

A HIDDEN REALITY UNVEILED

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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ABSOLUTE SILENCE LEADS TO SADNESS.

-JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

ABSTRACT

Sahil undertook this research to fulfill an essential need for planning an advocacy program. This report is based on findings of a country-wide survey.

The research explored general public perceptions on child sexual abuse (CSA) to see how it is understood and defined. Moreover, it has also tried to assess the means through which the general public receives information about the issue and appraise their preferred modes of communication for messages on prevention, intervention and protection against CSA.

This research data has been compared (wherever similar data is found) with “Trends in Child Sexual Abuse: Media Reports; A Five Years Analysis Sahil Statistics 2002 – 2006.

The findings of the present research confirm, and amplify Sahil’s five years analysis data.

The data was collected through a detailed questionnaire from a random selection of 2000 respondents. Both men and women, from across the country were 3000 respondents from 60 cities. Data was collected from October 2007 – December 2007.

Results of the survey show a high level of CSA awareness amongst the general public. Out of 2000 respondents, 1988 recognized the prevalence of CSA in our society.

Both genders were seen as being at risk of sexual abuse.

On the question on determining the age of the child, the respondents marked it at 12 years, and at 16 years of age.

The respondents viewed the vulnerable age of child at risk of sexual abuse were between the ages of 11years to 15 years.

The largest numbers of abusers were identified as relatives, acquaintances and trustworthy persons by the respondents.

Factors contributing to the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse were poverty, labor, domestic violence and harmful traditions. Some respondents felt that children living in difficult circumstances brought on sexual abuse due to irresponsible sexual behaviors.

The majority of the respondents said that media should always highlight CSA. No awareness messages had ever been seen by large number of respondents. Television was the most preferred form of media for information followed by a preference for the print media.

The study helps in setting the guidelines for awareness-raising campaigns on CSA through media, which can sensitize both the general public and policy-makers.

This study conducted in Pakistan, provides a baseline data on which further research can be conducted.

AN OVERVIEW OF CSA

Historical and cultural factors have created and shaped the concept of “child sexual abuse”, as most of us understand it today. A good deal of literature and research is available on this issue, mainly produced by developed countries. However, there are now a number of local researches available for reference.

In Pakistan, sexual abuse has only recently been discussed openly as a problem than any other social stigma. CSA has risen precipitously in public awareness from being hidden to clearly visible. Sexual abuse is now one of the recognized forms of child abuse.

CSA has many complexities involving emotional damage, which often sets off conflicts for the victims/survivors that affects them and all those around them.

The age of consent is directly related to the age that defines a child. International laws, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, clearly define the age of a child up to 18 years. Synchronization of laws and social interventions are directly affected if there are discrepancies in the definition on child’s age of responsibility.

Consent is one of the key concepts around which the ethics of social interactions are organized. There is a belief that children consent to sexual acts due to the liberalization of values. In this sense, a child gives consent to sex with an adult. This view is not acceptable under any circumstances. The power imbalance that is observed in the enactment of sexual abuse is especially true for the child. A child is usually under the authority of an adult and, psychologically, children have a hard time saying “no” to adults, who control all kinds of resources that are essential to children. Abusers may also use emotional attachment and blackmail to obtain the ‘consent’ of a child.

Gender perceptions of CSA are that the larger number of victims is that of girls as seen in reported cases. However, boys who may be more exposed to dangerous situations may not report sexual abuse.

It is very difficult to characterize an abuser. He or she may be anyone, from any socio-economic class, gender, age and geographical or ethnic background.

Places of abuse are not restricted. Child sexual abuse can happen anywhere.

INTRODUCTION

To further investigate the dynamics of CSA and add to available data, it was decided that a research, based on general public opinion, would reveal the extent of recognition of the issue and the effective role of media.

Newspaper reports show that sexual abuse is prevalent in the country. Almost universally, the problem is accepted to be far greater than reported cases indicate.

The data of this research is compared to similar information where ever it is available in the data collected by Sahil in a research publication in 2007 “Trends in Child Sexual Abuse: Media Reports; A Five Years Analysis Sahil Statistics 2002 – 2006.

METHODOLOGY

The research consists of both qualitative and quantitative data of CSA. The questionnaire was developed based on data previously collected and analyzed by Sahil through newspaper reports.

Prior to the survey, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 20 respondents. According to their feedback, some changes were made in the questionnaire.

TARGET GROUP

The target group was the general public defined by the following characteristics:

- Above 18 years of age
- No literacy restrictions
- Respondents inclusive of unemployed, laborer*, student, self-employed, employed* and professionals.

* Laborer (whose income was less than Rs. 5000 per month)

* Employed (in a work place)

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study design was based on ‘semi structured interview schedule’. The study was conducted through an open ended and multiple choice questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided in three sections. The first section elicited information on demographic aspects of the respondents; the second on awareness level about CSA, and the third on media preferences for messages on interventions.

SAMPLE SIZE

In the study, 3000 questionnaires were distributed across the country. Out of these, 2000 respondents both male and female, from 60 cities (Annex. 1), completed the questionnaires.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was conducted between October 2007 and December 2007. The Sahil head office team including the staff of referral units from Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sukkur, Abbotabad, Jaffarabad and Swat was deployed to collect data in their districts. Moreover, volunteers of Sahil were also involved in data collection. The volunteers were guided through letters and telephone calls to ensure correct and appropriate data collection.

After receiving completed questionnaires, the data was reviewed and organized. It was documented on SPSS software.

Response percentage is rounded off to the nearest number above or below 0.5%.

