

A Survey on Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse among Male and Female College Students of Guwahati, Assam

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| Received: 25.03.2019 | Accepted: 07.04.2019 | Published: 30.04.2019

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i04.002](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i04.002)

Abstract

Review Article

Research in recent era is quite intrigued in the matter of child abuse and child neglect. Child sexual abuse generates deep concern worldwide as a social phenomenon and pressing public health issue. Young victims of childhood sexual abuse are often unable to express as to what they are experiencing and comprehend to seek out help. According to latest Government figures in India, a child is sexually abused every 15 minutes (BBC, 2017). A study was conducted by India's Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) [1], where 53 % of children surveyed said that they have been subjected to some form of sexual abuse. Clinical case reports advocates that the abused and neglected ones are more likely to experience cognitive, emotional and behavioral problem such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, delinquency, difficulty in school and early sexual activity. Hence, this paper is an attempt to assess the attitude towards prevalence of child sexual abuse in a randomly assigned representative sample of 30 young male and female undergraduate college students (aged: 18-22 years) of Guwahati, Digholipukhuri area of Kamrup (Metro) District of Assam. Also this paper scrutinizes the various obstructive outcomes due to maltreatment in them.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, Child sexual abuse, College students.

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“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.”- Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) also known as child molestation is a form of abuse in which an adult uses a child for sexual stimulation. CSA is a hideous crime. For the vast majority of us, the idea of violating, hurting and abusing a child is intolerable. Young victims of CSA are often unable to express as to what they are experiencing and comprehend to seek out help. They reported of experiencing cognitive, emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, delinquency, difficulty in school and early sexual activity. Also, many reported of having adjustment problems in their late adolescence. The potentially traumatic impact of child sexual abuse is well documented. A notably as a contributory factor in poor school performance, substance abuse, delinquency, prostitution, sexual dysfunction, mental illness, suicide, and transmission of abusive behavior to subsequent generations [7, 8]. Child maltreatment is a serious public health problem because of its potential to have long lasting negative effects on the victim and to exact a large financial burden on the healthcare system [10].

Attitudes supportive of sexual contact with children were associated with variables previously linked to sexual interest in children: male gender, use of pornography, greater numbers of sex partners, and greater endorsement of a scale measuring acceptance of sexual aggression against women.

The child sexual abuse can be in any environment, surrounding or in any setting. It can be in the child's home, school or work place (if any child works as a laborer). Child marriage is one of the main forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation of girls.

The word 'pedophile' is commonly applied indiscriminately to the one who sexually abuse a child, but child sexual abuse offenders are not pedophiles unless they have a strong sexual interest in prepubescent children. The great majority of children have been abused by some elderly or someone whom they trust. Child sexual abuse often occur among all the section of the society, it is a public health issue that crosses all economic, social, racial, and ethnic boundaries [9].

Every year about a million children are physically maltreated and abused. Over 110,000 of these children are sexually abused. Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a universal problem with grave life-long outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines CSA as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violate the laws or social taboos of society.” CSA covers a range of activities including both touching and non-touching activities.

Some examples of touching activity include

- Touching a child's genitals or private parts for sexual pleasure
- Making a child touch someone else's genitals,
- Encouraging a child to play sexual games or have sex; putting objects or body parts (like fingers, tongue or penis) inside the vagina

Some examples of non-touching activity include

- Photographing a child in sexual poses
- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- Inappropriately watching a child undress or use the bathroom
- Showing pornography to a child
- Deliberately exposing an adult's genitals to a child
- About 73 million boys and 150 million girls under the age of 18 years had experienced different forms of sexual violence. A report by advocates for youth, estimated that per year 1-3% of youth from the us experience csa. Reports of national child abuse and neglect data system found that in 2006, 8.8% children were abused sexually in the us.
- India is home to 19% of the world's children. It has the world's largest number of csa cases. For every 155th minute a child, less than 16 years is raped, for every 13th hour child under 10, and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point of time. Studies propose that over 7,200 children, including infants, are raped every year and it is believed that several cases go unreported. In india, every second child is being exposed to one or the other form of sexual abuse and every fifth child faces critical forms of it.
- In a state wise analysis in india, assam tops the list of the highest percentage of sexual abuse (57.27%) of those children who faced one or more forms of sexual abuse. Studies revealed that 62.55% boys and 51.19% girls from Assam reported facing one or more forms of sexual abuse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Child sexual abuse among adolescents in south east Nigeria: A concealed public health behavioral issue. Manyike Oieus C, Chinawa Josephat M *et al.* [2]. This study revealed that child sexual abuse among adolescent with physical contact happened

most frequently in public place or in a house other than the victim's and most perpetrators were known to the victims .The impact of pornography is pointed out as a form of adolescents several abuse in this study.

