

Aminabee Shaik
Suguna Leelavathi Thota
Lakshmana Rao Atmakuri *Editors*

Child Sexual Abuse

A Public Health Problem in India

 Springer

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Aminabee Shaik
V. V. Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Gudlavalleru, Andhra Pradesh, India

Suguna Leelavathi Thota
S. R. Gudlavalleru Engineering College
Gudlavalleru, Andhra Pradesh, India

Lakshmana Rao Atmakuri
V. V. Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Gudlavalleru, Andhra Pradesh, India

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History, Statistics, and Prevalence



Rama Krishna Gummadi , Nagasen Dasari ,
Sai Kiran S. S. Pindiprolu , and Sujiya Balla 

Abstract The emotional anguish stemming from child sexual abuse often leads to self-harm and suicide attempts, alongside memory issues and behavioral problems such as criminal activities. Historically, there have been stigmatizing attitudes towards child sexual abuse, hindering its acknowledgment and proper response. Nevertheless, addressing this issue remains paramount, necessitating the identification and reporting of incidents to the appropriate authorities. The trauma of child sexual abuse can have profound and enduring effects, including anxiety, fear, and panic attacks for the victim. Despite legislative measures against it, enforcement often falters, resulting in insufficient accountability for perpetrators. Furthermore, the legal framework for tackling child sexual abuse is inadequate, hampering effective action. Campaigns aimed at altering perceptions of child sexual abuse and providing education to children and families are crucial. In essence, efforts to intervene and prevent child sexual abuse in India demonstrate progress but also persisting challenges. One such challenge is the absence of comprehensive education, leading to a limited understanding of healthy relationships, consent, and child sexual abuse. The stigma surrounding child sexual abuse complicates matters further by fostering negative societal attitudes that discourage survivors from reporting their ordeals.

Keywords Sexual abuse · Molestation · Trauma · Effects · Psychological problems · Criminal behavior · Child

1 Introduction

The introduction to the issue of child sexual molestation serves as a comprehensive overview, highlighting its significance as a pressing public health concern. This section defines child sexual molestation, delineates its extent, and discusses

R. K. Gummadi (✉) · N. Dasari · S. K. S. S. Pindiprolu · S. Balla
Aditya Pharmacy College, Surampalem, Andhra Pradesh 533437, India
e-mail: g.ramakrishnampharm@gmail.com

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, India

its profound impact on the health and overall well-being of children. It underscores the urgent need to address child sexual molestation in India as a critical publicized issue with serious physical and mental ramifications. This sets the stage for the subsequent discussion topics within the chapter.

2 History

The historical trajectory of child sexual molestation as a significant public health issue in India charts the evolution of recognition and response to child sexual abuse over time. This segment delves into pivotal moments such as:

- Initial societal attitudes towards child sexual abuse and its associated stigma.
- Implementation of child protection laws and policies.
- Heightened public awareness and advocacy efforts for child protection.

By providing a historical narrative, this section offers insights into the progression of child sexual molestation as a public health concern in India [1].

3 Statistics

The statistics section offers a comprehensive summary of data pertaining to child sexual molestation in India. It encompasses:

- The prevalence of child sexual molestation in India.
- Trends observed over time.
- Disparities in prevalence based on demographic factors like age, gender, and geographic location.
- Information on the types and severity of abuse.
- Data concerning reporting rates and outcomes within the criminal justice system.

This section serves to provide an overarching view of the current landscape of child sexual molestation in India, utilizing statistical data as its cornerstone.

4 Frequency and Commonness of Sexual Molestation of Children in India

Child sexual molestation is a prevalent and highly publicized concern in India, impacting a significant number of children. Estimates suggest that the prevalence of this issue ranges from 15 to 53% of children in India. The abuse varies in nature

and severity, yet it frequently goes unreported due to cultural norms and limitations within the criminal justice system's capacity to address it effectively. Tackling child sexual abuse remains an imperative priority [2] and includes analysis of the following:

- General overview
- Prevalence statistics
- Incidence rates

General Overview

A general overview offers insight into the prevalence and common occurrence of child sexual molestation in India. This provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature, types, and extent of child sexual molestation, supported by data and statistics regarding its incidence and prevalence. It serves to establish a broad understanding of the issue, laying the groundwork for further exploration into specific aspects of child sexual molestation in India.

Prevalence Statistics

It is very important to examine statistics on the prevalence of sexual molestation of children in India. The available data provides an understanding of the extent and scope of the issue, informing policy and practice. Through analyzing the statistics, trends over time and demographic differences can be observed, and the effectiveness of preventative measures can be evaluated.