DATA ANALYSIS

“RESPONDENTS’ DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION”

The following tables provide demographic information arranged under different categories of 2000 respondents:

Table1: Gender Division of respondents

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentages
Male	1501	75%
Female	499	25%

Sahil research 2007

In the sample, the proportion of male respondents is much higher (75 percent) than the female respondents (25 percent). This was because females were not easily accessible and they also shied away from being interviewed.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age Criteria	No of Respondents	Percentages
18 – 28	873	44%
29 – 39	678	34%
40 – 49	325	16%
50 – 61	91	4%
Above – 61	33	2%

Sahil research 2007

Table 3: Occupation of respondents

Occupation	No of Respondents	Percentage
Employees	544	27 %
Laborers	464	23 %
Professionals	362	18 %
Self - Employed	278	14 %
Students	242	12 %
Unemployed	110	6 %

Sahil research 2007

Table 4: Educational Background of Respondents

Literacy Level	No of Respondents	Percentage
Above Graduation	462	23 %
Graduation	457	22 %
Intermediate	285	15 %
Matric	276	14%
Illiterate	203	10 %
Middle	176	9 %
Primary	141	7 %

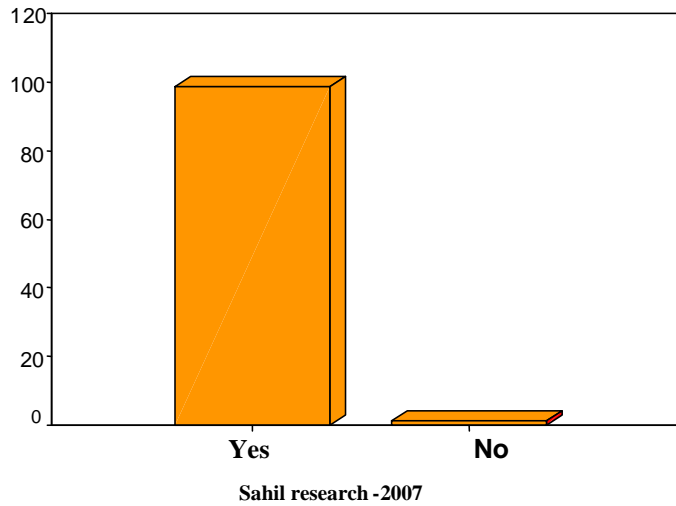
Sahil research 2007

Q. Are children being sexually abused in our society?

Out of a total of 2,000 respondents answer in affirmation was given by 1982 respondents (99%) as graph 1 shows below

Respondents acknowledged that they get to know about child sexual abuse from newspapers. Some respondents replied that peer groups are one of the sources for attaining information on CSA. A few mentioned they had heard about CSA from human rights activists and organizations.

Graph 1: Are children being sexually abused in our society?



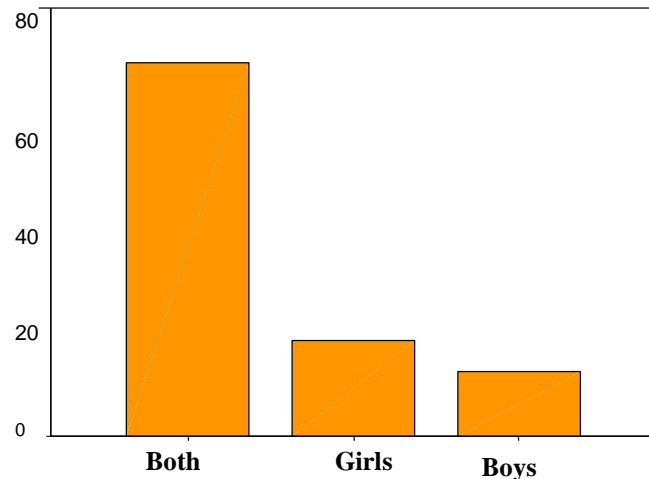
The 18 respondents (1%) who answered in negative usually made such comments as: “I don’t know”, “I don’t want to talk about it” and “May be it happens but I don’t know”. Out of these 18 respondents, 14 were educated persons.

Q. Who are at greater risk of CSA ?

Among the common myths about the issue is that only girls are sexually abused.

Graph 2 shows that 1387 respondents (69%), had correctly identified that both genders are at risk of abuse.

Graph 2: Who are CSA?



at greater risk of

Sahil research 2007

However, 340 respondents (17%) said that only girls are at risk, whereas 273 respondents (14%) said that only boys are vulnerable to CSA.

Those respondents who identified girls only said that girls are victims because they are considered objects rather than human beings and used for sexual purposes and revenge.

Respondents who identified boys only equated child sexual abuse with homosexual activity. They also commented that boys are easily accessible, and are less likely to reveal the incidents.

Comments on gender vulnerability by respondents included that the abuser is not bothered about gender. It is more about the situation or place that makes a particular gender vulnerable to child sexual abuse.

Comparison with Five Years Sahil Statistics 2002-2006:

Data of five years statistics shows that out of a total of 8209 cases in five years, the maximum percentage of sexual abuse at an average of 70% is that of girls. Perhaps it is more difficult to hide sexual abuse cases of girls.

Table 5: Gender Divide Comparison

Year	Girls	Boys
2002	57%	43%
2003	70%	30%
2004	76%	24%
2005	75%	25%
2006	73%	27%

Five Year Sahil

2006

Statistics 2002 –

Cases of sexual abuse of boys are at an average of only 30%.

Many researches show that cases of sexual abuse of boys are less reported.

In Pakistan, the reasons for fewer numbers of reported cases of sexual abuse of boys could be, because it is more culturally acceptable, or seen as experiential incidents.

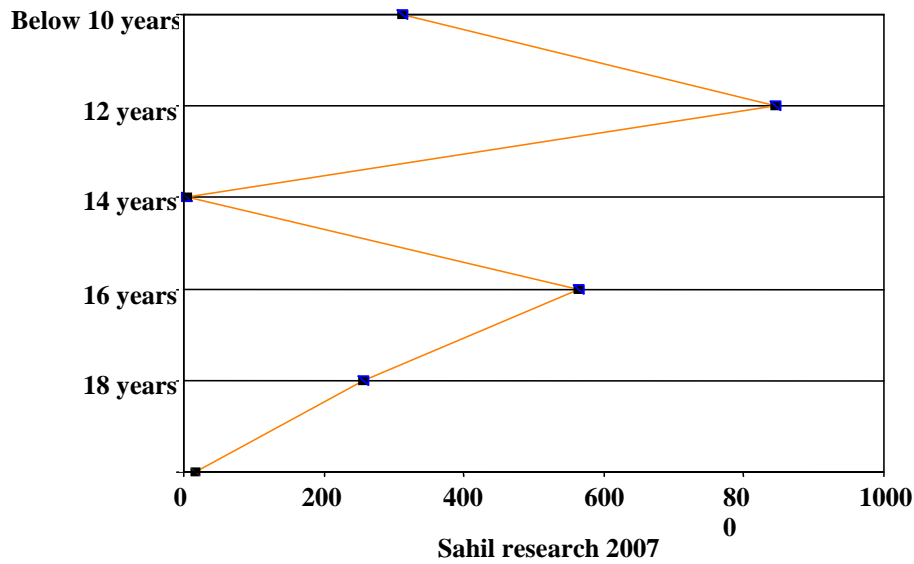
The general public respondents give a much more realistic view on gender divide of child sexual abuse than newspaper reported cases.

