

INTERROGATING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SELECTED EPISODES OF *SAVDHAAN INDIA*

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Abstract

Child abuse is one of the forms of maltreatment such as physical, sexual, emotional and neglect by an adult, which is violent or threatening for the child. Many forms of child abuse has been ignored and avoided by parents, guardians, caretakers and society as a whole which led to severe consequences such as psychological and behavioral disorder including depression, delayed development, poor academic performance and even death also. Child labour, Child marriages and Child trafficking are also great threat to the lives of children in the society. All these issues regarding children need to be taken into consideration in order to provide safe and fearless environment to them. Child abuse is a serious global problem and it is the need of the hour to abolish it from the society. The study aims to critically analyze the episodes of Savdhaan India. The study focuses on why these issues do not come in front of society and what are the core reasons that lead to these issues against children. The study is conducted by analyzing the observational data collected from different episodes of Savdhaan India, to examine the measures taken by the government and NGOs. In order to eradicate these issues, crimes and violence there is need to raise awareness among society pertaining to Child abuse. It can be included in the body of knowledge to promote awareness and promote positive parenting practices.

IndexTerms: child abuse, child trafficking, psychological disorder, awareness and crime.

Introduction

Child abuse is one of the evils that have been prevailing in our society since long back. It is a global problem that has been paid very less attention by society in order to provide safe and secure life to children. It is increasing day by day and there is dire need to eradicate this issue pertaining to children by taking into consideration its reasons, consequences and measures. World Health Organization defines Child abuse as the transgression of child's basic rights. Child is affected by physical, emotional, sexual harm and neglected which ultimately damage child's health and mental development regarding relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Commercial or other exploitation also comes under child maltreatment.

Various forms of child abuse are as follows:

Physical abuse: It is one of the forms of child abuse which is defined as the harm that results in physical injury to a child. It includes the activities of burning, kicking, hitting and beating. Parents do not have any intention to physically abuse the child but due to over-discipline, they have imposed power on child which led to physical abuse (WHO, 1999).

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in the activity pertaining to sex. Often, elders are responsible for the sexual abuse. Due to vulnerable nature of children, perpetrators exploit them for pornographic performances, sodomy, rape, exhibitionism etc which cross the limit of laws (WHO, 1999).

Emotional abuse: It is defined as the failure on the part of parents or caregiver in order to support the child in its emotional and mental trauma. Mostly scolding by parents or any other person leads to psychological damage

and has a great impact on emotional health. Conflicts, dissatisfactions, repressions and frustrations make the child emotionally disturbed (WHO, 1999).

Neglect: It is the carelessness or inattention by the parents or caregiver in the supervision of child. Caregivers often not care for all around development of the child in the spheres: health, education, nutrition, emotional, safe living conditions. Due to this child's wellbeing, physical, mental, spiritual, ethical or social development suffers a lot (WHO, 1999).

In this era of technology, there evolves another kind of child abuse which is known as online abuse. In India, the risk of online abuse is increasing day by day as the children are more active on social media networks and exposed to mature content like pornography. Due to vulnerable nature children easily become the prey of abusers. According to Teens Tweens and Technology study 2015, conducted by Intel security 81 percent of Indian children who are active on social media network, aged between 8 to 16, about 22 percent of them are bullied online. The latest example of online abuse is the *Blue Whale Challenge*. It proves quite dangerous phenomenon which leads children to commit suicide in order to complete their challenge. It has been acknowledge that Russian social media started this challenge and gradually spread across the globe. Philipp Budeikin, psychologically manipulate the children to perform 50 tasks which ultimately lead to death (Dwilson, 2017).

