

Mother's Awareness about Different Types of Child Abuse in Taif Region (Western KSA)

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Abstract

The issue of child abuse has been recognized as a major global social problem prevalent within and outside the homes and among all socio-economic groups of both the developed and the developing nations of whole world.

The Aim of this work is to identify the awareness and knowledge concerning different types of child abuse and neglect among a sample of Saudi mothers living in Taif region Western KSA. A descriptive cross sectional research was performed, targeting mothers living in Taif region western KSA, an electronic method was used to collect the data, participation in the research was voluntary. 400 participated completed the questionnaire, 15 were excluded due to incomplete questionnaire.

Results showed 55%, 60% of fathers and mothers respectively were college gradulators. Majority of mothers viewed that sexual abuse and neglect were very important problems. While the majority of mothers were physically abused by their parents, only 40 (12.7%) of mothers physically abuse their children. Although the majority of mothers 245 (77.8%) stated that emotional abuse have a tremendous effect on child personality, 143 (45.4%) stated that they were frequently abusing their children emotionally. The Majority of mothers living in Taif region KSA viewed that the services done by the governmental and non-governmental agencies to decrease child abuse was insufficient.

Our study showed that although educated mothers seems to be aware about different types of child abuse, many of their information is inadequate. However, Saudi Arabia has taken some steps in implementing intervention and protection programs aimed at safeguarding children from abuse, much remains to be done.

Keywords: Child Abuse; Taif Region; Western KSA

Introduction

The issue of child abuse has been recognized as a major global social problem prevalent within and outside the homes and among all socio-economic groups of both the developed and the developing nations of whole world [1]. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation leading to actual and potential damage to a child's health and development [2]. Abuse refers to (usually deliberate) acts of commission while neglect refers to acts of omission [3,4]. Child maltreatment includes both acts of commission and acts of omission on the part of parents or caregivers that cause actual or threatened harm to a child [3]. The impact of child abuse and neglect is often discussed in terms of physical, psychological, behavioral, and societal consequences. In reality, however, it is impossible to separate the types of impacts. Physical consequences, such as damage to a child's growing brain, can have psychological implications, such as cognitive delays or emotional difficulties [5].

Despite the absence of reliable global estimates for the prevalence of child abuse as data, especially from low- and middle-income countries, various international studies reveal that approximately 20% of women and 5 - 10% of men report being sexually abused as children, while 25 - 50% of all children report being physically abused [6]. Worldwide, the growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes brought about by socio-economic transitions have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to various and newer forms of abuse [7].

The notion that child abuse and neglect are rare in Arab countries is a myth that can no longer withstand the strength of the evidence. Denial is unacceptable [8]. In the Gulf countries, reports began to surface in the 1980s and early 1990s [9]. In a review of literature done in KSA, about the prevalence of Child Abuse in Saudi Arabia from 2000 to 2015 [10], it concluded that child physical abuse and child neglect were the most prevalent forms of abuse over the last 15 years, whereas the recognition of emotional abuse started late compared with other forms of abuse. Awareness of the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect is improving in KSA. Consequently, the detection and reporting of such cases are growing across the nation.

Out of the many parental causes of child abuse, the first reason is lack of knowledge among them [11]. Parents tend to apply harsh form of disciplinary actions without knowing it actually is an abuse [12]. Due to the absence of knowledge, the parents, especially mothers show reluctance to report cases to authorities concerned with health care or legal protection [13]. If parents have knowledge regarding child abuse, they can detect the signs of it and can prevent its occurrence by educating their children [14].

Although importance of the topic and its prevalence, after reviewing literature we found no study exploring the awareness of parents regarding types of abuse in KSA, so the aim of our study is to assess the awareness of mothers about different types of child abuse in Taif region Western region KSA.

Aim of Work

- 1) Identifying the awareness concerning different types of child abuse and neglect among a sample of Saudi mothers living in Taif region western KSA.
- 2) Identify Knowledge of mothers concerning different types of child abuse and neglect.
- 3) Identify different methods parents are using for disciplining their children.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional research was performed, targeting mothers living in Taif region western KSA. Participation in the research was voluntary. An electronic method was used to collect the data, after clearly explaining the participants about the purpose of the study, ensuring the confidentiality and obtaining the informed consent.

