

PTSD among child sexual abuse victims during adulthood

¹ Sameena Mohi-ud-din, ² Maria Maqbool

¹ Research Student, Institute of Home Science University of Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, India

² Lecturer, Institute of Home Science University of Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract

The present study was carried out with the objectives to study the severity of Post-Traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among sexually abused individuals and to compare its severity among males and females. The study was conducted on a sample of 40 (31 females and 9 males) Sexually Abused Individuals who were identified from different sources. The tool used by the researcher was: Severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms- Adult: it is a National Stressful Events Survey PTSD Short Scale (NSESS) that assesses the severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among individuals age 18 and older. The results revealed that more the severity of abuse more severe was PTSD and among males PTSD was more severe than females.

Keywords: Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Introduction

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of the victims not able to give consent. Sexual abuse can also be defined as any sort of non-consensual sexual contact that can happen to men or women at any age.

Child Abuse

Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child.

Child abuse or child maltreatment takes the following forms:

- Physical abuse: assaults, such as kicking, biting, shaking, punching, or stabbing, that inflict physical injury.
- Sexual abuse: fondling, intercourse, exhibitionism, commercial exploitation through prostitution or production of pornography, and other forms of sexual exploitation
- Neglect: failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, medical attention, education or supervision
- Emotional abuse: acts that could cause serious mental or behavioral disorders, including social isolation, repeated unreasonable demands, ridicule, humiliation, intimidation, or terrorizing.

Child sexual abuse

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a multifaceted problem, extraordinarily complex in its characteristics, dynamics, causes, and consequences. However the definition of Child Sexual Abuse varies considerably and with the advancements made by the perpetrators for abusing children, the definition is also changing. Until recently there was much disagreement as to what should be included in the definition of Child sexual Abuse. After much evaluation the definition has been provided with vast criteria as: According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder Fourth edition (DSM-IV), Child Sexual Abuse is defined as a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse includes asking or

pressuring a child to engage in sexual activities (regardless of the outcome), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.) with intent to gratify their own desire to intimidate or groom the child, physical sexual contact with a child, or using a child to produce child pornography. The definition encompasses both adult males and adult females since child sexual abuse is a crime committed by women as well even if their numbers are miniscule. For some victims abuse begins early in life and continues for many years and typically the abuser is male, either a parent or someone the parent knows well. The internet and mobile phones have also become avenues through which other adults commit sexual abuse --- for example, by exposing children and adolescents to pornography and online sexual advances as a way of "grooming" them for sexual acts (Berk L.E.).

As per Ranbir Penal Code (RBC), "Child" means any person below the age of eighteen years and includes any adopted, step or foster child.

According to the WHO (World Health Organization), one in every four girls and one in every seven boys in the world are sexually abused. The WHO also estimates that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact, though this is certainly an underestimate. Much of this sexual violence is inflicted by family members or other people residing in or visiting a child's family home- people normally trusted by children and often responsible for their care.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is acute psychological reactions to intensely traumatic events- events much more disturbing than most ordinary human troubles. These include assaults, rape, natural disaster, accidents, etc.

Features of PTSD are:

1. Post-traumatic stress observed can be extremely debilitating. Victims may go on for days, weeks and months re-experiencing the traumatic events, either in pained reactions or in night mares.

2. Victims of PTSD show a diminished responsiveness to their present surrounding, a sort of emotional anesthesia.
3. Some typical symptoms of PTSD include physical symptoms like insomnia, decreased sex drive, and heightened sensitivity to sound. Psychologically they suffer from depression, anxiety, and intense irritability, exploding over the slightest frustration.
4. PTSD also leads to memory disturbances.

Literature Review

Fang and Tarui (2006) [5] conducted a longitudinal study on adolescents in a high school to study the effects of three forms of maltreatment (i.e., neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse). The study indicated that the neglect, sexual and physical abuse were negatively associated with high school graduation.

Finkelhor (2009) [6] conducted a study on The Prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse and findings revealed that no strong scientific evidences points as yet in the direction of one strategy or program to prevent sexual abuse

Firdosi and Margoob (2006) [7] conducted a study on varying clinical presentation in victims of sexual traumatization. Most common effects are PTSD with variable associated symptoms of depression, suicidal attempts, psychotic features and obsessive compulsive behaviors.

Hall and Hall (2011) [8] studied The Long Term Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse that included counseling implications. Childhood sexual abuse have been correlated with higher levels of depression, guilt, shame, self-blame, eating disorders, somatic concerns, anxiety, dissociative patterns, repression, denial, sexual problems, and relationship problems.

