## **Original Research Article**

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# Perceptions and possible solutions for violence against children among mothers of under five

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Violence has been one of the most complex contemporary phenomena and their manifestations are responsible for social and mental disturbances of children. This phenomenon is a serious problem of global public health, presenting various causes that compromise socio-cultural levels of society. The objective of the study was to assess the perceptions on causes and consequences of violence against children among mothers of under five children and to describe the common solutions for the violence against children as perceived by mothers.

**Methods:** This qualitative research was undertaken in the urban field practice area of Department of Community Medicine, JSS Medical College, Mysore. A total of 20 women were interviewed for free-listing exercise and the data regarding their perception about causes, consequences and methods of prevention of violence on children were collected. The data collected through free listing and pile sorting was analyzed using Visual Anthropac 1.0.

**Results:** Among 20 subjects interviewed, mean age of the women interviewed was 29.6 years, 70% were completed basic schooling, 30% had history of substance abuse by family members. Common themes emerged out were subjects being not aware of child abuse, opined that child abuse was solely from family members, claimed that they do not abuse their children, opted to remain silent in the circumstances of child abuse, believed it hamper child growth.

**Conclusions:** It is necessary to intervene violence as it means to prevent it through short- and long-term goals such as the implementation of public policies, programs that aim at changes capable of modifying the conditions that favour this phenomenon.

Keywords: Attitude, Child violence, Knowledge, Practices

## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is any form of physical or emotional violence that causes harm to the wellbeing of a child.

Child abuse is "an act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which introduces an avoidable danger or substantial damage to anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year. Target 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children.<sup>2</sup>

In India, 9 per cent of girls and women aged 15-49 reported having experienced sexual violence including forced sexual intercourse and other sexual acts; for many

women this occurs at a young age with up to 5 percent of 15-19-year-olds having experienced the same.<sup>3</sup>

#### Types of violence against children

The five main subtypes of child abuse and neglect are physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, neglect, sexual abuse and witnessing family violence.<sup>4</sup>

- Physical abuse- When the child is deliberately harmed or hurt bodily (physically).
- Emotional abuse- When the child is abused emotionally by repeated humiliations or foul words usage
- Neglect- When the child does not receive the love and care it is supposed to receive.
- Sexual abuse- When the child is abused sexually that is by touching inappropriately, witnessing sexual acts or movies.
- When directed against girls or boys because of their biological sex or gender identity, it is referred to as gender-based violence.
- Witnessing family violence- When the child is exposed to violence in the family that causes emotional disturbance in child.

## Consequences of child violence

- Violence on infants damages the brain structure which can lead to serious health issues ranging from decreased intelligence to mental retardation.
  Certain studies have shown that physically abused children have structural brain changes, including "smaller intracranial and cerebral volume," smaller lateral ventricles, and smaller corpora callosa.<sup>5</sup>
- Violence on pre-school children results in behavioural changes among them leading them to wrong way of living with anti-social behaviour.
- Violence on school going children makes them more stubborn and also results in lack of attachment towards family members. The child may also develop anti-social behaviour.

### Prevention of child violence

Child violence since starts at or around the home, the knowledge regarding the same is utmost essential to parents. Violence in any form can happen to any child. Protecting child and providing them the love and care it deserves is the first aspect of violence prevention. Educating those who cause violence should be the prime duty of those around. Violence cannot be the solution for every wrong deed the child does and the same needs to be taught.

Though there has been wide spectrum of studies regarding child violence, there has been limited light on perception of mothers on child violence. The current study intends to assess the perceptions on

causes and consequences of violence against children among mothers of under-five. And, to describe the common solutions for the violence against children as perceived by mothers.

#### **METHODS**

This cross-sectional qualitative community-based study was conducted in the field practice area of the Department of Community Medicine, JSS Medical College, Mysore, from June 2019 to August 2019.

#### Inclusion criteria

Women available at the time of study and have an under five child were included in the study.

#### Exclusion criteria

Women who were not willing to take part in the study were excluded from the study.

The women were interviewed for free-listing of answers for items like meaning of child abuse, common child abusers, consequences of child abuse and measures to prevent child abuse. The houses of these 20 women were visited and details regarding their socio-demographic characteristics, perceptions and their perceived possible solutions for child violence were noted through an unstructured questionnaire.

The data collected were entered in MS Excel 2007 and analyses using SPSS version 24 and Visual Anthropac version 1.0. Descriptive statistical measures like percentage mean and SD were applied. Qualitative data obtained from free listing was analyzed in visual anthropac 1.0 and the salience score is noted. The options within the range of salience score were selected for pile sorting. Pile sorting was done with the help of at least five faculty in the Department using flashcards and data was analyzed using Anthropac 1.0 and the results are noted.

#### **RESULTS**

Among the women interviewed, mean age of mothers was  $29.6\pm3.57$  and women with less than SSLC as education status were 17 (85%), more than SSLC were 3 (15%) and women with history of substance abuse constituted 6 (30%).

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-demographic variables	Results
Mean age of the mother (in years)	29.6±3.57
Education status of the mother N (%)	
Less than SSLC	17 (85)
More than SSLC	3(15)
History of substance abuse in family N (%)	6 (30)

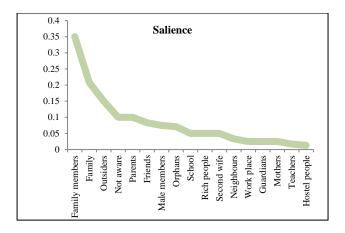


Figure 1: Source of violence on Children.

Figure 1 shows that the elbow dip was observed to be until 0.1 and the options within the range were family members, outsiders, not aware. Other significant options like male members, rich people and neighbours were also considered for pile sorting.

