The Impact and Understanding Childhood Abuse and Neglect

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Abstract

This study was conducted to analyze the difference between the public's level of knowledge regarding child abuse cases based on the analysis of the respondents' demographic background and the level of knowledge in the child abuse cases that are increasingly widespread. The methodology of this research is quantitative. Questionnaires were distributed to 50 respondents from the community currently living in Terengganu, Malaysia. The findings were further analyzed by t-test, ANOVA, correlation and multiple regression using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme version 23. The data showed that the value obtained was not significant when the null hypothesis was rejected as there was no difference between the level of public knowledge with the respondent's demographic details such as gender, ages and academic qualification. The next findings showed that the four predicting factors were related with the level of public knowledge regarding child abuse in the community. Household crisis was the most dominant factor in influencing the level of public knowledge regarding child abuse when the beta value was 0.24 at a significant level of 0.00. In general, the child abuse issue should be given attention by all parties regardless of age. This is because child abuse cases were surely becoming widespread if there were no actions and cooperation from all parties to handle this problem.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Level of Public Knowledge, Occurrences of Child Abuse

Introduction

Every child has the right to live a free and healthy life from violence. However nowadays, we can see that child abuse cases risen exponentially day by day as more issues and incidents occured to children. This can be proved through Dr. Irene Cheah Report, 2012 in the official Portal of MyHEALTH Ministry of Health Malaysia which reported that every year, at least 2,000 children in Malaysia were victims of abuse and neglect.

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Following a string of abuse cases, many parties have been accusing the authorities. In fact, almost every members in the community also paid close attention to the abuse issues of the children. Various views and assumptions were made on child abuse cases that are so much as to cause various death cases. Only when these events had occurred, the community started to pay attention to the care and protection of the children.

However, according to the Utusan Online report: "Tanggungjawab *bersama kurangkan kes dera, di Malaysia* ", anyone found to have abused children physically or mentally can be investigated under section 3 (1) (a) of the Children Act 2001. The Act constitutes a maximum jail term of 10 years or a fine not exceeding RM20,000 or both upon conviction. However, under section 31 (1) (a) of the Child (Amendment) Act 2016, the fine was increased to RM50, 000 and a 20-year jail term for the offense of abusing, neglecting and abusing children. In fact, from the Islamic point of view, the concept of human rights does not come from human reasoning, but it does exist from the Divine revelation which was passed down to the Prophets and Apostles again (Aaron, 2000).

These facts and concerns clearly shows that this is a problem for the community and that it is an issue that needs attention as well as action from all parties. Therefore, this study is aimed at examining the perceptions of the community living in the Gong Badak, Kuala Nerus with relation to the prevalence of child abuse. Through this study, it is possible to see the extent of which the community is vulnerable and the dominant factor in child abuse.

Research Objectives
The objectives of this study are as follows:
  i.   To investigate the relationship between the levels of public knowledge and the factors in child abuse cases.
  ii.   To recognize the most influential factors that leads to most child abuse cases.

