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Awareness of Child Sexual Abuse and Media: An Analysis of Pakistani Electronic Media

Abstract

Child sexual abuse is a serious concern all over the world. Child abuse is a broader term which encompasses physical, emotional and sexual abuse. This study has attempted to analyze role of Pakistan's electronic media with reference to the child sexual abuse. Intensive interviews were conducted to meet objective of the study. The sample was 25 parents of victimized children who had been sexually maltreated. The collection of responses led to a clear inference that Pakistani electronic media is not providing awareness regarding child sexual abuse. The results showed that Political and entertainment content is given preference over the social issues. Findings indicated that media is not fulfilling its duty of being socially responsible regarding the content on child sexual abuse. It is not educating the masses about any prevention methods. The media should sensitize and educate the society about this intolerable act.

Keywords: *Child sexual abuse, Awareness, Pakistani social media, Pakistani broad cast media.*

Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a worldwide issue that cannot be eradicated easily. It can be defined as maltreatment and exploitation of rights of child from which one is affected destructively. It is a devastating issue that affects people who belong to all cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and

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religions (Putnam, 2003). It is physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual exploitation, neglecting behavior that results in tangible or potential harm to the child's health (World health organization, 2003).

Child sexual abuse can be described as an inappropriate behavior of adult from touch to sexual intercourse towards child. It takes place when an adult dominates and exploits a kid by means of sexual activity or suggestions (Maltz, 2002). Harassment, rape, child pornography and prostitution are some categories of child sexual abuse. It is extremely disastrous for the lives of minors. There are many chances of death of a younger victim. Childhood sexual abuse has been correlated with higher levels of depression, guilt, shame, self-blame, eating disorders, somatic concerns, anxiety, dissociative patterns, repression, denial, sexual and relationship problems. The whole life of a victim is at risk or most probably destabilized by this cruelty (Hall & Hall, 2011). Perpetrators are mostly neighbors; teachers, father, immediate family member, and peers of aggrieved ones (Kisanga, 2012). In approximately 85% cases the perpetrator is someone the child knows. In addition, most perpetrators are juvenile (Fieldsmann & Crespi, 2000). Briere and Elliott (1994) concluded that victim of sexual assault could not sustain its life after this incident. An infant suffers a lot from mental diseases after that. There exists a broad variety of mental disorders and interpersonal abnormalities amongst those who have been sexually abused

The only way to control this problem is to make the society aware of the prevention strategies. To avoid the possible risk children need to be taught about the defense mechanisms and the coping strategies against it. Children can be empowered by preparing for daily life; educating them how to response in a dangerous situation, by recognizing, stopping sexual abuse, looking for their assistance. There is a great need that children must know how to protect themselves. Now the question is that which institution has the potential to create awareness about CSA. No doubt in this time of media explosion, media has become an integral part of society. It can play a vital role in public awareness (Voakes, 2004).

Dorfman and Wallack (2011) define the relation between media and issue; there are four dimensions of child sexual abuse in the context of media. The very first is that it is immensely out of view. It is very occasionally discussed in news channels. Secondly a case could only take the attention of media if its investigation is proceeding in court. Not only this but treatment sustained by judges also affects the media coverage. Thirdly media just spread the news on CSA, it does not tell how to stop and prevent this problem from the root. As only less than thirty

percent content of media is on prevention strategies of CSA and awareness. In most of the articles there is no specification of the type of sexual abuse and stories are reported vaguely. Even the most of children do not know what child sexual abuse is actually. Fourthly the language used by the media is unclear. Besides this one of the important point media highlights is that abuser is from family and close relatives of younger ones rather than unknown. For this study researchers used content analysis as methodology. Self-defense strategies are important and significant. If a child knows how to protect itself then he or she could be saved from molestation.

Pakistan is a third world country which is facing many issues at a time. People of Pakistan are highly influenced by the content shown on electronic media. This study is confined to the Messages broadcast on TV as they are considered a credible source of information. People trust on the social realities that are structured by media. Media is a central vehicle by which people can learn about the issue of child sexual abuse. Studies show that content of media has altered the behavior of children (Babatsikos, 2010). That is why Pakistani Electronic media can show responsibility to combat this issue prudently. It can prevent and stop this brutal act by sharing beneficial and useful content of awareness on this issue. It is the responsibility of media to teach prevention strategies and some precautionary measures to masses. It must educate its audience that how this cruel act could be eradicated from society. Media can initiate advance discussion on CSA to influence public and policy makers. No doubt; media can be cited as the most important source of providing information on child sexual exploitation and prevention education as it is a reflection of our society.

This study has analyzed the child sexual abuse and role of Pakistani Electronic media i.e. TV in creating awareness.