Lazenbatt (2010) [9] studied the impact of abuse and neglect on the health and mental health of children and young people. The experience of maltreatment (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) can have a major long-term effects on all aspects of a child’s overall health. Depression, severe anxiety, panic attacks, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, eating disorders, self-injurious behaviors, anger and aggression, sexual symptoms and age inappropriate sexual behavior are the most common short term and long term mental health consequences of abuse.

Margoob and Hussainet *al.* (2006) [7-11] studied adult life consequences of childhood sexual abuse to prepare a case report, it was found that the victims experienced trauma between the ages of 4-12 years. The commonest manifestations were anxiety, depression, dissociation, somatization and obsessive traits. In most of the cases the perpetrators were relatives.

Putnam conducted a ten year update research review in 2000 to provide clinicians with information on prevalence, risk factors, outcomes, treatment, and prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA). A range of symptoms and disorder has been associated with CSA, but depression in adults and sexualized

behaviors in children are the most-documented outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

- To study and assess the severity of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) among sexually abused individuals.
- To compare the severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among males and females.

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 40 (31 females and 9 males) Sexually Abused Individuals who were identified from different sources. The breakup of the sample is as under:

Group	Number	Total
Males	09	09
Females	31	31
Total		40

Tool

Following tool was used for present study:

1. Severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms- Adult: it is a National Stressful Events Survey PTSD Short Scale (NSESS) and is a 9-item measure that assesses the severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in individuals age 18 and older following an extremely stressful event or experience. The 9-items measured in the scale are:
 - Experiencing Flashbacks
 - Feeling emotionally upset
 - Trying to avoid negative thoughts and feelings
 - Blaming oneself or another person for stressful event
 - Having negative emotional state
 - Losing interest in activities
 - Being alert for dangers
 - Feeling Jumpy on hearing unexpected noise
 - Experiencing irritability or anger

Each item on scale is rated on a 5-point scale (0=Not at all, 1= A little bit, 2= Moderately, 3= Quite a bit, and 4= Extremely). The score can range from 0-36 with highest score indicating greater severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The average total score is calculated by dividing the raw score by number of items in the measure (i.e.,9).

Procedure

In order to collect the information the researcher employed the judgment sampling technique. The investigator visited many psychiatrists to collect sample and also investigated around her surrounding people in district Srinagar. The investigator administered National Stressful Events Survey PTSD Short Scale (NSESS) over 40 samples (9 males and 31 females) that were of different age and from different backgrounds.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Experiencing Flashbacks

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	37.5%	22.5%	22.5%	5%	12.5%	100%

The above table shows that most of the respondents i.e., (37.5%) were not experiencing flashbacks at all. Equal number of respondents i.e. (22.5%) were having flashbacks

little bit and moderately. Least number of respondents i.e. only (5%) experienced flashbacks quite a bit. Whereas (12.5%) respondents experienced flashbacks extremely.

Table 2: Feeling Emotionally Upset

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	20%	30%	15%	15%	20%	100%

The above table reveals that (20%) respondents were not emotionally upset at all. Whereas (30%) respondents were little bit upset. Equal number of respondents i.e. (15%) were

disturbed emotionally quite a bit and moderately. While as (20%) respondents were extremely upset.

Table 3: Trying to avoid negative thoughts and feelings

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	17.5%	12.5%	12.5%	17.5%	40%	100%

The above table shows that (17.5%) respondents did not try to avoid negative thoughts and feelings. Equal number of respondents i.e. (12.5%) tried a little bit and moderately to avoid negative feelings and thoughts. While as (17.5%)

respondents tried to avoid negative thoughts and feelings quite a bit. Highest number of respondents i.e. (40%) tried to avoid negative thoughts and feelings extremely.

Table 4: Blaming oneself or another person for stressful event

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	27.5%	27.5%	27.5%	7.5%	10%	100%

The above table reveals that (27.5%) respondents did not blame themselves or other for stressful event. Equal number of respondents i.e. (27.5%) blamed a little bit and moderately

either to oneself or others for stressful event. Least number of respondents i.e. (7.5%) and (10%) blamed quite a bit and extremely to oneself or others for stressful event respectively.

Table 5: Having negative emotional state

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	17.5%	32.5%	22.5%	10%	17.5%	100%

The above table shows that (17.5%) did not have negative emotional state at all. Highest number of respondents i.e. (32.5%) had little bit negative emotional state. While as

(22.5%) had moderate negative emotional state. Least number of respondents i.e. (10%) and (17.5%) had quite a bit and extremely negative state respectively.

Table 6: Losing interest in activities

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	42.5%	20%	25%	2.5%	10%	100%

The above table shows that highest number of respondents i.e. (42.5%) had not lost interest in activities they used to do before. While as (20%) and (25%) respondents had lost interest a little bit and moderately in activities they enjoyed

before. Least number of respondents i.e. (2.5%) had got affected quite a bit. Whereas (10%) respondents had extremely lost interest in activities they used to do before.