Research Questions
In order to achieve the objectives of the above study, there are several relevant research questions that need to be addressed. These include:
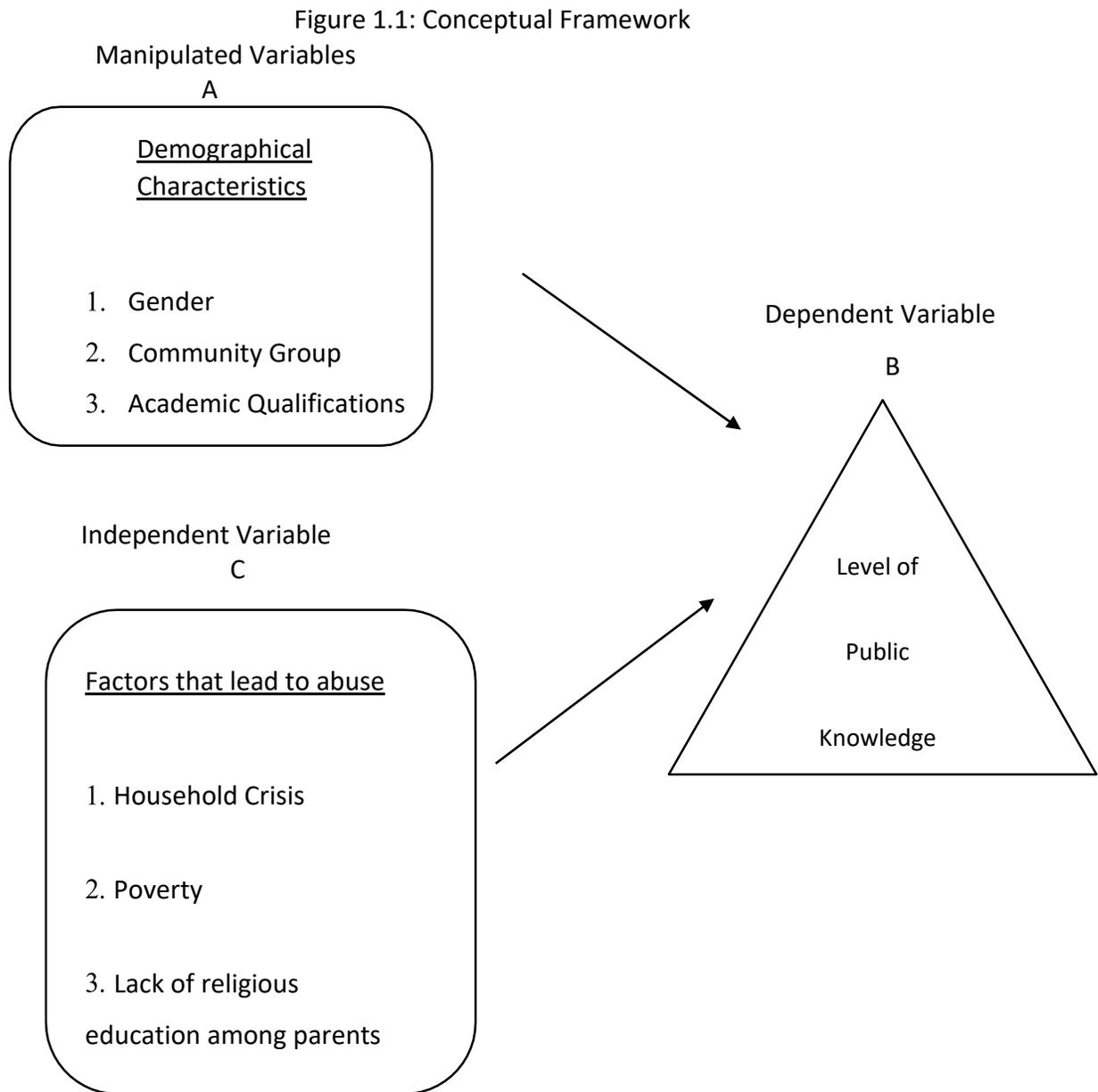 i.   What is the relationship between the levels of public knowledge and the factors that leads to child abuse cases
  ii.   What are the most influential factors that leads to most child abuse cases?

This study was conducted in Terengganu, Malaysia. This study did not only focus on only one but rather the community as a whole.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Manipulated Variables
A

Demographical
Characteristics

1. Gender
2. Community Group
3. Academic Qualifications

Dependent Variable
B

Independent Variable
C

Factors that lead to abuse

1. Household Crisis

2. Poverty

3. Lack of religious
education among parents

Level of

Public

Knowledge

**Figure 1.1: A Conceptual Framework of the Public Perceptions living in
Terengganu, Malaysia**

Literature Review
Child Abuse Concept
    According to Piaget (2000) in his book *Child Abuse*, the term child abuse is a difficult or an inconvenient phenomenon to fathom. This is because an abuse is evaluated from a variety of

angles. Generally, abuse refers to the" Punishment against a person who is unable to fight by using an object, disregarding the lethality.

Furthermore, according to Ismail (1996) defining child abuse is generally "allowing or disallowing any act that could endanger or interfere with a child's physical and mental development, resolve, feelings, emotions or social development. "

In addition, the book also listed several aspects of child abuse:

    i.   Active physical harm.
    ii.   Sexual exploitation.
    iii.   Failure to provide care.
    iv.   Not giving enough parental love.
    v.   Not accepting the child.
    vi.   Do nothing to stop the abuse.
    vii.   Letting the abuse occur.
    viii.   Lack medical care.
    ix.   Not providing medical care even though there are ample facilities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as any form of physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, abuse, slander or exploitation that may result in injury or damage to the health, life, development or the chastity of the children by those who are responsible, obligated, or have authority over the children. Therefore, it is clear that child abuse does not have a specific definition as it is assessed from a variety of angles and a variety of circumstances.

Neglect

Neglect is also a form of child abuse. According to Yusoff, (2010: 16), neglect can be defined as negligence or other behavior that poses a threat to the health and well-being of the children. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Child Protection Policy defines child neglect as a continuing and serious failure in providing the children's basic needs on the physical, emotional, food, shelter and life aspects. Neglect can also expose children to a variety of dangers, including life-threatening incidents.

