



**ASIAN UNIVERSITY
FOR WOMEN**

“I CAN HELP ME” CAMPAIGN

**Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Program in primary schools
of Kerala**

Summer Project 2018-19

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INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous country in the world and children account for the 39 percent of India's total population. (Childline India Foundation. 2012). Despite the fact that children are the future asset of a nation, 9 out of 10 children in India is facing one or other abuses. It is evidently found that in India, children in their early childhood are alarmingly prone to sexual abuse from their family circle and also from society. The age of dependence, ignorance, and unawareness about the abuses are the main three reasons behind the increasing rate of child sexual abuse in India. The abuse towards children was un-noticeable in the early periods because there is a stigma attached to reporting sexual abuse in a conservative Indian society. Despite the odds, some of the Non- Government-Organizations, and media played a crucial role to report child sexual abuse cases to the law and that brought the attention of people to this issue. When Indian law ensures justice to the affected child, people started approaching positively towards reporting such incidents to the concerned people. Child sexual abuse cases have been reported frequently then-on. The relevance of this issue is that Child Sexual Abuse is a universal problem because it can cause severe lifelong physical and mental implication on children and that will haunt them in their future as well. Key attention is required in this issue because Children found to be very vulnerable to sexual abuse and in need of support from the responsible ones. When looking into this issue, it has been noted that actions are taken against the culprit and care and protection were given to the child when such incidents have been brought to the attention of the responsible people. The unnoticed part is that almost all the people across India are aware of the unsafe situation for children in the society, yet no preventive methods have been adopted against this issue. It is one of the important issues which also needs prime concerns or which could be prevented with proper directions to the vulnerable community. The communication gap between parents and children hinders individual's psychological as well as physical development which adds to unawareness and ignorance in the society. This paper would try to address some of the reasons that leading to increase the rate of child sexual abuse in India and eventually will propose some solution to tackle sexual abuse towards children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the 2013 census, India houses 40% of children in its total population but is ranked as the sixth most unsafe country for children. (Subramaniyan. 2017). Additionally, research done by BBC shows that there is 4 child abuse happening in every hour. ("India sexual abuse". 2017). To find out the extent of child abuse in India, The first ever National Study on Child Abuse was conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, covering 12447 children, 2324 young adults and 2449 stakeholders across 13 states. In 2007 it published the report as "Study on Child Abuse: India 2007."(Dr. Kumar. 2012. p-171). The result given in the report was quite shocking. 53.22% of the children were found to be sexually abused. Among them 52.94% were boys and 47.06% were girls. Moreover, 21.90% of them faced severe forms of sexual abuse, 5.69% had been sexually assaulted and 50.76% reported other forms of sexual abuse"(Dr.Moharana etal.2015. p-86)

The term CSA is very hard to define in general. According to World Health Organisation (WHO), CSA is "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."(qt. Singh. 2014). "Signing up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, India promised to protect its children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Article 34 (a) enjoins state machinery to prevent the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity".(Kumar etal. 2012. p-170). Protection of Children from sexual offenses(POSCO act) came into action on regards of this report and witnessed a huge progression all over India towards this concern. The law also assured that, "the State shall protect all children from all forms of violence and abuse, harm, neglect, stigma, discrimination, deprivation, exploitation including economic exploitation and sexual exploitation, abandonment, separation, abduction, sale or trafficking for any purpose or in any form, pornography, alcohol and substance abuse, or any other activity that takes undue advantage of them, or harms their personhood or affects their development."(Ministry of WCD. 2012.P-9). Ministry of Women and Children Development(WCD), National coordination and Action Group(NCAG), National and

State Commission for protection of child rights are some of the monitoring group of child protection act in India. They ensure protection and justice to the affected child with the hold of existing laws. All the children have access to free education in India and thus educational institution found to be the key target place for the implementation of child welfare policies. As mentioned, a special unit called “Jaakrita” has been formed in all schools over India to ensure successful implementation of the child protection policy.