- Child sexual abuse among Swiss adolescents By–Meichun Mohler – kro, ScD. *et al.* [3] According to this study the high prevalence of CSA occurs at the cyber space and the dramatic increase of juvenile perpratators suggest emerging trends in CSA. In cases of child sexual abuse without physical contact, perpratators were most often strangers and in cases of physical contact, most perpratators were known to the victims.
- Marter, Marter, Atkinson and Reynolds conducted a study of men and women undergraduate students from two universities in south western United States, shows that women subject predicted that peers disclosing history of child sexual abuse had poorer health and interpersonal and adjustment, but has strength in copying and abilities

Objectives

- To investigate the attitude towards prevalence of child sexual abuse among young college boys.
- To investigate the attitude towards prevalence of child sexual abuse among young college girls.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The participants of the research study consisted of 30 young college students (15 males and 15 females). The males were from Cotton University and the females were from Handique Girls' College. The age was limited between 18 to 22 years.

Scale: The scale used in this study is ‘Child Sexual Abuse Attitude Survey Scale’. The instrument covered a variety of aspects of college students’ attitude, knowledge and awareness towards CSA. A one page printed survey with 10 questions was administered to 30 undergraduate students.

The printed form includes

- Demographics (age, gender and qualification)
- Attitude towards Child Sexual Abuse
- Knowledge of Child Sexual Abuse
- Awareness towards Child Sexual Abuse

Statistical Technique

Through the survey scale, a comparison of the scores between the sexes obtained on each statement is considered for the study.

Ethics

- Before commencing the study, all the participants were given an outline of the research.
- After obtaining their consent to take part, the study was conducted.
- Confidentiality was ensured to them.

- If they wish to withdraw their participation before or during the study, they would be allowed to do so.

Tool: Survey method was used for conducting the present study. A formal Questionnaire on Child Sexual Abuse was used. It is a structured questionnaire consisting of 10 items which focuses on assessing the attitude towards prevalence of child sexual abuse among young college students.

Target Population

This research paper is a targeted intervention to assess the cumulative prevalence of Child sexual abuse among the young male and female undergraduate college students (aged: 18-22 years) of Guwahati, Digholipukhuri area of Kamrup (Metro) district of Assam.

Guwahati is the largest city of the Northeast India, with the population of 22 million. It is also considered to be the “gateway” of the entire

Northeastern region. The project is located in an area of 216.19 sq km under Guwahati Metropolitan Development. The pattern of population is a cosmopolitan type.

Assam tops the list of the highest number of sexual assaults described as ‘severe’ among the other states of India, Guwahati being the grimmest of all areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 30 students, the best of 10 from both the sexes are taken for further discussion because of the vast differences between the scores obtained.

All the 10 statements and its results along with its graphical representation showing favorable attitude towards each respective statement are depicted below:-

Statement 1: *“some children are sexually abused by older children”*

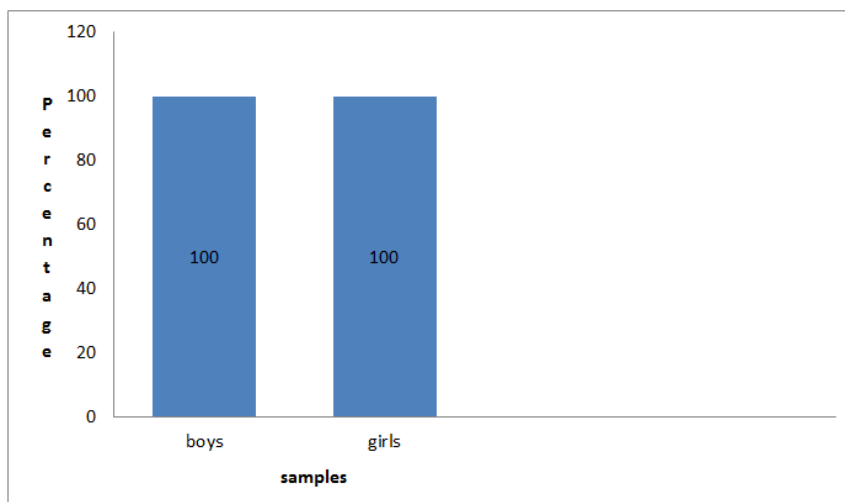


Fig-1: Graph showing favorable representation of scores

In the fig no: 1 results shows that 100% of boys and 100% of girls believes that some children are sexually abused by the older children.

