CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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The present research was undertaken on the topic ‘A STUDY OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF GIRL CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BEED DISTRICT’. The subject is studied with the help of multi-source data collection i.e. five hundred school going girl children, 30 case-studies (reported and unreported cases) and interviews of forty key informants who are working on the concerned issue. The findings derived from analysis of this data are presented in this chapter. The extent, nature, causes and consequences of girl child sexual abuse are studied and coping strategies are also suggested in the present study. The issue was selected due to its severity and its need of immediate action. Girl child sexual abuse is not an individual problem. It is emerging as one of the most heinous offences and is gaining more and more momentum as a social issue.

It is very necessary that the issues like girl child sexual abuse are not neglected by govt. and social activists. Majority of the human rights groups in India so far have focused chiefly on the rights of adults. This mindset and approach has to be changed. There is urgent need to appeal to all concerned to treat violation of rights of the children with equal importance. While, punishing the guilty is important, concerted action to make the people aware of the problem is also urgently needed. The emergence of this issue as a global problem needs to be given special attention. The researcher, therefore, selected this subject for study and also to suggest some coping strategies and tackling measures.
For the present study some objectives were set and for testing the validity of hypothesis, the analysis of data was undertaken and the conclusions were drawn.

1. **To study the socio-economic background of the victims of sexual abuse was the objective of the present study.**

   In this regard it was found that the school going girls in the age group of 11 to 18 years who had suffered sexual abuse were mostly from lower income group of the society. 28 percent victim’s fathers were daily wage earners in rural area and 24.40 percent were daily wage earners in urban areas. 21.20 percent father of the victims in rural area and 16 percent in urban area were unemployed.

   The number of victims whose fathers are Govt. servants earning salary is very less in both the areas. Persons other than Govt. servants had no certainty of job and did not have fixed income. Unemployment exists in large scale in both, rural and urban areas and the data shows the percentage of victims whose fathers are unemployed is very high in both the areas. The unemployment of father gives him more leisure time and that leisure time makes him addict and addiction leads to tension and quarrel in the family. Such tensed families are not having healthy environment and interactions with their children. Most of the girl children are having their mother working as wage earner, domestic worker or engaged in agricultural work. Only few, 1.20 percent in rural area and 4.40 percent in urban area, are Govt. servants. The mother of victim bears the responsibility of working to earn for the family and this work keeps her away from home and she has no time to interact with her child.

   These girls are, most of the time, alone in the home as the parents are away for earning 97% Victims from the rural area and 76% Victims
from urban area had to give considerable time for house hold work and responsibility of their siblings. This results in the girls irregular schooling and school dropout and deprives the girls from education and recreation. This situation is misused by the male family members and the relatives who visit the home misuse the trust of the girl child by sexually abusing her. Women in the family are some time aware of this fact, but they are unable to protect the girl children from abuse as they cannot afford to abandon their work outside due to poverty and are forced to keep mum because of fear of social stigma and male authoritarian atmosphere in the family.

Television is the only medium of entertainment for 62.8 percent victims. These girls were rarely allowed to go outside for cinema, for trip, to garden or even to chitchat with friends. So the television is the only medium of entertainment for girl children in both rural and urban areas. These girls are deprived of healthy means of recreation such as reading, playing games and mixing with peer groups.

This study also reveals the fact that even though the sexual abuse is prevalent in all income group families, girls belonging to lower income group are at high risk. Beed District which is the universe of this study is known for its migration, poverty and low literacy level of girls and for female foeticide. The poverty renders the family unable to fulfill the needs of their girl children and the teenage girls are generally tempted by the gifts, money and items of luxury and by false promises offered to them by the abuser and these girls become victims of sexual abuse.

Thus the main factors that contribute to the magnitude of the problem of girl child sexual abuse are gender discrimination,
poverty, illiteracy and unhealthy family environment. Hence, a girl child who is a future mother, with such socio-economic background, runs a greater risk of being victimized. From this study the hypothesis, that the lower the economic condition, the more is the vulnerability of a girl child to sexual abuse, is proved.

2. To find out the nature and causes of girl child sexual abuse was another objective of the present study.

   For the proper understanding of the problem, the nature and causes of girl child sexual abuse were studied in the present study. The various nature of girl child sexual abuse found in the study was rape, sodomy, prostitution, molestation, abduction, incest, intercourse, touching private parts of the child, fondling of child genitals, making the child fondle an adult genitals, exhibitionisms and pornography.

   Abusers of girl children found in the study were, father, brother, grandfather, family members, frequent visitors like relatives, family friends, male cousins, maternal uncle, paternal uncle, step-father, step-brother, brother-in-law, neighbours etc. The study revealed that many victims were made to watch pornographic material by the frequent visitors and the sources of such material is mobile phone, books, videos, CD’s and internet. Among all these abusers from both urban and rural areas, the percentage of male cousin is higher (28.77 percent in rural area and 36.07 percent in urban area) followed by, maternal uncle (24.30 percent in rural area and 20.88 percent in urban area). The percentage of paternal uncle is at third position i.e. 18.86 in rural area and 17.72 in urban area. The percentage of father as abuser is 4.71 in rural area and it is 3.79 in urban areas is quite distressing. Quite a sizable number of girl children are abused by more than one abuses, 84.8 percent girls from
rural area have suffered sexual abuse by different members of family, whereas the same is reported by 63.2 percent victims from urban area.

These figures prove that there is rural and urban divide about girl child sexual abuse and girl from rural area in large number suffer sexual abuse.

The girls have adjustment problem in reconstituted families. Ill-treatment at the hands of step-father and cousin is common. Thus the causes leading to sexual abuse of girl child within a family are found to be lack of communication among parents, no or little interaction with parents, deprivation of teenage needs of love and affection, breaking of values about brother-sister and other close relationships. Because of this, victims loose the faith in relationship and family system.

