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| Psychosocial Effects of Sexual Abuse on Children Inside the Family  Child-Sexual-Abuse-Has-Declined-by-5-2.jpg |
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**Psychosocial Effects of Sexual Abuse on Children inside the Family**

1. **Introduction**

The present mixed-method study is concerned with the psycho-social effects of sexually abused children inside the family. This study would highlight the psychological, social as well as physical effects of sexual abuse onto children assaulted by his/her family member. The sexual abuse of child by family member has risen with time and become an alarming concern for child and developmental psychologists.

**1.1 Child Sexual Abuse**

The definition of child abuse is an important as well as monotonous and scientific issue, but it does not possess any framework for its integration into the consistent pattern of knowledge (Gough, 1996) as well as extension and conversation of its issues related to definition (Wattam, 1996). Wattam agreed with ‘Child Protection: Messages from Research’ (DoH, 1995) in defining child abuse as incomplete concept, but also condemned the document on reconstructing a moral definition of child abuse by ignoring the perspectives like the scientific or the legal. The most widely used definition of child abuse is seemingly relied on the moral perspective. With the passage of time, the definition of child abuse is altering, as now it is conceived as a part of cultural relativism (Parton, et al., 1997) and social constructions (Reder, et al., 1993).

While defining the term ‘child abuse’, various terms were recommended in close collaboration to the word ‘abuse’ like injury, maltreatment, harm, assault (Wattam, 1992, 1996; Archard, 1999). Since 1960s, the child abuse aspects have been broadened to define the term in better way and Gough in 1996 mentioned the growth in six areas. The expanded six areas are abuse types from battered baby syndrome to physical, emotional and sexual abuse; responsible people from familial or known to strangers; consideration on satisfactory development of factors effecting children mental health; concern about children rights; structure of childhood duration from conception to adulthood; and successive combination of last five areas for lowering abuse. History endow with various versions of what is called ‘child sexual abuse’ (Gelles, 1987; Jenks, 1996). In ancient times, sexual abuse of children was accepted culturally and authorized like it was believed to be cure to venereal disease as well as a form of educational instruction (Lawrence, 2004). According to Myers (1994), child sexual abuse can be referred as blind spot of society which was seen to be raised as a societal problem in present scenario although it has long history. Jenks (1996) supported the fact that sexual relationship between child and adult is not new, but as Freud declared this dimension of human experience is likely to be unexposed as no one dares to speak about it aloud. Since 1960s, the documentation of child sexual abuse has increased and these documentations have given rise to diverse definitions of child sexual abuse.

One of the latest definition of child sexual abuse defines ‘when a child is betrothed in activities of sex without approval which he/she is unable to comprehend, not developmentally prepared as well as is considered as a violation of societal taboos or laws of society’ (Kempe, 1997). Such activities involves all types of genital, oral-genital, or anal contact to or by the child, it also includes abuse that lacks contact like voyeurism, exhibitionism, as well as use the child for pornography production. Similarly, Whealin and Barnett (2009) defined child sexual abuse consisting of various sexual behaviors taking place among child and an adult which erotically arouse the adult with no reflection of its reactions and effects on the child being abused. As sexual abuse of child is a complicated phenomenon with various causes, so its singular explanation is unlikely to occur.

**1.1.1 Various Perspectives on Child Sexual Abuse**

There have been different groups of people taking special interest in the phenomenon of child sexual abuse that seems to involve in the recognition as well as treatment of child sexual abuse. Every group differs in defining the phenomenon of child sexual abuse in reference to its theoretical reflection. There are majorly six influential groups in the field of child sexual abuse definition and observed grounds which are as follows:

1. **The Perspective of Sociology:** The writers of sociological perspective believe that there is an indirect link between child sexual abuse and social factors like beliefs of society as well as social values, particularly attitude towards violence in reference to existing culture. Sociologists suggests that living in underprivileged and low socioeconomic conditions are also determinants of abuse as well as children with one parent being sexually abused are at risk of sexual abuse. The explanations of sociologists also shows that collapse of in neighborhood communities, rise in divorce, and the weakness of familial bonds have raised the social isolation which is vulnerable to sexual abuse of children (Lawrence, 2004).
2. **The Perspective of Feminists:** The feminist’s perspective on child sexual abuse is the misuse of male authority in the family. Similarly, Hallett and Birchall (1992) defined child sexual abuse as an abuse done by an authoritative and respectful person. In the definitions of feminists, child sexual abuse seems like a product of social structure and male socialization as it is a male dominating society. The feminist’s definition uses the term incest, which was also unsatisfactory as it covers an entire extent of sexual misbehavior committed by a surrogate or family member of a child (Howitt, 1992).
3. **The Perspective of Family Systems:** According to the family systems theory, dysfunctional family system is also responsible for sexual abuse of children like both parents are working, child having learning or physical disabilities, underprivileged family (Minuchin and Fishman, 1981).
4. **The Perspective of Public Health:** The ‘public health model’ by Parton in 1985 shows a scientific perspective which holds the supposition that the perpetrator and sufferer of abuse can be identified. Parton, et al. (1997) declared that this scientific model would allow professionals to recognize abuse and intrude it for children.
5. **The Perspective of Psychiatry:** This perspective represents the perpetrator of sexual abuse as mental patient and also holds a view that the perpetrators as well as victims are needy of psychiatric treatment as claimed by psychoanalytic model. The traits such as low self-esteem, poor control on impulse, external LOC and other relevant antisocial behaviors are predictors of adult offenders but do not have any reliable identification (Parton, et al., 1997).
6. **The Perspective of Interactionists:** The present perspective is to blend various factors of sociological, economic, environmental, psychological and family system perspectives as they all play a vital role in sexual abuse of children. This multidisciplinary network shares important information to assess the collective information about child sexual abuse (Lawrence, 2004).

