

**CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE AMONG JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS OF RURAL MAHARASHTRA, INDIA**Omkar S. Kulkarni<sup>1</sup>, Vaishali V. Raje<sup>2</sup>**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

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**ABSTRACT: INTRODUCTION:** Child sexual abuse is a serious problem globally. Approximately 150 million girls and 73 million boys are being victimized for sexual abuse. Disclosure by the children and reporting by the parents regarding exposure to sexual violence found to be poor. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:** The current study is aimed to find the magnitude of childhood sexual abuse among junior college male students and the various types of sexual abuse experienced. **METHODOLOGY: TYPE OF STUDY:** Descriptive Cross sectional study. **STUDY SETTING:** Junior college of Rural Malkapur Maharashtra. **STUDY SUBJECTS:** Male students enrolled in Junior college during year 2012 to 2013. **RESULTS:** It was found that more than half of male junior college students were the victims of verbal sexual assault. Threatening by the abuser and fear and poor knowledge associated with the assault leads to poor disclosure and poor identification of victims and perpetrators. **CONCLUSION:** Awareness program on child sexual abuse for students, teachers and parents must be adopted to prevent assault and to identify victims of child sexual abuse.

**KEYWORDS:** Child Abuse, Sexual Harassment, Verbal Sexual Assault.

**INTRODUCTION:** The problem of child abuse and human rights violation is one of the most critical, matters on the International Human Rights Agenda. Child sexual abuse is a serious problem globally as well as in our society and occurs more frequently than people realize. World health organization estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 years have experienced forced sexual or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact.<sup>1</sup> In Asia where population density is high the issues of child labor and child sexual exploitation are also high.

In Indian context acceptance of child rights as a primary inviolable rights is fairly recent. In India almost 30-50% of children are abused.<sup>2</sup> Reporting of child sexual abuse is also extremely low. Exposure to sexual abuse during childhood results into serious behavioral, physical problems.<sup>3</sup> thus the current study is an attempt to find out the magnitude and types of childhood sexual abuse among junior college students.

**METHODOLOGY:** This Cross sectional, descriptive type of study was conducted in a junior college under the capture areas of Krishna Institute of Medical sciences, Malkapur, Karad of Maharashtra State, India. All male students of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standards of junior college enrolled during the academic year 2012 to 2013 who belonged to 15 to 19 years of age were included in the study.

**Exclusion Criteria:** All girl students were eliminated from this study. Boys remained absent on the day of interview were not included in the study.

**Ethical Issues:** As child sexual abuse is a sensitive issue, written permission of principal of junior college was obtained on explaining the purpose of the study. Assurance was given to the College

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Authority and students for the confidentiality of the name of college, students at any circumstances. Information was collected by maintaining privacy.

**Data Collection:** Data was collected on a pre-structured questionnaire included the knowledge and experiences of childhood (5 years to 18 years) sexual abuse. Also information was collected on types of sexual abuse experienced and sharing of such events with parents or friends. Each student was assured for confidentiality of information and freedom to quit the study anytime during the data collection.

**Statistics:** Data was compiled and analyzed by using SPSS 20

### RESULTS:

Age group	Knowledge Yes (%)	Experience Yes (%)	Total (%)
15-17	87(77.7)	87(80.6)	161(84.3)
>18	25(22.3)	21(19.4)	30(15.7)
Total (%)	112(58.6)	108(56.4)	191
X <sup>2</sup> & P value	p =0.002	2.622 & 0.105	

Table 1: Knowledge and experience of childhood sexual assault among students.

