

A Study on Perceptions towards Child Sexual Abuse among Student-Teachers in Puducherry

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the research is perception about child sexual abuse among student teachers. Perception is someone interpretation of something based on their previous experience. Any activity with a child before the age of legal consent that is for sexual gratification of an adult or a substantially older child. The perpetrators take advantage of violate or deceive children or young people who have less power over elders. Student teachers in a B.Ed., programme are individuals who are currently enrolled in Bachelor of Education programme, which is a professional degree program designed prepare individuals to become approved and recognized teachers. They are typically in the process of completing coursework and gaining field experiences in order to meet the requirements in the jurisdiction. Survey method was adopted for this study. The sample consists of 62 student teachers in Vivekanandha College of Education in Puducherry. Simple random sampling technique was used in this study. Although preliminary in nature, the present findings are among the first to demonstrate the nature of child sexual abuse among student teachers in Puducherry. Further, the study revealed that child sexual abuse manifests both as contact and noncontact forms. More boys than girls are exposed to most forms of abuse.

Keywords: *Perception, Child Sexual Abuse, Student Teachers*

Sexual assault in childhood or adulthood impacts not only the victim, but also the victim's family and friends as well as society as a whole. In this regard, sexual assault is a public health problem that concerns everyone. Sexual assault has numerous potential consequences that can last a lifetime and span generations, with serious adverse effects on health, education, employment, crime, and the economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies There does not appear to be a specific pattern of consequences from sexual abuse experienced in childhood. In fact, the sequelae, or after-effects, of childhood sexual abuse vary from one child to the next. Victims of child sexual abuse can face immediate psychological consequences as well as chronic effects that can impact their adjustment throughout their development.

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Immediate psychological consequences of child sexual abuse include: Shock, Fear, Anxiety, nervousness, Guilt, Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, Denial, Confusion, Withdrawal, isolation and Grief.

Physical Health issues such as-

1. Sexually transmitted diseases,
2. Pregnancy,
3. Complaints of pain or itching in the genital area,
4. Difficulty in walking or sitting,
5. Repeated unusual injuries,
6. Pain during elimination, and
7. Frequent yeast infections

Sexual abuse in childhood is known to be a major risk factor in the development of long-term psychological and social adjustment problems that can carry over into adulthood and affect married life and parenthood. The most common effects of sexual abuse in children are symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Roughly one third of sexually abused children do not display symptoms deemed problematic (i.e. symptoms that have reached the clinical threshold).

There may be various reasons for this, including:

- These children experienced less severe sexual abuse.
 - These children have protective factors that help them cope better with the trauma of the abuse.
 - These children may exhibit no symptoms during assessment, but have latent sequelae that might manifest later.
 - Depending on their age, victims of child sexual abuse are also at greater risk of experiencing symptoms of physical and mental health issues.
- i. Abrupt changes in behaviour such as self-harm, talks of suicide or attempt to suicide, poor impulse control etc.
 - ii. Reluctance to go home.
 - iii. Sexualised behaviour or acting out sexually.
 - iv. Low self-esteem.
 - v. Wearing many layers of clothing regardless of the weather.
 - vi. Recurrent nightmares or disturbed sleep patterns and fear of the dark.
 - vii. Regression to more infantile behaviour like bed-wetting, thumb-sucking or excessive crying.
 - viii. Poor peer relationships.
 - ix. Eating disturbances.
 - x. Negative coping skills, such as substance abuse and/or self-harm.
 - xi. An increase in irritability or temper tantrums.
 - xii. Fears of a particular person or object.
 - xiii. Aggression towards others.
 - xiv. Poor school performance.
 - xv. Knowing more about sexual behaviour than is expected of a child of that age

Child sexual abuse is a global public health and human rights concern. A meta-analysis of about 65 studies done in 22 countries found that 7.9% of men and 19.7% of women had suffered

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some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18 years. Although studies of child sexual abuse conducted in developing countries are emerging, the process is slow and sporadic. India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children, with a below 16 years raped every 155th minutes, a child below 10 every 13th hour, and one in every ten children sexually abused at any point of time. Child sexual abuse can be defined as 'any activity with a child before the age of legal consent that is for sexual gratification of an adult or a substantially older child. The perpetrators take advantage of violate or deceive children or young people who have less power over elders.' Despite having varying definitions, child sexual abuse broadly falls under contact (sexually touching of different areas of the child's body as well as penetrative oral, anal, and vaginal sex) and noncontact acts (such as a child being forced to pose naked, take part in or watch masturbation, take part in or view pornographic materials, or watch others having sex).

