

Psychological Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse News on Parents in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT:

World Health Organization has identified violence against children as a growing public-health issue with a global magnitude. Media has the power to transfer information and influence people at a massive scale. The aim of the current study is to examine the psychological effects of media content on child sexual abuse among parents of Pakistan. Cultivation theory was employed as theoretical foundations. Survey conducted from the sample of 1000 respondents residing in four largest populated cities of Pakistan. This research was laid out through cross sectional survey and analyzed through using SPSS version 22. Purposive sampling technique was used and survey questionnaire was developed after conducting the pilot study. The results of this study indicated that Pakistani media is helpful in creating awareness about child sexual abuse; moreover 51% of the participant are strongly agreed with the point that Pakistani media content on child sexual abuse affects the mindset of parents. By watching news about CSA, 65% of the parents become more concerned about their children's protection and the feeling of aggression and fear also develops. They started monitoring the daily activities and behavioral changes of their child and intent to teaching them how to protect themselves after watching media content on CSA.

Keywords:

Child Sexual Abuse, Psychological Effects, Media, Parents, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a kind of child exploitation involving the misuse of a child for fulfilling sexual desires in many ways. It includes touching a body inappropriately, sodomy or, rape. As a result, the victim faces several issues depending on the nature of event including extent of abuse, situation, and pre-existing conditions of child's life. There exist certain factors that results in CSA such as parents are not aware, lack of preventing steps to be taken, child's relationship with the criminal, and a series of situations that increases vulnerability of a child. Several research and awareness campaigns in the Western countries started three decades ago using the conceptualization of sexual abuse and proposed model (Freeman & Morris, 2001).

Different researches were conducted by people belonging to diversified filed on the effect of CSA on different zones of a human's life. In developing countries, several strategies and therapeutic interventions have been developed for maintaining

or restoring the psychological well-being and welfare of victims. But in case of Pakistan which is a developing country, the issue has received attention only recently. Children in general and street children in particular are reported to be at risk of sexual abuse in Pakistan. The number of children living in streets to be more than 170,000. Among these, about 90% faced sexual abuse on first night of sleeping outside (Pakistan Human Rights Report, 2013).

Limited researches on CSA with respect of psychological impact have been carried out in Pakistan that calls for increased need to spread awareness regarding existence and effect of CSA. In Pakistani content, no exact and official data is available to identify the exact number of CSA cases. According to an unofficial report, around 15-25% of children are sexually abused in Pakistan (Mehnaz, 2018).

According to a report from Sahil, an NGO working for a safe environment for children and tackling child abuse there were about 2,321 cases

of child abuse in 2007, 1838 in 2008, 2012 in 2009, 2252 in 2010 and 2303 in 2011. The number of CSA cases has been increased exceptionally in Pakistan with a ratio of 7.67% in 2013 (Sahil, 2015). The issue of CSA: a terrible crime remains behind the curtain of social stigmatization creating negligence and unawareness of parents, that leads to the lack of preventive measures, awareness both in parents and children (NSPCC, 2015).

In Pakistani society, sexual abuse is associated with the loss of respect and integrity and thus, is most likely to have damaging effects on one's own identity, social life and mental welfare of the individual. Incidents like rape grab more attention while those slight in nature are easily suppressed to the best possible extent due to stigma. Legal and especially mental measures are rendered unimportant to prevent dignity from any harm of stigmatization. If revealed, the person ultimately becomes a social outcast whose social-self bleeds in the jaws of stigma. To prevent oneself from devastated image of life and social self, people prefer to hide it even if child manages to reveal it by some means. Certain factors are responsible behind underreporting of CSA cases that mainly includes victim's own fears and guilt associated with abuse, child's failure to recognize such activity as abusive particularly if criminal is a close friend or relative, rejecting that abuse has occurred; negative response on disclosure, and suppression of event due to stigma (Batoool & Abtahi, 2017).

