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## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse or neglect is an important social and public problem<sup>1</sup>. Research on the perception of child abuse by different professionals including dentists, pediatricists and pediatric registrars have suggested a number of barriers to reporting suspicions of child abuse<sup>2</sup>. Although the views of professionals about child abuse are important to reduce the negative effects of abuse on children's wellbeing, the views of young adults are equally important to prevent child abuse. However, as far as the authors are aware, there is no study which examined the views of young adults about child abuse and neglect. Therefore, the main aim of the present study was to understand the views of university students who participated in a program (Youth Disseminating Life Skills Program) about child abuse by adopting a qualitative methodology.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample included 10 female and 3 male university students, 13 in total (mean age 22 years; age range: 20-31) who took part in the Youth Disseminating Life Skills Program. This program was a 12-week training that targeted child protection, and prevention of child abuse and neglect. Exclusion criteria consisted of being deaf and unable to speak.

### Procedure

Each focus group meeting lasted for 60-90 min during which an interview guide was used. Participants recounted their views about child abuse.

### Data Collection

Three focus group meetings were undertaken. The general interview guide approach was used.

### Data Analysis

Grounded Theory formed the basis of the present study.<sup>3</sup> Not only coherence and theoretical validity but also catalytic validity formed the basis of the trustworthiness of the analysis.<sup>4</sup>

## FINDINGS

Participants' views included nature and causes of, feelings towards child abuse, ways to prevent child abuse and barriers to prevention of child abuse.

Participants recounted that child abuse is a notion that is (2) *covered up*, hidden, misrepresented in the media, difficult to face up and that needs to be kept away. The descriptions of these views have included a number of predominant feelings including feeling guilt and disturbed. However, other participants felt that child abuse is something that is not covered up or hidden anymore and that needs to be faced up to avoid trauma. Participants also recounted that child abuse is experienced frequently across different backgrounds of the (4) *society, not only in the rural areas but in the cities, highest social background and in the lowest social background*. Participants perceived child abuse as (11) *a moral problem*.

A number of causes for child abuse were recounted. Some causes involved demographic factors. Other causes were more psychosocial in nature. Child abuse was perceived as a learned response transmitted from generation to generation. This was described idiosyncratically by participant number 9: *I mean while bringing up the next generation they applied what they saw from their parents. ... This is being passed on from generation to generation because child sees it happening in the family*.

Child abuse was also considered as a way of (3) *discharging anger*, getting pleasure and feeling happy.

Participants experienced a number of negative feelings in relation to child abuse. These included not only feeling bad, horrified, pity but also feeling (2) *helpless*, (7) *hurt*, (9) *sad*, and feeling angry as described by the participant (4) *This helplessness turns into anger too from time to time*.

Most ways to prevent child abuse were positive in nature. These included thinking (3) *broad*, in particular, by attracting the state's attention through (3) *a march*, (3) *social media*, organising campaigns, or events such as (3) *Honor Parade*, helping towards developing new 3 *legislation*, and opening (3) *a centre*, which necessitates (3) *sacrifice* and (3) *budget*. Other ways of preventing child abuse included raising awareness, guiding people, in particular through (9) *an internet site or a blog kind of thing*, training other professionals including (11) *teachers, doctors and even police officers* and using teachers as role models.

Some barriers to preventing child abuse involved emotional barriers. These included not only feeling (10) *threatened*, guilty for possible misinterpretation, (4) *turning completely a blind eye*, and inflicting secondary trauma. Feeling frightened and being in denial were also reported as barriers. In addition to (5) *people's perception*, (10) *prejudices*, (1) *parent's discipline style*, (4) *giving up*, (2) *conflict of interest*, (8) *legal barriers*, patriarchal family structure and forming cliques, labelling people, inexperienced managers, the use of jargon and insensitive words were also mentioned as barriers.

## DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the value of adopting a qualitative methodology to the understanding of child abuse. In general, qualitative analysis revealed important information whereby child abuse was perceived which provide an evidence base for community initiatives to understand child abuse. Community initiatives aiming at raising awareness need to include a number of findings as targets. These include the views that child abuse is covered up, hidden, misrepresented in the media, intergenerational transmission, discharging anger and getting pleasure from controlling the situation and feeling happy as causes for child abuse, negative feelings towards child abuse, ways of preventing child abuse and emotional barriers to preventing child abuse.

## REFERENCES

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