Research Questions

This study has explored that

- I. If the Pakistani electronic media (TV) is creating awareness regarding the child sexual abuse
- II. To what extent Pakistani electronic media (TV) is creating awareness or educating the masses regarding the child sexual abuse?
- III. If the content on child sexual abuse is being highlighted in an appropriate manner?

Relevant Literature

Tyler (2002) found that there can be several social and emotional consequences of sexual exploitation of a child. Pregnancy, running away, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), risky sexual behavior are most prominent after effects of child sexual abuse. The results and problems in internal and external behavior of such children may differ according to gender, race, and age. Some Abusive characteristics were also examined in this study, i.e. use of force, and the victim's relationship to the executor was found to be important one. Parents and elders are supposed to help the infants but in reality they rarely support victims.

Another study with same arguments concluded that Child sexual abuse is devastating issue of USA. Childhood disorder has been revealed to have severe outcomes for future life. It has been demonstrated that a range of psychological indication and disorders during adulthood can be seen after this tragedy. Hopelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline trait disorder, substance use, suicide rate, sexual behavior problems, dissociative disorders, and learning disorders are associated with early traumatic experiences. Moreover, in some cases victims have developed the criminal behavior and health problems. They also face disturbance in different routine works. They can be categories as emotionally distorted people. Most of the victims are illiterate because they couldn't concentrate on their education, which makes them uncanny (Van der Kolk, Hopper, & Crozier, 2001).

Child sexual abuse becomes more and more complicated due to the social norms and values in society. Sahil organization (2014) in their publication that was on content analysis of CSA cases (in Pakistan) concluded with that, this brutal act could occur in all classes of societies. It is not an issue of a certain class or a certain group of people. In most of the cases the abuser is the one who is blindly trusted by the kid's family. That is why he can easily access to child. A Child must know what are the strategies of self-defense because a child can be sexually exploited both in close and open places. If a child is not educated than the protection would be difficult. On the other hand policy makers, government and other authorities must make policies for the protection of children. Media must report the cases of child sexual abuse, but this reporting should be according to code of ethics. Government must implement code of ethics on the reporting of CSA. Some important programs that can put off the ongoing abusive behavior involve media campaigns.

Media is a social institution. It should focus on prevention strategies. Kitzinger and Skidmore (1995) found that the content of media regarding child sexual abuse is on case-based

reporting. Media does not focus on the tools and strategies for prevention of CSA; rather most of the coverage is based on cases which can be seen in news segments, bulletins and in newspaper reports.

Lyles, Cohen and Brown (2009) contended that diverse roots are associated with Child sexual abuse, even nobody can tell the intensity of its devastating effects. Leadership can also play a role in prevention, but it seems that they are not working staunchly. There must be a national movement to eradicate this issue. This can only be possible with the help of experts, intelligence of communities. There are at least five negative norms that enhance child abuse that are conventional male roles, restricted female roles, Power, violent behavior and privacy.

Daro (1994) who is also in the favor of protection by introducing precautionary measures stated that Child sexual abuse prevention is the other term of safety education to the children on this issue. He argued that it is not necessary that children might change their behaviors after receiving education on this problem. Major benefits of education on self-protection can certainly increase the rate of revelation from children about past and present experience.

Weatherred (2013) further added to this, through a longitudinal study with content analysis he found out that media does not highlight child sexual abuse frequently. Among all news articles only less than 25 percent are on child sexual abuse. Secondly media is always more focused towards the heinous cases of child sexual abuse. There is less content found on awareness, education and prevention strategies of child sexual abuse. The study suggested involvement of authentic lawyers and policy makers for the media coverage of CSA.

Cheit (2010) stated that media has an impact on the ongoing cases of CSA; it can distinctively be seen that case hearings are affected by this. This study explored that CSA is not covered in the same manner as other crimes are being covered. It also reveals that CSA coverage does not involve the media advocacy. Such slanted coverage leaves people partially unaware about important CSA related issues. Child sexual abuse experts and professionals can put individual stories in a broader context, and there is an obvious need of expert sources in the formatting of these stories. So it would be helpful for people to understand the issue.

Children are naturally dependent upon their elders and parents for their protection. They believe on whatever they say and follow them. That is why their elders can play a vital role in protection younger ones from sexual assault.

While highlighting the same issue, Dryden(2009) argues that child abuse and neglect is a failure of a parent or custodian which may results in serious harm and even death of a child. There are unlimited risk factors associated with child sexual abuse. It is said that reporters job in this field is so difficult. It is necessary to educate teachers how to teach and aware children after they face the situation of sexual exploitation. They must have sense of what to do with these victims. Teachers must help them out because they need a person who supports them in such situation.