Despite having a policy, responsible bodies for the enactment of laws and aware society, CSA is still continuing in India. While looking into the reason behind that, it has been noted that the policy regarding child sexual abuse is coming into action only after such has been reported. There is no means to prevent CSA before it happens. When children are provided with nutritious food from schools to prevent them from physically unfit, yet no preventive methods have been adopted against CSA in schools of India. As Halls has mentioned Children Sexual Abuse is such an important issue which can cause severe impacts on children’s future such as higher levels of depression, guilt, shame, self-blame, eating disorders, somatic concerns, anxiety, dissociative patterns, repression, denial, sexual problems, and relationship problems. (Hall and Hall. 2011). The move of Australian Government towards tackling CSA is found to be very successful and relevant when researching the status of CSA and preventive methods adopted in other countries. According to Daniel Morcombe Foundation, the foundation that proposed child safety curriculum for the children under the age 9 in Australia, says that providing information and awareness to children is the best way possible to tackle the sexual abuse towards children.(Morcombe Curriculum, P-7). Since wellbeing of children in aspects of the life is the prime goal of an education system and also educational institutions are the accessible platform of children, adopting any methods against abuses against children in an educational institution would help to reduce the crime rate against children in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- We aim to make a safe environment for the primary school children by giving awareness among parents and teachers of various sexual health issues.
- We aim to make them aware of social evils existing in our society such as child sexual abuse and violence together with the possible ways of dealing with them.

- We aim to encourage them to be comfortable in opening conversations about sexual harassments or other abuses with children.
- We aim to encourage them to make sure that their children know about their body rights, promote responsible sexual behavior and understand the social implications of the latter.
- We aim to create and develop recklessness about sexual harassments among the parents and teachers thereby school children. Also help their children to Recognize, React and Report the abuses.
- We aim to encourage them to reduce the conversation gap between them and children when it comes to sex-related matters.

METHODOLOGY

Study Region: Beypore village, Calicut district, Kerala state, India

Study Duration: June 18th to August 15th, 2018

Our quantitative and qualitative research study to analyze the awareness rate of Child sexual abuses among Primary school children and parents and implementation of Sex education in primary school curriculum, included interviews with authorities and schools, surveys for parents and teachers and focus group discussion sessions. These data collected from field surveys were used as primary data and further secondary data was collected from electronic databases like Google Scholar, ISSN, Jstor, MedIND, and Researchgate. Similar successful Curriculums including Sexual Awareness for Primary school children, implemented in other regions of the world were reviewed. Daniel Morcombe's Child Safety Curriculum developed for Queensland students in Australia was selected as the base for the new curriculum formation.

Before we started the study, we visited District Police Commissioner's office to get permissions to conduct surveys and interviews with primary schools of the respective study region selected. Child Helpline Organization was visited for their advice on the enhancement of the project and to know more about the current scenario in the area of CSA awareness among Beypore region. NGOs working in similar fields in the region named Nirbhaya was also visited to get ideas about the different approaches and responses for related studies and surveys. We

visited five schools authorities and explained the goals of the project and the effects we thought it would bring in to increase sexual abuse awareness among primary school children. One of the schools didn't show any interest in the project and informed that parents of the region are not much responsive, so they doubted the success of the whole project. Other three agreed to conduct surveys and focus group discussions session and another one agreed to have a discussion session with teachers and a short workshop session for children. Teachers who were in charge of awareness campaigns in respective schools were contacted and collaborated with the discussion sessions. Names of the schools visited are as follows:

1. Naduvattam Upper Primary School, Beypore
2. Thattadath kavu Lower Primary School, Beypore
3. Beypore North Lower Primary School, Beypore
4. Ganapathivilasam Lower Primary School, Beypore

The discussion session for parents and teachers in schools were conducted in days they had PTA meetings in order to avoid non-availability of participants for the study. At first, a little introduction was given on ourselves, why we decided to do research on this particular topic and importance of this study to improve the rate of awareness among parents, teachers and the school children themselves. Later on, Pre-questionnaire was distributed among parents and teachers which included questions from following topics:

- If they get enough time to spend with their children
- Their thoughts on their children's knowledge of sexual abuse awareness
- Their knowledge of abuses happening against children in the society
- Their thoughts on handling these abuse issues in a healthy way

After collecting the pre-survey questionnaire, we introduced our idea of implementation of sex-education and awareness in Primary school curriculum in order to increase the rate of awareness among children and thereby decrease the rate of Child sexual abuse in the region. We explained the base curriculum we selected, which was also successful, and how similar educational criterias can be used in our own regions and empower the growing generation from

the beginning itself. Post questionnaire was distributed among the participants after this, which included following concerns:

- If they agree with the inclusion of sex-education in primary school curriculum.
- If they think this inclusion can bring change in current society.
- If they think this will make their children more aware of the abuses and help when they grow up.
- If they think this will affect their child in any negative ways.

