



# Enhancing Self-Confidence in High School Students through Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE): An Experimental Study

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The present study examines the impact of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) on enhancing self-confidence among high school students. Recognizing the growing concern of child sexual abuse (CSA) and its profound effects on adolescent mental health and personal development, the study adopts a quasi-experimental design involving 84 students from two government schools in the Salem District. Participants were divided into control and experimental groups, with the latter receiving a structured CSAPE intervention comprising lectures and demonstration-based training. Pretest and posttest assessments were conducted to evaluate changes in students' knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence using validated instruments. The results, analyzed through paired sample t-tests and ANCOVA, revealed statistically significant improvements in all three domains within the experimental group, particularly in self-confidence ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.72$ ). These findings underscore the effectiveness of CSAPE in not only raising awareness about CSA but also in empowering students with the psychological resilience and assertiveness required to protect themselves. The study advocates for the integration of CSAPE into the regular school curriculum as a vital component of holistic education and adolescent safety.

**Keywords:** Child Sexual Abuse, CSAPE, Self-Confidence, High School Students, Prevention Education, Adolescent Empowerment, School Curriculum

## Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage during which individuals undergo significant physical, psychological, and emotional transformations. Among the many challenges faced by high school students is the threat of child sexual abuse (CSA), a grave concern with far-reaching consequences for personal development, mental health, and academic achievement (Finkelhor et al., 2023). Sexual abuse not only compromises the safety and well-being of children but also profoundly affects their self-esteem, trust, and self-confidence core aspects of healthy personality development (Moore et al., 2022). Unfortunately, due to the taboo nature of the subject and lack of formal education, many students are unaware of protective strategies, legal rights, or reporting mechanisms (UNICEF, 2023).

In recent years, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) programs have gained global attention as proactive interventions aimed at equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to recognize, resist, and report abuse (Walsh et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2021). These programs often include age-appropriate information on body safety, boundaries, consent, and communication, all of which contribute not only to abuse prevention but also to strengthening students' psychological resilience and self-confidence (Kenny & Wurtele, 2020). The empowerment gained through CSAPE enables students to develop a sense of control and assertiveness, reducing feelings of vulnerability and fear (Mathews et al., 2019).

Self-confidence, defined as the belief in one's own abilities and judgment, is a crucial factor in adolescent development and academic success (Bandura, 1997; Pajares & Schunk, 2021). When students are confident, they are more likely to speak up, resist inappropriate advances, and seek help when necessary. Empirical studies have shown a positive relationship between participation in prevention education and increased levels of assertiveness, decision-making skills, and self-assurance among school-aged children (Krahé & Knappert,

2021). However, despite global advancements, the integration of CSAPE within high school curricula remains limited in many contexts, often due to cultural sensitivities, lack of trained educators, or policy gaps.

This study seeks to address this critical gap by implementing an experimental design to evaluate the impact of CSAPE on enhancing self-confidence in high school students. Through structured interventions and pre- and post-assessments, the research aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of prevention education not only in reducing the risk of CSA but also in fostering a more confident and self-aware student population.

### Need and Significance of the Study

Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains one of the most underreported and devastating forms of violence affecting children and adolescents worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (2023), nearly one in five girls and one in thirteen boys have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18. In India, the *National Crime Records Bureau* (NCRB, 2023) reports a disturbing rise in cases of CSA, many of which involve adolescent victims. Despite these alarming statistics, there is a significant gap in school-based preventive interventions that educate students on personal safety, assertiveness, and protective behaviors. Adolescents, particularly those in high school, are at a vulnerable stage where peer pressure, lack of awareness, and limited access to safe adult communication channels can heighten their risk of abuse. Moreover, cultural taboos, fear of stigma, and inadequate educational frameworks often hinder students from reporting or resisting abusive behavior. This highlights an urgent need to implement structured Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) programs that not only raise awareness but also empower students with the confidence to protect themselves. This study focus first, to assess the effectiveness of CSAPE as a preventive tool, and second, to examine its impact on enhancing self-confidence among high school students. Self-confidence serves as a psychological shield that enables students to make informed decisions, communicate assertively, and seek help without fear or shame. Prior research has indicated that children who participate in well-structured prevention education programs are more likely to exhibit protective behaviors and report higher levels of self-efficacy.

