

Exploring and Addressing Sexual Violence of Boys in Nepal

*"I am a boy
and
I also feel the pain"*



VOICE OF CHILDREN

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मिति.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Nepal as a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (CRC) has been putting its efforts to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation and promote the rights of children as enshrined in the Convention. As results, access of children to their rights to survival, protection, development and participation has been encouragingly increasing since the decade of 1990s, and child related indicators have been improving noticeably.

Notwithstanding, it has been a great challenge to bring faster results on the protection related indicators of children. Among others, sexual abuse and exploitation against children in general and sexual abuse and sexually harmful behavior against boys in particular remain as one of the critical concerns. Though the issues of sexual abuse and exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation of children have been taken as one of the serious concerns in course of child rights intervention - awareness raising, program designing and implementation, and monitoring, particularly after ratification on the CRC, understanding and addressing sexual abuse and sexually harmful behavior of boys remained as new area to go further in course of protecting and promoting rights of children.

Voice of Children has tried to bring out the hidden issue 'sexual abuse and sexually harmful behavior of boys' and recommended some crucial actions to address emerging concerns against boys. Though this study covered a very limited cluster and sample size, I hope that the recommendations will be useful to consider while developing protection related policies and programs for concerned organizations. Central Child Welfare Board would like to thank VoC and the study team, and I hope that VoC will study in emerging areas of child concerns in coming days as well.


Executive Director
(Keshav Bhattarai)
Executive Director

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Foreword

In order to develop contextually relevant interventions to prevent and address sexual abuse and exploitation of boys there is a huge need to build evidence regarding the specific risk factors for boys, map and analyze effectiveness of existing interventions and what boys in a particular context would need in order to seek and access support.

One of the main findings of the *Out of the shadows: Shining light on the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation* - a 60-country benchmarking index examining how countries are responding to the threat of sexual violence against children commissioned by World Childhood Foundation and Oak Foundation is that boys are generally overlooked in the fight against child sexual abuse. For example, only 10% of the countries gather prevalence data for sexual exploitation of boys. We also know that most research regarding sexual abuse of boys is carried out in high-income countries.

The study *Understanding and addressing sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviors of boys in Nepal* fills is a crucial contribution to filling the gap in knowledge and awareness about the particular vulnerabilities and risks of boys related to child sexual abuse.

This study is the result of the close work and coordination between World Childhood Foundation, Voice of Children and Family For Every Child and is part of a larger regional initiative aiming to advocate, raise awareness, and most important make boys confident to report abuse and access qualitative services across South and South-East Asia. World Childhood Foundation extends its appreciation and gratitude to all involved in this study. The commitment of Voice of Children to conduct this study and its contribution to the movement to put an end to sexual abuse of children is gratefully acknowledged.

Asa Olsson

World Childhood Foundation



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This joint study involved three Asian country members along with Voice of Children in Nepal hence I would like to thank Butterflies (India), CPTCSA (Philippines) and First Step (Cambodia) for their collaboration and coordination. And also to Family for Every Child for an opportunity to explore this matter, William Gali and Camilla Jones for providing their persistent inputs, Helen Veitch and Jonathan Blagbrough for their guidance.

Special thanks goes to World Childhood Foundation for their support to conduct this study in Nepal.

Krishna K. Thapa
Director
Voice of Children

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Glossary

Abbreviations

CCWB	Central Child Welfare Board
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center
CPTCSA	Center for Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse
EI	Extended Interview
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
II	Individual Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VOC	Voice of Children
VDC	Village Development Committee
WHO	World Health Organization

¹VDC is dissolved and now called as Gaupalika (Rural Municipality)

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify the country specific understanding and existing interventions on sexual violence affecting boys including both boys as a victim of sexual abuse and boys as an actor displaying harmful sexual behaviour. The study is focused on three themes, the first is on masculinity/sexuality to find out the lived experiences in the context of sexuality and masculinities of boys; its social construction and impact on boys. Sexual violence was the second theme of the study to identify the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity with sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour of boys. The third theme was the intervention part to find out the existing best practice and challenges encountered and the way they were resolved. This primary study was proposed by five alliance members of Family for Every Child after a scoping study was conducted on the concept of boys sexual violence through a document review and key informant interviews.

This study is in five sections; the first section introduces the topic and background of the study as cases of boys sexual violence are hardly mentioned or reported in Nepal, implying that the topic itself is not common. The second section of the study is the review of context specific global and country literature specifically gender, masculinity, sexuality and sexual violence and boys. The third section outlines the method, sample design, sample size, data collection and ethical considerations undertaken during this study. As the study is focused around the shared experiences and understandings of children it used qualitative study methods and participatory techniques to understand the topic of boys' sexual abuse and existing interventions. A total sample 131 respondents was collected from Kathmandu Valley and Sunsari District. Boys and girls aged 14 -20 years participated in this study through extended interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) and parents participated through individual interviews and FGDs while professional experience was collected through key informant interviews.

The fourth section of this study outlines the key findings with excerpts from data. The findings of the study are summarised as follows:

1. 'Boys have strong heart but girls have soft heart'

The socio-cultural construction of masculinity

Existing social construction of masculinity contributes to creating differences between boys and girls. Boys are socialised to be resilient and autonomous and to nurture qualities and attributes associated with male stereotypes of dominance and aggression.

2. Boys should be 'prestigious in society'

Roles and responsibilities of boyhood into manhood

Participants appeared to identify some pressure to maintain stereotyped masculine traits such as virility or to rise to challenges.

3. 'Learning about sexuality, image and acceptable sexuality'

Participants indicated that in Nepalese society, social norms on sexuality restrict sexual activity to within marriage; norms are not flexible enough for boys to explore their sexual orientation. A clear assigned image emerged linking masculinity to heterosexuality and boys are not allowed to break this image.