Children remain quiet and do not reveal anything to their parents due to which most of the cases have not been reported to police stations. They do not disclose the issue because of fear and sometimes they do not know how to explain it to their parents and suffers a lot. To make this world a safer place for children, there is a need to take stern actions against the abusers and alert the children, parents, community and society as a whole in order to get rid of child abuse. Digital media plays a vital role in order to figure out severity in the amount of child abuse. Various shows pertaining crimes has been broadcasted on Television such as *Crime Patrol*, *CID*, *Satyamev Jayate* etc which discussed sensitive social issues of the country. And out of these crime shows one is the *Savdhaan India*. The study focuses on child abuse by critically analyzing select episodes of *Savdhaan India*. It has dramatizes real-life crime incidents in India. The main aim of the study is to promote awareness by collecting data and analyzing the reasons, impact and consequences in the selected episodes of *Savdhaan India*. Moreover it focuses on measures and initiatives to fight back against the child abuse. The study is based on the following research questions.

1. Why these issues do not come in front of society?
2. What are the reasons that lead to these issues?

The methodology used in this research is observational and analytical. The data of child abuse with respect to the episodes of *Savdhaan India* has been collected. Henceforth, the data has been analyzed to determine the causes of child abuse in India. Since, *Savdhaan India* dramatizes the actual incidents, it may be construed that it is a real data. Further, on the basis of the analysis, the study recommends the measures that may be taken to prevent child abuse in India.

A study conducted by The Ministry of Women and Child Development reports that 83% of children are facing emotional abuse by their parents. Also, it reported that 70.57% girl children face negligence by their family members. According to the study on Child Abuse: India 2007, sexual abuse of children in the state wise analysis revealed that Assam is at first rank in case of sexual abuse among children with 86.26% then next is the Andhra Pradesh with 72.83 percent of sexual abuse followed by Delhi and Bihar which have been reporting 72.26% and 67.64% respectively (MWCD, 2007). The states which are mentioned above has severe form of sexual abuse but one or other forms of sexual abuse with less severity are more prevalent yet they are not reported and just neglected. Due to the unawareness, most of the cases remain under the rug and constitute very low percentage. But nowadays, media has such a broad reach to rural and far- flung areas so that it promotes awareness among citizens. Because of awareness, there is an increase in reported cases about child abuse but still most of the victims, families or communities have not come out of it.

The research paper published in the *International Journal of Indian Psychology* stresses upon the substance abuse in India, titled as *Substance Abuse among Children: A Rising Problem in India* by Mr. Bhawani Singh Rathore, Dr. Uma Joshi and MS. Aditya Pareek. Nowadays, at a very early stage of life children become addict

to drugs. World Health Organization estimated that globally, 25-90 percent of street children have the addiction of substance abuse. Earlier, substance abuse was a problem of concern among street children, working children and trafficked children, but, now it seems to have great impact among the school going children who belong to different socioeconomic and educational status (Kailash, 2016). In India, around 5500 children start consuming tobacco products daily, and some as young as 10 years old (Saxena, Kishore and Kumar, 2010). The business of drug is the third largest business in the world. Abuses who consume drug and substance are struggling between life and death. Addiction of these things leads to bad behaviors like gambling, pick pocketing, stealing, fighting and self-harm. It sometimes leads to depression and suicide.

In the article, *Plight of street children: An explorative study from Varanasi, India*, Mona Srivastava, Nasra Shareef, focus on the condition of street children. They have been more exposed to exploitation and abuse. According to UNICEF, most of the street children are boys who do not get education and 72% of them follow in the age group of 6 to 12 years (P.66-69). These children do not have shelter and basic amenities. But according to last census of the government of India the numbers of street children were projected to 1.8 million, New Delhi; constitute twenty-three and twenty percent respectively (p.92-94). There were various types of abuses faced by street children such as common abuse and neglect, verbal abuse, physical abuse, health abuse, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. The study was conducted in Varanasi area, Uttar Pradesh area of India. Street children face social abuse which encompasses deprivation of child from food, living and education (p.64-66). A baseline survey was conducted from January 2014 to April 2014 in collaboration with the non-governmental organization working with the children. It has been estimated that 8.1% to 70% of street children were harassed by the police (p.907-913). Parents are also to blame for the exploitation of children because of the family violence. Many children were tricked by abusers and migrated to city. In this study sample, 12% children were kept as domestic servant, 21% children were dumped in small scale factories and 18% get the bread by working in the hotels and shops (p.92-94). These children have an addiction of smoking, chewing tobacco and bullies. The findings show that the plight of street children will not change if there is no awareness and studies are not being conducted to highlight their problems.

