Child Sexual Abuse:
Who else is responsible for the predicament?
Adolescent's Perspective

By: Sarah Mumtaz and Azka Ali

Discussion paper produced under the Youth Innovation Research Challenge

Abstract

The purpose of the research was to find out the perceptions of adolescents, from both public and private sector schools, about education on Child Sexual Abuse. The purpose provided the context to take mythological decisions in solving the problem, thus quantitative research method was used for objectivity and generalization of the results. The study was conducted to investigate the variables—role of parents (RP), role of school (RS), role of friends (RF), role of internet (RI), and protection against child sexual abuse (PCSA)— that contribute to the control of child sexual abuse (CSA) and to determine the predictive value of parental factor in protecting against child sexual abuse (CSA). The sample comprised of 200 students (100 male and 100 female) from four high schools (2 private schools, 2 public schools). The instrument was a questionnaire for students comprising 31 questions. Data analysis was performed through SPSS 25; descriptive analysis and regression analysis were performed to answer research questions. The findings supported the hypothesis that the variables—role of parents (RP), role of school (RS), role of friends (RF), role of internet (RI)— contribute as protection against child sexual abuse (PCSA). The findings also confirmed the predictive value of the factor, Role of Parents (RP), as it was found as the strongest predictor to control child sexual abuse (CSA). It was recommended that parents shall break the silence and play their role in educating their children regarding sex education to control child sexual abuse; moreover, policy makers shall make sex education a part of the curriculum in high schools of Pakistan to create awareness at the broader society.

Literature Review

The issue regarding Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) exists in developing countries predominantly because of the lack of education. Due to an already low literacy rate, one cannot expect the efforts to improve the otherwise ignored issue of sex education in countries like Pakistan, where the current illiteracy rate is 37pc according to the Ministry of Education.

Literature review (Granich, Jabeen, Omer, & Arshad, 2021; Tabassum & Tabassum, 2022)accentuated the prevalence of CSA. Most of the studies reported that abusers are the primary factor contributing to CSA and recommended suggestions to control this variable; however, the existing level demands revisiting the problem and finding out whom else is responsible for the predicament alongside the abuser. Controlling the increasing percentage of primary abusers is not questioned in this research, rather directing the behaviors and attitudes of the parents as the main guardians is in question for the ideal outcome.

In Pakistan, this topic is under-researched. Collecting information from the adolescents on such a sensitive issue has suffered on cultural grounds whereby the beliefs and values considered it unethical to disclose the adolescents' perceptions and experiences in a shared conversation as it is treated as a taboo which further impacts negatively on the larger society.

It is this lack of awareness within society that should be held accountable alongside the abuser, and efforts to further this cause can help potentially reduce CSA cases. The more the adolescents would be educated of their physical and psychological sexualities through directed efforts of the parents, the more precautious they would be to handle the issue healthily and decently to safeguard themselves (Rudolph,

Zimmer-Gembeck, Shanley, & Hawkins, 2018; Tarar, Naomi, & Khan, 2020). Unfortunately, this delicate issue is left to be explored by the children themselves, mostly through friends resulting in immature opinions (Powers, Ressler, & Bradley, 2009). These opinions are further reshaped by exploring the content, voluntarily or involuntarily, through unguarded usage of the internet as a source of information (Bursztein, Clarke, DeLaune, Elifff, Hsu, Olson, & Bright, 2019), thus resorting the child to traumatic isolation. The researchers considered the role of parents and/or guardians to control the increasing percentage of child sexual abuse (Ashcraft & Murray, 2017; Rudolph, Zimmer-Gembeck, Shanley, & Hawkins, 2018; Jones & Ramchandani, 2019). The next factor that becomes relevant would naturally be of the adolescent's teachers, as they are an additional source of knowledge and education alongside parents and/or guardians. The teachers' treatment of sex education would further play an important role in the child's understanding of sensitive issues like sexual violence – side-stepping the topic or not emphasizing on the severity and reality of sexual violence will not prove to be enough for the prevention of Child Sexual Abuse as adolescents need to be taught about it at length. (Márquez-Flores, Márquez-Hernández, & Granados-Gámez, 2016). Additionally, adolescents, particularly school fellows, oftentimes go through puberty together as they are age-mates. This sense of mutual friendship encourages sexual talk and jokes since everyone is going through a similar phase – this proves to be another pivotal factor in the exposure and understanding of sexual content (Banyard, Moynihan, Walsh, Cohn, & Ward, 2010). Indecent, immature, and childishly crude conversation can solidify similar ideals regarding sex education and, by extension, sexual assault and violence. Such immature and inadequate sources of sex education also include the Internet and the content consumed by adolescents online. The effects and ramifications of unsupervised exposure to the Internet add to the complexities resulting in further anxiety by internalizing the gathered information leading to misconceptions (Rimer, 2019). Unguarded and indecent sources of information often lead to the pervasiveness of Child Sexual Abuse.

