

# Profile of Sexual Assault among Children's Examined Under One Stop Crisis Management Center

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Sexual assault is one of the most traumatic crimes which leaves a deep mental and emotional scar in the victim's life. Mostly girls are the victims of sexual assault whereas boys are also victimized but are few in number. This heinous incidence hampers the normal growth and development of a growing child making them vulnerable to psychiatric disorder, drug abuse disorder and anti-social conducts in adult. This study aims at identifying the incidence of child sexual abuse in different municipal areas of Kavrepalanchok district of Nepal

**Methods:** This is a retrospective study in which data of sexual assault victim less than 18 years presented at emergency department of Dhulikhel Hospital, KUSMS through One-stop Crisis Management Center (OCMC) by the investigating authority was studied. The data from 2076/09/01 B.S. to 2080/12/30 B.S. was included in the study. Total of 127 cases were studied.

**Results:** Mandandeupur rural municipality reported highest number of child victims of sexual assault i.e., 14.17%. Out of 127 victims, 4 of them were male and rests were female. Most of the victims (74.01%) were of 12-18 years age. Most of the perpetrators (51.18%) were strangers to the victim. The cases of sexual assault with children occurred mostly in the places other than house (45.66%). More than one fourth of the victims (26.77%) sustained some type of bodily injuries.

**Conclusions:** Sexual assault among children is predominant among females and mostly between the teenager age group with perpetrators being stranger to the victim Psychological screening of the potential pedophiles could lead to minimizing the incidence of child sexual assault and abuse. Psychosocial counseling to the victim is must to prevent the devastating psychological effects of sexual abuse.

**Keywords:** Assault; Examined; Nepal.

## INTRODUCTION

When a child involves in a sexual activity which he or she cannot comprehend, for which he or she is developmentally unprepared and cannot give consent, and/or that violates the law or social taboos of society is referred to as child sexual abuse. The Department of justice (2012) has defined rape as the penetration, no matter how slight of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.<sup>1</sup> Sexual assault is one of the most traumatic crime

in which perpetrator uses physical or psychological aggression and sex as a weapon to assault victim.<sup>2</sup> Sexual assault diminishes one's personality between his or her personality and environment which can produce post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as rape trauma syndrome in victim. The victims experience symptoms like insomnia, intense fear, anxiety, night mares and dissociative symptoms. It halts the mental and developmental growth in children.<sup>3</sup> Child sexual abuse is mostly found in family, school, streets, neighborhood and with the development of internet world, also seen in social medias.<sup>4</sup> Age group can be classified as: newborn:

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first 4 weeks of life, infant: <12 months of age, toddler: 1-3 years, preschool: 4-6 years, school age: 7-12 years, early adolescent: 10-13 years, middle adolescents: 14-16 years, late adolescent: 17-20 years.<sup>8</sup>

There is no age bar in sexual assault, and no gender has been spared. Mostly girls are the victims of sexual assault whereas boys are also victimized but are few in number. And no relation has been spared because even the biological father has been found involved in these cases.<sup>1,5,6</sup> The punishment for proven sexual assault ranges from 7 to 20 years imprisonment depending on the age of victim and nature of heinousness of crime. Despite this provision in Nepalese law secured for the protection of children and woman, the numbers of cases are in rising trend as per the available statistical records.<sup>7</sup>

This study aims at identifying the incidence of child sexual abuse in different municipal areas of Kavrepalanchok district of Nepal and promotes timely and standard medico-legal examination to aid in justice for the sexual assault victims.

## METHODS

This is a retrospective cross-sectional study conducted at Forensic Medicine Department of Dhulikhel Hospital, Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences. Census sampling method was used where the data of sexual assault victim less than 18 years presented at emergency department of Dhulikhel Hospital through One-stop Crisis Management Center (OCMC) by the investigating authority was studied. The data from 2076/09/01 B.S. to 2080/12/30 B.S. was included in the study. Ethical approval was taken from Institutional Review Committee, Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences (IRC-KUSMS). We collected relevant details of the sexual assault victims, data were entered into Microsoft Excel initially, which was later entered in SPSS 20 statistical pack. The data were categorized, tabulated and summarized in terms of frequency and percentage.