**1.1.2 Types of Child Sexual Abuse**

The child sexual abuse carries differences in various societies, but Lawrence (2004) categorized three major types which are as follows:

1. **Sexual assault:** It is an act of adult to touch child for his or her sexual gratification which includes unwanted touching of sexual orgasm by elder child or any adult, non-consensual sexual behavior like rape, sexual assault and different forms of sexual annoyance and sexual incest.
2. **Sexual exploitation:** It characterizes the offense in which adult advances the child for sexual gratification like exposure of child to pornography for ones own benefit and usage of trust to force unwanted activities of sex without any physical force which raises attempt of rape or sexual attack.
3. **Sexual grooming:** It defines the social behavior of offender seeking the child to accept the advances in potential manner which consists of fondling, genitalial exposure, sexual kissing, voyeurism and exhibitionism, and use of statements that are sexually suggestive towards any child like child molestation.

**1.1.3 Global Prevalence of Sexual Abuse of Children**

Child sexual abuse is a global concern as it is prevalent in every part of world though reported as a crime or a part of culture. The estimation of global prevalence reported by Pereda, Guilera, Forns, and Gomes-Beniro (2009) shows about 19.7% females and 7.9% males victim by examining 65 studies conducted from 22countries. Geographically, Africa has the highest prevalence rate of child sexual abuse claimed as 34.4% as South Africa has highest cases, whereas prevalence rate of Europe is 9.2% which is lowest, and the prevalence rate of America and Asia lie in 10.1% to 23.9% (Wihbey, 2011). In the past, researches have proved that mostly the offenders of sexual abuse are known by the victims. Research has shown that about 30% offenders are relatives mostly brothers, cousins, fathers or uncles, almost 60% have other relationships like family friends, neighbors or baby sitters, whereas sexual abuse by strangers is approximately 10% (Whealin, 2007).

Wide variety of researches in the field of child sexual abuse have confirmed that before the age of 18 years, 1/6 boys and 1/4 girls are sexually abused in America (Whealin and Barnett, 2009). Researches have shown that most of the child sexual abuse is committed by males as their percentage varies among studies. Some studies show that offenses committed by women are 14 to 4% against boys and 6% against girls (Whealin, 2007), 4% to 43% female offenders in mixed study by Shakeshaft (2004), and Browne and Finkelhor (1986) disputed that in the past rate of women offenders was underestimated which is 5% for female victims and 20% for male victims. The study conducted by Allen (1991), and Knopp and Lackey (1987) showed that the professional female sexual offenders had occupations related to their customary functions having 45% service workers, 14% per cent clerics,12% laborers and 8% homemakers.

**1.1.4 Impacts of Sexual Abuse on Children**

More than 80,000 cases of child sexual abuse have been reported per year but there are far greater unreported cases as to tell anyone about this mishap is torturous for children as it gives them feelings of guilt. There are thousands of children who become victims of emotional, physical or sexual abuse every year which results in major financial and psychological charge to victims, their immediate families as well as their society. The major damage to children after sexual abuse is not only physical but psychological and social as well. Every child though two or three years old or five or older, he or she would develop problems due to their inability to deal with overstimulation. The fiver years or older children get trapped in affection and sense of false activities of sex but the offender don’t let them break the relationship by threatening with violence or fear of losing love (Facts for Family, 2011).

The sexual abuse occurring within the family, the victim fears the resentment, envy or shame of other members of family, or fear that disclosing the secret would break the family. After being abused within family or by any stranger, the child is prone to develop various emotions, thoughts and actions. The children being sexually abused develop certain problem depending on the type, duration as well as seriousness of abuse which are as follows:

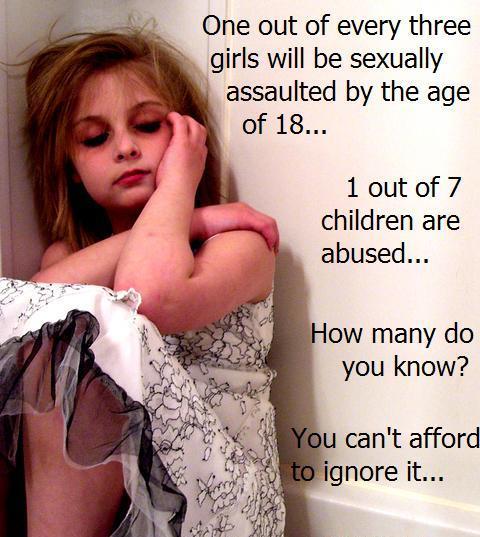
1. **Physical Harms of Child Sexual Abuse:** The child sexual abuse can lead to the physical injuries which solely depend on their age and size as well as force used which can cause internal bleeding which can lead to death (Anderson, Mangels and Langsam, 2004). Sexual abuse of child can also cause infections or sexually transmitted diseases (De-Jong, 1985). Similarly researches have shown that traumatic stress caused by sexual abuse causes noteworthy alterations in brain development and functions (Siegel, 1999; Szalavitz and Perry, 2006) like various studies resulted in the link between child sexual abuse and condensed volume of hippocampus of left side (Teicher, 2002). Various researches have also shown the strong link between the abuse duration and short-term memory impairment for verbal, visual and global categories (Navalta, Polcari, Webster, Boghossian and Teicher, 2006). Other than these physical harms, Moelker (2008) figured out certain body pains like menstrual pain, stomach ache, abdominal pain, back pain, pain during intercourse, headache, nausea and other such chronic pains which are often enigmatic.
2. **Psychological Effects of Child Sexual Abuse:** The most prevalent problems after the sexual abuse of children are psychological ones which consists of depression, anxiety, fear, guilt, nightmares, panic attacks, irritability, helplessness, isolation, sadness, flashbacks, sleeping problems, severe anger and self destruction. High level of anxiety and depression can lead to self-destruction in adulthood like addiction, situation-specific disorder, insomnia, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression, dissociative disorder, eating disorder, suicide and panic attacks (APA, n.d.). Moelker (2008) described certain harmful behaviors of sexually abused children directed towards themselves like excessive work or sports, prostitution, addiction as well as lack of self-confidence and self-respect. The PTSD is common in children being abused sexually that originates from harmful events and consists of major symptoms namely: denial of events, repression of experience, re-experiencing the event through nightmares, indefinable physical problems and sudden memories, and over-irritation in normal situations (APA, 1994). Various studies have shown that sexually abused children have been found to suffer psychological problem more than normal children and the ratio lies between 51% to 79% (Caffaro-Rouget, Lang and Van-Santen, 1989; Kendall-Tackett, Williams and Finkelhor, 1993). The study by 46 shows that there is a greater chance of psychological problem if the offender is relative and involves intercourse, or forced physical relation.
3. **Social Problems as a result of Child Sexual Abuse:** The initial effects of sexual abuse in reference to social behavior includes behavior problems at school, lack of interest and participation in studies and social activities, regressive behaviors like bed-wetting, thumb sucking. In a longer run, victims encounter various problems in their adult relationships and sexual functioning’s (APA, n.d.). Moelker (2008) reported that children being sexually abused lack confidence and have fear of losing control in relationships. Similarly, withdrawal from family and friends, seductiveness, avoidance of things of sexual nature, secretiveness, delinquency, unusual aggressiveness, statement of body as being dirty, and suicidal behavior (Facts for Family, 2011).
4. **Sexual Problems due to Child Sexual Abuse:** Work done by Finkelhor (1979) and Herman (1981) found association between child sexual abuse and sexual adjustment as an adult like sexual esteem and lack of sexual satisfaction. Whereas, some other researches found no relationship among sexual self-esteem and sexual abuse history (Fromuth, 1986). The work of Moelker (2008) depicted the recollection of sexual abuse, lack likeness for love-making, face problems in getting arouse, have sexual dysfunction, and orgasm problems as well. An inappropriate sexual knowledge, sexual acting out and sexual interest are indicative to child sexual abuse (APA, n.d.).

