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CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE: THE BOTSWANA PERSPECTIVES

Amos A. Alao and Maithamako B. Molojwane†*

Careers and Counselling Centre, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

ABSTRACT

The African Child, particularly the female child is in constant threat of sexual abuse for many reasons. Some of the reasons are neglect by parents, exploitation by older males, family poverty and a variety of situations which include crime rate, war or oppression.

In some African countries, underage female children have been forced into marriage, resulting in physical and emotional damage, and sometimes resulting in HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Botswana, like any other African country has its own incidence of childhood sexual abuse, which has now become a global phenomenon. This paper explores the magnitude of childhood sexual abuse in Botswana through cases reported to the Botswana Police, and those handled by Resource Centres, namely Child line and the SOS Children Village. While it is true that it is sometimes difficult to determine the extent of childhood sexual abuse for a number of reasons, such as the consequences of blame, shame or guilt to mention a few, nevertheless, its monitoring in any community is helpful to ascertain its prevalence so that appropriate measures and interventions could be taken.

The forms of childhood sexual abuse investigated in this paper were, incest, defilement and rape. It is observed that the incidence of sexual abuse were in this order: rape, followed by defilement and incest. More cases of defilement and incest were reported to Resource Centres compared to the Law of Enforcement Agency. The factors reported as being responsible for child sexual abuse in Botswana were socio-economic factors exposing the victims to abuse such as drinking depots in the villages where young girls easily fall victims.

* E-mail: alaoaa@mopipi.ub.bw

† molojwane@mopipi.ub.bw

INTRODUCTION

Abuse in general, could be perpetrated based on a number of factors some of which are human, environmental and situational. Sexual abuse, a non-consensual relationship may be an indication of an attempt to exert control over the other, to humiliate or satisfy sexual urges of the perpetrator. Whatever reason is advanced to any form of abuse, it is unacceptable because of its negative effect on the victim. Forcing one into a sexual relationship the other party does not want by force, could lead to humiliation or stigma especially when others become aware of the incident. There is also the possibility of the victim's inability to have normal sexual relationship with partner in future because of fear.

Psychological, emotional and sometimes financial pressure in addition to fear of social consequences may sometimes compel victims to come out or report incidents of sexual abuse. The perpetrator of sexual abuse can be across various demographic variables, ranging from adults to those in authority over the victim and even peers of the victim.

CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON THE VICTIM

The effects of sexual abuse on the victim are many and varied, some of which range from reproductive health consequences, including sex-related diseases, such as HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Gold, Swingle, Hill and Elfant (1998) noted that childhood sexual abuse has been observed to go beyond the peripheral characteristics of abuse such as frequency, duration, age at on set, number of perpetrators and type of abuse. While all factors are considered important, many studies reduce childhood sexual abuse to absence or presence of penetration, which over-simplifies the abusive experience and implies that penetration constitutes the single most severe aspect of it (Gold, Swingle, Hill and Elfant (1998).

According to the studies of Cole and Putnam (1992) the often serious and damaging psychological sequelae associated with childhood sexual abuse, includes depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, suicidal behaviour, substance abuse, sexual dysfunction and personality disorders (as cited in Schreider & Lyddon, 1998). The personality disorders included in the list of effects of childhood sexual abuse are antisocial, histrionic, narcissistic dependant, avoidant and especially borderline behaviours (Sullins, 1998).

CONCEPT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

The degree of specificity of sexual abuse definitions has been observed to vary widely from state to state. Definitions written into civil laws and criminal statutory definitions have also been observed to lack uniformity, while there are wide variations in the penalty structures and in the upper age limit of the child victim. The definition of sexual abuse of C. Henry Kempe which attempts to explain sexual activities of children within their social and cultural contexts, notes that: "sexual abuse is the involvement of dependent developmentally immature children and young people in sexual activities they cannot fully understand, to

which they cannot give informed consent and which violates the social taboos of the culture and are against the law" (Good-Year Smith, 1993).

Under the Botswana Laws, Cap 80:01, rape is defined as follows:

141.Rape: "Any male person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent if the consent is obtained by force or means of threats or intimidation of any kind, by fear of bodily harm, or by means of false representations as to the nature of the act, or, or in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence termed rape."

Other definitions of sexual abuse under the Botswana law, related to the forms of abuse under consideration, namely, defilement and incest are as follows:

Defilement: (Defilement of girls under 16 years of age).

