

# Perception of Nurses towards Protection of Children from Abuse

Shyla Ipe Varghese<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Pratiksha Patric<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D Scholar, Mansarovar Global University, Sehore, Madhya Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Ph. D Guide, S S Institute of Nursing Sciences, Bhopal, MP, India

**Abstract:** Any society's greatest investment and primary foundation for development are its children. Children's safety is an essential and vital component of healthcare quality. Nurses are well positioned in hospitals and other healthcare settings to contribute to the protection of children and initiate appropriate measures in the event of identifying child abuse. The aim of the present study was to understand the perception of nurses towards the protection of children from abuse. The study was a descriptive study conducted among 100 nurses from major hospitals in the Kottayam district. The study used a predesigned questionnaire. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results reveal that child protection is a concern for the majority of nurses and all nurses need training on various aspects of child abuse.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, Nurses Perception, Child Protection, Child rights, Child related legislation, identifying child abuse

## 1. Introduction

The greatest investment and primary foundation for development in any society are its children. In the present society, child abuse is one of the most common and difficult psychosocial issues. Thousands of children undergo different types of abuse every day. Even though some children are not targeted as victims of various forms of physical or sexual abuse, they still experience different forms of psychological abuse. Child safety has been broadly conceptualized as the prevention of unnecessary child harm or potential harm (WHO 2017). Protecting children is everybody's responsibility. All nursing staff, including those who primarily work with adults, should be aware of what to do in the event of a violation of child rights. Nurses should be competent to spot signs of child abuse.

Child safety can be practically defined as the pursuit of the reduction and mitigation of unsafe acts within the healthcare system, as well as the use of best practices shown to lead to optimal child outcomes (WHO, 2014). Child safety is a global problem that calls for global solutions. Safety is emphasized as a prime concern in health system performance and quality management (Popay et al., 2014).

Nurses must be knowledgeable about recognizing, reporting, and documenting suspected child abuse in order to safeguard children. Education has been shown to increase provider awareness of the warning signs and symptoms of child abuse as well as their likelihood of reporting suspicions. To develop a solid understanding of this topic, nursing staff must receive ongoing and initial education. Children who have been abused or neglected can be shielded from further harm by skilled nurses (Amy Chihak 2009). Nursing care for the child includes promoting proper growth and development, optimizing mobility and preventing further deformity, maintaining adequate nutrition, increasing family coping, strengthening family support, and educating them about the condition (Ashraf and Choudhary). Child health nurses also need excellent, sensitive communication skills to enable them to care for children in situations that may be

stressful and distressing, to support children and their families and careers, and provide information and advice (Target jogs). Emergency department (ED) nurses can be the first to interact with victims. This poses an urgent and unique opportunity for nurses to identify, support, and refer victims to appropriate agencies. Incorporating relevant training for nurses and other healthcare providers is crucial. (Edmonson et al, 2017)

Legally and ethically, the nurse must assume the role of advocate for the child. All nurses have legal and ethical responsibilities. Paediatric nurses have specific responsibilities as child advocates in the areas of health promotion, violence, abuse, neglect, drug abuse, infant morbidity, and mortality, protection of child rights, and access to care. They also provide complete, clear, concise, understandable, and accurate information concerning treatment and procedures as well as inherent risks provide for privacy and respect, and allow clients/ families to refuse a drug, treatment, test, or procedure. Advocates also need to be careful not to impose their own personal values and standards but to allow the child and family to make autonomous decisions (Dengale, 2017)

Many of the child protection roles identified by nurses, such as supporting families, parenting education, and service development, are clearly within the ambit of contemporary notions of public health, despite the perception of some nurses that there is a clear divide between work in child protection and public health interventions. (Beth Crisp, 2004)

Children can be protected from vulnerable and exploitative situations only if we are aware of the real dangers and issues children face and the legal and policy options available to improve the situation. Understanding the fundamentals of the law and the rights it safeguards is critical. Nurses won't be able to persuade a child, their parents or guardians, or the community to take legal action unless they are aware of the rights and the legal protections available to safeguard children. Pediatric clinic nurses to consider children's rights

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when providing treatment and care (İlknur Yıldız, Fatma Tok Yıldız (2019). It is essential for nurses to have a fundamental understanding of the laws that affect their practice and the ethical guidelines that can be used to resolve dilemmas because nurses caring for children in critical care areas face ethical dilemmas (Ruchika Duggal Choudhary and Koushal Dave (2017), Chihak (2009).

