

Child sexual abuse – a threat to childhood

[Society](#), [Child Abuse](#)



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE — A THREAT TO CHILDHOOD (Assignment — Media Research Methods) Aprajita Kalyani Roll No. — 287 Communication Management Batch 2012 Justification Child abuse is the term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18, either physically, sexually or emotionally. Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person who is either significantly older than the victim or is in a position of power or control over the child. Child sexual abuse can take any form * Sexual touching and fondling * Exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic movies and photographs * Having children pose in a sexual fashion or undress * Rape, attempt to rape or molestation, etc. Over 53% children face child sexual abuse in India. However, in most of the cases, the children do not share such issues with their parents but it leads to a change in the child's behaviour and the situation cannot be improved. The aim of the research is * to know more about the effects of child sexual abuse * to increase awareness about important facts of child sexual abuse * to educate the parents about the behavioural changes in a child who has been a victim of child sexual abuse * to increase awareness so that a comprehensive law for the issue can be adopted and enacted by the judicial system of our country. Review of Literature Dr. Krishna Pal Malik & Dr. Kaushik C. Raval; Law and Social Transformation in India; Allahabad Law Agency, 2nd Edition, 2009. " There are a number of laws related to children but there is no single comprehensive law that discusses the issue of sexual child abuse. In such cases, the perpetrator is more often than not, a member of the family,

somebody who enjoys a position of trust and honour in the family. The law is unable to take any concrete steps to hold these people in check. Mistreated and abused children do not know where to go for support. " Dr. Malik and Dr. Raval point at the judicial system of the country which lacks the power to tackle the problem of child sexual abuse. If there is no comprehensive law, the child won't get any justice. Also, Dr. Malik and Dr. Kaushik state an important fact of child sexual abuse that more than often; a member of the family is the perpetrator. However, there is a strong belief in the minds of our society that a child faces sexual abuse by a " stranger"

----- Kokkinos, Sophie; Literature Review Child Sexual Assault/Abuse Causes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Victims The Free Library; (2008, April 18); Retrieved September 09, 2010; [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Literature Review Child Sexual Assault/Abuse Causes Post Traumatic...-a01073868114](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Literature+Review+Child+Sexual+Assault/Abuse+Causes+Post+Traumatic...-a01073868114)
" The impact of Child Sexual Assault (CSA) on victims has been extensively documented in the research literature over the past couple of decades (if not longer) and has examined the various types of impacts that CSA can have on such victims. One such impact that has been researched to some extent is the relationship between CSA and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Child sexual assault/abuse (CSA) can have an enormous impact on victims in many ways. One of the potential impacts of CSA on victims is that of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Researchers have examined whether there is a causal relationship between CSA and PTSD and as such this literature review examines extant research on this question. Thus the hypothesis of this review is Child Sexual Assault (CSA) causes Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD) in victims. " Posttraumatic stress disorder is classified as an anxiety disorder, characterized by aversive anxiety-related experiences, behaviour, and physiological responses that develop after exposure to a psychologically traumatic event (sometimes months after). These persisting posttraumatic stress symptoms cause significant disruptions of one or more important areas of life function. PSSD has a long term effect on a child. Most of the people ask the child to forget about the incident but they tend to forget that even if the child does not share his feelings, he will develop a psychological disorder and an incident which has taken place in the childhood will have an impact on that child throughout his life.

----- Depanfilis, Diane; Literature Review of Sexual Abuse; Document Resume; U. S Government Printing Office, August' 86. " Children are affected by sexual abuse in different ways. A child's reaction depends on a no of factors occurring both during the sexual abuse and after it has ceased. There are a no of factors which determine how a child will react to the sexual abuse. These factors include the age, status, relationship of the abuse to the child, degree of shame and perhaps the most important is the reaction of child's parents and the professionals who intervene in the child's life. " " Numerous researchers have found incest victims manifesting psychological problems. " From the extract, we come to know that the effect of child sexual abuse is dependent on numerous factors stated above. This is important to know because the problem can be tackled only if it is understood to the same level as it is.

----- Depanfilis, Diane; Literature Review of Sexual Abuse; Document Resume; U. S Government Printing Office, August' 86. " Browne and Finkelhor state, Empirical studies with adults confirm the presence of many of the hypothesized long-term effects of sexual abuse mentioned in the clinical literature: suicidal tendencies, fears, isolation and stigma, lowered self-esteem, distrust, revictimization, substance, abuse, and sexual problems such as sexual dysphoria, sexual dysfunction and promiscuity. " The above extract gives an insight of the various problems which a child who has been a victim of sexual abuse, faces in his life. Most of the people think that a sexually abused child can go into depression neglecting the fact that sexual abuse not only affects his psychology but also the physical, sexual state of the child.

