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[www.advancelrf.org](http://www.advancelrf.org)**Causes and Effects of Child Sexual Abuse in Pakistan****Fozia Naseem**

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**Abstract**

*Both physical and sexual abuse of children is an act of violence being practiced all over the world but especially in underdeveloped countries. There are a lot of causes that lead to CSA (Child Sexual Abuse). One of them is poverty, which is closely related to acts of sexual violence. A pattern has been observed in numerous sexual abuse cases where poorer families are more likely to be victims of CSA as compared to more financially stable families. The targets of sex offenders are usually children belonging to poor families because these children are easier to manipulate. Child molesters usually target young children from poor families and bribe their parents into selling their children as sex slaves or force them to make inappropriate sexual videos of their children in exchange for some cash. Victims of sexual violence may then be subjected to blackmail in the future. People who are socially crippled or outcasts of society may also fall prey to sexual violence as they are unaware of the danger that they may get involved in and are more vulnerable due to their lack of self-confidence. Such people are also targeting of sexual molesters and may become victims of sexual violence.*

**Keywords:** Sexual Abuse, Child, Rights, Violence, Target, Victim

**Introduction**

Many anthropological types of research have dictated that gender disparity or inequality is a leading cause of sexual violence amongst adults as well as children. Structural misogyny and systematic inequality lead to rising cases of sexual abuse. Most of the victims of sexual abuse are female which leads people to believe that gender inequality leads to sexual violence because when men and boys are given undue attention and support, they start considering themselves to be entitled to this treatment and think of themselves as a higher position than females. Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence and can be tackled by eliminating sexism and gender disparity. Nearly one in

every three females suffers from some form of physical and sexual abuse in their lives, irrespective of their age, color, race, or social status. The UNDHR or Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Articles 2 and 23 that there can be no discrimination or distinction based on gender in a workplace including the right to equal pay for women. More specifically the Charter of the UN states in Articles 8 and 101 that there shall be no restriction on the eligibility of men and women to participate in every capacity under the conditions of equality. If in a society, people are unable to find their age fellows of the opposite gender to have sexual intercourse; these people may resort to abusing young children. Such sexually frustrated people channel their frustration in the form of sexual abuse against children or minors. In most cases of rape and sexual violence, the molesters are older men who abuse younger children. These men may not have been able to find suitable sexual partners of legal age due to which they sexually abuse children. Although this is no excuse for rape or sexual violence, some people claim that it is a considerable issue when it comes to satisfaction of one's sexual desires. This issue can also be countered by therapy and medications to reduce sex drive and help the person to control their sexual urges voluntarily (Pergament, 2002).

### **Culture and Norms**

Some certain norms and traditions become leading factors in the prevalence of child sexual abuse, certain gender roles for example the norm that men are in control and have power over women whereas females are supposed to showcase compliance and submission to men. Such norms instill a sense of entitlement and ego in the minds of the men who consider themselves to be worthy of the compliance of women and demand that all their demands be met with complete submission. These rigid gender norms about masculinity are responsible for promoting domination, control, and risk-taking. Women are compliant and willing to sacrifice anything to satisfy the males in their lives. Some norms also support abuse of power in which people in higher positions consider themselves to be entitled to the exploitation of the rights of others. Adults may consider themselves to be more powerful than children as a result of which they may sexually violate the rights of children. Another norm prevalent in our society is that sexual violence or abuse is a personal or private matter which need not be discussed publicly or among other peers. It is a topic of taboo which must be dealt with discreetly although it is better if it is not even discussed at all. This silence leads to many more years and incidents of abuse that the victim must suffer.

Some people believe that delaying one's marriage may lead to dissatisfaction with their sexual lives and as a result, such people may resort to sexually abusing other people, usually children. In most religions, having sex before marriage is prohibited and one must wait until they are married to have intercourse with their spouse. As a result of this people may feel sexually frustrated as they are unable to fulfill their sexual urges and are incapable of getting married. People of this belief say that if a person marries early, their sexual desires are satisfied and channeled towards their spouse as a result of which they do not feel the need to sexually abuse others or rape them. This belief is refuted by most people who say that having sexual desires is common and controllable but if a person cannot control these desires and acts out on these urges, then he is either at fault or mentally unstable. Early marriages and child marriages should not be an excuse for fulfilling one's sexual desires according to most people. It is believed that controlling one's sexual urges and waiting for the right time to get married should be standard practice.

