

Sexual Abuse and Adolescent Girls : An Experience of Rural Areas of Delhi, India

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Introduction

The world health organization (WHO) defines adolescents as the age group 10-19, a definition used throughout the volume. The meaning of adolescence as a cultural constraint has been understood in many different ways throughout the world, however in general terms, it is considered a time of transition from childhood to adulthood during which young people experience changes following puberty, but do not immediately assume the rules, privileges and responsibilities of adulthood. During adolescence, in addition to the emotional development also. Adolescents are increasingly spending more time in school experiencing puberty at younger ages. Marring and having children later than in the past. The planning commission of India estimates that as of March 2000, adolescents aged 10-19 comprised 23% of the Indian Population i.e. almost 230 million.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any contacts or interactions between a child (under the age of 18 for girls and 16 for boys) and an adult (who is significantly older than the victim and is in a position of power or control over the child or may even be an acquaintance or an unknown person).

Sexual abuse is not often identified through physical indicators alone. Frequently a adolescent child confides in a trusted person (mother, friend, neighbor, kin...) that she or he has been sexually assaulted or molested by a family member or the employer or the caretaker or lover or a family acquaintance. These are, however, some physical signs of sexual abuse. These are:- difficulty in walking or sitting, torn, stained or bloody under clothes, complaints of pain or itching, bruises or bleeding, mineral disease and pregnancy (in early adolescence) (Sloan Irving, 1983, 6).

Scenario in India

The very mention of the word sex titillates the senses, makes the blood run faster in the minds and hearts of all alike. Sigmund Freud has said that sexual satisfaction is analogous to satisfaction of hunger. Sex is a natural phenomenon and is necessary for the continuity of human race on this planet of earth and sexual exploitation is the worst form of degradation of those who indulge in it. The violation of virginity subjects a woman to considerable shame and humiliation in Indian context. There are various ways and forms in which sexual exploitation is practiced. The most perverted and degrading form is rape. The term "rape" is derived from the Latin word "rapese" meaning to steal, seize or carry away, it implies hiding and attacking girl and woman by man for the satisfaction of his sexual desire. Incidence of rape, particularly among young and adolescent girls is reported almost daily. It not only humiliates and makes women powerless but for many the effects are long lasting. The capacity for personal relationship gets impaired and endless fear is generated. In a report (Hindustan Times, 2004a), a total of 12,204 cases were reported in the counting against 11,204 cases in 1993 and 12,351 in 1994. As far as molestation is concerned, in 1993 as many as 20,985 cases were reported which increased to 24,117 in 1994 and touched a high of 25,446 in 1995.

Despite the fact that Delhi is having the highest per capita income, it has more than 2.1 million people living in Poverty. The majority of girls and women are vulnerable to diseases, crime and sexual exploitation.

Most if the victims are unskilled and illiterate. The capital in becoming ever more unsafe for women and adolescent girl with the crime rate of 341 per million compared to 9.5 for all over Indian in 1993.

During 1993 as many as 233 rape cases were reported which rose to 322 in 1994, 377 in 1995 and to 470 in 1996 showing an increase of 28.38% of registered crime (Hindustan times, 1997) the figures for a reported crime is not known. The various studies have shown the reporting of heinous crime like rape is more as compared to other sexual crimes of harassment and exploitation. In analysis of 470 rape cases has shown that 88% of the rape cases were committed by relatives and close acquaintances of the victim. Close acquaintances who criminally violated young girls include doctor's, lovers servants and fellow travelers, (Hindustan times, 1996 b)

(Source: Aggarwal N.K, Bhatia M.S Aggarwal B.L. Sexual crime against women scenario in Delhi.

Sexual crime in Delhi

According to a report of Delhi State commission for women, out of the 470 cases of rape, 60% of cases were of girls below 16 year of age, about 42% of the rape victims were in 10-16 age group compared to 23% in the country.

Sexual crime Against women

Particular	2001	2002
Dowry Death	107	158
Rape	233	322
Molestation of women	-	521
Cruelty by in-laws	-	985
Eve Teasing	-	1668

(Source: - A report of sexual crime against women scenario in 2005)

In addition to the trauma of rape (Carman, 1984) the victims suffer further during the legal proceeding. The victims is not only forced to re-live through the traumatic experience, what is forced to do so in a totally alien atmosphere with the whole of the criminal justice system focused upon her. So, the victim undergoes two crises (i) the rape (ii) the subsequent trial.

