



A Study on The Awareness on Sexual Abuse Among Girls in Chennai Schools

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Children are the gift of god. Constitution proclaims that children are to be safeguarded from any harm, abuse or violence. They are considered to be the greatest human potential on which their dignity should be protected and in this era of digital economy child became a commercial product for exploitation and abuse. Sexual violence against children occurs across all strata of the society and in all countries of the world. It is a heinous offence against mankind. But the crimes against them are always silent, hidden, invisible crime that both girls and boys face at all levels. Research says that more children are abused in every form in every respect. Girls have become commodity to sex tourism, pornography, cybercrimes, trafficking, organ transplants, kidnapping, rape prostitution, sexual assault, harassment, molestation and so on. Female children are prey in other circumstances like foeticide, infanticide, child marriage, and other social evils. The children are the valuable asset and indeed they are the building blocks of our country and of all humanity. There should be a strong will to uplift the plight of the child coupled with strong legislative and legal measures to improve the situation

INTRODUCTION

Scientific development and technological achievements are expected to be pursued by man for general human good, but unfortunately in the present times some technological knowledge has led to greater abuse on humanity. One such case is the sex determination through scientific methods resulting in female foeticide, the selection test which in other words known as 'elimination of unborn daughters'. Gender bias and deep rooted prejudice and discrimination against girls and preference for male children have led to female foeticide.

The Child sexual abuse is defined as exposing or subjecting a child to sexual contact, activity or behavior. Sexual abuse includes oral, anal, genital, buttock and breast contact. The other aspects are use of objects for vaginal or anal penetration, fondling or sexual stimulation. Exploitation of a child for pornographic purposes, child prostitution, exhibitionism and incest are some of the forms of child sexual abuse. Sex exploitation and trafficking in other words, Institutional abuse among girl children is an alarming global problem. Tens of millions of children are already in the commercial sex market and of these there are many as two million girls between the ages of 5 and 15 in the trap. Many adult female who have had a history of sexual abuse turned into prostitution. Run away girls can easily become targets for ruthless people who turn them to a life of crime, drugs and prostitution. UNICEF estimates that one million children enter the trade each year, mostly in Asia. The commercial sexual exploitation of girl children is a global problem requires international cooperation.

Displacement from rural areas to urban areas pushes children to do bonded labour in the cities along with their parents and sometimes girl children are sold for it. Migrant tribal child labour has been treated as commodities which they were sold at a very low price. The lives of the girl children and women are miserable they become labour as prostitutes. In addition, the documentation regarding the buying and selling of girls is very poor because it is often done with the connivance of parents and guardians and law enforcing agencies. Although there is a law against Rape, and against child sexual abuse (POCSO Act) but reporting on time is not in process or documented correctly.

Assaults in schools where girls are victimized by teachers have started coming up in news nowadays. Molestation and abuse are constant news from the school sides. There are cases of rape and of minor girls and insane girls. Their soft and mute nature targets them for sexual assaults. Girls can easily seduced or enticed are prone to rape and sexual assaults. The sexual assaults cases include rape, sodomy, fellatio cunnilingus or oral sex. There is greater likelihood of the offenders involved in these cases are suffering from sexually transmitted illness and also HIV/AIDS. It is time for the sensible ones to start thinking of some measures to control the crisis among the girls. Unfortunately, the present law also is inadequate to fulfill its purpose.

The Short- Term Effects:

Some effects manifest for short periods and resolve without intervention, while others persist through adolescence and into adulthood. Research reveals that positive outcomes are associated with early detection and treatment. Sexually abused preschool children who are not identified, diagnosed, and treated at the time of abuse frequently surface 7-10 years later in the legal system as runaways, delinquents, or prostituted children (NAPSAC, 2008). These facts dramatically highlight needs for prompt reporting of suspected sexual abuse, immediate investigation by child protection authorities, and timely referrals for treatment of sexual abuse victims.

The girls who are adolescents experience a wide range of problems and difficulties after they are abused. Some of the most common symptoms the abuse children face are nightmares, depression, anxiety, aggression behavior, withdrawn behavior, fear and phobia, bedtime fear, aversion, suicidal gestures, hate redness etc. The young girls manifest symptoms and it varies according to the age of the child. Younger the age the manifestation will be less and the adolescent children manifest it in the way of substance abuse, run away from home, sexwork, illegal behavior. The teenage becomes highly promiscuous.

The Long -Term Effects:

The effects of childhood abuse can also continue well into adulthood. These are called as long term effects. Long term effects are divided into many categories. Those are

described below: Cognitive distortions, emotional distress, Avoidance, Interpersonal difficulties, physical health problems, Post traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, differences in response to abuse, thoughts of suicide, sexual anxiety and HIV/AIDS. Psychological effects of child sexual abuse include lower levels of self-esteem, higher rates of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, sexualized behavior, identity difficulties, shame and cognitive impairments, sleep disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), self-mutilation, and suicide. The magnitude of these effects ranges from mild to severe to life-threatening (requiring immediate counseling intervention).

