



# Effectiveness of a Structured Teaching Program on Child Abuse Awareness Among Mothers of School-Going Children

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## Abstract

**Background:** Child abuse remains a significant issue, manifesting as physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional harm. Many parents lack sufficient knowledge to identify and address child abuse effectively, underscoring the need for targeted educational interventions. **Methods:** This pre-experimental study employed a one-group pre-test and post-test design to evaluate a structured teaching program on child abuse among 60 mothers of school-going children in Anagaputhur, Chennai. Participants underwent a pre-test to assess baseline knowledge, followed by a two-day structured teaching program, and a post-test to evaluate knowledge improvement. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** Pre-test results showed 61% of participants had inadequate knowledge of child abuse, 34% had moderate knowledge, and 5% had adequate knowledge. After the educational intervention, 70% of participants achieved adequate knowledge, and 30% had moderate knowledge, with none remaining in the inadequate category. The mean knowledge score improved significantly from 40.0 to 78.6 ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Conclusion:** The structured teaching program effectively enhanced knowledge about child

abuse among mothers, demonstrating the importance of educational interventions in empowering caregivers to prevent and address abuse. Regular implementation of such programs is recommended to foster safer environments for children.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, Educational intervention, Parental awareness, Knowledge improvement, Prevention strategies

## 1. Introduction

Child abuse is a critical issue that can manifest in various forms, including physical, verbal, and sexual harm (Christian, 2015; Durrant et al., 2016). Research indicates that one in four girls and one in eight boys experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18, and annually, about one in twenty children endure physical abuse (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2013; Stoltenborgh, van Ijzendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011). This highlights the urgent need for parents and caregivers to recognize and understand the different types of child abuse that their children may encounter, particularly in environments like schools, where they spend a significant amount of time (Leeb, 2008).

Understanding the scope and impact of child abuse requires comprehensive knowledge. A study evaluating the knowledge level of parents on child abuse showed that before an educational intervention, 61% of participants had inadequate knowledge, 34% had moderate knowledge, and only 5% had sufficient knowledge (Durrant et al., 2016). However, after receiving structured education, 70% of parents exhibited adequate knowledge, while 30% showed moderate understanding, with none remaining in the inadequate category (Alisic, Bus, Dulack Pennings, & Splinter,

**Significance** | This study shows the importance of targeted educational programs in enhancing parental knowledge to prevent child abuse effectively.

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2012; MacMillan, Wathen, Barlow, Fergusson, Leventhal, & Taussig, 2009). This outcome demonstrates the importance of targeted educational programs in improving awareness and preparedness to prevent and address child abuse (Gilbert et al., 2009).

Child abuse encompasses a range of harmful behaviors. Physical abuse involves a caregiver causing non-accidental physical injury to a child (Briere & Elliott, 2003; Dube et al., 2001), while sexual abuse refers to any sexual activity involving a child, whether coerced by an adult or an older, dominant child (Christian, 2015). Emotional abuse, another form of maltreatment, can occur when a caregiver's actions harm a child's mental and social development, resulting in severe emotional distress (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005; Twardosz & Lutzker, 2010). Addressing these various forms of abuse is a complex challenge for communities, as it requires understanding, prevention, and intervention strategies (Brown, Cohen, Johnson, & Salzinger, 1998; Hughes et al., 2017).

To create a safer environment for children, it is essential to foster nurturing and protective relationships with caregivers and significant others (Jones et al., 2012). Strong relationships with family members, educators, and peers play a crucial role in shaping a child's understanding of safety and trust (Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, & Taylor, 2004). The key to preventing abuse lies in education, awareness, and the proactive involvement of parents and caregivers in recognizing the signs of abuse and taking steps to prevent it (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007; Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2008).

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Materials

The tools and materials used in this study included a structured questionnaire developed by the investigator to assess participants' knowledge about child abuse. Teaching materials such as visual aids, lecture notes, discussion guides, and interactive activities were designed to enhance the learning experience of the participants. Data recording tools, including data sheets and computer software, were utilized for statistical analysis to accurately capture and evaluate the results.

The study was conducted over a period of one week. This timeline comprised one day for administering the pre-test, two days dedicated to the teaching program, and one day for administering the post-test to assess the effectiveness of the educational intervention.

By following this methodology, the study aimed to determine the effectiveness of an educational intervention in enhancing the knowledge of mothers regarding child abuse, thereby contributing to the prevention and early identification of abuse cases within the community.

### 2.2 Study Design

This study used a pre-experimental, one-group pre-test and post-test design to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured teaching program on knowledge about child abuse among mothers of school-going children aged 6 to 12 years. The study was conducted in the community area of Anagaputhur, Chennai.