Furthermore, according to Ismail (1996) in his book "Guidelines for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect," the book states that neglect occurs if the caregiver does not provide adequate food, appropriate attire, care or advice appropriate to their age and the level of development. The book also listed some of the physical signs of child neglect:

    i.   Prevalent hunger.
    ii.   Insufficient nutrients and underweight.
    iii.   Increase in weight when they are admitted to a hospital or a

designated care facility.
  iv. Not properly cleansed.
   v. Rashes in the genital area is severe and untreated.
  vi. Apparent weaker muscle strength than other children their age.
 vii. Severe dental and gum damage.
viii. Untreated wounds.
  ix. No sedative given.
   x. Lack of supervision appropriate with age.

However, some of the signs of neglected children behaviours are as follows:
   i. Weak parental relationships
  ii. Love to be close to adults
 iii. Easy to approach strangers
  iv. Overexertion
   v. Lack of active movement notably during infancy and early childhood.
  vi. Glutton or lack of appetite
 vii. Prevalent school truancy or late to school.
viii. Poor achievement in school
  ix. Difficulty in learning
   x. Disinterest in returning home
  xi. Frequent body shaking
 xii. Finger sucking
xiii. Claps their own head

Level of Public Awareness Related to Abuse Cases
Based on a study conducted by Merican (2014) on Visual Abuse of Children research is about the role of visual communication in the visual image of child abuse. Based on the survey conducted, the researchers found that most people are aware of child abuse cases in Malaysia.

In addition, based on a study conducted by Al-Dawamy and Sulaiman (2010); Pihie, Dahiru, Basri, & Hassan (2018) on *"Persepsi Pelajar Tentang Kejadian Jenayah Terhadap Kanak-kanak".* He found that the respondents'awareness towards criminal cases involving child murder cases is at a high value of 4.42. Respondents also found that the incidence of child murder in Malaysia was disconcerting and concerning.

Results

Table 1.0: Anova Test Levels of Public Knowledge on Child Abuse Based on Age Differences

Level of Public Knowledge	Total Squared	Degree of freedom	Mean Squared	F Value	significance
Between Groups	0.591	3	0.197	1.563	0.211
In Groups	5.794	46	0.126		
Total	6.385	49			

* 0.05 significance value

Based on the table above, results from the one-way ANOVA for age-based public knowledge showed that the obtained significance value was greater than the significance level of 0.05 for the four age groups. F = 1.563, p =0.211 (p> 0.05). Therefore, based on the results obtained, the null hypothesis fails and there are no significant differences between the level of knowledge of the public and their age.

Analysis of the Difference in Public Knowledge Levels Relating to Child Abuse based on Highest Academic Achievement.

There were no significant differences between levels of public knowledge regarding child abuse awareness based on their highest academic achievement

Table 1.1: Anova Test Results on the Public Knowledge Regarding Child Abuse Cases Based on the Difference of Highest Academic Achievement

Level of Public Knowledge	Total Squared	Degree Freedom	Mean Squared	F Value	Significance
Between Group	0.741	3	0.247	2.014	0.125
In Group	5.644	46	0.123		
Total	6.385	49			

* 0.05 significance value

Based on the table above, the results of one-way ANOVA tests on the level of public knowledge pertaining child abuse based on the highest academic achievement showed that the obtained significance value was greater than the significance level of 0.05 for the four highest academic achievement groups. F = 2.014, p= 0.125 (p> 0.05). Therefore, based on the results obtained the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected and there are no significant differences between the public knowledge levels pertaining child abuse awareness based on the highest academic achievement.

An Analysis of the Relationship between the Levels of Public Knowledge pertaining Child Abuse and Household Crisis Factors

Ho   There was no significant relationship between the levels of public knowledge pertaining child abuse and household crisis factors

Table 1.2: Correlation between the Levels of Public Knowledge regarding Child Abuse with Household Crisis Factors

		Level of Knowledge	Household Factors
Level of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Household Crisis	Pearson Correlation	.736**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is the significance on the value of 0.01 (2-tailed)

The table above showed that the household crisis factor value (r = 0.74) showed a strong positive correlation between household crisis factors and the level of public knowledge pertaining child abuse, analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between household crisis with the level of public knowledge relating to child abuse, p <0.05. Therefore H4 is rejected.

Table 1.3: Correlation between the Levels of Public Knowledge regarding Child Abuse with Poverty

		Level of Knowledge	Poverty
Level of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.338*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
	N	50	50
Poverty	Pearson Correlation	.338*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	50	50

*. Correlation is the significance on the value of 0.05 (2-tailed)

From the table above, the results showed that the poverty value r = 0.34 shows a weak correlation between poverty and the level of public knowledge pertaining to child abuse, analysis showed that there is a significance between poverty and the level of public knowledge pertaining child abuse with the value r = 0.76, p <0.05. Therefore H5 is rejected.