After collecting the filled post-questionnaire there was a session for Question and answers where parents asked their questions and concerns regarding various issues related to child sexual abuse and effects of the implementation of curricula.

In the last school, a short workshop was given to class 4th students where students were taught about basic child sexual abuse awareness, eg. to know about Good touch and bad touch. Kids-friendly awareness videos and powerpoint presentations were shown. Emergency contact details and Helpline phone numbers were also provided if they face any such situations.

RESULT

Total Number of Children from 4 School surveyed: 728

Expected Sample Size(parents and teachers): 600

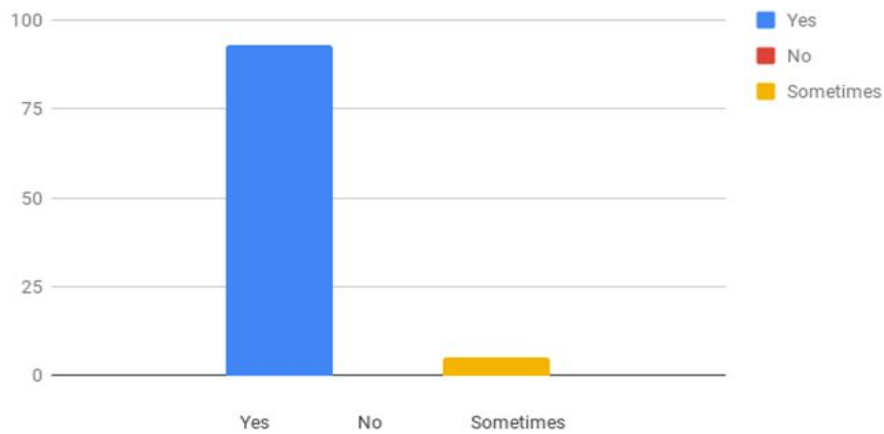
Actual sample size (parents and teachers): 146

Response collected: 98

Table. 1

Do you think you spend enough time with your child?		
Yes	No	Sometimes
93	0	5

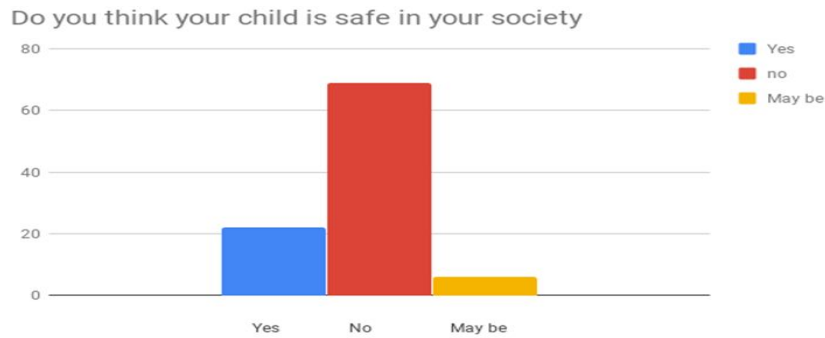
Are you able to give enough time for your children



Graph - 1

Table 2

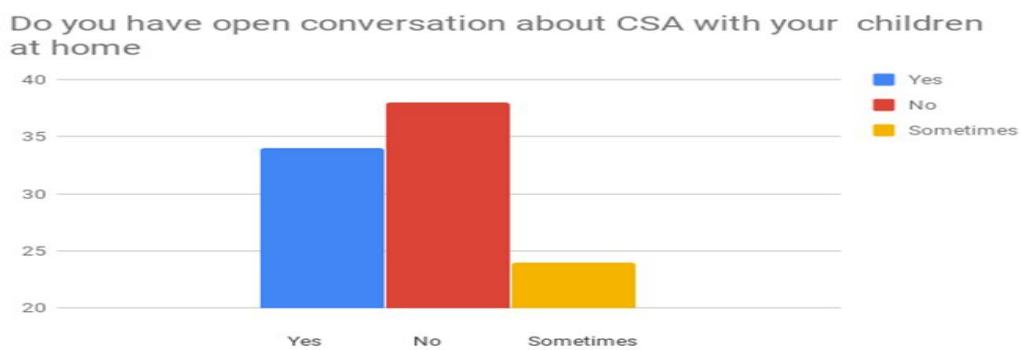
Is your child safe in your society?		
Yes	No	May be
22	69	6



Graph-2

Table. 3

Is your child aware about sexual harassments/ You ever had an open conversation about this with child at home?		
Yes	No	May be
34	40	24

