



SURVEY ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Executive Summary, November 1999

Introduction

1. The End Child Sexual Abuse Foundations (ESCAF) has commissioned Professor Catherine So-kum Tang of the Department of Psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a survey on child sexual abuse in February, 1999. The overall objectives of the survey are:
 - (1) To study the public's perceptions towards the definitions of child sexual abuse.
 - (2) To estimate the prevalence rate of child sexual abuse among Chinese university students.
 - (3) To explore profiles of abusers and victims of child sexual abuse, the abuse incidents, and long-term impacts on the victims.
 - (4) To recommend preventive measures to tackle child sexual abuse.

Methodology

2. This study adopted a self-administered questionnaire design. Questionnaires were distributed to all universities between April and June of 1999. A total of 2,147 completed questionnaires were returned, with the response rate being 67%. Among them, 887 were male, 1,151 were female, and 109 respondents did not specify their sex. The average age of the respondents was 21 years old.
3. The survey questionnaire was in Chinese and included personal and family background information, definition and criteria for child sexual abuse, information about the abuse incidents, consequences of the abuse, and perceptions towards service for child sexual abuse.

Definition and Criteria for Child Sexual Abuse

4. Results of respondents' ratings on the importance of various criteria for child sexual abuse were listed in Table 1.

Table 1

	Respondents (N=2,147)	
	Importance %	Ratings*
Causing harm to the child e.g., physical injury, discomfort, low self-confidence, no trust of adult	89.2%	3.44
Abuser's motives and lack of child's consent	88.2%	3.40
Child developmental factors, e.g., age, sexual experience, relationship with abuser	43.9%	2.79

Note: *Scale: 1 = very unimportant, 4 = very important

5. Respondents' perceptions of whether the given behaviors could be defined as child sexual abuse were included in Table 2.

Table 2

	Respondents (N=2,147)	
	Agreement %	Ratings*
Intimate contact sexual behavior	96.4%	3.79
Non-contact sexual behavior	86.9%	3.49
Contact sexual behavior	79.1%	3.28

Note: *Scale : 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree

Child Sexual Abuse Experience

6. The prevalence of respondents experiencing child sexual abuse before age 17 was shown in Table 3. A total of 752 respondents (35% of the total sample) reported child sexual abuse experience, i.e., 330 males (37.2% of the male sample) and 390 females (33.9% of the female sample). In general, more males experienced non-contact child sexual abuse than females (33.3% vs 28.2%), whereas more females reported more intimate contact child sexual abuse than males (5.8% vs 3.0%). There was no gender difference in contact child sexual abuse experience (13.1% for both sexes).

Table 3

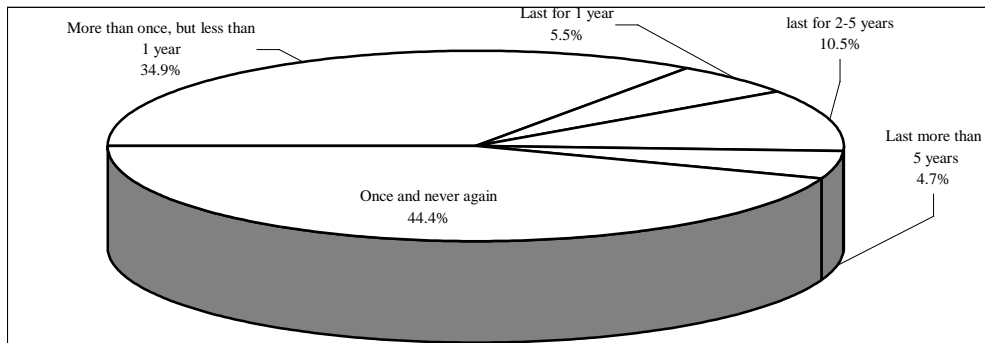
	Male (N=887)	Female (N=1,151)	Total* (N=2,147)
<u>Non-contact Child Sexual Abuse</u>			
Watching pornography & x-rated material with child**	25.7%	17.6%	21.0%
Masturbating in front of child	1.2%	2.0%	1.7%
Talking sexual jokes with child**	20.1%	14.3%	16.7%
Engaging in sexual intercourse in front of child	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%
Asking child to fondle child's own sex organ**	0.7%	1.7%	1.3%
Exposing adult's nude body or sex organ to child	3.5%	4.8%	4.4%
Peeping at child while he/she are bathing or in toilet**	1.2%	3.2%	2.3%
One or more behavior**	33.3%	28.2%	30.2%
<u>Contact Child Sexual Abuse</u>			
Rubbing and touching child's body	1.8%	3.1%	2.5%
Bathing with child**	10.1%	7.6%	8.8%
Making mouth-to-mouth kisses with child	5.0%	5.7%	5.3%
Taking pornographic pictures of child	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
Asking child to swallow adult's semen	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%
One or more behavior	13.1%	13.1%	12.9%
<u>Intimate Contact Child Sexual Abuse</u>			
Asking child to fondle adult's sex organ	1.6%	1.8%	1.7%
Asking child to kiss adult's sex organ	0.5%	1.0%	0.7%
Fondling child's breast and/or sex organ**	2.0%	5.2%	3.9%
Penetrating child's vagina or anus with foreign body	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%
Having sexual intercourse with child	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%
One or more behavior**	3.0%	5.8%	4.8%
Total (Once or more behavior)**	37.2%	33.9%	35.0%

Note: *109 respondents did not specify sex.

