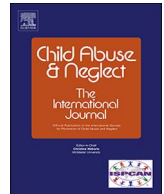




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Child Abuse & Neglect

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/chiabuneg

Research article

Mothers' knowledge & perception about child sexual abuse in Jordan

Fatmeh Ahmad Alzoubi^{a,*}, Reem Ahmad Ali^a, Intesar Hussein Flah^b, Ahlam Alnatour^a^a Faculty of Nursing, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan^b Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Childhood sexual abuse
 Mother's knowledge
 Mother's perception
 Prevention
 Education
 Health
 Child protection

ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious problem causing physical, social and psychosocial harm. To understand the Jordanian mothers' efforts to prevent CSA, we assessed the mothers' general knowledge about CSA, their perceptions, knowledge about signs and symptoms of CSA and their knowledge about prevention practices of CSA in relation to their demographics. A cross-sectional descriptive design was used with a convenient sample of 488 mothers. The data was collected using a self-reported questionnaire consisting of 52 items. Descriptive and parametric and non-parametric statistical procedures were employed. Almost all mothers in the study were Muslim and married. Half of the mothers had post-secondary education and only 36% were employed. The study revealed that the majority of mothers were knowledgeable about CSA and its prevention practices. Though only 17% of mothers had started practicing some of the CSA preventive measures when their children were young (1–4 years of age) and less than half (48.8%) had started when their children were 4–6 years of age. Three quarters (74%) of the mothers indicated that educating children about CSA can prevent it. Only 37.7% knew about laws regarding CSA in Jordan and less than half of mothers knew about social organizations that provide services for children who suffered from sexual abuse. Mothers who had a high income or a high level of education or were employed had a higher awareness of CSA and recognized signs and symptoms of CSA more than other mothers.

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious problem causing physical and psychosocial harm. CSA is defined by WHO as “involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO, 2006, p. 10). Child sexual abuse leads to negative short term and long-term consequences that affect children's lives physically, psychologically, socially, and developmentally. The abused children are suffering from depression, panic disorder, and anxiety (Draper et al., 2008; Haileye, 2013), aggressiveness, suicidal thought, eating disorder, sexual behavior dysfunction, defensive avoidance, and social isolation that may persist into adulthood (American Psychological Association, 2014; Jemal, 2012; Swea, Gordana & Dragana, 2013).

Child sexual abuse is a taboo in a majority of Muslim communities including Jordan (Btoush, 2007; Elayyan, 2007). In most cases, Muslim parents will minimally discuss sex related issues with their children. In some cases, parents ask their children to withdraw themselves from sex education or TV programs that discuss sexual issues (Clark, 2005). Parents believe that exposing their children to

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: faalzoubi@just.edu.jo, fatimazoubi@yahoo.com (F.A. Alzoubi), raali@just.edu.jo (R.A. Ali), ihflah12@nur.just.edu.jo (I.H. Flah), asalnatur@just.edu.jo (A. Alnatour).<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.06.006>Received 2 December 2016; Received in revised form 5 May 2017; Accepted 1 June 2017
0145-2134/© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

sex education may trigger them to practice sex at an earlier stage and to draw their attention to sexuality issues. As a result, children in Jordan do not have sufficient knowledge about CSA and do not have the confidence to disclose any sexual abuse they experience because of social stigma (Elayyan, 2007). In a number of cases, the perpetrator is either a family member or a close friend; making disclosure even harder. Children are often not believed in case of disclosure unless there is clear evidence. Consequently, the child will suffer significant physical and psychological harm (Btoush, 2007).

In Jordan, there are mothers who leave children unattended in play areas and even on streets. Children from the age of 4 are allowed to go near markets and shops to buy groceries, exposing them to the risk of CSA. In addition, some mothers don't closely monitor what their children do and see on different media sources (TV, tabs, cellphones, internet). The issue of child neglect is not well researched in Jordan, and the annual reported incidence of child neglect has remained low. This is not surprising as the concept of neglect is not easily understood. Therefore, this is an area where mothers could make a change in their children's lives. Increasing mothers' awareness of CSA prevention could protect children and ensure their safety.

In the Jordanian culture, the children who were exposed to sexual abuse and their families felt ashamed and humiliated, especially those who were raped, and this feeling tends to be stronger if the victim was a girl. Moreover, the girls who were exposed to sexual abuse during childhood are rarely getting married in the future (Ratrou, 2002). In the Jordanian culture, which is strongly concerned with honor issues, an incident of CSA is considered a violation of family honor. Therefore, the affected family could avoid social interaction until they restore the honor of their family and punish the abuser or keep silent to avoid the social stigma (Abu Farah, 2015).

