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A STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE ON SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG SCHOOL TEACHERS AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract:

Introduction: Schools serve as critical environments for identifying and addressing mental health issues among students, making it imperative for educators to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to intervene effectively. This introduction aims to explore the importance of suicide prevention training for school teachers, the challenges they face, and the potential impact of such training on student outcomes. The aim of the study is to assess the knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers at selected schools in Chennai. **Methodology:** A quantitative, descriptive research design was employed to evaluate suicide prevention knowledge among higher secondary school teachers in selected Chennai schools. The study utilized non-probability purposive sampling to gather data from 65 teachers who met the inclusion criteria of currently teaching grades 11-12 and having not attended recent suicide prevention training. **Result and Findings:** The study found that 62.5% of first-year B.Sc. Nursing students had inadequate knowledge, 28.75% had moderately adequate knowledge, and 8.75% had adequate knowledge on preventing nosocomial infections. In terms of practice, 57.5% had inadequate practice, 26.25% had moderately adequate practice, and 16.25% had adequate practice. **Conclusion:** The study highlights the critical role school teachers have in suicide prevention but also exposes a significant gap in their knowledge and preparedness to address this issue effectively.

Keywords: Suicide prevention, Knowledge, School teachers

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INTRODUCTION:

Schools serve as critical environments for identifying and addressing mental health issues among students, making it imperative for educators to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to intervene effectively.

Research indicates that school-based suicide prevention programs can significantly decline in suicidal ideas and attempts among students. A review of various interventions revealed that programs emphasizing mental health literacy and skills training have led to notable reductions in suicide-related behaviors among adolescents Platt & Niederkrotenthaler (2020). These findings underscore the necessity for educators to receive comprehensive training that not only enhances their understanding of suicide risk factors but also equips them with practical intervention strategies. For instance, the HEYLiFE program demonstrated positive effects on help-seeking behaviors and risk factors associated with suicide, reinforcing the value of curriculum-based prevention initiatives in schools (Grosselli et al., 2024).

A study highlighted that a significant number of educators lack formal training in suicide prevention, which contributes to their anxiety and uncertainty when faced with such critical situations (Bevilacqua, 2023). This gap in training can hinder teachers' ability to recognize warning signs and provide appropriate support, ultimately affecting the mental health outcomes of their students. Therefore, it is essential to integrate suicide prevention training into teacher professional development programs, ensuring that educators are equipped to respond effectively to the needs of at-risk students (Mehra et al., 2022).

Tailoring training programs to reflect the unique needs and backgrounds of students can enhance the relevance and impact of these initiatives. For example, culturally sensitive approaches that incorporate local resources and practices have been shown to improve the effectiveness of suicide prevention strategies (Lee et al., 2023).

Moreover, ongoing support and resources are crucial for sustaining the knowledge and skills acquired through training. Continuous professional development opportunities, peer support networks, and access to mental health resources can help educators maintain their competence in suicide prevention (Mehra et al., 2022). This holistic approach not only benefits teachers but also contributes to a more resilient school community capable of addressing the mental health needs of students effectively. The study aimed to assess the knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers at selected schools in Chennai.

METHODOLOGY:

A quantitative, descriptive research design was employed to evaluate suicide prevention knowledge among higher secondary school teachers in selected Chennai schools. The study utilized non-probability purposive sampling to gather data from 65 teachers who met the inclusion criteria of currently teaching grades 11-12 and having not attended recent suicide prevention training. The primary tool was a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic data and 25 multiple-choice questions on suicide prevention knowledge. Ethical

clearance and informed consent were obtained to ensure participant confidentiality. Data collection was conducted over a week, with subsequent analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics to correlate teachers' knowledge with demographic variables.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Demographic variables of the school teachers.

S.NO	Demographic Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	**Age in years**		
a)	25 – 30	15	23.1
b)	31 – 35	12	18.5
c)	36 – 40	16	24.6
d)	41 – 45	22	33.8
2.	**Gender**		
a)	Female	29	44.6
b)	Male	36	55.4
3.	**Qualification**		
a)	Graduate	3	4.6
b)	Post graduate	59	90.8
c)	Doctorate	2	3.1
d)	Others	1	1.5
4.	**Religion**		
a)	Hindu	51	78.5
b)	Christian	12	18.4
c)	Muslim	2	3.1
d)	Others	0	0
5.	**Marital status**		
a)	Single	12	18.4
b)	Married	49	75.3

c)	Divorced	0	0
d)	Widower	4	6.1
6.	**Type of family**		
a)	Nuclear	42	64.6
b)	Joint	23	35.4
7.	**Teaching stream**		
a)	Science	27	41.5
b)	Computer	5	7.7
c)	Commerce	8	12.3
d)	Art or others	25	38.5
8.	**Job experience as school teacher**		
a)	Less than 1 year	4	6.2
b)	1 to 5 years	14	21.5
c)	5 to 10 years	9	13.8
d)	More than 10 years	38	58.5
9.	**Attended suicide prevention training within 2 years**		
a)	Yes	4	6.2
b)	No	61	93.8
10.	**Sources of information regarding suicide prevention**		
a)	Mass media	34	52.3
b)	Health professionals	1	1.5
c)	Friends and relatives	15	23.1
d)	Others	15	23.1
11.	**Any previous experience of handling any suicide cases**		
a)	Yes	7	10.8
b)	No	58	89.2

Table 1 reveals the demographic distribution of the school teachers surveyed: 33.8% (22 teachers) were aged between 41-45 years; 55.4% (36 teachers) were female; 90.8% (59 teachers) held postgraduate degrees; 78.5% (51 teachers) identified as Hindu; 75.3% (49 teachers) were married; 64.6% (42 teachers) came from nuclear families; 41.5% (27 teachers) taught science; 58.5% (38 teachers) had over ten years of teaching experience; 93.8% (61 teachers) had not attended suicide prevention training in the last two years; 52.3% (34 teachers) sourced their suicide prevention information through mass media; and 89.2% (58 teachers) had no prior experience handling suicide cases.