The data was collected through semi-structural questionnaire including the following

1. Personal data regarding age, gender, residency, occupation of both parents, monthly income of family
2. Perception awareness and information concerning child neglect, physical and sexual abuse, through constructed questionnaire of Parents awareness of Child Neglect and Abuse [15].

The sample size was determined using formula as $n = z^2pq/d^2$. Data was gathered and analyzed using SPSS program version [16].

Result

The results were presented in socio-demographic characteristics, level of knowledge and attitude of mothers about different types of child abuse and neglect.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

In (Table 1) showing that 400 participated completed the questionnaire, 15 were excluded due to incomplete questionnaire, (43.4% mothers, 66.3% fathers) their age were above 40 years, and nearly 55 % and 60 % of fathers and mothers respectively were college gradulators. To our surprise the majority of mothers 180 (57.1%) are working.

	No.	%
Mother's age		
Less than 20 years	6	1.9
20 - 30 years	95	30.1
30 - 40 years	77	24.4
More than 40 years	137	43.5
Father's age		
Less than 20 years	1.6	0.5
20 - 30 years	44.4	14.0
30 - 40 years	60.5	19.2
More than 40 years	209	66.3
Level of father's education		
Illiterate	18	5.7
Lower than secondary school	38	12.1
Secondary school	86	27.3
College graduation	173	54.9
Level of mother's education		
Illiterate	30	9.5
Lower than secondary school	50	16.0
Secondary school	46	14.6
College graduation	189	60
Mother's job		
Working	180	57.1
Not working	135	42.9
Father's job		
Working	41.3	86.9
Not working	274	13.1
Monthly income		
Sufficient	36	11.4
Not sufficient	163	51.7
Sufficient and save	117	37.1

Table 1: Distribution of the studied cases according to demographic data (n = 315).

Knowledge about neglect and sexual abuse

While only 22 (7%), 13 (4.1%) of mothers didn't know about sexual abuse and neglect respectively, the majority (248) 78.7%, (228) 72.3% respectively viewed that sexual abuse and neglect were very important problem. Nearly 173 (55%) and 31 (10%) of mothers

stated that households are responsible for neglect and sexual abuse, respectively. The majority of mothers 167 (53%) viewed that parents who were exposed to sexual abuse, abuse their children. Although 209 (66.2%) of mothers knew the correct peak age of sexual abuse (5-12y), only 19 (6%) of mothers reported the correct peak age of neglect (0-4y) (Table 2).

	Neglect		Sexual	
	No.	%	No.	%
The problem				
Very important	228	72.3	248	78.7
Moderate	71	22.5	36	11.4
Less	3	0.9	9	2.8
Don't know	13	4.1	22	7.0
Age of exposure				
Birth - 4 year	19	6	4	1.4
5 - 12 years	152	48.4	209	66.2
13 - 16 years	100	31.9	64	20.2
> 17 years	30	9.4	7	2.3
Don't know	14	4.4	31	9.9
Parent exposed to abuse, abuse their children				
No	129	40.8	76	24
Yes	115	36.6	167	53
Don't know	71	22.5	72	23.0
Whose responsible for abuse				
Parents	120	38.0	0	0.0
Households	173	54.9	31	9.9
Neighbor	10	3.3	10	3.3
Friends	0	0.0	132	41.8
Strangers	0	0.0	99	31.5
Don't know	12	3.8	43	13.6

Table 2: Distribution of the studied cases according to child neglect and sexual abuse (n = 315).

Knowledge about physical abuse

Table 3 showing that mother viewed that in general only 15 (4.8%), 80 (25.4%) of mothers and fathers respectively were responsible for physical abuse of their children, others were responsible for about 194 (61.6%). While the majority of mothers 186 (59%) were physically abused by their parents, only 40 (12.7%) of mothers physically abused their children.

	No.	%
Who is most important person causing physical abuse in children in general		
Mother	15	4.8
Father	80	25.4
Others	194	61.6
Don't know	26	8.2
In your family whose physically abusing children		
Mother	37	11.7
Father	65	20.7
Brothers ,sisters	93	29.6
Others	92	29.1
Don't know	28	8.9
Where you physically abused from parent's		
No	88	27.9
Yes	186	59
Don't want	41	13.1
What is the way you are using to discipline Your children		
Physical abuse	40	12.7
Emotional abuse	83	26.3
Don't giving what require	143	45.5
Others	49	15.5

Table 3: Distribution of the studied cases according to physical abuse (n = 315).

