“Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun; not living a nightmare in the darkness of the soul”  

-Dave Pelzer¹

Sexual abuse of children is disturbing, abhorrent and very often an unimaginable crime but the unfortunate reality is that it exists. When children do not feel safe, their other rights are endangered. While it is the responsibility of us adults to be the primary safeguards to care for and protect the interests of children, with the continually increasing incidences of abuse of children being reported, there seems to be a failure in this most basic of obligations.

With fear, shame, guilt and the ensuing stigma unfortunately being characteristic features of sexual abuse for boys and girls, the issues of gender stereotypes however cause various differences in the way abuse is perceived by community and the abused children themselves, and the subsequent availability and efficacy of support networks. Abuse of girls is usually kept hidden under the guise of family honour and issues of "purity", while abuse of boys is often ignored to the extent that sometimes it is even considered impossible. Also, because of the widespread ignorance and silence on the issue.

6.1 EMPIRICAL STUDY

The research was conducted partly in an empirical form wherein victims of child Sexual Abuse were interviewed through a questionnaire, in 6 schools in

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Lucknow, including both private and government aided. This study was conducted to understand the lives of these victims in order to investigate the extent to which law addresses the plight that they undergo.

Child sexual Abuse is not an issue that deserves only textual inter-linkage. Sexual abuse is not merely a diagnosis. It is an event or a series of events that take place within a relationship involving the child. Nevertheless, the physical or psychological consequences can be diagnosed and considered consistent with sexual abuse. In such circumstances it is sometimes necessary to determine the possibility that sexual abuse has occurred on the basis of the behavior and emotional state of the child.

An investigation into the lives of girls who became a victim of the same was felt imperative to structure and position this study in a meaningful way.

6.2 AIM OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The study aims to inform subsequent action at the levels of advocacy, action and policy, with the following specific objectives:

- To determine the prevalence of child sexual abuse among school going girls and boys in Lucknow

- To understand the nature of child sexual abuse with relation to
  
  - Type of abuse
  - Frequency of abuse
  - Age of onset of abuse
  - Relational proximity of the abuser
  - Process of abuse
• To understand the disclosure pattern of children and accessibility to support systems.
• To contribute to the existing information and knowledge base on child sexual abuse in India.
• To contribute towards improving child protection policies and practice.
• To strengthen the initiative to have a comprehensive law on child sexual abuse in the country.
• To contribute towards spreading awareness and information about child sexual abuse among children, families and the stakeholders in the larger community.
• To develop an instrument to determine the probability of child sexual abuse and to estimate the questionnaire's discriminant validity.

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In order to give a holistic view about the issue of child sexual abuse, research was conducted in the 6 schools in Lucknow, representing private and government aided.

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The sample sizes picked up in each school were representative, though small in size. The reason why small sample sizes were taken was that data was needed to support the legal fall-outs. The individual stories that were collected helped in finding out the larger gaps in interventions on child sexual abuse. The girls and boys were able to describe with clarity their situation as well as the problems they’ve had to face on account of sexual abuse. Though on account of obscenity in questionnaire, a small group of children kept silence.
The sampling method that was employed was random and purposive. The selection was based on age of the respondent as well as the specific aspects of being a child sexual abuse.

6.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected by way of semi-structured questionnaire. A Questionnaire containing 30 questions was prepared. It included aspects on their personal details, age, family type, forms of child sexual abuse, disclosing the fact to anyone, education about sexual abuse, frequency of child sexual abuse, measures they adopted to rescue, awareness of Child sexual abuse and desired measures for protection of child abuse.