This shows that ‘the family’, which is a place of protection and security for every human being, has become for the girl children most insecure place and the persons who are the known, the trusted persons and are exceeded to be the care takers and protectors have turned into villains and destructors of the future of girl children. Such people are almost just waiting for the right opportunity to initiate contact with the girl and then gradually to engage her in sexual activity. The girl child is losing her faith and trust in members of her family and family relationship. Indian culture had taught her to respect and trust the elders in the family. This teaching does not allow her to speak about her sexual abuse by incest.

The study also reveals the fact that the abusers from outside the family are generally the persons known to the child such as neighbour, teacher, boyfriends, male and female family friends, school servants,
watchmen, persons at work place and house owners. Neighbours and family friends who have special place in Indian society as caretakers and well-wishers are found to sexually abusing the girl children. 11 percent girls reported sexual abuse by neighbours, 2.8 percent by family friends and 3.6 percent by teachers. The behaviour of such neighbors and family friends is disgusting and reprehensible. **Teacher student relationship is considered sacred in India but it was found that in many cases the behaviour of teacher with his student is immoral and unworthy of this profession. This shows how these known and trusted persons are abusing the girl child by violating her by betraying their and their parent’s trust.**

The present study reveals the fact that the problem of girl child sexual abuse is prevalent in secured place like home and also in neighbours house, and public places like market, while travelling and also in the joyful ceremony of marriages etc.

**Marriage Ceremonies** are special events where people gather to enjoy and feel happy. But it was found that, unfortunately, the girl children are harassed at such functions. The nature of sexual abuse faced by the girls in the marriage ceremony was, looking at in a sexual way, making of sexual comments, touching private parts, fondling in sexual way and photo snapping by both known and unknown persons. Camera in mobile phone is very conveniently used by relatives and family friends. Many a times the girls are embarrassed and shocked when they have to face defamation and blackmail due to misuse or abuse of their photographs. In this study it was found that during marriage ceremony the percentage of relatives as abusers is high in both rural and urban area (47.93). Among the relatives, percentage of male cousins (51.38) as abusers is high in both areas i.e. 45.45 in rural and 48.57 in urban area
followed by paternal uncle which is 24.24 percent in rural area and 20 percent in urban area.

**In Market Place** nature of sexual abuse of girl children is, looking at in a sexual way, whistling, singing vulgar songs, making sexual comments, and touching private parts. It was observed that looking at in a sexual ways is highest among all other forms of abuse in both the areas. It is 19.6% in rural area and 29.2 in urban area. It was found that whistling is higher in rural area. It is 13% in rural area and 10.4% percent in urban area. Whistling is used in different tunes to indicate one’s identity and to attract the attention of the girl concerned. It was observed that the other forms of abuse such as ogling or looking at the girl with sexual intention is more common in urban area because the abuser can take advantage of the surrounding crowd to go near young girl to gain proximity to satisfy his sexual desire. But the girls from rural area have suffered this more on Bazar day in villages. For girls living in urban area this form of abuse is of almost a daily occurrence. Girls from rural area are comparatively saved from this type of abuse as they are not normally in crowd in their villages.

**During Travel** the nature of sexual abuse faced by the girls is, touching private parts, making sexual comments, sitting very close, and ‘looking at in a sexual way’. It is found that the sexual abuse in the various forms is high in the urban area than in rural area. The girls complain that they are afraid of travelling as it is very embarrassing. The standing passenger even goes to the extent of rubbing his private part to the shoulder of a sitting girl. Parents are reluctant to send the girl to school if she complained of such things. The girls of tender age who are living in rural area have to go to nearby town daily for their high school. **Sexual abusers take advantage of this necessity of these girls and**
travel in these vehicles purposely to harass the girls by sitting very close and try to develop intimacy by means of various ways. The girls don’t even complain to their parents for fear that they might be asked to discontinue their education.

The girls who have to face sexual abuse during travel to school are keeping mum and are unwilling to disclose the matter. In fact their silence increases the nuisance and emboldens the abusers. **Investigation into causes for their keeping mum about trouble at public places revealed the disturbing fact that they have to lose much by telling people about the nuisance then by tolerating it.** Among the reasons for keeping mum the highest is the fear about being blamed, it is 53.25 percent in rural area and 49.38 percent in urban area. Nobody is caring for their complaint so they learn to get accustomed to the evil, to accept and to live with it. It was found that abusers take advantage of crowd in the market place, in marriage ceremony and while travelling to go near the young girl to gain proximity and the pleasure of satisfaction of his sexual activities.

In this study the various causes of girl child sexual abuse were noted. Among them the family atmosphere is prominent. **Tensed atmosphere** in the family is higher in rural area i.e. 52.40 percent where as it is 48.46 percent in urban area. Only 10 percent families are having friendly atmosphere in the rural area, where as it is 16 percent in urban area. This shows the severity of the problem and the difference between urban and rural families.

82.61 percent families having the **head of the family addicted is quite a distressful situation as this result into disharmony, frequent quarrels between parents and tension affecting the childhood of the**
girl child in the family. Tensed atmosphere at home makes the child feel inferior, lose her self confidence, makes her keep quiet and, therefore, vulnerable to abuse. Due to the silence of the girl children, they are easily carried away by allurements and become an easy prey of the abusers who exploit them for their personal sexual gratification. 68.10 percent victims reported that their parents quarrel always, 31.89 percent victims reported that their parents quarrel frequently and 7.2 percent girl children did not respond. It is clear that quarrel between parents leads to tension in the family. This study reveals that sexual abuse that occurs in a context of granting of special privileges may be as traumatic and bewildering to the child as a violent molestation. If the home and surrounding are not congenial enough and basic needs of foods, clothing, education and hobby are not met, the child is likely to fall prey to sexual abuse.

Nature of punishment for mistakes committed by victims is also a causative factor in abuse. Nature of punishment ‘scolding’ is higher in both the areas i.e. 63.20 percent in rural area and 59.60 percent in urban area. In rural area, forms of punishment for girl children, such as giving food late, giving more work, ask to do agriculture and household work, and not purchasing new clothes during festivals etc. are very common. In urban area, the ‘other punishments’ include, not sending outside, insulting in front of the friends etc., beating, locking, not talking are inhuman punishments given by the parents to girl child. Such punishments make the girl upset and it leads to mental strain and makes her keep mum. It creates distance and lack of rapport between the parents and child and makes the girl child feel insecure in her home. In such situation potential abuser gets a chance to give the child emotional support and an opportunity to win the trust of the girl. He
not only abuses the girl once or twice but frequently because her silence emboldens him.