CSA has become the alarming social issue and is being increasingly noticed and covered by media in Pakistan as well as globally. Pakistani media play vital role in breaking taboo and discussing the issue of what is normal and what is not. The part media play in relation to child abuse issue and child protection is very significant.

The issue of child sexual abuse has received a great amount of attention in the Pakistani media. In early 2018 Pakistan experienced a great loss in terms of Zainab case; a little girl lost her life due to the evil side of this society. This case brought into light the horrific accident of the past year, Kasur's child pornography case. Pakistani media followed up the case constantly which creates greater attention and awareness. Media highlighted this issue for a few weeks but

later the urgency died due to other conflict issues (Mehnaz, 2018).

Problem Statement

According to Walsh and Brandon (2011), parents are the core support who is always available for their children when needed. When it comes to a family system, the parent is the one who is responsible to look after the child in the development and growth of the child. Thus, parents should be well informed about the reasons behind the occurrence of CSA, and how to prevent it for the safety of their child. Proper education to parents about the increasing societal problem i.e. CSA may lead in the decrease of diminishing such cases. CSA cases can only be prevented if it is considered and highlighted as an important societal problem (Taylor-Browne, 1997).

Media developed a much broader focus of concern about child sexual abuse, child protection system and what the role of parents should be in relation to this. It also helps in policy making and changing public perception. Child sexual abuse is an emerging issue worldwide even in developed countries. Current study is designed to explore that extensive exposure to electronic media content on child sexual abuse in changing the mindset and perception of society as well as behaviors affiliated with parenting role. The climate of mistrust and fear has developed by watching such content repeatedly. It made people think that world is dangerous place for children. That is extremely important to understand the impact of exposure of content related child sexual abuse in creating consciousness and fear among parents.

Research Objectives

1. To study the psychological impact of news about child sexual abuse on parents.
2. To investigate the effect of child sexual abuse news on mindset of future parents.

Literature Review

The circumstance in Pakistan is worse than some other developing or developed nation yet non accessibility of the measurements at government level in regards to the common circumstance of child abuse makes it progressively critical. As per a UNICEF report (2004) roughly 40% of the all our child populace younger than 5 years endured lack of healthy sustenance, 63% between a half

year to 3 years hindered development, sickly and underweight and newborn child death rate is 81%. Poor conditions stretch out to the education area as well, 23 million children in Pakistan had never been to school and 21% were the casualty of child relational unions. Just single third of every single Pakistani child younger than five are enlisted during childbirth. As indicated by the UNICEF, around three million children younger than 14 and 18 % of children between the ages of 10 and 15 are associated with work. In 2003 there has been a 30% expansion over the earlier year in the quantity of children fleeing from home. A large portion of them left home on account of child battering by the parents, domestic violence and family money related issues. In Pakistan, physical abuse or battering is the most widely recognized piece of the disciplinary preparing techniques utilized by the parents.

Child sexual abuse is exceedingly common in the public eye however this issue is underreported because of shame related with it. Pereda, Guilera, Forns and Benito (2009) conducted a research aimed to estimate the burden of violence, crime and abuse in children life. Telephone interviews were conducted from 4000 children and care givers samples: A meta-analysis of around 88% of CSA is never detailed. Not with standing, it has been discovered that universally overall, 15.2% children experienced maltreatment 8% of the males and 20% of females experience the ill effects of molestation (Pereda et. al, 2009). A report incontestable terribly nearly one,549 instances of regulatory offense were accounted for within the year 2003; chatting with a rate of 4 cases for every day and one, 184 young girls were sexually ambushed before the end of 2004 (SPARC, 2006).

Another research by Adeosun (2015) concluded that most of the cases of child sexual abuse are not reported due to fear of parents, mistrust on law institute, and it being a shame and taboo topic. The study aimed to investigate psychological impact of sexual maltreatment the dominance of CSA may vary from five to half percent. These varieties may be because of difference in characteristics, study methodology and aims of the study. For instance, with an overall, characteristics of sexual abuse as "any sexual act", commonness rates of abuse can go as high as half percent and a restricted definition of sexual abuse as "force

genital action" rates of about five percent. An investigation from 20 nations discovered 7 to 30 percent of ladies and three to 30 percent of men had endured sexual abuse amid childhood. All the more essentially, it very well may be said that one in each four young ladies and one in each six young men is abused sexually over the world. (Adeosun, 2015).