Much has been reverberated in the intellectual conversation (Kamiya, Timonen, & Kenny, 2016; Assink, van der Put, Meeuwsen, de Jong, Oort, Stams, & Hoeve, 2019) regarding the spread of CSA, physical and mental challenges of the victims, and health problems of the abused; however, the ontological turn in the thinking process demands to find ways on how to reduce the problem rather than merely measuring the level of problem (Khanjari, Modabber, Rahmati, & Haghani, 2017). The research goal is to investigate where the gap exists in solving the issue at hand, why it exists, and what we can do to overcome this.

Research Questions

The research framed following questions and the sub-questions to seek answers for the study while using quantitative research method.

1. What factors contribute to Child Sexual Abuse?

2. What is the predictive value of the parental factor as a contributing variable in reducing Child Sexual Abuse?

Problem Statement

The study was conducted to investigate the variables—role of parents (RP), role of school (RS), role of friends (RF), role of internet (RI), and protection against child sexual abuse(PCSA)—that contribute to the control of child sexual abuse (CSA) and to determine the predictive value of parental factor in protecting against child sexual abuse (CSA).

Delimitation of the study

The study was delimited to:

- Only high school located in Lahore district

- Only registered students at the time of study

Research Design

The study was quantitative in nature.

Population and Sampling

All male and female students of public and private high schools from Lahore, Pakistan, were the population of the study.

Through criterion sampling two grades (Grade 9 and Grade 10), with the criteria of being adolescents and having been through puberty, were selected for the study. Through random sampling, section A from each grade was selected. Student sampling was proportionate as the researchers collected responses of 100 students from each school (2 private schools, 2 public schools). Overall, 200 students (100 male and 100 female) from four high schools were selected for the study.

Instrument

A questionnaire, comprising 31 questions, for students was used to collect information.

Data Collection Process

Data were collected personally and with the help of 2 volunteers (trained for the purpose). The researchers approached the school administration through formal permission. Data about the number

of sections in each grade (Grade 9 and 10) were collected to finalize the participants. The selected sample was given an orientation (15 minutes) to share the purpose of the research. An attempt was made to make all the participants comfortable, so that they could provide true perceptions without any pressure. Researchers informed the participants prior hand that the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses will be ensured.

Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion

All the collected data were cleaned, organized, and stored through SPSS version 25. Descriptive analysis was performed at the first level. Means, percentages, and standard deviations were calculated to answer Research Q:1. The inferential analysis was performed at the second level and advanced statistical technique i-e., regression analysis was applied to get answers to the research Q:2.

Demographic Analysis

To get descriptive statistics, frequency analysis in the form of percentage was applied which is reflected in the given details:

Demography Related to University and Program

Data were collected from four schools (2 public and 2 private) of Lahore, Pakistan. To protect anonymity of the schools, they were assigned pseudonyms as PR1, PR2, PB1, PB2 in data analysis. Total sample size comprised of 200 students.
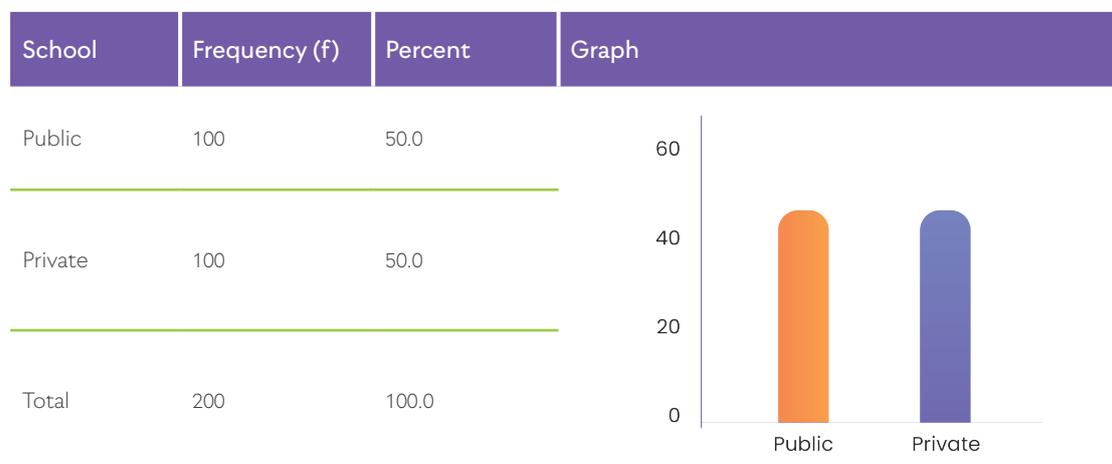
School	Frequency (f)	Percent	Graph
Public	100	50.0	
Private	100	50.0	
Total	200	100.0	

Table1: Demographic Distribution of data by School-Type

School-type data were collected from 2 public and 2 private schools.

