

A STUDY AMONG THE VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CITY OF CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

The problem of child abuse is age-old but the dimensions are new. Every day a new way of harassing children takes place in every part of the world. Since it is a continuous problem we can't leave the same unstudied and un-researched. In the recent past, many incidents of child abuse are being reported in media. This has created a kind of fear among the public. These recent incidences have raised many questions especially on the causes of the child abuse and protection of children. The present study aimed to conduct empirical research on the reported cases of child sexual abuse registered under POCSO Act in the city of Chennai in the year 2018.

KEYWORDS: *Child Abuse, Child Rape, Sexual Harassment, Victimization*

INTRODUCTION

A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started.

He is going to be where you are sitting and when you are gone,

Attend to those things you think are important “

Abraham Lincoln

“Children are the treasure of future and assets of the Nation”

Mahatma Gandhi

Children are the pillars of any country. It is important to focus on the development of children in any country to have a healthy nation. If the children are grown based on their needs with good mental health, education and support the nation can achieve heights. Children need proper education, parental care, peer group support, and social harmony.

Unfortunately, certain conditions do not lead to the same and there are a lot of child abuse cases being reported in the country. In India, the rate of child abuse is being increasing day to day, which increases the vulnerability of future abuse. Tamil Nadu is also not spared from the cases of child abuse. In the year 2016, 21856 cases have been reported. In the year 2009, the total number of cases reported is 640. Out of the total crimes reported, Tamil Nadu contributes 8.1% among the child abuse cases which is definitely significant. Even this number is not a confirmed one as there are many cases which go unreported. The recent cases reported in Tamil Nadu like the one reported in Aynavaram, Chennai where

an 11 year old differently-abled girl child was sexually abused, a case on Thiruvallur district where a girl child was sexually abused and assaulted, have created a kind of panic among the parents. Parents are in a dilemma to send the children to the schools. Even recently the Tamil Nadu Police have made an announcement to the parents that not to leave their children below 10 years unattended as there is a threat of them being kidnapped and sold for various purposes by a group of intruders from other States. Based on all the above facts, it was aimed to undertake a study on the child sexual abuse victims which is the worst form of child abuse.

Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse Definition and Types

The **World Health Organization** (WHO) defines *child abuse* and *child maltreatment* as "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

The **United States Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act** defines *child abuse and neglect* as, at minimum, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation" or "an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm"

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is defined by the **Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, USA** and involves : (a) the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or (b) the rape, and in cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children. Child sexual exploitation includes ownership, production, and supply of sexually explicit images of children; using the Internet to lure children into sexual acts; prostitution of children; and child molestation. Sexual Assault includes any attempted or completed sexual acts with a child or adult who is coerced or forced to engage against their volition. This includes forcible sex offenses such as rape and sodomy.

Child sexual abuse, also called child molestation, is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse include engaging in sexual activities with a child (whether by asking or pressuring, or by other means), indecent exposure (of the genitals organs), child grooming, or using a child to produce child pornography.

Basically, child abuse is of four categories;

Child Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is an injury resulting from aggressive behavior.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse: Psychological Abuse is any behavior or failure to do an act which will affect a child's mental health or social development. It ranges from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. Emotional abuse is present in all form abuses and it would have long term psychological effect on the children and would hinder his / her development.

Child Sexual Abuse: Child Sexual Abuse is any sexual act between an adult and a child, including penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, and sodomy. Other forms of child sexual abuse includes fondling, which is touching or kissing a child's genitals, making a child fondle an adult's genitals, violations of bodily privacy which is forcing a child to

undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom, exposing children to adult sexuality which is performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling “dirty” stories, showing pornography to a child and commercial sexual exploitation which is Sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography.

Neglect: Neglect is a very common type of child abuse. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, more children suffer from neglect than from physical and sexual abuse combined. Yet victims are not often identified, primarily because neglect is a type of child abuse that is an act of omission - of not doing something.

Table 1

Types of Child Abuse	Activities
Physical Neglect	Failure to provide food, clothing appropriate for the weather, supervision, a home that is hygienic and safe, and/or medical care, as needed.
Educational Neglect	Failure to enroll a school-age child in school or to provide necessary special education. This includes allowing excessive absences from school.
Emotional Neglect	Failure to provide emotional support, love, and affection. This includes neglect of the child's emotional needs and failure to provide psychological care, as needed.
Some Signs of Child Neglect:	Clothing unsuited to the weather. Being dirty or unbathed. Extreme hunger. Apparent lack of supervision.