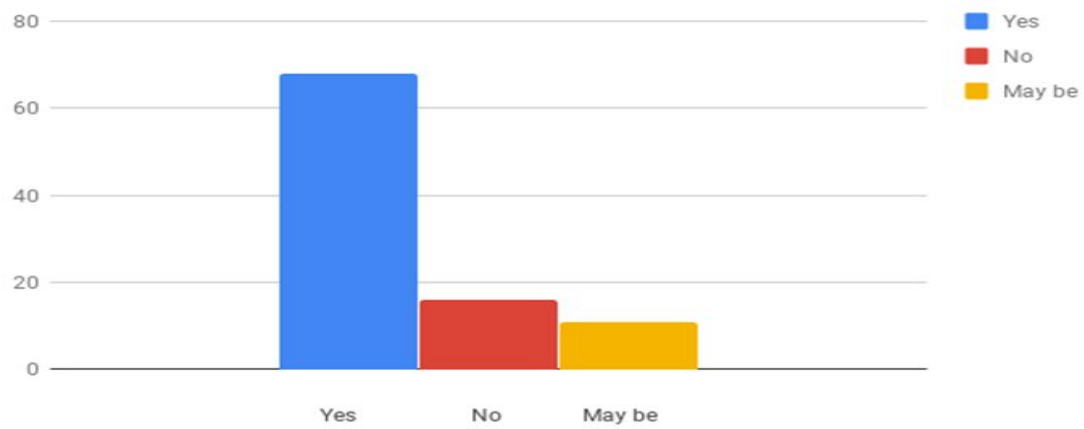


Graph-3

Table.4

Do you think awareness should be provided from very young age?		
Yes	No	May be
68	16	11

Is awareness needed in this small age

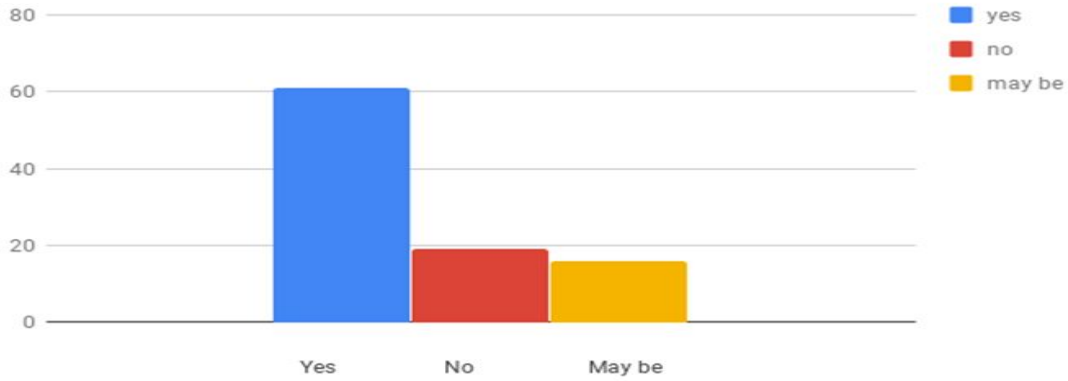


Graph-4

Table. 5

Do you think sexual awareness should be included in the school curriculum?		
yes	no	may be
61	19	16

Do you think sexual awareness should be included in the school curriculum

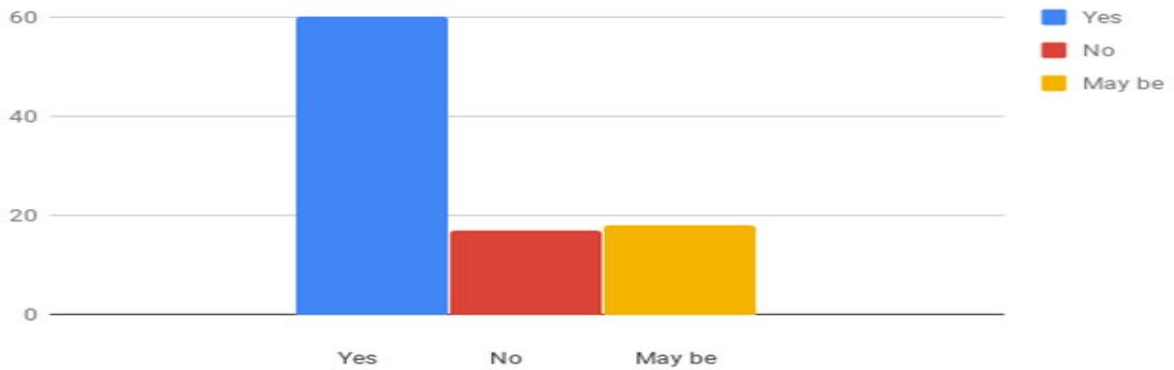


Graph-5

Table.6

Do you think including CSA in school curriculum will reduce the CSA rate		
Yes	No	May be
60	17	18