4. Implicit agreement, victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse and environment

During this study, respondents said that girls were more likely to be sexually abused compared to boys, but that when boys are abused the impact of the abuse is magnified. On typical profile of a victim of sexual abuse, boys said that they can be a victim anywhere, however, some mentioned milieu and categories of boys being more likely to be victims of sexual abuse such as boys who are on the street, innocent, shy and younger boys. Study participants stated that perpetrators of the sexual abuse of boys could be anybody without classification: male or female, a familiar face or a stranger. Study respondents appeared to believe that boys who are brought up in safe family environment are less likely be a victim of sexual abuse.

5. 'A victim becomes isolated': the impact and response to sexual abuse

At a personal level, victims reported feeling a sense of loss, anger, hate, fear, confusion and suicidal thoughts, and that the response of a victim's family, friends, and society is extremely significant for the survival and existence of a victim. In addition, the family's response to victims ranged from purposefully ignoring their exploitation to discriminating against them or disowning them. A few respondents also mentioned that some families and friends support victims.

6. Legal process and reporting of boys sexual abuse

It appeared that the legal ambiguities around the sexual abuse of boys - as an 'unnatural' act - lead to silenced voices of the victim and unreported cases. Furthermore, for victims this is compounded by the fear of being re-victimized, humiliated and not supported. Therefore, many respondents focused on the need for awareness raising.

In the fifth section the conclusion and recommendations from the key findings are included at three levels:

Primary Interventions

Address the existing social construction of masculinity that is creating differences in gender and supporting in ignoring the voices of boys through multi-layered programs activities. Linking boys as victims of sexual abuse and actors of harmful sexual behaviour to responsible local authorities for further support. Raise the self-confidence of boys affected by sexual violence through life-skills trainings, support boys and their families by addressing their emotional/psycho-social or financial needs and enable boys to understand their emotions and educate them about sex, sexuality, masculinity, sexual violence and self-protection/defence mechanism and awareness and counselling programs with families.

Secondary Interventions

Increase the understanding of school management committees and teachers on the issue of sexual violence and boys through delivery of training programs for school staff that enables them to identify and respond to sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour in boys and to refer boys to appropriate support services. Schools

and NGO's can form child clubs and train children to raise awareness or help victims and actors via a child-to-child approach. Schools, NGO's working as child care institutions, rural municipalities, ward and municipalities should develop child protection policies, guidelines and/or a code of conduct on sexual abuse/harmful sexual behaviour and within existing policies, guidelines and/or code of conduct, sexual violence affecting boys should be included with provisions for further actions.

Tertiary Interventions: Train and sensitize local government bodies, child protection officers, police, medical persons, lawyers and judges in all seven provinces about sexual violence, its causes, consequences and interventions. Advocate at the national level to include references to the rape/sexual abuse of boys in relevant national laws and remove references to 'unnatural' sex. Advocate and develop child (boy)-friendly juvenile justice services in all provinces and safe houses for boys as a victims of sexual abuse and/or actors of harmful sexual behaviour. Raise awareness with municipalities, rural municipalities and ward offices of the availability of child friendly websites such as 'safe internet' and also of relevant provisions within the Children's Act of 2018 . Raise awareness with the media to adhere to their journalist code of conduct including reporting on the issue of boy's sexual violence responsibly.

Disclaimer: For this report, study respondents aged 18 to 20 years old are referred to as 'boys' and 'girls' for ease of communication.

Terminologies

□ Child

In this study child means every human being below the age of eighteen defined under article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). For this study report, respondents aged 18 to 20 years old are referred to as 'boys' and 'girls' for ease of communication.

□ Sexual Violence

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

□ Child Sexual Abuse

The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- the exploitative use of children in pornographic performance and materials.

□ Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour of children is sexual activity where one individual has **not consented**, or where their relationship includes **an imbalance of power**, for example due to age, intellectual ability, physical ability or impairment (disability), or physical strength.

²Nepal Children's Act (1992) states that every human being below the age of 16 is a child, whereas the Labour Act (1992) puts the age limit of a child at 14 years

The harm caused may be physical and/or emotional/psychological even though the behaviour is sexual in nature. The child with harmful sexual behaviour may use grooming, coercion or threats to influence the other person to comply with their wishes, or they may use force. This term is useful because it is not appropriate to label a child's behaviour as abusive or criminal. However, it is important to intervene to protect the rights of other children and to support the child with sexual harmful behaviour to take responsibility for changing their behaviour. It is important to understand that the child with sexual harmful behaviour is due to an underlying vulnerability.

□ Problematic Sexual Behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour may be problematic, even if it is not yet causing harm to others. Problematic sexual behaviour is behaviour that is a cause for concern in terms of the child's age or developmental stage, according to the context. For instance, knowledge of sexual acts, or use of sexually explicit, words or acts. Children's behaviour may be seen as problematic if the behaviour is recurrent.

Without intervention, problematic sexual behaviour may pose a risk to the child or others. For example, bullying, stigmatisation, development of the child's sexual identity and vulnerability to sexual abuse. It may also be disturbing for others.

Problematic sexual behaviour can be divided into 'self-focused behaviour' and 'interpersonal behaviour'. Self-focussed behaviour may include compulsive masturbation and excessive interest in pornography. Interpersonal sexual behaviour may include sexual games with friends, sharing pornography and spying on others. The behaviour of some children, especially younger children, may not be considered as problematic yet. Factors to consider include whether it is spontaneous, not recurrent, the child has no inhibition and can stop the behaviour.

³ World Report on Violence and Health, WHO Geneva (2002)

⁴ WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention (1999)

⁵ Taken from the research protocol for the research and agreed by research partners as a working definition

⁶ Taken from the research protocol for the research and agreed by research partners as a working definition

❑ **Victim (of sexual abuse)**

A boy (under 18 years) who has been forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities.