Gender discrimination is also prevalent in both the areas. It is an important causative factor in girl child sexual abuse. This shows the negative attitude towards girl child in our society. This discriminatory treatment to girl children is an indicator of their low status in the family. Due to low status girls feel interior and due to lack of attention by parents these girl children never find a suitable atmosphere in their homes to share their problems. They feel insecure as there is lack of communication and the tensed atmosphere in the family makes them suffer silently without raising their voice against their sexual abuse.

In rural families, economic discrimination is highest i.e. 97 percent, where as it is 86 percent in urban area households. Even though gender inequality is there in both the areas, the discrimination is sourly profound for girls from rural area. Indicators of discrimination in the present study show that the girls from rural area are more discriminated than urban area against in the familial level and also in economic, educational and cultural level.

These girl children are not having appropriate and accurate knowledge about sex and sexuality and this becomes an obstacle in the healthy development of adolescent girls. They cannot differentiate between right and wrong. The media, T.V. with its serials, film songs items, reality shows and movies have the negative effect on their mind. The ‘Make-Believe World’ of this mode of entertainment, accompanied by lack of proper education and neglect by parents, makes these innocent girls vulnerable to deceit and exploitation. The potential abuser abuses her sexually due to her ignorance and teenage. By
gaining her trust, he gradually starts fondling the victim or having the victim fondle him, all the while rationalizing that sex is OK. She is rewarded by gifts for her participation and slowly this situation makes the girl child to agree to more serious sexual acts like intercourse. Abuser is a trusted person in the family so even when the girl child speaks about her sexual abuse, nobody believes her. On the other hand they blame her and this makes her suffer silently.

A girl child is at high risk when she is neglected. If parents are suffering financial problems, if there is no communication between parent and children, between husband and wife, the abuser lays the trap taking advantage of the situation, attracts the child towards him by giving things and by giving emotional support and with the trust thus gained sexually abuses the girl child. Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, the tensed atmosphere in the family and teenage of a girl tempts her to believe the person who has sexually abused her. A girl child, especially if she is poor, is considered as a commodity devoid of any personal choice and desire.

It is found in the study that instead of reporting the case to the police, her guardian scolds and beats the girl child calling her a “girl of bad character”. Instead of giving her any emotional support they insist on her even to leave her home. The girl has nowhere to go and, therefore, is depressed. For no fault of her she is blamed. In fact the girl is a victim of deceit.

The girl child in such family lives with tensed mind and would not share her feelings with others. The child keeps mum even when she is sexually abused in the family itself. This silence works actively because it is the main perpetrator as it puts curtain before the eyes of the parents and they don’t see the reality. Recurrence of the abuse of
girl child in family is possible because of this silence on the part of the
girl and her parents. Investigation into causes for their keeping mum
about trouble revealed the disturbing fact that they have to lose much by
telling about the nuisance than by tolerating it.

The study reveals that ‘no disclosure’ is there because the victim
and her family members feel that disclosure of the incident causes too
many problems such as difficulties in victim’s marriage, the family is
isolated from the social relationships, the girl is ‘labeled’ as ‘damaged
goods’. This ‘labeling’ of the victim gives an easy access to the abuser
to abuse the girl child again and again or even exposes her to be
abused by more the one abuses. All the potential abusers find it easy
to abuse the victim, and it leads to recurrence of abuse. Thus
‘disclosure’ gives rise to disrepute and stigma instead of solving the
problem. Hence, the parents keep silent and they tell their girl child
also to keep quiet and ask her to tolerate her abuse as unfortunately
she is a ‘girl child’. She is asked to keep quiet to protect the dignity of
the family. If the culture teaches her to bear this responsibility of
protecting the dignity of the family being a ‘girl child’, of what is
such ‘dignity of family’ which ends her childhood and even her
happy life. This destroys the life of the girl child as she suffers from long
lasting consequences.

Lack of interaction in the family makes her keep quiet. Keeping
mum only adds to recurrence of the abuse of the girl child the family.
Inadequate control of family, neglect of the child’s needs by the family
and helplessness of the girl child, taken together, has resulted in the
increase of incidents. Sexual abuse within kinship is a fact of life for
many girls as it happens in all kinds of families and in both, the rural as
well as urban area. It disturbs the girl child and makes the child self blaming, feel guilty, causes her to mistrust herself and others.

The results of the study reveal that sexual abuse of girl children is caused by number of situations like lack of communication between parents and children, little or no interaction with mother, no respect for relationship, tensed atmosphere in the family, addiction of father, migration of parents, ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and deterioration of value system and morality in the family and society, inadequate control of the family over children, presence of an authoritative person in the family who thinks it to be his privilege to exploit the girl children in the family, the lust of the elders, an easy access to the girl child and helplessness of the girl child, neglect of girl children by parents because of separation of parents or because of reconstituted family. These are some of situations that are taken advantage of by neighbours and other people to sexually abuse the lonely children. **Lacunae in the criminal Justice system and negative attitude of society towards abused girl children compel such children not to disclose their abuse and suffer in silence.**

Thus it is seen that the girls are victims of sexual abuse only because people have no moral values and derive pleasure by resorting to sexual advances towards girls. A girl, for these people of perverted mentality, is only an object of sexual satisfaction. Temptation, immaturity of age and not knowing the consequences of sexual behaviour on the part of girl children, detoriation of value system and mortality are some of the important factors that are found responsible for this phenomenon of sexual abuse of girl children in the Indian society.

From this study the hypothesis, **1) Urban and rural divide exists about girl child sexual abuse, 2) Girl child sexual abuse occurs**
mainly within kinship and 3) Deterioration of morality and value system leads to higher incidence of girl child sexual abuse, are proved.