Statement 2: *“most people who sexually abuse children do not belong to the child’s family”*

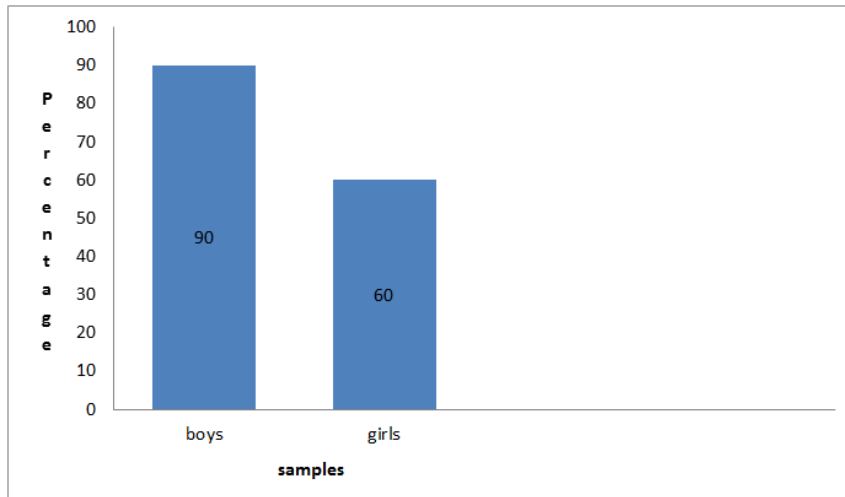


Fig-2: Graphical representation of scores

Scores on fig: 2 show that 90% of boys and 60% of girls agreed with the statement that “most people who sexually abuse children do not belong to the child’s family.

Statement 3: *“most of the times children are sexually abused when they are alone, at night and outside their home”*

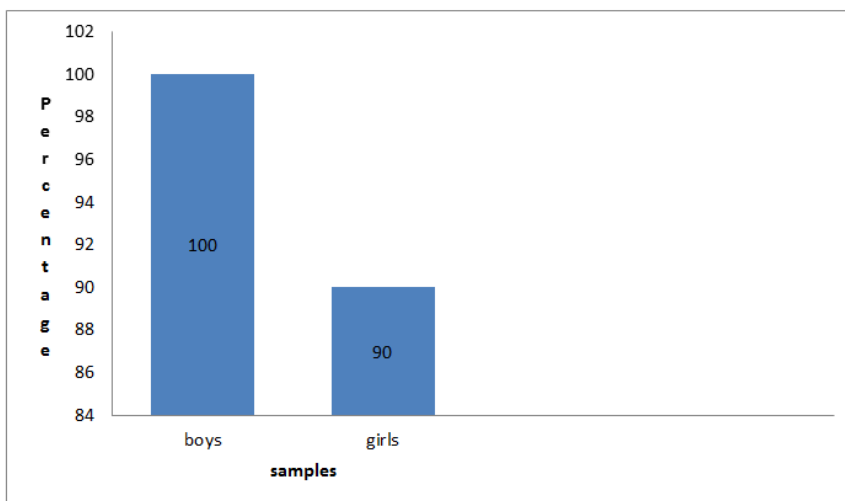


Fig-3: Graphical representation of scores

The percentage figures depicted in Fig 3 shows that 100% boys and 90% girl’s belief that most of the times children are sexually abused when they are alone, at night and outside their home

