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## “A Correlational Study to Assess the Level of Perception and Practice Regarding the Prevention of Child Abuse Among Parents in A Selected Community Setting.”

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**Abstract:** A correlational study was conducted among 170 parents of children below 18 years residing in Kerala to assess the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse. The objectives of the study were to assess the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse, determine the correlation, and find the association with selected sociodemographic variables. A total of 170 samples were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using a self-structured sociodemographic questionnaire, perception scale, and practice checklist. Statistical analysis showed that 81.2% of the subject had a moderate level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse, 15.9% had good perception and 2.9% had low level of perception. Regarding the practice 67.6% of the subject had moderate level of practice, 26.5% had good level of practice and 5.9% had poor level of practice. A moderately positive correlation ( $r = 0.626$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) was found between perception and practice. Significant associations were found between the level of perception and educational status ( $p = 0.005$ ), and between the level of practice and number of children ( $p = 0.025$ ).

**Keywords:** Perception, Practice, Child abuse prevention, Parents.

### INTRODUCTION

Children represent the future of society, carrying the potential to become tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and caregivers. As emphasized by UNICEF, every child has inherent dignity, rights, and the opportunity to grow in a safe and supportive environment regardless of background. They deserve protection, education, health, and the chance to achieve their full potential. However, these fundamental rights are often threatened by child abuse or maltreatment, which includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that can seriously harm a child's health, development, and well-being. "Six in 10 children or 400 million children – under 5 years of age regularly suffer physical punishment or psychological violence at the hands

of parents and caregivers." One in 5 women and 1 in 7 men report having been sexually abused as a child. This alarming scenario underscores the need for greater awareness and intervention to protect children from abuse and its long-term effects. UNICEF emphasizes that these acts are not isolated events; instead, they appear as patterns of harm that undermine a child's physical and mental health, learning, and social development. WHO and UNICEF both highlight that much of this violence is "hidden"-with many children experiencing abuse without ever receiving professional help or support.

A descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted in Ambala, Haryana (2025), assessed the knowledge and attitudes of 300 parents toward preventing child abuse. The study found



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that only 20% of parents demonstrated a very good level of knowledge, while 34.7% achieved an average level. In terms of attitude, nearly 49.3% had a favourable outlook, and another 49% showed a moderately favourable attitude toward preventing child abuse. Parents displayed the strongest understanding of child sexual abuse (mean score 69.3%), followed by emotional abuse (63.2%), with neglect lagging behind (48.4%). There was a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r=0.306$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) between higher knowledge levels and more favourable attitudes. The study highlights that while awareness is moderate, it is uneven across abuse types especially weak regarding neglect and suggests the need for targeted parenting education and community awareness initiatives.

Child abuse and neglect continue to be widespread global concerns, emphasizing the urgent need for increased parental awareness and vigilance. Limited understanding of child development and abuse risk factors can delay recognition and intervention. When parents are knowledgeable about different forms of maltreatment and early warning signs, they are better equipped to protect their children. Informed parental perception, along with awareness of social risk factors such as financial stress, substance misuse, and mental health issues, plays a crucial role in prevention. Therefore, strengthening parent education, community support, and public health initiatives is essential to promote child safety, healthy development, and stronger families.

## NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

Child abuse is an increasing societal concern that can severely affect a child's physical health, mental well-being, and overall development. Since parents are the primary protectors of children, assessing their perception and preventive practices is essential. Parental understanding directly influences their actions; misconceptions such as confusing abuse with discipline may lead to neglect of protective measures. Additionally, a lack of clarity about identifying, responding to, or reporting abuse increases children's vulnerability. Evaluating parental awareness and practices helps identify knowledge gaps and supports the development of targeted education programs and preventive

strategies by healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations.

Globally, violence against children affects nearly 1 billion children aged 2–17 each year, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Around 400 million children under five face regular physical or psychological punishment, while 1 in 8 girls (over 370 million) and up to 310 million boys experience sexual abuse before 18. Additionally, 138 million children are involved in child labor, with 54 million in hazardous work, and nearly 40,000 dies annually due to abuse or homicide—highlighting the urgent need for stronger protection measures.

