



Awareness On Sexual Abuse Among Young Women

KEYWORDS

Sexual Abuse, Young Women, Gender Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Sexual abuse is an act of unconsented sex. Sexual assault can be verbal, visual, or anything that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact. Rape is a common form of sexual assault. Violence against women by any one is always wrong, Young women in the age group 17-22 are the victims most often. The Study is conducted among the undergraduate women in Bishop Heber College to study the level of their awareness on sexual abuse. The awareness does not only help in prevention, but also to handle the crisis situation. Young women are often the victims even though it isn't their fault for someone else's violent behaviour. Therefore they need to be educated and helped. Ignorance on sexual abuse is a major threat to the victims and the society at large. It is the duty of social workers to educate, give awareness and also assist in helping them overcome the various impacts due to sexual abuse. In this context, the present study is undertaken to understand the sexual abuse among young women pursuing college programmes. Salient findings and suggestions are discussed in the full paper.

INTRODUCTION:

Violence against women in our country is very common, Sexual abuse among women in India is a rising problem; most of the cases go unreported due to social stigma. There are many forms of sexual abuse / assault / molestation. Rape is a common form of sexual abuse. Adolescent women are the common victims. Adult women sometime experience domestic violence in their marriage. However violence against women in any form is wrong.

A range of factors can influence the impact of sexual assault, including:

- the victim/survivor's relationship to the perpetrator;
- the extent and severity of any accompanying psychological or physical abuse;
- the severity of the abuse;
- the extent of physical harm;
- the length of time over which the abuse occurred;
- the responses of family and friends of the victim/survivor;
- the woman's experience of the various systems (health, police, courts etc.) with which she may have contact following the assault; and
- the personal history of the victim/survivor (Daane, 2005).

Women who have experienced sexual violence may constitute the single largest group of people affected by PTSD (Calhoun & Resnick, 1993, cited in Astbury, 2006). For example:

-a range of US studies have found that between 35% and 57% of community-based samples of rape victims suffer from PTSD at some point in their lifetime (Littleton & Breitkopf, 2006; Kilpatrick et al., 1987, and Kilpatrick & Resnick, 1993, both cited in Petrak, 2002); and

-up to 16.5% of survivors meet PTSD criteria an average of 17 years post-assault (Kilpatrick et al., 1987, cited in Petrak, 2002). PTSD "stresses the abnormal nature of the stressor that causes the mental health symptoms, not individual pathology" (Walker, 1991, p. 22, cited in Bennice, Resick, Mechanic, & Astin, 2003). In other words, PTSD symptoms are "normal" or typical responses to sexual assault (Valentiner, Foa, Riggs, & Gershuny, 1996).

Some authors are critical of PTSD as a concept for understanding victim/survivors (e.g., Wasco, 2003). The primary reason for this is that PTSD, as a psychiatric diagnosis, implies that the individual survivor suffers from a medical problem, and that her "symptoms" are signs of a disorder, rather than reasonable responses to a lived experience. Also, the symptoms included in the diagnosis of PTSD do not include all the effects of sexual assault on women's lives.

PTSD is also criticised for seeing the event of rape as the cause of trauma, thereby not fully accounting for the gendered and cultured context in which rape occurs (Wasco, 2003).

REVIEW OF EARLIER STUDIES

Sense of a foreshortened future was for me the most terrifying symptom of trauma, I was obsessed with the thought that I was going to die ... even though he was gone, my psyche still behaved as if it expected a disaster to happen. ("Rachel", in Eastale & McCormond-Plummer, 2006, p. 140).

David et al (1990) his paper reports on the first national survey of adults concerning a history of childhood sexual abuse. Victimization was reported by 27% of the women and 16% of the men. Higher rates of abuse were found among men who grew up in unhappy families, lived for some period with only their mothers, who were currently residing in the West and who came from English or Scandinavian heritage. Higher rates of abuse were found among women who grew up in unhappy families, lived for some period without one of their natural parents, received inadequate sex education, were currently residing in the West or who were born after 1925.