The impacts of sexual abuse differ in their severity and nature. Children experiencing sexual abuse by a family member and high level of physical force exhibit different psychological and social problems. Every victim differs in symptoms or outcomes of sexual abuse as some of them exhibit no psychological distress but have fear of expressing true emotions or use denial as a defense mechanism. On the other hand, certain children experience ‘sleeper effects’ as they experience no or less harm in the shorter run but face serious troubles later on.

To sum up, child sexual abuse is one of the major problems that exists in every country but differ in its prevalence. The term child sexual abuse is difficult to define as there are different perspectives which disagree with each other but every perspective open new horizons for the clarity of this phenomenon as well as the damage it is upholding to the society. While reviewing the prevalence of sexual abuse it has been seen that in certain cultures and societies it is a ritual, whereas in other cultures child sexual abuse is condemned and disliked to great extent. The facts and figures show that girls are at higher risk of being sexually abused than boys and men are more likely to be offenders than women. Sexual abuse has various impacts on children in longer run including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and sexual problem. So, keeping in view the importance of child sexual abuse as a social problem present study is designed to discuss its psychological as well as social effects on the children being assaulted by their family member.

**1.2 Rationale of the Study**

The present study is aimed at exploring the effects of sexual abuse which has been explored by many researchers, but it has become essential to identify the psychosocial effects of sexual abuse on children especially when they are abused by a family member. Many researches have been conducted to identify the perpetrators of child sexual abuse and showed that mostly children are sexually abused by their family members including father, step-father, mother, step-mother, elder brother, elder sister, uncle, aunt, grandfather and other relatives. The sexual abuse by family member have shown to be more destructive for children as they feel more pressure inside their family circle and don’t feel safe at home as well as social gatherings. Accordingly, this study has been planned to explore the psychological and social effects of sexual abuse onto children within the family.



**2.0 Literature Review**

There is a long history of ill-treatment of children by adults all around the world, though recorded or not. The victims of child abuse can be of any age, race, gender, economic and social class, and religion, including acts of commission as well as omission. In 1999, Archard claims that there is a wide variety of documentation on maltreatment of children but the literature also claims the problem of child abuse as being new. This contradiction seemingly shows the identification of physical traumas of child through medical and science which started in America during 1950s. After a decade, these researches on physical injuries of children described the child abuse trend and the credit of this description goes to Dr. Henry Kempe and associates of University of Colorado. Child abuse was considered as a social problem after the results published and distributed by early researchers (Kempe et al., 1962; Parton, 1985; Parton et al., 1997), but the recognition of the kinds of abuse as well as apprehension for the problem management is emerging till date.

The present study is aimed at investigating the psycho-social effects of sexual abuse on children being attacked by the adult family member including father, step-father, mother, step-mother, elder brother, elder sister, uncle, aunt, grandfather and many more. Some of the recent literature on child sexual abuse showing the psychological as well as social effects on children is as follows:

One of the studies displaying the alliance among self-reported CSA and its undesirable psychosocial effects by using the sample of twin has been examined by Nelson, et al., (2002). The structured psychiatric interviews were conducted on telephone from 1991 Australian pairs of twins having same-gender, and 16.7% women and 5.4% men reported history of CSA who had parents having alcohol-related problems. The risk factors associated to family background were also linked with eight adverse outcomes namely suicide attempt, nicotine dependence, conduct disorder, alcohol dependence, social anxiety, rape, divorce, and major depression, which had statistical importance for both genders. Whereas, the analysis of discordant twin pairs showed that twin who reported CSA is at high risk to encounter these adverse outcomes. Hence, self-reported CSA and risk factors from family background were related to risk of adverse outcomes, where analysis of discordant pair is considered as efficient means of controlling familial risk.

Regarding the sexual abuse in childhood and psychiatric disorder in their adulthood, Kendler, Bulik, Silberg, Hettema, Myers and Prescott (2000) conducted a research on female twin adults by using self-report and Cotwin report on three levels (genital, non-genital, and intercourse) of CSA. The results of self-report/interview displayed a positive relationship between CSA and psychiatric disorders as the bulimia, alcohol and other substance used disorders showed highest odd ratios. The odd ratios were less likely to be significant with nongenital CSA, which increased with the CSA of genital and mostly intercourse as most of the odd ratios surpassed 3.0. The results reported in Cotwin report were almost similar but various odd ratios were smaller than self-report results. Thus, the results shows that the control on family background and factors of parental psychopathology had low to modest decrease in odd rations, although the twin exposed to CSA has a higher risk of developing psychopathology.