This study is particularly relevant in the Indian educational context, where topics related to sexuality and abuse are often excluded from mainstream curricula. By adopting an experimental approach, this research aims to provide empirical evidence on how targeted educational interventions can enhance students' psychological readiness to face potential threats. Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for school-based mental health and safety initiatives aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes holistic development and life skills education. Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to inform policymakers, educators, and school administrators about the value of integrating CSAPE into the high school curriculum. By promoting both safety and self-confidence, the program could play a transformative role in shaping resilient, informed, and empowered youth.

### Review of Related Literature

**Mozid et al. (2024)** piloted an alternative implementation modality for a school-based Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) curriculum. The study demonstrated that the program significantly improved students' awareness of personal safety and boosted their confidence in recognizing and responding to inappropriate behaviors.

**Celik (2024)** conducted a systematic review evaluating the effectiveness of school-based CSAPE programs among primary school-aged children. The review concluded that such programs substantially enhanced children's knowledge, safety skills, and self-confidence in identifying and managing potentially unsafe situations.

**Kanwal et al. (2024)** assessed the efficacy of a CSAPE program in schools with varying socioeconomic backgrounds in their study published in the *Contemporary Social Sciences Journal*. The results revealed a marked improvement in students' understanding of personal safety and a notable increase in self-confidence when setting personal boundaries.

**Lu et al. (2023)** carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis of school-based CSAPE interventions. The findings confirmed that these interventions effectively strengthened children's knowledge of sexual abuse and improved their self-protective behaviors, which contributed to greater self-confidence.

**Finkelhor and Jones (2023)** examined national trends in child sexual abuse prevention and evaluated the psychological impact of CSAPE programs implemented in middle and high schools. Their study found that students engaged in interactive modules showed enhanced confidence in identifying unsafe scenarios and were more likely to seek help, particularly when exposed repeatedly to empowerment-based messages.

**Pingley and Sharma (2022)** analyzed the psychological effects of CSA awareness programs in urban secondary schools in India. Through a pre-test/post-test design, the study revealed that the CSAPE intervention significantly improved students' assertiveness, self-awareness, and confidence in setting personal boundaries, especially when culturally appropriate methods were used.

**Kenny and Wurtele (2021)** investigated the role of adult involvement—particularly caregivers and teachers—in CSAPE delivery. Their research indicated that when trusted adults reinforced the program's core messages, students developed a greater sense of personal agency and showed heightened self-confidence in resisting inappropriate behavior.

**Chaudhary and Thomas (2021)** implemented a quasi-experimental study to examine the effects of CSAPE on adolescent girls' self-efficacy in government schools in South India. The four-week intervention produced statistically significant increases in self-confidence, especially in the students' ability to assertively say "no" and report abuse.

**Krishnan and Dey (2020)** conducted a longitudinal study in Delhi public schools to explore the behavioral and emotional outcomes of CSAPE programs. Over a six-month period, the study observed sustained improvements in students' communication abilities, boundary articulation, and overall self-confidence when confronting uncomfortable experiences.

### Research Objectives

1. To assess the effectiveness of the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) program in enhancing knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence of high school students by comparing their pretest and posttest scores within the experimental group.

2. To evaluate the impact of the CSAPE program on the posttest scores of knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence between the experimental and control groups, after adjusting for pretest differences using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

3.

### Null Hypotheses (Ho)

1. There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence among students in the experimental group after the CSAPE intervention.

2. There is no significant difference in posttest scores of knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence between the experimental and control groups when controlling for pretest scores.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) in enhancing self-confidence among high school students. A total of 84 students from two government middle schools in the Salem District were selected as participants. Both male and female students aged 10 to 14 years participated in the study. The students were divided into experimental and control groups for comparative analysis.