Catherine (2002) in Childhood experience of sexual abuse among Hong Kong Chinese college students. This study aimed to explore the prevalence rate and profiles of abusers and victims of child sexual abuse in a Chinese society: A convenience sample of 2147 Hong Kong Chinese college students completed questionnaires which included items on definitions of child sexual abuse, recall of sexual abuse experience before age 17, information about the sexual abuse incidents, and

personal demographics. The overall prevalence rate for various forms of child sexual abuse was 6%, with the rates being higher for females than for males. The average age of the victims at the time of the sexual abuse was 11 years old, with a majority of them experiencing sexual abuse during their teenage years. The average age of the abusers as estimated by the victims was 24 years old, and only 28% of the abusers were strangers to the victims. Males were about three times more likely than females to be sexually abused by their friends, whereas females were about twice more likely than males to be sexually abused by strangers. Only 39% of the victims reported their sexual victimization to others, and 56% of the reported incidents were not followed up. As compared to Western studies, the present study showed lower rates for more intimate or severe forms of child sexual abuse. The Chinese victims were more reluctant to disclose their sexual victimization than their Western counterparts. Limitations and practical implications of the study are also discussed.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sexual abuse does not always mean Rape, unconsented sexual activities like touching genitalia or forcing others to touch their genitalia, sexual insults, inappropriate touching, and pornography, marital rape, threatening someone into unwanted sexual activity, attempted rape, and sexual insults. Sexual violence against any of the above forms is very tormenting to a woman. Adolescent women 18- 24 of age are the common victims. The abusers are often family members, friends, acquaintance and very rarely a stranger. Awareness on sexual abuse is essential in college level to prevent young women being victims to rape and other abuse. This study is focused on the awareness of sexual abuse among young undergraduate women of Bishop Heber College.

METHODOLOGY:

This Study is Descriptive in nature and the Researched adopted convenient sampling to collect Data from the respondents. Self- constructed questionnaire was designed by the Researcher based on the Sexual and Physical Abuse History Questionnaire by Karger was to collect the data from the respondents. The data were collected from 42 Respondents.

RESULTS

Table 1:
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
18	7	16.7
19	32	76.2
20	3	7.1
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 76.2% are in the age group of 19 years of age.

Table 2:
Distribution of Respondents by Domicile

Domicile	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
Rural	13	31.0
Urban	26	61.9
Semi-Urban	3	7.1
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 61.9% are from Urban background

Table 3:
Table Representing Awareness on Sexual Abuse among the Respondents

Awareness	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
Yes	37	88.1
No	5	11.9
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 88.1% are aware about sexual abuse.

Table 4:
Table Representing the Source of Awareness among the Respondents

Source	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
Newspaper Clippings	5	11.9
Magazine	7	16.7
News on Television	26	61.9
Internet	4	9.5
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 61.9% came to know about sexual abuse through News on Television. 16.7% of the Respondents got awareness through Magazines.

Table 5:
Representing the opinions of the Respondents for preventing sexual abuse

Opinions	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
Punishment to the abuser	8	19.0
Strict Laws	28	66.7
Education to Women	2	4.8
Self- defense	2	4.8
Women should be bold	2	4.8
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 66.7% opine that Strict Laws could be a measure to prevent sexual abuse. 19.0% of the Respondents mention that punishment to the abuser is a method of preventing sexual abuse.

Table 6:
Respondent's willingness to participate in Counseling/Help to handle crisis

Willingness	No. of Respondents (n:42)	Percentage
Yes	19	45.2
No	8	19.0
No idea	14	33.3
Not at all	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

Majority of the Respondents 45.2% were willing to participate in counseling or any other treatment provided to handle the crisis. 33.3% of the Respondents had no

idea whether to participate in counseling / treatment methods to handle the crisis.

SUGGESTIONS

- The Role of Social worker ranges from Sex Education to working with women who were sexually abused.
- Sex education in the High School and Higher Secondary school could be useful; similarly media plays a major role in awareness.
- Magazines, Television shows are vital agents in bringing about awareness. Use of Self- defense like Karate is an useful weapon at hand.
- Strict law enforcement is as important as punishing the abuser. People are controlled by laws, hence strict laws could reduce the sexual abuse at large in the society.

CONCLUSION

From The results and interpretations of the study awareness of the sexual abuse is essential to prevent sexual abuse.

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