In India, 12.9 million children are engaged in child labor, and a child is sexually abused every 15 minutes, often by someone known to them. The National Crime Records Bureau reports that 53% of victims are abused by family members. In Kerala, 4,196 cases were registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act up to November 2024, with over 4,500 cases expected for the year, particularly in Thiruvananthapuram, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kollam—underscoring the pressing need to strengthen child protection systems. Assessing parental perception and practice is a crucial step toward fostering a protective environment where abuse is recognized early, prevented effectively, and addressed promptly to ensure a safe and nurturing future for all children.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"A correlational study to assess the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents in a selected community setting in Kerala."

## OBJECTIVES

1. Assess the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents.
2. Find the correlation between level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents.
3. Find the association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.



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4. Find the association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

### Perception

It is the process by which parents organize and interpret information regarding prevention of child abuse and create a meaningful understanding about the preventive measures as measured by perception scale on prevention of child abuse.

### Practice

It refers to proactive measures and strategies implemented to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect are measured by practice checklist on prevention of child abuse.

### Child Abuse

It refers to act or failure to act by a parent or care giver that result in a actual or potential harm to the child that can occurs at child's house, school or the community the child interacts with.

### Prevention of Child Abuse

It refers to creating a safe and nurturing environment for children. It includes educating them about healthy boundaries and safety.

### Parents

The biological or adoptive caregiver directly responsible for a child's care and guidance. It includes mother, father, or legal guardian of child under 18 in the selected community in Thrissur District.

### Selected Community Setting

The geographically defined community within Thrissur District where the study is conducted.

## HYPOTHESES

H<sub>1</sub> -There will be significant correlation between level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents.

H<sub>2</sub> -There will be significant association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.

H<sub>3</sub> -There will be significant association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

**Research approach:** quantitative research approach

**Research design:** a correlational research design

**The setting adopted for the study:** Arampilly, Thrissur district.

**Population:** Parents

**Sample :**170 parents whose child has the age of < 18 years Thrissur district.

**Sampling size:** 170.

**Sampling technique:** Purposive sampling technique.

## SAMPLING CRITERIA

### Inclusion criteria

Parents who are;

- In between the age group of 20-60 years.
- Having children under 18 years.
- Able to read and write Malayalam.

### Exclusion criteria

Parents who are;

- Not willing to participate.
- Mentally or physically unfit to participate.

## TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

### TOOL 1: A structured questionnaire

A structured questionnaire to assess the sociodemographic variables of the samples like age, gender, educational status, family income per month, employment status, area of residence, type of family, number of children, participation in child abuse prevention workshops or classes and experience of abuse at home during childhood.

### TOOL 2: Perception scale on prevention of child abuse.

It includes a total of 15 items designed to assess perception on the prevention of child abuse, categorized under three headings. The first heading, awareness of child abuse prevention, contains 5 items (Items 1–5); the second, attitudes towards child abuse prevention, includes 5 items (Items 6–10); and the third, perception on reporting and support system, consists of 5 items (Items 11–15). Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4).



## SCORING

Score Range	Level Of Perception
15-30	Low Perception
31-45	Moderate Perception
46-60	Good Perception

### TOOL 3: Practice checklist on prevention of child abuse.

The practice checklist consists of 12 items, each designed to assess specific preventive actions taken by parents regarding child abuse. Respondents will answer "Yes" and "No" and is rated as one and zero respectively.

## SCORING

Score Range	Practice Level
0-4	Poor Practice
5-8	Moderate Practice
9-12	Good Practice

## RELIABILITY OF THE TOOL

It refers to its consistency and stability in measuring a concept across different conditions and time points. A reliable tool produces similar results when administered repeatedly under the same circumstances. The internal consistency of Perception scale and Practice checklist on prevention of child abuse by Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 and 0.82 respectively, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

## DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

- Formal permission is obtained from the principal Amala college of nursing.
- Purpose and need of the study will be explained to the participants and informed consent were obtained for assuring their confidentiality.
- The data were collected using self-structured questionnaire to assess socio demographic variables,

## PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The plan for data analysis refers to the systematic process of organizing, summarizing, and interpreting the collected data using statistical methods to answer the research questions

and test the hypotheses. The steps use to analyses the data were;

- Arrange and record the data in the master sheet for systematic analysis.
- Find the frequency and percentage distribution of subjects based on socio-demographic variables.
- Calculate the level of perception using frequency and percentage based on responses to the perception scale.
- Calculate the level of practice using frequency and percentage based on responses to the practice checklist.
- Spearman rank correlation coefficient to determine the correlation between the level of perception and practice regarding child abuse prevention.
- Fisher exact test to find the association between level of perception and practice and selected socio-demographic variables.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

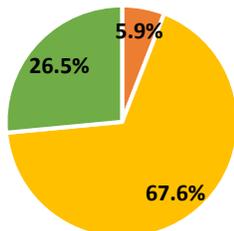
### Section I - Distribution of parents according to the socio-demographic variables.