3. To study the consequences of sexual abuse on victims was another objective of the study.

In this study it was found. That the consequences of sexual abuse especially on girl children are far reaching. Stigma and fear of defamation around the subject makes the girl child a silent sufferer. Due to secrecy and taboo sexual abuse remains undisclosed and under reported.

The study shows many reactions to the incident from the concerned child such as fear, disgust, shame, helplessness and confusion. Of all these reactions, the percentage of ‘fear’ is highest i.e. 43.4 percent and the percentage of ‘feeling of disgust’ is 17.4.

A very little percentage of girls i.e. 6 percent actively oppose the abuse. These teenage girls do not know the consequences of sexual abuse and many a times they are not even aware of the fact that they are being abused. Such matters are not spoken in the family due to secrecy around the subject. Most of the time the abuser is a family member or a person in close relation of the child and therefore she is in utter confusion as to the incidence of abuse and her mind filled with sense of shame and disgust. The girl child finds herself helpless and is forced to hide the family secret. The entire concept of family relationship gets distorted and such girls face problematic relationship in their future life. In this mental state the girl child who had experienced sexual abuse loses her self confidence, and is at risk of developing a number of psychological problems.

The study also reveals some other consequences of sexual abuse on girl children. Of all these consequences, guilt complex is highest i.e. 23.2
percent. Feelings of guilt leads to self pity, depression, anger and fear resulting into sleeping problem, eating disorders and sadness. Suicidal tendency is also noticed in many victims. Even if these girl children feel angry at the abuser, they are helpless and cannot do much in the matter.

It is also found that many victims suffer from more than one effect of the harrowing experience. The tender age of girl child and lack of understanding of sexual relationships make the sexual encounter, howsoever minor it might be, is mentally destructive to the child. The sexual abuse leaves strong legacy of self blame, guilt feeling, and mistrust of close relatives. The child loses self confidence and cannot live happy life in future.

In their tender age, the girl children are unaware of the consequences of sexual abuse. Due to the abuse these girls suffer from inferiority complex, devoid of self confidence and self respect and lose capacity to communicate with outside world.

Analysis of case-studies in the present study reveals that sexual abuse by close relative makes the girl child confused about the values of relationship and a feeling of disgust, hostility and depression fills her mind. She is inclined to dissociate herself from the company of family members resulting into stunted growth of her personality.

It was found that consequences of sexual abuse in childhood are far reaching. She is tormented by shame and guilt and loses her inquisitiveness and fails to realize her full potential in future life. The girl child who is the victim of sexual abuse suffers from low self-esteem, poor social functioning, and inability to trust, isolation and trauma. The impact of sexual abuse in childhood is in psychological, behavioural and also in societal terms.
In the study of reported cases to police station in Beed District during 2006-2010 it was found that 10% victims are suffering from damage to internal organs, internal lacerations and bleeding and the children are not getting any treatment. The parents say “she is not the only child of us, from where should we bring money for treatment as we are dependent on wages, have no guarantee of work and have to give food for other 4/5 children, What can we do?”

It was found that the victims of sexual abuse blame themselves by accepting the responsibility for the abuse and think that something is wrong with them or that the ‘abuse’ was their fault. These girl children face long term effects and irreparable loss as an abused girl child. Early pregnancy and injury to reproductive organs are physical harms. Self blaming, anxiety, depression, feeling of isolation are serious psychological problems, and stigma and recurrence of the incident, make her think that being a girl child is a ‘curse’.

The study shows that absence of normal family life adversely affects the physical and emotional well being of the child. The girl suffers from, lack of trust in family adults, fear of men, and wants to be alone. Dreamy age of the girl is changed into an age of fear and depression.

Thus, in accordance with the fourth objective of the study, the above stated findings were identified in context of consequences of sexual abuse. This also confirms the hypothesis that sexual abuse leads to mental and physical disorder in victims.
4. To assess the attitude of family members towards the victims was another objective of the study.

Disclosure about sexual abuse by victims to other persons is to mother, father, sister, brother, friends and persons in whom the child reposes confidence. The highest single category of persons to whom the girl child speaks about her sexual abuse is mother. 48.4% girls from rural area and 43% from urban area have told their mother about the sexual abuse experienced by them. Even though most of the girls are disclosing the matter to the mother, in the patriarchal Indian family, the mother finds herself powerless due to male dominated atmosphere in the house and secondary status given to mother and girl, and asks her girl child to silently tolerate the abuse. This shows the negative attitude of family members towards the girl child.

It was found in the study that 44.2 percent parent’s reaction is one of ‘Disbelief’ in the sexual abuse of their girl child. The first reaction of the parents is to disbelieve their own child and even if it is found that the child is telling truth, the tendency is to hold the child, who is a victim, guilty and blame her for her misfortune. They even punish her though she is not at all at fault. This high percentage of ‘Disbelief’ shows the negative attitude of family members towards the phenomenon. This negative attitude and disbelief of parents makes the child undergo the shame and humiliation of sexual abuse.

It was found in the present study that lack of acceptance of the fact of sexual abuse of girl children by her family members, not to believe her even if the girl child speaks about the incidence, believe the abuser and blame the girl child saying she is telling lie, and not disclosing the matter due to conspiracy of silence surrounding the
phenomenon, results in low percentage of complaints against the abuser and allows the recurrence of the abuse.

The action of the parents not allowing the girl to continue her education, not allowing her to mix with other girls of her own age, preventing her from participating in outdoor games and discouraging her from going for shopping etc. shows the negative attitude towards girl children. The parents say that the above actions are the means to protect her from sexual abuse. This attitude results into the stunted growth of the personality of the girl. She loses her self confidence and may not mature into a healthy and happy human being.

22 percent of families of girl children in the study were found to have ‘tension’ in the family due to sexual abuse of their girl child. They feel that sexual abuse is the fault of their girl child and they think this causes disreputation of family. So the parents do not allow the unfortunate girl to go outside even for genuine reasons. In some cases girl children are asked to discontinue their education and are not allowed to meet even friends. They cannot even think of outdoor games and entertainment. If they are sent out side they are accompanied by some family member like brother, grandfather, grandmother or any other near relation.