❑ **Actor (of sexual violence)**

A boy (under 18 years) who has displayed problematic or harmful sexual behaviour (see above) with another child (under 18 years).

❑ **Masculinity**

Masculinity refers to the *socially produced but embodied ways of being male*. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks 'proper' to men and women ('men work in offices, women do housework'), and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived antithesis; femininity. (Srivastava 2012, p.13)

❑ **Sexuality**

Sexuality refers to the bundle of social phenomena at the level of the individual that shape erotic life. (Seidman et al. 2011) This definition does not dismiss the biological preconditions of sexuality.

❑ **Transgender**

Transgender is the state of one's "gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, or neither) not matching ones "assigned sex" (identification by others as male or female based on physical/genetic sex).

⁷Pant v. Nepal, Writ No. 917 of the Year 2064 BS (2007 AD), translated in N ATIL JUD.ACAD.L.J., , at 262

Introduction and Background

Child Sexual abuse exposes children to severe mental, physical and psychological risks with consequences such as depression, fear and low self-esteem. But, as a social problem it still remains an unexplored area (UNICEF & CWIN, 2005). In Nepal, addressing child sexual abuse as a social problem is particularly challenging due to cultural and social norms that mean the topic of sexuality is not discussed in public.

Voice of Children (VOC) is an organization working especially with children and their families living and working in the street, to protect children from sexual abuse by building the capacity of vulnerable families living in urban poor areas to protect their children. For 18 years, VOC has expanded and developed its work and projects with street children, for example running prevention, awareness and support programs on child sexual abuse and working with poor families in vulnerable communities. As a leading organization working in the prevention of the child sexual abuse in Nepal, VOC recognizes that there are long-term consequences both for the victim and for society and that cases of the sexual abuse of children rarely gain a conviction in court. To minimize the negative impact of child sexual abuse VOC identified the need to gain an understanding of the issue in the context of Nepal, and, specifically to gain an understanding of the sexual abuse of boys; sexual abuse as a topic is not discussed openly by Nepalese society, consequently there is minimal research/study or data dedicated to this topic.

In this study, Voice of Children (VOC) collaborated with Family for Every Child - a global alliance of local civil-society organizations working together to improve the lives of vulnerable children around the world. VOC, as a member of the Family for Every Child alliance met with other alliance members from the Philippines, Cambodia, India and Indonesia in the Philippines in February 2017 for a practice exchange on child sexual abuse. A scoping study of secondary literature and key informant interviews addressing the existing knowledge on the drivers of sexual violence affecting boys, and relevant interventions was conducted. The scoping study

identified a need for further study with a focus on the linkages between dominant notions of gender, masculinity, sexuality, and the need for a multi-layered strategy to protect boys from sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour.

To understand the country specific context, this study was carried out by four member organizations of the Family for Every Child alliance: VOC (Nepal), Butterflies (India), CPTCSA (Philippines) and First Step (Cambodia). An inception meeting of the directors and researchers of the member organizations was organized by Family for Every Child in February 2018 in Cambodia for the finalization of objectives, methodology and time frame for the study.

This study is a result of needs identified by the scoping study by Family for Every Child and its member countries with following goals:

- That boys experience improved levels of service in programmes to prevent and respond to sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour of boys;
- That boys are confident to report violations, and they can access and experience an improved level of services.

Review of Literature

The focus of this literature review is the contexts of boys' sexual abuse which is interrelated with gender, masculinity, sexual violence and existing interventions; hence accessible relevant studies on these subjects are incorporated in this review. There are severe limitations in prevalence data and study into the specific context of boy's sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour in both the global and national contexts. Sexual violence affecting boys remains largely unknown, unacknowledged and not responded to, across a wide range of contexts and cultures, mostly as a result of gendered social norms, which influence perceptions of boys' vulnerability. These also pose an obstacle to disclosure of sexual abuse by boys, identification and acceptance by others, recognition of harm caused, and recognition of the support needed to recover from sexual abuse (Family for Every Child, 2018).

Masculinity in Nepal

Masculinity refers to the socially produced but embodied ways of being male. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks 'proper' to men and women ('men work in offices; women do housework'), and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived antithesis: femininity (Srivastava 2012). Likewise, in Nepali society, strength, competence, independence, and rationality are associated with masculine qualities whereas fragility, passivity, and emotionalism are taken to be the feminine ones. Men are portrayed as free individuals guided by definite targets. They are in pursuit of knowledge and wealth (Mishra 2013). In a 2014 report on Nepali masculinities and gender-based violence by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) three interrelated aspects of masculinities are outlined: socially ingrained norms, social structure and law, which mutually support each other, reinforce gender inequalities and support a culture of condoning violence - including gender-based violence. Furthermore, the report also mentions how many Nepalese men feel a sense of stress because they are unable to live up to the traditional norms and expectations concerning masculinities which are associated with physical strength, economic power, emotional control and sexual capacity. They try to deal with such a sense of stress by displaying violent behaviour - both physical and mental - towards women, children, transgender people and other men who are in lower social and economic positions (UNDP 2014).

Sexuality in Nepal

Sexuality refers to the bundle of social phenomena at the level of the individual that shape erotic life. (Seidman et al. 2011) This definition does not dismiss the biological preconditions of sexuality. A study on women's sexuality in Nepal by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) in 2007 is relevant to this study and defines sexuality as not solely biological or natural; rather it is highly influenced by socially constructed behaviour, beliefs, norms, values, perceptions and misperceptions. Sexuality plays a crucial role in determining socio-political structures. In a patriarchal society like Nepal, sexual behaviour affects the entire life of a person. The dignity of a person in a society is based on his or her ability or disability to maintain the sexual behaviour or norms of sexuality as expected by his or her community (FWLD 2007).