The review of CSA in reference to social interactions is important; as the changes resulted by CSA is one of its adverse effects. Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, and Herbison (1994) examined the link between reported CSA and the difficulties faced by adults in social, interpersonal and sexual matters. Women with the history of sexual abuse were inquired in detail about their present sexual and social functions, which resulted in noteworthy links between CSA and increased problem in sexual and interpersonal matters as well as decline in socioeconomic status. The commonality of CSA was seen in women from disrupted families and those reporting physical and emotional abuse along with troubles in trusting and perceiving the intimate relationships as dominating and careless. Consequently, the CSA seems to be associated with the suffering in social, interpersonal as well as sexual lives of adults.

Another important social effect of CSA is the shame and guilt child feels in reporting the information related to sexual abuse. In a research conducted by Leander, Granhag and Christianson (2005), children were given obscene phone calls like verbal sexual abuse and the reporting of children was examined in reference to completeness and accuracy of statements. Police was provided with detailed documentation of every call made by perpetrator and the results showed that children omitted about all the sexual and receptive information, but the neutral information they provided was accurate which implies that children deliberately skipped the sexual information. So, research demonstrated experiences of shame and embarrassment in reporting the experience of sexual abuse.

Many researchers have shown interrelationship between psychological and social effects of CSA, so some of the researches displaying the associated results are important to be discussed. To explore the psychosocial impacts of CSA, Wondie, Zemene, Tafesse, Reschke and Schroder (2011) examined the survivors who were abused by rape, prostitution and early marriage in Ethiopia. The data for CSA survivors and control group was composed by using Children's Impact of Traumatic Events Scale-Revised and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The case-control comparative analysis revealed more symptomatic factors in CSA survivors like lack of social support, low empowerment, more chances of considering world as unsafe along with high degree of guilt and shame. So, it has been revealed that survivors of sexual abuse have low-degree of social worth as compared to the non-sexual fellows.

A study entitled as ‘Physical aggression and sexual behavior among siblings: a retrospective study’ was conducted by Hardy (2001) and collected data from undergraduate students of southern large urban university. The results of study showed that it is quite common for siblings to have an aggressive contact which has increased with time from 6.6-33.3% for those involved in sexual relation with siblings, 9.3-19.6% for physical abuse victims, and 14.5-22.9% for aggression perpetrators. The findings employ the stress within the family which affects the relationship among siblings and also showed that the individuals who showed sexual behavior towards siblings, their relationship seems to be neutral or it can be said that the quality of relationship remained the same.

There are diverse researches showing that incest results in many negative results, though emotional, physical, sexual, psychological, social or familial. Harter, Alexander, and Neimeyer (1988) in their study displayed the long lasting effects of incestuous child abuse among college girls in reference to their social cognition, social adjustment as well as familial characteristics. The present comparative study revealed that the family of origin lack unity and adaptability, resulting in greater social isolation and poor adjustment in society. The results of study also predicted increased social isolation and family structure as well as sexual abuse by parental figure are results of social maladjustment.

The link between psychiatric disorders and CSA within family has also been proved by empirically comparative study. A work of Wonderlich, Donaldson, Carson, Staton, Gertz, Leach, and Johnson (1996) examined the interaction among reported incestuous history and the later growth increase in bulimic conduct. Results depicted that the behaviors like binge eating, vomiting, no control on eating habits and lack of satisfaction are more significant in victims of incest than comparative group. It has also been seen that there is greater chance of incest victims to display further maladaptive behaviors including suicidal intentions, smoking, self-mutilation and alcohol abuse. Thus, there is an increasing probability to develop bulimic behavior and such problems of eating can play a role in regulating emotional distress related to trauma.

Mostly, the child abuse within a family is considered to be committed by male person as male is the person with power. The research on sexual abuse by caretaker conducted by Margolin and Craft (1989) identified the characteristics of the caretaker prone to commit CSA. The results of study depicted that sexual abuse is significantly overrepresented in non-biological caretaker when compared to biological caretaker. The gender based ratio of perpetrator showed that male caretakers were mostly responsible for CSA, which includes grandparent, step-father, father, adoptive and foster male of the family.

Similarly, the article presented by Mey and Neff (1984) examined the adult-child insect by using a sample of authenticated cases, which possessed a sample of 15 reports entailing 26 victims. The chosen cases were focused on father-daughter or step-father-daughter association along with numerous cases of biological father-daughter. For the study mostly the source of information was the victim with an emphasis on newly recognized risk factors like spouse abuse, alcohol dependency, non-sexual child abuse, birth order, social isolation and many other variables of family patterns.

Rudd and Herzberger (1999) compared the characteristics and consequences of brother-sister and father-daughter incest. The results showed that in the absence of father figure brothers play a fundamental part in women sexual abuse and durations were lengthy. The characteristics of male dominating figure resulted in being equally serious for sister as well as daughter and the family structure of both groups resulted in proper knowledge of the incestuous family. Both groups had profound family level disturbances like mental illness, substance abuse and familial violence. In addition, the disruption created by brother and father abuse was almost similar and resulted in depression, eating disorder, PTSD, suicidal ideation and substance abuse.

Feminist’s belief depicted that the sexual is mostly committed by male as they have a power, but many researches and case studies have shown that mother-child sexual also takes place and proves to be more harmful for children psychologically. A research conducted by Kelly, Wood, Gonzalez, MacDonald and Waterman (2002) explored the mother-son incest as well as the positive opinions about sexual abuse occurrences on the psychosocial adjustment of men. The participants completed self-report to illustrate their experiences of sexual and physical abuse during childhood, 17 out of 67 participants reported mother-son incest and reported more traumatic symptoms than other men. The incest committed by mothers was understated as behaviors of mothers were hard to be distinguished as abuse and then 27 men recollected certain positive as well as mixed preliminary opinions of the abuse, which included half participants being abused by their mothers. Those participants abused by their mothers faced more problems in social functioning and adjustment than others.