In Afghanistan, children are used for sexual activities, and for it, a proper term is used by the abusers "bacha bazi". It is a term that is used to describe the sexual abuse of younger boys by older men. These sexual abuses especially of young boys have continued over the decades and are practiced even today. In 2014 it was reported that the areas practicing bacha Bazi had increased exponentially (O'Leary, 2018). Similarly, in Pakistan, this term is used as Londay bazi. Like Afghanistan and other developing or under-developed countries, Pakistani children are also subjected to different forms of

sexual abuse. It was reported that almost 10 children were raped daily in Pakistan over 6 months in 2021. Nearly 1084 cases of CSA were reported during this time and many other cases went unreported or undocumented. 53% of the victims were females while 47% were males. Like Afghanistan, bacha bazi or londy bazi is practiced in different areas of Pakistan as well. Pakistan is a sexually oppressed country and there is strict segregation among the sexes. Due to this when women are not available to these men, they start preying on young children to fulfill their sexual desires. They isolate and brainwash these young children and force them to perform sexual acts (Mehnaz, Child abuse in Pakistan-Current perspective, 2018).

In different regions of Pakistan, the terms which are used for this activity are different. Like in Mianwali, a district In Punjab, Pakistan, the term which is used for this activity is Shina. Similarly, in Dera ghazi khan, this is termed as Beli. Hence, these activities become part of the cultures and societies in the area of such bad people, who are involved in this curse (Chambers, 2021).

### **The Society and Mindset of Friends, Family, and Kin**

In our society, sexual violence has become such a common practice that it has become normalized. Victims of sexual abuse, especially children are not given due attention or recognition when it comes to the reporting of sexual violence cases. This has given rise to a rape culture where raping of adults as well as minors has become a widespread practice and has lost its vitality or significance. Women's bodies are being objectified, children are being victimized and sexual violence is being glamorized. Victim blaming is one of the reasons why sexually abused victims are reluctant to speak up about their suffering. Society blames the victim instead of the abuser and claims that the victim must have brought it upon themselves. Due to this even if the abuser is caught, they are rarely given due punishment. Victim blaming makes it extremely hard for the abused person to come forward or share their story. Family and friends may also leave the side of the victim after the assault and the victim might feel responsible for their suffering. Some families even go to the extent of disowning their child if he or she becomes a victim of abuse. In these circumstances, victims feel it better to keep quiet about the abuse and suffer in silence to not lose their friends, family, and social respect.

### **Biological Causes**

A new study states that genetics as well as certain environmental stimuli and conditions may increase the likelihood that a person will become a sexual abuser. This study observed that the biological sons of sex offenders were much more likely to become sex offenders themselves. They were almost 5 times more likely to become sexual abusers as compared to sons of non-sex offenders. This study further states that genetics play as much as a 40% role in increasing the risk factor of a person becoming a sexual abuser. The researchers concluded that although genetics plays a role in the risk of a person becoming an abuser, it did not imply that the son of a sexual abuser or molester was bound to become an abuser himself. The environment that the child grows up in plays a huge role in his future dispositions which may suggest why sexual offenders had children who later became sex offenders themselves. These children grow up in an environment that is not conducive to proper and appropriate grooming. These children may be subjected to abuse in different forms throughout their lives either by their family or by their peers. As such they become more likely to gain a negative influence from their surroundings (Pergament, 2002).

### **Extremism**

Extremism is also a root cause of violence against children. Many extremists religious or political groups have been involved in sex cults and the exploitation of the sexual rights of the people around them. Children often fall victim to these extremist groups because of their vulnerability. Mostly the

cases of sexual violence or rape are reported against people of a higher social position. Military officials, religious scholars, and political leaders are usually among those who sexually abuse young children and then force them and blackmail them into staying quiet. These children feel threatened and are unable to speak up about their suffering. Extremism instills a sense of correctness and righteousness in the minds of the abusers and they consider themselves to be capable of abusing others sexually and making them stay silent about the abuse. Extremism in any form is harmful and must be diagnosed and countered as soon as it is detected. To prevent children in the future from being abused by people in powerful positions, the countries must come together and make laws and rules regarding the punishment of such extremist groups who target young children and buy and sell them as sex slaves.

### **Effects of CSA on Individual**

The effects of Child Sexual Abuse on individuals have similar impacts on the mental and physical health of children. Firstly, the victim does not only go through the trauma of being sexually assaulted there is more to face after the incident had happened. For a child, this tragedy does not only affect him, but also affects his family, social circle and all people linked to him.

As far as the effects of CSA are concerned on the individual, the first thing that the victim faces would be that he starts to stay under mental stress which leads to devastating anxiety. This situation results in complex behaviors of the child who has gone through the tragedy. Due to this, the victim goes into depression which does not only affect him mentally, but physically, emotionally, and socially. The personality of the child is damaged, and it results in a very negative character for the future of society.

