

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD – LITERATURE REVIEW AND STATISTICAL STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

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### ABSTRACT

Sexual violence in various forms is prevalent throughout the world, but the most severe physical consequences of such violence occur in children. In assessing the prevalence of sexual violence must take account of social and cultural values of the population of a village, city or country. The use of violence (physical, mental, addiction, etc.) in gender relations is not always equivalent to the legal definition of rape. Sexual violence exists in the world. However, in many countries on this issue were held a little research. We present herein a statistical research on cases of sexual violence against children from the age of one to seventeen in the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora and their regions. The purpose of this study is to present some basic indicators relevant in assessing the aspects of the stated problem. We examined a total of 805 cases of sexual violence in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora and their regions for the period 2005-2012. Sexual violence has always been avoided and unwelcome topic for discussion, and reason for shame and disgrace to the victim. When analyzing the data from this study it is noteworthy that in the majority of children, sexual violence against them was committed by acquaintances, family members or other relatives. Experience shows that the use of violence (physical, mental, addiction, etc.) in gender relations is not always equivalent to the legal definition of rape, which is why it is not always subject to judicial actions and consequences.

*Key words: Sexual offense, childhood*

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual violence in various forms is prevalent throughout the world, but the most severe physical consequences of such violence occur in children. The scientific studies on this issue are conflicting. In assessing the prevalence of sexual violence must take account of social and cultural values of the population of a village, city or country. In fact, the word "rape" is always associated with the actions of a sexual nature. However, the base of the unpleasant experience and adverse effects are not only due to the sexual intercourse, but to the presence of coercion, humiliation and fraud. Any encroachment on sexual integrity of children, through lies, coercion, physical force, threat, etc. for the purpose of sexual satisfaction should be regarded as sexual abuse. Cases of sexual abuse are more difficult to identify. The statistics come from cases subject of a criminal investigation or surveys among adults. Police data are often incomplete because the victims are afraid of censure and shame of the act. Sexual violence has always been avoided and unwelcome topic for discussion, and reason for shame and disgrace to the victim. It can be assumed that in some cases sexual violence are somewhat neglected by researchers. Data on sexual violence are usually admitted to the police, hospitals, NGOs and research. Sexual violence can be presented in the form of shaped iceberg. Reported to the police case is the tip of the iceberg, but a substantial part remains hidden. The use of violence (physical, mental, addiction, etc.) in gender relations is not always equivalent to the legal definition of rape, and therefore is not necessarily subject of justice

actions and consequences. The usual health information does not contain enough information about the consequences and the need for respect towards the victims as victims of violence.

Sexual violence exists in the world. However, in many countries on this issue were held a little research. According to Mooney, [1993], up to one third of the girls reported that their first sexual act was consensual. In fact, the word "rape" is always associated with the actions of a sexual nature. But, the base of the tragedy is not only about the sexual intercourse but for the presence of coercion, humiliation and fraud. Any intervention in the sexual life of people with coercion, physical force, threat, etc. may be considered as sexual abuse. Sexual inviolability of citizens, under the age of 14 in Bulgaria regardless of their cooperation, participation, challenge and motivation is under legal protection. In the United States the fastest growing crimes are the sex crimes - 5.5% of all crime. This fact is connected with the general trend of increasing violence against women, becoming endemic. Many of them experience life in some form of violence from family members or other relatives and friends. In a survey about two thirds of the women interviewed reported physical violence, and to one third of women surveyed have confirmed at least one incident of sexual abuse to 18-year-old age [Wyatt and Loeb, 1999]. Recently, research in this direction provide important results. Yet in assessing the prevalence of sexual violence must take account of social and cultural values of the population of a village, city or country. According to data from a report of the National Institute of Criminology in Italy [1998] it varies in different countries - Bolivia 2%; Botswana 0.8%; Beijing 1.6%; Manila 0.3%; Tirana 6%; Buenos Aires 5.8%; Bogota 5%. It is necessary to note that these data are based on both an act of violence between partners and in rape by a stranger. Reported cases of sexual abuse by Jewkes et al. average 26.5 / 100 thousand persons. In absolute numbers, they are significantly more in the cities, but as a ratio to 100 thousand the frequency for women in rural areas - 37.75 / 100 thousand was significantly higher than that of the urban population - 26.8 / 100 thousand women. Separately for cases of rape, the ratio is 33.9 / 100 thousand women from the villages against 19.7 / 100 thousand of those of the city. In over 65% of the attacks were carried out in the home of the attacker or the victim; in 82% the perpetrators were known to the victim. According to Kelly et al., [2005] 38% of sexually abused children were abuse by their brothers, 23% by their fathers and 14% by an uncle, 13% by stepfather, 8% by cousin, 6% by grandfather and 4% by their mother . Only in Africa in the Sahara region, Egypt and Sudan, three million girls and women have genital injuries. Studies in England show experienced incidents of sexual violence in 21-23% of women in urban areas. By reports of sexual assault in Norway means that 6% of unmarried women reported this to happen one or more times in their lives, with a high degree of sexual violence against women in rural areas - up to 46% [MsSann et al . 1990]. Global trends that develop in the international scale are accompanied by an increase in sexual violence and sex trade Antrobus, [1994], particularly manifested in the Caribbean and Africa [Omordion, 1998], 17.7% in the age group of 15 to 19 years have made "commercial" sex [Onyango and Walji-Moloo1991]. The sex trade - exchanging sex for basic needs, money, food and shelter, is within the range between 7 and 31 percent for women, while men deal much less with this activity [Butterfield et al. , 2003 and Carey et al., 1997]. According to Kevin, [2004], 37% of respondents offered money or gifts, 22% were forced, and 16% threatened. Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, most child victims are 11 years of age. Various data are presented by Johnson, [2004]. Ten percent of the victims were between 0 and 3 years of age, approximately 28.4% of the victims were between 4 and 7 years, 25.5% are between 8 and 11 years and 35.9% were older 12. Girls from 16-19 are 4 times higher than other age groups.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

