

## A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE

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### INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a violation of the basic human rights of a child and is an outcome of a set of inter-related familial, social, psychological and economic factors. The problem of child abuse and human rights violations is one of the most critical matters on the international human rights agenda. In the Indian context, acceptance of child rights as primary inviolable rights is fairly recent, as is the universal understanding of it.

#### Definition of child abuse

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child. It may, however, be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age.

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behavior with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation.

**Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. It includes acts or the failures to act by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma.

**Sexual abuse** is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and perpetrators know each other. Immediate reactions to sexual abuse include shock, fear or disbelief. Long-term symptoms include anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress disorder. While efforts to treat sex offenders remain unpromising, psychological interventions for survivors — especially group therapy — appears effective.

#### Health and Physical Consequences

- Pregnancy, especially in early adolescence
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Difficulty walking, sitting, or standing
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Vaginal/penile discharge
- Pain during urination or urinary tract infections
- Bruises on the child's mouth, to the hard or soft palate
- Sleep disturbances (difficulty sleeping, nightmares)



- Enuresis & Self-injurious behavior (cutting, burning oneself, suicide attempts)

### **Preventing Sexual Abuse**

- Know the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse so that you might recognize a child who is being harmed.
- Be willing to report suspicions. Remember, it is not your job to prove that sexual abuse has occurred, and your report might keep a child from further harm. Offer ongoing communication about sexual touching and other topics to create trusting relationships with children.
- Teach children self-protection skills that they have the right to say no or stop and to tell an adult and keep telling the adult until they are believed.
- Support community and school programs to prevent abuse

### **Objectives**

- To understand the socio demographic profile of the respondents.
- To understand the adolescent girls knowledge regarding sexual abuse.
- To understand the attitude of adolescent girls towards sexual abuse.
- To understand the practices adopted by the respondents to handle the sexually abusive situation & reasons for not responding in sexual abuse situation.

### **Sampling**

The researcher selected adolescent girls studying in both government and unaided schools in kaveripattinam Block as the universe of study. The researcher selected total 60 adolescent girls from both government school and private school for comparative study. A descriptive research design was adopted for the present study. Simple random sampling method is used in this research work because the study conducted in a homogeneous group. All the elements in the population have an equal chance of being selected.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Distribution of respondents by age.**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Unaided school</b>		<b>Government</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
12	0	0	4	13.3
13	9	30.0	19	63.3
14	13	43.3	5	16.7
15	8	26.7	2	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most of the respondents are in the group of 12-15 years. The above table shows that 30 percent of respondents in unaided school are belong to the age group of 13 years while in government school 63.3 percent respondents belong to the group of 13 years. Very few of (6.7 percent) respondents in government school are belongs the age group of 15 years while in unaided school 26.7 percent of respondents belongs to the age group of 15 years of age.

**Distribution of the respondents on the basis of class**

<b>Name of the class</b>	<b>Unaided school</b>		<b>Government school</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> standard	10	33.3	17	56.7
9 <sup>th</sup> standard	20	66.7	13	43.3
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0

From the above table it is clear that the majority of the respondents in unaided school are from 9<sup>th</sup> standard while in government school the majority respondents from 8<sup>th</sup> standard.

**Distribution Of family members of the respondents**

Name of the family members	Unaided school		Government school	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	0	0	1	3.3
2	0	0	0	0
3	4	13.3	0	0
4	14	46.7	2	6.7
5	4	13.3	9	30.0
6	4	13.3	6	20.0
7	0	0	5	16.7
8	0	0	7	23.3
9	4	13.3	0	0
Total	30	100.0	30	100

From the table it is clear that most of the respondents in the government school are from big families. Whereas, most of the respondents in the private school are from small family.