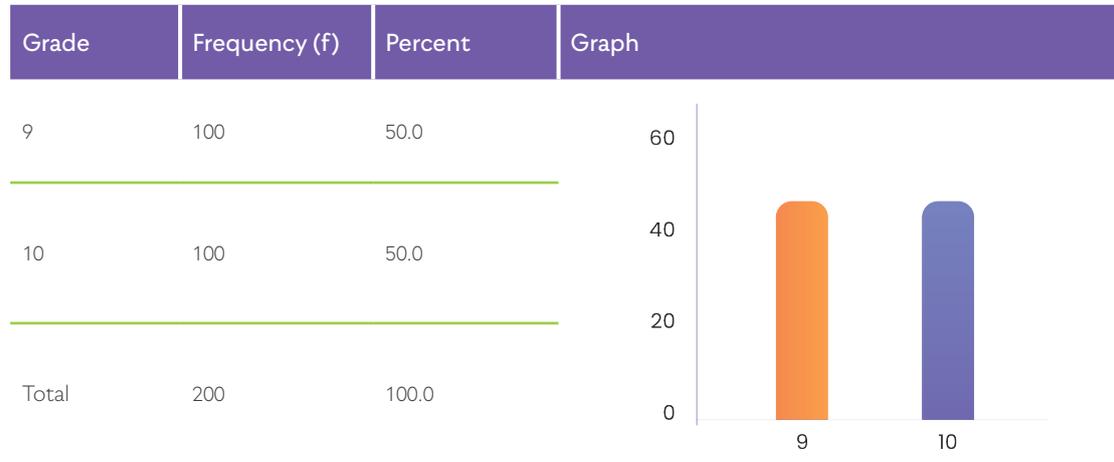| Grade	Frequency (f)	Percent	Graph
9	100	50.0	
10	100	50.0	
Total	200	100.0	

Table2: Demographic Distribution of data by Grade

Data were collected from 200 students, 9th grade (100 students) and 10th grade (100 students).

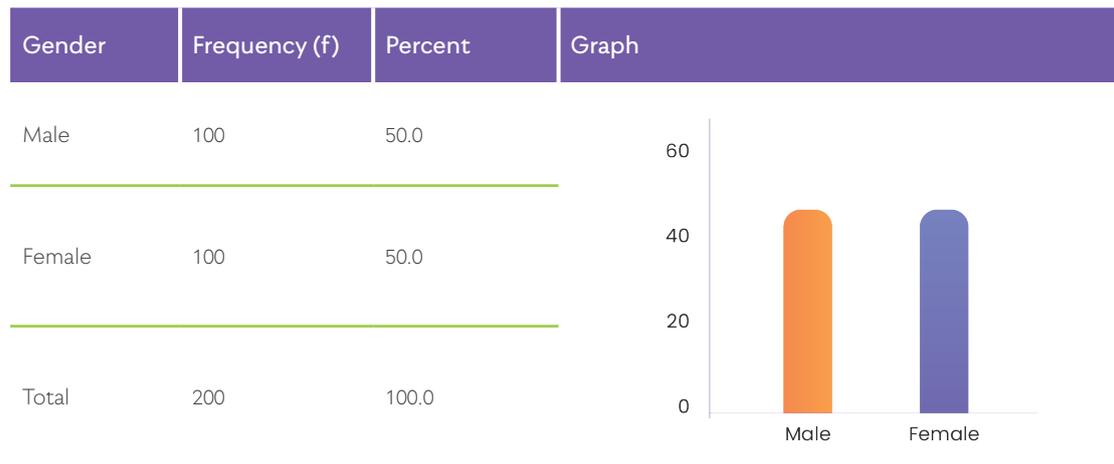| Gender	Frequency (f)	Percent	Graph
Male	100	50.0	
Female	100	50.0	
Total	200	100.0	

Table3: Demographic Distribution of data by Gender

Data were collected from 100 male and 100 female students, accumulating to 200 students.

Statements	No		Yes	
	f	%	f	%
Live-Father	6	3.0	194	97.0
Live-Mother	6	3.0	194	97.0
Live-Stepfather	198	99.0	2	1.0
Live-Stepmother	197	98.5	3	1.5
Live-Other	198	99.0	2	1.0

Table4: Descriptive Analysis (Live-with)

The descriptive analysis reflected that most of the students (97%) lived with their birth parents.

Descriptive Statistics of Factors of the Study

The purpose of factor wise descriptive analysis was to explore the perceptions of students on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). To get descriptive statistics, item-wise frequency analysis in the form of percentage was applied while selecting all items from all (5) factors: parents, school, friends, internet, protection.

The scale for the study was constructed on five point Likert-scale. Items on all constructs used the response options as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The tables and graphs show difference in perception in the 5 categories as used originally in the questionnaire. The details are explained below.

Factor: Role of Parents (RP)

The factor: Role of Parents (RP) consisted of 9 items to measure students' perceptions on CSA. Descriptive statistics for the factor RP spotlighted that a majority 96%, 97%, 91%, 91%, 83%, and 73% of

the respondents disagreed with the items father comfortable, father educated, talked, abused by family, mother educates, and mother comfortable respectively.