6.6 SAMPLE COLLECTION

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6.7 KEY FINDINGS

6.7.1. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse

The results of this study suggest that the crime of child sexual abuse is extremely widespread in its prevalence. Out of a total of 100 child participants, 90 had faced at least one form of sexual abuse at some point in time, that is, 90% of these children had faced sexual abuse in one form or the other. The Percentage can also be viewed as suggestive of the prevalence of abuse of children in India, which has a large child population falling within the 18 years age bracket.
The sex-wise distribution of data on prevalence of sexual abuse also present significant results. For instance, it is often believed that boys are not sexually abused - a myth often dangerously reflected in parental, familial, community and professional attitudes. The findings of this study completely refute this. Not only are boys abused, their abuse is extremely prevalent as well, shown by the figures that 39% of boys had been abused. With regard to girls, the results show that 61% of girls had faced abuse.

The abuse of both girls and boys is highly stigmatized within Indian society. Due to the strongly male-dominant patriarchal nature of Indian society, abused girls are often disbelieved and/or blamed for their abuse, with abuse usually being associated with "loss" of virginity and notions of family honor often playing an extremely significant role in this process. Also, sex and sexuality are taboo topics in Indian society, more so for girls than boys. All these factors may have hindered girls from disclosing about abuse faced by them, even though the questionnaires were anonymous. Also, many children, due to the general silence on the subject of sexual abuse and lack of awareness, may not have been able to relate their experiences of abuse to the questions asked, or may not perceive those experiences as abusive. These factors too may have led to a noteworthy level of under-reporting among all children in general, and girl children especially. Also, the
limitations of undertaking research on a subject as sensitive as child sexual abuse must be carefully considered.

The results contradict various other myths and popularly held perceptions about child sexual abuse in India, a major one being the extremely common perception that it happens only in poor and illiterate families.

6.7.2. Child Sexual Abuse with Respect to Socio-Economic class

The study included children from various socio-economic strata of society, and there did not seem to be any dramatic difference between the prevalence of child sexual abuse between these strata; in fact the prevalence of sexual abuse in upper and middle class was found to be proportionately higher than in lower and lower middle class, as is evident in the graph below (the criteria used for stratification: family income less than Rs.10,000 per month = Lower and lower-middle class; between Rs.10,000 and Rs.20,000 per month = Middle class; higher than Rs.20,000 per month = Upper class).

![Child Sexual Abuse with respect to Socio Economic Class](chart.png)
6.7.3. Sexual Abuse with respect to Family Type

Similarly, another popular myth is that sexual abuse does not take place within joint families, and that it happens within nuclear families only.

This is often attributed to the element of a greater degree of supervision, especially by the elderly, in joint families. However, the results of this study do not endorse this viewpoint, as sexual abuse is found to be as prevalent in joint families as it is in nuclear families. This may be because though the degree of supervision may be high in many joint family systems, the number of people having access to the child is also greater in these families.

6.7.4. Prevalence of different forms of sexual abuse

The abuse faced by children includes a wide range of activities from noncontact forms such as voyeurism, exhibitionism to fondling, molestation, sexual intercourse, making the child touch offender's private body parts etc, with the
study asking children questions about some of the forms of sexual abuse, to estimate their respective prevalence.

As can be observed, the most prevalent forms of sexual abuse are touching children's private parts, exhibitionism and forcing and/or tricking children to watch pornography. The high rate of abuse in the form of touching children's private parts may also be due to widespread sexual harassment at public places (popularly, though inappropriately, known as "eve teasing"). The prevalence of more severe forms of sexual abuse demands special attention. Though all forms of sexual abuse are serious and deserve concrete action, severe forms may have a higher potential of causing harm in the short and long term. Of the different forms of sexual abuse studied as part of this research, oral sex, sexual intercourse, making the child touch offender's private parts and making the children take off their clothes and looking at them or taking their pictures are considered here as severe forms of sexual abuse.


6.7.5. The Abusers

“When I was three years old, one of my uncle’s friends took me to the terrace and exposed his penis and asked me to expose my vagina.”

-Girl, 15yrs

“When I was studying in 3rd standard someone stayed in our house. He called me and told me a story and I was listening he took my hand and made me touch his penis.”

-Girl, 16yrs

“I was forced to touch a woman’s private body parts. She was my neighbour.”

-Boy, 14yrs

“My cousin brother tried to have sex with me. This happened when I matured. He often forces me to it.”

