

## Research

### An Insight into Child Sexual Abuse: Its Cause and Effects

Maria Inayat\*

*Researcher, Writer and Clinical Psychologist, Islamabad, Pakistan*

#### Abstract

Child Sexual Abuse is a rising social problem. It is an attack on the innocence of powerless children leaving them with lifelong trauma and psychological distress to cope with. Child sexual abuse is not as voiced as the need of the hour even today. The dilemma is under discussed and so are its consequences. Effective measures to stop this practice are still being discussed and very less implemented. It is more than a taboo and a practice that occurs in the far dark woods it is a common and rapidly growing practice causing millions of kids their futures and lives.

#### Introduction

In the world of transgressions child sexual abuse is termed to be one of the most severe and unforgivable sin. Child sexual abuse is no ordinary crime it is one of those acts that can have lifelong effects on a child. Defining this hideous crime it is mistreating a child physically, sexually or psychologically against his will in the span of his naiveness and innocence. The molester or pedophile can be anyone a closest family member to a complete stranger, as he/she is merely a hunter searching for the most innocent prey to hunt at the perfect time.

The types of abuse that can be inflicted on children is beyond imagination and so are its consequences. Child sexual abuse is not necessarily a onetime act it can go on years and years in some cases as long as the abuser is alive. The abuser can make a child perform inappropriate sexual acts to unlawful social acts whose one time exposure can make any child vulnerable and threatened to the abuser giving him full control over him.

#### Types of Child Sexual Abuse [1]

There are 2 major types of child sexual abuse:

##### 1. Non-Contact Abuse [2]

##### 2. Contact Abuse [3]

Non-Contact Abuse involves practices that do not involve the abuser directly touching the victim but exploiting them in below listed ways:

Making a child watch or hear sexual activities

Asking the child for his nude images or distributing others nude

images to him (online abuse)

Performing sexual intercourse in front of a child or exposing him to child prostitution or pornography

Video recording a child while he or she undresses.

Video recording the child in nude condition as an asset to threaten the child and force him into future acts

Contact Abuse involves the abuser making physical contact with the child in any of the below listed forms:

Touching or kissing a child in private places (genitals)

Making a child fondle adult genitals or masturbate

Rape or penetration by putting a body part in the child's anus, vagina or even mouth

Child sexual violation is not as difficult as it seems and has no hard and fast rule for the molester to be a male and has completely no age limit. The molester can be aged from as less as 14 years to major 60's or even more. As the abuser has no specific age limit and can follow any age group similarly the victim can be as less as 3 years. Such children are used as objects by pedophiles to satisfy their lust, gratification and even their rage. These acts can be performed in slow levels in front of the child's parents or caregivers and still go unnoticed for example a stranger interacting with your child in a delightful tone to making them sit in his lap tending to engage him/her in his phone or some story but exploring his genitals while the parents believe that person to be a child loving human being.

Many victims share the story of their abusers defining them as very close and cherished member of the family. A someone with whom the parents would make the child interact forcefully despite his

**\*Corresponding author:** Maria Inayat, Researcher, Writer and Clinical Psychologist, Islamabad, Pakistan, E-mail: mariaainayat@gmail.com

**Sub Date:** July 18, 2017, **Acc Date:** July 27, 2017, **Pub Date:** July 28, 2017.

**Citation:** Maria Inayat (2017) An Insight into Child Sexual Abuse: Its Cause and Effects. BAOJ Psychol 2: 030.

**Copyright:** © 2017 Maria Inayat. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

resistance, A someone who would then easily rape , molest or abuse the child all to his convenience without anyone ever knowing. In some cases the victim claimed to be raped and molested on almost daily basis for a span of ten or even more years. In some cases the children said that they tried approaching their parents who wouldn't take them seriously, in others they mentioned trying to end their lives (suicide) once they found out about what had been happening to them or even running away from their homes.

Living in 2017 what we call the 21<sup>st</sup> century child abuse is still a taboo an un discussed topic that gives these hunters their power and cost our children their lives and futures. Thousands of such cases go un reported which is the mere strength of these abusers. Like women rape cases if the abuse is discovered the parents mostly try to keep it confidential to hide their negligence and save themselves from social humiliation. The molesters feed on the vulnerability of these parents and caregivers and know that they are not strong and thoughtful enough to voice the crime.