State-ments	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Talked	89	44.5	94	47.0	4	2.0	7	3.5	6	3.0
Abused by Family	83	41.5	99	49.5	5	2.5	12	6.0	1	0.5
Encouraged to tell	44	22.0	108	54.0	10	5.0	31	15.5	7	3.5
Discouraged to tell	47	23.5	72	36.0	8	4.0	40	20.0	33	16.5
Father comfortable	128	64.0	65	32.5	2	1.0	3	1.5	2	1.0
Mother comfortable	63	31.5	83	41.5	4	2.0	37	18.5	13	6.5
Mother educates	63	31.5	103	51.5	4	2.0	30	15.0	0	0
Father educates	108	54.0	86	43.0	5	2.5	1	0.5	0	0
Should talk	10	5.0	10	5.0	66	33.0	114	57.0	0	0

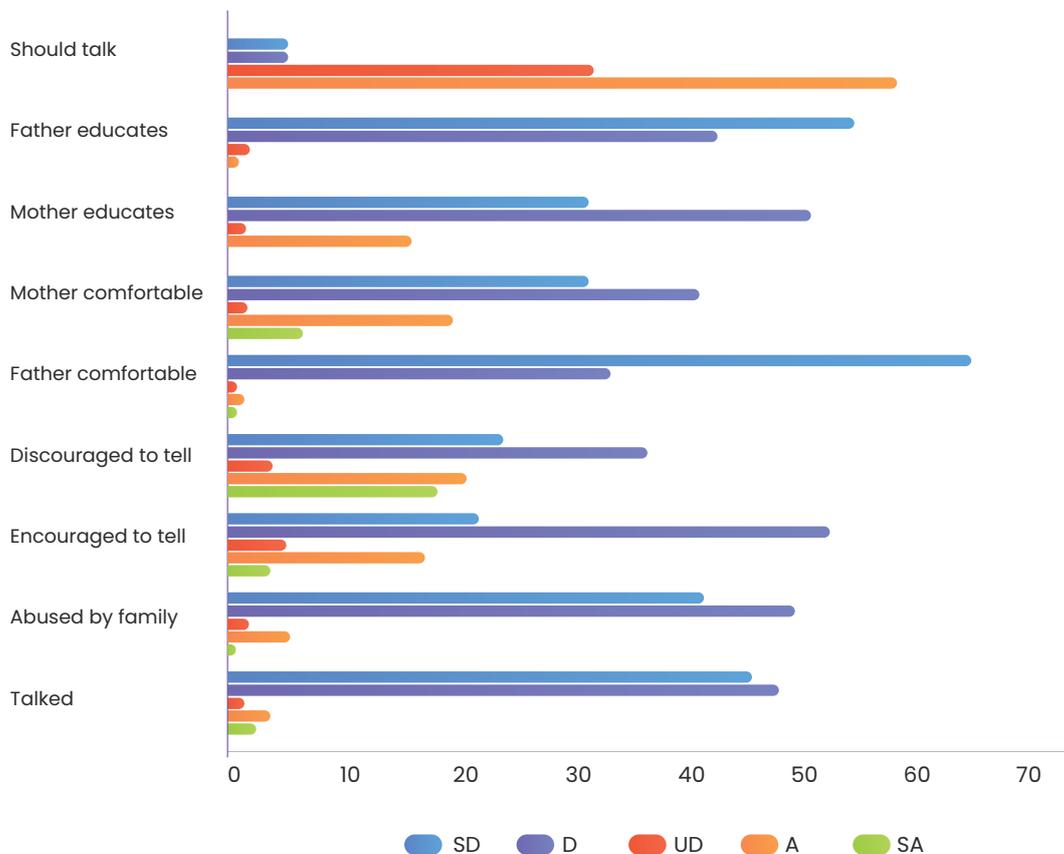Table5: Descriptive Analysis: Role of Parents

Role of Parents

Figure1: Descriptive Analysis (Role of Parents)

Visual representation accentuated that a reasonable percentage (57%) of the students agreed with the item that parents should talk to their children about sexual abuse and these findings corroborated the previous research (Khanjari, Modabber, Rahmati, & Haghani, 2017; Rudolph, Zimmer-Gembeck, Shanley, & Hawkins, 2018).

Factor: Role of School (RS)

The factor: Role of School (RS) consisted of 5 items to measure students' perceptions on CSA. Descriptive statistics for the factor RS spotlighted that a majority 100%, 100%, 92%, and 92%, of the respondents disagreed with the items counselling, taught, and teachers comfortable respectively. Visual representation accentuated that a reasonable percentage (92.5%) of the students agreed with the item that sex education should be made a regular part of curriculum at schools. The results complemented the research findings (Márquez-Flores, Márquez-Hernández,& Granados-Gámez, 2016) that the teachers' knowledge and beliefs about sex education should be reshaped to influence the adolescents' behavior and attitude towards child sexual abuse.