-Girl 16yrs

"It may not seem so bad, but a few years ago, a man stood right outside our school gate and under our classroom window and shouted out foul language and took off his pants. This fact that it was right outside our school made me feel very insecure.”

-Boy, 15yrs

The abusers are often considered to be dirty old men, and "stranger danger” is commonly believed to be the biggest threat to children’s safety. However, the data made available to this study supports what has been indicated before by previous studies on child sexual abuse across the world as also demonstrated in our experience, that the abusers are more often than not people who are known to the child. This trend is clearly visible in the graphs below, for each category of abuse:
Immediate family: Father, Mother, Siblings  
Extended family: Grand parents, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins  
Personal and/or family acquaintances: Such as Friends, Family Friends, Teachers, Neighbours, Domestic help

As can be observed from these graphs, the majority of abusers in each form of abuse are people who are known to the child, whereas the strangers are more often than not a minority. The only two forms of abuse where strangers constitute a sizeable number are touching the child's private parts and exhibitionism. Both of these forms of abuse are often part of sexual harassment at public places, which is often perpetrated by strangers, and therefore the percentage of strangers as abusers
in these two cases is especially high. However, abuse in the form of sexual intercourse, oral sex, making the child touch abuser's private parts etc., most often requires a greater and much closer access to the child for the abuser to be able to gain the trust and confidence of the child often by building a relationship with him/her over a period of time and then abusing the child. Such access is mostly the privilege of people who are known to the child and who may be in a position of power, authority and trust over her/him. For these reasons, the majority of abusers are people who are known to the child, a fact reflected in the data presented here. Also important to note, with regard to showing children pornography, is the very high percentage of individual and family acquaintances such as friends, neighbors, teachers, drivers and domestic help etc. The study reveals that a sizeable percentage of participants who selected this option, mentioned that they were made to watch pornographic materials by their own friends. Besides the fact that the participants may have actually been forced and/or tricked into watching such material, the participants may also have included sharing of pornographic materials amongst friends while responding to this question, which is indicative of the high rate of viewing pornographic materials such as books, video CDs and websites by young people today. This demands introspection by communities and professionals as to their role, responsibility and response in terms of young people having to resort to accessing pornographic material for information on sex and sexuality, which is often inaccurate, inappropriate and unhealthy, due to a dismal lack of approachable and informative resources.

6.7.6. Frequency of Abuse

It was found that a vast majority of participants could not remember the number of times abuse happened. A distribution of responses from those who had been abused with respect to frequency of abuse is given below:
The study suggest that abuse by strangers may be a one-off incident (such as in cases of sexual harassment, exhibitionism by strangers etc.) whilst abuse by known people is very often repeated over a period of time. Therefore, it may be suggested that a majority of those who were abused once may have been subjected to abuse by strangers, whereas those who were abused repeatedly, may have been abused by people they were familiar with.

6.7.7. Age of onset of Abuse

Participants were asked about the age when their abuse first happened/ started. A total of 40 boys and 60 girls who had been abused responded to this question. The trend that emerged from the responses is:
As can be observed here, the age of 0-8 years (that coincides with onset of puberty) is the age of onset of abuse for most girls and boys. However, it is interesting to note that while there is steady rise in the abuse of girls as they advance in age till the age group of 10-14 years, there is sudden jump in the abuse of boys from the age group of 12-14 years. This may be analyzed in relation with the earlier discussion on adolescents watching or being made to watch pornography (the study had a large number of boys who said they had watched or had been made to watch pornographic material by their peers). This jump in the onset of abuse may also be linked to a greater access to pornographic material made available through their own peer group.

6.7.8. Disclosure and seeking help

Considering the insidious and manipulative nature of abuse, relational proximity to the abuser and the potential for stigmatization within society, disclosing about abuse can be a very intimidating experience for abused children.
However, this voicing is an extremely crucial step towards stopping the abuse and at the same time may also contribute significantly towards healing. Unfortunately, the experience of disclosure about sexual abuse is fraught with fears for many children - arising out of the myths, shame and silence that surround the issue. These fears may range from the fear of losing love since the abuser and the child usually share a relationship, fear of not being believed, fear of being blamed and fear of further harm.