Moreover, as a result, the victim of the CSA becomes a patient with a sleep disorder, depression, anxiety, stress, and lonely. The child starts to be frightened of being surrounded by people. The child loses his confidence and courage. Also, the child starts to stay quiet, weak, frightened, and nervous. Being affected by the CSA, the child starts to stay away from people and society. His self-esteem has been lost and he is no more able to stand among a group of people as he loses trust in them. He has been unable to get engaged among people which is why he is not able to socialize and show a friendly attitude towards others. Therefore, the effects of CSA do not only ruin a life, instead, but it also ruins the youth, a family, and a whole society (Yin, 2022).

### **Physical Effects**

CSA has negative effects on the body of a victim. Firstly, the physical effect involves the body image issues of the child. The victim starts to go through phobias, fear, guilt, hyper-vigilance, learning problems, etc. Also, he may suffer from eating disorders, sleeping disorders, etc. The victim can lead to chronic pain due to being physically assaulted. The victim faces this pain not only during sex but remains after sex as well. Moreover, the child can go through internal lacerations. This can lead to internal bleeding as well as internal organs of the affected child can be damaged. At times, the victim comes across death as well due to the unbearable trauma that he goes through. Another physical impact of CSA could be internal infections that the child goes through lately, which he experiences during being sexually abused. The child feels anxious and his lifestyle changes. Moreover, he starts to stay sad, confused, and aggressive which results in a negative impact on his personality. He shows hatred due to being mentally depressed. The victim turns into violence and therefore substance abuse. Additionally, the child can come across sexually transmitted diseases that can harm not only his organs they can be as dangerous as taking their lives away (Liben, 2002).

## Psychological Effect

Child Sexual Abuse increases the risk of development for a child. He is unable to develop psychologically, and emotionally, as well faces problems in his physical development. The psychological impacts are huge and include severe mood swings for instance crying and suddenly laughing, shock, irritability, impaired memory, nightmares, anger, etc. Moreover, the child could go through flashbacks which can lead him towards complete negative behavior. He also loses self-esteem which makes him rude and emotionless and gives him a feeling of being betrayed which is why he is unable to trust anyone. The victim can also start to get involved in the consumption of drugs or alcohol. Another effect could also include unwanted pregnancy as a result of the CSA which could have a severe impact on the psychology of the victim not for the time, but, for a lifetime. The victim starts to go through phobias, fear, guilt, hyper-vigilance, learning problems, etc. At times, the victim comes across death as well due to the unbearable trauma that he goes through. The child feels anxious and his lifestyle changes.

Moreover, he starts to stay sad, confused, and aggressive which results in a negative impact on his personality. He shows hatred due to being mentally depressed. The victim turns into violence and therefore substance abuse. As the child takes the incident as a shame, he blames himself for it and therefore stays embarrassed and degraded. Moreover, he loses interest in sexual life and connects it to something undesirable and filthy. He feels helpless which is why he feels defenseless and feels humiliated. The psychological effect does not end here as he stays in the fear of being a victim of another assault. Therefore, he is engaged in high-risk behavior and avoids going to different places as he has lost trust in humanity. He avoids interacting with people and places that remind him about his assault. Thus, the psychological impacts of CSA are long and lead the child towards depression. The child may be a patient with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The long-term effects include the attempt of suicide, para-suicide, schizophrenia, delusional disorder, intimacy issues, and relationship problems. The child shows self-injurious behavior which eventually leads to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The entire incident leads to Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) (Del Giudice, 2009).

## Effects of CSA on Society at large

The effects of CSA on society at large can be explained by the fact that when a child is young and is sexually assaulted, the act of being sexually abused gets stuck in his mind for his lifetime. The hatred and negativity that he carries in his mind throughout his life are what makes him a child sexual abuser later. This can be seen in most of the cases where a person who is the assaulter had been one of the victims of being sexually abused when he was a child. Therefore, such children, who have gone through an incident where they have been sexually abused, become harmful to society when they grow up. The feeling of being sexually harassed makes them so aggressive that they become revengeful.

Through greater use of public services by sufferers, survivors, and offenders, CSA can influence the larger society. The judicial system, medical system, community services system, welfare system, plus special academic provision, as well as rehabilitation services and programs, are some examples of these government services. It has a connection to lost job market efficiency since victims' and sufferers' unemployment rates are higher and their incomes are lower. The remaining portion of this total is mostly made up of expenditures on behalf of the general government for the support of social, medical, and legal services. It all costs much more to the government and indirectly costs civilians as well. This all results in genetic inheritance and negativity taking shape as a norm or spiral activity. The long-term psychological effects of CSA also include interpersonal disturbance (break-up/divorce), higher infertility, stress, panic, alcoholism and drug addiction, and attempted suicide. As a result, the abuse chain and consequential cycle could carry through to the following generation.



