



A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF PARENTS REGARDING THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE, IN AMBALA, HARYANA.

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ABSTRACT

Background:

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe. Our greatest responsibility is to protect children from abuse and victimization. Abuse affects everyone; however, for a child, it robs them of their innocence, replacing it with fear and pain that can have lifelong consequences. The first line of defense against child abuse is ensuring that people know what to do when they suspect it has occurred. In India, 69% of children are victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

Aim:

To assess the level of knowledge and attitude of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Methodology:

A descriptive survey was conducted to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of 300 parents regarding the prevention of child abuse, utilizing a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected through structured knowledge questionnaires and Likert scale interviews. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results:

The study revealed that only 20% of respondents had a very good level of knowledge, while 34.67% had an average level of knowledge. Nearly half of the respondents (49.33%) demonstrated a moderately favorable attitude toward the prevention of child abuse. Area-wise, knowledge scores indicated that parents had good knowledge of sexual abuse (mean percentage of 69.33%), emotional abuse (mean percentage of 63.16%), and average knowledge of physical abuse (mean percentage of 56.17%). The overall knowledge in the prevention of child abuse had a mean percentage of 56.36%, while the general concept scored a mean percentage of 53.18%, and neglect had a mean percentage of 48.4%.

A correlation analysis showed a mean knowledge score of 23.13 (SD = 7.42) and an attitude score of 104.96 (SD = 14.95), with a low positive correlation ($r = 0.306$, $p = 0.05$) between knowledge and attitude scores. This indicates that as parental knowledge increases, their attitudes become more favorable towards the prevention of child abuse.

Significant associations were found between parents' knowledge scores and their awareness of child abuse, as well as their sources of information, particularly mass media. Additionally, the attitude score was significantly associated with parents who did not employ domestic helpers at the 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion:

The study concluded that few parents possess a good level of knowledge about child abuse, while half have a favorable attitude toward its prevention. They do not have adequate knowledge of what constitutes emotional abuse and neglect. These findings highlight the need to raise community-based education programs to increase parents' and caregivers' awareness of child rights.

Key Words: Healthy, Defense, Child Abuse, Attitude, Physical, Emotional.

INTRODUCTION

The children of today in the country are the future of tomorrow and are full-fledged members of human society. Each child is unique and has the right to be given a healthy and meaningful life to contribute to society. Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe, and we should have no greater responsibility than the protection of our children against abuse and victimization. Abuse makes a child steal the blessing of innocence, replacing it with fear and hurt that can damage young lives and take a lifetime from which to recover.

Globally child abuse is a serious life-long consequence. In a recent national survey in several low- and middle-income countries. Nonetheless, international studies reveal that a quarter of all adults report having been physically abused as children and 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men report having been sexually abused as a child. Additionally, many children are subject to emotional abuse referred to as psychological abuse and neglect. Every year, there are an estimated 41,000 homicide deaths in children under 18 years of age. (M. Ajilian Abbasi, et al. 2015)

One of the most common types of violence against children is child abuse. This type of violence can have implications for both the physical and mental health of the children and can influence their health status long after the abuse has occurred. Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child. Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, neglect and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen.

In 2022, India witnessed an overwhelming 8.7% increase in child abuse cases, reaching a total of 162,000 incidents, as reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). This surge came amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns, highlighting a disturbing trend in crimes against children. Tyagi & Karande, 2021, an estimated 7.9% of males and 19.7% of females universally faced sexual abuse before the age of 18 years.

