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To assess the perception of the young adults regarding child sexual abuse: A cross sectional survey

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Abstract---Background and Objectives: Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a worldwide issue with serious long-term consequences. "The involvement of a child in sexual behavior that he or she does not completely grasp and is unable to provide informed permission to, or for which the kid is not developmentally equipped, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society," according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The present study was aiming towards the perception of CSA among young adults. Methods: A cross sectional survey design was used for this research study. For data collection, an online tool was prepared. The data collection tool was constructed into two sections, first section deals with demographic data like age, gender, occupation, etc. whereas the second section were having Likert scale. Tool was shared to potential participants via online social media applications. After screening, total 1000 samples were selected for this study. Results: This study reported that maximum 64% were males and 36% were females. In age, maximum 43.50% participants were from 18-22 years of age group, 33.60% were from 23-27 years of age group and 22.90% were from 28-32 years of the age group. Demographic data was also associated with the research findings. Conclusion: Investigators concluding that the findings of the research study suggested that there is a lack of official sexuality education program for the adolescence so it can be added in the school education. This is an also a sign for the people who work with children like teachers, parents, and other policymakers that they need to pay

more attention for provide the accurate and right information of CSA to child so they can avoid and prevent CSA.

Keywords---child sexual abuse, POSCO act, child abuse, child sexual offence, perception.

Introduction

“You can recognize survivors by their creativity. In soulful, insightful, gentle, and nurturing creations, they often express the inner beauty they brought out of childhood storms.”

— Jeanne McElvaney, *Childhood Abuse: Tips to Change Child Abuse Effects*(1)

“We can, and we must, protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation in all settings. Children deserve nothing less.”

— Marta Santos Pais, *Special Representative on Violence Against Children, U.N.*(2)

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully understand, is unable to give consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates societal laws or social taboos. Fondling, inviting a kid to touch or be touched sexually, intercourse, exhibitionism, using a child in prostitution or pornography, or online child luring by cyber-predators are all examples of CSA.(3)

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a worldwide issue with serious long-term consequences. "The involvement of a child in sexual behaviour that he or she does not completely grasp and is unable to provide informed permission to, or for which the kid is not developmentally equipped, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society," according to the World Health Organization (WHO). "Intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling of genitals directly or via clothing, exhibitionism or exposing minors to adult sexual activity or pornography, and the use of the child for prostitution or pornography" are among the behaviours covered under the term CSA.(4)

CSA is a complex and difficult topic to research. Sexual violence, on the other hand, is witnessed at all ages, in all social classes, and in nearly all countries, with varying degrees of severity. As a result, the goal of research studies was to present a concise review of CSA in order to raise awareness among primary health care physicians, policymakers, counsellors, police officers, teachers, and the general public.(5)

Child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to all forms of sexual victimisation of minors, including penetrative and non-penetrative sexual contact, pornography, sexual harassment, commercial sexual exploitation, sex tourism, and online exploitation. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 (which makes any sexual activity with a kid under the age of 18 a felony) defines

a variety of sexual offences in India.(6) CSA has been a global problem in recent years. CSA has largely been recorded from economically developed countries; however, it could be more widespread in developing countries. According to a recent epidemiological study, the prevalence rates of CSA in Europe, America, and Asia are all increasing.(7)

Women's and children's violence is becoming more widely acknowledged as a public health and human rights issue. Rape and child sexual abuse (CSA) are prevalent across continents, according to studies.(8) The social and cultural background is intimately linked to sexual assault against women and children. CSA prevalence varies between 2 and 62 percent for girls and 3 to 16 percent for boys over the world, depending on the setting and terminology employed. Methodological problems and discrepancies in definitions employed by different studies make it difficult to estimate the prevalence of rape. However, studies show that between 14 and 25 percent of adult women have been raped at some point in their lives.(4)(9)

CSA is also having long term effect on the children. According to research studies depression, conduct disorders, post-traumatic stress, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder were the most common long term psychological trauma to the children. Some research studies also reported the strong association of CSA with feeling of hopelessness, suicidal ideation, suicidal attempts, feeling guilty, shame, helplessness, depression, fear and uncertainty.(10)(11)