The word neglect may feel simple, but it is the most heinous form of child abuse, why because all the other form of abuse turn to happen when neglect ion takes place, when a child is left without proper care or capable guardian it leads to vulnerability of the child.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child’s medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child’s age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

The rate of child abuse is increasing day by day. More cases are reported in every state. The causes and consequences of child abuse are many. Especially, in the recent past, more child sexual harassment cases are reported and highlighted in the media. This gives a kind of panic and fear among the general public concerning the safety and security of their children. Understanding this fear, a research study was designed and conducted to focus on the child sexual harassment cases reported in the city of Chennai during January – February 2019.

There is a need that every child born in the society gets proper care and protection. Society often fails to provide the same because of which many cases of child abuses have been reported. Unless the people in the society realizes that child abuse is the worst form of crimes against children which will cause huge damage on them, the cases of child abuse can't be prevented. In this context, it is significant to understand the cases reported, the causes for the same and the offender behavior which will enable us to significantly prevent and minimize the child abuse cases in the future. Especially when there are not much studies on child sexual abuse cases reported at Chennai the researcher felt it is significant to study the same.

The objectives of the research carried out by the authors were;

- To study the extent of child sexual abuse cases reported in the city of Chennai.
- To understand the socio-economic background of the victims of child sexual abuse cases reported in the city of Chennai.
- To understand the causes of child sexual abuse.
- To know the behavior of the perpetrator of the child sexual abuse cases
- To study the consequences of victimization on the victims of child abuse

During the research a brief review of the literature was conducted by the researchers and some of them are given below:

The Universe of the present research study is the victims of child sexual abuse reported in the year 2018 under POCSO Act at Chennai City. A total number of 25 victims of child sexual abuse reported in the year 2018 under POCSO Act were selected for the purpose of this research study using purposive sampling technique. All the victims couldn't be interviewed due to the problems like improper address, the child was too young to respond and as parents were non-cooperative. The researcher used constructed an interview schedule which was used as a research tool for the present study. The tool was used to know the facts from the victims and the parents of the victims in the presence of a psychologist. Initially, a Pilot Study was conducted by the researcher with four victims to know the feasibility of the study and then actually study was undertaken. After the pilot study, the reliability and validity of the tool was established. In order to check the reliability test-retest method was used and the validity was checked using face validity with senior professors and academicians, After the pilot study the main study was conducted in the field with the victims of child sexual abuse which included those who were a part of pilot study also and later the data collected were analyzed SPSS software. The results obtained are given below with the discussion.

Based on the data obtained from the primary sources, the following results are obtained:

Extent of Child Sexual Abuse Cases Reported in Chennai During the Last Five Years**Table 2**

S. No	Year	Number of Cases Reported Under POCSO
1	2013	12
2	2014	15
3	2015	06
4	2016	15
5	2017	10
6	2018	48

The above table reveals the total number of cases reported under POCSO Act on Child sexual abuse from the year 2013 – 2018. More number of cases were reported in the year 2018. The least number of cases were reported in the year 2015 at Chennai. The number of cases reported seems to be high in the year 2018 and the rest other years it is reported less than 20. It does not denote that the numbers of incidences are less, but the reporting behavior is increased among the public. The reasons for the same is the awareness created by the media, agencies like child rights commissions, human rights commissions, NGO's working in the field of Child rights, etc. Also, it shows the increasing confidence among the police and judiciary among the parents in such cases. The recent case of the child Hasini near Chennai and the way police and judiciary handled the case for investigation has created confidence among the general public that they can report to police and will get justice. One another reason that may be attributed is the victim's parents and the neighbors feel that the offenders should get punished that such things should not happen to their children again and to other children. They feel that the reporting might help the offenders get caught, punished and will create fear among them and the other similar motivated culprits.

