A STUDY ON THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
AMONG STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction
Child sexual abuse is a state of emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, maltreatment encountered by any person below the age of eighteen. In the prenatal stage, they are succumbing to sex selective abortion, the next stage of infancy they face female infanticide, the girlhood brings risk to her life through sexual abuses, child marriages, child prostitution, pornography, and female mutilation. In the adolescence and adulthood they face violence, rape, forced prostitution, dowry deaths and domestic abuse, marital rape, in the old age they are assaulted and even rape the old women and kill her for her property. Thus I would like to voice that, it is the responsibility of the Youth to work towards the prevention and eradication of all abuses and work for a safer and better place for every child to live in. This study is done to find out the awareness level, their knowledge on sexual abuse among students. The sample size is 97 which include 60 males, in the age group 19 to 21 years and 37 females in the age group of 18 to 20. A self structured questionnaire with two point scale was administered on the students. The questionnaire consists of 23 items including their demographic details, attitude towards child sexual abuse, percentage analysis method was adopted to analyze the data.

Key words: Child sexual abuse, prevention strategies, attitude, knowledge, safer sex.
A STUDY ON THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AMONG STUDENTS

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Introduction
Child sexual abuse problems include a vast area of study and intervention, involving a range of acts of violence and maltreatment. The four main categories of abuses are, Physical, Emotional verbal, Sexual and Neglect. Down the ages, discrimination against girls and woman exemplified in various forms and viewed of her as sexual objects. They were denied equal rights, suffer indignities. Though the girl children struggle to tackle the sexual violence in the campus in their day to day life still it remains unexposed. Sexual violence or abuse in the campus assumes new dimensions on the streets of schools, colleges, class room, canteens, libraries and hostels and they suffer abuses at home (Incest), the protectors of the child her father, himself may be an abuser at home. The known relative, brother, cousins, uncles are also not spared. It happens in the campus of primary schools to research institutes. Child sexual abuse can result in both short term and long term harm, including psychopathology in later life. The research proved that about 50% of children were abuse by the people known to the child. The child gets more psychologically affected when he/she is abused sexually by their own relatives. The physical effects may include injury, infections and neurological damage. Child sexual abuse can ruin a child’s life resulting in various psychological effects such as depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders etc. So the criminals who misuse children for sexual means should be punished severely

Impact of abuse on children:
One of the issues about children most debated is sexual abuse of children. Every country has its own issues to talk on the topic child sexual abuse. Child Sexual Abuse is an issue which most of us feel that the government is failing to bring to an end. It is very sad to note that it is those adults whom we trust most who take advantage of our weakness or inability. The problem of Child sexual abuse is as old as humanity and occurs in all races, religions, economic groups (rich or poor) and cultures. In most cases when girl children lose their parent’s loss and grief heavily
affect them. This is the time when they are in need of love most. Traditionally, orphaned children were absorbed into the extended family. However nowadays it has changed as extended families usually have their own problems, living with the poor child feeling unwanted which may lead to the child losing self-confidence that so many cases of attempted suicide have been reported. In a number of cases the children are left to with their old grandparents who are too old to offer adequate physical and psychological support to these children. These girl children grow at risk emotionally due to the absence of concerned adults to teach and guide them. There are some cases where parents at home do not guard their children where they go and what they do and these children fall prey to perpetrators.

Other groups of children who are in danger of sexual abuse are children with physical disabilities, those who are mentally handicapped and children living in toxic family environment. Most of the caregivers take advantage of their disability and most of them have gone unpunished. The cases of incest in the families of the child have attributed and child is the prey for all those who are in thirst of sex. Nobody seems to care to report such cases, fearing the child's security and wellbeing since there won't be any one to look after the child if the caregiver is arrested.

In some of the cases, which have left most children depressed, sad, feeling low self-esteemed and unwanted, is when she is physically or emotionally abused. Physical abuse has led to most of its victims living in constant fear of their perpetrators. This is when a child is constantly criticized, belittled, teased or ignored. A girl child is emotionally abused when the parents/care-givers fail to provide psychological nurturing necessary for a child's physical and emotional development. Children are verbally abused by step-mothers but also by their real mothers. They are often shouted at and humiliated or frightened that they live in constant fear and suffer from grief and stress. How disappointing it is to note that most parents especially those who are heavy drinkers often neglect their children that a child ends up feeling lonely and unwanted, mostly in situations when the girl child lives with a stepmother and only relies on the father for true love. Negligence is continued failure by the caregiver to provide a child with the necessities of life and adequate supervision needed for a child's optimal growth and development.

Girl child neglect could be a result of a number of factors such as lack of parenting skills (due to early marriage), inability to plan, low self-esteem, social isolation and excessive consumption of
alcohol and if father is a widower he satisfies his sexual needs with his own children. A deviant behavior father also has sexual relations with their young girl children and satisfies his sexual need. In other word it is called as Incest. There was a recent incident took place a 9 year old girl child from Kerala was abused by her widowed father and his 5 friends for past 2 years. They were caught but the child lost its glow. Street children are yet another category which needs to be studied in relation to sexual abuse. Majority of the children experience abuse and rape.

"The offence of a child sexual abuse is an extremely grave one. Innocent and tender children are abused sexually through a variety of means. Such incidents leave a deep scar on the psyche of the child and have the potential of adversely affecting the child's emotional and mental development. The harsh truth is that these incidents are more frequent than we imagine and very often goes unpunished by the child suffering the trauma silently.