She not only needs legal aid but empathy, safety, reassurance and proper rehabilitation, Burman et al, 1988) Apart from rape, there are other forms of sexual exploitation i.e. molestation of women/girl , eve teasing etc.

These type of crime also leave one our other form of mental trauma. The number of cases in these categories is also on the increase as evident from the table 1st

Experience from Psychiatry outpatient Department

Psychiatry disorders have been more commonly reported in sexually abused women and vice versa. The experiences from our psychiatry outpatient department of a tertiary care

Teaching hospitals, Delhi reflects that the sexual crimes against psychiatric patients are common.

Either psychiatric illness especially psychosis or mental retardation predisposes a person to the risk of sexual torture or the sexual crime may trigger to one set of a psychiatric illness. The experiences of last five years in the outpatient department is depicted in table 2 & 3

S.No.	Psychiatric disorder	Sexual torture No of cases
1	Schizophrenia	20
2	Mania	08
3	Endogenous depression	15
4	Generalized Anxiety Disorder	05
5	Neurotic Depression	07
6	Hysteria (conversion / Dissociation)	12
7	Post traumatic stress disorder	04
8	Psychalgia	12
9	Somatoform Disorders	15
10	Sleep Disorder	10
11	Elimination disorder	05
12	Eating Disorder	05
13	Attention Deficit Disorder	05
14	Mental retardation	12
15	Drug dependence	03
16	Attempted suicide	15
17	Others	05
	Total	158

Perpetrators of sexual crime

Sr. No	Perpetrator	No. of cases
1	Parent	40
2	Uncle of relative	80
3	Sibling	15
4	Teacher	12
5	Warden	10
6	Stranger	30
7	Physician	05
8	Police	05

Source: A report by national crime records bureau of India (2004)

An Experience of Sexual exploitation among adolescent girls in villages of Delhi

The paper describes the experience of an organization called Navjyoti India Foundation in family counseling centre. The researcher conducted a qualitative study in three village called Bawana, Holmi Khurd and Narela, the area of Delhi, through taking counseling sessions, out reach programmes and home visits. The objective was to study adolescents "Sexual behaviour information needs and networks. This paper describes the kind of coercion faced by adolescent girls and the sociocultural factors that lead to coercion. Researcher identified adolescents as particular students of 8th to 12th standard group in term sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse of adolescents girls may also be a wide spaced problem with serious implications for their mental health.

Methods

To do this, study recruited adolescents from the 48 outreach programmer in rural communities to collect ethnographic data from their press. The researcher used these findings to develop in depth interviews and focus group discussion guidelines. She conducted 65 depth interviews and 10 home visits. With them most of girls were unmarried. Finally researcher held 5 focus groups to gather information on normatic behavior. Researcher translated the data from hindi into English a coded the issues that emerged at the time of translation.

Key Findings

Bawana, Narela and Holambi Khurd and village of Delhi, generally from middle-lower and higher socio economic bracket. All are belong to Hindu family. The prevailing culture is patriarchal in which girls are seen as the family "Izzat (Honour) and are sometimes referred to as 'Paraya Dhan' or someone else property (i.e. their future husband's) arranged marriages are the norms and any perceived misdemeanour on the girls marriage. As a result families restrict girl's mobility and limit interactions with boys who are not part of the family.

During 65 in depth interviews, responding mentioned teasing 150 times and described 30 separate instances of more serious kind of sexual exploitation. Typically group of two or four boys tease girls who pass on the street. Teasing includes comments, singing film songs, whistling, shorting, suggestive hand gesture and facial expressions. Boys who lack other opportunities use teasing as a way to interact with girls while teasing is mild compared to other issues discussed in this paper. It may reinforce attitudes about male dominance as boys became aware that society tolerates this behaviour. Most teasing goes unrewarded, but in the few cases it leads to friendship between boy and girls. Girls in the study described the attitude of boys towards girls that boys be friend girls with physical relationship for most in their mind. An 17 years old girl remarked, mostly boys do friendship for sake of physical relations some boys keep friendship till friendship but mostly boys (to) established physical relation as early as possible. Respondents described a number of relationships that begun as consensual but led to sexual exploitation, ranging from forced kissing to forced intercourse. In some cases become progressively more violent. For example: A 15 year old girls described how my uncle (Mamaji) kissed me forcefully at my home when I was alone and subjugation at the start of the relationship led to more severe violence. The girl explained:- after some time pass on he started having anal and vaginal sex with me forcefully when I refused he gave me threat that if I will not do this then he will tell everybody and my parents will beat up me lot and will not give me food and clothes.