According to world population data, the number of rape incidents in India per 1 lakh population is 22,172 as of 2020. Indian children, at 440 million, constitute 19% of the world's population of children. UNICEF reported that child sexual abuse in Indian girls was 42%. It can be observed that sexual abusers are mainly male and often individuals known to the child. As per the National Family Health Survey (2019-21), 1.5% of young women in the age group 18-29 reported having experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. UNICEF estimates that, globally 40 million children aged less than 18 years suffer from abuse and neglect. An estimated two million children are involved in pornography and 300,000 serve as soldiers in armed conflict. It also estimates that 3500 children die annually from child abuse occurring in developed nations. The first line of defense against child abuse is making sure people know what to do when they suspect it has occurred. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the family is the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children. The ideal parent should love, nurture and wisely discipline his children so that they may develop as ideal children into ideal adults. Parents have important roles that involve childrearing and long-term care of children until they reach adulthood.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess parents' level of knowledge and attitude regarding the prevention of child abuse in a selected area of a Hospital in Ambala Haryana.
2. To determine the correlation between knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse in a selected area of a Hospital in Ambala Haryana.
3. To seek the association between knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse with the selected sample characteristics in a selected area of a Hospital in Ambala Haryana.

HYPOTHESIS

All hypotheses will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₁: There will be a significant correlation between the knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

A Quantitative research approach and an- Experimental Descriptive Survey Design were adopted to assess the knowledge and attitude of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse the sample consisted of 300 parents of children (5-18 years) who are visiting O.P.D. and admitted to the selected area of Hospital Ambala Haryana was selected using a convenient sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection was a structured knowledge questionnaire and Likert scale through interviews technique. The research instrument was categorized into four sections:

Section I: Description of sample characteristics

Section II: Finding the assessment of the level of knowledge and attitude of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Section III: Finding regarding the correlation between the knowledge scores and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse

Section IV: Finding regarding the association between knowledge scores and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

The researcher adhered to the principles of beneficence and respect for human dignity during data collection. The data analysis and interpretation were based on the objectives of the research study and analysis done with the help of inferential and descriptive statistics.

RESULT:

The data and findings have been organized and presented in the following section.

Section I: Description of sample characteristics

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of parents according to their sample characteristics

N=300		
Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Relation with child		
a) Father	160	53.33
b) Mother	140	46.67
2. Age of child (in years)		
a) 5-9	153	51
b) 10-14	77	25.67
c) 15-18	70	23.33
3. Religion		
a) Hindu	210	70
b) Muslim	49	16.33
c) Sikh	30	10
d) Christian	10	3.33
e) Others	1	0.33
4. Educational status of father/mother		
a) Non-literate	20	6.67
b) Primary school/ Middle school	74	24.67
c) High school	40	13.33
d) Higher Secondary	62	20.67
e) Graduate	71	23.67
f) Post Graduate	33	11
5. Occupational status of mother/father		
a) Homemaker/ Unemployed	58	19.33
b) Private job	113	37.67
c) Government job	43	14.33
d) Business	86	28.67
6. Monthly income (in rupees)		
a) <5000	90	30
b) 5001-10,000	124	41.33
c) >10,001	86	28.67
7. Place of residence		
a) Rural	121	40.33
b) Semi-Urban	78	26
c) Urban	101	33.67
8. Are you aware of child abuse		
a) Yes	218	72.67
b) No	82	27.33
If Yes, what Source of getting information	54	18
a) Family members/Friends	149	49.67
b) Mass media	14	4.67
c) Health personal		
9. Employment of a domestic, servant at home		

a) Employed > 2 full-time servants on salary for domestic work	9	3
b) Employed only 1 full-time servant on salary for domestic work	29	9.67
c) Employed 1-2 part-time servants on salary for domestic work	15	5
d) Employed no servant for domestic work	247	82.33

Table 1 illustrates that more than half (53.33%) of parents are fathers and (46.67%) of respondents are mothers. More than half (51%) of parents having children in the age group of 5-9 years, (25.67%) in the age group of 10-14 years, (23.33%) were in the age of 15- 18 years. Most (70%) of the parents belong to Hindu, (16.33%) belong to Muslim, (10%) belong to Sikh religion, (3.33%) belong to Christian and (0.33%) belong to other religions. One-fourth of (24.67%) of the parents had primary school/middle school, (23.67%) had graduated, (20.67%) had higher secondary, (13.33%) had high school, (11%) had graduated and (6.67%) were illiterates. One-third (37.67%) of the parents had private jobs, (28.67%) had businesses, (19.33%) were unemployed/homemakers, and (14.33%) had a government job. Nearly half (41.33%) of the parents had 50001-10,000, (30%) had below 5000, and (28.67%) had above 10,001. Nearly half (40.33%) of the parents belonged to rural, (33.67%) belonged to urban, (26%) belonged to semi-urban. Most (72.67%) parents have knowledge regarding child abuse 27.33% of parents have no knowledge regarding child abuse and half (49.67%) of parents have a source of information as mass media, (18%) family members/friends, (4.67%) health personal. A majority (83.33%) of parents have no servant, (9.67%) have one servant, (5%) have 1-2 servants, (3%) have more than 2 servants.