Child sexual abuse is associated with long-term physical and mental health consequences. The physical effects include vesicovaginal and rectovaginal fistulae and chronic pelvic pain. The mental health consequences involve psychological/behavioral disorders which may manifest in suicidal thoughts, posttraumatic stress disorders, or depression. Other behavioral disorders include bodily shame, abuse-related fears, substance abuse, and discomfort during sex.

Statement of the Problem

“A study on Perceptions towards Child Sexual Abuse among Student teachers in Puducherry”

Objectives of the Study

To find out the significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to,

- a) Gender
- b) Locality
- c) State
- d) Discipline
- e) Educational Qualification
- f) Residential

Hypotheses of the Study

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to,

- a) Gender
- b) Locality
- c) State
- d) Discipline
- e) Educational Qualification
- f) Residential

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Tetti and Cecep (2023) conducted a study titled child sexual abuse prevention: a qualitative study of teacher's educational needs. Child sexual abuse has emerged as a global concern, particularly affecting children in Indonesia. However, there remains a scarcity of research on child sexual abuse within the Indonesian context. This study aimed to explore the educational needs of primary school teachers in preventing child sexual abuse. A qualitative descriptive study design was employed, with eight teachers and school principals selected through

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purposive sampling. Data were collected through focus group discussions and analyzed using content analysis. This study provides valuable insights into the educational prerequisites for teachers to implement child sexual abuse prevention measures effectively. The findings emphasize the pressing need for school teachers to develop and implement child sexual abuse prevention programs, with the governments and nursing professionals support, to enhance educators' abilities in combating child sexual abuse. Nurses have a pivotal role in preventing and addressing child sexual abuse, and they should actively contribute to improving child safety and well-being abuse, through knowledge, collaboration, and advocacy for comprehensive prevention strategies.

Meenakshi and Ravi (2015) examined childhood experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse among college students in South India. To document the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual abuse during childhood among college students. The study was conducted among college students of Puducherry, South India. Stratified random sampling was done to select colleges. Data were gathered using the adapted Ministry of Women and Child Development Questionnaire on Child Abuse for Young adults. A total of 936 college students completed the questionnaire. Mean \pm SD age of the participants was 19.2 ± 1.1 years. Half (48%) of the participants reported being mocked because of their physical appearance. In all, 56% (524/936) of the participants reported that they were beaten during their childhood, of which 13.4% (70/524) required medical treatment. Around 10% reported someone exposing his/her private parts to them, while in 6.4% of the cases, the perpetrator forced the study participants to expose their private parts. Emotional, physical and sexual abuse is common in childhood and demands prompt interventions at the familial, community and political levels.

Prathima and Pragadeesh (2022) studied effectiveness of video tutorial coaching in improving the knowledge of school teachers on child abuse and neglect in Puducherry. Child abuse and neglect (CAN) is a major threat to the health and well-being of children throughout the world. Apart from healthcare professionals, teachers also play an important role in recognizing and reporting child abuse as they are in a better position to observe the behavioral changes in children as they spend substantially more time at school. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a video tutorial program in improving the knowledge of school teachers on CAN. A cross-sectional questionnaire-based study was conducted among the 79 school teachers of Puducherry. At baseline a pre-validated questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge of the school teachers on CAN. After the intervention knowledge score was improved to 14.46 ($p > 0.05$). The study showed that a knowledge deficit exists among teachers regarding CAN, and the video tutorial program was found to be effective in improving the knowledge of school teachers. The government, as well as the schools should take the initiative to create awareness among teachers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population and sample of the research

The population for the study includes the student-teachers are studying in the Vivekanandha College of Education in the Puducherry. The investigator has selected 62 student teachers in the college of education.