Q What is the age that defines a child

According to article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, 'child' refers to a person up to 18 years of age.

The definition of age directly affects the attitudes towards children. A forced adult responsibility at a young age involves them in child labor and child marriages, which makes them more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

GRAPH 3: What is the age that defines a child.



Only 13% of the respondents defined the age of the child at 18 years, the same as the internationally accepted age.

The highest number of respondents (42%) defined a child as up to the age of 12 years. The reason given by this group is that children can easily understand commands and behave like adults at this age. Once the child reaches this age, he can do any work, any where.

The understanding of the respondents about child development seems to be limited to child ability to basically look after him/her self physically, and does not reflect knowledge of the cognitive growth of the child.

Second highest response at 28% is up to 16 years of age. Respondents' opinion was that by this age adult behaviors appear such as, privacy needs, decision making powers, willingness to take risks, have ideals, and to know all about the social norms of society. This age definition is reflected in the law as the legal age for the marriage of a girl.

It is serious matter and dangerous sign of concern when children are considered as adults at the age of 10 years as identified by 17% of the respondents.

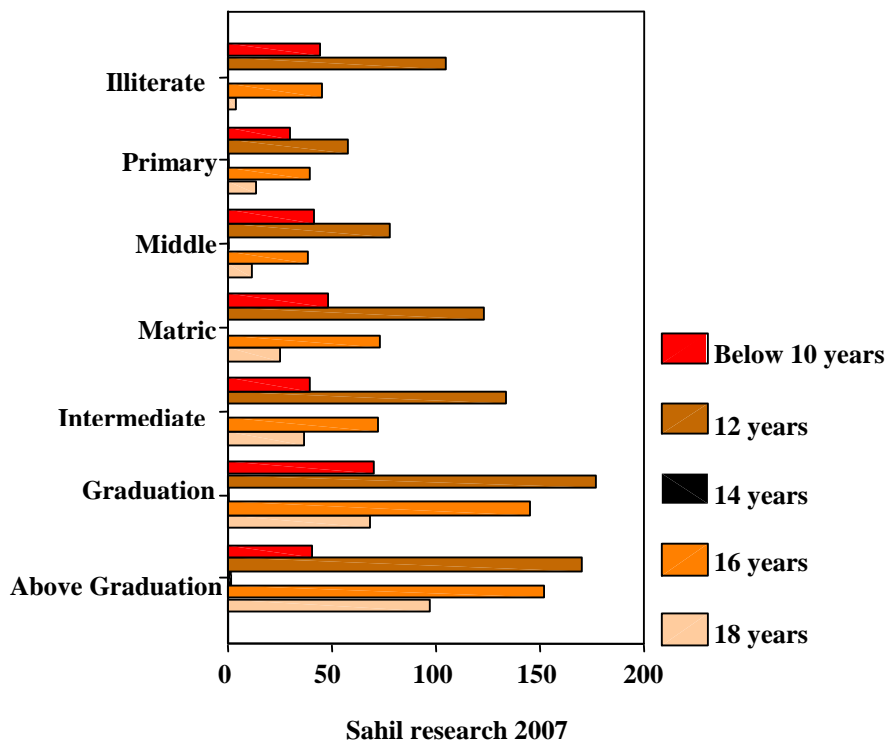
Age definition of a child VS Respondents' education

The age limit of a child at the age of 18 years has the highest recognition at post graduation level as seen in graph 4.

However, even at this educational level the age defining a child is inclusive of below 10 years and 12 years of age.

Interestingly enough, the age limit of a child at 14 years has not been identified across all the respondents.

Graph 4: Age definition of a child vs. Respondents education



At all educational levels, respondents have identified the age for defining the child at 12 years as their most favored response.

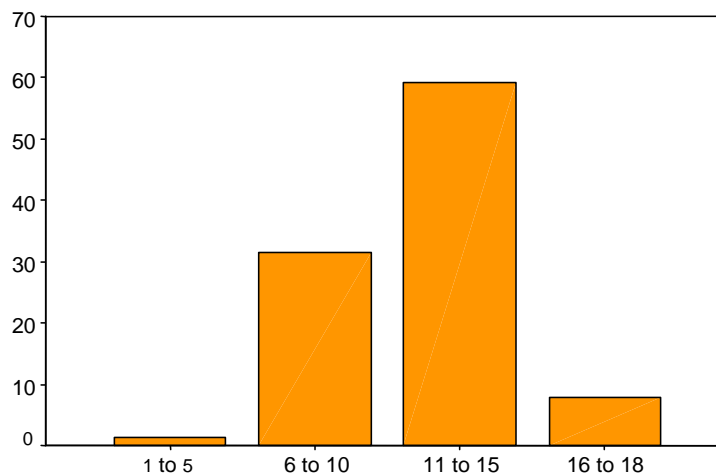
It can be seen that, irrespective of their educational background, respondents have also set the age limit of a child at below 10 years, with graduates marking it the highest.

Q. At what age is a child more vulnerable to sexual abuse

The highest number of respondents (57%) marked the children between 11 to 15 years as most vulnerable to sexual abuse. Respondents commented that the pre- adolescent age is the most vulnerable age.

The other most vulnerable age groups defined by the respondents (31%) shows that the second major group was of children was between 6 to 10 years of age. According to them, this age group is vulnerable due to their innocence.