In adolescents and youth, CSA has been linked to the engagement in dangerous sexual practises. Adolescence is a vital time when sexual activity begins and sexual behaviour is influenced by a variety of factors (e.g., friends, media, pornography) that can lead to a loss of control and greater vulnerability. Low risk perception, alcohol and other drug usage, lack of planning of sexual intercourse, and the romantic ideals typical of this stage are some of the characteristics of sexuality during adolescence.(12)

Poor psychological functioning, violent conduct, interpersonal problems, scholastic challenges, and higher use of alcohol and other drugs have all been associated to having had some incident of CSA. CSA infringes on a child's privacy, leading to mistrust of others. As a result, interpersonal relationships and sexuality are one of the most important areas of research and intervention in the aftermath of CSA. In the case of CSA victims, incongruent, even contradictory behaviours in the domain of sexuality are observed: either they avoid relating to others for fear of probable revictimization, or they experience sexual changes that lead to the performance of unsafe sexual behaviours.(13)(14) (15)

Child Sexual Abuse data at global level

The world health organization and united nations both reported the alarming stage of existence of the child sexual abuse at global level. According to WHO in 2006, 8% of men and 20% of women worldwide reported for sexually abused as children. Current data suggested that approximately about 1 in 10 girls under

the age of 20 have been forced to engage in sex or performing other sexual acts.(16) 90 per cent of adolescent girls who report forced sex say that their first perpetrator was someone they knew, usually a boyfriend, uncle, father's friend, mother's friend. A research study by Crime Against Children Research Center in united states reported that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys are the victim of the child sexual abuse. Further they also reported that 20% of adult females and 5-10% of adult males recall their childhood sexual assault.(4)(17)

Child Sexual Abuse data in India

According to Interpol, an estimated 2.4 million instances of online child sexual abuse were reported from India from 2017 to 2020. Eighty per cent of these children were girls under the age of 14. The US-based National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported that more than 2.44 million children were abused in 2017 and by 2020 the cases will increase.(18) When it comes to child sexual abuse material, they are getting much more proactive in India. The number of rape incidents in India per 100,000 citizens is 22,172 as of 2020. United Nations International Children Education Fund study during 2005–2013 reported that CSA in Indian girls was 42%. This major state-sponsored survey in India reported the prevalence of CSA as 53%. Boys were equally affected and more than 20% were subjected to severe forms of sexual abuse that included: sexual assault, making the child fondle private parts, making the child exhibit private body parts, and being photographed in the nude. In both the major surveys, majority of the abusers were people known to the child or in a position of trust and responsibility.(19)(20) Several reports indicate that neighbours, friends, close relatives, and acquaintances, and employers at workplaces are the most common abusers. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) revealed that crimes against children increased by 4.5% in 2019 as compared to 2018. In its report, NCRB stated that as many as 148,185 crimes against children were reported in 2019 in the country. In this, 31.2% cases of crimes against children were registered under the POCSO Act, 2012.(21)

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the perception of the young adults regarding child sexual abuse.
2. To associate the demographic findings with present result findings.

Material and Method

Research design and data collection tool

A cross sectional research design was used for this research study. After reviewing the previous researches, investigators prepared an online data collection tool. Data collection tool was constructed into two sections, first section deals with demographic data like age, gender, education, occupation, residential status and aware about CSA. whereas the second section is having total 18 items with three types of responses (agree, neutral and disagree). The second section is dealing with perception of the participants on CSA. Tool was validated from 7 subject experts. After validation, the reliability of tool was also

calculated by Cronbach's alpha and it was found reliable as r-value of the tool was "0.8424".

Selection of Participants and Study Setting

Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data. The data collection tool was shared to participants via online social media applications and using QR code- scanning. The research study setting was selected districts of Madhya Pradesh state. The inclusion criteria for sample was age group of 18-32 years. Total 1000 samples were collected for this study.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was executed on IBM SPSS and Microsoft Excel-2016. In descriptive statistics, frequency and percentage were calculated. In inferential statistics, Chi square was used to find out the association.

Results

Table 1st shows the demographic variables of the participants in frequency and percentage distribution.

