

GIRL CHILDREN SEXUAL ABUSE – NGO REHABILITATION SUPPORT

Dr. V. Jagadeeswari

Academic Consultant
Centre for Women's Studies
Sri Venkateswara University,
Tirupati-517502
E mail-ID: v.jagadeeswari@gmail.com

Dr. Thapai Ananda

Post-Doctoral Fellow,
Department of Economics,
Sri Venkateswara University,
Tirupati-517502
E mail-ID: anandthapai@gmail.com

Prof. K. Sudha Rani,

Department of Adult and Continuing Education,
Sri Venkateswara University,
Tirupati-517502
E mail-ID: kasireddysudharai@gmail.com

Abstract

India, a land of ancient civilization and diverse cultures has a rich history spanning thousands of years. India, seventh largest country by area becomes the world's most populous country according to estimates by the United Nations. Achievement of gender equality and women empowerment is on top of the global agenda and Sustainable Development Goal-5. In this direction, Central and State Governments launched various schemes and efforts initiatives have been taken at Global, regional and local level to promote gender equality. Thus India stands as a vibrant and sovereign nation, but it continues to grapple with complex issues including violence against the women and the girl child. Social progress, secure and safe society is one of the components of VIKASIT BHARAT 2047. In this point of view if we observe statistics of crimes on women and children addressing this issue is a major challenge. To support and empower the women and girl children, many agencies along with the Government putting in efforts by providing welfare and legal provisions. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the NGOs rehabilitation support to child victim underwent sexual abuse by her stepfather.

Keywords: *Child victim - Sexual abuse - Rehabilitation- NGOs Support - Counseling.*

Introduction

India is fast growing Country in all fields blooming in the field of economy, technology and research. Even after such witness advancement in the country, violence against girl child is practiced. It has made its roots so deep, creating problems and dangerous social evil in society. Girl children are one of the most vulnerable sections of the society and are subjected to multiple waves of abuse by society and even by their family members. Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which an adult or elder adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Child sexual abuse is not confined to specific settings, affects in all socio-economic levels and in both rural and urban areas. It is a global problem for public health as it negatively affects people and society.

The National Girl Child Day is celebrated in India every year on January 24 which was initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Government of India. It is a day set aside to call for increased awareness of challenges faced by girls in the country based on their gender. Over the years, the Indian government has undertaken various legal initiatives and measures to protect and empower the girl child.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data 2020, approximately 28.9 per cent of the entire child population experienced some form of sexual crime, yet only 65.6 per cent of these crimes were reported. The Children’s Bureau of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services collects National Child Abuse incidents data on an annual basis. In its report on Child Maltreatment 2018 reported that an estimated 11 per cent suffered from physical abuse, 2 per cent suffered physical, emotional or psychological abuse. Child rape cases encompassing all forms of penetrative assaults, has registered a rise of 96 per cent from 2016 to 2022 according to an analysis of the NCRB data by child rights NGO ‘CRY’. From 2021 to 2022 alone, there was a 6.9 per cent increase in such cases. In 2022 alone, 38,911 cases of child rape and penetrative assaults were reported, marking a significant increase from 36,381 cases in 2021.

Hence, there is a need to provide support to the victims of child abuse to enable them to cope up. On this direction many NGOs are working and providing rehabilitation support to the victims. To have an insight on this issue, the investigator made an attempt to conduct a case study on the victim faced child abuse and NGO support. PASS Tirupati is the NGO selected for this case study as it is working to rehabilitate the girl child victims.

Objectives of the Case study

- To study the sexual abuse faced by the girl child victim.
- To identify the causes leading to abuse against the girl child victim.
- To know the consequences of abuse on health and wellbeing of the victim.
- To study the rehabilitation support provided by the NGO.

Selection of the victim and NGO

NGO

NGO is a non-governmental organization that functions independently of any government with the objective of improving social conditions. They are sometimes called civil society organizations and are established on communally, national and international levels to serve a social goal as a humanitarian cause. As the study is to know the support and services of NGO for girl child victims’ rehabilitation, the investigator browsed the information about the NGOs located in Tirupati, their services, functions, target groups and grading. Based on this information, PASS is selected for the study.