Neha Gupta and N.K. Aggarwal, in the study, titled *Child Abuse* explore the serious physical and psychological impact on the overall growth of a child. Emotional abuse becomes more prevalent in children than physical abuse and due to the emotional abuse children suffer from depression, think of suicidal attempt and become assailant. According to Indian child abuse statistics, India covers 40% of children population in the world. 69% of Indian children suffer from physical, emotional and sexual abuse. 70% of cases have not been reported and not even shared with parents. The study also shed light on the causes of child abuse. It may be the cause that the abuser in his/her childhood was the victim of child maltreatment. In some cases, abusers do not get proper education, attention and care by parents due to which they drag towards abuse. Children, who are immobilize are more prone to abuse.

The study also unfolds various reasons responsible for physical punishment such as lying, disrespect, disobedience and low performance. It is necessary to bear in mind that sometimes child suffers from more than one abuse and on the other side parents do not show concern for the child. They use physical force in order to correct the child's behavior and as a result wide gap occurs in their relationships. But it is essential to realize that children are at great risk and need full support of family members, community and society. Child abuse can be controlled by strengthening families, creating supportive communities and prevention programs.

Critical analysis

In an episode no.1, season 34 of *Savdhaan India*, telecasted on 23 July 2012; a child commits suicide due to the pressure from an unforgiving education system. A thirteen years old boy named Amol is the only child of his parents. He denies attending the class and even not ready to go to school. But his parents tell that there should not be any bunking of class. It is analyzed that due to the fear of teacher the child does not want to go to school. Teacher has created such a fearful milieu in the classroom which adversely affects the child's mental, physical and emotional health. Due to unbearable pressure students suffer from stress; feelings of sadness and worthlessness, outbursts of aggression develop low self-esteem, intense dislike of authority and suicidal thoughts. In the episode Amol also faces such type of sufferings and does not tell anything to his parents which

results in great loss to his dear mother and father. It has been noticed that children do not share their problem with their family members due to the fear of teacher's aggressiveness about complaint. Sometimes even parents do not take the matter seriously and says that it is all about their well-being and progress. One day, unknowingly Amol has not done his homework. He tries to copy it from his friend but unfortunately teacher has caught him and brutally beats with the stick which frightens other students. Teacher forces Amol to write "I am a cheater" (00:15:49-00:15:51) on the board until he has not asked the child to stop and also undressed him in front of his classmates. The little child does not bear such an insult and commits suicide. Before committing suicide, he writes to his parents that he is not a cheater and will forgive him. It has been observed that in order to maintain discipline and their authority on students, teachers imply harsh punishment and strictness irrespective of what will happen to a child.

Police registered case as his parents want justices for their child. When it has been investigated from the students, nobody tells anything due to the fear of teacher. Even his fast friend doesn't disclose the incident because of threat given by teacher. In the investigation from the teacher, he says that their son had severe psychological problem and not take interest in studies. But endless efforts of his parents bring forth the reality of the crime in front of everyone. His friend discloses the whole incident in front of media and the accused gets the punishment of his deed.

In order to control these issues, there is a great need to have a friendly environment in the classrooms so that students can be able to communicate with teacher and fearlessly tell their problems regarding studies or anything else. Teachers must have adequate training to control and maintain discipline of class without the use of force and aggressive techniques. There can be no development and enhancement in his/her reasoning ability if he or she suffers from phobia. A better learning can only be possible in a fearless classroom in which students are also obedient to teachers. There must be a positive interaction between students, teachers and parents.

Various laws, rules and commissions have been formulated by government in order to provide safe and secure environment to children. Child Welfare Committee helps to provide protection to the child. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. The commission help the parents in order to provide justice to child but these commission needs legitimate proof against perpetrators. According to IPC section 83, it is considered a crime to give corporal punishment to a child who has not done homework or has not dressed in proper uniform (WBX Press Community, 2012).