We present herein a statistical research on cases of sexual violence against children from the age of one to seventeen in the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora and their regions, that were subject of examination in the Departments of forensic medicine and deontology in Sofia, Plovdiv

and Stara Zagora - Bulgaria, for a period of eight years from 2005 – 2012. The purpose of this study is to present some basic indicators relevant in assessing the aspects of the stated problem.

**RESULTS**

For the period 2005-2012 at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Deontology in MF-MU-Sofia, a total of 596 examinations of children from 1 to 17 years of age, reported that they were victims of sexual violence against them. For the same period were reviewed at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Deontology in MF-MU-Plovdiv total of 23, and at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Deontology in MF-Thracian University-St. Zagora – 186 children (Table 1). The examinations in connection with the rape and fornication are presented in Table2:

CITY	NUMBER OF VICTIMS
SOFIA	596
PLOVDIV	23
STARA ZAGORA	186

Table. 1-Victims of sexual violence

CITY	RAPE	FORNICATION
SOFIA	324	273
PLOVDIV	12	11
STARA ZAGORA	98	96

Table. 2-Cases of rape and fornication

It should be noted that all sex offences are included in fornication. The distribution by sex shows the following results, presented in Fig.1:

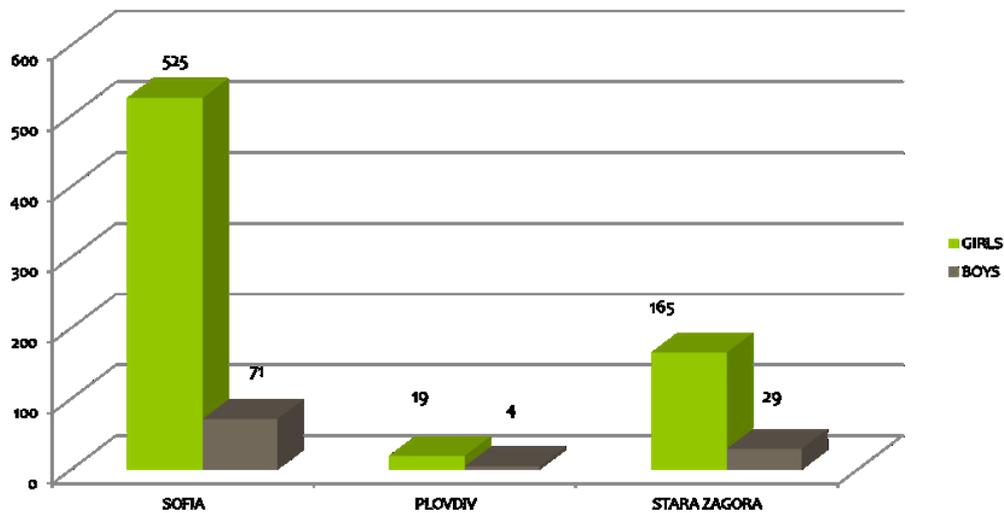


Fig.1- Sexual violence - Distribution by sex in Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora

Analysis of data from this study shows that about 78% of cases of sexual violence were committed by a familiar face, about 20% - the violation were committed by a relative, and in other cases of random strangers. Less than 1% were cases of gang rape. When investigating cases of sex crimes with minors, we found that a significant percentage of them between the ages 16-17 years are sex workers and those that allowed the sexual acts with them under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. When the effect of the drugs passes they realize the incident and give a signal to the police and undergo forensic examination, which rarely catches traces of injuries on the body, limbs and sex-anal area.

## DISCUSSION

Sexual violence has always been avoided and unwelcome topic for discussion, and reason for shame and disgrace to the victim. It is a widespread phenomenon, but between the statistics cited by different authors, there are major differences. One major reason is the different definitions that give content based on different legislative terms. Perceptions of violence in sexual relations vary widely in different social and ethnic groups and societies in different countries of the world. Sexual violence is further penetration of the penis into the vagina or anus, [Christian et al., 2000], also penetration with another object. According to Heppenstall-Heger, [2003], 69.3% of children said to penetrate the vagina with a finger. The importance of the problem of children up to 15 years reported Grossin et al., [2003]; vaginal penetration 40%, [Christian et al., 2000]; [Adams, 1994] - 33%; oral and genital or oral 28% in 168 of the 293 cases reported and ejaculation [Christian et al., 2000]. Forms of sexual violence can occur in different circumstances. Traditional practice of polygamy is one factor that occurs in Bedouin-Arab society Elbedour et al., [2003] or extramarital relations with married women, rape of unknown women, rape of mentally or physically weak women raped during the war, rape of children, coercion into prostitution and others. [WHO, 2002]. Seemingly harmless, but safe is a widespread form of sexual behaviors of children with their peers, called "playing doctor" [Debbie et al., 2005]. In some African countries spread belief that sex with a virgin cures (takes) sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS. In the South African Republic that faith has been declared as a reason for the boom of rape of minors [Richter, 2003]. A dramatic traditional form of marriage is sexual abuse in early childhood. Such forms are distributed in Central and South Asia, Latin America, West Africa. For example, in Nepal 7% of girls enter marriage at the age of 10, 40% at the age of 12 and 100% at the age of 15, while in North America, Canada, Switzerland, UK, Belgium, Germany and Spain marriage before 19 years of age is 1-5%, [Jewkes et al, 2001]. Other forms of sexual violence are as tribal customs laws "ngozi" in Zimbabwe, the relatives of a girl give her to the family of a killed man so she can get pregnant from that en's father or brother and give birth to a baby. Such custom "chimusa mapfiwa", after the death the wife, she is replaced by her sister. Particularly dangerous moment is hiding sexual exploitation and abuse supported by public management including attributes such as family honor, virginity and veiling. Shameful and forbidden taboo topic to talk about sexuality Abu, [2003], including sexual abuse. In many cases the woman that suffered sexual abuse commits suicide or is killed to save the family honor [Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999b]. The use of violence (physical, mental, addiction, etc.) in gender relations is not always equivalent to the legal concept of rape and therefore not always subject to judicial actions and consequences. The usual health information does not contain enough information about the consequences and the need for respect towards the victims as victims of violence.

When analyzing the data from this study it is noteworthy that in the majority of children, sexual violence against them was committed by acquaintances, family members or other relatives. Cases of sexual abuse are more difficult to identify. In the study carried out by us the statistics are based only on forensic examinations of children carried out in the departments of forensic medicine in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora and their regions in order from the police and rarely at the request of one of the parents for incidents on the territory of Sofia city and Sofia region. We believe that the data are incomplete, because victims or their parents, often obscure and / or suppress such cases because abused children, depending on their age, either do not understand the nature of what happened to them or are afraid of the perpetrators, or ashamed of what happened to them. Experience shows that the use of violence (physical, mental, addiction, etc.) in gender relations is not always equivalent to the legal definition of rape, which is why it is not always subject to judicial actions and consequences. The usual health information does not contain enough information about the consequences and the need for respect towards the victims as victims of violence.

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