Sampling technique

In the present study, the investigator used Simple Random Sampling Technique for selecting the sample. Further, the investigator randomly selected 62 student teachers from Vivekanandha

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college of education and stratified them on the basis of their gender, locality, state, discipline, educational qualification and residential.

Tools used

The self-administered closed-ended questionnaire was made in English language by a language expert. The questionnaire had 20 questions with likert scale type all questions having five responses. The questionnaire focused on demographic details (such as gender, locality, state, discipline, educational qualification and residential) perception of child sexual abuse.

RELIABILITY

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha value the item analysis of student teachers

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0.823	20

From the above table, the investigator concludes that the tools high level of internal consistency from the Cronbach's alpha value 0.823 after the item analysis process. In this manner, the investigator has evidenced the reliability of the tool.

SCORING PROCEDURE

The strongly agree response of the favourable statement should be assigned with a score of 5, agree response with a score of 4, Neutral with a score of 3, disagree with 2 and strongly disagree 1. The respondents were asked to read each item carefully and put a (✓) mark in the cell provided. The investigator computed all the scores for the items for each respondent. The total score of all the items were calculated and finalized as the individual's score.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their gender.

Table 2 Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std	t- value	p- value	Remarks at 0.05 level
Male	10	82.400	2.3664	3.93	0.00	S
Female	52	76.769	4.3863			

The above table 2 shows that the computed p value is 0.000. Since $p > 0.05$, that is less than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. then the null hypothesis is rejected, and it can be said that is significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their gender.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their locality.

Table 3 *Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their locality*

Locality	N	Mean	Std	t- value	p- value	Remarks at 0.05 level
Rural	32	78.688	5.2020	1.814	0.07	NS
Urban	30	76.600	3.6725			

The above table 3 shows that the computed p value is 0.07. Since $p > 0.05$, that is greater than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. then the null hypothesis is accepted, and it can be said that is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their locality.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their discipline.

Table 4 *Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their discipline*

Discipline	N	Mean	Std	t- value	p- value	Remarks at 0.05 level
Arts	44	77.000	4.8609	1.843	0.70	NS
Science	18	79.333	3.5314			

The above table 4 shows that the computed p value is 0.70. Since $p > 0.05$, that is greater than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. then the null hypothesis is accepted, and it can be said that is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their discipline.

H₀4: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their educational qualification.

Table 5 *Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their educational qualification*

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Std	t- value	p- value	Remarks at 0.05 level
UG	42	77.762	5.0933	0.23	0.81	NS
PG	20	77.500	3.5019			

The above table 5 shows that the computed p value is 0.81. Since $p > 0.05$, that is greater than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. then the null hypothesis is accepted, and it can be said that is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their educational qualification.

H₀5: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their residential.

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Table 6 Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their residential

Residential	N	Mean	Std	t- value	p- value	Remarks at 0.05 level
Days scholar	8	78.250	2.0529	0.66	0.51	NS
Rental House	54	77.593	4.8856			

The above table 6 shows that the computed p value is 0.51. Since $p > 0.05$, that is grater than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. then the null hypothesis is accepted, and it can be said that is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their residential.

H₀6: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their state.

