ABSTRACT

In this thesis ‘Repercussions of Child Abuse and Therapeutic Interventions in Childhood and Adolescent Behavior’, only the child sexual abuse as a parameter and the four repercussions of child sexual abuse (self–esteem, optimism/pessimism, anxiety and aggression) were chosen for the study purpose.

The sexual abuse of children by grownups is not something new but has been a long-standing culturally sanctioned offence. From ancient times child prostitution, pornography and sexual abuse have been known to exist. Today problem is that many young children are kidnapped and traded, sexually exploited by older people and even used as child soldiers in war (War Child, 2013). Since last two years cases of sexual abuse are on the rise in India. Children are exploited by the family members, neighbors, caregivers, treated as attraction of sex tourism and have become the victims of a globally organized sex trade.

Child sexual victims are very much susceptible to health and emotional issues in life. These children are involved in misuse of drugs and intake of alcohol, eat too much and gain weight smoke intensely, suffer from low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, aggression, violence and suicide ideations. Child sexual abuse disrupts the proper functioning of the brain parts and this leads to bodily and mental problems in the victim. The child sexual victims suffer from sleepless nights, extremely frightful, anxious, restless and hyper active (Child Maltreatment, 2007 and 2013).

Child sexual abuse leads to sexual trauma which often leads to traumatic body reactions, resulting in the victim feeling 'a black hole of emptiness' and low self-esteem. Many abused children and adolescents feel that they are not worthy to receive love, care and attention from others. Due to the abuse they have lost the sense of self worth and feel very much low and small to socialize with others. As the victims of child sexual abuse suffer from poor self-worth and low self-esteem they find it extremely difficult to mix with others and this leads to their further sexual abuse (A.J. Urquiza, C. Winn, 1994).
Abell, (1995) conducted an interesting study and proved that child sexual abuse can lead to post traumatic disorder in children and adolescents. The trauma of abuse makes them depressed, hostile and lose confidence in self. The study also showed that the devastating effect on the victims of child sexual abuse are alike to those who have suffered from war-related trauma. Grave fear and anxiety are the primary responses of rape victims.

To assess the repercussions of child sexual abuse of children and adolescents a series of psychological tests were carried out (pre-tests). They are as follows-(a) Rosenberg's Self Esteem Questionnaire (b) A New Measure of Children's Optimism and Pessimism – Dr. Sidney Ey et al. (2005) (c) GAD-7 Anxiety (d) Buss-Perry Aggression Scale. The pre-test result showed that the children and adolescents had low self-esteem, decreased optimism, high pessimism, increased anxiety and aggression.

In the experimental group the therapeutic intervention the dance movement therapy was conducted. The psychological tests were administered once again (post-tests) to see whether the dance movement therapy had effect on the behavior of children and adolescents. To analyze the effects of dance movement therapy the paired t test for various combinations and chi square test had been done which indicated that dance therapy was the significant factor which resulted in high levels of self-esteem, increased optimism, reduction in pessimism, anxiety and aggression among post test group of experimental group of children and adolescents.

According to Devereaux Basiner, dance movement therapy helps to express oneself genuinely. It helps to broaden horizon and improves body awareness of the person. It also helps to identify, establish and build healthy boundaries in relationships. It gives way to release tension and stress. Dance increases the attentiveness of self and others. It improves communication skills in children and adults of their growing period (J. Basiner, C. Devereaux, S. Mulcahy, M.C. Ponsini, J. Shaw, S. Tortora and S.R. Vincent, 2007; Megan Starnes, 2011). The unresolved sexual trauma of sexual abuse and can lead to poor body image, anxiety, depression, and low self esteem. Child sexual abuse
leads to multifaceted repercussions on children and adolescent behavior. Several explorations and investigations have proved that dance movement therapy is very useful to bring healing to the child sexual victims.

The dance therapist in Freudian technique helps the client find out and discern feelings that are deep rooted in oneself and express the inner emotions and feelings by being aware of them in the dance movement therapy. Bringing awareness to one’s feelings can lead to change of attitude in the person. The individuals are motivated by the dance therapist in the Jungian approach. They are made to become aware of the continual imagination of their feelings, thoughts and dreams so that they obtain a true sense and better understanding for their life. The clients are left free to move about with their internal wishes instead of dancing and expressing out their thoughts and feelings. The individual is the own master of her/his movements and without any biased mind the therapist only observes the movements of the client (B. Boughton, 2005). Dance has a great effect on the mind, body and emotions. The rhythmic movement and the self-expression produces a physiological reaction which is called the healing dimension.

Stretch and release, the movements which are physical, spiritual and emotional integration of the individual in the therapy sessions make it transformational. It enhances self-esteem and increase a grounded sense of self. Builds trust, improves interaction and socialization, releases tension and anxiety. It brings one into relationship with sensation, which is the voice of the body. The movement brings healing and finds connection for the mind body and spirit and discovers oneself in a new way.

Research has proved like Bojner-Horwitz et al. (2003) examined that creative therapy like dance movement therapy is used to develop the self-esteem, emotional well-being, and self-control of the person. It is an effective tool in treating mental disorders of adolescents. Marcus and Arbeiter, (1994) showed how dance movement therapy helped sexually abused children to identify, bring about a change and build a healthy image towards body and self. Trauma directly affects the brain verbal processing. Disturbing memories lead to disconnect the brain from one’s body. This is called body
brain disconnection. There are conflicts in a person’s psyche (negative brain effects) because of body freezing and disturbing emotional thoughts and memories. Thus, energy of body and brain get restricted often leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Intra personal conflict arises from unresolved emotional responses and unresolved thinking. This leads to unstable interpersonal relationships and destroys trust. The body is reconnected through the dance movements which stimulates and releases the trapped body emotions. It creates healthy self identity

S. Loman (2005) claims that dance movement therapy is a creative and action-oriented method that promotes positive attitudes and helps in to express underlying feelings. It helps to let go worry and tension and provides as a means to reconnect body, mind and spirit. Krantz, (1999) shows that dance movement can create the potential to be a psycho- physiological channel that can function as a cathartic (therapeutic healing) release. Choi and Lee (2008) claim that music in the dance movement therapy can develop children's self-esteem reduce aggression and help them to be in control of their feelings and emotions. Dance movement processes provide an opportunity by using dance as a source of full body health and wellness and for body re-integration. It helps in healing the imbalances in the body.

Milliken (2002) examined that the creative method of dance and movement allows the person to communicate ones deepest thoughts and beliefs in a new way. This leads to the individual with a totally healing experience. Yalom (2005) claims that group therapy in the dance movement therapy is a source of a healing moment to convey one’s emotions and feelings with others. It provides healing and remedial factors. Dusso (2000) states dance is an outstanding form of exercise and extremely favored by adolescents. It improves the mental health of the individuals who take part in it. The psychological benefits are improvement in morale, decreased depression, and better sleep, reduces anxiety, a lesser amount of substance use, strengthening of the mind, reduced neuroticism and an enhancement in emotional happiness.
In conclusion the therapeutic interventions are necessary for anyone who has to go through a process of healing. This is all the more necessary for the child and adolescent victim of abuse, whether the abuse is physical, psychological or sexual. The research study has proved that dance movement therapy can bring healing. Dance movement processes provide an opportunity by using dance as a source of full body health and wellness and for body re-integration. It helps in healing the imbalances in the body. The dance movement therapy and hoop movements made the children and adolescents to express their bottled up and repressed emotions freely and openly. This was a cathartic effect of the movement therapy.