147 (1). Any person who unlawfully or carnally knows any girl under the age of 16 years is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life, with or without corporal punishment.

(2). Any person who attempts to have unlawful carnal knowledge of any girl under the age of 16 years is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years, with or without corporal punishment.

(3). It shall be a sufficient defense to any charge under this section if it appears to the court before whom the charge is brought that the person so charged had reasonable cause to believe and did in fact believe that the girl was of or above the age of 16 years or was his wife.

148. Defilement of idiots and imbeciles: Any person who, knowing a woman or girl to be an idiot or imbecile, has or attempts to have unlawful carnal knowledge of her under circumstances not amounting to rape, but which prove that the offender knew at the time of the commission of the offence that the woman or girl was an idiot or imbecile is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years, with or without corporal punishment.

Incest: (Incest by males)

168.(1). Any male person who has any carnal knowledge of a female person, who is to his knowledge his grand-daughter, daughter, sister, or mother, is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years. Provided that if it is alleged in the indictment or summons and proved that the female person is under the age of 13 years, the offender should be liable to imprisonment for life.

(2). It is immaterial that the carnal knowledge was had with consent of the female person.

(3). If any male person attempts to commit any such offence as aforesaid he is guilty of an offence.

(4). On the conviction before any court of any male person of an offence under this section, or of an attempt to commit the same, against any female under the age of 21 years, it shall be in the power of the court to divest the offender of all authority over such female, and, if the offender is the guardian of such

female, to remove the offender from such guardianship, and in any such case to appoint any person or persons to be the guardian or guardians of such female during her minority or any less period.

Provided that the high court may at any time vary or rescind the order by the appointment of any other person as such guardian, or in any other respect.

Incest by females

169. Any female person of or above the age of 16 years who with her consent permits her grand-father, father, brother, or son to carnal knowledge of her knowing him to be her grand-father, father, brother, or son as the case may be, is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Garcia – Moreno (2003) noted that sexual abuse of children and young adolescents is wide spread in all societies. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that overall prevalence is 25% for girls and 8% for boys, although these figures differ with the population studied and definitions used. Finkelhor (1994) observed that boys and girls between ages seven and thirteen years are at greatest risk.

Saewyc, Magae, and Pettingell (2004) found childhood sexual abuse to be associated with adolescent pregnancy. Brady, Gallagher, Berger et. al (2002) and Lindergren, Hanson & Hammett et.al (1998) found childhood sexual abuse to be associated with HIV infection.

Anderson, Ho.foster, Matthis et al. (2004) found that the victim of childhood sexual may demonstrate the tendency to force someone else to have sex. Johnson (2004) reported other adverse effects of childhood sexual abuse to include (mental and physical effects) emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, sexualized behaviour, binge eating in woman and substance abuse. Johnson (2004) also noted that victims of childhood sexual abuse have reported guilt, anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness, inability to distinguish sexual from affectionate behaviour, difficulty in maintaining appropriate personal boundaries and the inability to refuse unwanted sexual advances.

In a study of childhood forcible sexual abuse and victim – perpetrator relationship among a sample of secondary school students in the Northern Province of South Africa. Madu and Peltzer (2006) reported that an overall prevalence rate of childhood forcible sexual abuse was 16.4%; 8.8% for males, 15.7% for females. 9.9% were kissed sexually by force, 6.8% were touched sexually by force and 6.1% were victims oval/anal/vaginal intercourse using force. The majority of the perpetrators were acquaintances or relatives of the victims.

Finkelhor and Browne (1986) indicate the effects of forcible sexual abuse and other forms of childhood sexual abuse on victims to include traumatic sexualisation (such as increase in salience of sexual issues and confusion about sexual identity and norms) stigmatization (such as shame, guilt, low esteem and suicide, betrayal (such as grief, depression and extreme dependency and powerlessness (such as anxiety, fear and lower sense of efficiency).

In a study conducted Child line (2005), on factors contributing to the girl child sexual abuse in Botswana. Focused interview were conducted with ninety-five (95) key informants on child sexual abuse. The findings revealed that:

- a) With reference to poverty and child abuse, 22% of the key informants indicated that low income and poor housing were important factors associated with child sexual abuse. Poor shelter which may lead to over crowding within the poor population encouraged early exposure of children to sexual activities because children share the same bedrooms with parents.
- b) Fifteen (15%) of the informants associated the problem of child sexual abuse with the decline of family patterns such as more frequent divorce, increase in single-parent families leading to high rate of step fathers and mothers co-habitors, which has exposed some children to abuse.
- c) Sixteen percent (16%) indicated poor parenting and neglect as a factor in child sexual abuse as the discipline of children by parents in Botswana has changed from the known traditional method, to a style that may not produce responsible adults.
- d) Thirteen percent (13%) of the key informants reported that children from emotionally barren and abusive homes could be drawn into "sex rings" which offer companionship and reward not available at home.
- e) Ten percent (10%) of the informants indicated children from dysfunctional families where there is lack of harmony are less likely to resist sexual advances by a family member or someone outside the family who offers them sex in exchange for emotional attachment.