Table 1.4: Correlation between the Levels of Public Knowledge regarding Child Abuse with Lack of Religious Education by Parents

Level of knowledge			Religious Education
Level of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Lack of Religious Education	Pearson Correlation	.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is the significance on the value of 0.01 (2-tailed)

From the table above, the results showed that the lack of religious education among parents (r = 0.58) shows a moderate correlation between the lack of religious education among the parents and the level of public knowledge related to child abuse, analysis explained that there is a significant relationship between the lack of religious education among parents with the public level of knowledge, r = 0.58, p <0.05. Therefore H6 is rejected.

Table 1.5: Correlation between the Levels of Public Knowledge regarding Child Abuse with Child Neglection Factors

		Level of Knowledge	Neglection
Level of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.614[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Neglection	Pearson Correlation	.614[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is the significance on the value of 0.01 (2-tailed)

The table above showed that the child neglect factor (r = 0.61) shows a moderate positive correlation between the child neglect factor and the level of public knowledge related to child abuse, analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between the level of public knowledge with child neglect factors, 0.61, p <0.05. Therefore H7 is rejected.

Table 1.6 : The Regression Coefficient of Various Levels of Public Knowledge Related to Child Abuse

Non-standard coefficient			Standard coefficient		
Model	B	Coefficient Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	2.002	0.298		6.713	0.000
Household Crisis	0.241	0.051	0.553	4.746	0.000
Poverty	-0.030	0.046	-0.066	-0.643	0.524
Lack of Religious Education	0.149	0.079	0.216	1.870	0.068
Neglection	0.132	0.079	0.205	1.672	0.102

a. The Dependent variable: Levels of Public Knowledge

The formulaic results for regression was ($F_{(4, 45)}$ = 19.70, $p > 0.05$). The p value is 0.00. The study results showed that one factor in child abuse, namely the household crisis had a significant correlation with the level of public knowledge related to child abuse. The high beta value which is 0.24 showed that the factor of household crisis is one of the most important factors contributing to the level of public knowledge regarding child abuse in Terengganu.

The results of the analysis above also indicate that other factors such as poverty issues, lack of religious education among parents and neglect are not the dominant factors affecting the level of public knowledge regarding child abuse cases in Terengganu. Thus, H8 states that there is no significant effect on the level of public knowledge related to child abuse on the factor of household crisis. Which ultimately is rejected.

Furthermore, the first research objective has shown that there is a significant relationship between the level of public knowledge related to child abuse with the household crisis and the lack of religious education among parents. However, there are also null hypotheses that fail to reject the results due to significance values greater than 0.05. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between levels of public knowledge related to child abuse with poverty and child neglect factors.

The second objective of the study is that there is the most influential factor affecting the level of public knowledge regarding child abuse is the household crisis factor. A high beta value of 0.24 indicates that the household crisis factor is the dominant factor contributing to the level of knowledge of the community living in Gong Badak, Kuala Nerus in relation to child abuse. Therefore, the null hypothesis of was successfully rejected as the significance level of 0.00 indicates that there is a dominant influence between the household crisis factor and the level of public knowledge pertaining child abuse.

The findings from the last objective which is to investigate public opinion on the prevalence of child abuse cases show that the majority of the people living in Terengganu are aware with the issues related to child abuse. In fact, they provided their own opinions on child abuse such as those who should take legal action against offenders, factors that lead to abuse, how to deal with abuse, issues often associated with child abuse etc.

In addition, there were also respondents who expressed anger and frustration over the issue. They claimed that such an issue should not happen especially since the majority of Malaysians are Muslims. Respondents also noted that such issues occurred because parents and guardians were irresponsible and were careless in the care and education of their children. In fact, parents who fail to control their emotions when they are with children, assuming fights between their spouses, financial and work-related problems are also contributing factors in child abuse cases.

Conclusion
Child abuse is a relatively pertinent issue in Malaysia especially nowadays. As we know, newspapers and the mass media often publish news about child abuse from various forms such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglection every single day. From a logical point of view, this child abuse issue is not appropriate in society because children should be loved and cared for by their parents, families and the surrounding community. (Nachiappan et al., 2018)

On a conclusive notion, the child abuse issue needs to be resolved immediately before it becomes increasingly difficult to control. Collaboration between all parties is urgently needed to address such issues especially from the surrounding community. It is hoped that this study will be carried out by other researchers with more depth. The researcher aspires that this study will help the government and private agencies in addressing the child abuse issue to reach the target index of a developed and harmonious country without any criminal case.

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