Furthermore, acceptable sexual behaviour is mentioned by Thapa and Chaulagain in their study of adolescent sexuality (2015) who found that the majority of their respondents had no parent-child communication at home on matters related to sexual behaviour. They conclude that this might be because the issue of sexuality still remains a taboo in Nepal so Nepalese parents could be reluctant to talk about sexual matters with their children. However, they also found that peer influence plays an important role in shaping the sexual behaviour of adolescents and youths (Thapa and Chaulagain 2015).

Sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in South Asia

According to John Frederick's review of sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in South Asia (2010), social customs contribute to the vulnerability of boys, as boys are generally considered capable of protecting themselves and because society, in general, tends to deny the sexual abuse of boys and consensual sexual relationships between males. Frederick suggests that this may explain why the sexual abuse of boys is less frequently reported than the abuse of girls, due to lower frequency or greater denial of the problem, and that therefore, official statistics may not give an accurate picture of the problem. Frederick concludes that these factors, along with a commonly held belief that boys are able to recover faster and are less affected by sexual abuse can make society biased and take the issue of the sexual abuse of boys less seriously than that of girls.

In a report that maps the psychological support for girls and boys affected by child sexual abuse in South and Central Asia, Slugget & Frederick (2003) found that the sexual abuse of children and adolescents is committed primarily by males and that although studies indicate many more boys than previously suspected are being sexually abused, evidence suggests more girls are sexually abused than boys. Slugget and Frederick conclude, however, that commonly held beliefs where boys are considered to have 'ironclad' protection from abuse may help facilitate hidden nature of the sexual abuse of boys.

Both boys and girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in travel and tourism in the South Asia region (Hawke and Raphael, 2016). Sexual exploitation of boys is pervasive, but remains neglected. Recent studies, however, show that boys are also susceptible to sexual abuse and exploitation to a larger degree than previously recognized. In several South Asian countries, it appears that boys exposed to sexual exploitation in travel and tourism are mainly those living and/or working on the streets, migrants and drug-users. However, reports from South Asia confirm that not all travelling sex offenders are men, the presence of female predators has long been noted in Sri Lanka, tied to relationships with 'beach boys' during holidays (ibid).

In a report on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in South Asia (ECPAT, 2014), it was found that the relative invisibility of sexual crimes against male children is also reflected in the absence of specialized risk assessments, prevention and response mechanisms for boys vulnerable to, or victims of sexual exploitation. The ECPAT report recommended broadening the understanding of the specific protection needs of boys. For example, as compared to girls, boys are more prone to running away from home to live on the streets or to work in labour settings far away from their families. The general perception that boys are less vulnerable than girls, more independent and more able to take care of themselves may lead to an underestimation of the actual harm that they suffer when they are exposed to abuse and exploitation (ibid).

Sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in Nepal

Studies have shown a high prevalence of different forms of the sexual abuse in urban and semi-urban areas in Nepal; however, study is insufficient to ascertain the prevalence of sexual abuse in rural areas (Frederick, 2010). From the limited data

available, it appears that abuse of boys is more prevalent in urban areas, while abuse of girls is more prevalent in rural areas (ibid).

In an overview of 55 cases of sexual assault in Nepal over four years (2012-16) it was observed that the majority (46%) of victim's were aged 13-15 years and 20% were below 10 years. The majority (87%) of the alleged perpetrators were known to the victims, 13% were strangers and 3.6% were biological father of the victim (Hirachan & Limbu, 2016).

A 2015 governmental report on child protection mapping by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare & the Central Child Welfare Board found that sexual abuse is largely unreported and viewed as a private matter. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it occurs in all settings and is generally committed by somebody known to the child - family member, relative, neighbour, teacher and/or caregiver. Cases are often solved within the community through monetary compensation or marriage of the victim with the perpetrator, in order to avoid shame and loss of honour for the victim and to the family (MoWCSW & CCWB, 2015).

In a 2002 study by the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) found that 37 per cent of street children were reported to be victimized by pedophiles. The ILO report found that the prevalence of abuse is higher amongst older children, girls, and children living for a longer time on the streets. As stated in a more recent study (2010) about the sexual abuse of street boys in Kathmandu by CWIN, 75 per cent of street boys were victims of sexual abuse with the majority (83%) of perpetrators being Nepali males 10% foreigners, approximately 4% Nepali females and 3% third gender (third gender is a term used in Nepal to describe biological males who have 'feminine' gender identity or expression and biological females who have 'masculine' gender identity or expression)

In a governmental report in 2015, nearly half the VDC and district level key informant interview respondents, and the majority of district police representatives, indicated that levels of reporting of cases of violence against children have increased over the past five years, mostly due to increased awareness. Likewise, the majority of district justice representatives and public attorneys state that the number of cases of violence against children coming through the courts has increased over the last 5 years, also due to increased awareness (MoWCSW & CCWB, 2015).

Legal reforms

The Children's Act promulgated in September 2018 in Nepal provides a definition of offences against children under section 66 that includes if a person engages in any act of violence pursuant to Subsection (2) of act or sexual abuse pursuant to Subsection (3) of act, it shall be deemed an offence against children and mentioned that 'A person who is convicted of child sexual abuse pursuant to this Act or a prevailing law shall be deemed to have committed a criminal offence of moral turpitude' in reference to the offences against children. In relation to offences, a case shall be filed within the period of limitation specified under a prevailing law (i.e. six months) and if no period of limitation is specified, within a year of the offence being committed. (2) In cases of offences against children, if no case has been filed pursuant to Subsection (1), notwithstanding what is contained in a prevailing law, the period of limitation for filing case shall be one year after such child has attained the age of eighteen years.