In an episode no. 2299, season 2 of Savdhaan India, telecasted on 22 November 2017; menace of child trafficking has been highlighted. In the episode, a child trafficker disguises others as a caretaker. He runs a child trafficking organization in the name of an orphanage. Raju, a boy is one of the victims who have been kidnapped on the order of a caretaker named as Kalpesh. He has great affection with his family, especially with his son, Bittu. It has been analyzed that he has done all this in the greed of money. Greed is one of the reasons that render the child as a victim in the hands of child abusers. Most of the children have been trafficked for child labour, sexual slavery and extraction of body parts. Also, it is observed that most of the children who are homeless become the prey of kidnappers and then they force them to beg. In the episode, Raju runs away from kidnappers and while running in fear he collides with Kalpesh's wife and gets unconscious. She carries the child along with her and suggests him to stay with them until they get the address of his home, where he becomes the fast friend of his only son. Kalpesh wants to kidnap the child again and he succeeds in his plan. Kalpesh's family worried about the child. The children who have been kidnapped are often starved that they will look poor, weak and get more donations from people. It is the greed of the people which leads to child abuse. Due to the name and fame in the society nobody comes to know about the reality of Kalpesh, everyone pays him great respect as a social worker or caretaker. Most of the cases do not come in front because it becomes difficult to recognize the person as a child abuser due to the mask of caretaker or social worker on his face. Not only Kalpesh, but so many people run one or the other racket in the country on the name of social organization. So, people need to be aware and alert, must not believe anyone with closed eyes. Incidentally, Kalpesh's son finds Raju begging on the road, Bittu tells him to come back to his home but he denies. Raju suggest him to return, otherwise he will also be in danger and then ran away. But Bittu traces his way and with

his adventure come to know the reality. Next day, Bittu reaches at the place in order to save Raju and also wants to stop his father from committing the sin. He tells Raju to run away and he surely comes back after meeting his father. Now, he cleverly enters the room where kidnapped children have been kept. On the other side, Raju informed his mother and when his father comes to know that the police have come to Orphanage in order to investigate. He orders the kidnapper to put all the children in a vehicle and in the forest; vehicle will be set at ablaze. And then he replaces other children in the Orphanage. But in the greed of Kalpesh his own son would be in danger of death. When he comes to know about his son through Raju and his wife, he reached at the spot and save his son and other children. Police have arrested the Kalpesh for his heinous crime.

It can be controlled if strict laws have been imposed on child traffickers. Government should strictly prohibit giving alms to the children. Instead of alms, it must provide shelter, food and clothes to the poor children. It has been possible with the help of NGOs and with the donation of people in order to protect and save the homeless children. Children playing in the street have been trafficked by strangers so parents must be alert and careful towards the children. It is their duty to take care of the child and let the child to know, not to go anywhere with any strangers who either by force or by being tricked, kidnapped the child.

In an episode no.2257, season 2 of *Savdhaan India*, telecasted on 11 October 2017; Seema, a student of 12th class gets pulled into the social media popularity race. She wonders when she hears news about the death of her friend. Online abuse among children is reaching its height. Students or children are among the active users of social networking. In the episode, Seema wants to become popular as she has been impressed with the popularity of her classmate named as Rocky. Seema's friend Jyoti suggests her to purchase new mobile with fantastic features and upload the photos and videos which will make her star overnight. To become famous, having more likes and to become internet sensation overnight is the reason which leads the children to get trap in online abuse which even results in death. Money is another reason for uploading sensational videos as in the episode Rocky, in the greed of money presents an offer to Seema to make an attempt of committing suicide and promise her that in return she will become popular and get more than one lakh likes on her video. It has been observed that craze for likes and comments make children excited to do something different and distract them from study. In the episode, as her friend Jyoti stops her from doing this, another classmate named as Kishore beats Seema very badly. At the moment Rocky make the video and upload it on the net as he will get money from it. After this, they confess that it is just a prank in order to make video which becomes viral very fast. It becomes news and Kishore gets suspended from school. Then Seema and Kishore decide to tell the truth of video. But before the truth is revealed, Kishore has commit suicide. Actually it was murder done by Rocky in order to protect himself and later Seema, in order to provide justice to Kishore proves Rocky as murderer and surrender him to police.

