

EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTI-INTERVENTIONAL PACKAGE ON KNOWLEDGE REGARDING PREVENTION OF CHILD MOLESTATION AMONGST PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SELECTED AREAS, KANPUR.

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Background: Child molestation is a form of child sexual abuse (CSA) that affects children all over the world. It has the potential to devastate a child's life in every aspect of their normal growth and development and has become the larger field of interpersonal trauma studies, CSA studies and intervention strategies. The primary intervention for eliminating this societal scourge is the implementation of preventive methods.

Objectives: The aim of the study was to develop a multi-interventional package for the prevention of child molestation.

Methods: This randomized control trial was carried out on 200 primary schoolchildren (PS children) who were randomly assigned to experimental ($n = 100$) and control ($n = 100$) groups from selected schools in the Kanpur district of UP, India. A demographic pro forma and a knowledge questionnaire were used for data collection. The package included a display of a role-play video entitled 'Rooby' and a cartoon book explanation called 'local magazines,' implemented by the primary researcher. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. On pre-test, the majority of participants from both the groups had a good level of knowledge regarding child molestation prevention.

Results: After receiving the intervention, there was a significant difference in the level of knowledge about the prevention of child molestation amongst the experimental group of PS children ($P = 0.0001$) depicting the effectiveness of the multi-interventional package.

Conclusion: The developed multi-interventional package looked upon potent strategies for the prevention of child molestation.

Keywords: Child molestation, level of knowledge, multi-interventional package, prevention, primary schoolchildren

INTRODUCTION

Children hold greater power in the future of the society, and hence many societies keep important resources for child growth and development. Child maltreatment is one of the major adverse factors that hamper normal growth and development. Various research evidence has revealed that child maltreatment has a significant association with childhood-onset psychiatric disorders.^[1] Child abuse or child maltreatment can be physical, emotional and sexual or neglect that causes significant trauma to a child. Child molestation is one of the dreadful forms of child maltreatment.

Child molestation has a global estimated prevalence of 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males.^[2] It is defined as a set of unwanted sexual experiences before the of age of 18 years, of a perpetrator or an observer. Such interaction may involve both touching and non-touching experiences.^[3] In most of the cases of child molestation, the perpetrators are people related to children either as parents or other caregivers or even teachers.

The highest rate of child molestation was reported in Africa, followed by Australia, the USA and Canada. The lowest reports appeared in Asia, followed by Europe and South America.^[4] In India, according to National Crime Records Bureau data in 2019, out of all crimes against children, 32% were cases of child molestation.^[5] The highest prevalence of child molestation was reported in Maharashtra, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Overall, child molestation in India has increased about six times between 2008 and 2018.^[6]

According to UP police official data for the year 2020, 1243 (32%) of the 3941 total crimes against children were POCSO cases. The latest reports (2021) show that till the month of July, there were 2293 cases of crimes reported against children, out of which 38% were cases of child molestation. The highest number of cases was reported in the districts of Greater noida, followed by Gorakhpur and gonad.^[7]

This statistical evidence points to a rise in the occurrence of child molestation around the world, necessitating an immediate plan to combat child molestation and its consequences. The victims of abuse, the altruistic children, generally have an emotional, psychological, physical and mental impact on their lives, which harms their past, present and future and have disastrous long-term consequences for the country's economy.^[8] Implementing measures of prevention is the most important strategy to help in eliminating child molestation.

After an in-depth search and discussion with experts, the researcher has developed a multi-interventional package including a role-play video and a cartoon book for primary school (PS) children to educate them about child molestation and its prevention. The investigator would like to test the suitability of this multi-interventional package for child molestation prevention.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to assess the level of knowledge regarding prevention of child molestation amongst PS children, assess the effectiveness of the multi-interventional package on prevention of child molestation, determine the effectiveness of multi-interventional package on knowledge regarding prevention of child molestation amongst PS children and to find out the association between level of knowledge regarding prevention of child molestation and selected demographic variables of PS children.