Incidence Rates

Incidence rates of child sexual molestation in India have become a prominent subject of concern in recent years. Studies indicate a steady rise in the rates of child sexual molestation in the country. The profound and enduring impact of such abuse on the victim underscores its critical importance as a public health issue. Accurate data on the incidence of child sexual molestation is crucial for comprehending the scope of the problem and formulating effective prevention and response measures.

5 Implications of Sexual Molestation of Children on Their Health and Well-Being

Child sexual molestation can exert profound and enduring effects on a child's health and overall well-being. Typical repercussions encompass depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and self-harm. Moreover, survivors of such abuse are more susceptible to encountering physical health issues, such as sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. Furthermore, they may encounter challenges in developing trust, establishing healthy relationships, and attaining academic and career success. [4]. It is deemed essential for survivors to access sufficient support and treatment to mitigate these consequences and facilitate their journey towards recovery. The effects are detailed below under the headings:

- Consequences of child sexual molestation
- Psychological impacts
- Physical health risks

Consequences of Child Sexual Molestation

Child sexual molestation inflicts a traumatic impact, yielding significant and enduring consequences for the victim. These consequences may include:

Psychological trauma: Those who have experienced child sexual molestation may manifest symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health disorders.

Physical harm: Children who have endured sexual abuse may endure physical injuries, as well as contract sexually transmitted diseases, experience pregnancy, and encounter other health complications.

Difficulty in forming relationships: The trauma resulting from sexual molestation can hinder a child's capacity to establish healthy relationships.

Substance abuse: Certain victims of child sexual molestation may resort to drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism, potentially resulting in addiction and substance abuse problems.

Cognitive and behavioral difficulties: Child sexual abuse can result in memory difficulties, behavioral problems like self-harm and suicide attempts, and engagement in criminal behavior.

It is crucial to recognize and report cases of child sexual molestation to the relevant authorities. Through adequate support and intervention, the effects of child sexual molestation can be mitigated, enabling the victim to access the necessary assistance for healing and recovery [5].

Psychological Impacts

Child sexual molestation can significantly impact mental health, resulting in various psychological effects [6]. Below are some of the typical psychological health effects of child sexual molestation:

Depression: Children who have been sexually molested may endure emotions such as sadness, hopelessness, and diminished self-esteem.

Anxiety: Victims of child sexual molestation may encounter difficulties with anxiety, fear, and panic attacks.

Dissociation: As a coping mechanism in response to the trauma of sexual abuse, some children may dissociate, or detach from reality.

Self-harm and suicide: The emotional distress resulting from child sexual abuse may prompt self-harm and suicide attempts.

It is crucial to offer suitable support and treatment for children who have endured child sexual molestation. This may involve therapy, medication, and support from family members. Through proper care and intervention, children can acquire coping mechanisms to deal with the trauma of abuse and commence the healing journey.

Physical Health Risks

The physical well-being of a child who has undergone sexual molestation can also suffer adverse effects [7]. Some of the physical health risks associated with child sexual abuse include:

Physical injuries: Children who have been sexually molested may endure physical injuries like bruises, lacerations, and genital injuries.

Sexually transmitted infections: Victims of child sexual molestation may face the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.

Pregnancy: Children who have endured sexual abuse may face the possibility of pregnancy, which can introduce additional physical and emotional health challenges.

Chronic health conditions: The physical and emotional trauma resulting from child sexual abuse can elevate the risk of developing long-term health issues, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancers.

Substance abuse: Substance abuse and addiction may manifest as coping mechanisms for children who have experienced sexual molestation.

Reporting instances of child sexual molestation to the appropriate authorities is crucial to ensure that the victim receives essential support and medical care to mitigate physical health risks and aid in their healing process [8].

6 Sociocultural Factors Contributing to Sexual Molestation of a Child in India

In India, numerous sociocultural factors contribute to the issue of child sexual molestation [9]. They include:

Education shortage: In certain regions of India, the absence of comprehensive sexual education can lead to a limited understanding of healthy relationships and consent.

Stigma surrounding abuse: Child sexual abuse in India is frequently accompanied by a social stigma, which complicates the reporting process for survivors.

Patriarchal values: India's deeply entrenched patriarchal culture can contribute to the devaluation of women and girls, as well as the normalization of violence against them.

Imbalanced power dynamics: Those in positions of authority, such as family members, teachers, or community leaders, are frequently the perpetrators of child sexual molestation.

Cultural views on sexuality: In certain regions of India, traditional taboos surrounding sexuality may hinder the identification of child sexual abuse issues.

Weak laws and enforcement: Despite the existence of laws criminalizing child sexual abuse, enforcement is frequently inadequate, resulting in limited accountability for perpetrators.