**Gender differences were significant.

7. Results also included the duration of child sexual abuse experience (Figure 1).

Figure 1



8. The average age of victims of child sexual abuse was 12.17 years, and females (11.53 years) were generally younger than males (13.23 years) when they were sexually abused as children. The age distribution of child sexual abuse victims was shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

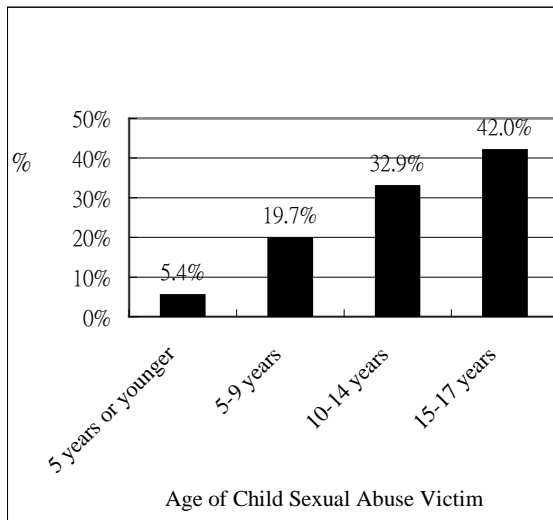
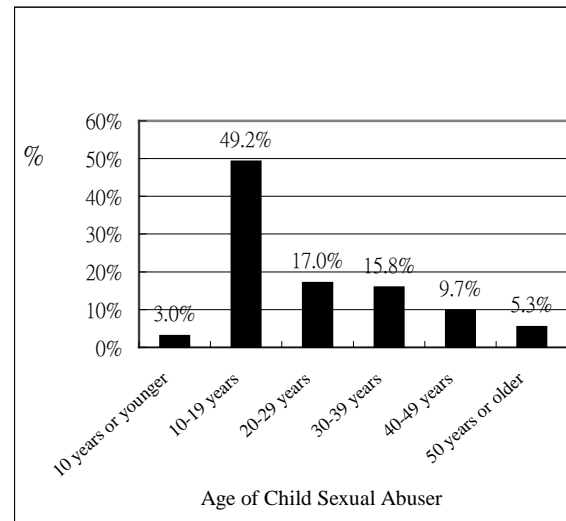


Figure 3



9. About 74.9% of the child sexual abuser were males and 25.1% were females. The average age of child sexual abusers was 26.19 years old, with female abusers being older than the male abusers (25.52 years vs 22.13 years). The age distribution of the child sexual abusers was shown in Figure 3.

10. The relationship between child sexual abuse victims and abusers was as follows: friend (39.4%), stranger (17.1%), relative (12.3%), father (7.5%), male sibling (6.5%), mother (5.8%), teacher (2.8%), female sibling (2.8%), and step-father (0.8%).

Consequences of Child Sexual Abuse

11. About 59.5% of the child sexual abuse victims did not report their abuse experience, and male victims were less likely than female victims to report such incidents (37.3% vs 41.9%).

12. Most of the child sexual abuse victims reported their abuse experience to their friends (78.6%), 40.5% to their parents and family members, and only a small percentage to social workers (6.4%) or teachers (4.0%).
13. When the child sexual abuse victims reported to others about their abuse experience, 70% of the cases were not followed up, 5.3% were advised to keep silent, 4.1% were being scolded or laughed at, and only 1.8% were referred to social workers for counseling. About 4.8% of the child sexual abusers were asked to stop contact the victims, and only 1 abuser was arrested and sentenced.
14. Compared to respondents without child sexual abuse experience, respondents with child sexual abuse experience had a lower level of life satisfaction and wished they would change their previous life experience.

Recommendations

15. Results also showed that 83.2% of the respondents felt the public lack knowledge about child sexual abuse, 74.3% also viewed that the professionals such as social worker, police, and counselor had insufficient knowledge to handle the problem. About 80% of the respondents opined a lack of public information (85.5%), public education programs (87.2%), and counseling services (83.7%) for child sexual abuse.
16. Recommendations include the promotion of awareness and knowledge among the public and professionals, including strengthening of public education programs and skills for detection and handling problems for parents and professionals (e.g., social worker and teacher).
17. The knowledge and skills for prevention of sexual abuse should also be promoted among school children, including abuse occurring in the family and among friends.
18. The ways to encourage and facilitate victims of child sexual abuse to report their abuse experience should be explored to enable the victims to have early professional intervention and to stop the abusers from repeating their abusive behavior.
19. The follow-up counseling services for child sexual abuse victims and abusers should be strengthened.
20. Laws related to child sexual abuse should be reviewed every now and then to determine whether the criminal procedure, sentence of the abuser, and inclusion of the various types of child sexual abuse behaviors reflect the current societal views and standard.
21. Research studies on child sexual abuse should be conducted, e.g., to collect data on the incidence and prevalence rates, to determine various identification factors, and to understand long-term impacts on child sexual abuse victims.