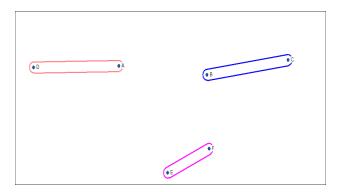


Figure 2: Source of violence on children. (A-D) Family members, (B-C) social circle and (E-F) unaware of violence on children.

The results obtained categorized the perception of women on child violence caused by as family members, social circle and mothers were not aware of child violence as well.

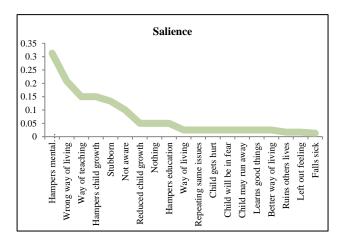


Figure 3: Consequences of violence against children.

Figure 2 depicts that the elbow dip was observed to be until 0.05 and the options within the range were hampers mental growth, wrong way of teaching, way of teaching, hampers child growth, stubborn, not aware. Other significant options like child gets hurt, child will be in fear were also considered for pile sorting.

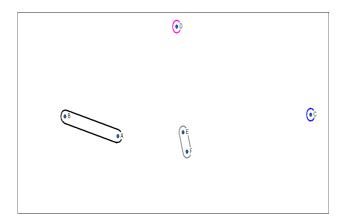


Figure 4: Consequences of violence against children. (A-B) Behavioural issues, (C) justifying violence on children, (D) unaware and (E-F) developmental issues.

The results obtained were the categories of the perception of women on consequences of child violence as behavioural issues, developmental issues, justifying violence and few were not aware.

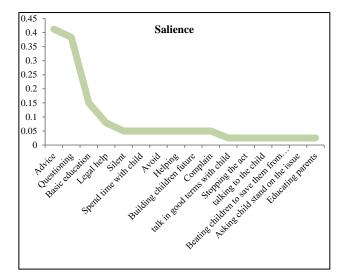


Figure 5: Measures to prevent violence on children.

Figure 1 shows that the elbow dip was observed to be until 0.05 and the options within the range were advice, questioning, basic education and legal help, silent. Other significant options like helping, talking to the child, educating parents were also considered for pile sorting.

The results obtained were the categories of the perception of women on measures to prevent child abuse as positive way of dealing, legal help and understanding child's perception.

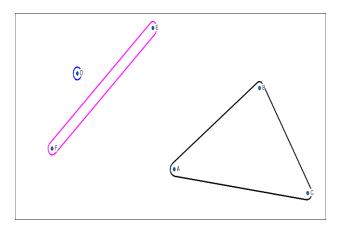


Figure 6: Measures to prevent violence on children. (A-B-C) Positive way of dealing the situation, (E-F) legal help, (D) understanding child's perception on violence.

The women interviewed opined variedly from legal help, questioning, providing basic education to children and parents, spending time with child, avoiding the situation, building the child's future, talking to child in good terms, stopping the act, asking child to take stand on the situation to remaining silent at the time of violence, beating children to avoid violence as possible solutions of child violence.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Violence against children is one of the biggest problems affecting families and societies. It happens all around the world, it happens more in the family. Violence against Children threatens not only children's survival and health but also their emotional well-being and future prospects. Violence against children remains a harsh reality for millions of children. It can occur in homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

In the present study, the mean age of study participants was 29.6±3.57. The education status of the study participants was 17 (85%) with less than high schooling and 3 (15%) with more than high schooling and with history of substance abuse constituted for 6 (30%). In the study done by Monteiro et al concluded that under socioeconomic-demographic profile, the majority of the interviewed mothers live in a stable union (47%), with an income lower than a minimum wage (43%); only 13% earned more than a minimum wage. Regarding the schooling of the participants, the majority held a high school degree (53%), and 17% account for some elementary school. Regarding the children's age, the minimum age range was between 5 and 12 years, with the mean number of children per informant of one to three children, half of the mothers had two children between the ages of 1 and 10 years.6

The present study categorised the perception of women on child violence caused by as family members, social circle and mothers who were not aware of child violence. The present study supports the World Health Organisation report on child violence.<sup>2</sup>

A study by Chakraborthy et al reported in their study that the mothers frequently mentioned the capability to stay healthy and nourished, to stay away from violence, and to practice autonomy in allocating time for child care.<sup>7</sup>

The results obtained were the categories of the perception of women on consequences of child violence as Behavioural issues, developmental issues, justifying abuse and few were not aware. A study by Al Odhayani et al, concluded the following results in line with the current study as child abuse is a common problem worldwide, and its physical and psychosocial effects are felt by abused children, their families, and their communities. It has been linked to changes in the victims' mental and behavioural development throughout their lives, putting them at risk of engaging in potentially dangerous behaviour in the future.<sup>5</sup>

A study by Radhika et al suggested that Through enhancing understanding of current ethical practices and gaps in CSV research in India, this systematic review informs reporting protocols and future guidelines for CSV research in India and other similar settings.<sup>8</sup>

The results obtained were the categories of the perception of women on measures to prevent child abuse as positive way of dealing, legal help and understanding child's perception.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Mothers believed that violence against children happens from either family members or from social circle and some were unaware of the same. They believed that spending time with children, providing basic education and advice to everyone along with legal help if needed can prevent violence against children. They opined that violence against children affects mental and physical development of child along with behavioural issues while some were unaware of the same. Out of 20 mothers interviewed, 8 opined that violence against children happens from Family members, 3 opined it from social circle, 4 opined it from school, 1 opined it from rich people, 1 from second wife, 1 from hostel people, 1 from work place and 1 from neighbour.

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