These sociocultural factors contribute to a societal environment where child sexual molestation is widespread, yet often goes unreported and unpunished [10].

Addressing these factors is crucial in order to prevent child sexual molestation and offer support to survivors. In particular, this entails addressing the shortage of education and the stigma surrounding abuse.

Education Deficiencies

In certain regions of India, there is a shortage of comprehensive sexual education, leading to a lack of understanding about healthy relationships, consent, and child sexual abuse. This absence of education can hinder individuals from identifying and reporting abuse, as well as recognizing the significance of supporting survivors [11]. To tackle this issue, it is crucial for educational systems in India to prioritize comprehensive sexual education. This education should encompass areas such as healthy relationships, consent, and child sexual abuse. By implementing this education, individuals will gain a deeper understanding of these topics, enabling them to better recognize and report abuse, and offer support to survivors.

Stigma Surrounding Abuse

Stigma surrounding child sexual abuse encompasses negative social attitudes and beliefs, hindering survivors from reporting their experiences. In India, cultural shame often accompanies child sexual abuse, leading survivors to refrain from speaking out and seeking assistance [12]. This stigma further exacerbates the lack of support for survivors and the lack of accountability for perpetrators.

To address this challenge, it is vital to raise awareness about child sexual abuse and foster a supportive environment for survivors. This can be accomplished through educational initiatives and public advocacy campaigns, alongside efforts to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and trauma-related support services. By diminishing the stigma surrounding child sexual abuse, survivors are more likely to come forward and access the support they require, while perpetrators are more likely to be held accountable for their actions [13].

7 Current State of Intervention and Prevention Efforts in India

The present state of intervention and prevention efforts aimed at addressing child sexual molestation in India reflects a blend of accomplishments and persistent challenges. On one side, numerous organizations and campaigns are dedicated to increasing awareness about child sexual abuse and offering assistance to survivors. These initiatives encompass hotlines, counseling services, and advocacy groups that aim to enhance child protection laws and policies [11].

Nevertheless, significant gaps and challenges exist within the current state of intervention and prevention efforts. The response to child sexual molestation in India may be inconsistent and insufficient, with insufficient resources and training for law enforcement, healthcare providers, and other first responders. Additionally, specialized services and support for survivors are frequently deficient, particularly in rural areas. To combat child sexual molestation in India effectively, increased investment in public education and awareness campaigns is essential. These efforts should focus on altering social norms and attitudes, involving educating children and families about abuse risks and encouraging the reporting of suspected cases. The current

intervention and prevention efforts regarding child sexual abuse in India reflect both advancements and persistent challenges. Despite ongoing initiatives, significant work is needed to address child sexual molestation comprehensively and offer sufficient support to survivors.

8 Current State of Intervention and Prevention Efforts for Child Sexual Molestation in India

Child sexual molestation represents a significant challenge in India, impacting a substantial number of children. In response, numerous organizations, campaigns, and governmental bodies have mobilized to aid survivors and heighten awareness of this issue. The current landscape of intervention and prevention endeavors concerning child sexual molestation in India reflects a combination of favorable advancements and persistent hurdles. On a positive note, there have been endeavors to enhance awareness, offer support to survivors, and lobby for more robust child protection legislation [14]. Hotlines and counseling services have been instituted, and public education campaigns have been initiated to encourage reporting of suspected cases and enhance awareness of the issue. Nonetheless, persisting challenges exist in combating child sexual abuse in India. The response remains insufficient, with limited resources allocated to first responders and inadequate support available for survivors, particularly in rural regions. Moreover, the legal framework addressing child sexual abuse is deficient, characterized by insufficient laws and enforcement. Investing in public education and awareness campaigns is imperative for effectively addressing child sexual abuse in India. These campaigns can facilitate a shift in societal attitudes towards child sexual abuse and promote education among children and families. In conclusion, the current efforts to prevent and intervene in child sexual abuse in India encompass both positive strides and ongoing hurdles, underscoring the necessity for sustained action to address this issue.

9 Summary and Future Directions for Addressing Sexual Molestation of Children in India

Child sexual molestation is a prevalent and significant issue in India, necessitating a comprehensive and consistent effort from various stakeholders. Effectively addressing it entails adopting a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating public education, bolstered support and services for survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable. Additionally, establishing a secure and supportive environment for reporting abuse and dismantling the stigma associated with this issue are paramount [15].

In the future, increased investment in research and data collection is imperative to gain a better understanding of the extent of child sexual molestation in India. This will facilitate the development of evidence-based interventions and enable more effective resource allocation. Collaborative efforts among the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector will also be crucial in driving progress and ensuring the implementation of effective policies and programs. While there is still much work to be done to combat child sexual abuse in India, a collaborative approach among stakeholders holds the potential for significant progress in safeguarding children from this devastating crime.