Section II: Description of the level of knowledge and attitude of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of data to describe the level of knowledge of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse. The scores obtained by the parents were arbitrarily categorized into 4 levels given below:

Very Good - >75%,

Good 61-75%,

Average - 50-60%, and

Below Average - <50%

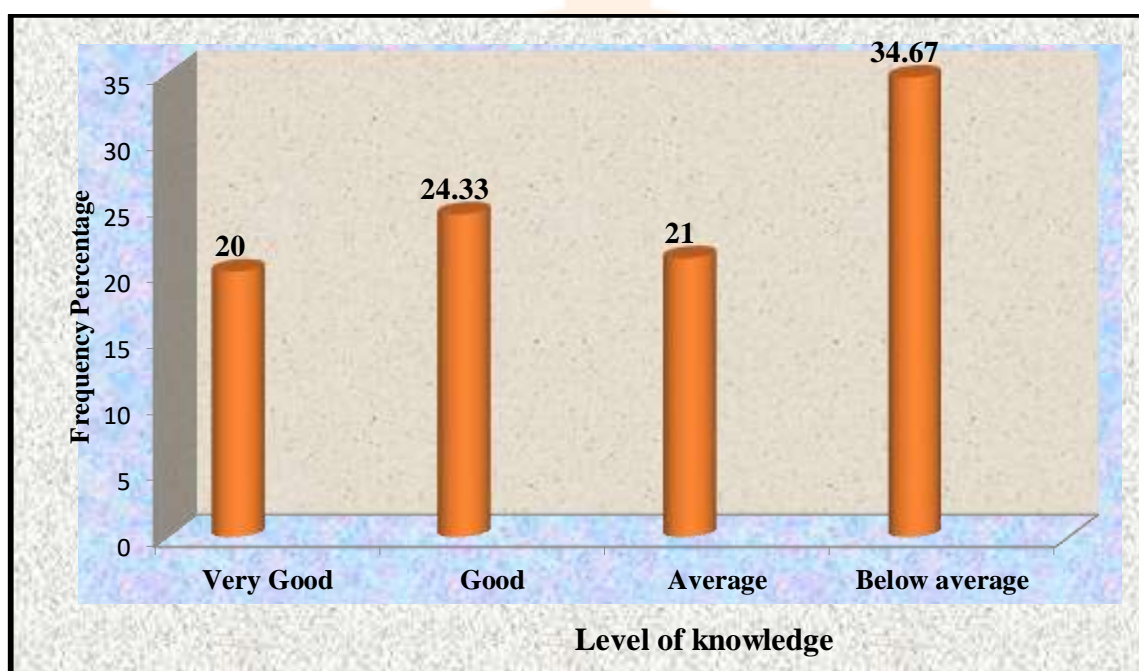


Figure 1: Cylindrical diagram showing the distribution of parents according to their level of knowledge.

Data in Figure 1 indicates that one-third (34.67%) of the parents had below-average knowledge, 21% of parents had average knowledge, 24.33% of the parents had good knowledge, and 20% of the parents had a very good level of knowledge regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Table 2: Area-wise Mean, standard deviation, and mean percentage of the level of knowledge of parents in various areas.

