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Prevalance of child sexual abuse – Pakistan’s context

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Abstract. The aim/ Objective of the study were to analyze the graph of child sexual abuse in Pakistan over the past ten years and to figure out the possible cause in prevalence of the same. Data for the said purpose was collected through Secondary source i.e. internet, newspapers, victims itself. Whereas, authentication of the data has been ensured through cross check from various other sources. CSA was found to be dominant mainly because of the silence of the victim, poor financial background, lack of strict implementation of rules & laws etc. Role of media has also been found to be an effective tool in prevention of this vicious act.

Keywords. Child Sexual Abuse, harrassmentt, children rights

1. Introduction

Since emergence in 1970s of sexual mistreatment of children as an extended problem, professionals have contended the conceptualization and definition of CSA (Haugard 2000). Overall Child abuse is act of commission or omission originated & created by human or abided circumstances to restrict or hinder the growth of natural abilities of children. Giovannoni (1971) described CSA as harm resulted from commissioning acts and acts of disregard accompanied with neglect depicting adverse consequences. Abuse is utilization of parental rights to compelled the children to behave or act in way their parents or guardian wants whereas adversity portrays lacking in performing parental responsibilities comprising of nurturance, supervision etc. It is subdivided in four major groups i.e. physical abuse & neglect, emotional abuse & neglect. Sexual abuse encompasses physical abuse, but it has distinct properties which discriminate it from all other sort of ill-treatment. Another definition of sexual abuse is a failure that portrays an impending hazard of severe damage to the child’s health and development in all respects (National Clearinghouse on Child abuse and Neglect Information, 2006).

Over the past few years, grown/ enhanced significance of child sexual abuse has been observed. It have concluded by various researchers that child sexual abuse encounters are adversely related with health conditions i.e. psychological and emotional (Chan K. L. 2011). For instance, sexual harassment negatively effects and undermines children’s well-being; promote psychological distress, resulting enhanced physical impairment and yields disordered eating (Lim, S. & Cortina, L. M. 2005; Gutek 1985; Hashim, et al. 2013; Huerta et al. 2006). Studies also shows that child sexual abuse is one of the reasons for psychological conditions i.e stress, anxiety and depression among children (Adams 1988; Baba et al. 1998).

Child sexual abuse is noteworthy particularly among minor girls (Gruber and Fineran 2008). Overall, female children tolerate enhanced periodicity of incivility than male children; however, both genders face identical adverse effects from sexual abuse (Cortina et al. 2001). Contemporary findings depicts that there is considerable distinguish of understanding CSA with respect to place of residence i.e. country, region etc (Fiedler and Blanco 2006; Luthar et. al 2007; Sharam, M. J. et al; Zippel 2006). i.e. there are women in some countries being probable to tolerate sexual harassment due to diverse reasons of cultural and men are more prone to harass sexually women (Cortina and Wasti 2005; Luthar and Luthar 2007). Pakistan's context is not distinguished from all other developing countries of the world. Pakistan has confronted graved happenings in this regard over the last few years, which are discussed below.

2. Objectives

The study focuses on under mentioned three objectives.

1. To gauge the intensity of CSA in Pakistan over the last 10 Years.
2. To evaluate possible causes of prevalence of CSA in Pakistan.
3. To grab the attention of Govt/ Media and other concerned societies towards prevention of CSA.

3. Methodology

Data is collected from already published authentic sources i.e internet, newspapers, NGOs etc and have been analyzed in various aspects keeping objective of the study in view.