The incest also affects the interpersonal and social relationships of survivors within and out of the family circle, which also seems important in its empirical nature. Lubell and Peterson (1998) explored the relationship of female survivors of incest with their mothers and female friends. Mostly, survivors showed no difference in terms of their friend’s network or friendship quality from other women. Survivors reported their mother to be socially isolated and showed poor relationship with them, as well as they had independent relationship with friends. Thus, the results showed that the relationship of female survivors had affects of incest, particularly with their mothers, but it does not reveal the absence of negative outcomes. The study also implied that many features of friendship appeared to be resilient and can be used in the positivity of therapeutic interventions.

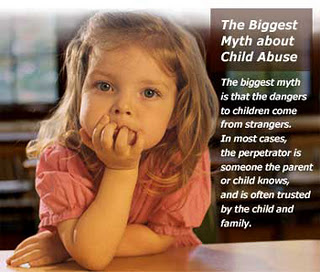
Although there are many factors that are affected by incest, but another very important variable under study is about their self-perception, one of the studies has been done by Fitzgerald, Shipman, Jackson, McMahon, and Hanley (2005). They observed that mothers with CSA history consider themselves less competent than other mothers, so the present study had a comparative design involving abused and non-abused mothers along with their 3-6 years old children. The measures of parenting efficacy, psychological adjustment and parental bonding completed by mothers and then they were given task to interact with children in their task of problem solving. The findings suggested that incest survivors reported less self-efficacy than other mothers but they had overall positive style of interaction with their children and high level of affection was showed to mothers by children. Interestingly, it has been seen that sexually abused mothers reported low bonding with their mothers as well as deprived psychological adjustment in current scenario. Consequently, researchers concluded that parenting abilities of survivors are negative than their actual behavior of parenting.

The studies on effects of sexual abuse especially incest on the self as well as ones social functioning is of great importance as it demonstrates the perspective of developmental psychopathology after CSA. A study conducted by Cole and Putman (1992) ruled out the effects of CSA as they have gained great attention of mental health profession. The present study stresses that in the realm of self and social functioning incest possesses its distinctive negative effects, most importantly it endangers self assimilation, process of self-regulation, and trust as well as security of relationships. Clinical sample studies showed that the conditions linked with incest history displays severity in self and social impairment.

After reviewing the literature of child sexual abuse, it has been seen that the child sexual abuse has a severe psychological effect on many children which prolongs to their adulthood and give rise to certain problems related to social life. Such psychological effects are interlinked with social effects of CSA as such a cruel experience in young age is very disturbing for child and he is unable to save himself from a person within a family who is powerful than him or her. Literature has shown that mostly the sexual abuse is committed a known person only 10% is assaulted by stranger, and researches have shown that when a child is sexually abused by ones own parents, he/she feel insecure at home and encounter feelings of shame, guilt and anxiety. There is an empirical evidence on the wide range of negative outcomes emerged from child sexual abuse including shame, guilt, depression, inferiority complex, social anxiety, nightmares, alcoholism, chronic tension, manifest anxiety, PTSD, dissociative disorder, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, eating disorder, suicidal ideation and many others. So, it is prominent that it is an emerging social dilemma which mostly starts from home and has worse psychological effects on children and makes them afraid of social life. Thus, it is important to know the effects of child sexual abuse on to mental, social, emotional, sexual, and physical, so that they can be treated on time of need.

**2.1 Problem Statement of the Study**

By reviewing the previous literature, it has been seen that the destruction caused by the child sexual abuse is diverse and now it is important to figure out its effects on children to improve their subjective well-being. So, the major problems caused by sexual abuse are believed to be psychological and social as they hinder in maintenance of the relationships of sexually abused children as well as leads to be offenders in longer run as depicted by literature.



* 1. **Objectives of the study**

Keeping in mind the findings of previous literature, the following objectives were formulated.

1. To explore the psychological effects of sexual abuse on a child attempted by a family member.
2. To determine the effects of sexual abuse conducted by a family member on the social life of a child.
3. **Methodology**

**3.1 Research Method and Sample**

Desk research method has been used to achieve the aims of the present topic in qualitative manner. The cases studies of five children of sexual abuse have been selected to fulfill the objective of the study. The age range of children being abuse ranges from 5 years to 15 years, who were abused by their family member.

**3.2 Data Collection Procedure**

As the desk research method is based upon research activity and review of literature which covers the topic of research, so internet has been used to look for the current cases of sexual abuse from the reliable and valid links. The cases were selected on the basis of type of information presented by the interviewee and the extensive description of trauma they went through to bring about the valuable results. Five cases were selected three were illustrations of their situations by the third person whereas two were written by victims themselves. The summary of selected cases is as follows:

**3.2.1 Case I:** Seven year old boy, David, was sexually abused by his father who was arrested for his indecent act. Even his older brother was also sexually abused he reported the way they were abused but David remained silent about history of abuse. Father used to sexually abuse by showing pornography, fondling, masturbating and anally penetrating him. After the disclosure of sexual abuse, David showed the signs as staying silent, used to prefer solitary, passive in classroom, watching mother coming out of shower, kissing little sister on lips, withdrawal from reality, lack of confidence, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, repetition of actions in play over and over again, as well as symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Mathis, 2001).

**3.2.2 Case II:** Rob was abused by his father when his age was between 8-13, which included masturbation for long time and showing sexual pictures. The abuse was sexual, physical as well as emotional as his father was alcoholic and mother hardly tried to resolve the issues among father and son, but still he got emotional support from parents in certain issues. Rob suffered about two episodes of depression in his teenage and tried to die but failed in both attempts. His attempt of suicide was resulted from despair, rage, suppression of inner-self. He had poor interpersonal relationship with his family and had passages of his emotions, and used to write his secrets in dairy. On a longer run he got married and realized problem in him as he once shouted at his wife so loudly that she left home showing him as a performer of abuse. Afterwards he realized that he used to have tantrums of hatred for his father, was physically abusive to his toddlers and had a lack of realization of reality showing disturbances in interpersonal relationships (CEHD, n.d.).