N=300

S.No.	Area	Max score	Mean	SD	Mean%	Rank
1.	General Question	6	3.19	1.63	53.18%	V
2.	Emotional abuse	6	3.79	1.80	63.16%	II
3.	Physical abuse	6	3.37	1.40	56.17%	IV
4.	Sexual abuse	6	4.16	1.53	69.33%	I
5.	Neglect	5	2.42	1.27	48.4%	VI
6.	Prevention and Management	11	6.20	2.31	56.36%	III
	Total	40	23.13	9.94		

Maximum score=40

Minimum score=0

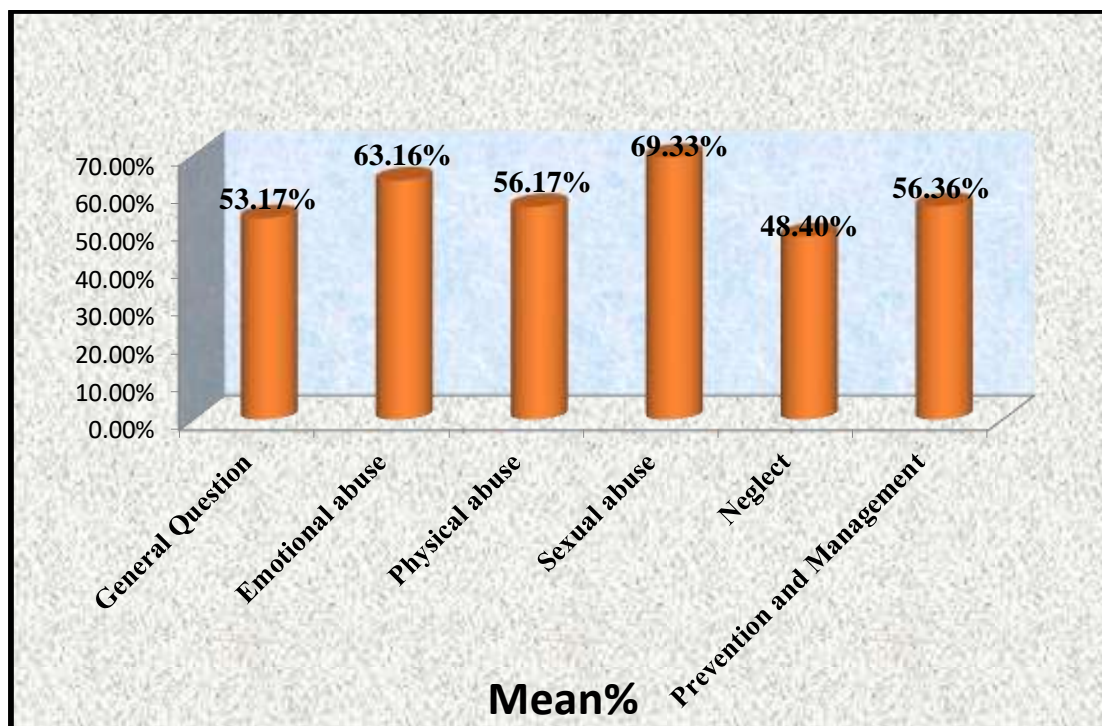


Figure 2: Cylindrical diagram showing area-wise mean percentage knowledge of parents concerning varicose veins.

The data in Table 2 depicts the knowledge of the parents in different areas regarding the prevention of child abuse. The parents have ranked I in the area of sexual abuse with mean and SD (69.33, 4.16, ± 1.53). II rank in the area of emotional abuse with mean and SD (63.16, 3.79, ± 1.63). III rank in the area of Prevention and management with mean and SD (56.36, 6.20, ± 2.31). IV rank in the area of physical abuse with mean and SD (56.17, 3.37, ± 1.40). V rank in the area of general questions with mean and SD (53.17, 3.19, ± 1.63). VI ranks in the area of neglect with mean and SD (48.4, 2.42, ± 1.27). It concludes that the parents had more knowledge in the area of sexual abuse, and emotional abuse but less knowledge in neglect.

Description and interpretation of attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

This section deals with the analysis of the interpretation of the data to describe the attitude score of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse. The scores obtained by the parents were arbitrarily categorized into 3 levels as given below:

Favourable >75%,

Moderately favourable 50-75%, and

Unfavourable <50%.