Overview: Sexual Molestation of Children in India and Its Importance

Child sexual molestation is a prevalent concern in India, impacting a distressingly high proportion of children, estimated at around 53%. This type of abuse can inflict profound and enduring effects on a child's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Sadly, it often goes unreported due to societal stigma and insufficient awareness.

While the Indian Penal Code imposes stringent penalties for perpetrators of child sexual abuse, enforcement continues to pose a significant challenge [16]. In addition to legal measures, raising awareness and offering support to victims is paramount. To prevent child sexual abuse, it is essential to educate both children and adults about the issue and establish safe environments for children. This involves promoting healthy relationships, encouraging open communication, and implementing an abuse reporting system. Addressing child sexual abuse in India is crucial not only for the well-being of the victims but also for the advancement of society as a whole. By addressing this issue, we can work towards building a safer and more equitable world for all children.

A comprehensive approach entails a systematic and thorough strategy for tackling a multifaceted problem. This approach considers all facets of the issue and aims to address it in a holistic manner. When addressing child sexual abuse, a comprehensive approach would encompass all pertinent factors, including the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of abuse on the child, societal attitudes and perceptions regarding the issue, and the necessity for both legal and societal responses [17]. A comprehensive approach would additionally entail engaging various stakeholders, such as child protection agencies, law enforcement, healthcare providers, educators, and the broader community. Implementing such an approach would necessitate efficient collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders, alongside the establishment of comprehensive programs and policies aimed at preventing abuse and aiding victims. In summary, a comprehensive approach is indispensable in addressing child sexual abuse, as it takes into account all facets of the issue and fosters collaboration among diverse stakeholders, ultimately leading to a more effective resolution [18].

Future Measures

The future of addressing child sexual abuse must prioritize prevention as the cornerstone of efforts. This entails raising awareness, supporting survivors, holding perpetrators accountable, and safeguarding children. Preventive measures encompass educating children on recognizing and reporting abuse, and training adults working

with children to identify signs of abuse and respond appropriately. Furthermore, there must be a sustained focus on bolstering support systems for survivors, ensuring access to medical care, therapy, legal aid, and safe housing. Shifting cultural attitudes and beliefs that contribute to child sexual abuse is also imperative, requiring efforts to address gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and challenge societal norms that perpetuate abuse [19].

Research and Data Collection

Research and data collection play a pivotal role in understanding and addressing child sexual abuse. They offer valuable insights into the scope and characteristics of the issue, as well as its impact on survivors and society at large. Accurate and comprehensive data is indispensable for formulating evidence-based policies and programs aimed at combating child sexual abuse. Furthermore, it serves to facilitate public and political discourse on the matter and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and support initiatives. Additionally, research aids in enhancing our comprehension of the underlying causes and risk factors associated with child sexual molestation, along with its enduring effects on survivors. This knowledge can inform the development and implementation of effective prevention and intervention strategies. However, collecting data on child sexual abuse presents challenges due to its sensitive and stigmatized nature. Therefore, it is imperative that data collection be conducted ethically and sensitively, with due consideration for the privacy and safety of survivors.

Collaboration among Stakeholders

Collaboration among key stakeholders is essential for addressing the issue of child sexual abuse. This necessitates partnerships between government entities, law enforcement agencies, non-profit organizations, healthcare professionals, educators, and the broader community. By collaborating, these stakeholders can pool resources, expertise, and information, leading to a more holistic and efficient response to child sexual abuse. For example, government agencies and law enforcement can work together to establish and enforce child protection laws, while healthcare providers and NGOs can provide medical and psychological assistance to survivors [20]. Through collaboration, the needs and viewpoints of survivors are more effectively acknowledged and attended to. This entails closely collaborating with survivors and their families to develop and execute support initiatives, while also involving the community in raising awareness about child sexual abuse. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders aids in dismantling barriers and fostering a more cohesive approach to tackling child sexual abuse. This encompasses addressing interconnected issues like gender-based violence and advocating for gender equality, as well as confronting broader societal and cultural attitudes that perpetuate abuse.

10 Conclusion

In conclusion, effectively addressing child sexual abuse demands a comprehensive approach that considers various facets of the issue. It is imperative to tackle the root causes and risk factors, offer robust support for survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, raise public awareness, and promote collaboration among all stakeholders. Looking ahead, it remains crucial to maintain the prioritization of addressing child sexual molestation and allocate the requisite resources for its mitigation. This entails continuous research and data collection to inform policies and programs, along with sustained endeavors to enhance public awareness and shift societal attitudes [21].

