

Original Research Article

A study to assess the level of knowledge and attitude regarding prevention of child abuse among rural mothers

Deva Pon Pushpam^{1*}, Suman Vashist², Frank J. C.¹

¹Ph.D Scholar, Teerthanker Mahaveer College of Nursing, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Department of Mental Health Nursing, Teerthanker Mahaveer College of Nursing, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

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*Correspondence:

Deva Pon Pushpam,

E-mail: pushpapdeva@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Child abuse is a severe social and public health issue that negatively affects children's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Parents have unique opportunity to identify early signs of abuse and take preventive measures because of their frequent and close encounters with children. Their level of knowledge and attitude must be assessed to enhance child protection efforts and create a safer environment.

Methods: A descriptive study was conducted to assess the level of knowledge and attitude regarding the prevention of child abuse among rural mothers from March 2025 to May 2025. A quantitative approach, descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted. 100 samples were selected using convenience sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire and Likert scale were used to collect data.

Results: The majority of the samples 52% had an average, 36% had below average and 12% had above average level of knowledge. In terms of attitude, the majority (66%) had favourable and 34% had unfavourable attitude. There was a positive correlation (0.28) between level of knowledge and attitude, which was significant at $p < 0.05$ level. There was a significant association between education and level of knowledge and there was a significant association between age and level of attitude.

Conclusions: Strengthening training and awareness programs can significantly enhance child protection and create a safer environment for children.

Keywords: Attitude, Child abuse, Knowledge, Rural mothers

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a serious social and health concern that has a big impact on children's development, safety, and well-being all over the world.¹ The difficulty of avoiding child abuse in remote areas is exacerbated by socioeconomic limitations, low awareness, and limited access to information.² As the primary carers, mothers are essential in identifying, stopping, and handling child abuse.³ Designing focused educational and preventive programs that can successfully protect children in rural areas requires determining their level of understanding.

Studies reveal that rural women are typically less knowledgeable about preventing child abuse than their urban counterparts.⁴ According to studies, a significant number of mothers in rural areas only have a moderate to poor understanding of the various types of child abuse, its warning signals, and ways to prevent it. A number of variables that differ greatly among rural people, including socioeconomic circumstances, cultural perceptions, and educational attainment, contribute to this knowledge gap.⁵ Enhancing rural mothers' understanding is essential to enabling them to act as child safety advocates.^{6,7}

In light of these difficulties, the purpose of this study is to assess rural mothers' understanding of child abuse prevention. Knowing their body of knowledge will make it easier to spot important holes and obstacles that stand in the way of successful prevention initiatives.^{8,9} By highlighting the need for greater awareness, suitable training programs, and supporting policies designed especially for rural carers, the findings hope to help community health efforts and provide a safer environment for kids.^{10,11}

Objectives

To assess the level of knowledge regarding prevention of child abuse among rural mothers. To assess the level of attitude regarding prevention of child abuse among rural mothers. To find out the association between the level of knowledge and attitude with selected socio demographic variables.

METHODS

A cross-sectional study conducted in the rural field A descriptive cross-sectional study with quantitative approach was conducted in Chak Bhalwal, Jammu, from March 2025 to May 2025. The study population comprised of 100 rural mothers who were selected using convenience sampling technique.

Rural mothers between the age group of 21-45 years, having at least one child below 18 years and able to understand English or Hindi were included. Rural mothers who were not willing to participate and those who were primary caregivers of children with disabilities were excluded.

Data were collected using a self-structured tool consisting of socio demographic variables, a 20-item knowledge questionnaire and a 10 item Likert scale. Ethical approval was obtained from institutional ethics committee of Bee Enn College of Nursing and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data were analysed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to describe variables. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between knowledge and attitude. Chi square test was used to assess the association between knowledge and attitude with socio demographic variables.

RESULTS

The socio demographic characteristics, knowledge levels and attitude levels are presented in the following tables:

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of rural mothers (n=100).

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)	21-28	28	28
	29-37	42	42
	38-45	30	30
Education	Primary	18	18
	High School	72	72
	Graduate and above	10	10
Religion	Hindu	90	90
	Muslim	08	08
	Sikh	02	02
	Others	00	00
Number of children	One	20	20
	Two	64	64
	Three or more	16	16
Previous knowledge on child abuse	Yes	74	74
	No	26	26

Table 2: Distribution of rural mothers according to the level of knowledge regarding prevention of child abuse (n=100).

Level of knowledge	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Below average	0-10	36	36
Average	11-15	52	52
Above average	16-20	12	12

Table 3: Distribution of rural mothers according to the level of attitude regarding prevention of child abuse (n=100).

Level of attitude	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Unfavourable	10-30	34	34
Favourable	31-50	66	66

The majority of the samples 52% had an average level of knowledge, 36% had below average level of knowledge and 12% had above average level of knowledge. In terms of attitude, the majority 66% had a favourable attitude and 34% had an unfavourable attitude. There was a positive correlation (0.28) between level of knowledge and attitude, which was significant at $p < 0.05$ level. There was a significant association between education and level of knowledge and there was a significant association between age and level of attitude.

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed that the majority of the rural mothers had an average level of knowledge regarding prevention of child abuse. This finding was in accordance with a study conducted by Panda et al where 20.83% had very good knowledge, 71.67% mothers had good knowledge, 7.5% had fair knowledge and none of them had poor knowledge.¹² Limited educational exposure and lack of targeted awareness programs may contribute to these findings.

In terms of attitude, the majority of rural mothers had favourable attitude. This finding was supported by a study conducted by Daniel et al where 90% of mothers had positive attitude regarding prevention of child sexual abuse.¹³ This shows that despite the knowledge gaps, mothers recognize the importance of child protection.

There was a positive correlation between level of knowledge and attitude, which was significant at $p < 0.05$ level. This finding is supported by Mishra et al where there was positive correlation (0.307) between knowledge and attitude regarding prevention of child abuse among mothers.¹⁴

There was a significant association between education and level of knowledge and there was a significant association between age and level of attitude. These findings were similar with the study conducted by Lal et al that there was a significant association between knowledge of child abuse and the selected demographic variables such as age of mothers, educational status, family type and occupation among mothers.¹⁵ This finding emphasize education as a key determinant of awareness.

The study was limited by its cross-sectional design, small sample size and use of convenience sampling technique which may limit generalizability. Self-reported data may also introduce response bias.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that rural mothers generally have an average level of knowledge regarding the prevention of child abuse, with notable gaps in understanding non-physical abuse and legal reporting mechanisms. Educational status was significantly associated with a higher knowledge level. These findings highlight the urgent need for tailored educational interventions in rural communities to enhance maternal awareness and protective practices. Empowering rural mothers through community-based programs and accessible information can play a critical role in preventing child abuse. Strengthening these efforts will contribute significantly to creating safer environments for children in rural settings.

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