Graph 5: At what age is a child more vulnerable to sexual abuse?



Sahil research 2007

Respondents commented that adults have power over the children, and at the same time children have little knowledge of harmful or dangerous situations. Also that children are immature and do not know about sex and its related issues. They felt that children are more amiable at this age and have more social interactions. Peer influence often plays a role in high risk behaviors.

It needs to be mentioned here that there is a dichotomy in the minds of people regarding the age of maturity of a child. On the one hand they think that a child after the age of 10 years can be considered an adult (graph 3 who is a child), whereas, here they talk of children of the age of 10 to 15 years as innocent and immature respectively.

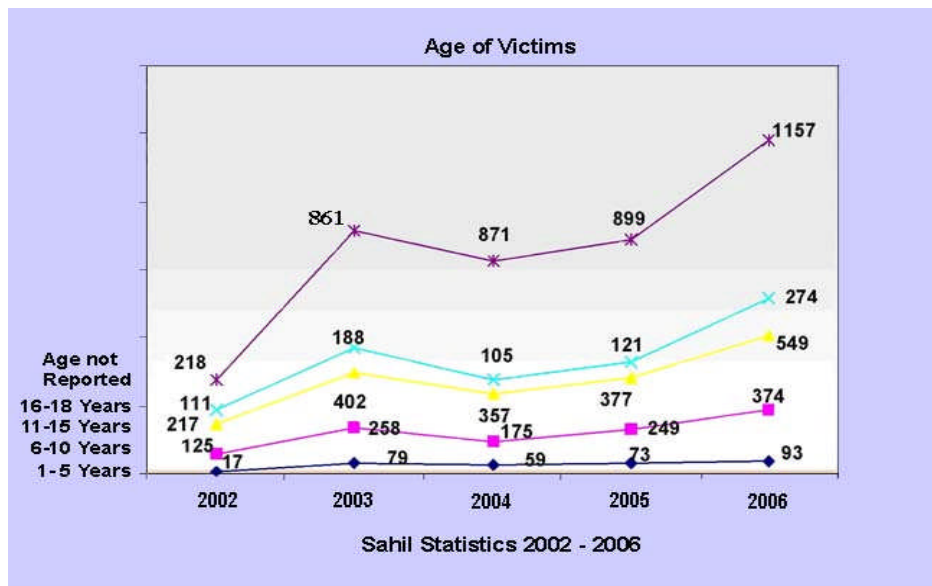
The third vulnerable group was marked at 16 years to 18 years by 10% respondents. However they also stated that at this age the victim may have given consent to the abuser as they do have the capability to protect themselves. This is a myth, and is most often used as an excuse by the abuser who actually manipulates and blackmails the victim into believing that they have given consent.

The least identified age group was 1 to 5 years by 2% respondents. This response is understandable because very few cases of this age are identified. This requires early detection of sexual abuse. This involves a high degree of awareness of symptoms and behaviors by parents and doctors who can report such cases.

Comparison with Five Years Sahil Statistics 2002-2006

Sahil’s analysis of 5 years also identifies 11 years to 15 years and 6 years to 10 years as the most vulnerable age groups from media reported cases.

Graph 6 Age of Victim Comparison



Q. Who are the abusers?

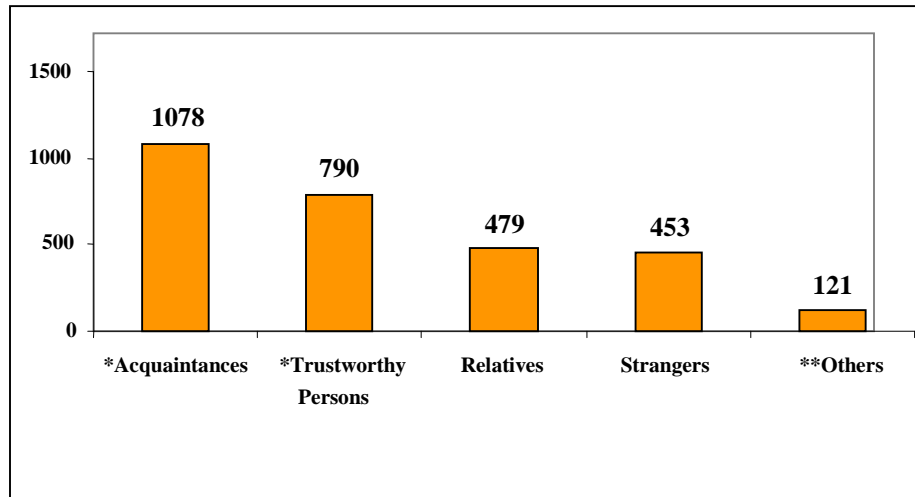
Abusers or ‘sex offenders’ come from all walks of life. They can be from any social background profession, age, or geographical area. They may be heterosexual or homosexual. Although the majority of abusers are males, they may also be females.

Child sex offenders can be divided into two groups: situational and preferential.

The situational child sex offenders do not have a sexual preference for children only but engage in sex with children because of the power imbalance, lack of self control, and the belief that they will get away with the crime. Easy accessibility of children is also a contributing factor. .

Preferential child sex offenders, known as pedophiles, have a definite sexual attraction for prepubescent children. They are a homogeneous group in terms of their behavior patterns. These abusers target children in much the same way as other sex offenders by using affection, attention or gifts to lure children.

Graph 6: Who are the abusers



Sahil Research 2007

NB. This is a multiple choice question and therefore the total responses are more than the number of respondent.

- *Acquaintances are those persons who have access to the home of the victim or his/her family
- * Trustworthy persons are those professionals who are a regular part of children’s lives such as teachers, police, and shopkeepers.
- ** Others meant that anyone could be an abuser.

Respondents (54%) agreed that children easily accept any request from an acquaintance, giving them access to children as abusers. These respondents also felt that acquaintances rather than strangers were likely to commit this crime.

The respondents (40%) identified those trustworthy persons as the second largest group of abusers. Usually these persons have power and authority over the children and their families.