Selection of the case

The investigators made an initial visit to PASS organization and had preliminary discussions with, project director of Family Counselling Centre & Swadhar Greh and Manager of PASS to have an idea about the organization and its services. In the second visit the investigator met the counsellor dealing with the victims and discussed about the victims and counselling process. Considering the client details, time availability of victims, counsellor, their willingness to respond the victim underwent sexual abuse at the age of 8 years by the stepfather and domestic violence at the age of 16 years by the first husband was selected for the study. While presenting the findings, the actual name and residential details were not presented to maintain confidentiality.

History of the Case

1. Victim's stepfather committed sexual abuse at her sister for several times. When the victim came to know about this, she was also raped by the stepfather. Moreover, she was threatened that if she discloses the fact to anyone, he will kill her mother.
2. The sexual abuse by stepfather against the victim and her younger sister took place when both the victims were less than 10 years.
3. The stepfather randomly abused both the sisters. Both the children underwent a lot of distress and fell ill. They were in trauma and pain within the four walls off their house as they were threatened of killing them and also their mother.
4. The forcible rape by the 34 years old culprit (stepfather) made the children to disturb deeply. They had injuries on body. Guilty feeling, deficit in food consumption, depression, weight loss, sadness and outburst of anger were the symptoms of their behaviour observed by the victim's mother.
5. The victim's younger sister (aged 5 years) died after few months due to this vulnerable suffering. The victim with whom interacted in this case explained about their suffering, pain and anger she felt at that time.
6. The childhood incidents influenced the victim's family life even after 15 years of the incident.
7. This case shows that though the childhood bitter incidents of the victim became cause for the damage of her marital life with first husband. She was triggered for the abuse. She is facing the problem in her life the abuse the incident haunting her life. Thus her first marriage came to an end with the suspicious behaviour of the husband.
8. Husband of the victim knows everything about the maltreatment faced by the victim in her childhood, he accepted her as wife. But due to male ego, the practice of hearing neighbours words, suspecting victim's behaviour after marriage, in-laws encouragement to husband influenced the family relations and led to victim's suicide attempt.
9. The victim's actions to gain self-respect leads to quarrels in the family. Lack of parents support to the victim gave opportunity to husband and in-laws to violate victim's freedom and rights.
- 10.

Rehabilitation by PASS NGO

At first time of child abuse faced by the victim, the in charge of Swadhar Greh attached to PASS provided temporary stay to her and her mother in Swadhar Greh. The personnel of NGO contacted the victim's husband and called for discussion. Second time when her husband tortured her, the Family counsellor spoke with the victim and her husband along with the her mother and in-laws. The victim's husband convinced with the counselling. Counselling was done to the victim, her husband and family members repeatedly. The same was happened for 3 times in 6 months of time. After that victim's husband declared that he is not willing to live with the victim and demanded for divorce. Since then, she is staying in Swadhar Greh of PASS and completed vocational training in tailoring. After one year with the help of PASS Personnel she married another person who is doing private job.

Counsellor Observations:

Counsellor in the Family Counselling Centre (FCC) of PASS organization since 2022 and offering counselling services to the victims. She studied the history of the victim through records. She dealt with the family issues of the victim after marriage directly. She analysed the case that the husband cannot digest the childhood incidents faced by the victim. The relatives and neighbours behaviour also provoke the husbands and in-laws behaviour. For counselling process husband is responding positively. But after going home, he felt guilty to face neighbours and relatives. This will continue in their lives for lifelong. Separation is the remedy for their issue. After second marriage she is leading the life happily. When she was at Swadhar Greh and the organization is provided nutritional diet, medical care, exposure to the reality and real life situations in the society, training in vocational skills, generating awareness, etc. For the present husband also they gave counselling. She said that sometimes society also cause for the family issues. In this case, without any fault from victim side, she faced the adverse consequences for several years and developed the disturbances in marital life too. Narrow mind of first husband is also one of the reasons for breakdown of first marriage.

Present status of the Victim:

The victim has provided shelter in Swadhar Greh of PASS. She underwent tailoring training course. After one year she married another person working as attender in a private organization. Currently the victim is living happily with the present husband. The victim and her husband attended the FCC to tell about their marital life. Thus, PASS organization provided support to the victim in terms of nutritional care, medical assistance, counselling, vocational training, and awareness. So, the counsellor efforts in building initiatives to empower the victim helped her to navigate her circumstances towards a positive future.

Investigators observations:

Investigators found the following in their study.

- Existence of patriarchal society, unequal power relations between men and women, admitted sexual violence against stepdaughters, illiteracy, ignorance among downtrodden, less access of education to girls, lack of awareness, etc. are the reasons for the child abuse.
- In this case the victims are three- two girls (sisters) and a woman (mother). All the three were exploited by a single male person i.e., second husband/stepfather. The mother due to her ignorance believed her second husband and left the children to him.
- Societal stigma restricted the girls and women to make a complaint against the culprit.