Statement 4: *“Children from reputed families are not victims of sexual abuse.”*

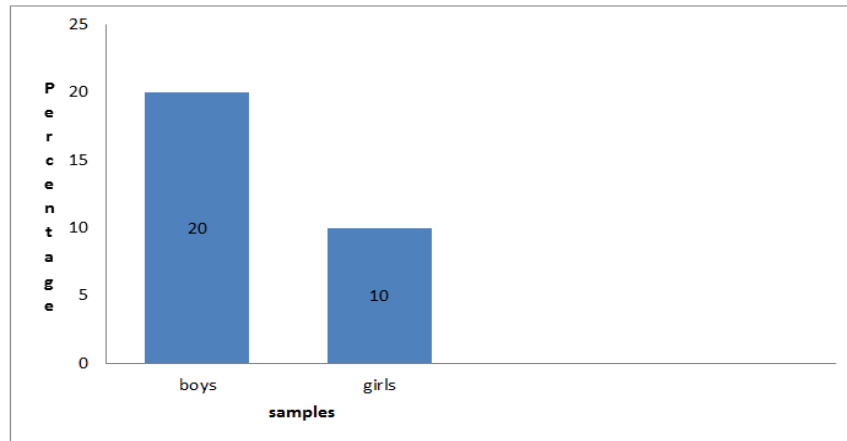


Fig-4: Graphical representation of scores

Out of 20 respondent 20% boys and 10% girls agreed with the statement that,"Children from reputed families are not victims of sexual abuse."

Statement 5: "Few children are victim of sexual abuse."

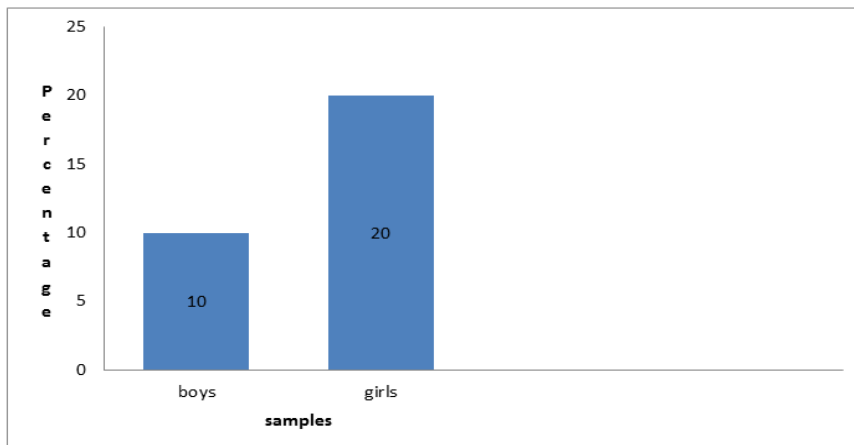


Fig-5: Graphical representation of scores

Only 10% boys and of 20% girls agreed with the statement that"Few children are victim of sexual abuse."

Statement 6: "only young children are sexually abuse".

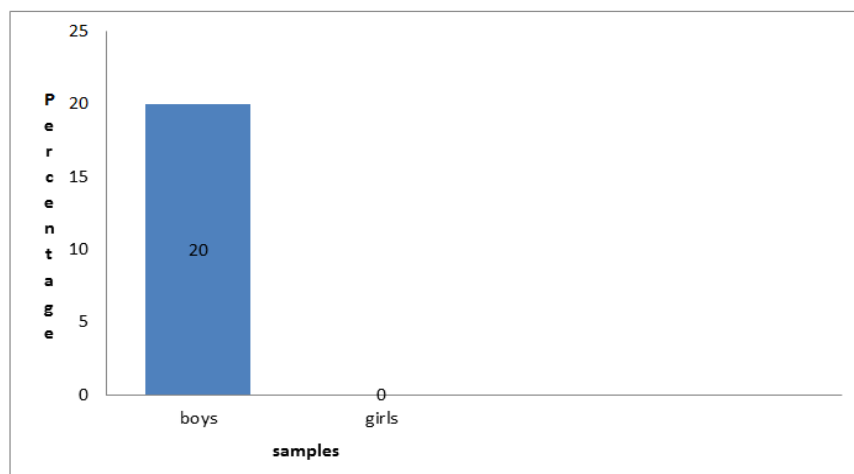


Fig-6: Graphical representation of scores

The percentage scores from Fig: 6 delineate that 20% of boys and 0% of girls agreed that only

young children are sexually abuse.

Statement 7: “Boys are not sexually abused.”