Table 7: Being alert for dangers

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	27.5%	22.5%	22.5%	5%	22.5%	100%

The above table shows that (27.5%) were not alert for dangers at all. Equal number of respondents i.e. (22.5%) were little bit and moderately alert. Least number of respondents

i.e. (5%) was alert quite a bit. While as (22.5%) respondents were extremely alert for dangers.

Table 8: Feeling jumpy on hearing unexpected noise

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	30%	20%	20%	15%	15%	100%

The above table reveals that equal number of respondents i.e. (20%) felt jumpy a little bit and moderately on hearing unexpected noise. Highest number of respondents i.e. (30%)

did not feel jumpy while as equal number of respondents i.e. (15%) felt jumpy quite a bit and extremely on hearing unexpected noise, respectively.

Table 9: Experiencing Irritability or Anger

Number of respondents	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Total
40	32.5%	22.5%	5%	20%	20%	100%

The above table shows that the highest number of respondents i.e. (32.5%) did not become angry at all. While as (22.5%) respondents experience irritability and anger little

bit. Least number of respondents i.e. (5%) experienced anger moderately. While as equal number of respondents i.e. (20%) became quite a bit and extremely angry or irritable

Table 10: Level of PTSD among males

Number of respondents	Gender	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Total
9	Males	55.6%	Nil	44.4%	100%

The above table shows that (55.6%) male respondents had mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while as none of the respondent i.e., (0%) had mild PTSD. The table further

depicts that (44.4%) respondents had severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Table 11: level of PTSD among females

Number of respondents	Gender	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Total
31	Females	54.85%	12.9%	32.25%	100%

The above table shows that most of the female respondents i.e., (54.85%) had mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The moderate level of PTSD was found among

(12.9%) female respondents. The above table also depicts (32.25%) female respondents were having severe PTSD.

Table 12: Comparison of PTSD among males and females

Number of respondents	Gender	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Total
09	Males	55.6%	Nil	44.4%	100%
31	Females	54.85%	12.9%	32.25%	100%

The above table shows that (55.6%) male respondents had mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while as (44.4%) male respondents experienced severe PTSD. The moderate level of PTSD was found more in females i.e., (12.9%) as compared to males who did not show the moderate degree of PTSD at all i.e., (0%). While as (32.25%) female respondents were having severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Overall it was seen that severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was more in males i.e. (44.4%) than females i.e. (32.25%).

Major Findings

- Findings revealed that most of the respondents i.e., (37.5%) did not experience flashbacks of the traumatic events at all, whereas (12.5%) respondents were experiencing flashbacks extremely.
- It was found that (20%) respondents were not emotionally upset whereas same number of respondents i.e. (20%) was extremely upset after the traumatic episode.
- Most of the respondents i.e. (40%) tried to avoid negative thoughts and feelings extremely while as only (17.5) did not try to avoid negative thoughts. Further (42.5%) either tried a little bit or moderately to avoid negative thoughts and feelings
- For the traumatic episode, (17.5%) respondents blamed oneself or others while as rest i.e. (82.5%) either blamed

- moderately or did not blame at all.
- It was found that (32.5%) respondents had little bit negative emotional state while as (50%) had moderate to extremely negative emotional state.
- Number of respondents who had not lost interest in daily activities they used to do or enjoy before was (42.5%) while as (57.5%) either had lost interest moderately or extremely.
- As far as being alert for dangers are considered only (27.5%) were not alert for dangers while as (47%) were moderately to extremely alert for dangers.
- It was found that (32.5%) respondents had little bit negative emotional state while as (50%) had moderate to extremely negative emotional state.
- Highest number of respondents i.e. (30%) did not feel jumpy on hearing unexpected noise while as (50%) were either moderately alert or extremely alert.
- After the traumatic episode (45%) respondents felt angry moderately to extremely and rest i.e. (55%) either did not become angry or only little bit.
- Majority number of male respondents i.e., (55.6%) showed mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while as none of the respondent i.e., (0%) had mild PTSD.
- Less than half of male respondents i.e., (44.4%) respondents depicted severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

- Most number of respondents i.e., (54.85%) female respondents had mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Least number of female respondents i.e., (12.9%) had moderate level of PTSD while as (32.25%) female respondents were having severe PTSD.
- Males experience severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder i.e. (44.4%) as compared to female respondents i.e. (32.25%). None of the male respondent experienced moderate PTSD as compared to female respondents that was (12.9%) while as highest number of female respondents i.e. (54.85%) experienced mild Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- The greater the severity of abuse the more the flashbacks were experienced, the lesser the severity the lesser flashbacks.

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