Another study which is in the support of parental role in child sexual abuses argues that kids can reveal their experience, but this required informal and friendly discussion.children do not reveal their past horrible event. It could be possible that an infant can recall the event if he is provided with a friendly environment. Another point worthy thing is that a child is easier with his parent, teacher and caretaker and no doubt even a professional. After two or three session a child would definitely reveal that what has happened to him. (London, Bruck, Ceci, & Shuman, 2005).

Mostly cases of child sexual abuse remain unreported. Many researchers have tried to find out the reason behind this. Jones and Trotman (2009) found that in most of the cases Victims, their families, and community do not report the cases of abuse because they are afraid of the aftereffects and reactions from society.

Child pornography is strictly banned all over the world but it still exist in the various countries of world including Pakistan. It has become a business now and people us it for earning money. Mitchell ,Wolak, and Finkelhor (2005) in their study argued that illegal child pornography has become an internet business. It is a federal crime and People involved in this serious crime possess images, videos of children for their gratification and relief .Sometimes they use it as a profit and business purposes. The videos that possessors contain are with sound effects and emotional music. After seeing these videos and images, an individual can easily feel compelled for this activity. Porn content is posted on social media and the internet. When a child comes to know that these pictures and videos will circulate in society, the younger ones naturally drag into extreme mental trauma. There are only few studies that are done on this issue, but it is necessary to do work in this field.

One of the cruel facts in most of the cases is that abuser is immediate family member of victim. Kisanga(2012) find out that child sexual abuse is a destructive social challenge for any

society. In most of the cases the abuser is a neighbor, teacher and family member of the victims. In most of the cases, survivors don't want to file the case and any other action on this brutality. There are multiple reasons that a child doesn't want to disclose it. It must be seriously considered as a public health problem.

By considering the importance of education on child sexual abuse, this study has made an attempt to analyze the role of Pakistani electronic media in creating awareness regarding child sexual abuse.

Social Responsibility Theory and awareness regarding child sexual abuse

Social responsibility theory considers that media is accountable to society with reference to the awareness of social issues. McQuail was among the advocates of media regulation. Self-regulation is a pre-requisite of media in a free society. So, Media has to be self-regulated, while providing information. If media has not succeeded in achieving this responsibility this must be enforced by some other authorities (Siebert et al., 1956).

Social responsibility theory permits freedom of media without any suppression, but the content of the media must be talked about in public platforms and at the same time media must accept obligations to serve the public good. Socially responsible media should avoid twisting the facts and paid news. Moreover, if the media has failed to fulfill its duty it must face some restrictions.

Social responsibility is related with the present study as in a developing country like Pakistan, role of media is not merely associated to dissemination of information, it should rather educate the masses on various issues.

This theory argues that media must take a stand against social evils. This study is conducted to analyze that to what extent Pakistani media is able to cope with CSA. This theory was found relevant because media must educate the people about social problems and it is the responsibility of the media to work for the betterment of the society. This study is conducted to investigate that if media is fulfilling its responsibility of creating awareness among masses on CSA or not.

Although this theory suggest media freedom, but in return, media must do the activities of public service, likewise this study has attempted to urge Pakistani media to work for eradication of CSA. The theory of social responsibility suggests some ethical boundaries for media. This study has also focused on the fact that self-regulation and code of ethics must be

taken into consideration regarding the production of content on CSA.

Research Methodology

To investigate the role of Pakistani electronic media in creating awareness on child sexual abuse, this study has used the qualitative method of intensive interview.

Intensive interviews are used to congregate most important data for almost all kinds of qualitative research and they are normally classified into structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Myers, 2009).

Intensive interviews are unique in nature as the sample used for conducting a research is small. They not only explain the verbal information but also non-verbal information from respondents. It is helpful to note down the expressions of respondent while he/she is giving interviews. It is conducted when a researcher wants a detailed self-report from respondent. So, Semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked from the respondents Interviews are purposive and involve face to face verbal communication (Skopec,1991).

Tool for data collection

For this study a semi structured questionnaire was prepared to collect data from the respondents. Questions and sub-questions were prepared to attain the research objectives. Respondents shared their experiences and behaviors associated with media and towards CSA. This study were conducted in the presence of psychologists. Interviews were conducted without mentioning name of the parents who were being interviewed.

The population selected for this research included parents of victimized children (those who faced sexual abuse or they went through sexual harassment) from big cities of Pakistan.

Rationale for Selecting Parents

Children are naturally dependent on elders for protection. Parents are guardians of their children and it is their obligation to make their children aware on this issue. That is why the parents were selected for analyzing the role of the media. Moreover, considering the sensitivity of current study, children could not be selected as a sample.