## RESULTS

Data records of 5 years, from 2076/09/01 B.S. to 2080/12/30 B.S. was studied in which 127 cases of child sexual assault was recorded. In this duration, Mandandeupur rural municipality reported highest number of child victims of sexual assault i.e., 14.17% which was followed by Banepa and Panchkhal municipalities as shown in fig.1. Bethanchok municipality reported least number of cases. Out of 127 victims,

4 of them were male and rests were female. Most of the victims (74.01%) were of 12-18 years age, nearly one-fourth of the victims were 6-12 years, 3.93% were 3-6 years and very few were 1-3 years as depicted in table.1. Most of the perpetrators (51.18%) were strangers to the victim, one-fifth were friends and rests were neighbor, close relatives and few were even family members (fig.2). The cases of sexual assault with children occurred mostly in the places other than house (45.66%), which was followed by incidences occurring inside house (25.98%) as shown in fig.3. More than one fourth of the victims (26.77%) sustained some type of bodily injuries. Number of child sexual assault was seen in rising trend each year as depicted in fig.4. None of the victims were either physically or mentally challenged.

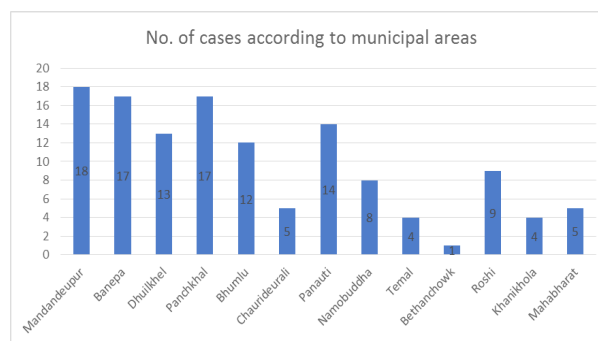


Figure 1.No. of cases according to municipal areas.

Table 1. Age and sex wise distribution of child victims in 5 years.

Age	Gender		Total (n=127)
	Female	Male	
1-3 years	1	-	1 (0.78%)
3-6 years	5	-	5 (3.93%)
6-12 years	27	-	27 (21.25%)
12-18 years	90	4	94 (74.01%)

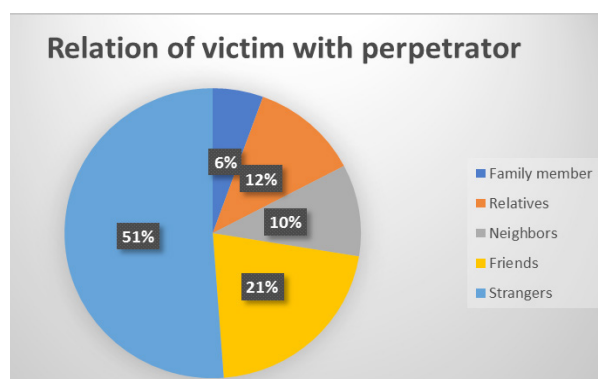


Figure 2.Victim-perpetrator relation in 5 years.

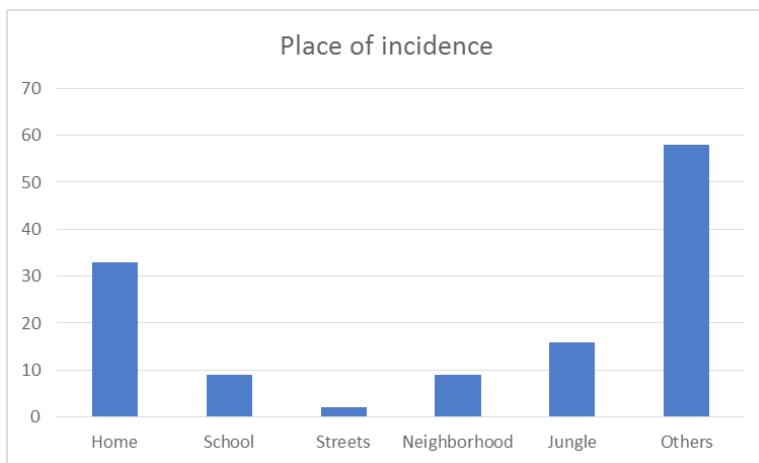


Figure 3. Place of incidence.

