

Level of Awareness on Personal Safety Issues among Female Adolescents Living in Kottayam District

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays children facing so many atrocities and cruelties in their homes, schools, and in their neighborhood or community. They cannot even trust their family members and neighbors too. Most of the children faced abuse from their close relatives themselves. Then they are facing physical and mental stress from their family in the name of education. This quantitative study conducted with 100 respondents from the Kottayam district. Through the study, the researcher identified that children are having awareness about the safety issues at the same time some of the children are facing the issues. So, it is important the educating children about the defense mechanism. In conclusion, Through the abuses, children face harm to their health, welfare, and safety in our society. It is a global issue faced by all children. The situation needed to be changed. These issues are creating a negative impact on our country and its development. Because today's children are tomorrow's citizens. And they are considered as the important resources of our future.

Keywords: *Level of Awareness, Personal Safety Issue, Female Adolescent*

All children are considered as the vulnerable groups by virtue at their young age. Children are needed to be protected from violence, crimes, exploitation, abuse, and neglect which are arising in our society. The children may face the risks like family separation, crimes, attack, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, disability, HIV and AIDS, and child labor are among that. Across the world, children face protection threats that are arising at the family, community, and societal levels. The arising of child safety issues may be seen as a crucial problem in our society. The impact of these problems can be led to distress in the physical, emotional, social, psychological, and mental health and wellbeing of the child. The state and society have the crucial responsibility to promote child development and ensure that every child could ably access the resources for growing up safely in their own environment and to nurture the child as an adult. Children need to be protected from or against any perceived or real danger or risk which threaten their life and wellbeing. By protecting children from dangers, the child can able to reduce their vulnerability in harmful situations. It is the right of the children needed to protect against social, psychological, and

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emotional insecurity and distress. The children who face security issues may need special attention than other children.

Statement of the Problem

Children are considered as the vulnerable category in our society which they are having helpless and the powerless. Maltreatment of children includes physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, and neglect. Now a day's sexual abuse, which is common, noticed an issue in our society. Child safety issues are the reality in our community and it is our responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harmful situations and abuse. A child feels unsafe when he or she is neglected, not loved or cared for, discriminated in terms of gender, ability, intelligence, physical abuse, and violence, mentally tortured, harassed, substance abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, exploited or cheated. In this situation, children need to be aware of personal safety issues and also aware of the measures to prevent the issues that arise against children. As a society, all are responsible to ensure that every child in our family, locality, community, state, and nation are safe and feels safe and protected from all the issues. Child safety issues are raised globally and taken special consideration for children and their environment. This study focuses on the following questions. What is the level of awareness among children in late childhood regarding their personal safety issues and what are the measures taken by the children in late childhood to protect them from safety issues?

Base Objective

- level of awareness of personal safety issues and measures among female adolescents

Specific Objectives

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of the respondents
2. To study the awareness of personal safety issues
3. To study the awareness of personal safety measures

Significance of the Study

Children are our nation's most precious resource, but as children, they often lack the skills to protect themselves in a harmful situation. It is the responsibility of all individuals to safeguard children and to teach them the skills to be safe in those situations. Every home that means parents should teach children about safety issues and protective measures. As a responsible person of children, all must teach the children to be assertive in order to protect themselves against abduction, exploitation, painful experiences, and uncomfortable situations. Previous literature states that in the Kottayam district, more child sexual abuse cases were reported in the age group of 13-15 years among female students, and in male students, more cases were reported in the age group of 6-12 years. In this context-awareness regarding personal safety issues and measures is more essential to children in this age. So, research finds that the study is significant. It is our responsibility to make our home a place of trust and support that fulfills a child's needs. Individuals need to protect their children by teaching them to be smart, strong, and safe. Personal safety as the protective behavior is a powerful way to teach children about safety, risk-taking, and what they can do when they feel unsafe. Children who are confident, assertive, and have good support networks are less likely to be at risk of abuse or find themselves in dangerous situations. By creating awareness of safe behavior, and teaching children empowerment strategies, protective behavior, aims to promote child resilience and ultimately reduce child abuse in our community.

