



Research Article

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF YOUNG GIRLS REGARDING BAD TOUCH IN RURAL AREAS OF ALIGARH

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse include engaging in sexual activities with a child (whether by asking or pressuring, or by other means), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.), child grooming, or using a child to produce child pornography. Child sexual abuse can occur in a variety of settings, including home, school, or work (in places where child labor is common). Sexual abuse by a family member is a form of incest and can result in more serious and long-term psychological trauma, especially in the case of parental incest. The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of young girls regarding bad touch in rural areas of Aligarh. **Material and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted during February-March in 2018, in the rural areas of Jawan, Aligarh. The study subjects were young girls aged between 9 to 19 years, who were present in the study area, those who refused to provide consent, were excluded. A total of 100 girls were included in the study. The results reported that more than 50% of the girls had not heard of bad touch nor they knew the meaning of it. Few girls understood that bad touch was a touch that made them felt uncomfortable. Out of 15 girls who had experienced bad touch, 7 girls (46.6%) experienced on their way to school or in school. 2 girls (13.3%) experienced in a marriage ceremony, 2 girls (13.33%) experienced in friend or her own house, 3 girls (20%) experienced in a crowd (exhibition). 1 girl experienced in train. No one went to thana for complaint. 3 girls (20%) confined themselves to house and stopped going to school.

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INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse, also called child molestation, is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation(1,2). Forms of child sexual abuse include engaging in sexual activities with a child (whether by asking or pressuring, or by other means), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.), child grooming, or using a child to produce child pornography(3,4).

Child sexual abuse can occur in a variety of settings, including home, school, or work (in places where child labor is common). Sexual abuse by a family member is a form of incest and can result in more serious and long-term psychological trauma, especially in the case of parental incest(5). The global prevalence of child sexual abuse has been estimated at 19.7% for females and 7.9% for males(6). Most sexual abuse offenders are acquainted with their victims; approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, fathers, uncles, or cousins(7), around 60% are other

acquaintances, such as "friends" of the family, babysitters, or neighbors; strangers are the offenders in approximately 10% of child sexual abuse cases(8). Most child sexual abuse is committed by men; studies on female child molesters show that women commit 14% to 40% of offenses reported against boys and 6% of offenses reported against girls(9-11). In India, for every 155th minute a child, less than 16 years is raped, for every 13th hour child under 10, and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point of time[36]. Studies propose that over 7,200 children, including infants, are raped every year and it is believed that several cases go unreported. Nearly 42% of Indian girls have gone through the trauma of sexual violence before their teenage[37]. Studies have found that 51% to 79% of sexually abused children exhibit psychological symptoms (12-15). The risk of harm is greater if the abuser is a relative, if the abuse involves intercourse or attempted intercourse, or if threats or force are used(15).

The WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention distinguishes four types of child maltreatment which are physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and psychological abuse and child neglect (16). Abuse is a disquieting everyday reality for as many as half of the country's children (17). There are many barriers for the girls for seeking care .e.g. rape

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myths. Rape myths are those ideas or beliefs that “deny or minimize victim injury or blame the victims for their own victimization”(18). Rape myths that are commonly accepted include, the woman deserved to be raped; she asked for it through her provocative behavior or dress; there was not much physical damage so it was not rape; stranger rape is more prevalent than acquaintance rape; and, a woman cannot be raped by her husband (19-22). Violence against women and children is globally recognized as a social and human rights concern. Sexual assault and rape cases are on the rise in India. Rape cases have doubled between 1990 and 2008 and in 2012, almost 25,000 rape cases were reported across India. Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, with girls being at greater risk, especially while at school and at home.

The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of young girls regarding bad touch in rural areas of Aligarh.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted during February-March in 2018, in the rural areas of Jawan, Aligarh. The study subjects were young girls aged between 9 to 19 years, who were present in the study area, those who refused to provide consent, were excluded. A total of 100 girls were included in the study. The confidentiality was ensured to them. Questionnaire was prepared for the study. Data was collected and analyzed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

Table 1

Type of Family	No=100
Joint	38
Nuclear	62

Table 2

Heard about bad touch	No =100
Yes	40
No	60

Table 3

What do you mean by bad touch	No =100
Bad eye to eye contact	8
Flirting	6
A touch from anyone from family, friends or strangers that makes you feel uncomfortable	26
Don't know	60

Table 4

Have you ever experienced bad touch	No =100
Yes	15
No	85

Table 5

If yes, it was experienced by	No =15	%
Stranger	9	60
Known	6	40

Table 6

If yes, number of times	No=15	%
Once	9	60
More than one	6	40

Table 7

If yes, where,	No =15	%
In a marriage ceremony	2	13.3
In school/college or on the way to	7	46.6
Friends or own house	2	13.3
In a crowd as exhibition etc.	3	20
In a public place, library, park, cinema, market etc.(train)	1	6.6

Table 8

What was your mental state at that time	No=15	%
Afraid and crying	3	20
Ignore all	0	0
Feeling nervous and started shivering	12	80
Courageous enough to ask him, why doing so	0	0

Table 9

What steps were taken by you	No =15	%
Confined yourself to house, stop going to school /college	3	20
Tell everything to your family	2	13.33
Go to mahilathana for complaint	0	0
Not to tell anyone as you think this was your fate	1	6.66
Thought that it would spoil your family name and prestige	9	60

The study population comprised 38 girls of joint family and 62 of nuclear family (table 1). Out of 100 girls, 60 had not heard of bad touch nor they knew the meaning of it. 26 girls understood that bad touch was a touch that made them felt uncomfortable. 8 girls understood as bad eye to eye contact and 6 girls knew as flirting (table 3). Out of 100 girls, 15 had experienced bad touch (table 4). Out of 15 girls who experienced bad touch, in 9 girls (60%) it was done by some stranger and in 6 girls (table 5), it was done by known person (40%). Out of 15 girls, who gave history of bad touch, 9 girls experienced once and 6 girls more than once (table 6). Out of 15 girls, 7 girls (46.6%) experienced on their way to school or in school. 2 girls (13.3%) experienced in a marriage ceremony, 2 girls (13.33%) experienced in friend or her own house, 3 girls (20%) experienced in a crowd (exhibition). 1 girl experienced in train (table 7).