CONCEPTS & OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS In the context of my research, the following are the identified concepts and their operational definitions:

1. Child — Any human being below the age of 18 years is defined as a child and if faces sexual abuse, he will fall in the category of child sexual abuse.
2. Child abuse — Any harm, physical, psychological or sexual; caused by a member of the family or any stranger is child abuse.
3. Child sexual abuse — Sexual Abuse i. e. any kind of sexual stimulation caused to a child by the perpetrator who can be a " stranger" or a family member, but necessarily a person in power over the child is child sexual abuse.
4. Parent - One who gives birth to, nurtures and raises a child.
5. Stranger — any person who the child has not met in his life and does not share any kind of family relationship is a stranger.
6. Perpetrator — person who has caused any kind of child abuse
7. Victim — person who faces any kind of child abuse. In this

case — child is the victim. **HYPOTHESIS** With the reference of the review of literature stated above, the hypothesis derived in the context of my research is: Child sexual abuse is not caused by a stranger but more than often, a family member. This is a very important fact which our society needs to realize. Child sexual abuse not only affects the psychological state but deeply affects the physical and sexual condition of the child too. It is important to know the psyche of such children and counsel them accordingly. There is a need to have a concrete comprehensive law which can help tackle the problem so that such incidents can be avoided in future.

OBJECTIVES In the sample study of the research being conducted, the objectives are:- * To know the incidents of child abuse among the people being observed under my research * To know how much awareness is there about the issue * To know more about the effects of child sexual abuse * To increase awareness so that a comprehensive law for the issue can be adopted and enacted by the judicial system of our country. **RESEARCH**

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN Intensive Interview Technique which is a qualitative approach is apt for researching on this issue. It is a hybrid of one-on-one interview approach. Smaller samples have been used as it is not easy to get responses from many people on a sensitive issue like this because most people do not like to discuss about such issues and find it uncomfortable to disclose any kind of information about the same. For the research, the questions framed are: 1. What is child sexual abuse according to you? 2. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? 3. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? 4. Are any particular children at increased risk? 5. Who are the most common perpetrators? 6. Is it

common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused?

7. Do you have any experience to share? 8. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? 9. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? 10. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? For this, the people who I plan to interview should belong to different age groups and also of different profession. Getting responses from parents, teachers, teenagers, working class will give a fair idea as to how much awareness is there and also, a difference in opinion will result in knowing as to how the background, generation has a deep impact on people's thinking about such issues.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH STUDY I interviewed 9 people - parents, teacher, teenagers, psychologist and professional. The responses received are: Name: Saraswati Prasad (Parent) Age : 79 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A — Indecent behaviour with the child. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A — If the child gets scared with the person supposed to be the perpetrator, it gives encouragement to the perpetrator. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - Until and unless the child attains maturity, not only in terms of age but also in terms of his mindset, he or she should not be left home alone. Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Children who are shy and lack confidence are at increased risk. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - Family members, servants and neighbours. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes it is. Because at times the child gets scared, few don't even come to understand what had happened

and few, even if they discuss with parents, at times, they are ignored because the family members are afraid to break the relationship, considering that a family member is the perpetrator. Do you have any experience to share? A — Yes. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A — No but certainly became more shy and anti-socialist kind of a person. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A — Yes, there is a possibility but love and affection of the family can prevent this situation to happen. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A — Severe punishment should be given but treatment should be provided to the perpetrator because he/she is mentally ill.

Name: Navin Kumar (Parent) Retd. Bank Executive Officer Age : 60 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A — Indecent behaviour with the child. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A — Culprit's perverted mentality, unawareness of the child, lack of confidence in the child. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - Until and unless the child attains maturity, not only in terms of age but also in terms of his mindset, he or she should not be left home alone. Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Yes. Those who are neglected by the parents, live in a separated family situation Who are the most common perpetrators? A - Family members and servants. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes it is because at times the child gets scared. Do you have any experience to share? A —

Yes. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A — No, that particular child did not go on to do so but there is a big probability. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A — Yes, there is a possibility. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A — depends on the level of abuse and harsh punishment should be given. Even death sentence should be given.

Name: Manju Shri (Parent) Teacher Age: 55 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A — Indecent behaviour with the child. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A — Unawareness of the child, lack of confidence in the child. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A — 10-12 Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Yes. Those who are innocent/naive, lack confidence and are shy. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - Family members and family friends. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes it is because at times the child gets scared. Do you have any experience to share? A — Yes. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A — No. But few went on to become more mature while few became more anti-socialist. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A — No. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A — Death Sentence but it depends on the level of abuse.