4. Statistics of CSA in Pakistan over the Last 10 Years

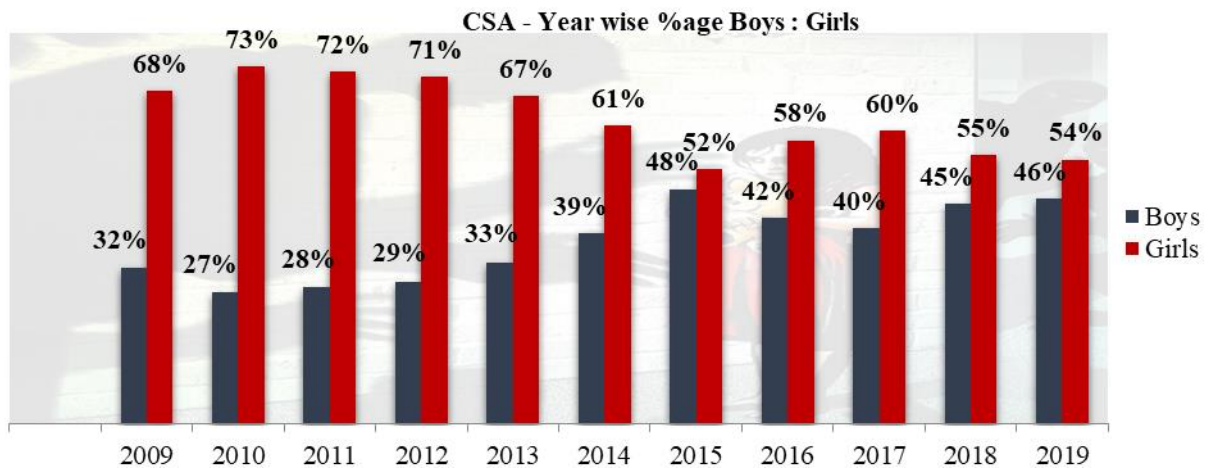
CSA is unluckily seen to be a usual happening in Pakistan which intends concealing himself beneath cover of culture but, is astonishing and sorrowful that CSA is widespread in society of Pakistan. Infamous Zainab case in Kasur and child sexual abuse scandal in same city are only two notorious incidents portraying a miserable view of disease that is bothering the society, whereas government and other influential groups have collapsed to resolve this issue and even if take preventive measures, it is alwas too late and hence re-occurring continues. Irritation, stress and feeling of being unsecure because of CSA are obvious in our society because of many reasons. There are likely possibilities of prevalence is the perpetrator might be a family member and there exist a communication gap between parents and their children accompanied by blind loyalty/ trust with family members contributes to child abuse taking place in this society.

Horrific details entailing incidents of child sexual abuse in Pakistan have emerged in a report compiled recently by an NGO working for a safe environment for children and tackling child abuse. According to a report from the same NGO 2012 cases of child abuse reported in 2009, 2252 in 2010, 2303 in 2011, 2788 in 2012, 3002 in 2013, 3508 in 2014, 3768 in 2015, 4139 in 2016, 3445 in 2017, 3832 in 2018 and 2846 in 2019.