Knowledge about emotional abuse

While the majority of mothers 245 (77.8%) stated that emotional abuse have a tremendous effect on child personality, 143 (45.4%) stated that they were frequently abusing their children emotionally (Table 4).

	No.	%
In your family are you emotionally abusing children		
Always	64	20.2
Frequently	143	45.4
infrequently	108	34.3
Do you think emotional abuse have an effect on children personality		
Obvious effect	245	77.8
Slight effect	59	18.8
No effect	11	3.4

Table 4: Distribution of the studied cases according to emotional abuse (n = 315).

The Majority of mothers 205 (65%) living in Taif region KSA viewed that the services done by the governmental and non-governmental agencies to decrease child abuse was insufficient (Figure 1).

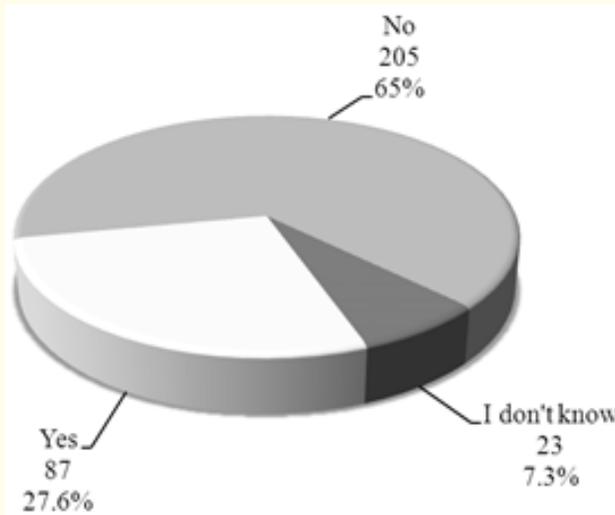


Figure 1: Opinion about the effort done by the governmental and non-governmental agencies to decrease child abuse (n = 315).

Discussion

While the limitations of this study is that it was electronic thus, the majority of respondents were highly educated, the results provide valuable insights into very important issue and significantly contribute to the awareness of mothers living in KSA regarding Child abuse and Neglect.

To our knowledge, this cross-sectional study to identify the awareness and knowledge of mothers towards Child abuse and Neglect is the first to be conducted in Saudi Arabia. However, comparable studies have previously been published for dentists in KSA [17], United Arab Emirates [18], and Jordan [19].

In the present study the majority of mothers rated sexual abuse and neglect as a very important problem, this reflects that Child abuse and Neglect is considered to be a hot issue known to Saudi educated mothers, and they are aware of the problem. Although, the majority of mothers knew the correct peak age for sexual abuse, only 6% reported the correct peak age of neglect. It is worth mentioning that although a recent study in KSA [20] has found that t 70 % of children in Saudi Arabia suffer rape and sexual harassment at the hands of relatives and 30 % from domestic helpers and strangers, in our study mothers viewed that households are responsible for only nearly 10% of sexual abuse among children.

In relation to physical abuse, while majority of mothers stated that they were physically abused as children, only 11.7% stated that they were physically abusing their children. Also 45% of mothers used the reward system as a way for their children discipline. This shows, that corporal punishment is now a days rejected [17], and that mothers are aware that simply giving the child spontaneous expressions of appreciation or acknowledgement when they are not misbehaving will act as a reinforcer for good behavior [18]. It is worth mentioning that although mothers new about the tremendous effect of emotional abuse on children development, and mental health, the majority of mothers stated that they were emotionally abusing their children.

It is evident that the services proposed to parents in Taif region related to child abuse is not covering the parents demand, as 65% of mothers stated that both the governmental and non-governmental agencies were not giving the sufficient service.

Conclusion

Spreading awareness among the community is the first step toward controlling and solving the problem of child abuse and neglect. Our study showed that although educated mothers seem to be aware about different types of child abuse, many of their information is inadequate. Specialized centers, Media, schools, are responsible for spreading correct information about different types of child abuse to parents. Greater emphasis on increasing public awareness supplied with informative knowledge about the problem, to be given through trained social workers and medical personnel.

Although Saudi Arabia has taken some steps in implementing intervention and protection programs aimed at safeguarding children from abuse, much remains to be done.

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