**3.2.3 Case III:** Margaret was few times sexually abused by her father in her toddlerhood and two other men as well, who were known by her in reference to family. She does not remember the sexual abuse by her father but the beer smell, his breath, and urgency are still in her memory. One of the other used to put her hand in his pants and the other fondled her breasts. Three incidents happened with her but she was ashamed, embarrassed and confused to tell anyone about them. Her family supported her a lot professionally but she had problems in interpersonal relationships in a longer run, became alcoholic and had certain problems with job as well. She though not apparently but deniably had anxiety and depression in her personality (CEHD, n.d.).

**3.2.4 Case IV:** Anonymous was about to be 5 years old, when her mother and step-father used to fight a lot and once her mother left her children and home and never come back. It was normal for her step-father to give her bath but on her 5th birthday he started touching her weirdly and kept on doing so even after protest and from that day his looks changed for her. It kept on for 3 years even her siblings saw him doing so, but he never gave up and every time victim thought to be killed by his evil act as it was painful to her and she was unable to bear that pain anymore. Even once step-father had his brother along with friend and they all raped one by one, even after two years the new boyfriend of mother also molested her. Victim started hating men, she used to have mistrust on relationships, had problems in falling asleep, always feared of being assaulted by any male, had suicidal ideations, showed dislike for ones body as being used by different men, as well as had a feeling of unsafe at home, especially in the presence of dad (Womens Self-esteem, n.d.a).

**3.2.5 Case V:** XYZ was 4 years old when sexual abuse started and it continued by she was 18 years old, and her parents were divorced and then remarried. She used to visit her father every weekend and then she saw her father raping her elder sister at the age of 8. He used to touch his daughter in unethical manner as well as used to ask her to comfort him in anyway he wants her to by instructing her. Even at the age of 11 she was molested by other family member as well as raped thrice. Then she met a boy who used to be nice to her at start but then forced her to sell her body for money for about three years and even made her drug addict. Such incidents created anger problems, depression, denial of realities, cutting oneself/hurting oneself, lack of courage, delinquent behavior, discomfort at home, sleep disturbances, dislike for ones body as being assaulted by so many men, and drug addiction (Womens Self-esteem, n.d.b).

**3.3 Data Analysis**

The interviews selected for the analysis has been analyzed by using the qualitative technique known as ‘Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)’. IPA can be defined as an idiographic approach aiming to offer insights into the way people make sense of their experiences in a given context (Heron, 1996). In this study, IPA has been used as it is considered to have speculative dedication towards an individual’s as a cognitive, emotional, physical, and linguistic being as well as presumes a series of association among the discussion of people and their mental and cognitive conditions.

IPA was considered to be the best suited technique of analysis for the present study as the main aim is to rule out the effects of sexual abuse on children psychological and social processes. IPA is a technique of content analysis in which the content is deeply analyzed and then results are carried out in descriptive form by using certain themes.

1. **Results**

The present study is aimed at putting forward the psychological as well as social effects of sexual abuse on to children within a family and the cases illustrated in the previous section are based on the sexual abuse conducted by the immediate family member, father or mother. By keeping in view the objectives of study, case studies were analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) on the basis of which major themes were extracted which resulted into a logical framework for the analysis of results in efficient manner.

First objective of the study was **‘to explore the psychological effects of sexual abuse on a child attempted by a family member’**. The content analysis of case studies/stories of children depicted the following major themes (as shown in figure 4.1) related to psychological effects of sexual abuse:

Sexual behaviors

Sleep disturbance

Anxiety

Drugs or other addictions

Depression

Denial of reality

Stress



*Figure 4.1*. Major Themes Showing the Psychological Effects after being Sexually Abuse by a Family Member

The content analysis of the case studies/stories of sexual abuse by children showed that their symptoms give rise to above mentioned seven major themes after being abused by the family member. Almost every child showed relationship to the major themes by displaying denial of experience for years, shame and guilt of situation, suicidal ideation, anxiety or fear of things, sleep disturbances, stress, drug addiction, sexual behavior, as well as depression were mentioned by every victim, though verbally or non-verbally.

***‘Stress’*** was one of the common effects that children survived with, after the harmful event of sexual abuse took place; some of its major symptoms were experiencing events through nightmares, denial of events, suppression of experience, over irritation in normal situations, sudden memories of awful event as well as certain physical problems that can not be defined.

Furthermore, ***‘anxiety’*** theme consisted of feelings of restlessness, excessive worry, irritability, and difficulty in concentrating, startled easily, social anxiety, repetition of actions, repetitive irrational thoughts, and has trouble in falling asleep.

***‘Denial of reality’*** is also one of the major themes carried out by the content analysis as the victims seemed to have a sense of depersonalization, de-realization, suppressed sense of identity as well as giving rise to mental health problems majorly anxiety and depression.

Moreover, the ***‘sleep disturbances’*** included insomnia, nightmares, difficulty to fall asleep or distracted sleep that had been part of history of sexual abuse of children within a family.

In addition, ***‘depression’*** was another major theme as victims presented symptoms of diminished pleasure in activities of daily life, feeling sad or empty, irritability, sleep disturbances, guilt feelings, lack of concentration, suicidal ideations and attempts as well.

Two children showed that they took the support of ***‘drug or other addictions’*** in lessening their pain of being abused by family member which included overuse of alcohol, or any drug that they get to relax and sleep in a tension free manner.

Additionally, one of the child also showed the ***‘sexual behavior’*** towards his family members like keeping eye on opposite gender as well as being physical to the opposite gender family member younger than himself.

