abuser		
Relatives	75	72.1
Classmate	4	3.8
Family members	48	46.2
House Worker	64	61.5
School driver	64	61.5

Teacher	67	64.4
Father/Stepfather	4	3.8
Others	65	62.5
Characteristics of Abuser		
Person who is likely to use sense of touch	87	83.7
Avoids adults and parents related to child	31	29.8
Confused person	3	2.9
Person who likes to stay with children (gives them sweet and plays with them)	2	1.9

*Multiple Responses

Table 6 depicts that most of the 72.1 percent said that relatives can abuse a girl child whereas only 3.8 percent said that a father can be abuser.. Likewise 83.7 percent of the mothers said that the abuser will have the behave of likely to use sense of touch.

TABLE 7

Mother's Awareness on Causes and Consequences of Girl Child Abuse

n=104

Statements *	Number	Percentage
Causes		
Lack of education	63	60.6
Weak laws/ politics	77	74.0
Alcoholism	68	65.4
Acceptance of violence	66	63.5
Gender inequality	5	4.8
Culture and tradition	44	42.3
Low economic status	56	53.8
Exposure of violence in Childhood	50	48.1
Consequences		
Psychological problem	90	86.5
STDs including HIV/AIDS	73	70.2
Chronic health problem	5	4.8

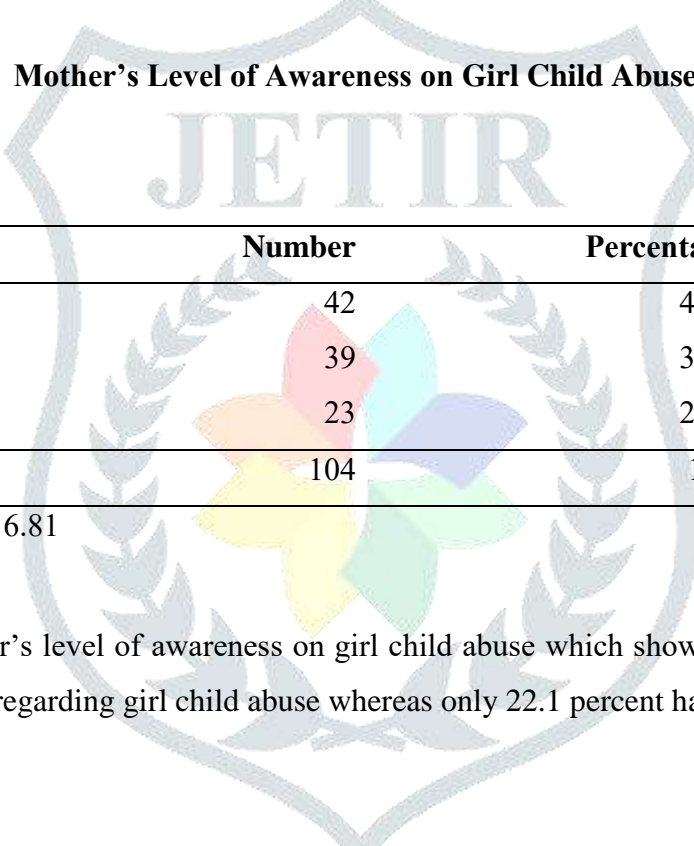
Reproductive problem	83	79.8
Physical injuries and Disability	71	68.3
Self-injurious behavior	66	63.5

*Multiple Responses

Table 7 reveals that 74percent of mothers were aware that weak laws /politics is the cause of girl child abuse. And majority of them(86.5%) said that psychological problem is a major consequence of girl child abuse.

TABLE 8

Mother's Level of Awareness on Girl Child Abuse



n=104

Level of Awareness	Number	Percentage
Poor	42	40.4
Average	39	37.5
Good	23	22.1
Total	104	100

Mean Score \pm SD = 42.01 \pm 16.81

Table 8 illustrates the mother's level of awareness on girl child abuse which shows that 40.4 percent of women had poor level of awareness regarding girl child abuse whereas only 22.1 percent had good awareness level

TABLE 9

Association of Awareness Level of Mothers with selected variables

n=104

Awareness regarding Girl child abuse					
Characteristics	Poor	Average	Good	Pearson's Chi-square	P-Value
Age					
≤30 yrs	9(39.1%)	6 (26.1%)	8(34.8%)	3.180	.204
>30yrs	33(40.7%)	33 (40.7%)	15(18.5%)		
Education					
Literate	37(44.6%)	30(36.1%)	16(19.3%)	3.583 [#]	0.175
Illiterate	5(23.8%)	9(42.9%)	7(33.3%)		
Religion					
Hindu	36 (44.4%)	31 (38.3%)	14 (17.3%)	0.067	.581
Others	6 (26.1%)	8 (34.8%)	9 (39.1%)		
Occupation					
Employed	23(38.3%)	21(35.0%)	16(26.7%)	1.712	0.446
Unemployed	42(40.7%)	39(37.5%)	23(22.1%)		
Age at marriage					
≤20 years	24(44.4%)	20(37.0%)	10(18.5%)	1.122	0.571
>20 years	18(36.0%)	19(38.0%)	13(26.0%)		
No of children					
< 3	34(48.6%)	28(40.0%)	8(11.4%)	14.98	0.001*
≥3	8(23.5%)	11(32.4%)	15(44.1%)		

*Significant (P<0.05)

#Fisher Exact value

Table 9 depicts the association between awareness level of mothers on girl child abuse and selected independent variables. Statistically significant association was seen between number of children and mothers level of awareness on girl child abuse with p-value is 0.001 at 5 % level of significance.

Discussion

The study showed that 40.4 percent of mother's had poor level of awareness on girl child abuse which is contradict with study in TamilNadhu¹⁵ with 0 percent and the same study is similar with average level of awareness (40.7 %) which is 37.5 percent of this study. Likewise, This study showed that 22.1 percent had good

awareness level which is similar with the study in lamjung¹³ (7.8 %) & contradictory with study in Maraimalai Nagar with 68 percent¹⁶ and Nepal, Kalanki¹⁷ with 50.53 percent but is similar with the study carried in TUTH¹⁴.

Most of the mothers (82.7%) were aware on physical abuse as one of the types of girl child abuse followed by sexual abuse against girl child (64.5%) and neglect (39.4%) which is similar with the study carried in TUTH, Kathamandu¹⁴.

The study findings shows that there is the statistical significant association between level of awareness and number of children ($P=0.001$) which is similar with the study carries in Kathmandu, Lamjung¹³ but no significant association was seen with age ethnicity religion educational status and age of marriage .which contradicts with the same study.

Conclusion:

Though different organizations have been working in the field of child abuse by launching various awareness raising programs the study findings still revealed that very few percentage of mothers had good level of awareness regarding the girl child abuse .So it is necessary to work from the grass root level to protect our girl child .

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