

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ASSOCIATED
WITH CHILD ABUSE AMONG THE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN
MALAYSIA**

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CHAPTER I:

THE PRELIMINARIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, all praises be to Allah SWT, the Lord of the universe who has bestowed upon me the strength, health and patience needed for me to complete this research. The completion of this study would not have been possible without the participation and assistance of so many people whose names may not all be enumerated. Their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. I would like to express deep appreciation particularly to the following:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND NOMENCLATURE

| | |
|--------------|--|
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitude and Practice |
| Hopistal USM | Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia |
| MCO | Movement Control Order |
| ECECAQ | Early Chidhood Educator Child Abuse Questionaire |
| CI | Confident Interval |
| SPSS | Statistics Package for Social Services |

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Child abuse is not a new phenomenon. It happens in all over the world. This study aims to measure the level of knowledge, attitude, and practice towards child abuse, and determine the predictive factors associated with knowledge, attitude, and practice among the teachers in Malaysia. With the new understanding on child abuse, this would allow better evaluation and provision of the child abuse law among the school teachers in Malaysia.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted throughout the month of January to February 2022, by enrolling 257 respondents. We utilised a validated questionnaire that was uploaded to Google Forms, a web-based application used to create and edit surveys online. A link to the questionnaire was generated in the form of URL address and QR code, which subsequently was shared via the online platforms such as Whatsapp and Telegram messaging services, Facebook, and Twitter. The questionnaire consists of six parts pertaining to knowledge, attitude and practice regarding child abuse.

Results: A total of 257 school teachers were included in the study. The majority of the respondents were Malay (91.1%), Women (73.9%) and Married (86.4%). Median score for practice was 2 (IQR 4) and for knowledge was 2.5(IQR 1). Marriage, education, gender and higher education level were significantly associated and interdependently variable with knowledge, attitude and practice regarding child abuse with p -value < 0.05 . Male gender has significant associations with poor attitude. Higher education level with male gender were the significant negative predictors for poor knowledge.

Conclusion: The likelihood of poor knowledge, attitude and practice among school teachers in Malaysia may be attributed from the lack of awareness, training and education about child abuse. Teachers' roles as 'reporters' for child abuse cases can be controversial. Improving training model and aggressive education strategies may boost the knowledge, attitude and practice about child abuse among the school teachers in Malaysia.

Key words: Child abuse, knowledge, attitude, practice, school teachers

ABSTRAK

Pengenalan: Penderaan kanak-kanak bukan satu fenomena baru. Penderaan kanak-kanak berlaku di seluruh dunia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat berkaitan pengetahuan, sikap dan praktis berkenaan penderaan kanak-kanak dan seterusnya menentukan faktor-faktor yang berkaitan dengan kurang pelaporan kes penderaan kanak-kanak di Malaysia. Menerusi hasil kajian ini, pemahaman dan pengetahuan mengenai penderaan kanak-kanak dalam kalangan guru sekolah dapat dinilai dan peruntukan undang-undang kanak-kanak kepada guru sekolah dapat dilaksanakan.

Kaedah: Kajian rentas telah dijalankan sepanjang bulan Januari hingga Februari 2022, dengan mendaftarkan 257 responden. Kami menggunakan soal selidik yang disahkan dan dimuat naik ke Google, aplikasi berasaskan web yang digunakan untuk membuat dan mengedit tinjauan dalam talian. Pautan kepada soal selidik telah dihasilkan dalam bentuk alamat URL dan kod QR, yang kemudiannya dikongsi melalui platform dalam talian seperti perkhidmatan pesanan Whatsapp, Telegram, Facebook, dan Twitter. Soal selidik ini mengandungi enam bahagian yang berkaitan dengan pengetahuan, sikap dan amalan berkaitan penderaan kanak-kanak.

Keputusan: Seramai 257 orang guru sekolah telah menyertai kajian ini. Majoriti responden adalah Melayu (91.1%), Wanita (73.9%) dan berkahwin (86.4%). Skor median untuk latihan ialah 2 (IQR 4) dan untuk pengetahuan ialah 2.5 (IQR 1). Perkahwinan, pendidikan, jantina dan peringkat pendidikan tinggi guru dikaitkan secara signifikan dengan pengetahuan, sikap dan amalan mengenai penderaan kanak-kanak ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Jantina mempunyai perkaitan yang ketara dengan sikap buruk dan amalan terhadap penderaaan kanak kanak. Tahap pendidikan yang tinggi dan jantina lelaki merupakan indikasi yang signifikan terhadap pengetahuan yang lemah berkaitan penderaan kanak kanak.

Kesimpulan: Kemungkinan sikap dan pengetahuan yang lemah dalam kalangan guru sekolah di Malaysia mungkin disebabkan oleh kurangnya kesedaran, latihan dan pendidikan tentang

penderaan kanak-kanak dan kurangnya pengetahuan tentang peranan guru sebagai medium pelaporan kes.