### Instruments

The researcher developed a structured CSAPE training module aimed at improving students' knowledge, attitudes, and self-confidence related to child sexual abuse prevention and self-protection. The intervention included two components:

1. Lecture and Discussion – A 45-minute interactive session delivered using PowerPoint slides. This covered definitions, types, prevalence, causes, consequences of child sexual abuse, and the importance of self-confidence in resisting abuse.

2. Demonstration-Based Training – A hands-on session conducted over two days (one hour per day), designed to build students' self-confidence in managing unsafe situations. The training emphasized assertive communication, boundary-setting, and practical skills that empower students to respond confidently and effectively to potential threats or inappropriate behavior.

To assess the impact of the intervention, the following instruments were used:

- A structured questionnaire to assess students' knowledge and attitudes about CSA.
- A practice checklist to evaluate self-confidence skills.
- A Self-Confidence Scale (researcher-constructed) designed to measure students' confidence in recognizing, responding to, and reporting abusive situations.

### Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the headmasters of the selected government middle schools in the Salem District. Written informed consent was secured from both students and their parents after clearly explaining the purpose and process of the study.

The two participating schools in Asthampatty Government Middle School and Fairland Government Middle School were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups, respectively, using the lottery method. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 84 students (42 in each group) from a pool of 168 eighth-grade students.

Both groups completed a pretest measuring their baseline knowledge, attitudes, self-protection practices, and self-confidence regarding CSA prevention.

- The control group continued with their regular school curriculum and received no intervention.
- The experimental group received the CSAPE intervention, including the 45-minute lecture and two-day demonstration session.

After seven days, a posttest was administered using the same instruments to both groups to measure changes in the variables, with a particular focus on self-confidence enhancement. The collected data were coded and entered into a database for statistical analysis.

### Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the research instruments was established by consulting three clinical psychologists with expertise in child abuse and adolescent mental health. Their suggestions were incorporated to refine the questionnaire and self-confidence scale.

Reliability of the tool was evaluated using the test-retest method. The self-confidence scale yielded a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.812$ , indicating strong internal consistency and stability. Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to ensure reliability of the instrument.

### Data Analysis

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) program, two types of statistical analyses were conducted: (1) Paired sample t-tests to assess changes within the experimental group, and (2) ANCOVA to compare posttest scores between the experimental and control groups, controlling for pretest scores.

**Table 1: Paired Sample t-Test Results (Pretest vs Posttest in Control and Experimental Group)**

Variable	Group	Pretest Mean (SD)	Post test Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Knowledge	Experimental	45.12 (6.85)	68.45 (5.22)	15.37	<0.001*
	Control	44.75 (7.01)	46.33 (6.45)	1.82	0.075
Attitude	Experimental	38.60 (5.12)	55.80 (4.70)	16.04	<0.001*
	Control	39.10 (5.30)	40.25 (5.15)	1.56	0.125
Self-Confidence	Experimental	30.55 (4.23)	50.35 (3.80)	18.45	<0.001*
	Control	30.95 (4.05)	31.20 (3.95)	0.84	0.405

### Interpretations

The paired sample t-test analysis reveals that the experimental group, there were highly significant increases in posttest scores across all three variables knowledge, attitude, and self-confidence following the CSAPE intervention ( $p < 0.001$  for all). In contrast, the control group did not show statistically significant improvements in any of the three variables. All p-values for the control group are above the 0.05 threshold, indicating no meaningful change between pretest and posttest scores. These results clearly demonstrate that the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) program had a positive and statistically significant effect on improving students' understanding, mindset, and self-confidence in addressing child sexual abuse.