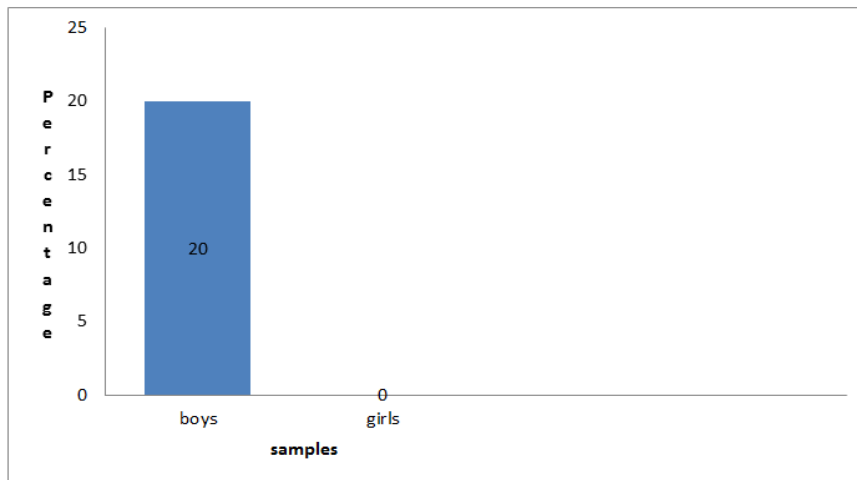


Fig-7: Graphical representation of scores

In Fig: 7 it is seen that only 20% of boys and 0% of girls agreed that boys are not sexually abused.

Statement 8: “even if one lets a year go by before talking about a sexual abuse situation, it is still possible to do something about it.”

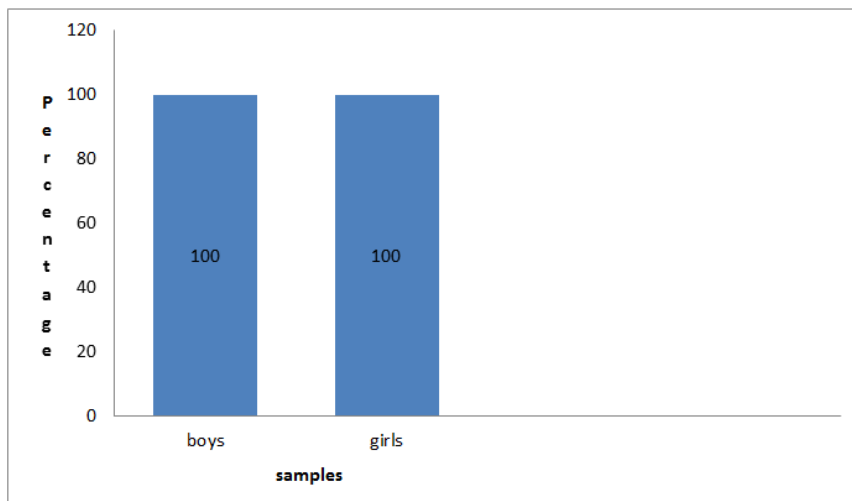


Fig-8: Graphical representation of scores

Here in the above fig: 8 100% of boys and 100% of girls agreed to the statement that “even if one lets a year go by before talking about a sexual abuse situation, it is still possible to do something about it.”

Statement 9: “In sexual abuse case, the child him/herself is never responsible”

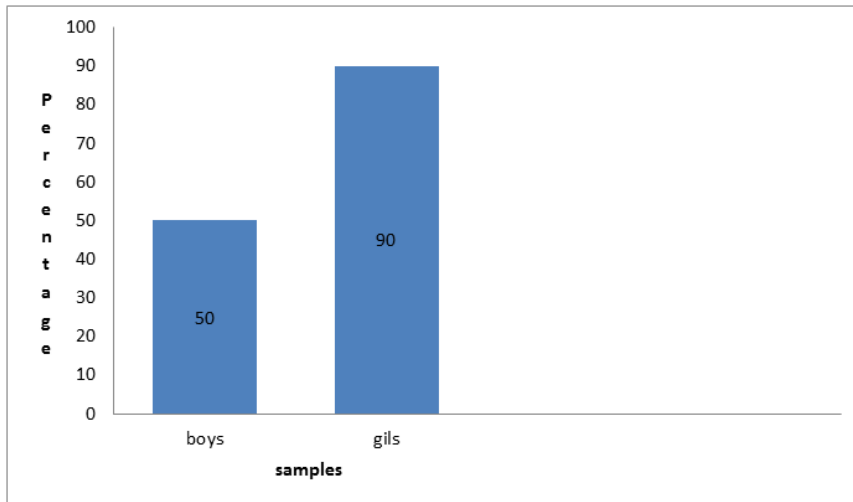


Fig-9: Graphical representation of scores

In the above Fig:9 50% of boys and 90% of girls was seen to be agreeing with the statement that in sexual abuse case, the child him/herself is never responsible.