Second objective of the study was **‘to determine the effects of sexual abuse conducted by a family member on the social life of a child’**. The content analysis showed that the psychological effects are closely related to social effects of sexual abuse as guilt, feeling of shame, sleep disturbances, denial of reality, repetitive thought or actions and such behaviors in excess leads to problems in social life of children. So, the major themes that emerged from content analysis of case studies/stories are as follows:

Feeling of Unsafe at home

Interpersonal Problems

Lack of confidence

Seductiveness

Unusual aggressiveness

Suicidal behavior



*Figure 4.2*. Major Themes Showing the Social Effects after being Sexually Abuse by a Family Member

The effect of sexual abuse though within family or by any stranger has great impact on a child in many different ways but when it is inflicted by a family member it worsen the effects and leads to social problems that are inflicted to oneself or people other than family. The six major themes carried out from the five case studies/stories are unusual aggressiveness, suicidal behavior, interpersonal problems, lack of confidence, unsafe feeling at home, and unhappiness for ones body as presented in figure 4.2.

***‘Unusual aggressiveness’*** is one of the major themes which include behaviors like yelling, beating, being angry at little issues and showing aggressive behavior towards family members.

Additionally, the theme known as ***‘suicidal behavior’*** consisted of rash driving, self-destructive activities, feeling of guilt and despair as well as always up to hurting oneself or showing dislike for oneself by showing no hope for future and nothing to lose in life.

***‘Interpersonal problems’*** includes the problems victim faces in his/her relationship with family, friends, peer group or society. This includes lack of indulgence in any relationship, lesser friends, fear of losing relationships, less expressiveness, unable to maintain smooth love/romantic relationship, inflict ones decisions on others, as well as lacking interest in being with anyone.

Moreover, the theme ***‘lack of confidence’*** includes the expressions like feeling of guilt and shame, fear of being punished, bother a lot about social image, unable to initiate any conversation, fear to talk to stranger, and preference to be alone.

***‘Feeling of unsafe at home’*** is the feeling displayed by children that showed that they are all the time at risk to be abused by the perpetrator as he/she have approach at me all the time when I am home. This also includes unhealthy environment of home, no emotional support, as well as being threatened to keep quite and keep the sexual abuse as a secret.

Last but one of the significant major theme carried out by the content analysis is namely ***‘unhappiness for ones body’*** which includes hurting oneself, calling oneself as disgusting and naming ones body as being dirty and trying to finish oneself to get rid of body.

To sum up, results showed the interrelationship between psychological and social effects of sexual abuse on to children as the psychological effects gave rise to the social problems. The results showed that the effects of child sexual abuse gave rise to the psychological disorder namely reality denial, anxiety, depression, drug addiction, stress, sleep disturbances and sexual behaviors. Whereas the themes extracted on the basis of their social effect on the child includes unusual aggressiveness, suicidal behavior, interpersonal problems, lack of confidence, unsafe feeling at home, and unhappiness for ones body.

The detailed discussion of the results has been carried out in the next section of dissertation.

1. **Discussion and Conclusion**
   1. **Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to find out the psychosocial effects of sexual abuse on the children which had been assaulted by a family member. For this purpose two objectives were set and data was analyzed by keeping in view the objectives of study by means of IPA. The main findings of the study are discussed in detail below.

The first objective of the study was aimed at exploring **the psychological effects of sexual abuse on child** within his family or it can be said by his or her family member. The first theme that emerged from psychological effects of sexual abuse was ***‘anxiety’,*** it has been seen that every child showed anxiousness or fear after being sexually abused though fear was of punishment, cleanliness of oneself again and again, shame, irritability towards normal situations, fear of being in social situation or being sensitive to any situation. Two case studies also showed that the victims had problems in falling asleep due to fear of being assaulted at night and had feeling of helplessness at the moment of assault. Work of Nelson, et al., (2002) displayed many after effects of sexual abuse which included social anxiety, free floating fear of unimportant things as well as sensitivity towards surprise or sudden shocks.

Furthermore, the second major theme that emerged was ***‘depression’*** as two of the victims displayed no or less interest in daily functioning, lack of concentration, and irritability. Whereas, four children mentioned about their suicidal thoughts and three of them attempted suicide as well. On the other hand, guilt feeling and sadness were named by every victim as being part of their personality after the abuse. Similar results came from work of Leander, Granhag and Christianson in 2005 showing that shame and guilt are related to sexual abuse which depresses the child. Furthermore, many researches support the fact that children being sexual abused are more prone to suicide as mentioned in research of Rudd and Herzberger (1999) and many others.

Another important theme extracted was ***‘denial of reality’*** which aroused as a defense mechanism and made the children to suppress once identity in a crowd of people as mentioned by one of the child. Whereas, three of them preferred depersonalization and ignored reality to find peace and comfort from ones guilt feelings. Such denial has also been considered as one of the major cause of anxiety and depression as it causes feelings of restlessness and even gives rise to suicidal ideations. The results of study by Kendler, Bulik, Silberg, Hettema, Myers and Prescott (2000) showed that children had a denial to reality of sexual abuse and to cope up with that stress and pressure they took drugs for relief from reality and made themselves dive in a world of pleasure.

Moreover, children seemed to be stressed out of such thought of sexual abuse, so the next emerging theme was ***‘stress’***. As every sexually abused person showed the irritability in his or her teenage or even in young age and four of them mentioned that at times sudden memories of sexual abuse disturbs them to a great deal and interfere in their daily functioning to some extent which is horrible experience. Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, and Herbison (1994) work revealed that due to stress created by the sexual abuse children faced many problems in social relations and also had problems in sexual behaviors.

The fifth theme that emerged was ***‘sleep disturbances’*** as every child mentioned his fear to fall a sleep at night and during that period of sexual abuse used to have distracted sleep and even now they have nightmares of sexual abuse they had as mentioned in the study by Wonderlich, Donaldson, Carson, Staton, Gertz, Leach, and Johnson (1996).

The next emerging theme was ***‘drug or other addictions’*** , as three children told that they took drugs or alcohol to find relief from such disturbing thoughts and to get rid of stress for a moment when he or she was unable to cope with rising problems. A study conducted by Kendler, Bulik, Silberg, Hettema, Myers and Prescott (2000) as well as Wonderlich, Donaldson, Carson, Staton, Gertz, Leach, and Johnson (1996) asserted that sexual abuse give rise to dependency on alcohol and other drug substances.