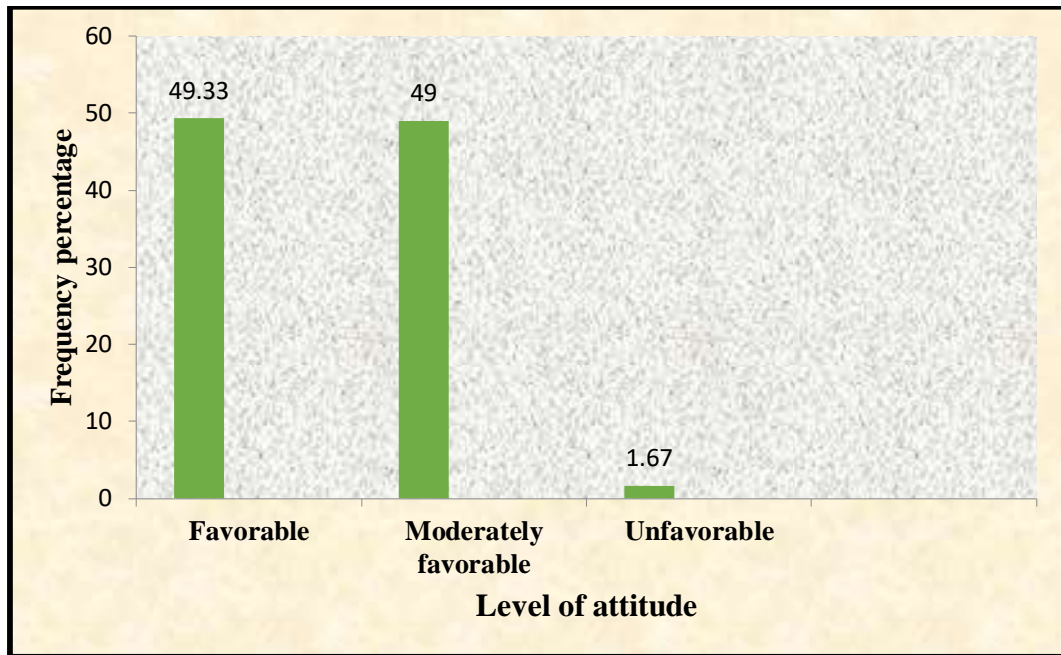


Figure 3: Bar diagram showing the distribution of parents according to their level of Attitude. Data in Figure 2 illustrate that half (49.33%) of the parents had a favourable attitude another half (49%) of the parents had a moderately favourable and only 1.67% of parents had an unfavourable attitude. This shows that half of the participants had positive attitudes and another half had moderately positive attitudes.

Table 3: Mean, median, and SD of parent’s knowledge and attitude scores regarding the prevention of child abuse

N=300				
Test	Range	Mean	Median	SD
Knowledge score	5-39	23.13	23	7.42
Attitude score	47-138	104.96	104	14.95