Only 15% respondents identified ‘strangers’ as abusers. Robbers/dacoits and persons unknown to the victim and its family members are categorized as strangers.

A small number of respondents (4%) thought that **anyone** can be an abuser.

Incest is perhaps the most hidden category and the most difficult to accept.

Incest occurs when the abuser is a relative, which includes immediate family members, any blood relatives and step relatives, a total of 24% respondents agreed that relatives are abusers.

Others commented that surely relatives cannot be involved in child sexual abuse.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total

However some did say that ‘cousins’ may do this.

Comparison with Five Years Sahil Statistics 2002-2006

As seen in the data, on the average 86% of acquaintances are identified as abusers. The research respondents have also identified the same category as the largest group of abusers.

The strangers’ category is seen in reported cases at 24%, whereas 15% of the research respondents have identified this category. This difference is possibly due to the fact that in reported cases gangs are involved in rape/sodomy cases.

Respondents know that relatives are involved. This data is also found in the Five Years Sahil Statistics 2002-2006 where on the average 100 incest cases are recorded per year.

Table 9: Reported Abusers Categories Comparison

Acquaintance	539	2338	1961	1336	3357	9531
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Male Strangers	116	490	568	324	764	2262
Female Abettors	5	132	199	123	351	810
Relatives	17	36	48	134	307	542
Trustworthy Persons	13	90	100	72	105	380

Five Year Sahil Statistics 2002 – 2006

This statistical comparison shows that the awareness level of the general public is similar to media reports.

What makes children vulnerable to child sexual abuse?

Poverty may be seen as the major contributing factor to child sexual abuse because it is difficult for poor families to hide the abuse. Children may suffer from neglect and therefore be pushed into vulnerable situations.

The following table shows that ‘poverty’ has been seen as the major reason for child sexual abuse as stated by 44% of the respondents.

Table 11: Children vulnerability to sexual abuse

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	871	44%
Live or Work on Streets	605	31%
Domestic Abuse and Neglect	602	30%
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	473	24%
Irresponsible Sexual Behavior	403	20%
Orphans	316	16%
Harmful Traditions	304	15%

Sahil research 2007

NB. This is a multiple choice question and therefore the total responses are more than the number of respondents.

It should be noted that a total of 50% of the respondents were educated and from the middle and upper socio-economic class. Data from direct interventions with children through youth help lines and counseling facilities shows that educated, urban middle class children can also be victims.

Domestic abuse and neglect, and harmful traditions were recognized as contributing to the vulnerability of children. These traditions are seen in the form of early, forced and child marriages, as well as girls given in compensation to persons for offenses allegedly committed by a member of the family.

30 % of respondent agreed that domestic abuse and neglect including psychological and physical abuse is another reason for the occurrence of child sexual abuse. When children suffer abuse within their families' acceptance of abuse from other authoritative figures is most likely.

Second major vulnerable group identified was children who 'live or work on streets' by 31% respondents.

Street children can be found in most cities of Pakistan. Usually their age is above ten years and generally they are boys. They either come from large families which have moved to the city in search of economic opportunities, or they may have run away from home due to violence. They are often abused in order to survive pressures of peer groups and the need for earning money. These factors, including blackmail and consumerism, lead to child commercial sexual exploitation identified by 24% of respondents.

Another reason for child sexual abuse, as agreed by 20% of the respondents, is irresponsible sexual behavior, such as sexual experimentation and homosexuality. These factors are of special concern when adolescents are involved.

Orphans are another vulnerable group of children as stated by 16% of respondents. They are often burdened with economic needs, and can be in the care of adults who may not provide them with a protective environment.

Q. Should media highlight CSA cases

It is encouraging to see that the public opinion was overwhelmingly (69 %) in favor of the 'always' category for reporting of child sexual abuse cases* .

* Sahil's monitoring of national, regional and local press shows that out of all the coverage to social issues, only 5 % coverage in English newspapers and 20 % coverage in Urdu newspapers is given to child related issues including CSA cases.

Table 10 : Should media highlight CSA cases

Crime categories	Frequency	Percentage
Always	1387	61%
Rape/Sodomy Murder	187	9%
Molestation	178	8%
Gang Rape/Sodomy Murder	164	7%
Not at All	155	6%
Abduction	118	5%
Rape Sodomy	90	4%

Sahil Research 2007

NB. This is a multiple choice question and therefore the total responses are more than the number of respondents

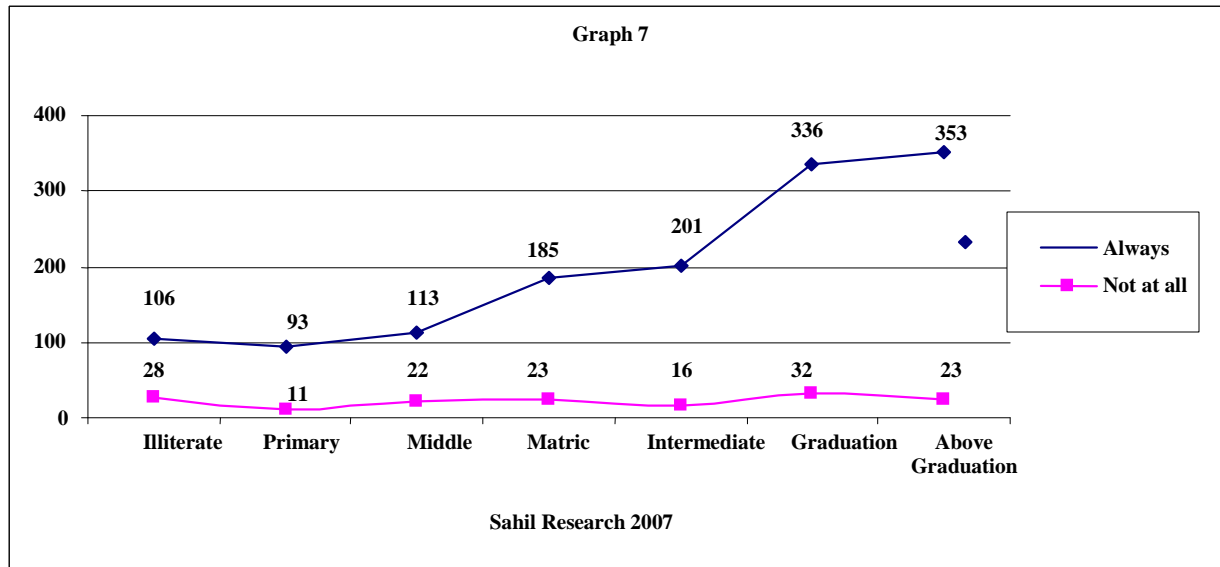
Respondents stated that these issues need to be taken up seriously by the media but in a responsible manner. There should be no identification of the victim and cases should not be sensationalized by using inappropriate descriptions.