Such apprehensions in the minds of children regarding disclosure of their abuse also suggest that there has been a failure to a certain extent of the adult society and systems to be able to create safe and effective support structures whether in terms of family/community response or professional services for abused children to be able to disclose and have their fears and concerns addressed.

“*I was blackmailed by my cousin brother, and he often forces me to do it (have sex).…………I was not able to tell this to my father, because he has got a good name in the family. He used to see me in the wrong way. Once I told this to my close friend. She told me, they won’t do it unnecessarily. Your appearance may have made them like that.*”

-Girl, 15yrs

“I am really in a confused state what to do for this. I can’t lose their (friend’s) relationship because they are all affectionate towards me.”

-Girl, 14yrs

“I never told anyone what happened to me in 7th Standard, because I would be blamed.”

-Girl, 13yrs
Some of the concerns, fears and anxieties that participants had about disclosure were:

![Bar chart showing fear of disclosure]

Considering such high prevalence of fears and anxieties among abused children, the fact that most children never disclose their experiences of abuse must not come as a surprise.

**6.7.9. Assistance and Information Needed to Children**

As has been discussed earlier, the resources available to children in terms of information on sex, sexuality and sexual abuse are limited, and so are support structures for help in situations of distress. This lack of resources and support was expressed as a concern by the children themselves, when asked about the kind of help or information they would like to receive. Also, these resources and support structures need not always be professional and specialized in nature - the affirming and supportive response by the family, community and friends, being of paramount importance as well.

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As is evident, a large number of children want information on protecting themselves against sexual abuse, and on sex and sexuality. It requires many times efforts to meet these needs of children. The lack of active support from the adults may result in children turning to unhealthy and inaccurate sources of information on sexuality, or staying fearful, silent and helpless in the event of occurrence of sexual abuse - both of which have surfaced strongly in this study. Also, it is almost tragic to note that the only help desired by many children is that they wanted someone to believe their experiences of abuse, a strong indicator of the usual response of disbelief towards children's accounts of sexual abuse.

The researcher through this study found out that child sexual abuse is one of the most fundamental violations of children's rights and usually an underlying obstacle, to their overall development. While it is expected that children will be protected by adults and systems, including parents, families, teachers, community and the State, the study estimates that at least 70% of our children will experience some form of sexual abuse before they reach the age of 18. This is because child
sexual abuse does not occur in a vacuum. The offenders are usually amongst us. They are family members, teachers, neighbors, friends etc. They use trickery, force or exploit their positions of authority to take advantage of a child's innocence and unconditional love.

It is alarming to imagine the prevalence of sexual abuse for disadvantaged and marginalized population groups of children. Groups such as institutionalized children, street and working children and differently abled children are even more at risk of being abused, due to their increased vulnerabilities owing largely to their special circumstances.

Because we as adults have often failed in protection of children, we must now help children, through non-threatening and age-appropriate means, to participate in their own protection. As our knowledge of the aftermath of sexual abuse of children increases, the need to find ways to prevent and to ensure safety of children from victimization of any form is paramount.

Prevention has increasingly gained recognition as the most prudent and cost effective strategy for addressing child sexual abuse. More importantly prevention, through the concept of Personal Safety Education empowers every Personal Safety Education is a methodology that promotes the safety of self against abuse. A multi-sectored approach is the only way to find solutions and prohibit these abuses, thereby saving the lives of many girls and boys whose rights deserve protection.

* * * * *
CHAPTER 6

INVESTIGATING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE FROM AN EMPIRICAL LENS

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The sex-wise distribution of data on prevalence of sexual abuse also present significant results. For instance, it is often believed that boys are not sexually abused - a myth often dangerously reflected in parental, familial, community and professional attitudes. The findings of this study completely refute this. Not only are boys abused, their abuse is extremely prevalent as well, shown by the figures that 39% of boys had been abused. With regard to girls, the results show that 61% of girls had faced abuse.