In a junior college the study on childhood sexual abuse was conducted among 191 boys. It was found that 58.6% of respondents know about child sexual abuse and significantly higher proportion of students below 17 years of age had information on child sexual abuse. Almost 56.4% respondents experienced sexual assault in their childhood. Majority of male students who suffered from child sexual abuse belong to age group 15 to 17(80.6%) (Table 1)

Age group	Physical Yes (%)	Verbal Yes (%)	Body language Yes (%)
15-17	54(80.6)	39(92.9)	15(71.4)
>18	13(19.4)	3(7.1)	6(28.6)
Total	67(62)	42(38.9)	21(19.4)
X <sup>2</sup> & P value	0.0 & 0.989	P=0.012	1.578 & 0.454

Table 2: Magnitude of various types of sexual assaults experienced by the victims (n=108)

Physical sexual violence which includes touching body parts, kissing, handling private parts, pitching, attempt to rape(62%) was reported predominately by the students followed by verbal(38.9%) and body language indicating towards private parts(19.4%) to abuse sexually. However verbal sexual abuse was reported significantly higher by the students of age 15 to 17 years than that of >18 years boys. (92.9% with p=0.012)(Table 2)

Age Group	Threatening Yes (%)	Force Yes (%)	Favor Yes (%)
15-17	11(84.6)	11(78.6)	17(85)
>18	2(15.4)	3(21.4)	3(15)

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Total	13(12)	14(13)	20(18.5)
X <sup>2</sup> & P value	P=1.0	P=0.21	P=0.758

**Table: 3 Modes used to convince victim to tolerate sexual abuse by abuser (n= 108).**

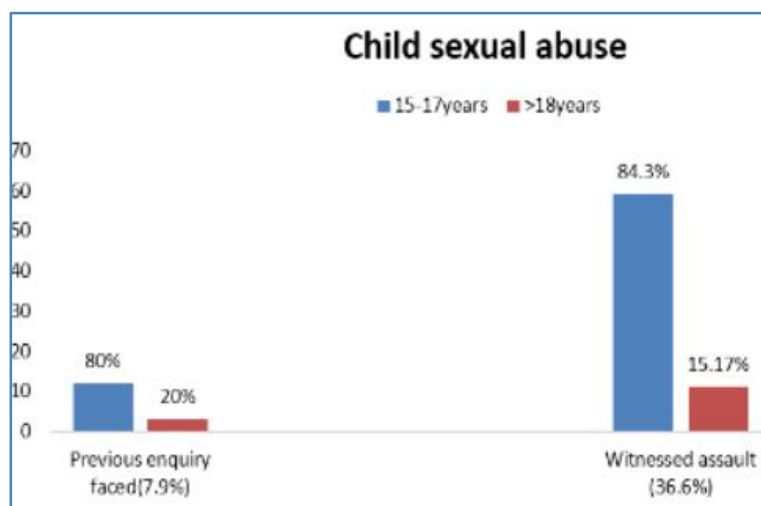
For the act of sexual abuse, 18.5% students had given favor in the form of giving sweets or gifts or by sweet words by the abuser for cooperating and hiding the act of abuse. Threatening (84.6%) was reported predominantly by students of age 15-17 years during their childhood that is since 5 years to 14 years of age. Students above 18 years age reported that, they had experienced force or use of physical power (21.4%) for performing assault during their childhood by the abuser (Table 3).

Age Group	Parents Yes (%)	Siblings Yes (%)	Teachers Yes (%)	Friends Yes (%)	Total Yes (%)
15-17	4(100)	1(33.3)	1(100)	22(84.6)	15(17.2)
>18	0(0)	2(66.7)	0(0)	4(15.4)	0(0)
Total	4(3.7)	3(2.8)	1(0.9)	26(24.1)	15(13.9)
X <sup>2</sup> & P value	P=1.00	P=0.096	P=1.00	P=0.777	P=0.039

**Table 4: Sharing of experience of assault (n= 108)**

It was asked to the students whether they had shared the incidence of abuse on the same time to any family members, friends or any said to be faithful person. The significantly higher proportion of students of age 15-17 years told they shared their experience of exposure to assault ( $p= 0.039$ ) than the students of age more than 18 years. Majority of boys of age 15-17 years had shared information of assault in childhood with their parents (100%), teachers (100%) followed by friends (84.6%) and siblings (33.3%). Whereas the students above 18 years age informed mainly to their sibling (66.7%) (Table 4).