### 2.3 Study Population and Sample

The study targeted mothers of school-going children aged 6 to 12 years. A total of 60 mothers were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selection criteria included mothers who were willing to participate in the study, had children attending school in the Anagaputhur community, and were available during the study period.

### 2.4 Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, the investigator first established rapport with the mothers to foster trust and cooperation. The study followed these steps:

**Pre-Test Assessment:** A pre-test was conducted to assess the baseline knowledge of the participants regarding child abuse, including its types, symptoms, and preventive measures. The pre-test comprised a structured questionnaire with multiple-choice questions designed to gauge the participants' understanding of child abuse.

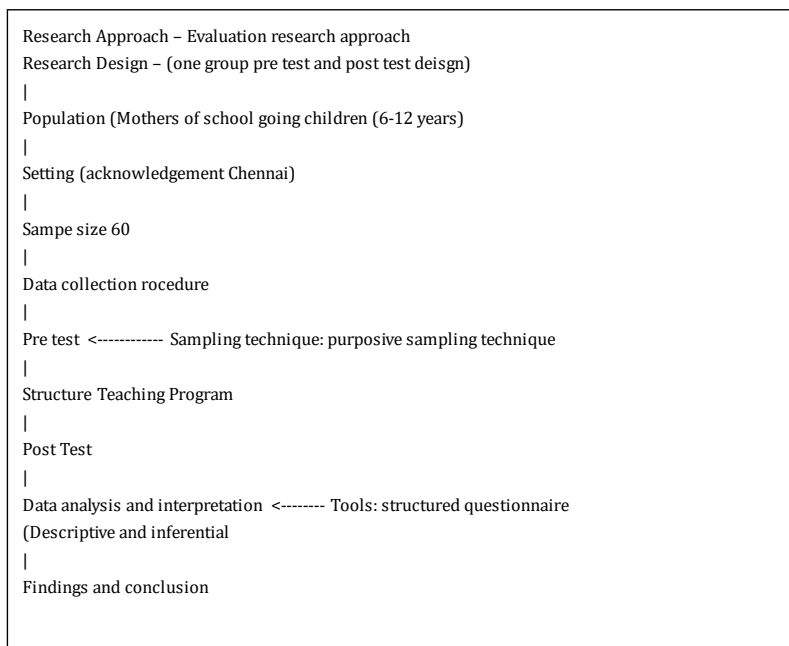
**Intervention-Structured Teaching Program:** A structured teaching program was developed to provide comprehensive knowledge about child abuse. The program covered various topics, such as the definition and types of abuse (physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional), signs and symptoms of abuse, potential risk factors, preventive strategies, and steps to take if abuse is suspected. The educational content was presented using visual aids, lectures, discussions, and interactive sessions. The teaching program was conducted over two consecutive days, with each session lasting approximately two hours. All 60 mothers actively participated in the program.

**Post-Test Assessment:** After the completion of the teaching program, a post-test was administered using the same structured questionnaire to evaluate the change in knowledge levels among the participants. The post-test was conducted immediately after the intervention to measure the immediate impact of the educational program.

### 2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the study commenced. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.

### 2.6 Statistical Analysis



**Figure 1.** Flowchart depicting the study design and timeline. The figure illustrates the sequence of events, starting with the pre-test assessment of knowledge among 60 mothers of school-going children aged 6 to 12 years, followed by a two-day structured teaching program on child abuse, and concluding with the post-test assessment to evaluate changes in knowledge levels. The flowchart highlights each phase, including data collection, intervention, and analysis, within a one-week study period.

**Table 1.** Pre-Test Knowledge Levels Among Participants of mothers of school going children (6-12) in child abuse. This table presents the distribution of participants' knowledge levels regarding child abuse before the educational intervention. Knowledge levels are categorized as inadequate, moderately adequate, and adequate based on pre-test scores. The percentages reflect the proportion of participants within each knowledge category.

PRETEST KNOWLEDGE	NO	%
Inadequate(50 and below)	37	61
Moderately adequate (51-75%)	20	34
Adequate (76-100%)	3	5

**Table 2.** Post-Test Knowledge Levels of mothers of school going children (6-12) in child abuse. This table displays the knowledge levels of participants regarding child abuse after completing the structured teaching program. Participants' knowledge is categorized as inadequate, moderately adequate, and adequate based on post-test scores. The percentages show the proportion of participants in each knowledge category following the educational intervention.

POST TEST KNOWLEDGE	NO	%
Inadequate (50 and below)	-	-
Moderately adequate (51-75%)	18	30
Adequate (76-100%)	42	70

**Table 3.** The mean and standard deviation of pre and post-test knowledge. This table summarizes the statistical comparison between pre-test and post-test knowledge scores to assess the effectiveness of the educational program. It includes mean scores, standard deviations, mean differences, and the results of the paired t-test.