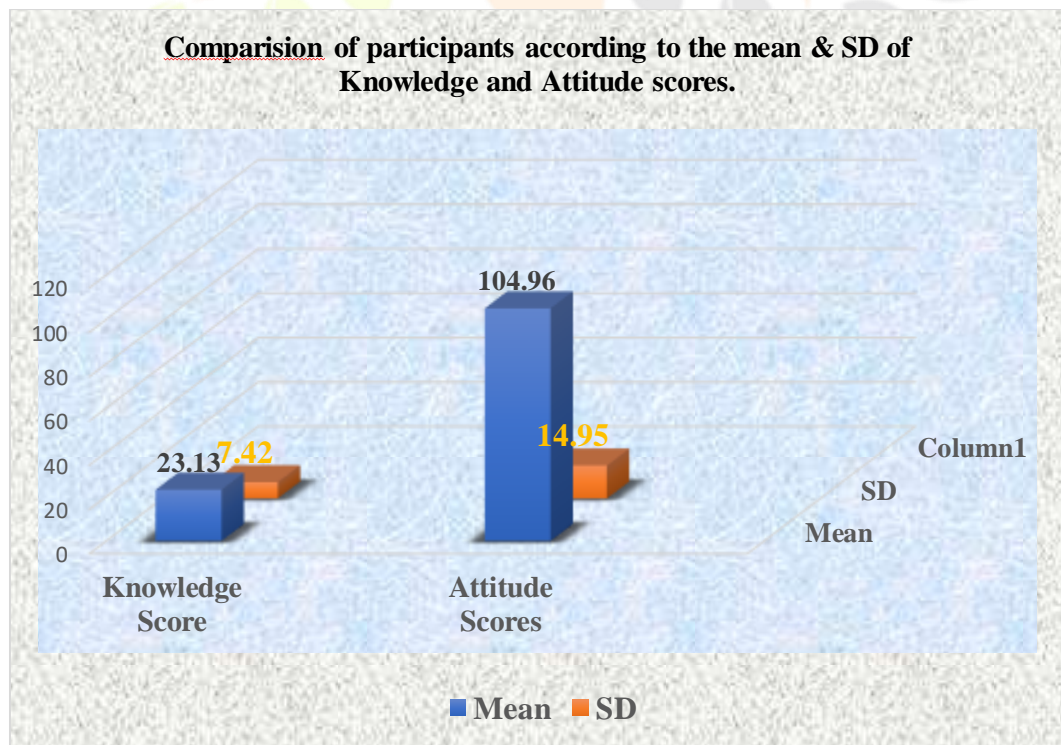


Figure 4: 3-D Column diagram showing the mean & SD of participant comparisons according to the Knowledge & Attitude scores.

The data presented in Table 3 and Figure 4 indicates that the value mean (23.13%), Median (23%), SD (7.42%) of the parent’s knowledge score and the value mean (104.96), median (104), and SD (14.95) of parent’s attitude scores regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Section III- Correlation between the knowledge scores and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

In order to determine the significant difference between knowledge scores, and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse. To test the research hypothesis the following null hypotheses are formulated:

H_{01} : There will be no significant correlation between the knowledge scores and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

H_1 : There will be a significant correlation between the knowledge scores and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Table 4: Correlation between the knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse.

N=300				
Group	Test	Mean	SD	r
Parents	Knowledge	23.13	9.94	0.306* (P=<.00001)
	Attitude	104.96	14.95	

*=Significant at $p<.05$

Findings in Table 4 indicate that there was a considerable significant correlation between the knowledge and attitude score at ($r=0.306$), which shows that there was a weak positive correlation between the knowledge and attitude score. Hence, when the knowledge of parents increases and the attitude of parents is also favorable towards the prevention of child abuse. Hence the research hypothesis (H_1) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected.

Section IV: Description of the association between the knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse with a selected sample characteristic.

This section describes the association between knowledge and attitude scores of parents regarding the prevention of child abuse with selected sample characteristics. It shows that there was a significant association between the knowledge score with parents' awareness regarding child abuse ($p=0.034$) and their source of information was mass media ($p=0.038$) and there was no significant association between the knowledge score with parents' relation with child ($p=0.625$), age of the child ($p=0.252$), the religion of parents ($p=0.263$), educational status of parents ($p=0.490$), occupational status of parents ($p=0.296$), monthly income ($p=0.816$), place of residence ($p=0.748$) and employed domestic servants ($p=0.216$) at home at 0.05 level of significance.

There was also a significant association between the attitude score with the religion of the child ($p=0.040$) and the employed no servant for domestic work ($p=0.054$) and there was no significant association between the attitude score with parents' relation with child ($p=0.191$), age of child ($p=0.549$), educational status of parents ($p=0.490$), occupational status of parents ($p=0.182$), monthly income ($p=0.816$), place of residence ($p=0.614$), aware regarding child abuse and source of information (0.220) at 0.05 level of significance.

