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Awareness of good and bad touch among children

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Abstract---In present scenario, many cases are reported on social media and other platforms like newspapers and television, where we hear about cases of child abuse mainly sexual abuse of children. These news are mainly about young children and adolescents especially girls who get molested or abused by an adult known person or a stranger. At their age, it is very difficult to say also if they understand that wrong things are happening to them. Because in a country like India, much awareness is not built through education at young age to make children and adolescents familiar about such things. They remain oblivion to such education and thus cannot even distinguish people with bad intentions from good ones. The effects of such an abuse on the child and family are much much more than what we can even imagine. Their mental health and overall development is retarded with such incidents occurring to children and young girls. It becomes very difficult for them to live a normal life and they find it hard to get acceptable by society afterwards. Thus, it is imperative to make our children and future generation aware of this educational intentions and bad touch and can protect themselves from such a trauma for entire life. Here the role of educational and social institutes and we all together as a society is largely significant.

Keywords---awareness bad touch, child, education, good touch, sexual abuse, violence.

Introduction

As per a study and worldwide report, it has been revealed that about 150 million female children and 73 million male children are subjected to sexual abuse which also included child trafficking cases for about 1.2 million children as well as life of 1.8 million children ruined by pushing them into pornography acts and prostitution. [1] Another approach of knowing such statistics through direct interviewing of 34000 adult people in United states revealed that 10 percent of these respondents have suffered from this abuse as a child, below 18 years of age. One fourth of these respondents were males. On telephonic interview of 4549 children and their caretakers, it has been found that approximately 6.1% suffered sexual abuse in previous year and about 9.8% have experienced this kind of atrocity in their lifetime.

The cases of sexual abuse were higher in number for adolescent group and escalated from 16.3% to 27.3%. [2] A child goes through sexual abuse in every 15 minutes in India as reported in government findings through research on crime rates in India as declared in 2016. Cases of child sexual abuse are on rise and number is increasing every day at alarming rate. Though an act has been framed to protect children against such crimes which is known as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POPSO Act), cases are still rising which mainly are in some specific states of country like Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka. [3]

Most of these crimes are targeted on children with age range 12 - 18 years amongst whom every second child is a victim as per a survey conducted on child sexual abuse cases. [3] Most of these children become victims of abuse by some relative or a known member of family while others are inflicted upon by such abuse by outsiders or criminals in India. Usually abuser is a known person to child in 90% of cases while it may be some unknown person in 10% of remaining cases. According to one study done from country, number of boys and girls abused before age of 18 years is about 9 and 53 respectively. [4] As the cases are escalating in our society day by day, we need to take steps to stop this crime against our children. The affected children faces lot of health issues and get traumatised for life. Not only this, such incidents impair their overall growth, physical and mental well being. [5]

Necessary steps are much required and dire need of hour to save our future generations. Our society needs to evolve in creating awareness platforms not only for our teachers and parents, but for our children too. They should be made familiar with such issues and be taught about the ways to distinguish bad touch and good touch so that they can save themselves from the predators. In this review article, we are going to discuss and highlight the types of child abuse, ways of identification, impact on child, methods of creating awareness amongst adults of society and children.

Types of Child Abuse

A child can be abused by an adult either physically or non physically. In the first type, physical contact is made by adult which may extend from touching to

forceful contact and penetration. In such cases, sometimes child is not able to understand this type of abuse as mostly he or she is unaware of this type of sexual abuse. [3] This is usually done by an adult person or an adolescent or an elderly person above the age of 50 years. [6]

As per definition given by United Nations, it includes “contacts or interactions between a child and an older or more knowledgeable child or adult may be a stranger, sibling or person in position of authority, a parent or a caretaker when the child is being used as an object of gratification for the older child's or adult's sexual needs. These contacts or interactions are carried out against the child using force, trickery, bribes, threats or pressure.” [7] The other way in which a child may be abused in by non physical means which may include verbal abuse, threatening the child to perform certain sexual acts, or making digital content of such acts. [3]

Ways of Identification of Abuse

Identifying a case of child abuse is definitely not easy . This is mainly because children are not able to tell about it as they are not aware of it in most of the cases. Certain changes in their behaviour could be the indications which a parent or guardian if aware of these signs can identify the case of abuse. Few of the changes which may be noticed in their daily routine may include sudden change like child becoming quiet abruptly, is not able to sleep, seems frightened or scared all the time, stops playing with toys or doing same abuse acts on toys that have been told to child by abuser. Such children may withdraw themselves from their friends and family members, may isolate themselves and are scare to come outside of their room or their space or their house.

Child may also exhibit mood fluctuations, may cry or break things, may get angry easily, may stop eating altogether. If the child has been persuaded to do some acts through gifts or money or sweets, they may be seen in child's room. In extreme cases, child may show suicidal tendencies. Parents or teachers or guardians if aware can also look for signs of abuse like any bruises, injuries or marks of slap on child's body, any hematomas or contusions, racoon eyes, loss of patch of hair where abuser may have tried to grab child from. Lacerations on inside of lips, punch marks or unexplained cuts with sharp objects and bite marks may also indicate cases of abuse. Most common sites to look for child abuse are face, mouth, breasts, neck, arms, genital organs and abdomen. Some signs of abuse may be specific to certain age groups.