Statement 10: *“If you have ever been subjected to sexual abuse that this person (or these people) was (or were)”*:

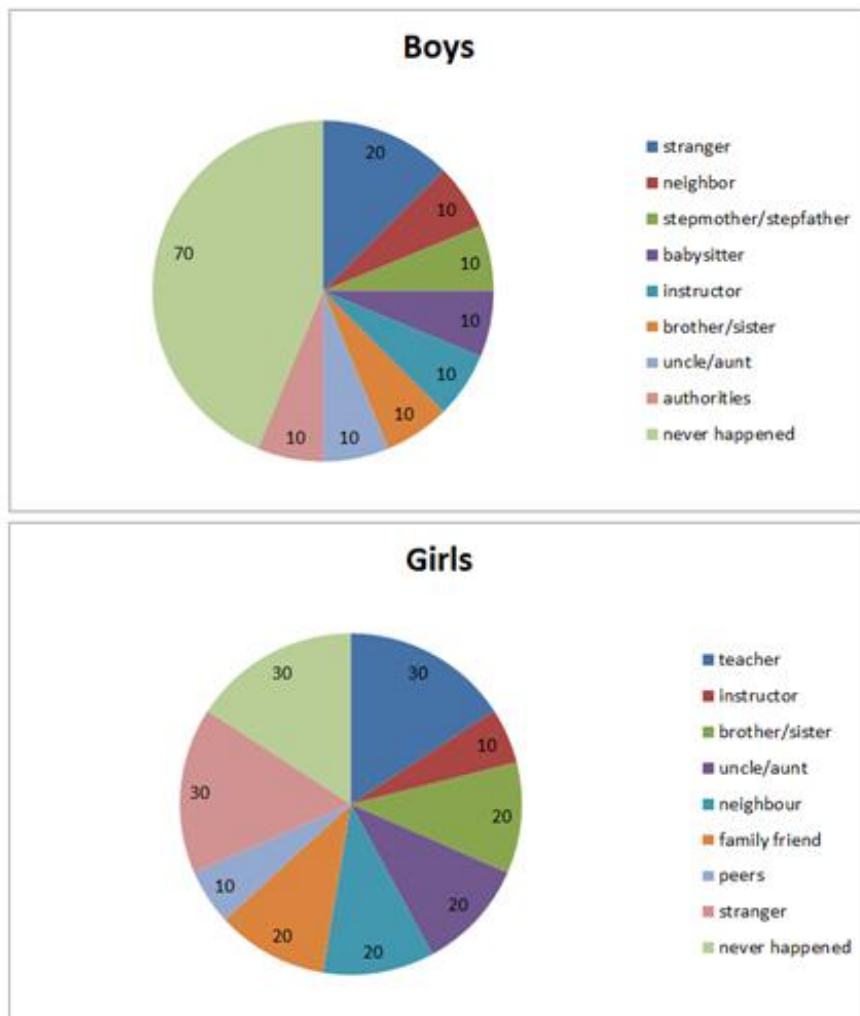


Fig-10: Graphical representation of scores of both the sexes

The figures: 10 depict the various percentages of sexual abusers of both the sexes. It is observed from the study that generally the female section of the society is more susceptible towards child sexual abuse than the male section in accordance with the scores evaluated of both the sexes.

A positive attitude was seen in both the sexes regarding the point of talking about sexual abuse in real sense. However, half of the percentage of the male respondents disagreed with the fact that the child he/she is never responsible in sexual abuse cases. This conflict with other responses obtained. But, almost all the respondents have reported of child sexual abuse cases in their lives and have shown favorable attitude towards awareness of child sexual abuse.

Limitations

The study had the following limitations

- Due to time constraints, the other related issues could not be studied in details.
- The sample size was relatively small and hence cannot be generalized.
- The study was limited to only the adult age group.
- Some of the respondent did not read the questionnaire carefully and as a result they may have been marked some answers incorrectly.

CONCLUSION

Child sexual abuse is one of the serious changes globally. It carries a broad range of adverse effects for survivors throughout their lifetime. As a result of this study in this field, our understanding of the impacts of childhood sexual abuse is becoming more and more nuanced. An increased risk of re-victimization of survivors has also been demonstrated consistently for both the sexes.

More and more research studies in this area is required to continue to axe out gender differences in victims' experiences of childhood sexual abuse and its impact on survivors' all spheres of their life. This understanding will assist in the identification, treatment and prevention of child sexual abuse.

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