The socio-demographic data of the parents (n = 170) revealed that the majority (31.8%) were in the age group of 31–40 years, and most respondents were females (74.7%). Regarding education, 37.1% had completed higher secondary education, followed by 28.2% with high school education, and none were illiterate. Nearly half of the parents (45.9%) reported a monthly family income between ₹8501 and ₹12,500, and 49.4% were employed. A large proportion (88.8%) resided in panchayat areas, indicating a predominantly rural background. Most parents (61.2%) belonged to nuclear families, and 38.8% had two children. Furthermore, 70.6% had not attended any child abuse prevention workshops, while 93.5% reported that they had not experienced abuse during their childhood. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of participants were middle-aged, educated mothers from rural nuclear families with moderate income levels and limited exposure to formal child abuse prevention training.



**Section II - Distribution of parents according to the level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse. (n=170)**

**LEVEL OF PRACTICE**



■ Poor practice ■ Moderate practice

moderate level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse. 15.9% of the parents showed a good perception, while only 2.9% demonstrated a low level of perception. This indicates that most parents have an average understanding, with relatively fewer showing strong awareness on the issue.

**Section III - Distribution of parents according to the level practice regarding the prevention of child abuse. (n=170)**

(n=170)



Figure 2 depicts that the majority of parents, 67.6%, demonstrated a moderate level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse. 26.5% showed a good level of practice, while only 5.9% exhibited a poor level of practice. This indicates that while most parents are moderately

practicing preventive measures, there is still scope for improvement in adopting better practices.

**Section IV - Analysis of the correlation between level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents.**

Spearman rank correlation test shows that there is a moderately positive correlation ( $r = 0.626$ ) between the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents. The p-value of 0.001 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that as parent's perception regarding child abuse prevention increases, their practice also tends to improve correspondingly.

**Section V - Analysis of the association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.**

The Fisher Exact Test was used to find out the association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables. There is significant association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and their educational status and the p-value is 0.005. But there is no significant association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and age, gender, family income per month, employment status, area of residence, type of family, number of children, whether have attended any child abuse prevention workshops or classes, and whether have experienced abuse in home during their childhood.

**Section VI- Analysis of the association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables.**

The Fisher Exact Test was used to find out the association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and selected socio-demographic variables. Result reveals that there is a significant association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and the number of children and the p-value is 0.025.



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And in other hand there is no significant association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and parents and age, gender, educational status, family income per month, employment status, area of residence, type of family, whether have attended any child abuse prevention workshops or classes, and whether have experienced abuse in home during their childhood.

### CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that 81.2% of parents had a moderate level of perception, and 67.6% had a moderate level of practice. And there is a moderately positive correlation ( $r = 0.626$ ) between the level of perception and practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents. The  $p$ -value of 0.001 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that as parent's perception regarding child abuse prevention increases, their practice also tends to improve correspondingly.

There is significant association between level of perception regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and their educational status and the  $p$ -value is 0.005. And there is a significant association between level of practice regarding the prevention of child abuse among parents and the number of children and the  $p$ -value is 0.025.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that enhancing parents' perception through education can lead to better preventive practices. Community-based awareness and training programs are recommended to improve parental involvement in child abuse prevention.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1.Future studies can include larger and more diverse populations across different geographic regions for better generalization of findings.

2.Longitudinal studies can be conducted to assess the long-term impact of educational interventions on parental perception and practice.

3.Qualitative studies can explore in-depth parental beliefs, cultural influences, and barriers to effective child abuse prevention practices.

4.Comparative studies can be done to assess differences in perception and practice between urban and rural parents.

### LIMITATIONS

1.The study was limited to parents residing in a selected community setting in Thrissur district, so the findings may not be generalizable to other regions.

2.The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, which may introduce selection bias.

3.External factors such as cultural beliefs, stigma, or fear of judgment may have influenced participant's willingness to respond honestly.

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