State-ments	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Taught	116	58.0	84	42.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers comfort-able	105	52.5	79	39.5	6	3.0	10	5.0	0	0
Teachers help	93	46.5	91	45.5	9	4.5	7	3.5	0	0
Counsel-ing	122	61.0	78	39.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Curricu-lum	2	1.0	11	5.5	2	1.0	77	38.5	108	54.0

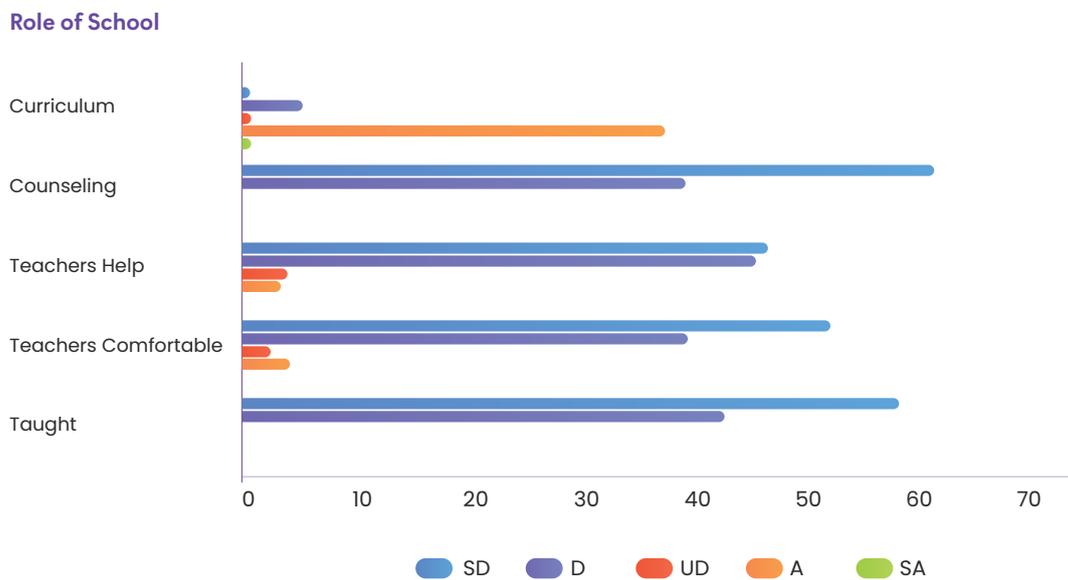Table6: Descriptive Analysis: Role of School

Role of School

Figure2: Descriptive Analysis (Role of School)

Factor: Role of Friends (RF)

The factor: Role of Friends (RF) consisted of 7 items to measure students' perceptions on CSA. Descriptive statistics for the factor RF highlighted that a majority 77.5%, 66%, and 59% of the respondents disagreed with the items friends help, comfortable friends, and inappropriate encouragement respectively. The findings match with the previous studies (Reitsema & Grietens, 2016; Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019) and spotlighted the inappropriate behaviors of the peers at school in handling CSA. As the adolescents are of the same age group, their immature conversation on CSA has more negative consequences than positive: exploring the sexual content on internet in isolation, getting depressed and isolated, adopting aggressive and violent behaviors etc.

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Friends help	73	36.5	82	41.0	7	4.5	27	13.5	9	4.5
Learned	36	18.0	51	25.5	4	2.0	58	29.0	51	25.5
Appropriate	53	26.5	72	36.0	7	3.5	39	19.5	29	14.5
Educational	53	26.5	72	36.0	7	3.5	39	19.5	29	14.5
Regret	44	22.0	83	41.5	5	2.5	44	22.0	24	12.0
Inappropriate encouragement	54	27.0	64	32.0	1	0.5	36	18.0	45	22.5
Comfortable friends	69	34.5	63	31.5	0	0	50	25.0	18	9.0

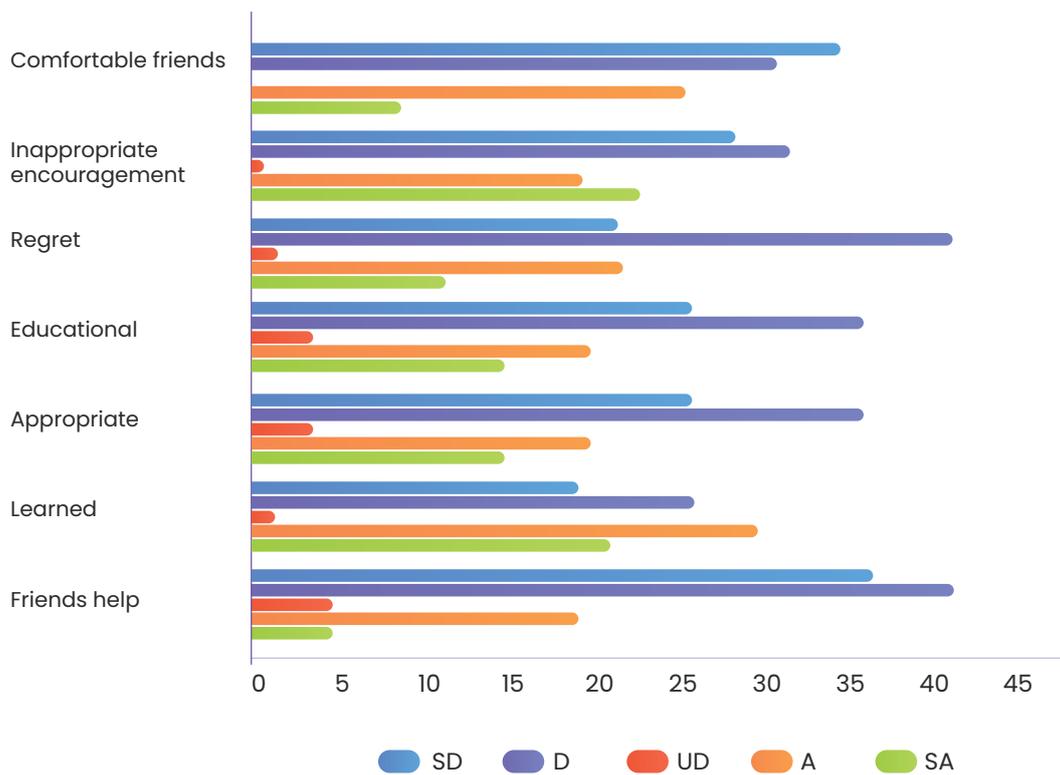Table7: Descriptive Analysis: Role of Friends