These girls are always considered as burden and a cause of anxiety to the parents. They feel that the family reputation in the society has suffered an irreparable damage and the future of their girl child is forever spoiled due to stigma attached to the issue. This results in non-disclosure which leads to increase and recurrence of this evil in the society.
The study reveals that the girl child sexual abuse is a harsh reality of life and the negative attitude towards girl child which results in disbelief, tendency to believe the abuser but not their own girl child makes the girl child silent sufferer of sexual abuse.

In the present study of 500 school going girl children it was found that just 10 percent victims got psychological support, only 4 percent victims have parents who filed complaint with the police station, almost nobody met the counselor due to lack of awareness of ‘counselling’ and again ‘due to fear of defamation, they feel this matter should not be disclosed’. The parents feel that their girl children should tolerate the sexual abuse by keeping mum because they think that it is the responsibility of girl child to protect the dignity of family. She should keep silent because she is a ‘girl child’. This shows the severity of the problem and negative attitude of parents towards girl children.

The present study also found gender discrimination, increasing school dropout rate, girls shoudering the responsibility of household work and of siblings, and not meeting the demands of teenage is the outcome of negative attitude towards girl children.

Thus negative attitude and not giving support to the girl child by parents, results in more trauma and continuing abuse for longer period. From this study the hypothesis that attitude of family members is negative towards the victims of sexual abuse, is proved.

Conclusions drawn from the present study other than the above mentioned hypothesis are as follows-

- It was found that girl child sexual abuse is not the problem of any particular country, but it is a rapidly increasing global problem. According to a study conducted by U.N. population fund, titled by
International Statistics on Child Sexual Abuse, at least 2 out of four girls are victims of sexual abuse.

- A multi-country study by WHO, including both developed and developing countries, showed that between 1 to 21 percent of women have reported to have been sexually abused before the age of 15, in most cases by male family members other than the father or stepfather. (WHO, 2005)

- In the present study of five hundred school going girl children only 30 percent victims found to have knowledge of sex relations. Remaining 70 percent victims were unaware of it. This proves how the subject is kept under conspiracy in Indian families, this conspiracy is a cause of sexual abuse of girl child as they are not aware of the consequences of sexual abuse and, therefore, they become easy prey of the abuser.

- It was also found that 95 percent girls were unaware of legal provisions. Only 5 percent girls were aware of the laws preventing sexual abuse of children and were of the opinion that if there is law regarding sexual abuse, it must be implemented effectively so that the accused is punished. 8 percent girls were eager to get self protection training to protect them against the sexual assault. 62 percent girls wished to change the mindset of the society regarding girl child sexual abuse. These girls want to get equal treatment without discrimination as human beings. This will help them to build their confidence to face the problem.

- In the present study when asked about getting help from police in case of sexual abuse, **59 percent girls were of the opinion that there is no surety of any help from police, 61 percent respondent replied that the police don’t help and 62 percent victims told that they are afraid of police!** This shows how the police personnel lost faith and
trust of the common man. This should make the police ponder over their image in society.

- 90 percent girls needed psychological support and trust of their parents and society as sexual abuse is not ‘girl child’s fault’. This will help for more disclosure and for breaking the silence.

- It was also found in the case-studies in the present study that sexual abuse hurts the psyche of the child and it leads to low academic achievements, poor concentration and it also affects the ability of the child to develop trustworthy and intimate relationship with adults. Due to the age of the elderly abuser, the girl did not expect him to behave inhumanly by misusing her trust. So, these girls should be taught to respect the behaviour instead of age of a person.

- The conclusion drawn from interviews of the key informants in the concerned field is that the crime is on increase because the offender is rarely punished for the offence. One of the factors for this is the reluctance of the family of the victim to report the matter to the police in time.

- According to key informants hardly 5% cases of sexual abuse of girl children are reported and then also the police is reluctant to take cognizance of the offence, and to bring the accused to book.

- It was found in the interviews with key informants that poverty of the victim’s family tempts the family to compromise and settle the matter outside the court for money. Witness, if there is any, is unwilling to testify before the court. There is inordinate delay in reporting the matter affecting the availability of medical and other clinching evidence.

- In the present study, key informants have revealed that the accused often gets acquitted for want of sufficient evidence to prove the
offence. The general tendency is to push the matter under carpet as the affected child’s parents feel that the court case leads to defamation and girl child’s future is in jeopardy.

- In the present study, key informants were of the opinion that the parents approach the doctors only when the girl is pregnant. They insist on abortion to avoid disrepute. Doctors are persuaded to terminate the pregnancy even if there are no medical grounds for it. The possibility of the girl committing suicide or being killed in such situation is not rare. Therefore, the doctors agree to do so for money or on humanitarian grounds.

- It was found that among the reactions of outsiders about sexual abuse of girl child, ‘disbelief’ is highest i.e. 45.08 percent followed by ‘told to neglect the incident’ at 7.8 percent. 10.2 percent people showed sympathy towards the victims. The attitude of the persons is generally not to accept that such incident has in fact taken place.

- Because of social stigma and shame attached to the victims, sexual offence remain one of the most misunderstood and under-reported crime which gives strength to the abusers to abuse the innocent girls. Thus girl child sexual abuse is really an ugly face of Indian society and a problem for the human growth and creativity.

Children are real social capital of our future, so we must take steps to solve this problem, by avoiding inadequate care, negative disciplining and, above all, faulty socialization, and by controlling abnormal behaviour, and then only we can save our girl children.
**Theoretical Presentation**

‘Integrated model’ and ‘Systems theory’ has been adopted for the present research as a theoretical frame work.

**Integrated Model of Child Abuse** -

Kewalraman’s Study (1992) of child abuse focused on the major premise of this model and the inter dependence between parent, child and situation. This model focuses on four factors in child abuse. 1) Family environment 2) Structural stresses 3) Individual characteristics of parents, and 4) Sub-cultural learning.

The model requires knowledge in five different areas: 1) Child development 2) Socialization processes 3) Family interactions 4) Learning principles and 5) Sources of arousing anger, aggression, hatred and so forth.