**Figure 1:** Information from students on witnessed assault and faced previous enquiry.



**Figure 1**

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Out of 191 students, more than one third(36.6%) had witnessed of assault with other children however they never informed or talk to anyone regarding this issue previously. Only 7.9% students told that they had talk or been asked previously on child sexual abuse. (Figure1)

**DISCUSSION:** Child sexual abuse is one of the alarming public health problems. Till date it remains unnoticed or ignored may be because of poor awareness among parents and the fear in victims. However in present study 58.6% of boys are aware of child sexual abuse. Similar findings were reported among children working on street. More than 60% of children had knowledge about the types of abuse<sup>4</sup>. Many international studies have reported range of sexual assault in male children from minimum 8% to maximum 55.5%.<sup>1,5-11</sup> Whereas child sexual abuse has been reported from 30-53%<sup>2,6,12</sup> in India. In current study of child sexual abuse in the boys of Junior college in their childhood is reported quite higher than the other Indian studies (56.4%).

Knowledge regarding abuse among children may help in protecting them in future and can prevent such incidence happening with other children.

Many studies have reported physical sexual abuse in the form of penetrating to non-penetrating sex from 5% to 84%.<sup>7,9,13-15</sup> In present study also physical sexual assault is reported higher(62%) than other forms(verbal sexual assault 38.9%, body language 19.4%). Among physical sexual assault, intimacy, fondling and attempt to rape is reported similar to above studies. However pinching to intend sexual assault is reported much higher (36.6%) by the boys in present study.

Verbal sexual assault using bad words, teasing and provoking for sex is commonly seen, whereas vulgar action and display of vulgar pictures and drawing as a part of sexual assault is also reported in present study. S. S. Celik and M. S. Baybuga observed verbal, physical, sexual abuse (50%, 50%, 65% respectively) among working children.<sup>4</sup> one of the study found that 63% of American parents reported verbal aggression such as swearing at and insulting their child. Such verbal abuse may have worse lasting consequences than any other form of abuse.<sup>16</sup>

Offenders usually take the advantage of powerlessness of child and to gain the child's compliance offender often gives bribes (18.5%), force (13%), threatening (12%). Children who are sexually abused often do not disclose incidence to anybody because they are afraid of perpetrator's anger, or they have threatened to stay quiet or convinced to believe them. Such use of power or favor by the abuser often leads to repeated abuse for long period.<sup>17</sup>

Broman-Fulks et al reported 73% of child victims do not disclose the abusive act at least for one year and 45% of victims do not disclose for 5 years.<sup>18</sup> However Queensland crime report says 50% victims of child sexual abuse never report or may do not disclose, the abuse to any one till they reach adulthood.<sup>18</sup> However in present study more than three fourth boys (86%) have not disclosed the abuse happened with them to anyone, this may be due to fear or poor awareness regarding the act of assault among them. Very few students were disclosed the act of assault to their friends instead of parents or teachers who are actually reliable and very much closer to the children.

### CONCLUSIONS:

1. More than 50% of male students of junior college have reported to be victimized during their childhood.
2. Threatening by the perpetrators was reported most commonly by the students which might have made them to hide the incidences from their parents/ Teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. It is recommended that immediate and appropriate responsive action must be undertaken at family level and primary and secondary school level when child informs his/ her parents/ teachers /any reliable person.
2. Awareness program on child sexual abuse for students, teachers and parents to be implemented mandatorily to prevent assault and to identify victims of child sexual abuse based on behavioral changes among the victims.
3. Teachers and parents should improve their communication with the pupil / student respectively so the abused child may feel free to share his/her experience which may help in identifying the abuser as well as prevention of such acts in future.

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