Socio -Economic Background of the Respondents:**Age of the Respondent****Table 3**

S. No	Age Group	Frequency
1	0-7	5
2	7-14	8
3	14-18	12
	Total	25

The majority of the respondents i.e. 12 of them were in the age group of 14 – 18 years at the time of interview. Five respondents belong to the age group of 0 – 7. Most of the respondents belong to the age group of 14 – 18 years. It further denotes that the incidences happened in the year 2018 and reported and hence the age of victimization also is the same. The incidences have happened within two to three months prior to the interview for this research study. Five respondents out of 25, i.e. 20% of the respondents were under the age group of 0 – 7. It is very significant to note that young children are victimized by the perpetrators when the children do not even know what is happening to them. In most of the cases, the children were not aware of what happened to them, and they have complained to their parents that they had body pain and some other physical discomfort. The parents and neighbors have later identified the cause to be sexual abuse.

Gender of the Respondent

Table 4

S.No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	4	16
2	Female	21	84
	Total	25	100

84% of the respondents belong are Female and 16% of the respondents were Male children. It is significant to note that the cases of child abuse happen not only to girl children but also to male children. 16% of the respondents are Male. These male children were abused for homosexuality. Out of the four male respondents, two of them were abused by the seniors in the schools at the bathroom, One respondent was abused by the auto rickshaw person who took the child every day to the school and the other one by the rickshaw driver. Though ragging is banned in schools and colleges, still it continues and that is what is denoted in the two cases were the seniors had asked the children to indulge in sexual activities. The seniors have threatened the children stating that if it is reported to someone, they will give the children. This has created a fear among the children and the parents identified the problem through some of the bruises in their bodies.

Education of the Respondent

Table 5

S. No	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Primary school	7	28
2	Secondary School	4	16
3	High School	11	44
4	Higher Secondary	3	12

Majority of the respondents i.e. 44% of them were studying High school at the time of victimization, 28% of them Primary school, 16% of them secondary school and 12 % of them belong to Higher Secondary school at the time of victimization. The same education is also attributed at the time of interview for this study as the interview took place within a few months of victimization. The results show that majority of the respondents who were abused sexually were studying high school at the time of victimization and interview for this study. High school is between 8th – 10th standard. During this age, the victimization is more and it is found that the use of social media like facebook, whats app is more in this age group and they are almost out of control of their parents. While the secondary school and primary school children have contacts with their parents and update day to day activities while it is found less among the high school and higher secondary school children. In the reported cases of the children who were in high school, the children get in contact with strangers through social media establish relationships and love affairs, in the name of love affairs they were victimized by multiple people or by the offender. Similarly, in the case of higher secondary school children, the major reason for getting victimized is due to the love affairs and the partner they chose. In the case of primary schools they were abused by the seniors, autorick shaw and rickshaw walas, neighbors and stepfathers.

Type of Residence of the Respondent

Table 6

S. No	House Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Individual homes	3	12
2	Flats	2	8
3	Housing board	14	56
4	Slums	6	24

Place of Occurrence of the Offence

Table 7

S. No.	Place of Occurrence	Frequency	Percentage
1.	At own home	3	12
2.	At neighbors Home	1	4
3.	At School	4	16
4.	At the offenders Choice of Place	17	68
	Total	25	

The above two tables reveal the place of stay of the respondents i.e. the victims of child sexual abuse and the place of occurrence of the abuse. 56% of the respondents stay at government housing board quarters, while 24% of them stay in slums, 12 % of them in the individual homes and the remaining in flats. In 68% of the cases, the crime had taken place at the choice of the offender, 16% at schools, 12% at own home and 4% at neighbors residence. The above two tables reveal the place of stay of the respondent and the place of occurrence of the incident. It is notable that most of the incidents have taken place at the place where the offender chose to viz., auto rickshaw, rickshaw, parks, bushy areas in general, ECR road and isolated beach areas near Kovalam. 16% of the incidents have taken place at schools which are understood from the previous table that they were abused by the seniors, in 12% of the cases and 4% of the cases it had been either stepfather or neighbor.