These areas point out that-

Child abuse can be viewed in terms of the degree to which a parent uses negative or inappropriate control strategies with her/his child. Employing ‘normal’ methods (meeting all the child’s needs, adequate control, positive disciplining, and clear communication) contributes to a child’s social, emotional and intellectual development, whereas taking recourse to ‘abnormal’ methods (neglecting child’s needs, inadequate control, negative disciplining, conflict between parents, addiction of father, unclear communication, negligent parenting, being indifferent and unresponsive and not paying due attention and over-reliance on coercion) in child rearing inhibits a child’s development and causes child abuse. Factors like unemployment and dissatisfaction with job affects an individual’s behaviour which leads to child abuse.
Individual characteristics of parents like lack of parenting skill and lack of resources (low prestige, little education and low income) also causes child to be victim of abuse. The sub cultural learning that is socialization in a violent home is another cause of child being vulnerable to abuse. The factors in the integrated model of child abuse are found in the present research. They are-

1. **Family Environment:** The analysis of family environment i.e. low socio-economic status of family which creates economic crises, lack of adequate control on children, lack of accountability, conflict between parents and wakening of inhibitions leading to neglect of the children, absence of affectionate relationship between parent and child, gender discrimination, unfulfilled desires, no interactions between parents, parents and children, deprivation from emotional bonds which creates favorable situation to abusers to enter in the family.

2. **Structural Stresses:** Illicit relationship of father and mother dominance of step father, brother, cousin reconstituted families single parent families, migration of the family, migration of the parents, divorce, separation of parents, and dissatisfaction with job of parents, lack of resources like low prestige, little education and low income, deteriorating relationships bitterness and unhappiness in the family. These are the circumstances leads to sexual abuse of children in the family.

3. **The Sub-Cultural Learning:** Socialization in a violent home is a another cause, neglecting child’s needs, inadequate control, negative disciplining, unclear communication and over reliance on coercion negligent parenting being indifferent and un responsive and not paying attention to child, gender discrimination, no interaction with children
and ask the girl child to suffer in silence under pretext of the responsibility of protecting dignity of the family causes reoccurrence of abuse.

4. Individual Characteristics: Of parents like self centeredness, deteriorating relationships, strained marriage life, poverty lack of parenting skills, illiteracy and ignorance of the victim teenage about abusing depression helplessness that she cannot escape from abuse also some of the causes of child being falling prey to abuse. All these findings support the Integrated Model of Abuse.

**Systems Theory (Founche and Oliphant 1977)**

According to Founche and Oliphant there is link between basic principles of system theory and sexual abuse. The focus is not only on the victim as a child who has been sexually abuse but also on the context of abuse.

The abuse forms part of a larger pattern of dysfunction such as marriage problems, financial problems or other dysfunctional behaviour.

The family system forms pattern of behaviour, which acts as the basis of family functioning. When these patterns of behaviour are operating to maintain the abusive relationship, they can be seen as dysfunctional and not to the benefit of the child.

Behaviour in the system (including the behaviour regarding the sexual abuse) the sexual abuses are circular in nature. The System is constantly in a state of stability and change, indicating that the family tries to cope with the abuse by means of certain patterns of behaviour for instance family may decide to cope with the sexual abuse by means of secrecy.
In the present study it was found that 97 percent girls are belonging to lower-income group and these families are facing financial problems and dysfunctional behaviour in their families. As most of the respondents reported that their parents quarrel always and there were no cordial relationship which leads to no interaction between children and parents.

It is also found in the study that the sexual abuse of girl children is more prevalent in lower income group families. The poverty of the family renders it unable to fulfill the need of their girl children and the teenage girls are tempted by the gifts, money and items of luxury by the abuser and the girls became victims of sexual abuse. These victims are facing marriage problems due to defame and stigma attached to the incident. The principle of social system the abuse forms part of larger pattern of dysfunction such as marriage problems, financial problems or other dysfunctional behaviour supports the above findings of this research.

It was found in the present study that all most all (100%) victims were asked to keep quiet about their sexual abuse due to their sex, and maintain the dignity of the family with the fear of defame, due to stigma attached with the problem. The problem of sexual abuse is keep in secrecy by asking all the family members and especially the victims to keep quiet without raising her voice thus family provides the context for the maintains of abuse which emboldens the abuser for recurrence.

Draucker (1991-92) Indicates that it is essential to acknowledge that sexual abuse occurs within a larger context, often important factors of sexual abuse according to him are family composition, for example the loss of a parent through divorce, death, separation, and the role of the other significant caretakers, the survivors birth order and the number of siblings in the family.
In the present study 74 percent victims reported that they are sexually abused within their families and most of victims were having single parent due to divorce, death or separation and these families are large families with having five to six siblings.

Draucker explains the social factors socio-economic class. Other significant family is pathology or stresses, parental alcoholism, emotional or physical abuse, mental illness, criminal behaviour and extra family resource. He further explains the characteristics of abusing families. These elements are denial, inconsistency and unpredictability, lack of empathy, lack of clear boundaries, role reversal, closed family system, incongruent communication, conflict, deterioration relationships and strained marriage relationships.

In the present research it was found that 82.61 percent families having the head of the family addicted is quite a distressful situation as this result into disharmony conflict, strained marriage life, stress, emotional and physical abuse of children. Tension in the family leads to incongruent communication between parents, parents and children it results in closed family system and found deteriorating relationship. This unhappy and unhealthy environment in the family is results into sexual abuse of girl child in her family.

It is clear from the above discussion that the symptom of sexual abuse explained by Dracker in ‘system theory’ has been found in the present study which supports this theory.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Above discussion indicates the severity of the problem. Even though the sexual abuse is a subject of social issue, most people would rather not think or talk about it. It continued to be shrouded in secrecy and taboos. Despite its invisibility, the problem is prevalent in India.

The following Recommendations are made by the researcher which can be helpful to cope with and to help policy makers to take measures to tackle the problem of ‘Girl Child Sexual Abuse’.