Likewise, the Constitution of Nepal which came into effect by the Constitutional Assembly on 20 September 2015 has created a reassuring atmosphere for the rights of children. The clauses related to 'rights against exploitation' under article 29 also incorporate children by mentioning: (1) every person shall have the right against exploitation, (2) No person shall be exploited in any manner on the grounds of religion, custom, tradition, usage, practice or on any other grounds. (3) No one shall be subjected to trafficking nor shall one be held in slavery or servitude, (4) No one shall be forced to work against his or her will. Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of law empowering the State to require citizens to perform compulsory service for public purposes, (5) Act contrary to clauses (3) and (4) shall be punishable by law and the victim shall have the right to obtain compensation from the perpetrator in accordance with law (MoWCSW and CCWB, 2017). The 2012 National Child Policy and the revised National Plan of Action for Children (2004/5-2014/15) take a more comprehensive approach to child protection than the earlier 1992 Children's Act, incorporating provisions on child abuse, exploitation, awareness-raising, rescue and rehabilitation services, family support services including for children at risk, programme standards and monitoring (MoWCSW, 2004).

Media reporting on child sexual abuse

In media reports on child sexual abuse there is, in general, a bias for reporting on the sexual abuse of boys by foreigners as exemplified in an online opinion piece by Budhathoki (2018) who reports that altogether 10 foreign nationals have been arrested between 2016 and 2018 for the sexual abuse of Nepalese boys. The startling revelation for Budhathoki is that all of those arrested are privileged white men which raises the question why are pedophiles targeting under age Nepalese boys?

An article published in The Himalayan Times (2018) reported on a situation analysis by the Central Child Welfare Board (under the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens), looking at news items related to children published in various media during the last fiscal year. In the CCWB's analysis of news items 243 children fell victim to molestation and rape in 2017-18 compared to 96 in the previous year, an increase by 147 per cent. As many as 236 girls were raped while only seven boys fell victim to molestation (2018, Himalayan times). Likewise, an article published in same newspaper in 2017 stated that while trafficking in girls and women for sexual purposes is largely recognized, young male victims face the danger of being overlooked due to gender stereotypes. A lot of foreigners have been found abusing young boys in hotspots in Kathmandu and in some of the more well-known tourist sites in Nepal and news of foreigners abusing children in more remote areas is increasing. However, it is extremely difficult for Nepalese children and their families to make a complaint about abuse, because foreigners are held in such high esteem (Fung & Gooch, 2018).

According to Shahi (2018) in an online opinion piece entitled 'child abuse trial highlights shortcomings in sector', the government mechanism to deal with child-related sexual abuse needs to be strong. Shahi suggests that unfortunately, the child rights sector lacks both trained human resources and financial resources to work on monitoring, tracking, creating awareness, and making a favourable environment for young victims to come forward and report the abuse (Shahi, 2018)

Research Methods

The study used qualitative research methods and participatory techniques to understand the topic of boys' sexual abuse and existing interventions. Qualitative study is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Family Health International, 2005). Qualitative and participatory approaches bring out the personal experiences of study participants.

Research questions: The study focused on three themes with the following main questions.

1. Gender / masculinity: What does it mean to be a male child and what are their lived experiences in the context of sexuality and masculinities? How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed? How do boys and those around them perceive masculinity and sexuality and how does this impact them?
2. Sexual violence: What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and sexual abuse of boys? What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and 'harmful sexual behaviour' of boys?
3. Interventions: What promising or best practice interventions exist? What challenges were encountered and how were they resolved?

Research Participants and Sampling

The study had a sample size of 131 participants and aimed to reach a 50:50 gender balance amongst participants. Please note 'victim' refers to boys who have been a victim of sexual abuse and 'actor' refers to boys who have displayed problematic or harmful sexual behaviour.

Sample	Data Collection methods	Participants
15	Key Informants Interview (KII)	Professionals
10	Individual Interview (II)	Parents / residential caregivers of boys who are victims / actors
50	Extended Interview (EI)	Boys who are victims / actors (25 in each category) Victim age group:14-20 years old / actors age group:14-20 years old
56	Focused Group Discussion (FGD)	Boys, girls and parents in the general population Boys number:23, Girls number:18, Parents number:15 Boys in general population age group:14-18 Girls in general population age group:14-19
131		

Data collection methods

All participants took part in individual interviews, apart from children and parents in the general population who participated in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This study included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with working professionals to get an insight of their knowledge on this topic. Boys who are victims and/or actors took part in Extended Interviews (EIs), which were participatory in nature, using some of the same participatory activities as were used in the FGDs. Participatory techniques for data collection were used in EIs with boys including body mapping and other drawing and visual activities, as well as activities to support the wellbeing of participants before the closing of individual interviews. Participatory techniques helped to ensure that the methods were children-friendly, sensitive and gave sufficient chance for boys to take time out, to think, to ask for support and revisit consent if needed.

Training and Pilot

All researchers were trained on the research and ethical protocols and on participatory study techniques and children friendly communication skills; key terms were agreed and translated into children friendly language. As many of the researchers were from the VOC staff team, the team provided some additional training for hired researchers. Before starting data collection, a pilot of the data collection methods was undertaken to check the appropriateness of the translation, methods and ethical protocol and to ensure the study team was confident when using the tools.

Research Sites

The study sites for the study were Kathmandu Valley and Sunsari District of Nepal. Kathmandu is the capital city in province three of Nepal and is highly urbanized. Sunsari is in Eastern Terai and is in Province One of Nepal. In Kathmandu participants for study were from different schools, non - profit organizations, parents and key professionals while in Sunsari participants were only children from schools and non-profit organizations.