Ensuring that the voices and requirements of survivors are prioritized in endeavors to combat child sexual abuse is crucial. This encompasses offering readily accessible support services and actively engaging survivors in the formulation and execution of programs and policies. Safeguarding children from sexual abuse necessitates a collaborative commitment from all segments of society. Through collective action and the adoption of a comprehensive approach, a safer future for children can be realized, while survivors can receive the necessary assistance to facilitate their healing and recovery.

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Child Sex Tourism, Causes, Consequences and Roles of the Public, Media, Business, and Government in India



B. Kishore Babu  and K. V. B. Ganesh 

Abstract An international problem that has worsened over the past 30 years is child sex tourism. The international community has made many efforts to eliminate child sex tourism, however there are very few statistics, studies, and empirically supported data that may be used to stop the issue. Children, the future of the nation, are mistreated and served as sex objects to visitors from all around the world. The desirability of tourism has meant that this situation has gone unchecked, because the Indian government was previously more concerned with the money generated by the travel and tourism sector and refused to recognize the allegations made by various publications revealing child sex tourism in different states. However, because of its rapid growth, the government feel compelled to examine the issue with the aid of numerous NGOs and advocacy organizations for children's welfare. Between 5,000 and 7,000 children are thought to be sexually exploited for profit in India. Due to India's liberal regulations, inexpensive and plentiful supply of young girls and boys working in the marketable sex industry, and a supposed reduced prevalence of HIV/AIDS, it is thought that domestic and foreign sex tourists may be switching to India. There is no agreement on how common the issue of child sex tourism (CST) is in India, despite the fact that there are many vulnerable youngsters. This chapter discusses government, media, public, and commercial roles as well as the causes, repercussions, and legislation of child sex tourism in India.

Keywords Child sex tourism · Root causes · Consequences · The function of the public · Media · Industry · Legislation

B. Kishore Babu (✉) · K. V. B. Ganesh
K. L. Business School, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF), Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India
e-mail: kishorebabu11@gmail.com

1 Introduction

While tourism has assisted in India's economy reaching new heights, child sex tourism has driven the country's morale to all-time lows. It resembles a blemish on the map of India.

Child sex tourism is the term for the lucrative sexual misuse of children, which includes, but is not always limited to, sexual abuse of children in tourist locations.

Child prostitution falls under the larger category of commercial sexual abuse of children, which includes the multi-billion-dollar universal sex tourism business. Around the world, 2 million children are victims of child sex tourism [1]. Children who toil as prostitutes in the CST industry are frequently kidnapped or seduced into sexual servitude.

There are several types of youngsters who are used for sexual and commercial objectives. Although child sex tourism is frequently linked with pedophiles, they do not make up the majority of users. There are two categories of offenders: situational users, or abusers who do not intentionally seek out children, but whose actual acts are unscrupulous. Situational users are addicts who do not aggressively seek out children but who believe the danger of sexually transmitted contagions is lower with this age-group. The age of a prostitute may not be a concern for situational users before participating in sexual intercourse.

Traveling child sex lawbreakers can utilize the Internet to plan their excursions by looking for, and exchanging details about, opportunities for child sex tourism and places where the most susceptible children can be found, typically in low-income locations.

Laws permitting the prosecution of its nationals for child sex abuse occurring outside of their own country have been passed by numerous governments. Commandments against child sex tourism, however, may dissuade inadvertent situational offenders who might act recklessly, but pedophiles who travel intentionally with the intent of abusing children are not easily stopped [2].

India is quickly evolving into a hub for child sex tourism, as per the report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), with minors being used for sex acts in the garb of pilgrimage, history, and coastal tourism. By remaining silent and refusing to address the issue, the community has only served to exacerbate this problem.

2 The Causes of the Rise in Child Sex Tourism in India

The increase of child sex tourism (CST) in India has been attributed to a variety of issues. An overview of a few of the driving forces behind children working in this field is provided below [3].

Poverty: One of the main factors contributing to young children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation is poverty. They have no choice but to vend themselves to overseas tourists who would pay and provender them due to their dire economic situation. This

is exacerbated by materialism and consumerism. Additionally, it has been discovered that children from upper-middle class families participate in child sex tourism. This is due to relative poverty rather than actual poverty, though. As a result of increasing material necessities, parents frequently either allow their children to be with vacationers, or vend them through middlemen,.

Unsatisfactory family history: Families that lack a healthy bond between the children and the parents are more at risk. Children from shattered homes frequently feel neglected and isolated. Parents who use drugs, drink excessively, or are substantially or emotionally ill frequently lose control over their children, who may then be seduced by middlemen.