CSA increases the crime rate, negativity, extremism, depression, and lack of harmony as well as humanity in society. The expenses for defensive and prevention efforts, such as those related to educating and coaching, the harms suffered by survivors and victims' on a mental and physical level, lost productive capacity, the costs associated with wellbeing and victim facilities, and the expenses accumulated by the criminal justice and law enforcement system, as well as the expense of protecting victims, are all included in the financial and socioeconomic costs of CSA. Every aspect of this considers the long-term effects of having experienced child sexual abuse (de Waard, 2004).

### **Comparative Analysis of Statistics**

Sexual violence and CSA are prevalent in all countries of the world and no country has been able to completely eradicate this issue yet some countries like India, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the United Kingdom have the highest rates of cases of sexual violence that are reported. Numerous factors play a role in this increasing number of sexual offense cases and these countries are trying to set up laws and institutions to counter this issue. A recent report stated that there were nearly 48,000 cases of CSA reported in India from 2001 to 2011 and India saw an exponential increase in child rape cases between these years (Asian Centre for Human Rights report). These cases of CSA increased from 2,113 in 2001 to 7,112 in 2011. The United Kingdom UK is also among the top countries where most cases of CSA are reported and detected. During 2012-13 there were nearly 18,915 cases of CSA reported in England and Wales (National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children). One in every 20 children in the UK has experienced sexual abuse and in 90 percent of cases, the abuser was known to the child.

Countries such as Spain Greece, Turkey, UAE, Japan, Ukraine, and Canada showed lower cases of CSA as compared to countries such as India, South Africa, the USA, and Pakistan. Those countries having better laws that are enforced practically and in due time have a lower rate of CSA as compared to those countries which do not practice such laws. In 2020, Iceland was ranked as the best country for raising a child due to its numerous laws regarding child safety and protection against sexual abuse. Italy and Switzerland were also ranked in close relation to Iceland as they also protected their citizens from this epidemic. These countries have strict and severe laws of life imprisonment and even death penalties for child abusers and molesters. If a child does suffer from CSE, he or she is given the right and suitable environment to cope with their trauma and is helped in reintegration into society. Children are provided with physical and psychological therapies to eradicate any traces of the trauma that they suffered and as a result of this, children are better able to move on and heal from it (Benoit, 2015).

### **Statistics of CSA in Pakistan**

As indicated by the World Health Organization (2006), CSA is "the contribution of a youngster in sexual movement that the individual in question doesn't completely understand, can't to give informed agree to, or for which the youngster is not normatively arranged, or, more than likely that disregards the regulations or social restrictions of society." Commonly, the culprits of sexual maltreatment are prevalently male. There are no exact measurements regarding CSA in Pakistan, however, it is assessed that sexual maltreatment generally influences young ladies Islamabad Med Dental Coll 2020 214 (19%) contrasted with young men (14%)

In 2010 total of 981 children were sexually abused, in 2011 total of 2140 children were abused. 1709 children were abused in 2012, in 2013 the number of sexually abused children were 1550, 1996 children were sexually abused in 2014, and in 2015 total of 2389 children were sexually abused. In 2016 total of 2005 children were abused sexually. In 2017 total of 3,445 children were abused sexually. More than 10 children have been abused each day during the year 2018. The information

shows that out of the absolute 3832 instances of kid misuse, 55% of victims were young ladies and 45% were young men. This year in the age sections of 6-10 years and 11-15 years, young men are more powerless against CSA than contrasted with girls. In the year 2019, the detailing of youngster misuse cases has diminished by 26% when contrasted with the year 2018. The current year's accounted-for cases show that 8 children are abused each day in Pakistan. The orientation partition shows that out of the absolute 2846 instances of youngster misuse, 54% of victims were girls and 46% were boys. During the year 2020, 2,960 children were sexually abused. Across Pakistan in 2021, 3,852 children including 2,068 girls and 1,784 boys were sexually abused.

## Conclusion

In Pakistan, children are presented with sexual abuse wherever in business sectors, at schools, in clinics/centers, at madrasa and police headquarters, and indeed, even in their own homes. The investigation of the information exhibited that the quantity of CSA cases was expanding step by step by step in Pakistan. Albeit a few NGOs are attempting to raise attention to CSA in the public arena, the subject of CSA stays an untouchable subject for conversation in Pakistan

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