Last and another important theme was the ***‘sexual behavior’*** towards his family members like mother of one of the child mentioned that he keeps eye on his mother when she comes out of shower as well as he was being physical to his younger sister like kissing her lips. Such sexual behaviors like indulgence in rape or seducing other person were also perceived as expected outcomes of sexual abuse as mentioned by Nelson, et al., (2002) in his twin study.

The second objective of the study was to figure out the effects of sexual abuse on **social life of children** as the unsafe atmosphere of home does have affect on children social activities. First theme that emerged from content analysis was ***‘unusual aggressiveness’*** of a person with history of sexual abuse towards his social relations though mother, spouse, colleague or children which included yelling, beating, being angry at little issues and showing aggressive behavior towards family members as shown by three victims.

Additionally, ***‘suicidal behavior’*** also emerged as a significant theme as four participants displayed acts of self destruction like rash driving, having bottle of pills, cutting oneself, feeling of guilt and despair as well as always up to hurting oneself or showing dislike for oneself by showing no hope for future and nothing to lose in life. Work by Rudd and Herzberger (1999), Nelsen et al., (1991) and many other researchers support this theme.

***‘Interpersonal problems’*** were common in every victim as the perpetrator was a family member and they faced problems in sharing this secret with friends so they preferred solitary then being in social circle. So they showed lack of indulgence in any relationship, lesser friends, fear of losing relationships, less expressiveness, inability to maintain smooth love/romantic relationship, inflict ones decisions on others, as well as lacking interest in being with anyone. The study of Cole and Putman (1992) gave reasons of such interpersonal problems as lack of trust, fear of guilt, lack of self-esteem and self-regulation as well as no security of relationships. Furthermore, Kelly, Wood, Gonzalez, MacDonald and Waterman (2002) study revealed that boys being sexually assaulted by mother faced more social and relationship problems than abused by others. In contrast, a study by Lubell and Peterson (1998) showed no difference in friendship of sexually abused and non abused girls and they showed resilience towards their social interactions.

Moreover, the theme ***‘lack of confidence’*** includes the expressions like feeling of guilt and shame, fear of being punished, bother a lot about social image, unable to initiate any conversation, fear to talk to stranger, prefers to stay alone and lack of self-confidence and self-respect. The results of this theme are supported by Moelker study in 2008 as well as Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, and Herbison (1994) which showed that lack of self-confidence and self-respect has a negative effect on socioeconomic status of victims. Furthermore, study by Fitzgerald, Shipman, Jackson, McMahon, and Hanley (2005) also showed the evidence of distorted image of sexual abuse victims in ones eyes.

***‘Feeling of unsafe at home’*** has been the significant theme as the perpetrator had an open approach to the victims to abuse them whenever they get chance. The content analysis also showed that four victims had broken home which depicted unhealthy environment of home, lacking emotional support, as well as repetitive threat to keep the sexual abuse as a secret. Like, Wondie, Zemene, Tafesse, Reschke and Schroder (2011) examined the survivors who were abused by rape, prostitution and early marriage in Ethiopia, the results showed lack of social support, low empowerment as well as consideration of world as an unsafe place particularly home as their assault started from home. Similarly, the work of Hardy (2001) resulted in distorted relationship among sibling having sexual relationship and lack of respect for each other as well.

Last and another significant theme carried out was ***‘Unhappiness for ones body’*** which includes hurting oneself, calling oneself as disgusting and naming ones body as being dirty and trying to finish oneself to get rid of body. Two female victims tried to commit suicide because they found their bodies as dirty being used by her father and afterwards relatives or strangers and they hurt the soul of their daughters.

The discussion of results in the light of previous literature showed that most of the results are supported by previously done researches. Previous researches support the result that CSA leads to depression, anxiety, great deal of stress, problems in sexual behavior, nightmares and sleep disturbances, addiction as well as denial of reality or incident. These psychological factors then effect the social life of child in negative manner most of the time as he or she face problems in interpersonal relationships, are self-destructive, shows unusual aggressiveness, don’t have much confidence, hate ones body and don’t feel safe at home. Mostly home is considered as the safest place in the world, but unfortunately their basic safety has been snatched by their own loved ones.

**5.2 Conclusion**

So, the content analysis of CSA showed that there is overlapping psychological and social effects, both are interrelated. These results depicts that children being abused by their family member are more stressed out and depressed than abused by the stranger as they are always at stake to be abused while being at home and are also confused about whether its their mistake of their family members mistake. Confusion, guilt, shame, and fear lead to depression, anxiety and stress which automatically effects their social and interpersonal functioning. The sexual abuse in childhood has terrible effects on child development as he or she grow with the fear of disclosure of this secret and they doubt the punishment from perpetrator and his family as well. It has been seen that the ratio of sexual abuse has reduced with the passage of time as the awareness has been given to parents, children and teachers about such unhealthy acts and their impact on children growth. It is a big crime to steal the innocence of children for ones physical and sexual satisfaction because it negatively impact the psychological, physical, social, emotional and sexual development of children, as revealed by the results of present study.

**5.3 Limitations**

For the present study, CSA stories/case studies were taken from online websites and these stories lack some basic information. Another limitation is that their demographic information was missing as the demographic information also matters a lot in the sexual abuse cases. The knowledge about the sexual abuse and scenario is limited as they were not proper and structural interviews. Further limitation is that only those cases were chosen in which the perpetrator was a family member.

**5.4 Suggestions**

It is recommended that for further research the interviews would be conducted by the researcher himself to rule out the extraneous variables from the data under consideration. Another suggestion is that for further research the demographics would also be given importance as in the incidences of sexual abuse demographics are very important. Furthermore, the study would be comparative in which CSA within family, by family friend and stranger would be taken to enhance the validity of results that sexual abuse by family member has greater negative impacts.

It is also suggested that campaign should be run in schools, colleges and even door-to-door for the awareness of social and psychological threat CSA have on our society.

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