Through a public health approach of prevention and early intervention, nurses can be crucial to global efforts to combat child abuse and neglect. However, there are no international or local guidelines to guide and evaluate the safeguarding practices of nurses. The modified Delphi study sought to achieve consensus regarding the nature and scope of nursing and midwifery practice in Australia's protection of children. The results show that participating nurses and midwives agreed that protecting children is an important part of their work in a variety of child-focused settings (Lauren Lines).

Despite their many responsibilities and experiences in ensuring the safety of children, nurses frequently felt unable to take action. Understanding why nurses feel powerless to advocate for and assist children at risk of abuse or neglect requires additional research. A study conducted in Korea concludes that reporting child abuse has not yet been established as a professional responsibility for Korea's emergency nurses (Lee & Kim 2018). Land and Barclay (2008) in their study found that nurses were criticized for failing to make adequate documentation about child abuse and nurses feared appearing in court.

## 2. Need and Significance of the Study

Nurses are the main group of healthcare providers in the hospital; they are generally closer to children than other clinicians and spend the most time in childcare departments. As they continually oversee, coordinate and provide care, nurses are well-positioned to strengthen the safety net for child care within hazardous hospital environments (Lundy, 2014). There was a lack of consensus among interviewees about the nursing remit in child protection issues, particularly with respect to the extent to which nurses should actively seek to detect cases of child abuse. An emphasis on identification and detection was not easily accepted by many nurses and was perceived by some to be a change from their more traditional role of supporting families, as well as being potentially in conflict with some public health responsibilities (Crisp & Liser, 2004). Children's safety is critically important to nurses. Through their formal and informal interactions with children, nurses can have a significant and positive impact on their lives. In this context, the perception of nurses regarding child protection is significant. The purpose of the current study is to find out the perception of nurses on child protection among nurses in the Kottayam district. For any individual to initiate an action, the individual need to have a proper perception of it, which will lead to the creation of awareness and further action. There has not been any study conducted in Kerala to understand the perception of nurses in child protection.

## Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to find out the perception of nurses on child protection. The study investigates nurses' comprehension of their professional responsibilities regarding child protection as well as the possibility of nurses participating in the protection of children from abuse. The study also assesses the attitude of nurses in professional involvement in child protection issues

## Method of the study

A descriptive survey was carried out to find the nurse's perception of child protection. 100 nurses from the major hospital of the Kottayam district of Kerala participated in the survey. A self-prepared tool that was subjected to validation was used for data collection. The tool was a five-point scale and covered major concepts such as child rights, child protection, reporting mechanism of child abuse, training needs, and legislation related to children. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## 3. Results

The majority of the participants were female (94%). 30% were above 40 yrs., 28% were between 36 to 40, 20% were 31 to 35 12% were between 26 to 30 and 10% were between 21 to 25 years of age. 90% of the participants were married. Regarding the qualification of the participants, the majority (58%) of the participants were B. Sc. Nurses and 26% were M. sc Nurses. 72% of the participants were staff nurses and 24 % of them were wards in charge. The majority (76%) of the participants did not have any training on child protection mechanisms.

Considering all the data, overall, 95% of the participants have a positive perception of child protection. Analyzing each dimension, Ninety-two percent of the participants concur that child protection is a concern for nurses. 94% believe that working with children necessitates an understanding of child rights. Knowledge of child rights is helpful when working with children, according to 96% of participants. All members concur that a nurse must have knowledge of the identification of child abuse. According to 92 percent of respondents, having knowledge of child-related legislation is essential for a nurse. According to 94% of participants, the nurse should know how to report child abuse. 96% of participants say that nurses should know how to create a protective environment for children. All participants agree that nurses need training on various aspects of child abuse. 90% agree that the potential negative effects of not treating child abuse can be devastating and last a lifetime. However, there were few respondents in all dimensions (except for the need for training and identifying child abuse) who do not consider the role of nurses as important in child protection.

## 4. Conclusion

The study outlines the significance of short-term courses and in-service education to equip nurses with current knowledge on child protection. Nursing personnel working in the hospital or community should conduct individual health teaching and group teaching on child protection and prevention of child abuse. When planning and instructing

nursing students, nurse educators should give them opportunities to learn about child abuse and protection of children in the community.

In order to assist nurses in educating mothers in their clinical and community postings, nurse educators should educate their students about child welfare agencies and help lines. With the advancement of technology and the ever-increasing demands for health care. It is the responsibility of the hospital and college administration to provide nurse educators and nurses with opportunities for continuing education on child abuse. The nurses will be able to upgrade their skills and knowledge as a result of this. Nurse administrators play a crucial role in planning and implementing continuing nursing education programs for nursing staff, as well as motivating them to implement programs on child abuse that will benefit the community.

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