Name: Trisha Das (Student) Age: 19 What is child sexual abuse according to you? What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A - Sudden irritation by mere physical contact with anyone, being aggressive, and isolation from activities/friends/family members he likes. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - According to me there doesn't exist any such age form which a child can be left alone. But in the Indian context -9 years. A lot depends upon the child's surroundings and the way he/she has been brought up Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Children of sex workers, alcoholic/drug addicts or children living in vulnerable areas. Children in the age group of 4-12 years Who are the most common perpetrators? Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes. Very common. Sometimes they are not even fully aware of what happened to them Do you have any experience to share? A - Nope. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - Not exactly. In fact some of them turn out to be very reserved, submissive and under confident. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A - Molestation-Life sentence Rape/ child sexual abuse by parents or relatives — Death Sentence

Name: Lovina Raymond (Media Student) Age: 19 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A - Touching a child sexually, or forcing a child to touch the perpetrator, sexually. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A - Withdrawal, Wanting to be left alone, getting violent at times,

performing poorly in school At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - 12 Are any particular children at increased risk? A - No. Any child could be vulnerable to abuse Who are the most common perpetrators? A - The people who the child knows (in most cases it's a relative or a family friend) Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes, if they've been threatened by the criminal Do you have any experience to share? A - None. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A - Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - Depends on the upbringing, family and education What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A - Life imprisonment

Name: Animesh Kumar (Management Consultant (Head — India Healthcare Consulting, Data monitor India) Age: 30 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A - Any sexual act directed towards a minor is a sexual abuse. It may or may not involve rape. As per me, touching the child inappropriately, exposing the child to sexual acts, pictures depicting sex are all part of child sexual abuse. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A - I think I have already answered the question through my response to the previous question. However, I would list them down. They are following; a. Rape of a minor b. Touching/kissing a child inappropriately. In several countries, you can land up in jail if you touch a child on his/her thighs c. Showing pictures/material depicting sexual acts At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - I am not too sure about that. I

guess 18. Are any particular children at increased risk? A - I do not have a particular reason to defend my response; however I do believe that some children are at greater risk compared to others. First of all, I think a girl child is at higher risk. Infants and small kids are at high risk as well since they cannot complain or identify the offender. I think mentally challenged children are at high risk as well. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - I do not think there is a class. However, I believe that people with troubled unhealthy life, people with low-self esteem, loners etc are the most common perpetrators. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - I think so. And that is what encourages the offenders. Do you have any experience to share? A - Fortunately, NO!!! If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A - My answer to the previous question is No. But I would like to add over here that I do not think that a victim will later sexually abuse another child. A child abuse victim will be scarred for life. He/She may turn into a socially inactive individual, may become a criminal or may act violently (especially towards child abusers), but I certainly do not think that a child abuse victim can later become a child abuser. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - I answered that through my response to the last question. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A - I am a person who believes that the punishment for rape should be nothing less than capital punishment. However, in case of child abuse, it will depend upon the severity of the offence. If it is rape of child, the offender should be burnt alive. If it is a

lesser offence, a jail term is probably appropriate. However, I think that in case of a lesser offence, the offender needs psychiatric treatment more than a jail term. Probably a jail term combined with psychiatric treatment is an option. _____

_____ Name: D K Srivastava Executive Director, Sahara India Financial Corporation Limited Age: 45 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A - Touching the child's vital organs, and hugging trying to kiss. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A - Performing poorly in studies. Very often gloomy in the family. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - 11- 12 Are any particular children at increased risk? A - No Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - Very close to our family (May Be uncle, family friend, relatives etc.) Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes, I agree with you. Do you have any experience to share? A - No I don't have any experience. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A - Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - Depends on the environmental factors prevailing in the family and education of the child. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A - Life imprisonment

Name: Manoj Singh Sr. Manager (It), Sahara India Age: 40 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A - Touching the Child's vital organs, from over the clothes. What are the signs or symptoms of child sexual abuse? A -

If the child has developed fear factors about the other persons. And wants to stay at home alone without parents. At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - 12- 14 Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Every child has risks. So caring is must at a particular age. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - I can't comment on perpetrators as recognition is most difficult. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Yes, I agree with this. Do you have any experience to share? A - No I don't have any experience. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A - Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - Of course depends on the positive and negative impact and tradition of family and education of the child. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? A - Life imprisonment