The Jordanian Penal Code provides protection of children from abuse and exploitation. It also applies penalties to parents or legal guardians who neglect or harm children (National Council Family Affairs, 2004; Ratrou, 2002). The legal system is quite vigilant in cases of sexual abuse, and the death penalty is applicable to the rapist of a girl younger than 15 years. In cases of sexual intercourse with a female without her consent, whether by deception, intimidation or ruse, the male perpetrator gets at least 10 years of imprisonment with temporary hard labor according to the Penal Code 9/1961 (Abu Farah, 2015). However there has to be clear physical evidence to prove the incident, therefore CSA is still a serious problem in the Jordanians society.

In Jordan, responses of CSA may take different levels. Parents could report the incident to the Family Protection Directorate if the abuse is occurred within the family and if not, the incident could be reported to the police. In addition, parents may contact their pediatrician or family doctor to evaluate and treat sexual abuse and to find out how the sexual abuse has affected children physically and psychologically. At the community level, schools should report the case to the "Family Protection Directorate" and to the parents. In severe cases with clear evidence such as rape, police will be reported. The literature in Jordan reveals limited access to and inadequate services which make it difficult for rape and sexual violence survivors to overcome the trauma. Therefore, children continue to suffer for years as the trauma is not well addressed at the early stage. Psychological support and counselling remain challenging (Elayyan, 2007; Shotar, Alzyoud, Oweis, Alhawamdeh, & Khoshnood, 2015)

The prevalence studies of CSA in Arab countries were limited due to social stigma and the cultural sensitivity of this issue to Arabic families. In Bahrain, a retrospective study conducted from 2000 to 2009, revealed that there was an increase in incidents of CSA from 33 cases in 2000 to 77 cases in 2009 (Al-Amer, 2011). In Egypt, a study among 450 college students found that 37.8% of females and 21.2% of males experienced CSA during childhood (Aboul-Hagag & Hamed, 2011). Another study in Lebanon revealed that 16.1% of children were exposed at least to one form of child sexual abuse (Usta, Mahfoud, Chahine, & Anani, 2008). According to a study that was conducted by UNICEF Jordan on "Violence against Children in Jordan"; (Elayyan, 2007) it was found that 50% of children are physically abused by family members and school teachers and administrators, while around one third are physically abused by neighborhood adults and children. With regards to sexual abuse, 2 to 7 children out of every 100 are sexually abused by family members and schools teachers and administrators. In addition, another cross sectional study was conducted among 1400 Jordanian university students revealed that 53.9% of university students were exposed to sexual abuse during their childhood (Shennaq, 2011).

A number of studies investigated parental knowledge about CSA prevention (Chen & Chen, 2005; Chen, Dunne, & Han, 2007; Igor & Fawole, 2011; Mathoma, Maripe-Perera, Khumalo, Mbayi, & Seloiwe, 2006; Pullins & Jones, 2006). These studies indicated that mothers' definitions of CSA were limited to rape and they were ignorant about other forms of CSA such as touching and kissing (Chen & Chen, 2005; Ige & Fawole, 2011; Mathoma et al., 2006). This limitation and confusion about the definition of CSA leads mothers to inappropriately respond to sexual abuse. They tend to focus on "rape" during their prevention education, and to underestimate other types of abuse. Thus, the child could be sexually abused within mild and moderate types without their mothers' awareness.

Inconsistencies were also found in parents' knowledge about signs and symptoms of CSA (Chen & Chen, 2005; Chen et al., 2007; Hebert et al., 2002; Mathoma et al., 2006). While some parents reported that they could recognize to some degree both physical and some behavioral signs of CSA (Ige & Fawole, 2011), others were unable to recognize them. A cross sectional study including 150 parents (87% were mothers), reported a lack of parental knowledge about emotional and behavioral signs and symptoms of CSA (Pullins & Jones, 2006).

Mothers can play an important role in CSA prevention through monitoring, reduction of risk factors, guidance, and education about prevention strategies. Many studies indicate that mothers could provide their children with warnings, teaching about dangerous situations, and how to handle the incidents of CSA (Chen & Chen, 2005; Chen et al., 2007; Collins, 1994; Ige & Fawole, 2011; Okoroafor & Clara, 2012; Walsh & Brandon, 2012; Walsh, Brandon, & Chirio, 2012; Walsh, Cross, & Jones, 2012). It is well documented that mothers who have enough knowledge about CSA, effectively discuss safety measures with their children and therefore improve the children's self-protection skills (Zhang et al., 2013), contrary to the mothers who don't have this knowledge. In Jordan, there is lack of information about the knowledge of Jordanian mothers about prevention practices and education related to CSA. Also

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6832145>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6832145>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)