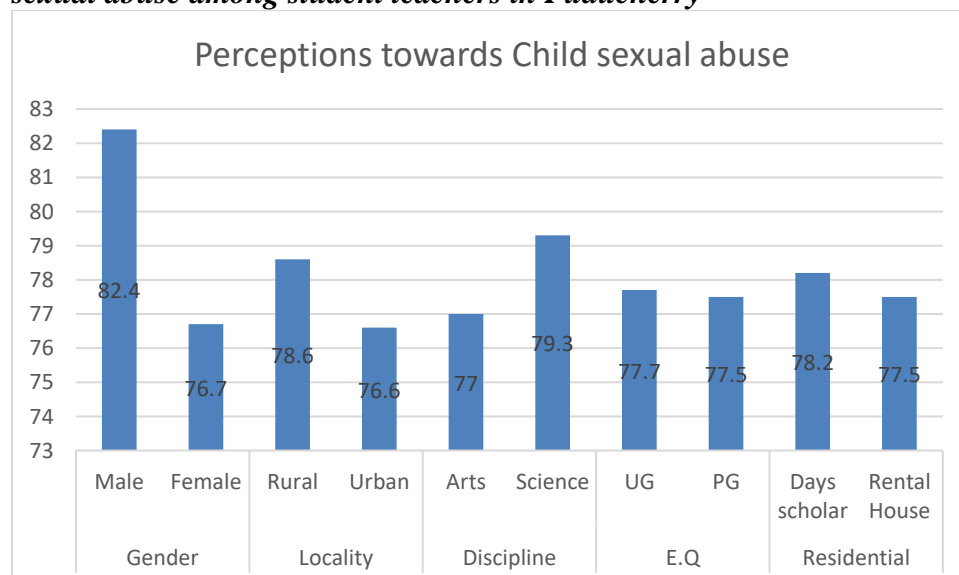
Table 7 Difference in the mean scores of student teachers of perception towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their state

Variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Remarks at 0.05 level
State	Between groups	94.266	2	47.133	2.311	0.108
	Within groups	1203.282	59			
	Total	1297.548	61			

It is inferred from the above table 7 that the calculated F value for the variables Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Anthaman-Nicobar Island were respectively. Hence there is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their state.

Histogram

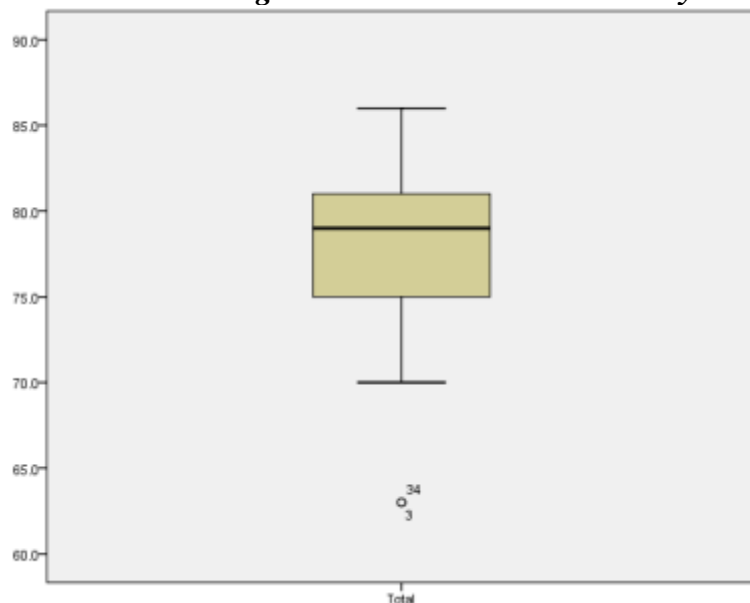
Figure 1 Bar chart representation of distribution of sample the perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers in Puducherry



Note: The above chart describes the demographic variables of gender, locality, state, discipline, educational qualification and residential of student teachers in Puducherry.

Boxplot

Figure 2 Boxplot representation of distribution of sample the perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers in Puducherry



Findings

- There is significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their gender.
- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their locality.
- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their discipline.
- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their educational qualification.
- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their residential.
- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers with respect to their state.

CONCLUSION

Perceptions towards child sexual abuse among student teachers in Puducherry. Child sexual abuse manifests both as contact and noncontact forms. More girls than boys are exposed to most forms of abuse. The student teachers' perceptions about abuse were very clear. Myths and cultural beliefs justified abuse. Thus, based on the results from this study, preventive measures are needed to engage the government in policy changes as well as to enhance community involvement in improving the situation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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