Unemployment or migration: Families that reside in and around tourist areas have been observed to be migrating there at an increased rate. Migrant youngsters who already feel uncomfortable in their new environment become easy targets and are more likely to be taken advantage of and to participate in the illegal child sex trade.

Children that are illiterate or not in school: Children who are illiterate themselves, often come from illiterate households who are unaware of the effects that these behaviors have on children's bodies and brains and frequently allow their own children to participate in such practices. Additionally, youngsters who drop out of institutions or the educational system, work as amateur, blue-collar low-income people, or who live on the streets are more susceptible to sexual exploitation [4].

Purchases made by families: Children are more likely to join their family members who are already in this trade. Children perceive this as a way to repay their elders, so it spreads across the family.

3 The Repercussions of Child Sex Tourism

Child sex tourism is one of the worst dangers to young people's mental and physical health. The majority of abused children suffer from PTSD, hopelessness, miserable thoughts, low self-esteem, and eating ailments, among other problems.

Children as young as six years old might incur developmental delays, suffer from illnesses associated to pregnancy, and acquire STDs, HIV/AIDS, or endure severe physical abuse [5]. A child's lack of education, lack of a balanced diet, societal isolation, engrossment in illicit activity, and/or substance misuse are some additional effects of child sex tourism. The children who are exploited as a result of child sex tourism suffer from both mental and physical effects, which could include STIs (such as HIV/AIDS).

4 Regulation of Child Sex Abusers

Even though there is no single central act that controls CST directly, some acts have penalties for violators of child sex laws [6], as follows.

4.1 Act of 2012 Protecting Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO)

The POCSO Act was created in 2012 to address sexual offences perpetrated against children in particular. It covers crimes like child pornography, sexual harassment, and assault. The act also establishes rules for the creation of distinct courts for the hearing of such felonies and associated cases. The fact that this act is gender-neutral and acknowledges the possibility of sexual abuse against boys is one of its unique features. This is an aspect that earlier acts lacked. A child in this context is defined as a person who is below the age of eighteen. The purpose of the act is to protect children during the legal procedure [7].

4.2 The 1956 Immoral Traffic Prevention Act

This act was created to stop the depraved marketing of females and offspring. The central government has the power to assign trafficking generals in accordance with this act. The act was changed to be more gender-neutral in 1978, 1986, and 1996. The act addresses the prostitution of children (below 16 years of age) and minors (16–18 years old).

4.3 1860 Indian Penal Code

Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860, which defines rape with a minor, aims to protect women and girls from forced sexual activity. This provision states that having sex with a girl under the age of 16 constitutes rape. In this case, consent is irrelevant because it is considered to be absent in cases involving minors [8].

4.4 2003's Goa Children's Act

The Goa Children's Act, 2003, which dealt explicitly with sexual felonies in contradiction of children and further explicitly pinpointed the problem of CST (which is not

covered by any central act) was created in 2003, making Goa the first state in India to pass such legislation. In order to create a child-friendly judicial process and reduce the ordeal that a child must experience, the Children's Court was also launched in 2004 [9]. The act covers an extensive range of practices and strategies that the abuser may employ to take advantage of the child. It has been discovered, nonetheless, that this act's enactment has fallen short of its goals.

5 Citizen and Media Roles

Children must be protected from sexual abuse by the Indian government, civil society organizations, individuals, and the media, especially in places where tourism is prevalent, and children are more likely to be harmed. Since a child's family is the primary representative of society in their life, it is crucial that they are educated about the problem and act with empathy [10]. The media should create awareness of the problem. Parents should be routinely informed about the spread of any pornographic material by the media, which should exercise more caution. By drawing attention to the problem, the government is compelled to acknowledge it and take action. Residents, particularly those in tourist areas, should be aware of their surroundings and contact the authorities if they see any unsettling behavior involving tourists and local children.

5.1 *The Government's Functions*

- Upgrading coordination and research.
- Investigating the scope and nature of the issue.
- Creating a plan of action to address CST.
- Coordinating the efforts of non-governmental, intergovernmental, and travel/tourism organizations.
- Designating a government point of contact [11].

5.2 *Enhance Training and Prevention*

- Promote the adoption of a Code of Conduct by the travel industry.
- Finance and/or start public education programs that emphasize pertinent extraterritorial legislation.
- Provide education and training on the subject for law enforcement agencies.
- Make sure that any suspected child trafficking cases are reported by border and airport officials [12].

5.3 Improve Legal Actions and Prosecutions

- Create, adopt, and/or enforce extraterritorial laws that make CST illegal.
- Impose harsher penalties on offenders.
- Prosecute the offence as vigorously as possible.