METHODS

The study was carried out as an open-blinded randomized control trial at three selected schools in Kanpur district of UP, India. The sample size of the study was calculated with 80% power and 5% error. The sample size was 184; the value was rounded to 200 (100 in the experimental group and 100 in the control group). The inclusion criteria for the study were children aged between 6 and 10 years (1st–4th standards), (ii) both genders, (iii) students in the selected lower PSs, (iv) students willing to participate in the study and (v) students whose parents have given consent to participate in the study. Children who were physically and mentally challenged and absent on the day of data collection were excluded from the study. Later, three schools (two as control groups and one as an experimental group) were selected as the setting for the study through the lottery method. Two schools were selected for the control group to achieve an adequate sample size, as calculated. The school chosen through randomization consisted of a minimal number of students, prompting the researcher to select one more school from the same list using the lottery method. The children were interviewed alone. A well-explained informed consent was obtained from the parents, and the study involved only children whose parents had given consent.

RESULTS

The majority of the samples were from 8-year-old children. Both the groups had a

predominance of female samples (51% in the experimental group and 52% in the control group). Seventy-one per cent of the kids in the experimental group were Hindus, and the rest were Muslims and Christians. Forty five per cent of the control group were Muslim and 43% were Christians. Both the groups used Malayalam as their primary language of the study. Fifty-five per cent of the experimental group and 66% of the control group were from joint families. As far as the birth order of participants, the majority were second in birth order (44% in experimental and 43% in control). The majority of the participant's families have their own accommodation. In the experimental group, 41% of fathers had a secondary level of education, whereas 48% of mothers had higher secondary education. In the control group, 43% of fathers of the participants had secondary education, whereas 33% of mothers had secondary education. In both categories, the majority of fathers were self-employed, whereas the majority of mothers were housewives. Seventy per cent of the participants in the experimental group were from middle-class families. The majority of the families in the control group (54%) were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. A considerable proportion of children from both the groups reported substance abuse in the family

Instruments

The demographic characteristics of participants were collected using a socio demographic pro forma that consisted of 15 items. The second tool was a knowledge questionnaire that consisted of 20 items with 5 sections, such as Section 1: body ownership and self-concept (two items), Section 2: do you know about private parts of your body? Recognize (6 items), Section 3: identify good behavior and bad behavior (4 items), Section 4: do you know what a good touch or bad touch is? Specify (4 items) and Section 5: what will you do? (4 items). The maximum score for the assessment tool was 32. Children were graded into four categories based on their level of knowledge on the prevention of child molestation, i.e. poor: 0–8, average: 9–16, good: 17–24 and excellent: 25–32.

The content validity of the tool was established (0.98), and the reliability of the tool was assessed by the test–retest reliability method using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient (0.92) indicating good reliability.

The researchers prepared the study's multi-interventional package in a structured way. Following an in-depth search of existing strategies for the prevention of Child molestation, the

narrative and screenplay for role-play and cartoon book designing were carried out with the help of experts. Role-play video was named as 'Rooby' and the cartoon book was named as 'local magazines' Later, the package was evaluated and verified by experts from various disciplines of nursing, clinical psychology and cinematography. The direction and editing of the role-play video were done with the help of experts from cinematography and cine actors. Cartoon book design and publishing is done with the help of publishers. These two

CONCLUSION

Childhood life events are long lasting. Adverse childhood events have long-term and negative consequences in adulthood. Child molestation is a long-standing health issue that has far-reaching implications for children. It affects one out of every seven girls and one out of every 25 boys.^[4] Children experience shame, guilt, rage, aggression, low self-esteem and a difficulty to sustain meaningful relationships throughout adulthood. They also struggle academically, which can lead to self-destructive behaviors, psychological illnesses, drug misuse and suicide thoughts and attempts. The current era of modern technology, videos and cartoons is more appreciated by PS children and the development of this multi-interventional package for educating children on harmful effects of child molestation is rewarding.

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