

# A Study on Girl Child Sexual Abuse in Rural & Urban Areas of Andhra Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon. However, in India, as in many other countries, there has been no understanding of the extent, magnitude and trends of the problem. The growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes brought about by socio-economic transitions in India have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to various and newer forms of abuse. Child abuse has serious physical and psycho-social consequences which adversely affect the health and overall well-being of a child. According to WHO: "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power". Child abuse is a violation of the basic human rights of a child and is an outcome of set of inter-related familiar, social, psychological and economic factors.

**Key words** :Sexual Abuse.

## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon. However, in India, as in many other countries, there has been no understanding of the extent, magnitude and trends of the problem. The growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes brought about by socio-economic transitions in India have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to various and newer forms of abuse. Child abuse has serious physical and psycho-social consequences which adversely affect the health and overall well-being of a child.

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as primary inviolable rights is fairly recent, as in the universal understanding of it. Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation. To be considered 'child abuse', these acts have to be committed by person responsible for the care of a child (for example a baby-sitter, a parent, or a day care provider), or related to the child. If a stranger commits these acts, it would be considered sexual assault and handled solely by the police and criminal courts Save the Children, 2007(Wed.nic.in/childabuse.pdt).

The Girl children and adolescents of today are sexually abused at schools, on roads and in neighbourhood making girls child safety a problem for parents. With this background a study was undertaken to know the sexual abuse of girl children in schools, neighbourhood and public places.

Sexual abuse, sexual harassment and trafficking of girl children and adolescents continue to occur in all societies. Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Bihar (Save the Children,

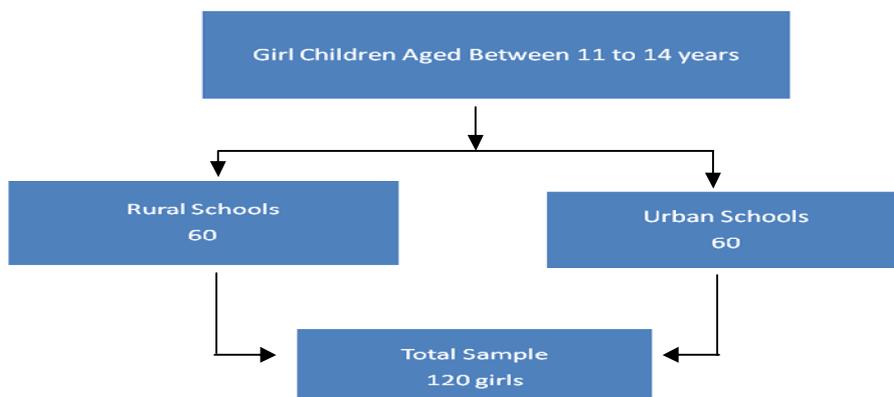
2007), states have highest prevalence in India. Parents were unable to prevent these incidences. In some cases parents themselves subjected their girls to abuse and harassment, especially the fathers (Actually girls in Tribal thandas were the examples).

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To asses the levels of sexual abuse of girl children in rural and urban areas of Tirupati.
2. To asses the parenting practices of girl children in rural and urban areas of Tirupati.

**METHODOLOGY:** It is an exploratory study to map sexual abuse of girl children aged between 11 to 14 years. As the younger children aged below 11 years may not be able to perceive and express the sexual abuse. Hence, only children aged between 11 to 14 years who have attained puberty or yet to attain were included in the study.

**SAMPLE SELECTION:** The Girl children studying 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes in rural and urban areas of Tiruapti, Andhra Pradesh rural and urban mandals were selected from government and private schools.



The Sample comprised of Sixty rural and sixty urban girl Children Studying 6<sup>th</sup> class (30), 7<sup>th</sup> class (30), 8<sup>th</sup> class (30), and 9<sup>th</sup> Class (30). Thus the total sample selected was 120 children.

**Tools for measurement of variables:** The independent variables selected were age, education of parents, occupation of parents, family annual income, Type of family, Size of family and Place of residence. The dependent variables included in the study were sexual abuse and parenting practices. A questionnaire was developed to collect general information and administered. The sexual abuse and parenting practices were

**Personal and Family Profile of the Sample:** The information collected on independent variables is presented in Table1 and 2.

assessed using sexual abuse scale and parenting practices scale developed for the purpose.

**DATA COLLECTION:** The data was collected from the girl children, pooled, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:** The family of girl children place an important role in educating them on their safety. Sexual abuse continues to be in the society in some form or the other in all most all countries. The girl child from poor families and families where the parents are both working are more vulnerable and easily targeted.

**Table 1: The Personal Profile of the sample**

S. No.	Variable	Classification	No	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (years)	11-12 years	40	34
		12-13 years	40	33
		13-14 years	40	33
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	Annual Family Income	Below 12000	35	29
		12001-36000	25	21
		36001-60000	38	32
		60,0001-84,000	10	8
		Above 84000	12	10
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
3	Type of Family	Nuclear	98	82
		Extended	22	18
		Joint	-	-
		Others	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
4	Size of Family	Less than 3	7	6
		4-6	96	80
		Above 6	17	14

		Total	120	100
5	Place of Residence	Rural	60	50
		Urban	60	50
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Age of the Girl Children:** The Chronological age of the girls studying 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes were taken from their school admission records. The percentage of the girls according to their age is given in Table-1

**Annually Family Income:** Income indicates the purchasing the power and economic status of the family. The annual family income of the girls showed that 29 per cent had an annual income of less than 12000 rupees, which means that they are living below poverty line. In nuclear type of families the mothers may not be able to give quality time to their girl children due to their work load.