METHOD

This study was used quantitative method and descriptive research design. The tool used for the study was a self-administrated questionnaire. The researcher collected data from primary and secondary sources. Nonprobability sampling is the sampling design used in this study and the method used was purposive sampling. Universe of the study consist of all school students studying in the schools of Kottayam district. An adolescent female school student below 15 years belongs to the Kottayam district and was taken as the unit of the study. The age group of 11 to 15 years of children (female) was included in the study. The children below 11 years and above 15 years were excluded from the study. The final form of the 34 items, questionnaires administered by the researcher contains the Cronbach's Alpha point for is .754. So, the data was reliable. The Shapiro-Wilk test reveals the normality of the data indicates .354. So, the data was normal. The sample size of the research was 100. SPSS Statistical Package for the social sciences is a method used in the study for analyzing the data.

Findings

The following points are the findings of the study. They are explained in detail below.

- Researcher found the age of the respondents. It is clear that 28% of the respondents belong to 12 years old, 26% of them belongs to 14 years old and 10% belong to 15 years old.
- Researcher found the standard of the respondents 32% of the respondents come under 9th standard, 30% of them in 8th standard, and 26% of them in 7th standard, and 12% of them in 10th standard.
- Researcher found that that religion of the respondents, 56% of the respondents belongs to Hindu background and 44% of them belong to the Christian background.
- Researcher identified that the number of family members 76% of them belongs to 3-5 category, 18% of them belongs to less than 3 category and 6% of them belongs to more than 5 family members.
- Researcher identified that the occupation of the father. The majority of the respondent's father are farmers, 26% of them having private jobs, and 4% of them having government jobs.
- Researcher identified that 80% of the respondent's mothers are housewives, 8% of them having private jobs and only 6% of them having a government job.
- Researcher identified that 54% of them belongs to the BPL category and 46% of them belongs to APL category. So, it is clear that the majority of respondents are from BPL families.
- Researcher identified the distance to school, 50% of the respondents have less than 30 minutes, 30% of them in between 30-minute -1 hour and 20% of them have more than 1 hour.
- Researcher identified the awareness part of children, 96% of the respondents having the answer yes and only 4% of them having the answer no.
- Researcher identified the best friends of the respondents, 52% of them having their classmates as best friends, 44% of them having their mother as best friends only 2% of them having a father as their best friend.
- Researcher identified that the safety of the children, 94% agreed that they feeling safety at home, 4% of them have a moderate opinion and 2% of them disagreed the statement.

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- Researcher identified that 34% of the respondents facing fear, 32% of them having moderate opinion and 28% of them strongly disagreed with the statement and 8% of them having disagree opinion.
- Researcher identified the negative experience of the respondents, 62% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 28% of them have strongly disagreed opinion, 6% of them have a moderate opinion and only 4% of them agreed with the statement.
- Researcher identified that 60% of them agreed that they are safe in school, 34% of them having a moderate opinion, 6% of them disagreed with the comment.
- Researcher identified that home is a platform used by children to express their view, 74% of them agreed that they express their views in home, 18% of them have moderate opinion and 8% of them have disagreed opinion.
- Researcher identified that 56% of them disagreed that they would not mingle with strangers, 36% of them have strongly disagreed with the opinion, 6% of them agreed that they mingle with strangers and 2% of them have a moderate opinion.
- Researcher identified that knowledge regarding good and bad touch. 68% of them agreed that they have knowledge regarding good touch and bad touch, 18% of them have moderate opinion, 12% of them disagreed to the comment and 2% of them strongly disagreed to the comment.
- Out of the total respondents that the sharing mentality of children, 54% of them agreed that they share everything with their parents, 34% of them have moderate opinion and 12% of them disagreed with the statement.
- Out of the total respondents the support from the parents, 78% of the respondents agreed that their parents gave enough support to the children, 18% of them moderate opinion to the statement and 4% of them disagreed with the statement.
- Out of the total respondent's home is a public space for children to share things with parents, 46% of them agreed on the comment, and 34% of them moderately agreed to the statement, 20% of them disagreed with the statement.
- Out of the total respondents that respondents face fear to travel alone, 38% of them disagreed to the opinion, 24% of them have a moderate opinion to the statement and 14% of them strongly disagreed with the statement.
- Researcher found that 58% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that is problem during travel, 18% of them disagreed with the opinion, and 16% of them agreed on the opinion and 8% of them have a moderate opinion.
- Researcher found that 66% of the respondents are having access to the internet. 20% of them are moderately agreed with the opinion. 10% of them have no access to the internet and 4% of them are strongly disagreed with the statement.
- Researcher found that 28% of the respondents are agreed that they are spending more time in front of social media. 24% of them are moderately agreed with the opinion. 36% of the respondents disagreed with the opinion and 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the opinion. It is evident that the majority of the respondents are spending less time in front of the social media.
- Researcher found 64% of the respondents are aware of the demerits of social media. 24% of the respondents are moderately agreed with the opinion and 12% of them have disagreed that they are not aware of the demerits of social media.
- Researcher found that 66% of the respondents are aware of the laws against exploitations of children and 34% of them are not aware of the comment.