**Knowledge Level**

SI NO	Statement	yes		No		Don't know	
		US	GS	US	GS	US	GS
1	Friendly with your parents	30 100%	29 96.7%	0 0%	1 3.3%	0 0%	0 0%
2	Own a mobile phone	1 3.3%	2 6.7%	29 96.7%	28 93.3%	0 0%	0 0%
3	A member in any kind of social network	3 10.0%	0 0%	27 90.0%	30 100%	0 0%	0 0%
4	Heard the word 'sexual abuse'	30 100%	21 70%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	9 30.0%
5	A problem only for girls	4 13.3%	13 43.3%	14 46.7%	0 0%	12 40.0%	17 56.7%
6	Sex related comments included in sexual abuse	16 53.3%	11 36.7%	3 10.0%	0 0%	11 36.7%	19 63.3%
7	Sex related messages/phone calls are not a sexual abuse	7 23.3%	12 40.0%	12 40.0%	2 6.7%	11 36.7%	16 53.3%
8	Physical abuse is the real abuse	16 53.3%	13 43.3%	5 16.7%	2 6.7%	9 30.0%	15 50.0%
9	Exhibitionism is a sexual abuse?	8 26.7%	14 46.7%	5 16.7%	0 0%	17 56.7%	16 53.3%
10	Rape is the cruelest sexual abuse	26 86.7%	26 86.7%	1 3.3%	0 0%	3 10.0%	4 13.3%
11	Way of dressing of girls leads to sexual abuse	21 70.0%	19 63.3%	9 30.0%	3 10.0%	0 0%	8 26.7%
12	Sexual abuse happens only from unfamiliar person	0 0%	3 10.0%	28 93.3%	16 53.3%	2 6.7%	11 36.7%
13	Sexual abuse happens within the family	17 56.7%	22 73.3%	3 10.0%	1 3.3%	10 33.3%	7 23.3%



**Friendly with your parents:** Cent percent of the respondents in unaided school are friendly with their parents as compared to the respondents in government school.

**Own a mobile phone:** The 6.7 percent respondents in government school have their own mobile phones. A member in any kind of social network: In government school there are not single respondents the member in any kind of social networks, while 10.0 percent of respondents in unaided school are the members in social network. Heard the word 'sexual abuse': cent percent of the respondents in unaided school are heard the word 'sexual abuse' while in government school only 70 percent of respondents heard about the word 'sexual abuse'. Rest 30 percent didn't heard about the word sexual abuse.

**A problem only for girl:** 43.3 percent of respondents in government school revealed that the problem of sexual abuse is the problem only for girls. Sex related comments included in sexual abuse : Sexual abuse may include verbal remarks like name calling, sex related comments, sex related messages, phone calls, exhibiting sex organs, sex related films, pictures etc. These abuses create mental stress and strain to a person. Majority (53.3percent) of respondents in unaided school has average knowledge, 10 percent have low knowledge and 36.7 percent have moderate knowledge about the mental abuse. While in government school majority (63.3percent) of respondents has moderate knowledge, 36.7 percent have average knowledge about the mental abuse.

**Sex related messages / phone calls are not a sexual abuse :** Sexual abuse may include verbal remarks like name calling, sex related comments, sex related messages, phone calls, exhibiting sex organs, sex related films, pictures etc. These abuses create mental stress and strain to a person. The statement is to understand the knowledge of the respondents regarding mental abuse. Majority (40 percent) of the respondents in unaided school had more knowledge about the mental abuse while compared to the respondents in government school. Physical abuse is the real abuse : sexual abuse can be physical abuse like unwanted touching, sexual kissing ,fondling, forced sexual behavior, rape etc. 50 percent of respondents in government school stated that they do not know about the physical abuse, while in unaided school 53 percent of the respondents had knowledge regarding the physical abuse.

**Exhibitionism is sexual abuse:** 56.7 percent of respondents in unaided school didn't know whether exhibitionism is a sexual abuse. While in government school 46.7 percent respondents respond to the statement. Majority (86.7percent) of the respondents in both government and unaided school respectively had the same knowledge regarding the rape. So 70.0 percent respondents in unaided school do not know that the dressing of the girls leads to sexual abuse. While in government school 63.3 percent respondents.

**Sexual abuse happens only from unfamiliar person:** Sexual abuse happens within the family also. Here 73.3 percent respondents in government school are agreeing with this statement.