- It is unfortunate that even though various studies in India proved the prevalence of girl child sexual abuse, still the government of India has never thought about the rehabilitation of sexually abused girls. 42 percent of India’s population is children and, children are the future of emerging and developing countries like India. Children are still deprived of their rights as human beings.

- All the victims studied in the present study revealed that they have not got any rehabilitative services. Poverty of the parents doesn’t allow them to meet any counselor or even to give their children any medical treatment and they are unable to give any vocational training to make their child self dependent. Hence it is recommended that the Govt. should provide rehabilitation services for the victims of sexual abuse at its level.

- The goal of rehabilitation is obviously to prevent sexual abuse of girl child, to ensure her safety in future and to help the victims of sexual abuse to come out from their feelings of guilt and self blame and reduce their suffering. Enhancement of psychological development and healthier adult-functioning and also help to liberate these girl children from their prison of secrecy and pain is the goal of
rehabilitation program. Special rehabilitative programmes for sexually abused girls are urgently needed, because the consequences of sexual abuse are a reaching and devastating on these girls, who are future mothers.

At Government Level

- Government should start rehabilitation centers that provide psychological, economic, medical, social and educational support to sexually abused girls. It was found in the present study that sexual abuse sometime leads to early pregnancy, injury to reproductive organs and this result in psychological trauma. Again stigma attached to subject makes her silent sufferer, so the rehabilitative programmes should be prepared especially for girl children taking into consideration their irreparable loss. It should include healing child victims though counselling and therapy so that they are able to get healed and live with the dignity and have a right to life beyond trauma of their abuse. The present study reveals the fact that 90 percent victims needed psychological support and trust of their parents and society. This study also reveals the fact that, victim’s family is isolated from the social relationships; the girl child is labeled as victim by facing default in her marriage. This labeling of the victim gives an easy access to the abuser to abuse the girl child again and again. It should include proper counselling to cope with the situation, to give knowledge about short term and long-term treatments, about prevention of recurrence, training of yoga and encouragement for regular schooling, some vocational training like dance, art and craft which will help heal traumatized victims.

- Rehabilitation programmes are needed for the victims to make them available supportive and timely intervention, to raise public awareness regarding the issue of girl child sexual abuse, preventive programmes
and the programmes which help in increasing the number of disclosures. It also should include treatment programmes which are essential for not only to treat current mental health but also to prevent future effects. Treatment goals may be carefully considered and made realistic and the treatment process should support the family’s adaptive behaviour.

- Free physical and psychological treatment of victims is made available by the concern govt., because most of the parents in the present study were of the opinion that due to poverty it was not possible for them to give proper treatment to their sexually abused girls. (Victim). Govt. should take not only the responsibility of economic and social rehabilitation of such victims but also encourage the man who would like to marry her. In the society she should not be looked down upon. She should not only be given sympathy but also be given normal treatment to enable her to do her duties and obligations in society in normal way.

- All the agencies that children come in contact like Family, schools, hostels, observation homes, orphanages, rehabilitative centers should arrange workshop on what is sexual abuse and how it can be prevented, what can be done after the abuse, how the child would not be a victim of recurrence, how to control it, the consequences of sexual abuse. All these things will make the children aware of the problem and they can be mentally prepared for saying ‘no’ to the abuser. To organize frequent workshops on the issue are necessary at family level by Government.
Workshops

1. At Family Level

- It was found in the present study that most of parents were unaware of the sexual abuse of their girl child. Even though some parents knew about the incidents they keep quiet due to stigma attached to the subject and fear of defamation. So it is found necessary to give orientation to them about the incident and about how to protect their child from this heinous crime and about how the parents should not feel shame but should support the victim to overcome from the trauma. Parents should get orientation that they will not think that the disclosure gives them disrepute and stigma instead of solving the problem.

- In most sections of society children’s views are not given much importance. They are not normally listened especially, when she is girl child she is more neglected due to gender discrimination. These girls are given low status in the family. This low status makes her feel inferior and silent by tolerating her exploitation because her parents stop her from disclosing the incident by disbelieving her or by asking her to keep quiet as she is a ‘girl child’. Thus the imposition of restive norms is especially true for girl children.

- The parents should allow the girl child to speak and should listen to her and believe in what they hear from her. The girls should be given information about what is sexual abuse, its nature, about the possible abuser, about what can be done after the abuse, about proper and improper touch, about consequences of sexual abuse and how to prevent it. Parents should make her believe that they are her protectors and should create such atmosphere in the family that she is not afraid and share her feeling with the parents without hesitation. Parents
should give psychological support to the victim and give her such confidence that she does not feel guilty, and also does not feel that something is wrong with her. The girl child should not feel that the abuse is her fault. If the parents are made aware of the consequences of sexual abuse and if they give psychological support to girl child and build her confidence that **it is not her fault this gives her strength to say ‘no’ to the abuser.**

- Orientation of parents should also include about family atmosphere because in the present study 82.61% families were having the head of the family addicted and 68% victims reported that their parents quarrel always and there is no interaction between parents and children. **So, the family atmosphere should be friendly and positive towards girl child and there should be interaction between parents and children. Family relations must be cordial, healthy and supportive so that the child feels secure and share her feelings without hesitation.** This can prevent the occurrence of sexual abuse and the near and dear abuser may not dare to take entry in home. The girl child should feel secure and safe in her family and get emotional, psychological, social and economical support from the family and society. For the healthy development of the child who is the victim of sexual abuse it will be the real rehabilitation.

- It is also important to orient the parents about the process of socialization. The upbringing should teach the girl child how to keep away from temptation of luxury and she should not be attracted by the valuable gifts given by the abuser which may spoil her life, she should be made aware about the consequences of sexual abuse by parents and caretakers, then only she would be safe from occurrence and recurrence of sexual abuse. **They should teach the girl child to respect the conduct and not the age of a person.** The parents are
also helped to adopt different coping skills and alternative values about child rearing.

- Parents should also be made aware about the newly passed Bill about sexual abuse and the procedure of reporting the cases in police station without any fear. This will be helpful in punishing the guilty.