Table 2: Knowledge level on suicide prevention among school teachers.

Level of Knowledge	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Inadequate (0 – 10)	42	64.6
Moderately Adequate (11 – 15)	23	35.4
Adequate (16 – 20)	-	-

The table 2 shows that 42(64.6%) had inadequate knowledge and 23(35.4%) had moderately adequate knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers.

Table 3: Assessment of mean and standard deviation of knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers

Knowledge	Score
Mean	8.96
S.D	2.63
Mean%	44.8%
Median	9.0
Minimum	4.0
Maximum	14.0

The table 3 depicts that the mean score of knowledge was 8.96±2.63. The median score of knowledge was 9.0. The mean% was 44.8 with minimum score of 4.0 and maximum score of 14.0.

Table 4: Association of level of knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers with selected demographic variables.

S.NO	Demographic Variables	Inadequate Knowledge	Moderate Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Frequency (n)	Chi- Square Test & p-value
1.	**Age in years**					χ^2=4.38 6 d.f=3 p=0.223 N. S
a)	25 – 30	2	13	0	15	
b)	31 – 35	6	6	0	12	
c)	36 – 40	6	10	0	16	
d)	41 – 45	7	15	0	22	
2.	**Gender**					χ^2=0.43 3 d.f=1 p=0.510 N.S
a)	Male	11	18	0	29	
b)	Female	10	26	0	36	
3.	**Qualification**					χ^2=4.26 2 d.f=3 p=0.234 N.S
a)	Graduate	0	3	0	3	
b)	Post graduate	20	39	0	59	
c)	Doctorate	1	1	0	2	
d)	Others	0	1	0	1	
4.	**Religion**					χ^2=1.19 5 d.f=2 p=0.550 N.S
a)	Hindu	16	35	0	51	
b)	Christian	4	8	0	12	
c)	Muslim	1	1	0	2	
d)	Others	0	0	0	0	
5.	**Marital status**					χ^2=1.38 1 d.f=2 p=0.501 N.S
a)	Single	7	5	0	12	
b)	Married	23	26	0	49	
c)	Divorced	0	0	0	0	
d)	Widower	1	3	0	4	
6.	**Type of family**					χ^2=2.89 9 d.f=1 p=0.089 N.S
a)	Nuclear	11	31	0	42	
		10	13	0	23	
b)	Joint					
7.	**Teaching stream**					χ^2=8.34 5 d.f=3 p=0.039 S*
a)	Science	9	18	0	27	
b)	Computer	1	4	0	5	
c)	Commerce	1	7	0	8	
d)	Art or others	10	15	0	25	

8.	**Job experience as school teacher**					
a)	Less than 1	0	4	0	4	χ^2=2.60 4 d.f=3 p=0.457 N.S
	year					
b)	1 to 5 years	2	12	0	14	
c)	5 to 10 years	4	5	0	9	
d)	More than 10	15	23	0	38	
	years					
9.	**Attended suicide prevention training within 2 years**					χ^2=0.20 1 d.f=1 p=0.654 N.S
a)	Yes	3	1	0	4	
b)	No	18	43	0	61	
10.	**Sources of information regarding suicide prevention**					χ^2=1.57 3 d.f=3 p=0.666 N.S
a)	Mass media	13	21	0	34	
b)	Health professionals	0	1	0	1	
c)	Friends and relatives	2	13	0	15	
d)	Others	6	9	0	15	
11.	**Any previous experience of handling any suicide cases**					χ^2=1.52 7 d.f=1 p=0.217 N.S
a)	Yes	3	4	0	7	
b)	No	18	40	0	58	

***p<0.05, S – Significant, N.S – Not Significant**

Table 4 indicates that the demographic variable "teaching stream" (χ^2 = 8.345, p = 0.039) demonstrated a statistically significant association with the level of knowledge on suicide prevention among school teachers at the $p < 0.05$ level.

DISCUSSION

The study results show that a significant portion of school teachers, specifically those aged 41-45, lacked adequate knowledge about suicide prevention, with 64.6% displaying inadequate levels of understanding. The average knowledge score among teachers was 8.96 out of a possible 20 points, indicating a gap in awareness and training. The only demographic variable significantly associated with knowledge levels was the teaching stream, which suggests that teachers in certain subjects might have different levels of awareness about suicide prevention. This highlights the need for targeted educational programs to address these gaps and improve overall knowledge and preparedness among teachers.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the critical role school teachers have in suicide prevention but also exposes a significant gap in their knowledge and preparedness to address this issue effectively. Teachers interact closely with students, positioning them to spot early signs of distress and intervene. Yet, the findings indicate that many lack the training and resources required for this crucial role. Therefore, it is essential for school authorities to organize workshops and conferences to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for preventing and managing suicide.

RECOMMENDATION

- A similar study can be conducted with a larger sample to generalize the findings.
- A comparative study can be conducted in schools, and a pre-experimental study can be done using a structured teaching program to assess suicide prevention knowledge among school teachers.

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