A 17 year old girls narrated how her cousin assaulted her since childhood. He pressed my breasts and kissed me forcefully and having sexual relationship for long time. I got lot of pain but he did this till he was not satisfied. He threat me to do this otherwise he will kill me or defame me in society.

However society after tolerates exploitation and places blam squarely on the victim as the following instance illustrates. A 14 year of girl narrated how a boy on the street assaulted her "once I was coming through the street and this boy came from the front. Pressed my breasts and run away I had not wrapped a chunni. Chunni (Scarf) is a symbol of modesty in the India social context and without it women are often said to have loose morals for exhibiting their breasts. The girl's mother beat up the boy, but the neighbors commented "fault lies in your daughter who did not wear a chunni. The neighbor's comment reflected tolerance of the boy's behavior by placing blame on the girls back of character.

One 17 year's old married girls narrated that her husband was forced her to having sexual relationship with his brother and relations. When I was refused he beat up me lot and threat to kill me.

One 19 years old girls described how her uncle raped her again and again with the threaten to kill her. She explained one day she took bold decision and shared her problem with her family. But they did not sport her and did not ready to listen her properly. They blame on the girls back of character aid gone her Dhamki (threat) to no discuss this matter to anyone for their keeping izzat.

Table 1

No. of cases who reported sexual abuse during last 4 years by type of abuse from the police stations:

Particulars	Kanjhawala	Narela	Bawana	Total
Rape	18	52	23	93
Molestation of Women	22	28	42	92
Eveteasing	-	17	6	23
Kidnapping/Abduction	17	63	53	116
Total				324

Sexual crime in villages of Delhi.

Accordingly to collected data from the police stations of villages Kanjhawala, Narela and Bawana 80% of cases were of girls below 17 years of age.

Table 2

Type of perpetrator and action taken by victim among adolescents who reported in police station and experience of sexual abuse with the past 4 year as number of abuser with type of abuser

Type of perpetrator

Student/friend/lever	119
Parent/Relative	60
Stranger	65
Neighbour	80
Total	324

Through most of these remain undetected and unreported, the actual incidence is on the rise. The crimes which are reported represent only the part of the tip of iceberg. The reasons cited for low reporting in usual axis are many like – due to family pressure (especially when the head of the family or a close relation is involved), social pressure (especially when an important member of the society is involved) personal reasons due to lack of awareness or being not able to report due to psychosis or due to fear of being further ridiculed and unaccepted, cultural factors (when incestuous relations or premarital sex is culturally accepted) legal reasons (due to lack of faith in law – due to fear of being exploited) or judicial factors (when the enforcement law is boxed and judicial decision takes a very long time or due to tear of being further tortured by repeated and prolonged interrogation especially in rape victims.

Conclusion

The major findings of this study indicate that sexual abuse and violence are common among this population. Many adolescents girls experienced of multiple types of sexual abuse and these was a strong association between experience of sexual abuse and experience of other forms of violence. The adolescent girls were more often abused by friend, lover neighbour, and relatives. Despite the pleasure boys desire from sex, they hold a negative view of sex that is bad, dirty and shameful. Nevertheless, they are willing to talk about sexual matters. Sexual coercion among adolescent girls are an exercise of maintain status. Society perpetuates abuse by tolerating certain kind of coercion, which emboldens boys to became even more aggressive and violent.

While boys have license from society to take advantaged of sexual opportunities, girls risk defamation. The crimes are widely prevalent in every society through most of them remain undetected and unreported. An awareness must be created in the community to motivate the victims to report, also more and more reporting centers (in community with NGO's or hospitals) must be opened to overcome the fear and back of faith in the law enforcing agencies which will help in the community.

The findings of the present study on sexual abuse and adolescent girls reveal that these vulnerable issues are alarming and need to be tackled urgently. Hence, appointment of school social worker in schools who is well trained in method of working with people and equipped with skills and knowledge can play a major contributing role to deal with risk behavior in adolescents with involving multiple modalities which is multidimensional in nature and multi-disciplinary in approach in networking with individual and groups. Both in private and in the public spheres, we need to give more space for development to the adolescent girls.

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