The abuse of both girls and boys is highly stigmatized within Indian society. Due to the strongly male-dominant patriarchal nature of Indian society, abused girls are often disbelieved and/or blamed for their abuse, with abuse usually being associated with "loss" of virginity and notions of family honor often playing an extremely significant role in this process. Also, sex and sexuality are taboo topics in Indian society, more so for girls than boys. All these factors may have hindered girls from disclosing about abuse faced by them, even though the questionnaires were anonymous. Also, many children, due to the general silence on the subject of sexual abuse and lack of awareness, may not have been able to relate their experiences of abuse to the questions asked, or may not perceive those experiences as abusive. These factors too may have led to a noteworthy level of under-reporting among all children in general, and girl children especially. Also, the
limitations of undertaking research on a subject as sensitive as child sexual abuse must be carefully considered.

The results contradict various other myths and popularly held perceptions about child sexual abuse in India, a major one being the extremely common perception that it happens only in poor and illiterate families.

6.7.2. Child Sexual Abuse with Respect to Socio-Economic class

The study included children from various socio-economic strata of society, and there did not seem to be any dramatic difference between the prevalence of child sexual abuse between these strata; in fact the prevalence of sexual abuse in upper and middle class was found to be proportionately higher than in lower and lower middle class, as is evident in the graph below (the criteria used for stratification: family income less than Rs.10,000 per month = Lower and lower-middle class; between Rs.10,000 and Rs.20,000 per month = Middle class; higher than Rs.20,000 per month = Upper class).

![Child Sexual Abuse with respect to Socio Economic Class](image)
6.7.3. Sexual Abuse with respect to Family Type

Similarly, another popular myth is that sexual abuse does not take place within joint families, and that it happens within nuclear families only.

This is often attributed to the element of a greater degree of supervision, especially by the elderly, in joint families. However, the results of this study do not endorse this viewpoint, as sexual abuse is found to be as prevalent in joint families as it is in nuclear families. This may be because though the degree of supervision may be high in many joint family systems, the number of people having access to the child is also greater in these families.

![Sexual Abuse with respect to Family Type](image)

**6.7.4. Prevalence of different forms of sexual abuse**

The abuse faced by children includes a wide range of activities from noncontact forms such as voyeurism, exhibitionism to fondling, molestation, sexual intercourse, making the child touch offender's private body parts etc, with the
As can be observed, the most prevalent forms of sexual abuse are touching children's private parts, exhibitionism and forcing and/or tricking children to watch pornography. The high rate of abuse in the form of touching children's private parts may also be due to widespread sexual harassment at public places (popularly, though inappropriately, known as "eve teasing"). The prevalence of more severe forms of sexual abuse demands special attention. Though all forms of sexual abuse are serious and deserve concrete action, severe forms may have a higher potential of causing harm in the short and long term. Of the different forms of sexual abuse studied as part of this research, oral sex, sexual intercourse, making the child touch offender's private parts and making the children take off their clothes and looking at them or taking their pictures are considered here as severe forms of sexual abuse.
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-Girl, 15yrs

“When I was studying in 3rd standard someone stayed in our house. He called me and told me a story and I was listening he took my hand and made me touch his penis.”

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“I was forced to touch a woman’s private body parts. She was my neighbour.”

-Boy, 14yrs

“My cousin brother tried to have sex with me. This happened when I matured. He often forces me to it.”

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"It may not seem so bad, but a few years ago, a man stood right outside our school gate and under our classroom window and shouted out foul language and took off his pants. This fact that it was right outside our school made me feel very insecure.”