**Table 2: ANCOVA Results Comparing Experimental and Control Groups (Posttest Scores Adjusted for Pretest)**

Variable	Adjusted Mean (Experimental)	Adjusted Mean (Control)	F-value	p-value	Partial $\eta^2$
Knowledge	68.35	46.18	142.35	<0.001*	0.68
Attitude	55.72	40.10	136.12	<0.001*	0.66
Self-Confidence	50.30	31.18	160.40	<0.001*	0.72

### Interpretation:

The ANCOVA analysis was conducted to compare the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups while controlling for pretest scores. The results are as follows:

- For knowledge, the experimental group had a significantly higher adjusted mean (68.35) compared to the control group (46.18), with a large F-value (142.35) and a highly significant p-value (<0.001), indicating that the intervention significantly improved knowledge levels.
- For attitude, the experimental group also outperformed the control group (adjusted means: 55.72 vs. 40.10), with an F-value of 136.12 and  $p < 0.001$ , suggesting a statistically significant positive shift in attitude due to the intervention.
- For self-confidence, the largest effect was observed. The experimental group (50.30) significantly outscored the control group (31.18), with an F-value of 160.40 and a p-value <0.001. The partial  $\eta^2$  value of 0.72 shows a very strong effect, confirming that the CSAPE program had a substantial impact on improving students' self-confidence.



## Major Findings

**1. Significant Improvement in Knowledge:** The experimental group showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge scores from pretest ( $M = 45.12$ ,  $SD = 6.85$ ) to posttest ( $M = 68.45$ ,  $SD = 5.22$ ),  $t(83) = 15.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . In contrast, the control group showed no significant change.

**2. Enhanced Attitude Toward Abuse Prevention:** A significant positive shift was observed in the attitudes of the experimental group after the CSAPE intervention ( $t = 16.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the control group exhibited no notable difference.

**3. Improved Self-Confidence:** Self-confidence levels significantly increased in the experimental group after the intervention ( $M = 30.55$  to  $50.35$ ;  $t = 18.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with the control group showing no meaningful change.

**4. Between-Group Differences:** ANCOVA results confirmed that, after adjusting for pretest scores, the experimental group had significantly higher posttest scores than the control group in all variables knowledge ( $F = 142.35$ ), attitude ( $F = 136.12$ ), and self-confidence ( $F = 160.40$ ) all with  $p < 0.001$  and large effect sizes (Partial  $\eta^2 > 0.66$ ).

## Educational Implications

**1. Integration of CSAPE into School Curriculum:** The findings highlight the urgent need to integrate Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) into the formal curriculum at the middle and high school levels, especially in vulnerable or rural communities.

**2. Focus on Self-Confidence Development:** Programs that build assertiveness and boundary-setting skills should be emphasized, as enhanced self-confidence equips students to resist and report abusive situations effectively.

**3. Teacher and Parent Involvement:** Educational policymakers should encourage collaboration among teachers, school counselors, and parents in reinforcing child safety messages for long-term behavioral change.

**4. Early Intervention is Key:** Given the significant improvements among 10–14-year-olds, CSAPE programs should start early in adolescence to maximize preventive impact.

## Conclusion

This study provides strong empirical evidence that Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (CSAPE) is a highly effective intervention for enhancing knowledge, attitude, and most importantly, self-confidence among high school students. The statistically significant gains observed in the experimental group, as revealed through both paired sample t-tests and ANCOVA, affirm the program's efficacy in equipping adolescents with vital protective competencies. The intervention's structured and interactive approach blending informative lectures with demonstration-based training proved particularly impactful in building students' ability to identify unsafe situations, resist inappropriate advances, and seek help from trusted adults. The large effect sizes (Partial  $\eta^2 > 0.66$ ) confirm that these improvements were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful, especially in relation to enhancing students' self-confidence and sense of personal agency.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and skill-based education in addressing the alarming and often underreported issue of child sexual abuse in schools. Adolescents in the 10–14 age group are at a critical developmental stage where awareness and assertiveness training can have long-term psychological and behavioral benefits. In addition to its direct impact on students, the CSAPE model has broader implications for educational policy, teacher training, and parental engagement. It underscores the need for educational institutions to move beyond traditional academic instruction and take a more holistic approach to student welfare by including child protection as a core component of school health programs. Finally, the findings support the urgent integration of CSAPE into national and state-level school curricula as a proactive measure to ensure the safety, empowerment, and emotional well-being of all children. Such interventions are not just educational necessities they are public health imperatives that contribute to the creation of safer, more supportive learning environments.

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