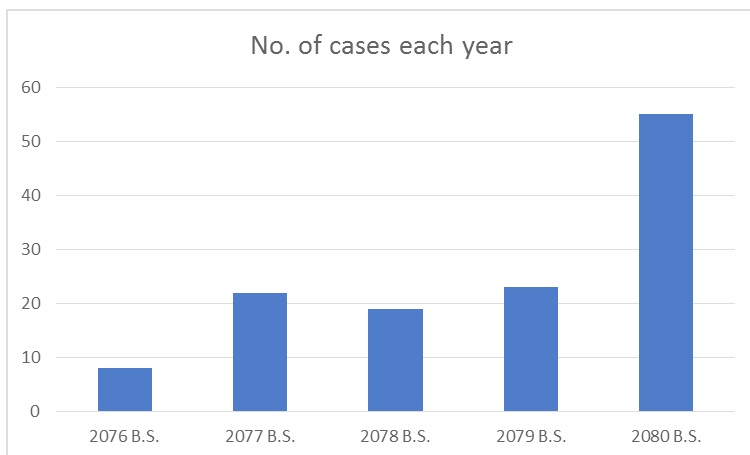


Figure 4. Trend of child sexual assault cases each year.

## DISCUSSION

Sexual violence is a serious problem and most heinous crime, moreover sexual violence against children irrespective of their sex is a rising issue. Pedophilia is defined as an ongoing sexual attraction towards prepubertal children and the person who commits sexual offence against children is known as pedophile.<sup>9</sup> The prevalence of pedophilia is around 3% to 5% according to some studies.<sup>10</sup> This study evaluated the child victims of sexual abuse/assault from Kavrepalanchok district referred by investigating authority for medico legal examination.

Majority of the victims in the study were female and few were male which is consistent with another study<sup>6</sup>. In most of the cases (51%) perpetrators were stranger to the victim and rests were known people among which 6% were family members related by blood. Most of the

incidents occurred in places other than house of the assailant. The findings are in contrast with other studies,<sup>2,16</sup> whereas one fourth of cases had some bodily injuries and the number of cases recorded each year were in uprising trend which is in harmony with a study.<sup>16</sup>

Municipal areas with low reported cases of child sexual abuse does not mean that there could no cases or very few cases as the author feels the reported number is just a tip of an ice-berg phenomenon. The reported number of cases depends on the geographical difficulty, level of awareness in the community, prevailing stigmas, and lack of support to the victim and victim's family, longer court proceedings and many more.

Child sexual abuse and pedophilia may sound synonymous but the term child sexual abuse is a legal term whereas pedophilia is a medical terminology. Pedophilia is a type of psychiatric disorder and has some diagnostic criteria according to DSM-5. Some pedophilic men have desire for sexual intercourse with children but they limit the desire to fantasy only whereas another group of pedophiles commit sexual offense as sexual fantasy alone does not give them gratification. These second group of men are the actual offenders in child sexual assault.<sup>11</sup> Severe mental and physical deterioration is seen in

victims of child sexual abuse. They may indulge in crimes, substance abuse or any form of anti-social activities in early life. The victims may develop post traumatic stress disorders, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, ideation and attempts, and the need for psychosocial counseling to the victims becomes a must.<sup>12</sup>

Some study considers pedophilia as a sexual preference of an individual in addition to gender but the main concern here is of age.<sup>13</sup> Sexual preference should not be considered as a mental disorder<sup>14</sup>, however sexual preference should be separated from psychosocial impairment.<sup>15</sup>

The author feels the need of psychological screening in the community to identify potential pedophiles, increase awareness related to child rights and measures to prevent child sexual abuse.

## CONCLUSIONS

Child sexual assault in the community is increasing despite strict laws and regulations. Age of the victim and relationship of the victim has been no bar to the child sexual assault as the study reports 1-3 years of child victim and some of the perpetrators being the blood related family members. Reporting of few cases from a municipal area does not rule out the very few or no occurrence of child sexual assault. Social awareness related to child rights, prevention of child from any form of abuse, abolishing patriarchal dominance, improving level of education and psychological screening of the potential pedophiles could lead to minimizing the incidence of child sexual assault and abuse. Psychosocial counseling is must to prevent the devastating psychological effects of the heinous trauma to the growing child.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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