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The abusers are often considered to be dirty old men, and "stranger danger" is commonly believed to be the biggest threat to children's safety. However, the data made available to this study supports what has been indicated before by previous studies on child sexual abuse across the world as also demonstrated in our experience, that the abusers are more often than not people who are known to the child. This trend is clearly visible in the graphs below, for each category of abuse:
Abusers - Touching child's private parts

- Multiple Abuser: 27%
- Strangers: 16%
- Immediate Family: 35%
- Extended family: 5%
- Personal and/or family acquaintances: 17%

Abusers - Making the child watch pornography

- Multiple Abuser: 75%
- Strangers: 8%
- Immediate Family: 4%
- Extended family: 8%
- Personal and/or family acquaintances: 9%

Abusers - Making the child touch abuser's private parts

- Multiple Abuser: 43%
- Strangers: 9%
- Immediate Family: 18%
- Extended family: 6%
- Personal and/or family acquaintances: 24%
Immediate family: Father, Mother, Siblings
Extended family: Grand parents, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins
Personal and/or family acquaintances: Such as Friends, Family Friends, Teachers, Neighbours, Domestic help

As can be observed from these graphs, the majority of abusers in each form of abuse are people who are known to the child, whereas the strangers are more often than not a minority. The only two forms of abuse where strangers constitute a sizeable number are touching the child's private parts and exhibitionism. Both of these forms of abuse are often part of sexual harassment at public places, which is often perpetrated by strangers, and therefore the percentage of strangers as abusers
in these two cases is especially high. However, abuse in the form of sexual intercourse, oral sex, making the child touch abuser's private parts etc., most often requires a greater and much closer access to the child for the abuser to be able to gain the trust and confidence of the child often by building a relationship with him/her over a period of time and then abusing the child. Such access is mostly the privilege of people who are known to the child and who may be in a position of power, authority and trust over her/him. For these reasons, the majority of abusers are people who are known to the child, a fact reflected in the data presented here. Also important to note, with regard to showing children pornography, is the very high percentage of individual and family acquaintances such as friends, neighbors, teachers, drivers and domestic help etc. The study reveals that a sizeable percentage of participants who selected this option, mentioned that they were made to watch pornographic materials by their own friends. Besides the fact that the participants may have actually been forced and/or tricked into watching such material, the participants may also have included sharing of pornographic materials amongst friends while responding to this question, which is indicative of the high rate of viewing pornographic materials such as books, video CDs and websites by young people today. This demands introspection by communities and professionals as to their role, responsibility and response in terms of young people having to resort to accessing pornographic material for information on sex and sexuality, which is often inaccurate, inappropriate and unhealthy, due to a dismal lack of approachable and informative resources.

6.7.6. Frequency of Abuse

It was found that a vast majority of participants could not remember the number of times abuse happened. A distribution of responses from those who had been abused with respect to frequency of abuse is given below:
The study suggests that abuse by strangers may be a one-off incident (such as in cases of sexual harassment, exhibitionism by strangers etc.) whilst abuse by known people is very often repeated over a period of time. Therefore, it may be suggested that a majority of those who were abused once may have been subjected to abuse by strangers, whereas those who were abused repeatedly, may have been abused by people they were familiar with.

**6.7.7. Age of onset of Abuse**

Participants were asked about the age when their abuse first happened/ started. A total of 40 boys and 60 girls who had been abused responded to this question. The trend that emerged from the responses is:
As can be observed here, the age of 0-8 years (that coincides with onset of puberty) is the age of onset of abuse for most girls and boys. However, it is interesting to note that while there is steady rise in the abuse of girls as they advance in age till the age group of 10-14 years, there is sudden jump in the abuse of boys from the age group of 12-14 years. This may be analyzed in relation with the earlier discussion on adolescents watching or being made to watch pornography (the study had a large number of boys who said they had watched or had been made to watch pornographic material by their peers). This jump in the onset of abuse may also be linked to a greater access to pornographic material made available through their own peer group.