In case of small children or children who have not started school yet, these signs may include fear, nightmares, aggressive behaviour, uncontrolled cries, anxious behaviour, regression, internalisation, externalising, increased activity and mental issues. In case of adolescents, more common signs include withdrawal, depressive feeling, suicidal thoughts , self inflicting injuries, to run away from home, aggressive and regressive changes in behaviour. [8] Apart from these, signs and symptoms can also be seen in abuser which can also help in identification of cases of child abuse. If an adult or known family member or relative is the abuser, he may show frequent visits to house or closeness to child. Such an adult may be seeing the child in private in absence of other family members or parents

or without knowledge of any other person. Such an adult may also bring unnecessary gifts or showering of child with sweets, toys or outings.

Impact of Abuse on a Child

Some of the effects of abuse may be common for both boy and girl child whereas in some ways, they are affected differently. In majority of children, abuse can leave a long depressive state over the child. A child may isolate himself and may take it as a stigma. Psychological and physical well being is affected variable in children with the severity of abuse. Some children may slip into post traumatic stress disorder. It becomes very difficult for them to carry out day to day activities normally. It may lead to retardation of their overall growth and personality.

In cases of girl sexual abuse, it may result into pregnancy which itself can put the girl through lot of difficulties as she is not physically and mentally able to accept it. In extreme cases, girl child may attempt and commit suicide. Alterations in psychology and behaviour may become manifested for a very long period in children who go through sexual abuse. Mental health is largely affected in such a child with associated significantly high risk of deterioration found and observed through different ages, childhood, adolescent period and when child becomes adult. [9]

Apart from the above mentioned affect, sexually abused child may also show mood disturbances, and depression. Children in their teenage may develop harmful habits of smoking or substance abuse to bear through the stress caused by abuse. Some of them may harm themselves by self inflicting injuries. [10] Higher values of depression scored clinically and increased intensity of symptoms in post traumatic type have been observed in a research done on girl children of school going age who went through sexual abuse when compared to age matched group without sexual abuse. [11] Similar scores of stress have been observed for both the genders in a longitudinal study done over sexually abused children which was conducted over duration of 3 years. [12]

When compared to symptoms in children who were sexually abused to those with different type of traumatic experience, the symptoms post trauma were higher in former cases. In children with an age range of 4 - 6 years, the higher tendencies of dissociation signs were observed when compared to ones without abuse which remained for a time duration of a year. [13]

Methods of Awareness Creation at Different Levels

Foremost role is that of the parent. Parents should be friendly with their children and must teach them about good touch and bad touch from very early age. This can help the child learn and understand it from initial years of life. Parents should shed their hesitation for talking about these topics to their children. They should educate themselves first and make themselves aware of the ways of talking to their children about these things in right way.

They should understand that imparting such teachings to their children is highly important for their safety and protection. They should use right means to convey

the message to child so that he or she can understand it easily and can feel comfortable talking to them if further knowledge is needed or whenever they are confused or need more help with this information. It is the responsibility of a parent to develop a friendly bond with their children so that they always know that their parents are there whenever they need any support.

Parents can also teach the children to speak up whenever they feel uncomfortable or not right in any particular situation or with any other person. A child should be taught to say No whenever anything or anyone makes them uncomfortable with their actions. Parents can also inculcate these teachings to their children by giving them examples of such situations which can arise.

Children should also be made familiar with their body areas along with their private regions. They should be told about which body part touch is bad. Not only this, children should also be prepared to take necessary actions if such a situation arises. They can scream for help, run from that place or ask for help from people around. They should be taught by parents that touching private parts or making contact with these areas is inappropriate and if somebody tries to do so, it should be immediately stopped or intercepted as it is bad touch. Parents should also teach their children to not let anyone take pictures of them or their any body parts in their phones or camera. If anyone tries to tell them to get naked or expose certain body area, they should refuse to do so.

Another important role in making our children aware about bad and good touch is through our education system and teachers. It can affect large sections of society. Sex education should be given to school children so they know well about their body and what is right and wrong action towards their body. Various awareness programmes can be conducted at school and societal levels to make school children aware of importance of good touch and bad touch. These play an immense role in prevention of sexual abuse cases of children. These programmes help children understand many related things related to mistreatment and abuse by any unknown person or adult.

In a study to understand the change in childrens' knowledge and perception of good and bad behaviours by adult after delivering a learning awareness programme, it has been found that majority of the children performed better scores in post test evaluation. [14] At level of society and government, research from different parts of the country regarding the knowledge and awareness of good touch and bad touch is required to know the needs of carrying out awareness and abuse prevention programmes. Such programmes can be conducted for parents as well to train them in a way that they can equip their children with much required knowledge of good touch and bad touch.

Conclusion

Our children are our future. It is an important duty and responsibility of a parent, teacher and society as whole to provide them with a safe atmosphere where they can grow without any fears and inhibitions. This can happen when we can provide the necessary knowledge and information to our children for them to understand the good touch and bad touch. With sufficient awareness and

confidence, our children can be trained to handle such situations if they arise. Further programmes should be made through our policy makers intending on providing awareness of good touch and bad touch to our children. This will help us in creating a better future for our children and our nation.

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