Do you think including CSA in school curriculum will reduce the CSA rate



Graph-6

DISCUSSION

Our summer project took place in total 4 different schools, and the response that we received from each of them was significant in understanding the normal social mentality of parents towards child sexual abuses, awareness and prevention strategies.

Male parents who came for the PTA was found to be very few in number. From this we assumed that fathers are less likely to involve with issues related with children and mothers hold most of the responsibility. 94% of the parents responded that they spend enough time with their children and still 65% of parents told they never had any conversation about sexual harassments and abuses happening around the world. From this we know that even though they have enough time to talk, they were reluctant to open a conversation about harassment with their child. During the question answer session after focus group discussions, many parents shared their concerns about talking about these matters at a younger age which may create negative effects. This was only a few while 80.6% voted for giving sexual awareness from a very younger age itself, where prior knowledge about these harassments can help in prevention at needed times. Most of the parents, mothers, were young and married at a younger age. They talked about their uncomfot and lack of knowledge in dealing with children as one of the issues that cause the communication gap between parent and child. Also they shared their experiences of noticing behavioural changes among children which may have due to sexual exposures and asked our opinions to tackle the issue in a healthy way. We were able to give some suggestions along with the help of awareness incharge teacher from the schools. After the sessions parents agreed on the fact that it is necessary for them to start the talk and also said that they will try to have a regular talk with their children and make it very comfortable to discuss about these issues. From talking with them we knew that parents are concerned and had eyes on their children's behavioural changes. They also mentioned that children obeys teachers more than them and things taught in schools are considered as right things to do by most of the children. This also strengthen our argument to introduce sexual awareness into primary school curriculum.

After analysing the response that were received from the pre and post questionnaire regarding the social awareness and implementation of curriculum, we could understand that

more than 70% of the parents are aware that their children are not safe in this society. They were also aware about the insecurities that their child might face in the society which they are growing up. But since the awareness of parents itself couldn't erase the taboo of the touchy topic, it is not having any effect in the prevention of CSA. This also raises the importance of other means of communications from teachers which is more feasible as well as effective. We also understood that parents want someone to introduce the idea of awareness, they don't want to do it by themselves, which was why they were all supportive to the idea of providing sexual awareness classes to the students along with their other subjects, by their teachers at school. Almost 79% of the parents positively responded towards implementing awareness program in the curriculum for preliminary school children and almost 80 % believes it can affect positively. They remarked that such program will help to reduce child sexual abuse rate and will bring more awareness among children about abuses which can happen anytime.

Primary school time period is when children come to know and exposed to newer things which they won't get from home or parents. These new things can be good or bad like they can start to build up their personality, find their interests, improve observation skills and also they are more prone to sexual abuses during this time. Children of this age are very vulnerable because even a single piece of chocolate can make them go for unknowns like people, places or things. Since they spend most of the time in school, teachers, study atmosphere and even school worker aunties can make great impact in their character formation. They will have more respect for teachers than their own parents along with a bit fear. Therefore we found from this study that introducing sexual awareness from this young age can have more effects than waiting for them to grow up, face situations and then learn. We all know Prevention is better than Cure. From the incidents we see around, we read everyday, hear everyday we should know that provision of prevention as early as possible is much better.

LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES

- There was epidemic Nipah Virus infection in the region, because of which schools opened late and limited our study duration.

- Due to unexpected flood havocs and heavy rainfall in the state of Kerala, our targeted schools were turned into flood relief camps. Transportation of investigators was also restricted because of the same reason.
- Undergraduate degree gave us less credibility with officials and school authorities since most of the field research studies were done by Masters and PhD students.
- Parents were found to be less responsive towards awareness programs which also limited our study population. We had to conduct our sessions on the day of the school's actual PTA meetings since parents don't show up for extra-curricular programs.
- Lack of knowledge about this kind of awareness programs among teachers and school authorities was a serious challenge since we had to explain a lot about the intentions and goals of the program before getting their agreement.

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