Findings of the Study

1. If Media Makes People Familiar to CSA

According to the data gathered from interviews, 52 % of the respondents heard the term child sexual abuse on electronic media. 20% of the respondents have not heard the term on TV or radio. The other 12 % of the respondents stated that whenever some court trial proceeds or a scandal appears on media, they heard this term. 16 % of the respondents said that they heard this vaguely as media did not clearly tell what this term was about (table1).

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the respondents who heard the term child sexual abuse on broadcast media

Options	Frequency	Valid percent %
Yes	13	52
No	5	20
With case	3	12
Vaguely	4	16
Total	25	100.0

2. If watched any program or drama serial related to CSA

20 % of the respondents told that they had watched the programs on broadcast media regarding CSA. The other 68 % of the respondents revealed that they have never found any program regarding child sexual abuse on broadcast media. 12 % of the respondents seldom watched such kind of programs (table 2).

Table 2: frequency and percentage of the respondents who watched program or drama serial related to CSA

Options	Frequency	Valid percent %
Yes	5	20
No	17	68
Seldom	3	12
Total	25	100.0

3. Any prevention strategies taught by the electronic media

12 % of the respondents said that they watched prevention strategies on media, while 88 % disclosed that they had never watched any kind of prevention strategies on broadcast media (table 3).

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the respondents who found any prevention strategies on media

Options	Frequency	Valid percent%
Yes	3	12
No	22	88
Total	25	100.0

4. Any gestures learned through Media (TV) to teach the children on child sexual abuse

100 % of the respondents were of the view that they had never watched any gestures on electronic media to teach their children about CSA (table 4).

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of the respondents who have learned gesture to educate through media

Options	Frequency	Valid percent%
No	25	100.0
Total	25	100.0

5: Is the content (programs, news, and discussion platform) on media about CSA appropriate to be viewed by a child

Out of 25 respondents, 17 (68%) respondents had not watched any content on CSA. The 8(32%) respondents who watched such content stated that the programs about child sexual abuse are not appropriate enough that a child could watch and understand alone (table 5).

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of the respondents who think that the content they find on broadcast media was produced ethically

Options	Frequency	Valid percent %
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No	8	32
Never see such content	17	68
Total	25	100.0

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to analyze if Pakistani electronic media (TV) is creating awareness regarding child sexual abuse or not. The findings indicated that Pakistani electronic media is not creating the much needed awareness on child sexual abuse. It is not educating its consumers about any prevention strategies or gestures which are important to educate a child about minor sexual exploitation. 3 respondents, out of 25 mentioned that they had watched drama serial “*udari*”, it was considered a progressive step to highlight the issue of CSA. Majority of the respondents (parents of victims) disclosed that they were unable to teach their children on CSA while being under the influence of electronic media. Most of the Respondents argued that Pakistani media should not show programs, drama serials or any kind of content on CSA because it can seriously damage this issue through an inappropriate coverage. Ethical boundaries should be followed while covering the sexual assault cases, which are under trial in the court.

This perception of the viewers (respondents) about media signifies the failure of Pakistani electronic media to disseminate information and create awareness regarding child sexual abuse. Media is not considered to fulfill the responsibility of making them aware of the issue of child sexual abuse. Media never highlights the fact that an immediate family member could also be an abuser. Pakistani electronic media should teach the society; especially parents and children about ways to cope with an emergency situation. Children should be taught about the sanctity of their body parts through gestures, signs and appropriate words. They should be encouraged to break the silence and express their feelings without any fear.

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that TV channels are not showing enough content on the social evil of child sexual abuse. It is a pressing issue that should be given more time and space. TV in Pakistan has a great viewership; it could be a useful source of learning for the children as well as their parents. But this medium is not playing its role regarding the awareness of child sexual abuse. Along with awareness it should produce the content that

enables the viewers to learn ways to fight against this abuse. Media content on CSA should be conveyed in an informed and proper way rather than addressing the issue aimlessly. On the basis of findings, it is evident that Pakistani electronic media is not enlightening the masses with prevention strategies against the menace of child sexual abuse.

Media is a social institution and it is responsible for educating the society about the different ways to prevent CSA. The government should take steps to eradicate this social evil with the collaboration of media, NGOs and religious organizations. There is a great need to inform and educate the Pakistani people through media. Children are an asset for any state. In a democratic society, media is supposed to play a responsible role to inform the people about societal issues. In general, Pakistani electronic media plays a reactive role in response to some incidents, but it should be proactive towards issues like child sexual abuse. The proactive role of media can lead the society towards a better future, in which citizens are cognizant of issues and topics that are detrimental for them and their children, and learn the ways to tackle such problems in an ethical manner to safeguard their lives.

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