### Effects of Child Abuse

The children start to show symptoms for anyone to notice and these symptoms should never be neglected. From the physical symptoms that range from unusual vaginal discharge, vaginal or anal soreness, pregnancy or even sexually transmitted disease (STI) the psychological symptoms are far worse and long lasting. Such violations have been proved to effect a child's cognitive and emotional orientation highly damaging their view of the world as well as self concept .Traumatic Sexualization , betrayal , stigmatization and feelings of powerlessness [4] are what give rise to high psychological distress in the following years.

Traumatic Sexualization occurs when the individual's sexual feelings and sexual attitudes are inappropriately shaped in the light of the traumatic sexual experiences. They might consider their previous sexual experiences as normal and make judgments if those levels of brutality or basic sexual level such as masturbation are not met. Betrayal is when a child finds out how he was manipulated by someone near and that has caused him harm. It is a child also realizing how the abuser lied about moral standards and treated them with disregard. It is not necessary that children experience betrayal only for the abuser but often they are seen to hold it against their caregivers and parents. They consider it betrayal when they realize how their caregivers neglected their responsibilities and made them easy target to sexual abuse. In some cases the children complain of trying to confess their conditions to the parents receiving no attention or support from them.

Stigmatization occurs at various levels. Sometimes the abusers abuse the children during worse sexual acts telling them how it was completely their fault and they deserved this treatment. Other times it happens when the child tends to hear ill about

such experiences in his surrounding for example a parent or sibling calling it disgrace, shameful and how such kids have no future left. When a child gradually starts to discover how he has been victimized stigmatization follows. Lastly powerlessness is an attitude that is taught to the victims by the abusers. The first stage of powerlessness is abuser violating the child's body against his will .Further the abuser makes sure and creates circumstances such that the child would never be able to recall them in front of anyone or voice them in front of any caregiver. The abusers first goal is to make the child powerless to create such scenarios that the child believes that he is forever trapped and has no way out.

Victims to child abuse are mostly socially isolated and depressed individuals [5]. They usually have a history of suicide attempts and drug abuse. In the light of psychology they tend to depict serious behavioral disorders along with dissociative symptoms. Some of the victims spend their entire lives trying to run away from the painful memories and flashbacks of their pasts. They complain of sleeping disorders both hypersomnia and insomnia followed by nightmares and heart palpitations during sleep that make it impossible to sleep again [6]. Psychologists have been able to readily identify poor self esteem along with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in such individuals which make their normal everyday functioning very difficult. Substance Abuse Disorder is another very common trait found in the victims of child sexual abuse these victims claim the drugs or alcohol abuse as an escape from the haunting memories of their past [7]. They mention these substances to be their sole helpers in the days of darkness and guilt.

### The Ninety One Abusers Study [8]

A recent study on child sex offenders was held. Ninety one abusers were interviewed and questioned for the strategies they used to target children and hold them victim. They were selected from random occupations, treatment programs, hospitals as well as prisons. Their responses were collected through interviews which mainly highlighted them gaining access to children through babysitting, caretaking, infatuating them with bribes and gifts at first and then using force, anger and ultimately threats. The offenders showed least guilt and bad feelings regarding sexually abusing children

### General Statistics [9]

According to a study conducted by Goldman and Goldman based in Australia 82% of their sample reported some kind of sexual experience with another person before the minor age of thirteen. The children fulfilling the criteria of basic sexual abuse were 28% girls and 9% boys. The mean value of the age of victims for girls was around 9 years and boys 10 years. The mean age of abusers was calculated to be above 30 for girls and initial twenties for boys. Rejecting the general perspective the study showed 76% of abusers

to be known to the children and only a 24% of ratio of unknown abusers.

### The U.S Health and Human Services Department (2010)

The U.S health and human services department stated in a 2010 report that 9.2% of victimized children were sexually assaulted [10] 1 in 5 girls were sexually abused whereas 1 in 20 remained the ratio for boys.