6.7.8. Disclosure and seeking help

Considering the insidious and manipulative nature of abuse, relational proximity to the abuser and the potential for stigmatization within society, disclosing about abuse can be a very intimidating experience for abused children.
However, this voicing is an extremely crucial step towards stopping the abuse and at the same time may also contribute significantly towards healing. Unfortunately, the experience of disclosure about sexual abuse is fraught with fears for many children - arising out of the myths, shame and silence that surround the issue. These fears may range from the fear of losing love since the abuser and the child usually share a relationship, fear of not being believed, fear of being blamed and fear of further harm.

Such apprehensions in the minds of children regarding disclosure of their abuse also suggest that there has been a failure to a certain extent of the adult society and systems to be able to create safe and effective support structures whether in terms of family/community response or professional services for abused children to be able to disclose and have their fears and concerns addressed.

“I was blackmailed by my cousin brother, and he often forces me to do it (have sex)...........I was not able to tell this to my father, because he has got a good name in the family. He used to see me in the wrong way. Once I told this to my close friend. She told me, they won’t do it unnecessarily. Your appearance may have made them like that.”

-Girl, 15yrs

“I am really in a confused state what to do for this. I can’t lose their (friend’s) relationship because they are all affectionate towards me.”

-Girl, 14yrs

“I never told anyone what happened to me in 7th Standard, because I would be blamed.”

-Girl, 13yrs
Some of the concerns, fears and anxieties that participants had about disclosure were:

![Fear of Disclosure](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn't know who to approach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't know what/how to say</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt guilty</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't think s/he will be believed</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser asked to keep it a secret</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt scared</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't want to tell anyone</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation will get spoilt</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more of these</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering such high prevalence of fears and anxieties among abused children, the fact that most children never disclose their experiences of abuse must not come as a surprise.

**6.7.9. Assistance and Information Needed to Children**

As has been discussed earlier, the resources available to children in terms of information on sex, sexuality and sexual abuse are limited, and so are support structures for help in situations of distress. This lack of resources and support was expressed as a concern by the children themselves, when asked about the kind of help or information they would like to receive. Also, these resources and support structures need not always be professional and specialized in nature - the affirming and supportive response by the family, community and friends, being of paramount importance as well.
As is evident, a large number of children want information on protecting themselves against sexual abuse, and on sex and sexuality. It requires many times efforts to meet these needs of children. The lack of active support from the adults may result in children turning to unhealthy and inaccurate sources of information on sexuality, or staying fearful, silent and helpless in the event of occurrence of sexual abuse - both of which have surfaced strongly in this study. Also, it is almost tragic to note that the only help desired by many children is that they wanted someone to believe their experiences of abuse, a strong indicator of the usual response of disbelief towards children's accounts of sexual abuse.

The researcher through this study found out that child sexual abuse is one of the most fundamental violations of children's rights and usually an underlying obstacle, to their overall development. While it is expected that children will be protected by adults and systems, including parents, families, teachers, community and the State, the study estimates that at least 70% of our children will experience some form of sexual abuse before they reach the age of 18. This is because child
sexual abuse does not occur in a vacuum. The offenders are usually amongst us. They are family members, teachers, neighbors, friends etc. They use trickery, force or exploit their positions of authority to take advantage of a child's innocence and unconditional love.

It is alarming to imagine the prevalence of sexual abuse for disadvantaged and marginalized population groups of children. Groups such as institutionalized children, street and working children and differently abled children are even more at risk of being abused, due to their increased vulnerabilities owing largely to their special circumstances.

Because we as adults have often failed in protection of children, we must now help children, through non-threatening and age-appropriate means, to participate in their own protection. As our knowledge of the aftermath of sexual abuse of children increases, the need to find ways to prevent and to ensure safety of children from victimization of any form is paramount.

Prevention has increasingly gained recognition as the most prudent and cost effective strategy for addressing child sexual abuse. More importantly prevention, through the concept of Personal Safety Education empowers every Personal Safety Education is a methodology that promotes the safety of self against abuse. A multi-sectored approach is the only way to find solutions and prohibit these abuses, thereby saving the lives of many girls and boys whose rights deserve protection.

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