5.4 Help the Victims

- Ensure victims have a place to stay, counseling, medical care, and legal support.
- Whenever necessary, offer aid with reintegration.
- Support the efforts of organizations that work with child victims [13].

6 Conclusion

In recent years, the problem of CST and its seriousness has become more well recognized. The current challenge is identifying and punishing the perpetrators. In order to successfully prosecute the abusers, India must have extradition accords with other nations based on extraterritorial jurisdictions: if no such efforts are made, these pedophiles will continue to hang out with youngsters on the beaches without being interrogated. The situation is ideal for them. There may possibly be 100 pedophiles working in a state like Goa or Kerala at any given time during the six-month tourist season (October–March). We should not underestimate the number. A pedophile typically exploits multiple youngsters, perhaps as many as 20, over the course of a visit that might last between 15 days and five months. In order to safeguard children and ensure their future, this must be stopped, and the government must take strict action. India is often inclined to secrecy and reluctant to discuss the subjects that bother it. Despite the atrocity of CST being on the rise, not much is being done to stop it or to raise awareness of it. The threat has increased due to the increased interconnectedness of globalization [14]. While neatly ignoring the associated social consequences of CST, the pecuniary advantages of tourism have pushed Indian authorities to mix various ongoing objectives.

It is advised that tutoring be utilized as a technique to prevent these children from falling into middlemen's and pimps' traps: Children should be made aware of such practices and their effects from a young age. Counseling and the chance to live a life with self-respect should be made available to children who have been the victims of CST. Local authorities should attend to their unique needs, based on the scope and seriousness of the crime, and design such laws as obligatory, while the federal government should focus on stricter and enhanced implementation of existing formulated laws to deter offenders. In order for parents to make sure that their children do not fall into these snares, the public should also be made more aware

of the issue. The time has come for India to wake up and stop this wickedness from destroying the futures of Indian children.

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Understanding Child Sexual Abuse and Neglect



Veeroji Adithya , K. Ravi Shankar , Aminabee Shaik ,
and Saritha Karnati 

Abstract Children are the backbone of the nation, and the development of every nation depends on the health and well-being of children. India has the second largest population of children in the world. Over 2.2 billion and 263.9 million worldwide, India (Census, 2011), who represent an unlimited potential. The optimal development of children has a special significance in national development. Protecting children from any form of violence, be it physical or mental abuse, or situations where their basic human rights are at risk, is crucial. Childhood is the most delicate phase of a person's life. While the government has taken steps to address this issue by enacting the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) in 2012, proper implementation of such laws and policies is necessary to combat this social problem. According to research, more than 7,200 young people, including infants, are raped every year, and experts believe that many cases go unreported.

Keywords Promulgating · Childhood · Offences

1 Introduction

Child sexual abuse, or CSA, encompasses a range of sexual acts that are prohibited and can include fondling, luring a child into sexual behavior, intercourse, exhibitionism, prostitution, pornography, and cyber luring. Sadly, millions of vulnerable young people fall victim to violence and abuse, causing them physical and emotional harm that can leave lasting scars. However, child sexual abuse is often not discussed

V. Adithya (✉) · A. Shaik

V. V. Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Gudlavalleru, Krishna District 521356, Andhra Pradesh, India

e-mail: veerojiadi15@gmail.com

A. Shaik

e-mail: aminaammi786@gmail.com

K. Ravi Shankar · S. Karnati

KVSR Siddhartha College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Vijayawada, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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in our society, despite being a pervasive problem. This lack of attention can lead to serious health consequences and other negative outcomes. It is crucial to recognize that adult sexual violence and child sexual abuse are equally important issues, but children are often unaware of the abuse or afraid to speak out. Privacy concerns may also discourage them from reporting it. In India, the government introduced the POCSO Act in 2012 to combat child sexual abuse, and while confirmed cases are declining, there is still much work to be done. It is estimated that one in ten children will experience sexual abuse before they turn 18. Although the number of reported cases is decreasing, the public is still largely unaware of the impact of this problem. Child sexual abuse has been an issue in India for many years, with reports of heinous acts surfacing regularly, and ongoing efforts to eliminate this evil from our society [1].

2 History

Child sexual abuse has been a subject of significant concern since the 1970s and is now considered one of the most closely monitored crimes. Even though sexual abuse of children by adults has existed throughout history, society's interest in prevention has changed over time. In the past, perpetrators targeted children under the age of ten, but in recent years, advocates have also highlighted the sexual abuse of children between the ages of 11 and 17. Prior to the 1930s, the physical and reputational harm to a child was deemed more important than the psychological impact of sexual assault. It was not until the 1970s that the Western world began to have a widespread public awareness of child sexual abuse.