- In the present study, the poor social and economic status of the victim's family perceived to face girl child abuse. Victim's mother belongs to very poor family leading life with daily wages. Marriage at the early age (of 16 years), responsibility of 2 girl children before 20s, loss of life partner due to severe ill-health forced her to go for second marriage at the age of 25 years with her children 8 years and 5 years of age. Poverty, traditional mind-set of her parents, lack of education threw her in vulnerable circumstances of family conditions with taking care of two girl children.
- One year after her impuissance gave an opportunity to trap her and she married a person of then nearby village to his native village who made betrayal. He acted before her as an innocent, showing affection towards her children. She believed his nature. But, after few months he showed his original culprit nature abusing sexually the second daughter aged 5 years at that time.
- The small kid became prey to him as she is innocent, not able to express her pain and threatened by him that he will kill his sister and mother. She was alone at home as her mother was going to field and her sister to school. Unexpected visit of her sister to home from school enabled her to notice this terrible behaviour of the culprit.
- He started same sexual assault on the elder daughter aged 8 years. The children were too frightened to report her mother as he threatened them about the killing of all three mother and daughters. The cruelty of step father came to light when the mother noticed behavioural changes, eating disorders among both the children.
- With the help of anganwadi teacher, they approached police and PASS NGO for all the needed support that is legal, medical and moral support which was given by NGO. The court imposed imprisonment of 4 years to the culprit.
- The suffering and distress faced by the children brought a heart touching poignant feeling and the second daughter (victim) died because off this antithesis behaviour of the culprit.
- In this case, the victim of sexual abuse (elder daughter) after 9 years of all these happenings, finishing 10th class studies got married her relative as an arranged marriage. She underwent domestic violence my husband. So again she approached PASS NGO in Tirupati. Counselling was done, but finally they took divorce. She stayed in Swadhar Greh, trained in tailoring, became self-reliant and married a person with the support of NGO. Now she is residing in Tirupati and leading a happy life.
- Child marriages still in practice as observed in this case (both mother and daughter got married as minors) is to be taken care of. Lack of effort from both the sides, absence of continuous interaction between the personnel of NGO and victim led to incidents of domestic violence on the same victim.
- Innocence and dependency of female gender made them preys to the culprit. In spite of a lot of efforts by so many agencies for women empowerment still the incidents are taking place.

Conclusion

Women play an important role in all aspects of society. The girl children, the future caregivers, mothers, leaders, entrepreneurs and activists are the pillars of the family and community. The present scenario in the society is two sided with the improved status of women in all fields on one side and in secured environment on the other side. Despite the efforts of the many organisations and individuals, safety and security of women is not of guarantee. We must all work together to create a world where women are valued, respected, and empowered to make the women significant contributors the world and continue to break down barriers and achieve equality.

References:

1. Shwetha, T. & Nidugonda, Pragnya. (2023). Child Sexual Abuse: An Indian Perspective. DOI:10.4018/978-1-6684-9983-2.ch001.
2. Bright, Melissa & Roehrkasse, Alexander & Masten, Sarah & Nauman, Ashton & Finkelhor, David. (2022). Child abuse prevention education policies increase reports of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105932>
3. Jacob, Annie & Ravindranath, Sreehari. (2023). Social and Emotional Well-Being of Adolescents From Disadvantaged Backgrounds. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-9983-2.ch008>.
4. Sarah Carsley, Sera Thomas, Tiffany Oei, Brendan Smith, Daniel Harrington, Ian Pike, Alison K. Macpherson, Sarah A. Richmond, Child abuse and neglect during the COVID-19 pandemic: An umbrella review, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 149, 2024, 106645, ISSN 0145-2134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106645>.
5. Chonnakarn Jatchavala, Ramdas Ransing, Nutt Sukavejworakit, Rodrigo Ramalho, Nilesh Devraj, Child sexual abuse, mental health, and legislation in India and Thailand: A cross-country comparison, *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, Volume 102, 2024, 102655, ISSN 1752-928X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jflm.2024.102655>.
6. Saith A. Wazir R. (2010). Towards Conceptualizing Child Well-being in India: The Need for a Paradigm Shift. *Child Indicators Research*, 3(3), 385–408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-010-9065-320543882>