Four percent (4%) of the informants implicated drug and alcohol abuse as a factor in child sexual abuse.

Methodology

A retrospective study approach was utilized to determine the nature and extent of child sexual abuse in Botswana in the last five years. The sources of information included Resource Centres identified to be dealing with issues related to child sexual abuse and from the law enforcement agency namely the Botswana Police to which such cases are reported. The Resource Centres consulted were the Childline and the SOS Children Village. The statistics on child sexual abuse was sought from the Commissioner of Police. The areas of sexual abuse under focus were rape, defilement and incest. The reported cases in each are noted during the under investigation.

In addition to the Police report on childhood sexual abuse in the country, a questionnaire was designed to collect information from two Resource Centres, namely the Childline and the SOS village, on the trend (reported cases) of rape, defilement and incest between 2003 and 2006. The questionnaire also sought information on the:

- a) referral of victims by the law enforcement agency to Resource Centres for rehabilitation.
- b) nature of intervention provided to victims by Resource Centres and
- c) assessment of the adequacy of staffing in Resource Centres to handle child sexual abuse cases.

The Resource Centres

The Child-line

The Child-line Botswana is a non-governmental and non-profit making organization. The Organization was founded by Doreen Khama and Fay Smith in 1990. It was recommended that Child-line be formed under a notarial deed of trust and interested members of the public were invited to become trustees. Child-line was officially opened on the 17th October 1990 and is run by qualified social workers who offer both telephonic and walk in services.

The mission of Childline based in Gaborone (the capital of the nation) is primarily to help abused children and addresses other related child welfare issues through nurturing and intervention strategies like education, counseling, case work and alternative care programmes.

The SOS Village

SOS Botswana is Child-Welfare Organization whose main aim is to provide a home and family for abandoned and orphaned children. It offers a residential care and it has also adopted a family model where children are grouped on smaller family units headed by SOS mothers.

The organization gives children an opportunity to grow, prepares children to be independent and to be self supportive. SOS Children's Village Botswana does not abandon children when they reach the age of 18 years; it reintegrates them back into the society. Here children are either taken back to their families if the family situation has improved during reconstruction service or given plots in the villages. The SOS acquires these plots for the 18years+ children and builds each one a small house with one bedroom, a small kitchen, toilet and bathroom and allows him / her to move on with his / her life.

SOS Botswana also has a program where follow-ups of former SOS children are made.

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE REPORTS

Rape

Table 1 indicates that the most common sexual abuse in Botswana is rape, followed by defilement and incest (which is not significant). In 2003, the trend of rape seems to be about three times higher for age 18 years and above, compared to age range 11-17 years. While rape cases between ages 11-17 years was about six and a half times higher compared to those age ten and below.

In 2004, the reported rape cases for ages 18 years and above was about twice of those in the age range 11-18 years, while about the same trend (about six and a half higher times) for ages 11-17 years compared to ages 10 years and under were maintained.

In 2005, the incidents of rape for age range 18 years above was about three times higher compared to age range 11-17 years. Incidents of rape cases for ages 11-17 years was between 4 to 5 times higher compared to age range 10 years and below.

**Table 1. Reports of Incidents of Child Sexual Abuse (2003-2005)
from the Botswana Police**

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Rape		63	61	Records not available yet.
Under 10 years	49	418	294	"
11-17 years	316	911	987	"
18 years upwards	923	(1392)	(1342)	"
(TOTAL)	(1288)			
Defilement				
Under 10 years	33	14	23	"
11-16 years	230	100	266	"
(TOTAL)	(263)	(114)	(289)	"
Incest				
Under 10 years	1	0	0	"
11-17 years	1	0	1	"
18 years upwards	1	0	2	"
(TOTAL)	(3)	(0)	(3)	

The trend of incidents of rape for the different age groups over the period under review seems not to have shown any significant change except for the rape incidents for age group 11-17 years which dropped from (418) in 2004 to (294) in 2005. Over-all the highest incident of rape was recorded in 2004. Statistics are yet not available for the year 2006.