Study team

Research Director

Krishna K. Thapa provided timely and adequate technical support to this study, guidance on the process, monitoring and evaluation to improve the study project overall.

Research Coordinator

Ranjana Sharma was responsible for leading and coordinating the study team in Nepal, leading on data collection, coding, and analysing data and development of key findings. She was also responsible for writing up the findings and study report for the Nepal study.

Researchers

There were eight researchers for this study: Kriti Bhattarai, Apsara Mahat, Rusha Adhikari, Pratima Khatiwada, Jivan Bhujel, Rojina Karki, Madhu Pun, Arjun Raut, Raju Babu Nepal, Bidi Yolkey Rai, Swechhya Rajbhandari, Samit Shakya, Pooja Sedhai, Sheela Rana, Namuna Sapkota and Yashi Maya Pun who had responsibility for data collection through KII, II, EI and FDG, note taking and transcription of data. They were also responsible for organising the first validation of key findings of this study.

Child Protection Officers

Raju Ghimire and Govinda Koirala were responsible for child protection for this study as they are members of child protection committee of VOC. They were present during data collection especially during the Extended Interview with child victims and actors to safeguard the child participants rights and need. They were also responsible to ensure the ethical protocol of this study is followed throughout the process

Management support

Uttam Dhakal coordinated and supported in the administration and management process for the entire study.

In this study process there was technical support from members of the Family for Every Child secretariat and international consultants.

Research ethics

A study protocol and ethical protocol were developed for the study. The ethical protocol was informed by an initial risk assessment completed by the working group of Family for Every Child members during an inception meeting of all study partners (in four countries). In addition, in-country risk assessments were completed for all boys and/or young men interviewed. All staff recruited for this study project had reference checks made regarding their suitability for the role, and where possible, police checks and were briefed on and asked to sign their commitment to the VOC's child protection policy.

All boys who are victims, actors or both were identified through VOC caseload or that of VOC trusted partners. The lead researcher ensured that an individual risk assessment was completed with the boys' social worker to determine whether they felt that he was in a sufficiently stable condition to take part. No boy that was known to be a victim of sexual abuse or an actor in problematic or harmful sexual behaviour was invited to take part in the study if this process had not been completed.

Informed consent of study participants was gained through initial sharing of information about the study. Once participants had expressed an interest in taking part, they attended a consent meeting at least one week prior to the study activity where they were invited to consent or refuse to take part. A discussion to re-confirm consent took place at the beginning of all FGDs and EIs using a script. Where children were living with parents or caregivers, researchers asked for their consent. Children's consent was recorded verbally and parents' consent was recorded on a consent form. All adult participants completed a consent form which was developed in English and translated into Nepali to enable all participants to understand fully. In focus group discussions and extended interviews, the issue of consent was re-visited at the end of the study activity. Participants were given the opportunity to say whether they wanted anything they said to be deleted from the documentation.

When collecting data, all researchers worked in teams of at least two people, knew where their child protection officer and supervisors were and where to go/who to contact in emergencies. Child protection officers and supervisors knew the protocol

to follow in case of the need for urgent action to help a child identified as at risk through the study, or in case of need for further guidance or concerns. All study teams had access to someone who could provide psychosocial support to children if they became distressed during data collection.

All researchers were fluent in the local language so there was no need for interpretation during data collection. Consideration was made of the gender of researchers interviewing boys who are victims, actors or both. This was to ensure their comfort, gain accurate data and, where possible, accommodate boys' preferences. Reimbursement of any travel expenses and refreshments for study participants, and their parent/caregiver if necessary, was provided. Given the sensitive nature of discussions all study activities took place in a safe venue where discussion could not be easily overheard or interrupted, and at times that suited and were safe for participants.

Confidentiality of data was provided through system of coding of notes and recordings, which were turned into coded transcriptions and further data will be destroyed after one year from study publication. To protect the confidentiality of participants pseudonyms are used in excerpts of key findings. Codes of respecting the decision of participants some EIs, FGDs and IIS were not recorded and data was collected in written format by note takers. Consent forms and participant contact details will be kept confidentially for one year after publication of the report, to enable consent and accuracy for use of quotes from participants to be revisited if needed.

Data analysis methods and validation

The system of analysis used in this study followed a process of transcription, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, 1994). Three levels of coding allowed the progressive refinement of data:

1. Coding made the voluminous data into organised data with a manageable focus.
2. Coding further focused the level one codes into categories.
3. Coding involved developing themes/key findings from the categories.

The key findings of this study was shared with researchers involved in data collection and transcription of data and further key findings was also shared with 25 study participants (boys, girls and young man from general population, parents from general population and individual interviews and also key professionals) for the validation and accuracy of the findings and to incorporate their suggestions before finalizing the report.

Challenges and reflections

- As sample data were collected from Kathmandu valley (Urbanized) and Sunsari (Semi-urbanized) districts and involved a sample group of 131 respondents hence the information collected may not represent the situation of 29.3 million (World Bank 2017) population of Nepal, in particular the rural areas of Nepal.
- The literature review for this study was limited in scope due to lack of available data on the topic of the sexual abuse of boys. Consequently, studies looking at the regional or global picture of child sexual abuse were reviewed as well as documents available online.
- The coordination with local organizations to gain access to study participants (boys) was difficult as staff were not familiar with the study topic of the sexual abuse of boys. Consequently, organizations provided limited days for conducting interviews and some organizations wanted their staff to be present during EIs with boys which would have made it difficult to conduct the interviews. Hence a series of meetings and information sharing with the contact person at relevant NGOs was conducted before the actual interview and, in the end, NGO staff were not present during EIs.
- Respondents in FGDs, EIs and IIs were hesitant to talk about sexuality and sexual abuse as it is a taboo topic to discuss and also some words were complex to translate exactly from English to Nepalese. However, participatory techniques such as body mapping helped respondents to share their perspectives.