Types of Child Sexual Abuse

Table 8

S. No	Forms of Abuse	Frequency
1	Rape	21
2	Rape and murder	1
3	Voyeurism	4
4	Fondling	7
5	Indecent exposure to genital organs	12
6.	Homosexuality	4

The above table reveals the types of abuse underwent by the respondents. 21 respondents have been raped by the offenders, one victim has been raped and murdered, four victims have been made to indulge in homosexuality. Seven respondents were abused through fondling and four through voyeurism. It is found through the study that the majority of the respondents were raped and one victim was raped and murdered. Every victim had been made to undergo either of the forms of sexual abuse which includes homosexuality, fondling, voyeurism, etc

Perpetrators Categories

Table 9

S. No.	Perpetrator Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Step Father	2	8
2	Father	1	4
3	School mate	4	16
4	Lover	7	28
5	Neighbor / Known Persons	8	32
6	Stranger	1	4

The above table shows the category of perpetrators of child sexual abuse. 32% of the cases which is the majority among the 25 cases, either the neighbour or the known persons have perpetrated the crime, in 28% of the cases lovers have perpetrated the crimes, in 16% of the cases, the school mates have perpetrated the crimes, in 12% either father or stepfathers and in one case stranger have perpetrated the crime. Most of the perpetrators in these reported cases are known persons viz, autorickshaw wala and rickshaw wala taking the child to school for many years, samosa wala, same street and colony people, securities, lift operator, flat maintenance persons like plumbers, electricians, etc. It is more hurting to note that even father and stepfathers have perpetrated the crimes in 25% of the crimes. The stepfathers have committed the crime to exhibit angry and power to the child as they felt that the child is a burden to them to be happy with their mothers. In seven cases, the perpetrators were the so-called lovers. Some of the children in high school and higher secondary school have the habits of using social media through which they connect to strangers, get into love and finally were abused in the name of love. In a few cases, as a type of ragging, the seniors have perpetrated the crime on their junior children and abused them for homosexual activities.

Age of Perpetrators

Table 10

S. No	Age Category	Number
1	15 - 18	4
2	19 - 25	6
3	25 - 40	9
4	40 and above	23

Education of the Perpetrators

Table 11

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Literate	0	0
2	Semi literate	8	32
3	Illiterate	17	68

68 percent of the perpetrators are uneducated and 32 percent are semi-literate and no one is a literate which could be a possible cause for such act

Occupation of the Perpetrators

Table 12

S. No	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Own petty business	3	12
2	Driver	4	16
3	Servant	6	24
4	Student	2	8
5	Job less	10	40

The maximum percentage of them is jobless and daily wagers, some as drivers and servants and a few students too.

Motivation of the Perpetrator

Table 13

S. No.	Nature of Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sexual motive	21	84%
2	Homosexuality	2	8%
3	Child considered as a disturbance for sexual relationship bet couples	2	8%

84% of them are sexually motivated, a few consider children a disturbance in adultery, and due to homosexual behavior

Causes for the Victimization

Table 14

S. No.	Type of Cause	Frequency	Percentage
1	Left with neighbors	7	28
2	Parents negligence	10	40
3	Traveling alone	3	12
4	Child left alone at home	5	20

The major cause behind the above cases is the lack of parental attention and negligence by parents

Types of Victimization Underwent by the Child

Physical

Table 15

S. No.	Type of Physical Consequence	Frequency
1	Hurt/ injury	25
2	Bodily Changes	2
3	Death	1

Every child faced hurt and injury physically and a child was dead too due to such hurt, 2 of them have got bodily changes such as an 8 or 10 yearoldgirl looks like a 17 or 18yearold girl due to repeated sexual abusal

Emotional Consequences

Table 16

S. No.	Type	Frequency
1	Depression	18
2	Isolation	20
3	Phobias	23
4	Abnormal Behaviour	3

Most of the children faced depression including boys, a few isolated themselves from normal society and a few had phobias towards some places and object.

Other Consequences

Table 17

S. No.	Type	Frequency
1	School drop outs	3
2	Change of place	14
3	Avoiding public communication	7

Many of them change the place of residence and avoided public communication, a few even drooped out from school, showing no interest in education.

Who Reported to Police?