N=1000

Demographic Data			
Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	640	64.00%
	Female	360	36.00%
Age	18 - 22	435	43.50%
	23 - 27	336	33.60%
	28 - 32	229	22.90%
Education	Higher Secondary	76	7.60%
	Graduation	788	78.80%
	Post-Graduation	136	13.60%
Occupation	Teaching	64	6.40%
	Health Care Industry	160	16.00%
	Clerk / Office Work	102	10.20%
	Student	560	56.00%
	Housewife	42	4.20%
	Self Employed	72	7.20%
Area of Residence	Urban	530	53.00%
	Sub Urban	261	26.10%
	Rural	209	20.90%
Are you aware about sexual abuse?	Yes	1000	100.00%
	No	0	0%

In demographic findings of the study (in table 1st) maximum 64% were males and 36% were females. In age, maximum 43.50% participants were from 18-22 years of age group, 33.60% were from 23-27 years of age group and 22.90% were from 28-32 years of the age group. 78.80% participants were graduate or any diploma

holder and 13.60% were having post-graduation qualification. In occupation, 53% participants were students, 4.20% were housewives and 16% were from health care industry. Most of the participants 53% were residing in urban area. All participants were aware about the sexual abuse.

Table 2nd shows the perception of the participants in percentage distribution.

N=1000

Sr No .	Statements	Perception			
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
1	Do you think child sexual abuse is a common problem in our society?	53.60%	28.00%	18.40%	100%
2	Do you think abuse is only serious when it involves touching the private part?	7.40%	17.40%	75.20%	100%
3	Do you think the child who was sexually abused is not to be blamed for his/her character?	74.20%	19.40%	6.40%	100%
4	Do you think most sexual abuse is committed by someone the child knows and trusts?	81.60%	13.00%	5.40%	100%
5	Do you think an adult female cannot sexually abuse children?	14.80%	55.60%	29.60%	100%
6	Do you think boys can be the victim of sexually abuse case?	80.20%	17.60%	2.20%	100%
7	Do you believe that teachers could be involved in child sexual abuse?	55.40%	33.80%	10.80%	100%
8	Do you think children who met with stranger/unknown person without any hesitation are of greater risk for child sexual abuse?	72.80%	14.60%	12.60%	100%
9	Do you think relatives & family are never involved in child sexual abuse?	10.50%	13.20%	76.30%	100%
10	Do you think children are at risk of sexual abuse at night or in places where people are less in number?	72.40%	12.90%	14.70%	100%
11	Do you think the garden/ playground/ clubhouse etc. are places where children are at risk of sexual abuse?	66.40%	24.80%	8.80%	100%
12	Do you think school can be a place where children are at risk for sexual abuse?	61.20%	33.40%	5.40%	100%
13	Do you think teaching sex education after matriculation (in 11th to 12th) will be good for the children as a part of a compulsory subject?	80.40%	10.40%	9.20%	100%
14	Do you think most of the time children are sexually abused when they are alone or outside their home at night?	86.40%	10.90%	2.70%	100%
15	Do you think Socioeconomic status is responsible for child sexual abuse?	56.40%	12.80%	30.80%	100%

16	Do you think attractive colors, body exposing clothes can be the reason for child sexual abuse?	43.60%	34.60%	21.80%	100%
17	Do you think mentally retarded/ Handicapped/ low IQ children are mostly victims of sexual abuse?	63.40%	23.90%	12.70%	100%
18	Do you think that blackmailing is the most common reason for child sexual abuse in child?	83.60%	9.40%%	7.00%	100%

In assessing the perception of the participants, this study reveals that (in table 2nd) 53.60% participants agreed on CSA is most common problem in society. 7.40% participants perceived that CSA is only serious when it involves touching the private parts. 81.60% participants agreed on the statements that is most of the sexual abuse committed by someone the child knows and trusts. 55.60% participants were neutral on the statement that is “an adult female cannot sexually abuse children” and 14.80% participants were agree on the same statement. 66.40% participants perceived that garden/playground/clubhouse of the society are the place where children are at risk of sexual abuse. 63.40% participants perceived that mentally retarded/ Handicapped/ low IQ children are mostly victims of sexual abuse. 83.60% participants agreed that blackmailing is the most common reason for child sexual abuse in child.

Table 3rd shows the association of demographic variables with perception of participants.