Defilement

Defilement seems to be more common among the age range 11-16 years compared to the age range ten years below. The ratio of defilement for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005 for the age range 11-16 years and 10 years below, were about 6.9 to 1, 7.1 to 1 and 11.6 to 1, respectively. It is significant to note that there was decline in defilement (to about half) in 2004 for the two age groups under consideration and in the overall incidents in the country in general.

Incest

The number of incidents reported to the police were minimal, three incidents, in 2003, none in 2004 and three in 2005.

The total incidents of sexual abuse handled by Child-line was summarized in Table 2. In this table, the incidents of sexual abuse handled were in this order; defilement (35 cases), rape (21 cases) and incest (14 cases) in 2005. The order in 2006 was rape (23 cases) defilement (13 cases) and incest (1 case).

The figures for 2003 and 2004 were not available at the time of data collection.

The data in Table 3 indicate figures for 2006 only, where 26 girls from Tlokwen S.O.S. Children Village and 17 girls from Francistown S.O.S. Children Village were sexually abused. The abuses were reported to be mainly by family friends, customers in a "Chibuku depot" (drinking depot).

Table 2. Reports of incidents of child sexual abuse(2005-2006) reported to the Childline

Rape	(Total)	2005	2006
		21	23
Defilement	(Total)	35	13
Incest	(Total)	14	1

Table 3. Reports of child sexual abuse at the S.O.S Village

		2006		Total
10-17 years	Tlokweg Village	Francistown		43 girls
	26 girls	17 girls		

NATURE OF INTERVENTIONS PROVIDED

The Law Enforcement Agency

As expected, the main focus of intervention of child sexual abuse by law enforcement agents is prosecution and referral for rehabilitation where applicable. While some forms of support may be provided by the law enforcement agency to the victims of child sexual abuse, the effective rehabilitation and support is better provided by Resource Centres with personnel in the helping profession.

Resource Centres

Whereas it is helpful to know the extent of child sexual abuse, the age group mostly abused and the factors which lead to abuse, it is equally important to have adequate resource centres to handle incidents of sexual abuse. This study has revealed the need for increased personnel to handle various aspects of child sexual abuse in Botswana. To begin with, few resource centres are available to provide support to the sexually abused in the country. The few available need to be adequately staffed to respond to a variety of concerns on child sexual abuse. This need was visible in the two Resource Centres namely the Child-line and the S.O.S village that responded to the questionnaire of child-sexual abuse in Botswana. There is need for staff with specialization in different areas of the helping profession to be employed in such Resource Centres as this need became apparent from the list of staff and their area of specialization in each Resource Centre.

SERVICES PROVIDED

The services provided by the Resource Centres consulted include counseling and therapeutic assistance, supportive counseling for parents and families of the victim of sexual abuse and a place of safety.

However, face to face interview for victims who reside outside the location of the resource centres was reported to be more difficult to achieve. It was noticed from the response that more staff would be needed to assist such victims.

It is apparent that Botswana like any other country has to confront the problem of child sexual abuse. There is need to keep proper records of child sexual abuse reported, as this would enable each community to know the number and the magnitude of this incidence and the prevailing factors associated with the incidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One option to assist victims of childhood sexual abuse is to provide on-line counseling services for such victims as an immediate intervention of support. It would be helpful if Resource Centres are equipped with facilities for on-line counselling.

There is need for more financial support for the few Resource Centres that provide services in child sexual abuse, so that a variety of support services could be made available to the victims of childhood sexual abuse through employment of adequate staff and procurement of other needed equipment.

There is also the need for professionals in the different helping areas in the country to volunteer their time and assist Resource Centres providing services for the victims of sexual abuse, to complement the efforts of the Resource Centres.

Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis and Smith, (1990) noted that the early identification of sexual abuse victims appears crucial to reduction of suffering, enhancement of psychological development and healthier adult functioning. It is thus important to identify early, victims of child sexual abuse in Botswana, and provide them with appropriate assistance.

It is imperative to take positive actions to reduce or eliminate this form of non-consensual sexual relationship because of its risk factors and the physical and mental consequences on the victim.

There is the need for more public awareness on the issue of child abuse, prevention programmes need to be put in place, victims are to be encouraged to disclose previous or recent abuse, so that necessary support could be provided.

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