They include problems with interpersonal communications and insecure/disorganized attachments in adult relationships, unstable and less satisfying intimate relationships, and increased rates of separation and divorce. Although these effects typically occur in adulthood, the first two may emerge during childhood and/or adolescence. Because the latency period between child sexual abuse and emergence of interpersonal effects may be several years, many of these effects are well ingrained in personality structures and interpersonal styles. Consequently, individual, marital, or family counseling interventions are typically required for symptom remission.

Behavioral effects manifest in a wide range of contexts, but often emerge as violations of social mores or laws. Victims of child sexual abuse demonstrate higher rates of academic and conduct problems, are at greater risk for committing property offenses, domestic violence, are more likely to be sexually promiscuous (including acts of prostitution), and are three times more likely to become pregnant before age 18. The long term effects can be divided into seven categories. They are (1) Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is also commonly occurring symptoms among adult survivors of sexual abuse. (2) Cognitive Distortions, scared and perceive themselves as the world as a dangerous place to live on. (3) Emotional distress, because of childhood sexual abuse experience and so they face depression, anxiety and anger. (4) Avoidance, survivors may experience dissociation, amnesia for painful memories, multiple personality disorder (5) Loneliness (6) Physical Health Problems (7) Interpersonal problems.

Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

More children are sexually abused inside their own homes, the abusers are friends of the families and have access to their homes

Both the genders are victims

- Children are in fact more vulnerable than before and there is no age for sexual abuse even infants are not spared. There are reported incidents to prove that.
- Children can never initiate sexual abuse, its adult interpretation or adult justification.
- Majority of the abusers are known to the child and they are in the position of trusted people.
- Though many of the abusers are men there are women abusers as well.
- Many of them did not know that a child can be sexually abused
- Child sexual abuse has harmful effects and it can lead to behavioural problems, physical problems and interpersonal problem.
- If child abuse is not reported the abuser has a chance to repeat it again and again targeting the same child or repeat with other children also.

METHODOLOGY

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

Objectives of the study

- To study the attitude or opinion of students towards sexual abuse and abusers
- To find the psychological problems the girls face because of abuse
- To examine various methods to stop abuse and the interventions to bring about change in the mind set of girls
- To find the prevalence of child sexual abuse
- To bring about awareness on legal factors which could protect the girls

Choice of study area

The study is conducted in Chennai. The study is selected through judgement sampling method. The researcher had selected Chennai for her study due to increasing of working parents, loneliness of children, and high child abuse cases in Chennai. So Chennai and school children would be more appropriate one for the study.

Sample Size

The study done in a government school in Chennai. In that school about 80 students are selected by systematic stratified sampling method. 9th and 10th std were selected for the interview of the study.

Tools

Interview schedule is the prime tool used for collecting data. Beside the interview schedule method, the researcher used child abuse survey to know the realistic status of the respondents. SPSS is applied for statistical analysis.

Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows,

- All the respondents are in class 9th and 10th. All the respondents are girls
- All the respondents parents are working in private or in government sector.
- All the respondents are living in a nuclear family
- All the respondents are in the age group 13- 15 years
- More than 1/3rd of the respondents has been abused in their early days and rest of them had no such experience.
- About 20% of the respondents are aware of child sexual abuse in that period. 26% of students have self experienced and 34% of the respondents have known from others
- Most of the respondents felt they were cared by neighbours in their parents absence
- Most of the respondents felt they stay home alone till their parents come from work.
- 1/4th of the respondents felt they were abused by neighbours and remaining felt they are abused by relatives.
- Majority of the parents did not spend sufficient time for their kids
- Majority of them felt they could not inform their parents immediately when they are abused because fear of the abusers
- 36% of the respondents seek help through counsel-

ling where the remaining choose no reaction to the situation.

- To the reaction of the students they felt that 51% state that molester should be punished severely and 28% state that they are not bothered towards the molester.
- To the reaction for the need of the hour, 16% of the children are given gifts or money for abuse, 40 % felt there is a need of a counselor and 8 % felt there is a need for sex education for all age group girls. 16%not sure what to be done.

CONCLUSION

Empowering children to protect themselves and to disclose if any abuse and it should be given top priority. Parents and teachers are to be empowered about abuses in the schools and homes. They should be aware of all the abuses which happen at home and at school. Counselling is an important specialized services which can be given to all children in priority wise and ongoing monitoring and vigilance are essential for the protection of children from child abuse.

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