N=1000

Sr no	Statements	Gender		Age		Education		Occupation		Area of Residence	
		d.f.	p-value	d.f.	p-value	d.f.	p-value	d.f.	p-value	d.f.	p-value
1	Do you think child sexual abuse is a common problem in our society?	2	0.11	4	0.16	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
2	Do you think abuse is only serious when it involves touching the private part?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
3	Do you think the child who was sexually abused is not to be blamed for his/her character?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	0.55
4	Do you think most sexual abuse is committed by someone the child knows and trusts?	2	0.14	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
5	Do you think an adult female cannot sexually abuse children?	2	<0.05	4	0.17	4	<0.05	10	0.06	4	<0.05
6	Do you think boys can be the victim of sexually abuse case?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
7	Do you believe that teachers could be involved in child sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
8	Do you think children who met with stranger/unknown person without any hesitation are of greater risk for child sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
9	Do you think relatives & family are never involved in child sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	0.19	4	0.44	10	0.08	4	<0.05
10	Do you think children are at risk of sexual abuse at night or in places where people are less in number?	2	0.22	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
11	Do you think the garden/ playground/ clubhouse etc. are places where children are at risk of sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
12	Do you think school can be a place where children are at risk for sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
13	Do you think teaching sex education after matriculation (in 11th to 12th) will be good for the children as a part of a compulsory subject?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
14	Do you think most of the time children are sexually abused when they are alone or outside their home at night?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	0.88	4	0.11
15	Do you think Socioeconomic status is responsible for child sexual abuse?	2	0.16	4	0.11	4	0.09	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
16	Do you think attractive colors, body exposing clothes can be the reason for child sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
17	Do you think mentally retarded/ Handicapped/ low IQ children are mostly victims of sexual abuse?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05
18	Do you think that blackmailing is the most common reason for child sexual abuse in child?	2	<0.05	4	<0.05	4	<0.05	10	<0.05	4	<0.05

This study also reported that demographic variables age, gender, education, occupation and residential status of participants is also associated with their perception about CSA. Data presented in table 3rd depicted that all p values < 0.05 were showing the association of demographic variables age, gender, education, occupation and residential status of participants with their perception about CSA.

Discussion

The enormity of the child sexual abuse problem has been described as 'one of the most discouraging discoveries of our era' CSA is a global child health problem and has been associated with long term adverse effects on both physical and psychological health. As per Census 2011, the population of children (0-18 years) in India is 472 million. Children are the future of the any country, In India children are considered as essential pillar for the development of this country. According to Jean Piaget, the development of children takes place in four stages. In that the child will have physical, biological, mental, psychological and emotional development. It is also essential to protect the children from any kind of violence, mental abuse, trauma to physical, social, emotional and psychological as this will provide a healthy life and a bright future for the nation building. Many research studies revealed that in most of the cases of children violence are related to CSA. The form of the CSA can be physical or nonphysical.(22)

Health and education department of the government are working on the several intuitive to educate, to create awareness and to protect the children from CSA. Inclusion of the sex education in the syllabus as compulsory subject for the 11th and 12th class adolescence students will be very good initiatives for the society. It will help to identify the issue and problems related to CSA. It will also help to children to report and raise the voice against CSA.(23)

In this study 64% participants were males and remaining 36% were females. 53% participants were residing in the urban area, 26.10% were residing in the sub urban area and 20.90% were residing in rural area. 53% agreed upon that CSA is common problem in our society. 75.20% participants disagree on the point of seriousness of CSA that "Do you think abuse is only serious when it involves touching the private part." Further 81.60% participants agreed that CSA is committed by someone the child knows or relative. This study also reported strong association of perception about CSA with demographic variable (gender, age, education, occupation and area of residence) of the participants. This study also shows that adding the sex education after secondary level education will be the good for children. Most of the participants perceived that socioeconomic status is the also major reason for the CSA. More than 75% participants perceived that relatives and families are involved in the CSA.

Conclusion

The findings of the research study suggested that there is a lack of official sexuality education program for the adolescence so it can be added in the school education. This is an also a sign for the people who work with children like teachers, parents, and other policymakers that they need to pay more attention for provide the accurate and right information of CSA to child so they can avoid and prevent CSA. These type of initiatives will help to increase awareness about CSA. Researcher also conclude that participants perceived that both boy and girl can be the victim of the CSA so there is an also significant need to plan strategies to protect the children from CSA both boys and girls. Awareness programs in schools, colleges and other institutes related to children should be planned and implemented.

Recommendations

- Increase the sample size in order to increase the generalizability of research.
- Further research studies can be conducted with including more factors contributing to CSA.

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