A few respondents (6%) thought that media should not highlight these cases at all. They felt that media could not handle these cases without harming the victim.

A comment was that the child has given consent to the act, so it was not to be considered as a form of child sexual abuse. This belief is extremely damaging for children. It is a globally accepted fact that an adult is always responsible for this act, never the child.

A very small percentage (4 %) of respondents thought that only incidents of rape and sodomy should be reported.

Graph 7 Respondents' education in relation to selection of "always and 'not at all" in reference to media highlighting the cases of sexual abuse.



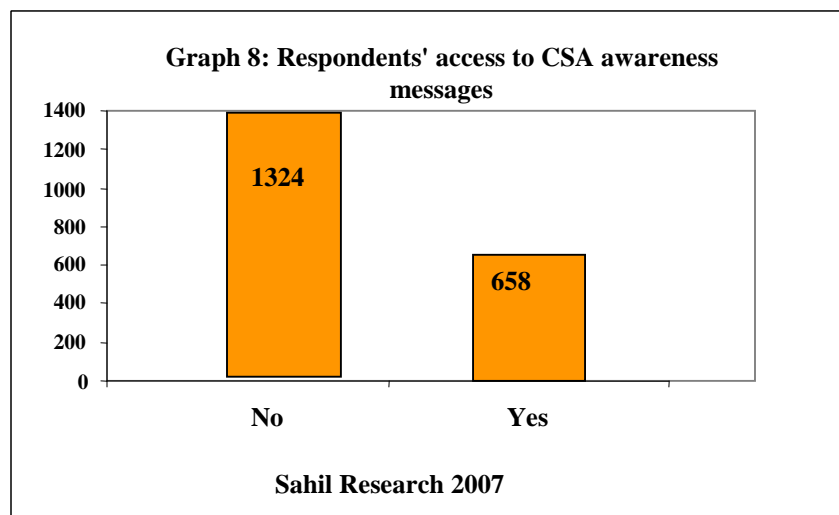
It is encouraging to see that the majority of the respondents have agreed with the ‘always’ option for reporting cases irrespective of their education.

The graph also shows that with the increase of education a larger group believes in media coverage of CSA cases.

Q: Have you seen or heard any awareness messages on CSA?

Respondents who had not seen or heard any awareness message on child sexual abuse were 67% whereas 33% had got information from different sources.

This response shows that the information on child sexual abuse is not publicly visible. The lack of provision of information can be seen across the media.



NB. This is a multiple choice question and therefore the total responses are more than the number of respondent

Out of 2000 respondents 758 persons, who had seen or heard awareness messages, the following sources are from which they had received the information.

The highest number of respondents (367) identified the ‘any other’ category as individuals who provided them with information. These individuals included were peer groups, elders, activists from NGOs. It is clear from this response that social relationships play a major role in information sharing.

Some commented that they have been experienced abuse themselves.

Pakistan, being a conservative society with a low literacy rate, gives preference to the transmission of information through the oral tradition. As a part of this tradition, literate persons in the community read out newspapers and magazine to large sectors of their community. This would than account for the second highest response of 194 respondents who have read and shared information.

Policies for electronic media, such as TV and radio, have had very strict censorship on sensitive social issues. However in recent years there has been a change and discussions and talk shows have taken place. A combined 20 % of respondents had received the message through television and radio.

Brochures/Flyers were identified by 19 respondents.

	Student	Unemployed / Housewife	Professional	Self employed	Employee	Laborer	Total
Any other*	54	18	95	36	120	44	367
Newspaper / Magazine	29	9	60	15	57	24	194
Television	21	4	32	14	43	13	127
Radio	3	1	6	4	2	10	26
Brochures / Flyers	3	2	10	0	3	1	19
Seminars / Workshops	3	0	6	0	6	2	17
Posters / Banners	1	0	3	2	0	2	8
Total	114	34	212	71	231	96	758

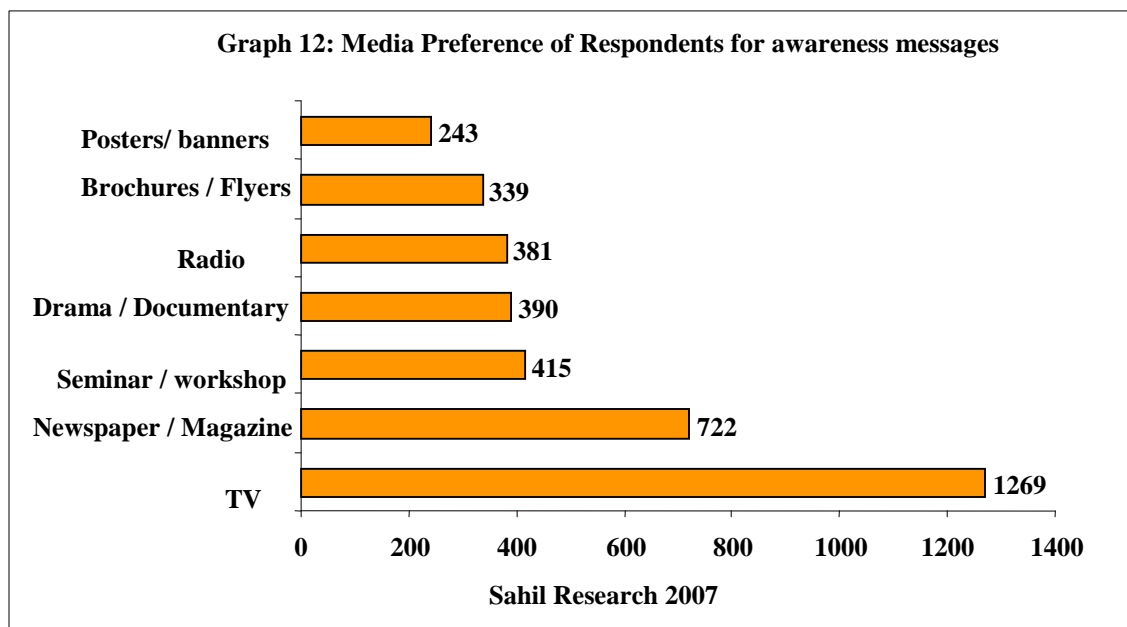
It could be said that seminars and workshops do not have much out reach as it was identified only by 17 respondents, possibly because these are not used for highlighting sensitive issues in public places.