2. **At School Level**

- School is an important unit in the socialization of child after its home. Teachers are the respected and ideal persons for the children, so it is the responsibility of the school to protect and create atmosphere in the school which should be healthy, supportive, and child friendly enabling the girl child disclose the incident to the concern person.

- There should be no gender discrimination at school level because it was found in the present study that gender discrimination is an important factor for sexual abuse of girl children. So the school should give equal treatment to the girls and boys that may give the girl confidence and she would disclose the incidence without hesitation. So efforts should be made to increase the enrollment of the girl children and retention of these children in school by adopting innovative, child friendly methods of teaching.

- Frequent workshops on the issue of girl child sexual abuse be made compulsory at school level by Govt. especially for girl children and their parents. **Orientation to teachers is also necessary not only to train the students and parents but also to teachers themselves because in the present study some case-studies revealed the fact that the teachers also sexually abuse their students.**

- **Workshop for Teachers** should include - Abusing is a matter of guilt, shame and defamation on the part of abuser and not for the victim. Teacher-student relationship is considered sacred in Indian society,
but in the present study it was found that some teachers are behaving inhumanly with the students not keeping in mind their relationship. The workshop should focus to make them realize their fault; they should feel shame and guilt for their atrocious crime and try to change their mindset.

- Orientation of teachers should also give them training to tell the students and parents about sexual abuse and should include the issues like age appropriate and right based information on sexual abuse. This will help the girl children to act in their own protection. Workshop should focus on the issues like personal safety, knowledge about proper and improper touch, introduction of private body parts, and knowledge about sexual abuse, consequences of sexual abuse which will make the girl children conscious to prevent the occurrence of the incident. Awareness about newly passed Bill about sexual abuse, the procedure of report to police station for its proper implementation to record the cases in police station without fear should be made because it was found in the present study95% victims were unaware about the Law.

- Lectures by police personal, doctors, advocates be arranged in the schools on the issue as these persons may act as protectors and helping hands for the parents and children in their difficult situation.

3. **Police Personnel**

- It was found in the present study that 59 percent victims were of the opinion that there is no surety of any help from police, 61 percent victims replied that the police don’t help and 62 percent victims told that they are afraid of police. This shows how the police personnel lost faith and trust in them of the common man. So it is urgent need for the police personnel to be given orientation for ‘child friendly’ behaviour
in the workshop. So that the child can dare to disclose the matter without any fear and this is helpful in increasing the number of disclosures and the culprit is punished. It acts as deterrent to the abusers from doing such heinous crime against girl children.

- **Child Help Line** centre’s should be started immediately at gross root level (in each taluka) which may cover all the villages under its jurisdiction because the problem of sexual abuse is prevalent everywhere. Information about child helpline and its telephone number should be given to the child. The child should be made to believe that the confidentiality of communication is maintained and disclosure of the identity is prevented so the child can open up freely about her problem. All the schools should be informed about the telephone number of helpline so they can make their students aware of the number in the difficult circumstances.

- **Counseling Centers** in Anganwadis be started by the govt. as Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) includes adolescent girls as its benefisheries. Anganwadi Tai is familiar with all the families from the locality and should be given training about the issue of Girl Child Sexual Abuse, about its nature, causes and preventive measures so that she can give proper counselling to the adolescent girls in the village to protect themselves from the problem.

- School counselors should be appointed by State Govt. in each primary, middle and high school. This school counselor should be an expert person who has training about prevention and intervention skills with the main focus on teaching children about personal safety-skills through role play, poster exhibition, oral and written material, and he may show ‘documentary film’ on the issue of girl child sexual abuse.

- **It is very important that all the persons concerned with child allow her to speak and listen to her and to believe in what they**
hear from her. The child has to be protected from further abuse and the child should know that the horrible thing will not happen again.

- From the present study it was found that some NGO’s are working for the victims of sexual abuse in India. To make their work more wide they should help the Govt. and be helped by the Govt. in implement schemes at grass root level like -
- Awareness programmes by Govt. and NGO’s be arranged nationwide to promote a wider understanding of child sexual abuse as a preventable public health issue and to increase the services available to the victims.

**At Academic Level**

A multi-disciplinary approach is necessary in dealing with the case of girl child sexual abuse.

- The ministry of women and child welfare should launch the projects and action research programmes on the issue of girl child sexual abuse for the fuller understanding of the problem and prepare action plans with the help of key informants who are working in the concerned field to prevent the occurrence of the problem. The ministry also should initiate preparation of documentaries on the concerned issue by the experts and the help of NGO’s to create awareness about the problem at all levels.
- Govt. and NGO’s should arrange programmes spreading awareness amongst various stakeholders like parents, teachers, caretakers, mental health professionals, staff in NGO’s, B.Ed., D.Ed. and Social Work students by giving training about prevention and intervention
skills and to bring forth the reality of child sexual abuse, its ill effects, and false beliefs surrounding it.

- The issue of child sexual abuse should be included in the curriculum of Administrative Institutes, Social Work Institutes, Police Training, Academics, law colleges, medical colleges, teacher training schools etc. So that the professionals passing out of these institutions have both the sensitivity and the knowledge to deal with these issues.

**Awareness Through Media**

- Media publicity should be made available so that it would help solving the problem by showing programmes on the subject of girl child sexual abuse and publishing the articles enabling the people getting awareness of the concerned issue. Thus electronic media should be used to spread awareness to enhance people’s knowledge and sensitivity upon this issue.

**At Community Level**

- The children have the right to live in safety and dignity in a protective and nurturing environment, both at home and in community.

- It is not the responsibility of Govt. and NGO’s alone to protect girl children from sexual abuse but it is also the responsibility of citizen and society to do so. Each citizen should contribute his / her might to prevent this heinous crime. **Social patrolling and social control is necessary in this regard.** Participation of people by performing their role as a responsible citizen in this respect will help to control the occurrence of sexual abuse of the girl child. So it is the responsibility of all citizens to allow the girl child who is a victim of sexual abuse to speak, to listen her, to believe her and to give
her psychological support to come out of the trauma and free herself from the ‘culture of silence’. It is necessary to make her trustworthy ‘girl child’ and not to label her as ‘bad girl’.