**Attitude Level**

SI No	Statement	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		No response	
		US	GS	US	GS	US	GS	US	GS
1	Careless of the girls is the main reason of sexual abuse	3 10.0%	8 26.7%	17 56.7%	6 20.0%	1 3.3%	3 10.0 %	0 0%	8 26.7%
2	People will keep a negative attitude towards a sexual abused girl	16 53.3%	8 26.7%	13 43.3%	5 16.7%	0 0%	9 30.0 %	0 0%	6 20.0%
3	Even though a girl is aware about the abuse, she is not responding to the authority	20 66.7%	7 23.3%	10 33.3%	6 20.0%	0 0%	4 13.3 %	0 0%	11 36.7%
4	Travelling alone is not reason for sexual abuse	6 20.0%	12 40.0%	16 53.3%	4 13.3%	7 23.3%	1 3.3%	1 3.3%	0 0%
5	It is very risk to run behind the police procedures	10 33.3%	5 16.7%	10 33.3%	1 3.3%	1 3.3%	8 26.7 %	5 16.7%	8 26.7%
6	I am not sure that my family will support me	3 10.0%	7 23.3%	0 0%	6 20.0%	21 70.0%	2 6.7%	2 6.7%	8 26.7%
7	Abused girls will be voiceless	7 23.3%	15 50.0%	11 36.7%	3 10.0%	2 6.7%	3 10.0 %	1 3.3%	8 26.7%
8	It is better to keep silence because girls are not physically strong to react towards boys	0 0%	10 33.3%	3 10.0%	1 3.3%	15 50.0%	4 13.3 %	0 0%	9 30.0%
9	Abused girl will hate the presence of boys in future	5 16.7%	11 36.7%	0 0%	12 40.0%	3 10.0%	2 6.7 %	10 33.3%	5 16.7%



Girl's carelessness is the main reason of sexual abuse: in this statement majority of the respondents in unaided school (56.7 percent) agreed with the statement and 30.0 percent respondents disagreed with the statement. In case of the government school 26.7 percent of the respondents are strongly agree with the statement and very few respondents (26.7 percent) in government school had no response with this statement. In case of the respondents in unaided school 56.7 percent are strongly agreeing & 43.3 percent are just agreeing the statement. Only 3.3 percent of the respondents are disagreeing this statement. While in case of the respondents in government school 30.3 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreeing this statement.

While compare to the respondents in government school 66.7 percent of the respondents in unaided school are strongly agreeing with this statement. None of them are disagreeing with this statement. But in case of the respondents in government school 36.7 percent are not responding and 13.3 percent are strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Travelling alone is not a reason for sexual abuse: 40.0 percent & 13.3 percent of the respondents in the government school are strongly agreeing and agreeing with this statement & 43.3 percent are disagreeing with this statement. But in case of unaided school 53.3 percent are agreeing with this statement and 23.3 percent are strongly disagreeing with this statement. It is a very risk to run behind the police procedures: While compared to unaided school majority of the respondents (26.7 percent) in government school are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing with this statement. But comparing to the government school in case of the unaided school 33.3 percent of the respondent are strongly agreeing and agreeing with this statement. I am not sure that my family will support me: compared to government school respondent's majorities (70.0 percent) of the respondents in the unaided school are strongly disagreeing with this statement & only 10.3 percent are strongly agreeing with this statement. Abused girls will be voiceless: 50 percent & 23.3 percent of the respondents in the government school & unaided school are strongly agreeing with this statement. 30.3 percent and 3.3 percent of the respondents in the unaided school and government school are disagreeing with this statement. 26.7 percent of the respondents in the government school are not responding to this statement.

It is better to keep silence because girls are not physically strong to react towards boys: 33.3 percent of respondents of the government school are strongly agreeing with this statement. 40 percent and 50 percent of the respondents in the unaided school are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing with this statement. 30 percent of the respondents in government school are not responding with this statement. Abused girls will hate the presence boys in future: 36.7 percent and 40.0 percent of the respondent in government school are strongly agreeing with this statement. 40.7 percent and 16.7 percent of the respondents in the unaided school are disagreeing and strongly disagreeing with this statement. In case of both government school and unaided school respondents 16.7 percent and 33.3 percent are not responding for this statement.