Kata kunci: Penderaan kanak-kanak, pengetahuan, sikap, amalan, guru sekolah

CHAPTER II:

THE TEXT

Section A:

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is not a new phenomenon. It happens in all over the world. From the national statistics, child abuse prevalence has been on the rise despite various efforts to curb it by the Malaysia government. Serious preventive measures have to be taken to protect the victims and prevent the abuse from recurring. Research commissioned by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2015 stated that child maltreatment had contributed to the economic burden of many countries in East Asia and Pacific region, costing approximately USD 209 billion per year.¹ Based on published data by the Social Welfare Department of Malaysia, child abuse and neglect cases has been steadily increasing over the years from 934 reported cases in 2000 to 4982 cases in 2016.²

Despite this alarming trend, a systematic review published by UNICEF in 2012 had shown that scientific research on child maltreatment were limited, and Malaysia was reported to possess minimal basic data and qualitative study on child maltreatment³. It is difficult to define child abuse with precision due to unavailability of universal meaning based on a broadly acceptable value. Some forms of neglect may not be considered as child abuse in certain community, but others may regard it as an abuse. Under the *Child Act 2001*, “child abuse” is defined as when the child has been or is at substantial risk of being physically or emotionally injured or sexually abused or neglected in terms of adequate care, food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, supervision and safety, or abandonment or others such as being on the street or used for begging by the parents or persons in charge of the child at any one time⁴.

The World Health Organization defines child abuse as all forms of abuse whether physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, abuse, maltreatment or exploitation which may cause injury or damage to the health, life, development or dignity of the child done by those who have the

responsibility, trust or authority over the child. At times, there is a need to differentiate between abuse and the rights of the parents to discipline their child. The parents have the rights to discipline their children as long as it is done within the reasonable manner, in moderation without causing harm physically, emotionally and, without cruelty. From the health perspective, child abuse constitutes all forms of physical abuse and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm, to the child's health, survival, developmental or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power⁵.

Malaysia is a developing nation with a population of more than 32.7 million in 2021 as compared to 32.6 million in 2020 with annual population growth rate of 0.2%. The percentage of the population aged 0-14 years (young age) consisted of 23% of total population which Bumiputera composition are 69.8%, Chinese 22.4%, Indian and others remained at 6.8% and 1% respectively (Department of Statistics Malaysia 15 July 2021). Despite recent increasing in the prevalence studies and the revelation of all forms of maltreatment for children in Malaysia, both occurring within their homes and at school, no mandatory reporting laws existed for teachers in Malaysia⁶.

Medical doctors, family members and childcare providers however, are subjected to provisions in the Child Act 2001 (Act 611, Part V, Chapter 2, Section 27-29) requiring them to report physically or emotionally injured as a result of being ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, or sexually abused, to the social welfare officers or police⁷.

Extending these provisions include teachers, arguably the professional groups who have the most contact with children were discussed publicly. This context makes the current study

important, timely and relevant. In addition, data from official child protection agency in Malaysia reveals that school personnel are the least common reporter of these events⁸. There were marked discrepancies when comparing reporting rates in countries which possessed mandatory reporting for teachers such as in United States of America and Australia compared to the developing nations⁹.

In these countries, school personnel are the second most common reporters contributing to approximately one quarter of their child abuse report. A well functioned child protection system requires teachers to be equipped with knowledge and actively played their roles as informer, other than health care providers and the social services, including holding positive understanding and attitudes toward reporting the abuse cases.

Understanding the Malaysia teacher's current knowledge, attitude and practice towards child abuse reporting are one of the crucial steps towards undertaking broader strategies such raising awareness, advocacy for legislative change and the adoption of teachers' training for child protection. Clearly, the local studies are needed to evaluate the differences of cultural practice thus obtaining important perspectives on the similarities and differences with respect to child maltreatment reporting attitudes and behaviours.

This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitude and practice toward child abuse, and determine the factors associated with under reporting of child abuse cases among the teachers in Malaysia. With this study, it is hoped a new understanding of child abuse among school teachers can be evaluated and the provision of the child law to the school teachers can be exercised.

2.1 Section B: Study Protocol

2.2.1 Documents

submitted for

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Dissertation Proposal



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KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD ABUSE AMONG THE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA

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**RESEARCH TITLE : KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ASSOCIATED
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INTRODUCTION

Child abuse and neglect including violent disciplining practices are widespread social and health problem. Research have shown that abuse and neglect often begun at the early age of the child. The consequences of abuse and neglect at that early age can be difficult, long lasting and the death of child is also possible (UNICEF 2010). Child discipline is integral part of child nurturing in all cultures. Child discipline is a foundation in children in gaining self-esteem and acceptable behaviour in the society.

Although the need for child discipline is broadly recognized, there is considerable debate regarding violent physical and psychological disciplinary practices. These will give negative impact on children's mental and social development. The United Nation's Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 main goal regarding child abuse is for

reduction of cases and proper intervention and prevention child abuse cases worldwide.

Despite growing awareness and development of knowledge in this area, studies conducted in many countries revealed professionals were feeling considerably less educated and competent in recognizing, assessing and reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect in children. Parents have the right to raise their children as they see fit. The society presumes that parents will act in their children's best interest for the safety and social well-being of their children.