According to Wilczynski and Sinclair (1999) observed the portrayal of child abuse issues in the newspapers. The research was conducted by reviewing the newspapers and the data depicted that less cases of child abuse were covered in the newspaper, and the weightage it had was lost due to promotion of 'law and order agenda' of the organization, rather than wholly focusing on reporting child abuse cases to bring a better change in mindsets in the society by creating awareness among people (Wilczynski and Sinclair, 1999). In the study "Does Violence Breed Violence? Contributions from a Study of the Child Abuse Syndrome" the researcher examine three generations of families of victims of child abuse cases. On the theme of violence breed violence according to the finding researcher found the person who is abused is more likely to become a violent person in future. It is like a cycle of child abuse syndrome that when someone saw child abuse content again and again or experience such maltreatment will become a violent person in society (Silver, Dublin and Lourie, 2017).

In the study "Prevalence of Childhood Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse Results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence" The research aimed to observe the effects of crime related issues such as child abuse and violence among children. Telephonic interviews conducted from children took place to understand the risks and factors associated with children during each stage of their life and the impact of child abuse news on the mindsets and thinking of the target market. The research resulted that children were well aware of such child abuse incidents which depicted that they were leaned towards having know-how of such problems which showed that it has positively affected the children and they knew what was right and what was wrong while being a part of the society. The main purpose was to analyze the awareness created among children which showed

positive output (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, Hamby, 2015).

Methodology

The current study is an exploratory in nature and quantitative approach was used to interpret the data collected through survey method. The population of the study consisted of all Pakistani parents and as sample researcher selected 1000 respondents (both father & mother) residing in four largest populated cities (Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan & Islamabad) of Pakistan. The inclusion criteria of the sample were to possess at least one children of age less than 9 who have exposure of different types of media in different cities of Punjab. Keeping in view the financial and time constraints, only small samples were taken from these four cities. Therefore, generalizations have been made with caution. Profession wise, majority of the parents were job holders and businessmen. The data was collected through purposive and snowball sampling. Informants or participants used their social network to get reference for people who could potentially contribute to data collection. Confidentiality was maintained and pseudonyms were used to hide the identity of participants.

An online questionnaire was designed to assemble information, additionally to demographic characteristics, associated with completely different elements like section one (9 statements) was related to parents viewing pattern of different media outlets and their communication with their children in the context of child abuse media content. While, section two (14 statements) is related to psychological effects of watching media content related to child abuse on parents' mindsets and consequently, parents dealing with sexual abuse related media content in

terms of parenting their children. Moreover, in section 2, all of the things can be answered by selecting choices on a five-point liker scale, ranging strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). Finally, as multi-method strategy, one open ended question is also asked to capture parents' views about precautionary measures that they have been taken for their children in response to sexual abuse media content.

Moreover, second survey questionnaire for future parents, in addition to demographic variables, includes section one (11 statements) involving statements regarding viewing pattern of different media outlets and their hypothetical futuristic behaviors with their children after becoming parents in future times in context of children sexual abuse media content. While, section two (11 statements) is related to psychological effects of watching media content related to child abuse on their mindsets and consequently, how they will deal with sexual abuse related media content in terms of parenting their children in future times after becoming parents. Moreover, in section two, all of the items could be answered by choosing options on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). Finally, as multi-method strategy, one open ended question is also asked to capture future parents' views about precautionary measures that they will be taken for their children in response to sexual abuse media content. Demographic information of parents includes Gender, Profession, Education, Number of Children and Children age. On the other side demographic information of future parents includes gender, profession education and university.