**Practice level**

<b>Si No</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>Don't know</b>	
		<b>US</b>	<b>GS</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>GS</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>GS</b>
1	I will keep away from him if somebody trying to abuse me	29 96.7%	21 70.0%	0 0%	1 3.3%	1 3.3%	8 26.7%
2	I will tolerate without any reaction or pretend like not knowing	2 6.7%	3 10.0%	27 90.0%	16 53.3%	1 3.3%	11 36.7%
3	I will try to frighten the abusing person	18 60.0%	9 30.0%	2 6.7%	8 26.7%	10 33.3%	13 43.3%
4	I will appeal to the authority or co-travelers	27 90.0%	21 70%	2 6.7%	1 3.3%	1 3.3%	8 26.7%
5	I will react in a way to draw the attention of others	15 50.0%	9 30.0%	4 13.3%	1 3.3%	11 36.7%	20 66.7%
6	Keep the help number of helpline, women cell etc	16 53.3%	16 53.3%	12 40.0%	4 13.3%	2 6.7%	10 33.3%
7	Feel that what others will think about me	23 76.7%	18 60.0%	4 13.3%	9 30.0%	3 10.0%	3 10.0%
8	Feeling whether surrounding people support me if I react	9 30.0%	6 20.0%	16 53.3%	11 36.7%	5 16.7%	13 43.3%
9	Fear about being a social issue in the media if I seek police help	23 76.7%	18 60.0%	4 13.3%	9 30.0%	3 10.0%	3 10.0%
10	Afraid that the abusing person will take revenge if I threat	9 30.0%	6 20.0%	16 53.3%	11 36.7%	5 16.7%	13 43.3%
11	Society may consider me guilt	15 50.0%	14 46.7%	5 16.7%	3 10.0%	10 33.3%	13 43.3%
12	It may affect my marriage proposals in future	21 70.0%	12 40.0%	3 10.0%	5 16.7%	6 20.0%	13 43.3%
13	I will make friendship with co-travelers to avoid fear	24 80.0%	19 63.3%	4 13.3%	3 10.0%	2 6.7%	8 26.7%

**NB:-US- Unaided school, GS-Government School.**



I will keep away from him if somebody trying to abuse me: 96.7 percent of the respondent in unaided school and 70.0 percent of the respondent in the government school are agreeing with this statement. 3.3 percent & 26.7 percent of the respondent in both in unaided school and government school are said that they don't know about this statement.

I will tolerate without any reaction or pretend like not knowing: 90.0 percent and 53.3 percent of the respondents in both unaided and government school are disagreeing with this statement. Compared to the unaided school 3.3 percent of the respondents in the government schools are agreeing with this statement.

I will try to frighten the abusing person: 60.0 percent & 30.0 percent of the respondents in both unaided school and government school are agreeing with this statement. 43.4 percent and 43.3 percent of the respondents in the unaided school and government school don't know about this statement. I will appeal to the authority or co-travelers: 90.0 percent and 70.0 percent of the respondent in unaided school and government school are agreeing with this statement. 26.7 percent of the respondent in government school doesn't know about this statement. I will react in a way to draw the attention of others: 50.0 percent & 30.0 percent of the respondent in unaided school and government school are agreeing with this statement. 36.7 percent and 66.7 percent of the respondents in both unaided school and government school don't know about this statement.

Feeling whether surrounding people support me if I react: Majority (53.3 percent) of the respondents in both unaided school and the government school are agreeing with this statement. 40.0 percent of the respondent unaided school and 13.3 percent of the respondents in government school are agreeing with this statement. Fear about being a social issue in the media if I seek police help: 76.7 percent and 60.0 percent of the respondents in unaided school and government school are agreeing with this statement. 10.0 percent respondents in both school are don't know what the statement is.

Afraid that the abusing person will take revenge if I threat: 53.3 percent and 36.7 percent of the respondents in the unaided school are disagreeing with this statement. 43.3 percent respondents in the government school don't know about this statement. Society may consider me guilty: 50.0 percent of the respondents in both unaided school and government school are agreeing with this statement. 33.3 percent and 43.3 percent of respondents in both schools don't know about this. It may affect my marriage proposals in future: 70 percent & 40.0 percent of the respondents in the unaided school & government school are agreeing with this statement. 20.0 percent and 43.3 percent of the respondents in both schools don't know about this statement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researcher understood that the respondent in government school have very low level of knowledge and attitude towards sexual abuse as compared to the respondents in unaided school due to social set up, family background economic status etc. To provide awareness about sexual abuse. The Sex education and value education should be including in school curriculum. To strengthen the school counseling programs. To Self defense classes also included in school curriculum. The Students need to be trained in seeking the help of various helpline services like child line, women cell, and police station.



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