This abuse increases as the parents do not know in which way their children make use of the internet. For this issue parents also need to learn about the advanced technology. Mobile itself is not bad or good, it depends on user that either he or she uses it for good purpose or bad one. It has been analyzed that too much use of social networking sites by children bring change in their behavior as Seema in the episode give rude responses to her mother. Sleep deprivation due to the late night use of mobile and psychological distressed are the ill effects on child's health. It has been noticed that valediction through internet i.e. photos and videos are posted which led children towards crime. There is need to set up restrictions and rules to help protect them from these abuses. Age limit for children should be set up by the sites for mature content.

In an episode no.2171, season 73 of *Savdhaan India*, telecasted on 18 July 2017; two children Yash and Mini, are sexually assaulted by their own family member i.e. by uncle Luthra, a famous doctor. He has great name and fame in the society. It has been noticed that not only girls are the victim of child sexual abuse but boys also. In the episode, Uncle Luthra most of the times lives with the family of his younger brother, who has two children, Mini and Yash. Mini has a problem of stammering because she scared from everyone except his brother. It is analyzed that the reason of her stammering is the fear that has been cultivated by her Uncle. Also, her brother Yash has an addiction of smoking. Smoking is one of the ways for him to placate himself. Both these children are sexually assaulted and threaten by their uncle, a pedophile, when their parents are not at home. Mini tries to tell her mother the sufferings that she faces but her mother is not ready to listen anything

about the matter. Instead of listening, she scolds her and says that “*Bado ke baara me aise kahte hai!*”(00:38:45-00:38:49). It has been observed that due to the culture of obeying the elders, the voice of children has been subjugated and muted. They must have freedom to speak and to raise an objection to the wrong deeds. In the episode, Mini’s mother ignores her and shuts her mouth which results in stammering and low self- esteem. In the same way, Yash also suffers from anxiety, poor self- esteem and conduct disorder but his parents do not bother about it. He is often beaten by his father when he refuses to obey his uncle and ultimately results in an addiction to smoking. Due to the culture of silencing, lack of attention, love and care by the parents, children suffer psychologically and distract from their path. Parents considered the child sexual abuse as a matter of defame due to which most of the cases yet not reported and the issues do not come in front of society. But in the episode, children fight for themselves. Their uncle becomes so frightened and mentally disturbed by the messages, phone calls and posters planed by the children to libel him. Moreover, they reveal everything about the uncle and hand him over to police. It is analyzed that in order to minimize it there is a need of breaking the silence and report to police.

Government and NGOs also helps a lot in order to overcome these crimes. Due to the increased rate of child sexual abuse, the government of India has passed a particular law called, ‘The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) 2012’. This law takes into account the acts of sexual assault, stalking, pornography, electronic contact or sexual cyber bullying etc. According to section 19, it is mandatory to report child sexual abuse by their closed one and as a result of failure to do so, six months imprisonment or fine has been sanctioned.

Conclusion

Child abuse is a menace which widespread all over the globe; whether it is India, China, Syria or any other country, children are one or the other way victims of human deeds. Children suffer from different kinds of abuses i.e. sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Child labour, Child marriages and child trafficking are serious threat to their lives. As a social problem, it is the responsibility of every individual to take into consideration this social evil and contribute their every possible effort in order to eradicate it. Government and NGOs try to minimize the acts of child abuse and neglect but besides that there must need community coordination and participation of everyone to save the life of children. Many scholarly and critical articles also help us to understand the extent of child abuse in our country. The main objective is to promote awareness among the society by analyzing the reasons, impacts and consequences in the selected episodes of *Savdhaan India*. The methodology employed is observational and analytical. Data has been collected by observing and analyzing the real-incidents of *Savdhaan India*. It helps out to understand various facets of the society and thus, making alert and vigilant about the crime. Greed, pressure of study and popularity race are some of the reasons that leave the children undone and even compel them to take a drastic step of committing suicide. And it is the need of the hour to raise our voice against this cruelty of the society.

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