12 girls out of 15, started feeling nervous and started shivering. While 3 girls got afraid and started crying as shown in table 8. As reported in table 9, out of 15 girls, 9 girls (60%) thought that it would spoil their family name and prestige. So it was better to keep their mouth shut. No one went to thana for complaint. 3 girls (20%) confined themselves to house and stopped going to school.

DISCUSSION

Women in India are not safe anywhere – at home, the workplace or on streets. And this is despite the fact that incidents of violence against women regularly make headlines in Indian newspapers, especially since the brutal rape of ‘Nirbhaya’ in Delhi in December 2012 (24). Even minors, sometimes as young as four years, have not been spared by these predators.

There are a number of social and economic forces at work in India that also lead to the high incidence of rapes. To start with, lower literacy rates (our literacy rates have improved but are certainly not high) are associated with higher crime rates. Poverty is another serious factor that abets rapes in India since it is responsible for the lack of adequate sanitation facilities. The absence of toilets within the house is one of the factors

contributing to the large number of rape incidents(25) Women who are forced to use open fields as toilets in the dark are easy targets for rapists who being from the same village know when and where to attack. Social hierarchy plays an important role too, especially in the rape of Dalit (26) and tribal women, who are treated like personal property without any human rights, because of their lower social standing.

As shown in table 1, the study population comprised 38 girls of joint family and 62 of nuclear family. Nuclear families in rural areas might be the increasing reason of sexual assault against girls because there are no relatives (grandparents, uncles etc) in the family to take care of children. The mother goes to the field for work or busy in household activities and the father also goes out for work. Poor girls may be more at risk of rape in the course of their daily tasks than those who are better off, for example when they walk home on their own from work late at night, or work in the fields or collect firewood alone. Children of poor women may have less parental supervision when not in school, since their mothers may be at work and unable to afford child care. The children themselves may, in fact, be working and thus vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

As shown in table 2 and table 3, 60 girls had not heard of bad touch nor they knew the meaning of it. Table 4 reported that only 15 girls had experienced bad touch.

Out of 15 girls who experienced bad touch, in 9 girls (60%) it was done by some stranger and in 6 girls (table 5), it was done by known person (40%). Out of 15 girls, who gave history of bad touch, 9 girls experienced once and 6 girls more than once (table 6). Out of 15 girls, 7 girls (46.6%) experienced on their way to school. 2 girl (13.3%) experienced in a marriage ceremony, 2 girls (13.33%) experienced in friend or her own house, 3 girls (20%) experienced in a crowd (exhibition). 1 girl experienced in train (table 7).

Nearly half the girls experienced on their way to school. The reason might be that schools are usually far away from houses. Also, on the way there are shrubs and bushes, where these activities are conducted.

For many young women, the most common place where sexual coercion and harassment are experienced is in or way to school. In an extreme case of violence in 1991, 71 teenage girls were raped by their classmates and 19 others were killed at a boarding school in Meru, Kenya (27). In Zimbabwe, a retrospective study of reported cases of child sexual abuse over an 8-year period (1990–1997) found high rates of sexual abuse committed by teachers in rural primary schools. Many of the victims were girls between 11 and 13 years of age and penetrative sex was the most prevalent type of sexual abuse (28).

As shown in our study, 12 girls out of 15, started feeling nervous and started shivering. While 3 girls got afraid and started crying as shown in table 8. As reported in table 9, out of 15 girls, 9 girls (60%) thought that it would spoil their family name and prestige. So it was better to keep their mouth shut. No one went to thana for complaint. 3 girls (20%) confined themselves to house and stopped going to school. The reason for not reporting to police station might be that complaints of rape may also be treated leniently by the police, particularly if the assault is committed during a date or by the victim's husband. Where police investigations and court cases

do proceed, the procedures may well be either extremely lax or else corrupt – for instance, with legal papers being “lost” in return for a bribe. In India, in these cases the silence is due to the fear of indignity, denial from the community, social stigma, not being able to trust government bodies, and gap in communication between parents and children about this issue.

While fear of rape is typically associated with being outside the home (29,30), the great majority of sexual violence actually occurs in the home of the victim or the abuser. Abused women reporting experiences of forced sex are at significantly greater risk of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder than non-abused women (31, 32). A study of adolescents in France also found a relationship between having been raped and current sleep difficulties, depressive symptoms, somatic complaints, tobacco consumption and behavioural problems (such as aggressive behaviour, theft and truancy) (33). In Ethiopia, 6% of raped schoolgirls reported having attempted suicide (34). A study of adolescents in Brazil found prior sexual abuse to be a leading factor predicting several health risk behaviours, including suicidal thoughts and attempts (35). Experiences of severe sexual harassment can also result in emotional disturbances and suicidal behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Education programs in schools should be incorporated that focus on violence against women and children. Using available mass media, might be an effective strategy for changing attitudes about rape and rape victims. Building toilets in houses should become a part of infrastructure provision by the government. The government should work to improve literacy rates since higher literacy reduces all types of crimes. In fact, states with higher literacy rates do have fewer reported rapes (23). Let us shift the shame and blame to whom it really belongs – the perpetrators of rape. Let us make it easier for women to report rapes and live in society on equal terms. Until we can make these changes, corruption may continue to be the bane of India, but these rapes will be the shame of our nation.

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