When the parents do not protect their children from harm or meet basic needs, the society has a responsibility to intervene to protect the health and welfare of these children. Any intervention into family life on behalf of children must be guided by federal laws, professional standards for practice and strong philosophical underpinnings. Children spend a large portion of their time in school, which gives teachers more access to students/pupils than most other professionals. They played a vital role in identifying, reporting and preventing child abuse and neglect due to

- their close and consistent contact with children
- their professional standards and legally mandated responsibilities for reporting suspected cases of abuse
- their unique opportunity to advocate for children, as well as provide programmes and services that can help children and strengthen families

PROBLEM STATEMENT & STUDY RATIONALE

- In Malaysia, nearly 5,000 children were reported to be in need of protection from abuse in 2016 alone
- Most cases of child abuse in Malaysia are under reported due to lack of awareness in identifying and recognizing the problem
- There is no similar study conducted in Malaysia even though there are many studies that have been carried out outside Malaysia
- This study is designed to explore the aspects related to knowledge, attitudes, belief, practices, normative expectations, reference networks and source of information among the teachers regarding child abuse

RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

- 1) To assess adequacy of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) on child abuse among school teacher in Malaysia
- 2) To assess the understanding regarding Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on child abuse among school teachers in Malaysia

OBJECTIVES

1.1 GENERAL:

To study the knowledge, attitude, practice and social norms among school teachers in Malaysia regarding child abuse

1.2 SPECIFIC:

1. To describe and determine the associated factors related to knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) on child abuse among school teachers in Malaysia

HYPOTHESIS:

1. Null hypothesis: Knowledge, attitude and practices towards child abuse among teachers in Malaysia are inadequate in recognizing, suspecting and reporting child abuse
2. Alternative hypothesis: Knowledge, attitude and practices towards child abuse among teachers in Malaysia are adequate in recognizing, suspecting and reporting child abuse

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Reporting Attitude Scale (TRAS): Confirmatory and Exploratory Factor Analyses using Malaysian sample was conducted in 2013 for 667 teachers in 14 randomly selected school in Selangor state. It was cross sectional descriptive study. The study showed that teachers had positive attitude towards reporting child abuse ($M = 8.02$, $SD = 1.29$). Significant disparities were identified between teachers' years of experience and their attitudes toward reporting child abuse. The study provided much needed insights into the nature and complexity of teachers' attitudes to reporting child abuse in Malaysia.

A study on the perceived social norms, expectations, and attitudes towards corporal punishment among an urban community sample of parents was carried out between the years of 2008 and 2009 and involved 400,000 participants in the southern metropolitan area of New York City between the months of December 2008 and February 2009. It was a stratified random digital dial telephone survey. The study showed that perceived injunctive and descriptive norms

regarding corporal punishment and expected outcomes were strong predictors of parents' attitude towards corporal punishment use. In conclusion, the study shows that the most common community level efforts to date to shift attitudes and reduce corporal punishment use is to involve national or schoolwide bans on corporal punishment.

Teachers' attitudes regarding child abuse and their understanding of child maltreatment are the subject of a cross-sectional survey study. The study involved 200 teachers from largest school districts in United States, Miami- Dade county. The study showed 25% of the teacher made at least one report and about 34% of them reported child abuse covered in pre-service training. There were 37% of them reported on the adequacy of training and knowledge of child maltreatment at professional level. The study concluded that more qualified the educators, the less awareness of child abuse in the society. It also demonstrated that lack of knowledge was seen among the teachers regarding identification of child maltreatment and reporting procedures.

Another study regarding knowledge of child abuse and reporting practices among early care and education providers (ECE) was done in October 2015. The cross-sectional study (survey by design) involved 173 ECE providers in state of Florida and the study showed 12% of provider made a report of child abuse to child protective services. Of those 66.7% of them who have made report, only one report was related to child abuse. There were 19% of them agreed that parents had the right to discipline in whatever manner it fit, while 16% from the survey were undecided. The findings of the study lead the researchers to the conclusion that an individual's perception of their level of knowledge regarding the signs and symptoms of child abuse is not necessarily reflective of their actual knowledge of abusive behaviours and the procedures for reporting them.

Another cross-sectional survey was designed to study about child abuse reporting related to teachers' perceived deterrents. The study which involved 197 teachers from large, urban, diverse, city in the southeast of Florida. The result from this study showed 73% of participants had never made report of child abuse, while 11% of this group of teachers believed that in the cases of abuse that had occurred, many failed to report. They felt pre and post service training did not adequately prepare them for child abuse reporting. The study demonstrated the obvious needs for more educations among the school teachers to address their perceived deterrents and aid them to feeling confident in of child abuse reports.

Another study on corporal punishment of children explored the discipline or abuse definition. This was conducted among 153 paediatricians in Lebanon at 12th Annual Congress of Lebanese Pediatric Society and North Lebanon Pediatric Society. It was cross sectional descriptive study with less than 50% and 60% of paediatricians knew the effects of physical punishment on the physical and psychic health of a child, respectively. More than two-third (76.2%) of them advise on the abandonment of corporal punishment, while 4.7% of them advocated for the use of discipline in children.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