Key Findings

1. 'Boys have strong heart but girls have soft heart': the socio-cultural construction of masculinity

In order to learn about the differences experienced by boys and girls regarding masculinity and its formation, this study asked participants about their perceptions of the physical and emotional differences about being a boy or a girl in Nepalese society, starting with the physical differences but focusing particularly on the social context:

'Physical differences of boys and girls are in their private parts, girls have long hair, girls wear make-up, boys have beard, clothes and shoes of boys and girls are different and women have breast but men do not' (Maite, victim, aged 14);

'Differences in genitals, chest and face' (Bijaya, actor, aged 14);

'No menstruation problem, and boys don't get pregnant' (Agrema, parent in general population).

Likewise, boys are emotionally different from girls:

'Boys have strong heart but girls have soft heart' (Prakash, victim aged 17)

'Boys are not drama queens like when they see monkeys boys don't say 'woohuhu yaya', girls look stylish when they talk' (Akash, boy, aged 16).

Existing socio-cultural norms and practices appear to induce many of the dissimilarities in girls and boys mentioned by study participants, indicating that boys inside a family are allowed to raise their voice, be aggressive, are free to move around without restrictions and be dominant:

'If girls raise their voice their family members say, 'Are you the brother or what?' Boys are not told about what to do by the society, only girls are told' (Sapana, parent of victim);

'Boys are more aggressive, their attitude is bossy at home, it is not compulsory for boys to do the household tasks, they can spend late night outside the home' (Rajani, parent of victim);

'Girls are scolded more if they go out without purpose' (Manish, victim, aged 14);

'Boys are taken as pure even if they stay out overnight, girls are said to be someone else's property who will get married and leave home' (Ambika, parent of victim);

'Family member gives nutritious food to boys and don't care about girls that much' (Durga, parent of victim).

Traditional thoughts and practices such as: *'girls are asked to do less work in terms of income because they will marry and go to another house'* (Mahesh, victim, aged 20); *'boys are sent to school whereas girls aren't sent to school as they will get married and go away'* (Binod, actor, aged 19), create differences in the way that boyhood and girlhood are socially constructed by society.

The social construction of masculinity has granted boys with the liberty of free movement, and characteristics such as assertiveness, or even, seemingly, a right to be dominant and aggressive. Whereas girls are subjected to social and cultural practices that limit their mobility and control. Perceptions of boys' lives are constructed and illustrated as brave and painless: *'Boys do not cry, they are free, they do not need to report about their action'* and *'Boys do not share their feelings'* (Manamati and Sabina, parents in general population); *'Society teaches boys not to cry in front of people and to be very strong'* (Sabita, parent of victim).

Boys designated themselves as fighters and fearless compared to girls: *'Boys are strong, aggressive'* (Arjun, boy in general population); *'Fighting is the quality of being boy'* (Ahir, boy in general population). Notions of being teased, abused and dominated are linked to the treatment of girls without expressions of regret:

'Girls are humiliated boys are not humiliated' (Sagar, actor, aged 15);

'Boys sexually abuse others; girls do not sexually abuse others' (Badal, actor, aged 16);

'Boys can demand whatever they want. They are free to tease and abuse girls and nobody will say anything to them' (Sabita, parent of victim);

'Girls are teased and dominated but boys are not' (Prabhas, victim, aged 14);

'Girls are abused and harassed when men are drunk' (Benten, victim, aged 14).

The existing social construction of masculinity contributes to creating differences between boys and girls. Boys are socialised to be resilient and autonomous and to nurture qualities and attributes associated with male stereotypes of dominance and aggression.

2. Boys should be 'prestigious in society': roles and responsibilities of boyhood into manhood

This finding explores boys' perceived roles and responsibilities, how masculinity is socially constructed and what impact it has on boyhood and later in their manhood. The common roles assigned to boys and men are protector and provider/income generator which are linked to status and symbols of power. These roles make boys feel privileged but equally they feel pressurized to fit into this image of masculinity.

Boys' appear to have a responsibility to aim for a high moral status:

'should be prestigious in society' (Sapana, parent of victim);

'Good person, honest, one with no wrong thoughts and helpful to others, one that does not harm others' (Ambika, parent of victim);

'Boys are given bigger responsibility of outside work' (Mukesh, actor, aged 18);

'Boys should not take part in activities that are not accepted by society like murder, rape' (Salman, actor, aged 16);

'Follow the social norms, values and laws' (Tiger, boy in general population).

Some cultural and religious responsibilities assigned to boys or men include: *'performing rituals after death'* (Manish, victim, aged 14); *'Men have to work, marry, start a family and educate the children'* (Doreman, victim, aged 14); *'Community calls in the time of need in case of death or birth or marriage and boys have responsibility to help'* (Sapna, parent of victim); *'After getting married if man does not take care of their wife society will question his manhood and taunt, others will question on your manhood and will say you are not son of a man'* (Akash, actor, aged 16).

Roles and responsibilities perceived by boys are linked to positions of power in society; boys are expected to be a decision-maker, to be authoritative and a risk bearer:

'If you see a fight, you have to go stop/resolve it' (Mahesh, victim, aged 20);

'Boys can take strong decision in the family' (Rajani, parent of victim);

'Help in making right decisions during conflicts or fights between the people of society' (Tiyara, girl in general population);

'Stop friends or people from community from getting into bad habits such as smoking weed' (Prashant, actor, aged 20);

'Boys have to be brave, talented and future oriented' (Naruto, actor, aged 14);

'A male can be a protector but not females' (C, boy in general population).