DISCUSSION:

The result reveals that more than half (53.33%) of parents are males (51%) of parents having a child in the age group of 5-9 years and most (70%) belong to the Hindu religion. Most (72.67%) parents have knowledge regarding child abuse half (49.67%) of them have a source of information in mass media and a majority (83.33%) of parents have no servant. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Alsalman et.al (2023), which reveals that 62% were female and the average age was 37 years. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (60.6%) consider child abuse and neglect to be a common problem. Only 53% had good knowledge of child abuse and neglect, and more than one-third were unaware of the hotline number available to report any abuse.

The findings of the study revealed that one-third (34.67%) of the parents had below-average knowledge, 21% of parents had average knowledge, 24.33% of the parents had good knowledge, and 20% of the parents had a very good level of knowledge regarding the prevention of child abuse. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Karuna (2012), which reveals that parents had below-average knowledge regarding child abuse in urban areas and the mean percentage was 57.76% and the parents have average knowledge regarding child abuse in an urban area and the mean percentage is 60.33%. This concluded that for improvements in child abuse, education, and continuing education programs are advised to provide adequate knowledge. In contrast, a study conducted by Prikhidko and Kenny (2019), reveals that parents discussed Child Sexual Abuse with girls more compared to boys and they have adequate knowledge about prevention concepts, but still desire more assistance from experts. Some parents need more assistance in conducting discussions with their children.

The data of the present study further revealed that half (49.33%) of the parents had favorable attitudes nearly half (49%) had moderately favorable attitudes and only (1.67%) parents had unfavorable attitude scoring. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Camilo et al. (2022), which reveals that mothers presenting more inadequate explicit attitudes also exhibit an overall lower performance in the implicit attitudes task.

The present study further showed that there was a correlation between the knowledge and attitude score ($r=0.306$), it shows that there is a weak positive correlation between the knowledge and attitude score. Hence, when the knowledge of parents increases and the attitude of parents is also favorable towards the prevention of child abuse. The finding is supported by a study conducted by **Sharma and Mathur (2019)**, results showed that the majority of parents lack knowledge regarding children's education and protection. Most parents were in favor of having better career prospects for Male children. The majority of the parents were of the opinion that children should be distinguished based on academic performance. The study also recommended various measures to combat child abuse. In another study conducted by Jabraeili et al. (2015), the results showed that the mean score of total attitudes toward child abuse was significantly higher than the middle and was significantly associated with mothers' educational level, employment status, attendance status, number of children they have, and economic status.

The present study revealed that there was a significant association between the knowledge score with parents' awareness regarding child abuse ($p=0.034$) and their source of information was mass media ($p=0.038$) and there was a significant association between the attitude score with the religion of child ($p=0.040$) and employed no servant for domestic work ($p=0.054$) at 0.05 level of significance. The finding is supported by a study conducted by AM Devi and Yadav (2016) reveals that 39% of parents have obtained knowledge recently from health personnel. Most 92% of parents had average knowledge and only 8% had good knowledge of child abuse. There is no association between the knowledge score with the sample characteristics. It reveals that the maximum demographic variables of the parents do not affect the level of knowledge except education status.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the findings and discussion of the study conclusion has been drawn. This study shows that most of the respondents had average knowledge. Nearly half of the respondents (49.33%) demonstrated a moderately favorable attitude toward the prevention of child abuse. Area-wise, knowledge scores indicated that parents had good knowledge of sexual abuse emotional abuse, and average knowledge of physical abuse and neglect. A correlation analysis showed a mean knowledge score of 23.13 ($SD = 7.42$) and an attitude score of 104.96 ($SD = 14.95$), with a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.306$, $p = 0.05$) between knowledge and attitude scores. This indicates that as parental knowledge increases, their attitudes become more favorable towards the prevention of child abuse.

Significant associations were found between parents' knowledge scores and their awareness of child abuse, as well as their sources of information, particularly mass media. Additionally, the attitude score was significantly associated with parents who did not employ domestic helpers at the 0.05 level of significance. It concludes that there is a need for education through courses, training, and/or support groups. The majority of parents have an overall average knowledge with good in sexual abuse but still desire more assistance from experts. Some parents are in need of more assistance in conducting Child sexual abuse discussions with their children.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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