Table 18

S. No.	Reporter	Frequency	Percentage
1	Parents	23	92
2	Neighbours	2	8

Cause for Reporting

Table 19

S. No.	Cause	Frequency
1	To avoid Re-victimization	7
2	Due to awareness camps at schools	22
3	To punish the offender and create fear among future offenders	7

FINDINGS

The female or girl children are more vulnerable in the sexual abuse cases, since the number of reported cases against boys is comparatively low, it can't be concluded only girls are affected through this, most of the victims and perpetrators belong to slum area which could be a possible cause for increasing rate of crime in such area, the victims are mostly semi-literate and the perpetrators are mostly illiterate which could increase the vulnerability of occurrence of crime. Most of the abuse cases happened due to neglectation by parents and lack of parental care, where there are possibilities that if there would have to be a capable guardian the crime might not have happened

OVERALL DISCUSSIONS

Child abuse happens mostly by the known perpetrator, where the child is left under their care, the perpetrator is neighbour of child or someone who is somehow known to the child, which means the perpetrator watches the child keenly,

child's nature and characteristics, where they tune the child according to their need and abuse the child, which means they well plan their target and then indulge in such act. The researchers came across a few cases which are really horrible, one of the case, where the researcher felt shocking is, a one and half old year girl child was brutally raped and murdered by own father just for the sake of sexual pleasure and benefit from wife where he felt that child is a disturbance to regulate their sexual life. Her elder sister who is 3 years old was also repeatedly raped, now the child is quite fine but she has an anxiety and phobia towards her home, now she is staying at a govt home, but whenever she goes to her home she definitely suffers fever, and wheezing problem, she never likes to stay at home.

Another case which was quite abnormal is that, a girl had an love affair with a elder guy, who misused her, got the jewellery from her and abused her, after all this he did to her, she was addicted to his sexual behavior, so when she was initially at counseling stage, she throws everything in home, puts down all the clothes and pours eatables on the clothes like pickle and gravy, then she locks the room door and sits at restroom for hours together and then comes out see her mother sad and feels happy.

A few cases were with the blanket of a love affair in the age group between 14 to 18, which had 24% of cases of respondent were of this type. In the age group of 7 to 14 most are abused by neighbors and schoolmates, here homosexuality also took place, where one boy who was victim of such homosexuality, he was abused at restroom so he always fears to enter the restroom at home too he always accompanies mother or father always to enter restroom, its too pitty that 0 – 7 years old kids were also brutally affected that too 3 of the case were by own father and a few by close relatives and neighbors. This could be reduced by target hardening, by not leaving the child to anyone for a long time or continuously The appropriate theory that could be applied for the situations are

Routine Activity Theory, where the child is the vulnerable victim who lacks a capable guardian and the abuse happens.

Psychoanalytical Theory, where if the child is left unattended at an earlier age there is a possibility that the child may turn in to a criminal or persist criminal behavior for such gratification.

Crime and Media Theory, as the children learn from media they may try to apply it in life, there is why due to homosexuality few boys were affected.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers would suggest that if the children are given proper attention and care there would not be any such abuses happening around, the researcher feels that with the observations made there was no proper attention paid towards the child, for instance, take the case of Aynavaram at Chennai, where the young 11 year old girl was been raped and sexually abuse by 17 perpetrators over and over again and again for 6 months. It is because the mother of the child didn't paid proper attention to the child and which is the main cause for such long abuse. Many of the abuses took place because of a lack of attention to be paid towards the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The researchers would recommend conducting more intensive study in this field to make awareness among the public
- The parents must spend some time every day with the child and communicate with them properly

- The child must be monitored and given proper attention
- Never leave the child with any person for a long time
- Never allow anyone to touch your child
- The toilets for primary kids and secondary must be separated one
- Avoid giving mobile phones and other electronic gadgets that influence them
- Monitor the child's behavior continuously
- Ask the child the everyday activities friendly
- CCTV installation in schools, flats, isolated and dark place
- More number of awareness programs among children and parents must be availed

CONCLUSIONS

According to the researchers perspective, the children are the future of any nation hence they must be given proper education, care, and protection to their rights and uphold such rights. A few studies says that there is a possible cause of becoming a criminal if the criminal is being abused or harassed in his young age, which he reflects on others. Child abuse happens mostly by the known perpetrator, where the child is left under their care, the perpetrator is neighbour of child or someone who is somehow known to the child, which means the perpetrator watches the child keenly, its nature and characteristics, where they tune the child according to their need and abuse the child, which means they well plan their target and then indulge in such act.

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