**Size of the family:** The number of members in the family was considered as size of the

family. The members of family also participate in child care. Especially the female members play an important role in care of girl children and sometimes assume the role of mother. The Table-1 shows that 6 per cent of the girls had family size of less than 3 members. Around 80 per cent of their family size of 4 to 6 members and 14 per cent had family size of above 6 members.

**Place of residence:** Among the girl children under study 50 per cent belong to rural areas and 50 per cent belong to urban areas.

**Table 2: Education and Occupation of the Parents**

S. No.	Variable	Classification	Father		Mother	
			No	%	No	%
1.	Educational Status	Illiterate	22	18	25	21
		Primary School education	21	18	68	56
		High School education	40	33	14	12
		College/Technical education	37	31	13	11
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	Occupation	Daily wage earner	35	29	25	21
		Employed (Private/ Government)	38	32	20	17
		Self Employed	30	25	30	25
		Others	17	14	45	37
		<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Educational status of parents:** The parent's education of sample is shown in Table.2, which indicates that 18 per cent of fathers

and 21 per cent of mothers were illiterates. A 18 per cent of fathers and 56 per cent of mother's had primary education. 33 per cent

of fathers and 12 per cent of mothers had high school education. A 31 per cent of Father and 11 per cent of mothers had college or technical education. The education status of parents shows that the majority of fathers and mothers had low education.

**Occupation of parents:** The work done to make a living was considered as occupation. Occupation determines the socio, economic status of the family. Among the sample 29 per cent of fathers and 21 per cent of mothers were daily wage earners. A 32 per cent of fathers and 17 of employed in private and government sector. A 25 per cent of fathers and mothers were self employed. And 14 per cent of fathers and 37 per cent of mothers engaged in other financial activities.

**Parenting practices:** Parenting practices and the styles influence the children and their

development. In cases of sexual abuse the girls need parental support. Many girls do not express or share their experiences with others. Parenting style determines children's relationship with the parents. Hence, an attempt was made to study the parenting styles/practices of girl children; authoritarian parenting, indulgement parenting and democratic parenting. A scale was developed to assess the parenting practices and styles. The scale consisted of 18 statements which were rated by the children with the help of investigator. Based on the scores the parenting practices of girl children was categorised as; authoritarian, indulgent and democratic as democratic as presented in Table.3.

**Table 3: Distribution of girl children according their Parents Parenty Practices**

S. No.	Type of Parenting	Girl Children	
		No.	%
1.	Indulgent Parenting	14	11
2.	Democratic parenting	15	13
3.	Authoritarian Parenting	91	76
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table.3 shows that a 11 per cent of girl children had indulgent parents. A 13 per cent of the parents were democratic in their practices. Around 76 per cent of parents were authoritarian in their practices. The authoritarian parents tend to give commands which the girl children must follow regardless of circumstances. The children

tend to be Quiet, unhappy and fear towards their parents. Children of such parents do not disclose their experiences to parents. In case of the indulgent parents allow immature and children behaviour. Expect their children to learn their mistakes. Children of indulgent parents may not have control and may face problems with regard to their safety. Where

is democratic parents are educate their children and allow them to express and question and treat them like friends. These children tend to be happy, confident and self assure.

**Levels of sexual abuse:** The sexual abuse is on increase in India. In most of the cases the abusers are familiar persons known to the

victim. The level of sexual abuse as perceived by the girl children was assessed using a five point scale consisting of 24 statements. Based on the scores the levels of sexual abuse in four areas; Home, School, Neighbourhood and others was categorised as Low, Medium and High which is presented in Table.4.

**Table 4: Areas of Levels of Sexual abuse as Perceived by the sample**

S. No.	Areas	Levels of Sexual Abuse			
		Low %	Medium %	High %	Total %
1.	Home	4	9	2	15
2.	School	5	21	4	30
3.	Neighbourhood	6	27	1	34
4.	Others	7	14	0	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table.4 shows that among the four areas 15 per cent of sample faced sexual abuse at home from relatives' servants and others. A 30 per cent of girls children experienced child abuse at school, a 34 per cent of girls faced sexual abuse in their neighbourhood and a 21 per cent encountered sexual abuse from others like drivers (Auto/Bus) cinema theatres, function halls, shop keepers etc.,

The levels of sexual abuse indicate that a 22 per cent of girls had low level of sexual abuse, a 71 per cent of girls experienced medium level of sexual abuse and a 7 per cent of them faced high level of sexual abuse. The low levels of sexual abuse includes verbal teasing, disturbing, staring,

discussing unwanted topics, paying unnecessary attention and purposeful touching. The medium level of sexual abuse included making girls sit on their lap, touching breasts, patting on back, peeping while dressing, bathing and in toilets. The high level of sexual abuse included; sexual assaults, threatening to punish if disclosed, forcing to meet in isolation and attempt to rape. This shows that almost all the girls under study faced sexual abuse of some kind or the other.

**CONCLUSION:** The sexual abuse of girl children can only be controlled through combined efforts of family and schools, where the girl children are taught and trained to face such abuse by exposing the abusers. The

parents should allow the girl children to share their experiences and extend support to face such problems. There should be a vigilance at community level to control sexual abuse in public places.

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*It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.*

*- J. K. Rowling*