

Chapter 1

Child Sexual Abuse: An Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse has its influence on multiple dimensions through crises in lawful, social, medical, and psychological matters. While child sexual abuse involves the child in a physical deed, its harmful developments are predominantly shown in the child's psyche. Its considerable risk factors for developing psychopathology lie not just in childhood and adolescence, but also into adulthood. Child sexual abuse is highly under-reported in India, which has attained epidemic proportions. It is still seen as a taboo, creating a sense of discomfort where most communities try to hide, ignore, or mistrust the accusations. In healthcare, it thus becomes paramount to understand the warning signs, the likelihood of revelation while interviewing, and the dynamics of the family about culture and implications that can come along with the abuse. With a keen understanding of the types of abuse and an awareness of the proceedings after the disclosure, safety can be targeted.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse of children is the sexual behaviour between a child and an adult. It can also be between two juveniles when one is relatively older or uses intimidation. The abuser and the targeted child may be of the same or the opposite gender. Sexual abuse includes both inappropriate physical contact and sexual exploitation of minors, such as the production of graphic images of children in a sexually exploitative in nature or the encouragement or trafficking of young people as prostitutes.

The intimate essence of Child sexual abuse and the perpetrator's steadfast denial of any claimed abuse are its defining characteristics. Beyond incest, other forms of sexual abuse take place both inside and

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outside of the family, although the victim is typically already familiar with the abuser. In fact, the abuser may have purposefully befriended or “groomed” the child before making this acquaintance. Disputed memories of childhood sexual assault that were later discovered to be true have generated controversy (Davies & Dalgleish, 2001). While some memories have come to mind independently, others could be prompted by cues or brought to mind in response to an inquiry that contains leading queries and other hints (Loftus et al., 1994). While this debate has (inappropriately) reignited suspicions about the overall truth of charges made by children, clergy and media personnel who have gotten access to children have now recognised the significant size of Child sexual abuse outside the family.

In defining Child sexual abuse, the most accepted and comprehensive outline was given by The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2011). “Sexual abuse and exploitation include (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful or psychologically harmful sexual activity ; (b) The use of children in commercial sexual exploitation; and (c) The use of children in audio or visual images of Child sexual abuse; (d) Child prostitution, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, trafficking (within and between countries) and sale of children for sexual purposes and forced marriage.”

The 1981 definition of the National Center on Child Abuse and The National Centre on Child Abuse and Neglect’s definition from 1981 is as follows: “Contact and interactions between a child and an adult when the youngster is used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person are considered child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also be committed by a person under the age of 18 if the perpetrator is much older than the victim or in a position of power or influence over another.”

The phrase “sexual exploitation” can refer to instances in which a youngster is coerced into having sex with an adult physically or under psychological duress. However, both must have a commercial component or an economic driver. A child will receive social and psychological benefits in return for the exploitation. *Incest* is defined as sexual abuse that takes place within a family. *Sexual molestation* is the term used to describe sexual abuse committed by those who are not family members, such as older children, stronger children, adults, neighbours, carers, strangers, or close family friends. Legal penalties and “child” classifications differ from state to state. If there is at least an age gap of five years between the victim and the abuser, the perpetrator is typically designated as such. The phrase “child molester” includes both the clinical term “incest offender” and the psychiatric term “paedophile.” Both of these two categories of child molesters might exhibit similar and different traits.

PREVALENCE: GLOBAL/INDIAN CONTEXT

A study by the Indian Government on 17,220 youths to estimate the load of sexual abuse revealed startling outcomes. It was revealed that one of every two children in the nation was sexually maltreated. 52.94% of these juveniles were boys. The most prominent accounts of Child sexual abuse were reported in the states of Assam (57.27%), pursued by Delhi (41%), Andhra Pradesh (33.87%) and Bihar (33.27%).

Recently, in a meta-analysis of 331 pieces of literature examining Child sexual abuse prevalence worldwide, It was found that rates for males and females combined in nonclinical samples were around 12% (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). The prevalence rate for females was higher (18%) than the prevalence rate for males (7.6%).

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