Role of Friends

Figure3: Descriptive Analysis (Role of Friends)

Factor: Role of Internet (RI)

The factor: Role of Internet (RI) consisted of 6 items to measure students' perceptions on CSA. Descriptive statistics for the factor RI spotlighted that a majority 64%, 74%, 64.5%, and 57.5%, of the respondents disagreed with the items active search, influenced by someone, learned, and knowledge influenced respectively. Visual representation reflected that a reasonable percentage (60%) of the students agreed with the item that they had to use internet as a source to learn about sex education because no other source was available for guidance. The results confirmed the findings on the topic (Bartels & Merdian, 2016; Kim, Park, & Park, 2017; Bursztein, Clarke, DeLaune, Elifff, Hsu, Olson, & Bright, 2019) that internet gave indecent exposure to the adolescents which negatively tempted them for involvement in sexual activities.

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learned	52	26.0	77	38.5	2	1.0	42	21.0	27	13.5
Knowledge influenced	48	24.0	67	33.5	6	3.0	46	23.0	33	16.5
Active search	77	38.5	51	25.5	1	0.5	37	18.5	34	17.0
Influenced by someone	66	33.0	82	41.0	5	2.5	21	10.5	26	13.0
Internet Ads	16	8.0	20	10.0	4	2.0	74	37.0	86	43.0
Education	32	16.0	45	22.5	3	1.5	47	23.5	73	36.5

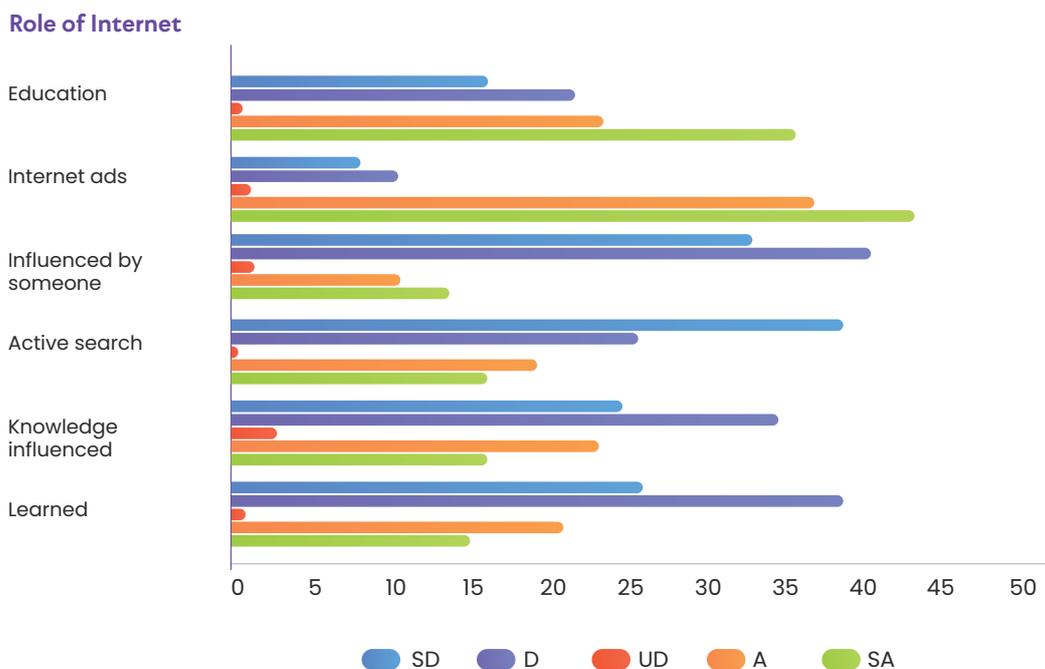Table8: Descriptive Analysis: Role of Internet

Role of Internet

Figure4: Descriptive Analysis (Role of Internet)

Factor: Protection against CSA (PCSA)

The factor: Protection against CSA consisted of 4 items to measure students' perceptions on CSA. Descriptive statistics for the factor PCSA spotlighted that a majority 82%, 80%, 88.5%, and 79.5%, of the respondents agreed with the items willing to discuss, guided, aware, and open communication respectively. Visual representation demonstrated that a vast majority of the students wanted to be aware of the sex education to safeguard themselves better against CSA. They were willing to be guided by the parents regarding sex education for mature handling of the sensitive issue.