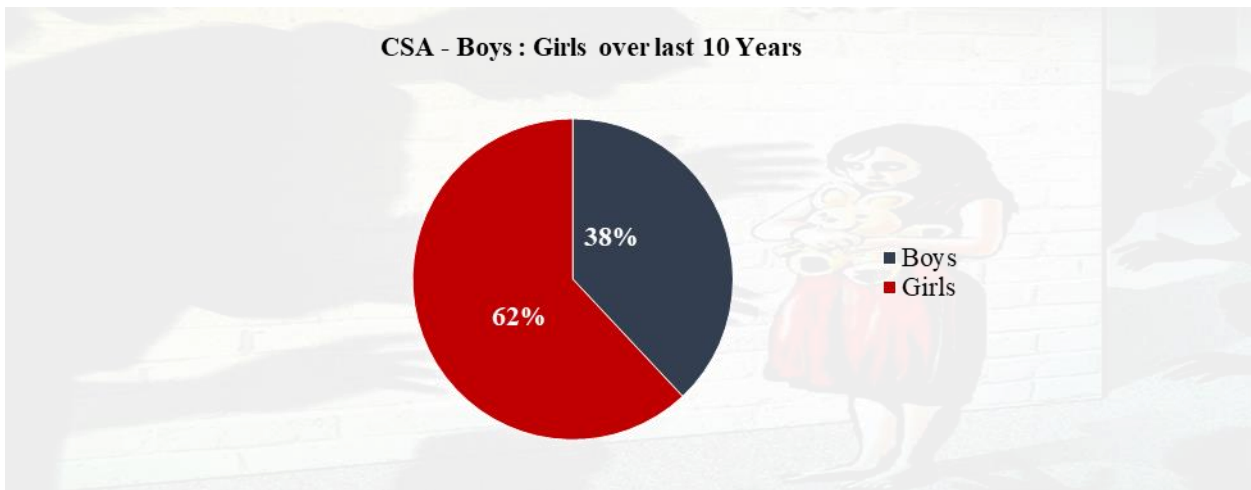
Statistics of CSA - Last 10 Years



The statistics appended below shows that the percentage of girls being harassed are much higher than boys, which reflects the reality that girls have always proved as an easy target being lesser capability to retaliate. It has also been confirmed by the American Psychological Association (APA) that Girls tend to be at greater risk of sexual victimization than boys. Boys are more likely to be victimized by a perpetrator outside the family than girls. In the year 2012 out of all 2788, 71% were girls and 29% were boys, in 2013 67% were girls and 33% were boys, in 2014 61% were girls and 39% were boys, in 2015 52% were girls and 48% were boys, in 2016 58% were girls and 42% were boys, in 2017 60% were girls and 40% were boys, in 2018 55% were girls and 45% were boys whereas in 2019 54% were girls and 46% were boys.



Over all during the era of 2009 to 2019 total 33895 case of child sexual abuse have been reported. In which 20872 were girls and 13022 were boys. In other word 38% and 62% were boys and girls respectively. Which clearly reflects that ratio of girls is much higher than boys.



5. Background of prevalence/ Findings

Following are the main grounds found during the study of child sexual abuse in Pakistan based on the above mentioned statistics.

5.1 Taciturnity – Silence Instead of violence

In Pakistani culture the victims/ children usually does not disclose the matter of being abused sexually as it is considered disgraceful to the family/ tribe. Although the victim has the legal right to raise voice against the same but due to above mentioned reason he prefer to be quit and hence being abused continuously over a period of time. Therefore lead to mental and physical disorder. On the other hand being voiceless results into encouragement of perpetrators to repeat the same.

5.2 Child Labor

Child labor is a common phenomenon in under developed countries, where to feed family/ siblings, minors have to perform a job of lowest cadre in factories far away from home/ city area or to be a maid. These minors in return face tortures of different kind majorly sexual abuses. Across Pakistan, thousands of children are being abused sexually by employer as employed in result of above mentioned situation/ scenario.

A major obstacle in hindrance of child sexual abuse in Pakistan is that child labor is so common. Many of those hiring children as their servants have no fear of law nor law restrict them in doing so. They are the wealthiest not only but most powerful, employing children as domestic workers. Across the board, children are employed, whoever can afford to employ them. Mostly, e minor workers being easier to control and exploit are being preferred. Whereas, poor parents are ever ready to offer their children for employment because it at least promises two meals and a roof. Nothing else matters.

Despite of highlighted risks, low financial background parents portrays willingness in sending for work children at low age. They have been entice by agents with argument of financial benefits, false assurances are often offered about how their children will be looked out while working far from home. Homes poverty ridden and to feed more mouths than food on plates, eager from the end of parents are observed in sending their children to work, in spite of lowest salaries/ wages and being abused in the hands of employers. In various cases, the alternative would be to leave children on the streets to beg at risk of succumbing to drug addiction and being lured in by criminal gangs.

5.3 Slow court proceeding/ No strict Punishment

The victims often do not raise voice due to lack of financial resources or due to fear of being face severe consequences or being disgraceful. Keeping these constraints aside if a victim decides to go to court for justice, slow court proceedings because of procedural formalities or lack of legislation or lack of strict punishment dishearten him in way of seeking justice. So far author's knowledge is concern, till Zainab's case no one of the perpetrators has been sentenced to death through court orders. However few of them have been life prisoned.