India was expecting a new and stringent punishment after the Delhi Rape case, Nirbhaya was an eye opener for many, and the whole country awakened and realized there is a need for change in the mind set of the people in viewing girl child and women. The punishment was apt and the verdict of hanging the culprits which was smoothening for many and it was a pioneering verdict and there was a hope that new cases of child sexual abuse will fall. The POCSO Act 2012 and the amendment in 2019, where punishment of hang to death could bring about change in the abusers attitude. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill (POCSO) Act, is aimed at protecting the young ones from sexual abuse, sexual harassment and child pornography and all the child related harmful practices. The punishment for "aggravated sexual assault" is imprisonment of up to seven years with a fine, while penalty for "penetrative sexual assault" is at least five years in jail and a minimum penalty of Rs 50,000. Crime against children has been classified into that of “penetrative" sexual assault, which could be of aggravated nature also, and that of non-penetrative kind, which could again be of aggravated nature. Now after the verdict of hang to death or life imprisonment could bring about incident free. Advocacy: There should be importance given to advocacy on Girl child abuse issues which is another aspect of interventions. The main aim of the advocacy would be sensitizing society and making them aware that girl child abuse exists in all classes, castes, and all strata of the society.
Methodology

Every study has its purpose and specific method to find out the problems in the selected study area. The methodology includes objectives of the study, choice of the study area, sampling size and tools used for data collection will help to explain the method of research.

Objectives:

- To study the attitude or opinion of students towards child sexual abuse and abusers.
- The motive is to analyze the vicious circle of Child sexual abuse
- To create awareness about the laws meant for children in India.
- To examine various methods to stop child sexual abuse, rehabilitation for victims and also to study factors which induce an abuser to sexually abuse a child

Choice of the study area and sample size: The study is conducted in Adyar, Chennai in an Arts and Science College. The Sample size is 97 which include 60 male respondents and 37 female respondents. Sampling: Purposive Random Sampling. Tool and its description: A self constructed questionnaire with two point scale was used to collect data among the college students. The questionnaire consists of 23 items including their demographic details and attitude towards Child sexual abuse. Percentage analysis method was adopted to analyze the data

Major findings:

- Majority of the students are aware of the issue.
- 84% females and 73% males agree that children are mostly abused by the person whom they know well.
- 72% males and 68% females agree that abusers will repeat the offence(victimization) if not reported on time.
- 62% males and 73% females believe that if a child is sexually abused, there will be physical evidence of abuse.
- 73% males and 76% females feel that boys cannot be sexually abused.
- 72% males and 70% females agreed that sexually abused children would not tell anyone about the abuse. Disclosure is not possible because of fear.
73% males and 87% females agree that CSA prevention education is required in and from primary schools itself.

32% males and females believe that CSA cases are few so it is unnecessary for children to learn how to prevent CSA

38% males and 49% believe that child sexual abusers are psychologically abnormal.

87% males and 84% females agree that there is a need for strong law enforcement required to prevent CSA

80% males and 86% females agree that there is a need for treatment and therapy for abusers.

12% males and 10% females have faced sexual abuse in their childhood.

100% of them they said if there is a Counsellor in any educational institution through counselling and psychotherapy the wounds of abuse could have been healed.

10% of the males and 50% of the females said that the molester or abuser should be punished under POCSO Act and others of about 10% of the females are aggressive and they want and to be done chemical castration/

70% of the males and females felt that parents should be on vigil what and where their children are doing when they are not at home. They also felt that majority of the parents did not spend sufficient time for their children and think about it only after an incident.

To the reaction for the need of the hour, 100% of the male and females said sex and sexuality education for all age group, age appropriately, is a must and prevention can be contained only then.

**Implications:** The study was done among few UG and PG students and their opinions are only stated here. There was a feeling that sex and sexuality details are private and it needs guts to answer and so many students did not answer the questionnaire because they felt uneasy.

**Summary and Conclusion:** The child sexual abuse prevention programme should be focused primarily on educating children, age appropriately on how to recognize instances of abuse, safe touch and unsafe touch and teaching them personal safety skills. Encouraging children to disclose such instances to parents or other responsible adults should be given
priority to save the victim from victimization. This study helps us the basics is to empower children to protect themselves and to disclose if any abuse and it should be given top priority. Majority of the students are aware of the issue. The students were sure that the abusers or perpetrators were known to the family. They were sure that the abusers if found that the victim has not disclosed to anybody they incidence can repeat, that is victimization can happen. If a child is sexually abused there will have physical evidence of the abuse done. Most of the students felt that boys cannot be sexually abused and also felt that children will not disclose their abuse immediately to anybody.

Regarding the prevention strategies all the students felt that child sexual abuse prevention education is a must and it should be strated from the primary section itself and few also felt since child sexual abuse cases are few in number and it is unnecessary for children to know it in early years. Half of the respondents felt that perpetrators are psychologically abnormal in nature and they need treatment and psychotherapy to change their attitude and behavior. They also felt that to heal the wound of abuse the child should be given counselling and psychotherapy by social workers or counselors in the educational institutions.

The result also reveals that there should be strong law enforcement required and POCSO Act should be effectively utilized and punishments should be given instantly and some female respondents felt that chemical castration is ideal to avoid victimization. From this study, it was revealed that many females had faced sexual abuse in their childhood. Most of the respondents felt that parents should be on vigil what and where their children are doing when they are not at home. They also felt that majority of the parents did not spend sufficient time for their children and think about it only after an incident. To the reaction for the need of the hour, 100% of the respondents informed that sex and sexuality education for all age group is a must and prevention can be contained only then. We must promote research, training and public education to address the risk factors that can lead to child sexual abuse. Disclosure can prevent victimization and punish the perpetrators according to POCSO Act.
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