Children were said to be most vulnerable to such incidents in ages 7-13

During a period of one year 16% of age 14-17 had been sexually targeted

### Child Sexual Education: The Only Way Out

Who is to be blamed for such negligence the question rises, everyone except the victim himself one could answer. The inhumane abuser, the negligence of parents and the states government inattention towards the issue all these together make this crime easier and frequent [11]. Other than that it is the responsibility of the parents and caregivers to look after their children at all times, it also their responsibility to end the taboo and provide their children with relevant sexual education as early as possible.

Studies in this domain suggested a difference of 2-5 years between siblings to develop exposure of right and wrong sexual gestures among each other. This concept was first introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) where Child sexual abuse was defined as any activity of sexual nature between child and an adult or with any other child who can be held responsible to intend to satisfy his needs. With that no definite age for sexual allowance has been defined by the state heads rather universally. The age of sexual consent differs across borders where it is as low as 12-13 in countries like Spain, 17-18 in US or Australia or in Pakistan (until marriage) what so ever that age is the solution too differs across cultures.

The children are exposed to these acts usually at such small ages that they do not even realize what is happening to them rather being able to define it. Only one practice can stop this brutality and make our children less vulnerable to the lust of these evil predators is "Child Sexual Education".

Child sexual education is the most easy and effective way to hinder such matters giving our children power to scream a "NO" in the face of abusers and reducing the chances of such cases to a great level [12]. Basic child sexual education involves teaching the children the following precautions [13]:

Child sexual education involves teaching the children the difference between the good and bad touch.

Telling them that no one is allowed to touch their private parts

except for the mother or father (the caregiver) that too for bathing or cleaning them.

It is to show them images that depict good and bad touch.

It is teaching them to not sit in everyone's lap

It is saying No to when strangers offer them food or a walk across the lane

It is giving them the space and confidence to share any such incident

### Conclusion

Child Abuse is a rising problem and can only be sorted when the Taboo that it follows is considered less of a taboo and more of a threat to our children our futures. It is our responsibility as parents and as a society to not only raise our children physically healthy but also psychologically and to look after them in all domains of life.

### Reference

1. Freeman P (2000) Book review: *Grappling with Smoke: Investigating and Managing Organised Child Sexual Abuse*. A Good Practice Guide. NSPCC Policy Practice Research Series, NSPCC Publications and Information Unit, NSPCC National Centre, London, 1998. ISBN 0-902498835. *Child Abuse Review* 9(1): 85-86. doi:10.1002/(sici)1099-0852(200001/02)9:1<85::aid-car574>3.0.co;2-a
2. (2017) Sexual abuse.
3. (2017) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today.
4. Jones DP (1986) The traumatic impact of child sexual abuse: A conceptualization. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 55:530-541 (1985). Finkelhor D and Browne A, Family Violence Research Program, University of New Hampshire, Durham. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 10(2): 267-268. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(86)90093-1
5. Adams-Tucker C (1981) A socioclinical overview of 28 sex-abused children. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 5(3): 361-367. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(81)90020-x
6. Gelinis DJ (1983) The Persisting Negative Effects of Incest. *Psychiatry* 46(4): 312-332. doi:10.1080/00332747.1983.11024207
7. Alexander R (2011) Introduction to the Special Section: Medical Advances in Child Sexual Abuse, Part 2. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 20(6): 607-611. doi:10.1080/10538712.2011.623686
8. Elliott M (2017) Child sexual abuse prevention: What offenders tell us. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19(5): 579-594.
9. Krishnan S, Syahirah N, Syahirah N, Amira N, Krishnan S, et al. (2017) Study on Child Sexual Abuse. *Human Resource Management Research* 7(1): 38-42.
10. (2017) Child Sexual Abuse Statistics.
11. Kaufman M (2015) Sex Education for Children: Why Parents Should Talk to their Kids About Sex.
12. Faller KC (2007) Forensic and Clinical Interviewer Roles in Child Sexual Abuse. *Interviewing Children about Sexual Abuse: 3-9*. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195311778.003.0001
13. Tyagi V (2015) Teaching Children About Good Touch Bad Touch.