5.4 Lack of Legislation/ Implementation

In the year 2020 keeping the prevalence of child sexual abuse National Assemble has passed Zainab Alert Bill on the second death anniversary of Zainab, victim of Sexual abuse and then brutally killed. Although the bill has to be passed and implemented way before to prevent the prevalence of CSA. The increase in ratio of CSA noted in above mentioned statistics justifies the need of strict legislation and its implementation since long.

5.5 Electronic Media/ Social Media/ Easy access to Pornographic Material/ Sexting

Television, movies, social media, music, sexually animated cartoons, games and magazines have enough of sexual contents. All these sources can be easily accessed from anywhere even from mobile phones, which exaggerates sexual feeling of one and incites them to commit or abuse child sexually being less capable of shielding/ guarding themselves.

In 52% of magazine & newspapers advertisements, women have sexually objectifying portrayals. Whereas in music videos 59% of women appearances observed. Studies, more than 100 have identified connection between revelation of young people to objectifying content that displays women. More tolerance is observed in exposed ones to objectifying portrayals or in alignment with sexual harassment, rape myths, contradictory sexual beliefs and CSA in comparison with those who have no exposure and experiences more body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, and disordered eating. Teen-rated video games contains 27% of sexual themes. Females are represented as sexual peace in video games. Peoples exposed to sexualized women in video games shows enhanced acceptance/ inclination towards rape believes and tolerance of sexual harassment in comparison to others.

5.5.1.1 Sexting

Sexual images sending rate of one self is 5% to 7% and it is an emerging side of natural adolescent, sexual exploration and experimentation. It is mostly a part of a chain of a developing or existing romantic relationship, which is linked with uncertainties. Sexts are forwarded to a third party in case of any conflict and often used as method of bullying or revenge. Underage teenager usually oversight these risk and become victim of sexual abuse through blackmailing etc.

5.5.2 Child Pornography

In the year 2019 child pornography has been monitored for the first time in Pakistan and 70 cases of the same have been reported. Uploading child pornography creates permanent record of CSA on the web. When such images/ videos are uploaded to internet and broadcasted online, the victimization of children continues in perpetuity. Experts and victims depicted in child pornography often suffer life time of re-victimization by knowing the images of their sexual abuses are on internet forever.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of above mentioned statistics and grounds/ findings, it is concluded that CSA rate has considerably increased over the years in Pakistan. Additionally, above mentioned statistics are based on cases which have been reported, whereas, surely there might be lots of cases which are unreported in media or remained hidden. The fundamental cause of the same is that victim either doesn't raise his voice against this maltreatment or don't have financial resources to peruse legal proceedings. Hence encourages and strengthening the perpetrator to redo the same. Thus, proper surveillance system is therefore required to identify the hidden cases of child abuse that can lead to effective policy formulation and implementation. Most of victims are found to be of poor financial background. Further, over the last 10 years it is noted that ratio of girls being abused sexually is much higher in comparison of boys, which reflects that they are more exposed to be abused. However, number of boys has also faced this merciless crime. As media has highlighted sufficient cases in this regard during the last year and grab the attention of Govt and Courts towards this serious matter. Consequently Govt/ courts have taken some steps but equivalent to a drop in ocean. However, these steps have also put positive impact in decreasing the ratio of CSA in the last quarter of year 2019. A decrease of 26% has been observed in same year in comparison to the previous year. This is also due to communities being more vigilant after the horrific Kasur case. But cases of murdering children after being abused have also been observed, which need to be focused in depth (cases, causes, affects etc) in future. Therefore, still there is a lot to do. Govt has to impose/ engage in making more strict laws and policies accompanied with improvement of financial conditions of poor ones to make their children avoid child labor. Pakistan has far to go in child protection though, numerous action plans, bills and act and its implementation in true spirit. Prime responsibility lies with the state, but commitments and responsibility of parents and society in this regard is mandatory.

On the other hand media has vital obligation on their shoulders in the context of CSA as it plays a key role in highlighting these incidences being the only source of diverting the attention of Govt towards this serious matter and making the people aware about necessary steps to be taken after such incidence took place or precautionary measures in avoidance of such happenings.

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