Variables	Pre test knowledge		Post test knowledge		Effectiveness		(Paired) 't' value
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
Knowledge	40.0	22.2	78.6	10.8	38.6	2.1	141***

S: Statistically significant \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The data collected from the pre-test and post-test assessments were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the participants' demographic data and knowledge levels. Inferential statistics, including paired t-tests, were employed to compare the pre-test and post-test scores and determine the effectiveness of the structured teaching program. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### 3. Results

The study evaluated the effectiveness of a structured teaching program aimed at enhancing knowledge about child abuse among mothers of school-going children aged 6 to 12 years. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the participants' knowledge levels after the educational intervention.

#### 3.1 Pre-Test Knowledge Levels

Before the intervention, the pre-test assessment revealed that a majority of the participants, 37 out of 60 (61%), had inadequate knowledge about child abuse, scoring 50% or below (Table 1). Additionally, 20 participants (34%) exhibited moderately adequate knowledge, with scores ranging from 51% to 75%, while only 3 participants (5%) demonstrated adequate knowledge, scoring between 76% to 100%. These findings indicate that most mothers initially lacked sufficient understanding of child abuse, underscoring the need for targeted education to bridge this knowledge gap.

#### 3.2 Post-Test Knowledge Levels

Following the structured teaching program, there was a marked improvement in the participants' knowledge levels (Table 2). None of the participants remained in the inadequate category (0%), while 18 mothers (30%) achieved moderately adequate knowledge, and a significant majority, 42 mothers (70%), attained adequate knowledge scores of 76% to 100%. This considerable increase in adequate knowledge levels suggests that the teaching program effectively enhanced the understanding of child abuse among the participants.

#### 3.3 Statistical Analysis of Knowledge Improvement

The comparison of pre-test and post-test knowledge scores further confirmed the program's effectiveness (Table 3). The mean pre-test knowledge score was 40.0 (SD = 22.2), which increased to 78.6 (SD = 10.8) in the post-test. The mean difference of 38.6 points (SD = 2.1) between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, as indicated by the paired t-test value of 141 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This statistical significance reinforces the conclusion that the structured teaching program substantially improved the participants' knowledge regarding child abuse.

### 4. Discussion

The study's findings highlight the effectiveness of structured educational interventions in enhancing knowledge about child abuse among mothers (Alisic, Bus, Dulack, Pennings, & Splinter, 2012). Initially, the majority of participants lacked adequate knowledge, which posed a significant risk to the early detection and prevention of child abuse (Durrant et al., 2016). However, the structured teaching program successfully addressed these gaps by providing comprehensive information on different forms of abuse, signs and symptoms, preventive measures, and appropriate actions to take if abuse is suspected (Christian, 2015; Gilbert et al., 2009). The positive shift from inadequate to adequate knowledge levels following the intervention demonstrates that educational programs can play a critical role in empowering parents to protect their children from abuse (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2013). The results are consistent with previous research suggesting that targeted educational initiatives can improve awareness and understanding of sensitive social issues like child abuse (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005; Jones et al., 2012). By fostering a better understanding of abuse among mothers, the program has the potential to contribute to the early identification of abuse cases, promoting safer environments for children (MacMillan, Wathen, Barlow, Fergusson, Leventhal, & Taussig, 2009).

Overall, this study underscores the importance of regular and effective educational programs to enhance knowledge about child abuse, especially among parents and caregivers (Hughes et al., 2017; Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2008). Continued efforts in community education can help in building awareness, reducing stigma, and encouraging proactive measures to prevent child abuse (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2007).

### 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that a structured teaching program significantly enhanced the knowledge of mothers regarding child abuse, highlighting its critical role in promoting child safety. Initially, a substantial proportion of mothers had inadequate knowledge of child abuse, which could hinder early detection and prevention. However, following the educational intervention, there was a marked improvement, with 70% of participants achieving adequate knowledge and none remaining in the inadequate category. The statistically significant increase in knowledge underscores the effectiveness of targeted educational initiatives in empowering parents and caregivers to recognize and prevent various forms of child abuse. The findings align with prior research that emphasizes the importance of community-based education in safeguarding children. Therefore, regular implementation of structured educational programs is recommended to enhance parental awareness and preparedness, fostering safer environments for children and reducing the risk of abuse. These efforts are vital in

building resilient communities that are proactive in protecting children's well-being.

#### Author contributions

M.P., S.K.S., V.E., and A. collaboratively conceptualized the study, performed data analysis, engaged in result discussions, and contributed to the writing and finalization of the manuscript.

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#### Competing financial interests

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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