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Guided	8	4.0	34	17.0	0	0	89	45.5	69	34.5
Aware	4	2.0	19	9.5	0	0	81	40.5	96	48.0
Open Com	12	6.0	29	14.5	0	0	67	33.5	92	46.0
Willing to discuss	14	7.0	22	11.0	0	0	91	45.5	73	36.5

Table9: Descriptive Analysis: Protection against CSA
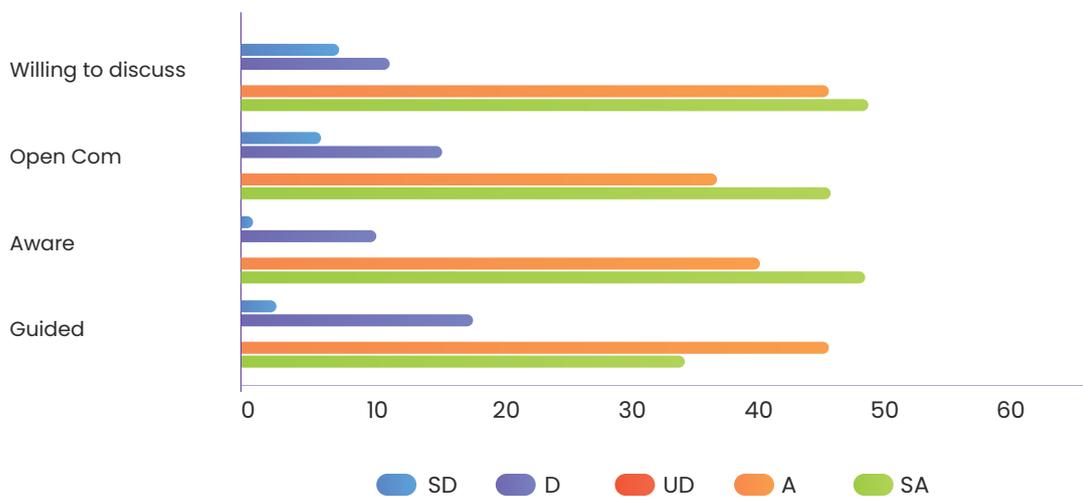
Protection against CSA

Figure5: Descriptive Analysis (Protection against CSA

Multiple Linear Regression using Step-wise Method with Dependent Variable : Protection against CSA

Overall, four models were generated with four leading factors: Role of Parents (RP), Role of School (RS), Role of Friends (RF), and Role of Internet RI). The results of the model are depicted below:

	Model	B	t-value	p-value
1	Constant		13.198	.000
	(RP)	.708	30.469	.000
2	Constant		5.615	.000
	(RP)	.431	19.620	.000
	(RS)	.335	15.230	.000
3	Constant		2.541	.015
	(RP)	.381	17.502	.000
	(RS)	.299	13.767	.000
	(RF)	.190	9.631	.000
4	Constant		-1.052	.293
	(RP)	.372	16.246	.000
	(RS)	.227	8.736	.000
	(RF)	.210	9.712	.000
	(RI)	.191	6.237	.000

Table10: Multiple Linear Regression using Step-wise Method (Protection against CSA as Dependent Variable)

Model 1 illustrated that Role of Parents (RP) was singularly responsible for 70% of the variance in Protection against CSA (r=.708; P =.000). Model 2 explicated that Role of Parents (RP), and Role School (RS) collectively influenced 76% of the variance in Protection against CSA (RP: r=.431, P=.000; RS: r=.335, P=.000). Model 3 explained that Role of Parents (RP), Role School (RS), and Role of Friends (RF) were collectively responsible for 87% variation in Protection against CSA (RP: r=.381, P=.000; RS: r=.299, P=.000, RF: r=.190, P=.000). Model 4 explained that Role of Parents (RP), Role School (RS), Role of Friends (RF), and Role of Internet (RI) collectively influenced 1.00% of the variance in Protection against CSA(RP: r=.372, P=.000; RS: r=.227, P=.000, RF: r=.210, P=.000; RI: r=.191, P=.000). The findings of regression analysis confirmed that the factor: Role of Parents (RP) was the strongest predictor (r=.708; P =.000) of Protection against CSA (PCSA).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, conclusions, and discussion on the research topic, the following recommendations are suggested.

- Although we recognize the fact that parents are aware of CSA in most cases, it is important to realize that true change came only come about when parents are made aware of the effects that safely administered knowledge of Sex Education can have on overcoming the prevalence of CSA in their children. The immediate effect of the research would be on parents' awareness that their children's education for CSA is important, and this would have an impact on the larger society to have a shift from informal education to formal education, thus making it a part of the curriculum through inclusive education. So, the shift in the role of parents, who firstly do not discuss CSA with their children and secondly, rather, more importantly, discourage such topics of conversation under the pretense of it being a taboo, with anyone else, would allow room for discussion at home in a mature way, where both, child and parent, are well-informed about the dangers and ways to control CSA.