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- Researcher found that 58% of the respondents know about child rights and 42% of them are lacking knowledge about child rights. The majority of the respondents having knowledge about child rights.
- Researcher found that 14% of the respondents are agreed that they hide a thing from their parents and teachers because of fear. 10% of them moderately agreed with the opinion. 48% of them disagreed with the opinion and 28% of the respondents are strongly disagreed the statement.
- Researcher identified that 84% of the respondents are aware of the problems faced by children through newspaper and 16% of the respondents are not aware of the problems through newspaper.
- Researcher found that 8% of the respondents have listened to the experience from the victims of abuse and 42% of them are not experiencing victims of abuse.
- Researcher identified that 26% of the respondents are agreed that they are alone in the home while their parents going for jobs. 16% of them having a moderate opinion of the comment. 48% of them disagreed with the opinion and 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.
- Researcher identified that 12% of the respondents are staying their cousin's home during holidays and vacations. 38% of them moderately agreed to the comment. 42% of them disagreed the comment and 8% of the respondents are strongly disagreed the opinion.
- Researcher identified that 30% of the respondents are going to friend's house for playing. 50% of them disagree to the opinion that they are not going to a friend's house for playing and 20% of them are strongly disagreed with the comment.
- Researcher identified 28% of the respondents are going to school by walk. 6% of them going to school-by-school bus and 66% of them are going to school by traveling in other vehicles. The majority of the respondents are other vehicles category.
- Out of the total respondent's awareness class about personal safety measures indicates, 92% of them agreed that they get awareness class and 6% of them have opinion no.
- Researcher identified shows that Child Line toll-free number, 72% of them have the answer yes and 28% of them have the answer no.
- Researcher identified services of Child Line, 54% of them have the answer yes and 46% of them have the opinion no.
- Researcher identified that 64% of them agreed that they have physical changes, 32% of them have a moderate opinion and 4% of them disagreed with the statement.
- Researcher identified that the punishment under the laws, 50% of them agreed to the statement, 36% of them disagreed to the statement, 12% of them have moderate opinion and 2% of them strongly disagreed to the comment.
- Researcher identified that the respondents are always being with friends, 38% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 36% of them agreed to the statement, 20% of them agreed to the statement and 6% of them strongly disagreed to the statement.
- Researcher identified that the availability of counselor, 60% of them have the answer yes and 40% of them have the answer no.
- Researcher identified the services of a counselor, 50% of them have disagreed opinion, 22% of them have agreed to the statement, 20% of them have a moderate opinion, and 8% of them strongly disagreed with the statement.

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- Researcher identified self-defense of the respondents, 20% of the respondents have the answer, yes and 80% of them have the answer no. So, it is clear that children having fewer defines practices.
- Researcher identified that the motivation gives by the parents, 62% of the respondents moderately agreed to the statement and 38% of the respondents have moderate opinion to the statement.
- Researcher identified that avoidance of strangers indicates 54% of them agreed to the statement, 40% of them have a moderate opinion, 4% of them disagreed to the opinion and 2% strongly disagreed with the opinion.

CONCLUSION

The study is concerned with awareness of personal safety issues and measures among female adolescents' children with special reference to Kottayam district. The atrocities against children include physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuses and neglect of children from others. Nowadays children facing so many atrocities and cruelties in their homes, schools, and in their neighborhood or community. They cannot even trust their family members and neighbors too. Safety issues of children can be found in cities, rural areas, rural homes, homes of rich and poor, streets, public places. It is a global issue faced by all children. The situation needed to be changed. These issues are creating a negative impact on our country and its development. Because today's children are tomorrow's citizens. And they are considered as the important resources of our future. Through the study, the researcher identified that children are having awareness about the safety issues at the same time some of the children are facing the issues.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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