

Chapter 8

Childhood Sexual Abuse and Violence

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ABSTRACT

The current chapter will focus on how serious this concern is and how this can be identified and overcome with different psychological methods or techniques. Childhood is a phase of innocence. The darker side of the world is yet to be known to them. Sexual abuse and violence is seen to occur in all ages, in all socioeconomic classes, and nearly in all countries with some differences in the magnitude. Consequences of child sexual abuse and violence include impaired lifelong physical and mental health. Many a times a person who was sexually abused in his/her childhood remains have some experiences that haunt them may be throughout his/her life. These may be guilt or shame of not able to stop the abuser or didn't tell it to others. Sexual abuse in children is very difficult to identify and may even harder to see. Knowledge of the risk factors for child maltreatment can be used to identify children at risk and may represent opportunities for prevention. Preventing child maltreatment before it starts is possible and requires a multidimensional approach.

INTRODUCTION

World health organization defines child maltreatment as the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development and dignity (WHO, 2016). Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is

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amongst the most severe form of abuses and has a devastating effect on the mental and physical health of the child. WHO defines CSA as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO, 2014). These are; fondling, masturbation in front of minor, intercourse, obscene phone calls, messages, exposing the private part to a minor, sex of any kind with a minor; vaginal, oral or anal, sharing pornography, sex trafficking or any kind of sexual act that is traumatizing to a child mentally, physically and emotionally. UNICEF (2014) defines violence against children as “physical and mental abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse.

International studies reveal that 1 in 13 men reported having been sexually abused as a child. Additionally, many children are subject to emotional abuse and to neglect. It may serve as a key predictor of exploitation in human trafficking for both boys and girls (Reid et al., 2016). A report of an estimated 7.9% of males and 10.7% of females universally faced sexual abuse before the age of 18 years. The highest prevalence rate of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) was seen in Africa (34.4%) (Wihbey, 2011) followed by Europe (9.2%), America (10.1%), and Asia (23.9%). With regards to females, seven countries reported prevalence rates as being more than one fifth i.e., Australia (37.8%), Costa Rica (32.2%), Tanzania (31%), Israel (30.7%), Sweden (28.1%), US (25.3%), and Switzerland (24.2%). The lower rates observed for males may be imprecise to some extent because of under reporting (Wihbey, 2011). In armed conflict and refugee settings, girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse by combatants, security forces, members of their communities, aid workers and others (WHO, 2016). India, as reported, has the world’s largest number of CSA cases: For every 155 minutes a child, less than 16 years is raped. For every 13th hour child under 10 is sexually abused and one in every 10 children is sexually abused at any point of time (Childline organization, 2014). A total of 33,098 cases of sexual abuse in children were reported in India during the year 2011 when compared to 26,694 reported in 2010 which indicates a rise by 24%. A total of 7,112 cases of child rape were reported during 2011 as compared to 5,484 in 2010 depicting a growth by 29.7% (Ministry of Women and Child development, 2007; Behere et al., 2013). Studies suggest that over 7,200 children, including infants, are raped every year and it is believed that the figures might be higher as cases are grossly underreported. It is estimated by the government that 40% of India’s children are susceptible to threats like being homeless, trafficking, drug abuse, forced labor, and crime (Humans rights watch, 2013). In India, every second child is being exposed to one or the other form of sexual abuse and every fifth child faces critical forms of it (Behere et al., 2013). A survey by United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF; Ray, 2014) conducted in India from 2005 to 2013, reported that ten per cent of Indian girls might have experienced sexual violence when they were 10–14 years of age and 30% during 15–19 years of age. Overall, nearly 42% of Indian girls have gone through the trauma of sexual violence before their teenage (Ray, 2014). A study was conducted in 2007 by Ministry of women and child development in India covering 13 states (Ministry of Women and Child development, 2007). It was reported that about 21% of the participants were exposed to extreme forms of sexual abuse. Among the participants who reported being abused, 57.3% were boys and 42.7% were girls, about 40% were 5–12 years of age. All the above mentioned figures are statistics however for the child who had to go through the sexual abuse and for the family it’s the worst life experience ever. Awareness about the magnitude of the problem and methods to curtail the same are of prime importance and are need of the hour.

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