"India will be free" is a quote attributed to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the country's founding father, who also declared that "women will feel comfortable roaming the streets of India at midnight". But at this point, it's still just a dream that will probably never come true. In India, little girls are worshipped. At the same time, however, the number of pedophilia cases has increased in India. The number of reported cases of child rape increased by 151% between 2009 and 2014 [2]. Because they are the easiest targets,, children with disabilities are more at risk, and people from economically disadvantaged areas do not have the means to protest and report abuse. The problem is also compounded by the lack of information that the relevant authorities provide on issues of sexual abuse of disabled children.

3 Statistics and Prevalence

According to the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against children in India rose by 16.2% from 2020 to 2021, with nearly 1.5 million crimes registered in all states and union territories in 2021. These crimes

include child sexual abuse, kidnapping, murder, child marriage, and other offenses. The overall crime rate also increased from 28.9% in 2020 to 33.6% in 2021.

The state of Maharashtra recorded the highest number of crimes against children, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Nagaland had the lowest number of crimes against children, while all northeastern states had low numbers. Among the union territories, Delhi had the highest number of crimes against children (7,118). In southern India, Karnataka recorded the highest number of crimes against children, followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh.

Kidnapping and abduction were the top crimes against children in 2020, accounting for 45%, while 38.1% of children were victims of rape attempts under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO). The definition of “child” and “minor” varies according to various Indian laws, but generally, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18. In 2021, a total of 53,874 cases were recorded nationwide, up from 47,221 in 2020.

Of the 33,348 cases reported in 2021 under Sects. 4 and 6 of the POCSO Act (penalty for penetrative sexual assault and aggravated penetrative sexual assault), 33,036 females and 312 boys were involved. Additionally, 67,245 FIRs were filed under the category of kidnapping and abduction, where a minor is defined as anyone under the age of 16, compared to 54,785 FIRs reported in 2020.

12,202 occurrences of minor girls being forced into marriage were reported under the category of kidnapping and abduction of children (Sect. 366, Indian Penal Code). Telangana reported 299 instances among the southern states, followed by Tamil Nadu, which reported 144 cases [3].

Moreover, 28,756 occurrences of missing children, assumed to have been kidnapped were reported in India.

4 Prevalence

Research on child abuse is a difficult and daunting task. The rates of child maltreatment vary significantly across countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), due to the definition of child maltreatment used, the type of maltreatment studied, and the quality of data and surveys used to gather information from victims, parents, and caretakers. Nonetheless, studies conducted in other countries suggest that one in five women and one in thirteen men have experienced childhood sexual abuse, while a quarter of all adults have suffered physical abuse during their childhood. Neglect and emotional abuse are also prevalent forms of child abuse.

In 2014, it was estimated that 41,000 children under the age of 15 are killed every year. However, the actual number of child homicides caused by abuse may be much higher, as many deaths are misattributed to accidental causes such as falls, drowning, or burns. In situations of armed conflict and displacement, girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse by combatants, security personnel, relief workers, and local populations.

5 Types

There are two distinct categories of sexual abuse: contact and non-contact. Both offline and online sexual assaults are possible. In instances of abuse, physical contact is made by the abuser with the victim [4]. Contact child sexual abuse includes:

- When a child is compelled to participate in sexual acts or is coerced to remove clothing or touch another person. It is classified as sexual touching, regardless of whether the child is clothed or not.
- More than just one type of behavior, and can involve activities such as oral sex, touching, and kissing.

Non-contact child sexual abuse occurs when the abuser does not make physical contact with the victim, and it can occur both in person and online. Examples of non-contact abuse include:

- Displaying or exposing a minor to pornography.
- Exposure of a minor to sexual activity and masturbation.
- Creating, viewing, or distributing child abuse photos or videos that compel a child to perform sexual acts or chat online or through a smart phone.

6 Signs

If a child aged 0–11 years is experiencing or has experienced sexual abuse online, they may:

- Spend significantly more or significantly less time than usual online, texting, playing games, or on social media.
- Act distant, agitated, or angry after using the Internet or sending texts.
- Be secretive about their online and mobile activities, including who they're talking to and what they're doing.
- Have many new phone numbers, SMS or email addresses stored on their tablet, laptop, or mobile device.

6.1 Alterations in Emotions

Childhood emotional abuse has been linked to various negative outcomes, such as depression, low self-esteem, and negative thought patterns, which can affect a child's emotional well-being. Studies suggest that the excessive stress caused by child maltreatment can lead to anatomical and functional changes in the brain, resulting in emotional and social abnormalities. As a result of the abuse, children may develop insecurities, experience stunted growth, and struggle with social disengagement, academic difficulties, and forming relationships [5].