Findings

Table 1

Characteristics of Parents Participants

		Frequency
Relationship to the Child	Father	500
	Mother	500
Age	18-25	154
	26-30	397
	>31	449
Educational Level		254
	Matriculation	284

Intermediate		
Bachelors		357
Masters		98
PhD		7
City	Faisalabad	100
	Lahore	100
	Islamabad	100
	Multan	100
<i>N</i> = 1000		

Table 2
Percentages of answers from respondents

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Do you think Pakistani media is showing content on child sexual abuse?	19%	10%	15%	36%	20%
Do you think Pakistani media content on child sexual abuse affects the mindset of parents?	4%	10%	17%	18%	51%
Are you more concerned about your child's protection after watching media content on child sexual abuse?	8%	19%	16%	21%	46%

The first row depicts that 36% of the total respondents are agreed and 20% are strongly agreed that Pakistan media is highlighting and showing content on child sexual abuse. Moreover, 15% respondents claimed that they have neutral opinion, 10% of the participants disagreed and 19% strongly disagreed while giving their opinion. Media help in educating public about child maltreatment to influencing their perceptions towards child protection, and helps victims or observers of abuse to teach them what to do (Saint-Jacques, Villeneuve, Turcotte, Drapeau & Ivers, 2012). The second row shows that 51% of the participant is strongly agreed with the point that Pakistani media content on child sexual abuse affects the mindset of parents. From the total population, 18% of the participants agreed, 17% of the respondents marked neutral option, 10% disagreed and only 4% strongly disagreed with the

above-mentioned notion. The third row depicts that a highest ratio with 46% of the total population are more concerned about their child's protection after watching media content on child sexual abuse, whereas; 21% of the respondents agreed, 16% showed neutral opinions, 9% disagreed and 8% with the least ratio strongly disagreed.

Discussions and Conclusion

The findings of the current study revealed that parent's exposure to news related to child sexual abuse leave various affects on them. Almost all of the parents regularly watch different types of programs such as news, drama, reality and crime shows. Majority of parents (65%) said that they have watched media content related to child sexual abuse and almost similar number of parents resultantly felt different types of emotions or

feelings like fear, aggression, alarmed and depressed. About 37 % parents said that girls are more likely to suffer from sexual abuse, 35 % asserted that boys are more likely to be affected by sexual abuse, while 28 % stated that both girls and boys are affected by sexual abuse and they become more concerned after watching media content on child sexual abuse. Pakistani media is helpful in breaking taboo and creating awareness about the harsh reality of child sexual abuse. Pakistani media dare to discuss the issue what is normal and what is not. The problem of child sexual abuse has received a great amount of attention in The Pakistani media in early 2018 Pakistan experienced a great loss in terms of Zainab case; a little girl lost her life due to the evil side of this society. Media follow up the story for several weeks which create a great impact on parents' mind. Parents that watch television on a regular basis get exposure of media content on child sexual abuse and resultantly felt different types of emotions or feelings like fear, aggression, alarmed and informed. After watching media content on child sexual abuse 29% parents of sample size feel aggression and 26% shows fear for their children. Majority of parents (65%) said they have become more concerned about their child's protection after watching media content on child sexual abuse. Mostly parents (70%) stated that parents should speak to their child regarding sexual abuse topic after watching media content on child sexual abuse. About 47% parents feel that Pakistan is an insecure place for children after watching media content on child sexual abuse. Mostly parents (59%) said that parents should monitor their child's daily activities. In conclusion, almost all of the parents do watch television on a regular basis and do watch sexual abusive media content. Moreover, a considerable number of parents do think that Pakistani media is showing content on child sexual abuse and media is helpful in creating awareness about child sexual abuse and this media content affects their mindset to a large extent. They have become more concerned about their child's protection. Consequently, parents asserted that parents should generally monitor their children's activities on a regular basis, instruct and educate them properly. Overall, media content greatly affected the mindsets of the parents and they have become more concerned and scared after watching media content and resultantly,

more cautiously monitoring their children's daily activities.

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