- An effort shall be made on part of the educational institutes to appoint in- house counselors to facilitate the students who are unable to receive guidance from other sources i.e., parents. Furthermore, informative seminars shall be held to teach the students about the dangers of CSA in a safe and non-confrontational environment.

- Training sessions shall be arranged for teachers whereby it is ensured that the instructors are prepared and equipped to comfort and help a child in case they are approached for support. Change in the belief-set of teachers through training programs shall encourage them to allow discussion and counseling with their students, thus building a culture to have a shared conversation in a guided and mature environment.

- It is concluded that the absence of Sex Education in Pakistan prevails due to the lack of an aligned school of thought among government sectors, paired with the cultural and religious opposition to teaching adolescents about sexuality and physical development. To overcome this persistent issue, it is recommended that orientation events be conducted to present concerned authorities from the Education Sector with evidence-based data from global and local sources to stimulate sensitized conversation.

- It is further recommended that the education sector should not only focus on the education of the adolescents but also consider educating and guiding the parents on how to help their children through this learning curve and emphasize the importance of parents' involvement in their children's Sex Education. This can be achieved through designing sensitized media campaigns and community-based seminars to stress the importance of this predicament and reach a wider audience.

- It is recommended that intellectual experts shall be involved in soliciting the support of the authorities for designing and drafting the content on child sex education, thus making it a part of the curriculum to have a direct impact on the belief-set and values of the students for open conversation.

References

Ashcraft, A. M., & Murray, P. J. (2017). Talking to parents about adolescent sexuality. Pediatric Clinics, 64(2), 305-320.

Assink, M., van der Put, C. E., Meeuwsen, M. W., de Jong, N. M., Oort, F. J., Stams, G. J. J., & Hoeve, M. (2019). Risk factors for child sexual abuse victimization: A meta-analytic review. Psychological bulletin, 145(5), 459.

Banyard, V. L., Moynihan, M. M., Walsh, W. A., Cohn, E. S., & Ward, S. (2010). Friends of survivors: The community impact of unwanted sexual experiences. Journal of interpersonal violence, 25(2), 242-256.

Bartels, R. M., & Merdian, H. L. (2016). The implicit theories of child sexual exploitation material users: An initial conceptualization. Aggression and violent behavior, 26, 16-25.

Bursztein, E., Clarke, E., DeLaune, M., Elifff, D. M., Hsu, N., Olson, L., ... & Bright, T. (2019, May). Rethinking the detection of child sexual abuse imagery on the internet. In The world wide web conference (pp. 2601-2607).

Granich, S., Jabeen, T., Omer, S., & Arshad, M. (2021). Addressing the issue of child sexual abuse in Pakistan: A conceptual analysis. International Social Work, 00208728211031955

Jones, D., & Ramchandani, P. (2019). Child sexual abuse: Informing practice from research. CRC Press.

Kamiya, Y., Timonen, V., & Kenny, R. A. (2016). The impact of childhood sexual abuse on the mental and physical health, and healthcare utilization of older adults. International psychogeriatrics, 28(3), 415-422.

Khanjari, S., Modabber, M., Rahmati, M., & Haghani, H. (2017). Knowledge, attitudes and practices among parents of school-age children after child sexual abuse prevention education. Iran Journal of Nursing, 29(104), 17-27.

Kim, B. N., Park, S., & Park, M. H. (2017). The relationship of sexual abuse with self-esteem, depression, and problematic internet use in Korean adolescents. Psychiatry investigation, 14(3), 372.

Márquez-Flores, M. M., Márquez-Hernández, V. V., & Granados-Gámez, G. (2016). Teachers' knowledge and beliefs about child sexual abuse. Journal of child sexual abuse, 25(5), 538-555.

Mathews, B., & Collin-Vézina, D. (2019). Child sexual abuse: Toward a conceptual model and definition. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 20(2), 131-148.

Powers, A., Ressler, K. J., & Bradley, R. G. (2009). The protective role of friendship on the effects of childhood abuse and depression. Depression and anxiety, 26(1), 46-53.

Reitsema, A. M., & Grietens, H. (2016). Is anybody listening? The literature on the dialogical process of child sexual abuse disclosure reviewed. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 17(3), 330-340.

Rimer, J. R. (2019). "In the street they're real, in a picture they're not": Constructions of children and childhood among users of online child sexual exploitation material. Child Abuse & Neglect, 90, 160-173.

Rudolph, J., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., Shanley, D. C., & Hawkins, R. (2018). Child sexual abuse prevention opportunities: Parenting, programs, and the reduction of risk. Child maltreatment, 23(1), 96-106.

Tabassum, N., & Tabassum, H. (2022). Gender Differences In School Dropout Due To

Insecurity And Harassment In And On The Way To School In Sindh. Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies, 22(1), 83-96.

Tarar, U.S., Naomi, S.S. and Khan, M.A., 2020. Child Sexual Abuse in Pakistan: From Tears Shed to Lives Lost. Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ), 4(1), pp.35-43.