The last option of posters and banners had only been seen by 8 respondents.

Q: Which form of media do you prefer for receiving an awareness message?

Mass media communication is developing rapidly in Pakistan. Almost every day new TV channels and FM radio stations are being launched. Electronic media is also functioning in the regional languages.

The media has become an increasingly integral part of dissemination of information and forming of public opinion in our society.



NB. This is a multiple choice question and therefore the total responses are more than the number of respondents.

The above figure indicates that the majority of the respondents (64%) have a preference for receiving information through television. Television also provides the best opportunity for giving information to people with poor literacy rates. Therefore it is imperative that television allots time, and provides opportunities for addressing sensitive social issues.

The second preference at 36% was for receiving information through newspapers / magazines. The strength of the print media is that it can be referred to over a longer period of time. It is also considered a reliable source of information.

Respondents felt that sensitive issues would be more acceptable in printed material.

The third choice for receiving information at 21% responses was seminars / work shops. Respondents felt that these sensitive issues can be discussed in detail at such forums.

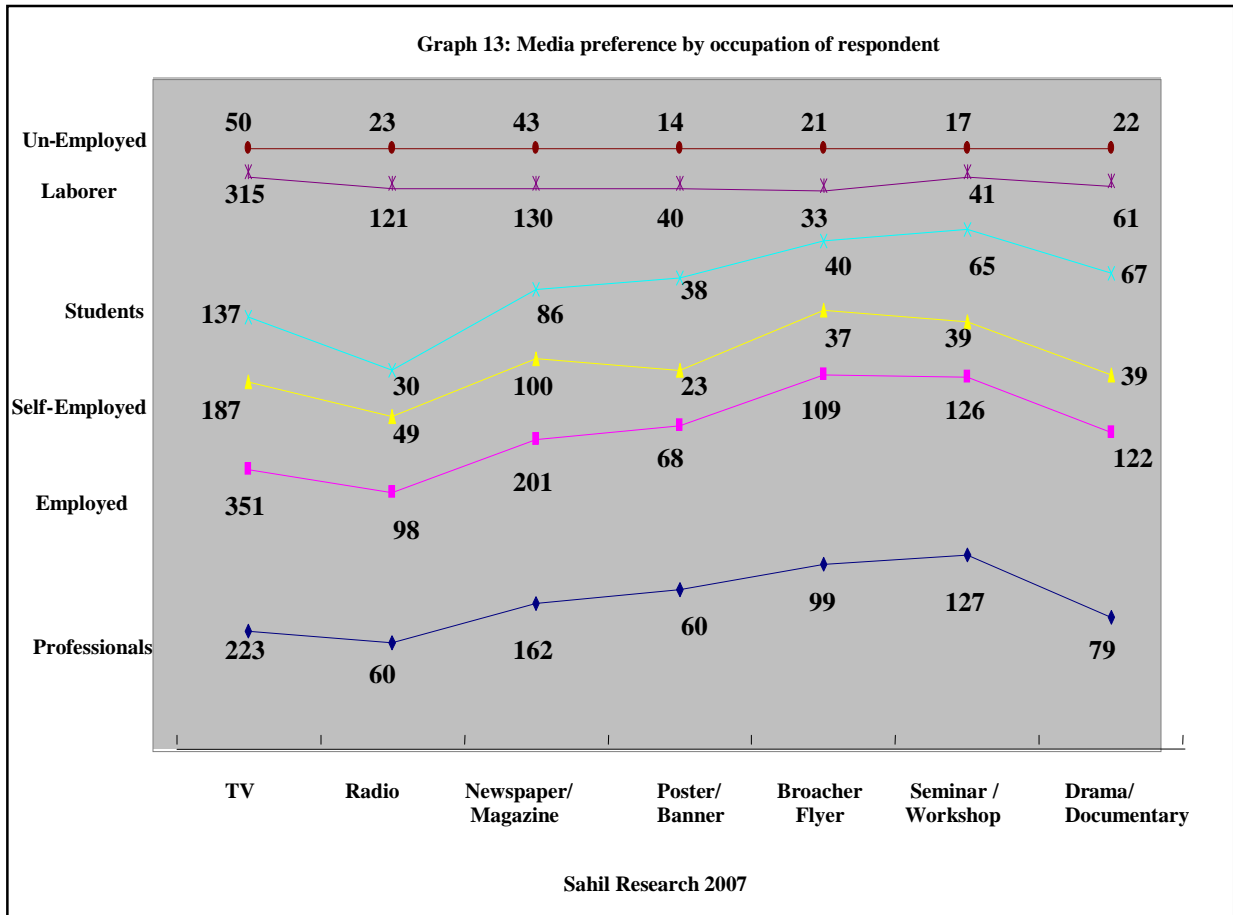
People rated ‘drama / documentary’ at 20% as the fourth option. The opinion of these respondents was that dramatization of this issue helps to encompass a holistic understanding of the problem.

Radio was selected by 19% respondents as a fifth option for receiving information. The mushroom growth of FM channels and the wide range of transmissions available make it an effective medium.

Respondents chose brochures / flyers as a sixth choice at 17%.