Name: Suman Kumar Sinha Psychologist Age: 40 What is child sexual abuse according to you? A - Child for me means someone who is not an adult, in fact not even an adolescent as yet. A Child therefore is someone who is not expected to be aware of the right perspective about many of the adult human relations. Sex being an integral part of adult human relation needs proper understanding, which is expected to come only with age and knowledge. Hence Child sexual abuse according to me means an incidence that a Child has been subjected to without being aware of its implications as well as complications. What are the signs or symptoms of Child sexual abuse? A - Signs of Child Sexual abuse are the post incidence Trauma, both

physical as well as emotional being undergone and suffered by the Child. Symptoms could vary from individual to individual. Some could feel physical or emotional suffocation; some may develop serious doubt about the adults - specially about adults of the opposite sex; some could develop deep fear (hallucinations) about the incident being repeated again; some could fear of being alone; some could develop fear of rejection from their immediate family and social group and be compelled to prefer isolation; At what age do you think can a child legally be left home alone? A - We cannot decide the ideal age for a child to be left home alone. It will vary from person to person, from family to family, shall be different for different social groups because awareness level varies with differences in social background. Are any particular children at increased risk? A - Children of the lower strata of the society are at the highest risk, mainly because their parents are dependent on others for different reasons, monetary consideration being one of the many. Also the capacity of the parents to fight back in case of any incidence is minimal. Therefore Child sexual abuse in these social groups are highest because of the fact that the parents can be easily be compromised. Also the rampant use of alcohol and other intoxicants in these social groups is another reason for incidence to recur. Under the influence of intoxicants and no fear of social retaliation the Child in these social groups is at a high risk. Who are the most common perpetrators? A - Surprisingly adult members of the immediate family as well as distant relations are the most common perpetrators. Then it is the people in position to favour. This lot uses its clout of position, power and finance. Is it common for children not to tell even their parents that they've been abused? A - Very common. In most cases it is

because of want of healthy relation between the Child and the family members; then the fear of being declared the culprit instead of the victim; then there is the fear of subsequent rejection by the family itself; hence the Child concludes in most of the cases and is compelled not to share the trauma even with their parents and suffer alone and in isolation. Do you have any experience to share? A - Yes. A girl child in my own family was abused by an adult uncle. She told her parents everything she could and was subjected to. But the parents instead of taking the person to task or exposing him, for fear of social rebuttal and complications, asked the Child instead to forgive and forget. Even the adult children of the perpetrator did not bother to take the matter with their father for fear of his stern action against them. If yes, then the child who was abused went on to abuse or act violently towards others? A - No she didn't go on to abuse or act violently towards others but she definitely developed a strict moralistic view of life. Her doubt of the adult male is a part of her understanding now and the conclusion that every adult male has a natural tendency towards such action, is something she cannot be convinced against. She also developed deep seated fear of being alone with any adult male. Do you believe that if someone is abused as a child it is common for them to be an abuser or get engaged in criminal activities when they grow up? A - Again I don't think we can generalise the outcome or complications arising out of these incidents. Every person is an individual first and therefore responses shall always vary from person to person. Of course such individuals may become an abuser or engage in criminal activities themselves but their involvement into these activities, will need to explored further and cannot be attributed to the

incidence they went through. What form of punishment do you believe to be acceptable? ----- A - Some very drastic and severe punishment of capital nature will need to be taken against the perpetrators. And the punishment should not be delayed and will need to be executed quick to act as a deterrent to many. RESEARCH REPORT Getting responses from parents, teachers, teenagers, working class gives a fair idea as to how much awareness is there and also, a difference in opinion helps in knowing as to how the background, generation has a deep impact on people's thinking about such issues. The objective of the research was fulfilled:- From the interview, most of the people have had experiences in their lives about such incidents which prove that child sexual abuse has become very common. Regarding the awareness, there is a difference in the opinion about what child sexual abuse is. According to few, any kind of indecent behaviour with the child is a form of sexual abuse while few believe that specifically sexual acts with the child are child sexual abuse. This difference in the opinion also helps to know that any kind of indecent act, though of a small level can also lead to have adverse effects on the child. The most important finding of the survey was the sample believes that mostly, family member, family friends, domestic help are involved in such issues and are the perpetrators. Also, there is no concrete law in our judicial system which deals with Child Sexual abuse specifically. The punishment depends on the level of abuse and accordingly, three major types of punishment mentioned by the Sample are: Death sentence, Life imprisonment and rehabilitative Sentencing (Reformative Theory of Punishment.) REFERENCES Dr. Krishna Pal Malik & Dr. Kaushik C. Raval; Law

and Social Transformation in India; Allahabad Law Agency, 2nd Edition, 2009.

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