The last preference was for banners / posters quoted by 12% respondents.

Other comments by the respondents were that the affect of the mode and acceptance of the messages depended on literacy, easy access, purchase power, and appropriateness of content of the message.



The above analysis of medium preferences for information in relationship to the occupation of the respondents shows that television, newspaper / magazine, radio and

docudrama / documentary are the most preferred by employees and professionals. Their education and economic status gives them access to all these mediums.

Television is the preferred medium identified by the laborers (315). This shows that persons with low literacy levels give preference to messages on television.

Across the board, radio and newspapers are the second most identified choices of the respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➡ Sensitization on gender vulnerability to ensure protection to all children.
- ➡ Inclusion of education on child development in teachers' trainings curriculum for understanding behavior patterns.
- ➡ Articles of UN Child Rights Convention should be widely disseminated.
- ➡ Awareness raising of parents and communities for provision of a safe environment to children.
- ➡ Media to incorporate code of ethics for reporting.
- ➡ Encourage traditional and performing arts, including drama and street theatre, to raise general awareness of the issues.
- ➡ Sensitization of police and court officials on children's rights, relevant legislation. And the need for the special handling of children in legal and prison systems..
- ➡ Media highlight issues of vulnerable children.
- ➡ National Plan of Action for children must be implemented.

Sahil Code of ethics for reporting on CSA:

- ✓ Give priority and space to news related to child sexual abuse.
- ✓ Avoid gender discrimination and biasness when reporting on issues related to children.
- ✓ The abuser should be highlighted in the report.
- ✓ Name and picture of the victim should not be reported. A letter representing the name may be used.
- ✓ Names and occupation of the victim's parents should not be reported.

- ✓ Permission should be taken from the victim's family for publishing of any picture related to the incident.
- ✓ Investigative reporting should cross check the First Information Report (FIR) as a follow up for verification.
- ✓ Action against abuser should be highlighted.
- ✓ Maintain language ethics while reporting CSA.
- ✓ Avoiding derogatory remarks about victims and their families.
- ✓ Report to the Follow ups of CSA cases, especially court proceedings.
- ✓ Avoid sensational headlines and views.
- ✓ Newspapers should report following crime category, abuser category, age of victim/abuser, geographical area, and place of abuse and case status (FIR registration).

Media Ethics on reporting sexual abuse and exploitation of children by National Commission for Child Welfare and Development.

1. **Never identify through words or images a child who is or has been abused or exploited- you could be putting their life at stake.**

For example, the full-face photo of a young girl caught up in the sex trade not only violates the dignity of the child, it could be seen by a family member who might kill the child to 'save family honor', Children in most parts of the world face similar risks whether it is for family honor, to protect a pimp, or for various other reasons.

If you want to show images of children caught up in sex trade, crop the photos (masking is possible but risks de-humanizing the child); film from a distance or from behind. If you are writing, make sure names are changed and that this is stated in your copy.

2. **Never identify through words or images places where vulnerable children can be located- you might be leading abusers and exploiters to them.**

For example, publishing a photo of an area, street or shopping center where children are used as sex workers might be identified. Beginning a story, "In street No: 10 in ABC area of Lahore" is a picturesque way to begin a feature and as good as a map to a sex tourist.

3. **Don't suggest that children be caught in the sex trade unless you are certain they are.**

For example, children who live on the streets are certainly vulnerable to exploitation but they are not all necessarily being sexually exploited; don't print a photo of children on the street and caption it 'street sex worker. You could be putting these children at risk and you are, in any case, giving misleading information that an adult would sue you over.

4. **Don't suggest that all adults are abusers or exploiters.**

For example, a middle-aged man with a young boy on a street corner might just be father and son. Always check your facts while reporting on adults involving with children.

5. **Understand what sexual abuse and exploitation are about.**

For example don't over-use the word 'pedophile' this word relates to a specific group of (usually) men who have a psychological profile that includes sexual relations (of varying degrees) with a child below the age of puberty. Over-using this word hides the reality that

the majority of men who have sex with minors are ‘normal’ (non-pedophile) men who simply choose to do so.

This is important because we need to get our responses to the problem right if we are going to have an impact on it: in this case, governments as well as the public need to know that pedophiles are not the only threat to children- the ‘normal’ guy living next door might be a bigger threat. So do your research for using such word in stories.

6. **Be a caretaker of children who may need support**

You may well meet a young person who has been a victim of sexual abuse/exploitation and who wants to speak out. Many young people become effective activists and powerful speakers. Also, many organizations realize this and are sometimes too ready to ‘offer’ young people as ‘testimony’ to the press. Some of these young people do not realize the risk they may be running in allowing their identity/image to be revealed and the pressure that can arise out of even fleeting press interest and profile. This is a delicate issue and a young person must be allowed to express his/her own feelings in this matter. But you, as not only a journalist but as someone who safeguards the identity and security of sources/informants, must use your discretion and take care of the young person involved, including refusing to profile them if you believe that it is in their best interest. Please do not ever feel that his or her safety is someone else’s responsibility.

REFERENCES:

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www.prevent-abuse-now.com

Annexure 1

Research Locale

Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	Federal	AJK
Arifwala Atharan Hazari Bahawal Nagar Gujrat Jhang Jhelum kamokee Kasur Lahore Multan Muzzafar Ghar Raheem yar khan Rawalpindi Shaikhupura Taxila	Dadu Digri Gangu Jumma Hyderabad Johi Kandh Kot Kandian Karachi Kashmore Khaino Khair pur Khairpur-Mirs Larkana Matiari Mirpur Khas Mithi Moro Nawab Shah Rohri Shahdad kot Sharafabad/ Village Sukkur	Abbottabad Bannu Bunier Dir Dobion/ village Kunj Kadeem Qalandar abad Mandian Mirpur Lucky Marwat Mianawali Peshawar Saidu Shraif Salhad Shangla hill Swat Topi	Dhadar Jacobabad Jaffarabad Kohlu Nsirabad Queta Sibi Zoab	Islamabad	Kotli

Sahil Research 2007

Total questionnaires distributed: 3,000

Responses received: 2,000

Research Locale: 63