The choice of boys' childhood role models can affect the traits they are inspired to adapt into their manhood such as Sujan, a 15 year old victim who is inspired by 'Don' a gang leader:

'I am inspired by Don [gang leader]. They have their gang to give them security, when you are poor, rich [people] will take you for granted and will shame you.'

Or 18 year old Gore, who is inspired by a Nepali actor:

'My closest role model is Nikhil Upreti [Nepali actor] I have learnt to play with guns by watching his films' (Gore, actor aged 18);

'I want to become a hero like Shiva, Motu Patlu, Bhim' (Motu 1, victim, aged 15).

Boys' choices of role model characters during this study predominantly symbolized the strength and power they are inspired to acquire in their manhood:

'I like to be like Motu-Patlu, John [cartoon characters], live luxurious life and have car, bikes and big house' (Super Bhim, actor, aged 16).

Participants appeared to identify some pressure to maintain stereotyped masculine traits such as virility or to rise to challenges: *'you are male and should not be impotent, fulfil your responsibilities'* (Sapana, parent of victim); *'There is a saying that Boys are born to struggle, and it is true we have to teach our son to struggle'* (Shraddha, parent of victim).

3. Learning about sexuality, image and acceptable sexuality

This finding explores how boys learn about sexuality, their understanding of an acceptable age or situation for sexual activity and acceptable sexual orientation by family and society.

Learning about sexuality

When asked about how boys learn about sexuality, boys and parents reported that digital platforms such as mobile phones, the internet and television are the primary mode, for boys, to learn about sexuality; through watching pornographic movies:

'Boys learn sexuality through porn videos' (Rohan, victim, aged 15);

'We learn this from porn photo or movies and from people who are involved in prostitution' (Akash, actor, aged 16);

'Children nowadays learn these from a mobile, the internet, television' (Ambika, parent of victim);

'Watching adult movies on mobile phones' (Abhishek, victim, aged 13).

Also mentioned by respondents were the boys' circle of friends, their families and society as sources of learning about sexualities:

'Watching porn movies in mobiles, drunkards learn it on streets'(Benten, victim, aged 14);

'learn on their own and also from their peer groups' (Rajesh, victim, aged 14);

'Boys learn about appropriate sexual behaviour from their parents, by watching them have sex, sleeping together' (Koshis, actor, aged 16);

'Boys learn sexual behaviour from the sexual activities from the family members and from pornography movies' (Bikash, actor, aged 17);

'By hearing and seeing the talks and actions of villagers towards a married couple' (Mukesh, actor, aged 18).

In some cases, boys talked of witnessing sex between their parents or of learning about sex by overhearing adults talking about it.

Acceptable Sexuality

The majority of study participants mentioned that sexual activity should happen only after marriage, *'It is acceptable for a boy to have sex at the age of 20-25 after marriage'* (Binod, actor, aged 19).

Boy, girl and parent respondents stated that it is not acceptable for a boy to have a sexual relationship with another boy, indicating that heterosexuality is the only allowed form of sexuality. A few respondents accepted that boys can have sexual relations with other boys, but specifically mentioned that they don't find it acceptable: *'Yes they can have but I don't like this'* (Hathodi, victim, aged 15); *'Yes they can have but it's not right'* (Manish, victim, aged 14). Respondents were conscious that society will condemn boys who engage sexually with other boys, signifying that boys are not free to explore their sexual orientation:

'Society makes boys afraid of different rules and regulation so that it is hard for boys to conduct sexual relation as their wish' (Partima, parent of victim);

'The boy will be treated badly if he does not conform to accepted sexual behaviour in the society. He will be seen in a negative way. He will also be humiliated and some superstitious people will also say; even if we just see such a guy, bad things will happen to us' (Mukesh, actor, aged 18);

'They will be called third gender' (Manish, victim, aged 18);

'Such boys will be forced to marry a girl' (Ronaldo, actor, aged 15);

'Men can have sexual relationship with other men, but there won't be any children' (Surendar, FGD, boy in general population).

To conclude, study participants indicated that in Nepalese society, social norms on sexuality restrict sexual activity to within marriage; norms are not flexible enough for boys to explore their sexual orientation. A clear assigned image emerged linking masculinity to heterosexuality and boys are not allowed to break this image.

4. Implicit agreement, victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse and environment

Respondents reflected on a common understanding and an implicit agreement amongst society that girls are sexually abused, as they are vulnerable. Whereas, boys are believed to be strong, hence they are less vulnerable to sexual abuse. Cases of girls' sexual abuse are mentioned in society whereas cases of boys' sexual abuse are rarely revealed because, *'Boys can hide if they are abused, sexual abuse of girls comes out in our society easily in comparison to boy's sexual abuse'* (Anup, boy from general population). It seems probable that this implicit agreement about girls' sexual abuse is due to the external effects that are visible in the case of girls, *'there is pregnancy in girls but not in boys'* (Fulmati, parent of victim) whereas, in the case of a boy such external effects are not clearly visible and other emotional and psychosocial effects are entirely ignored. Study participants reflected that the sexual abuse of girls is commonly mentioned as girls are considered vulnerable while society's view is that boys are macho and self-protectors. Sapana, the parent of a boy victim of sexual abuse mentioned that for girls who are abused, society will question as, *'Why you did this? For a man he can do anything but if girl lose prestige, the villagers will badmouth, and they are blamed and defamed'*.

During this study, respondents said that girls were more likely to be sexually abused compared to boys, but that when boys are abused the impact of the abuse is magnified, *'sexual abuse in girls is high but worse for boys to be sexually abused than girls'* (Prabhas, victim, aged 14).

When talking about the typical profile of a victim of sexual abuse, boys said that they can be a victim anywhere, however, some mentioned milieu and categories of boys being more likely to be victims of sexual abuse such as boys who are on the street, innocent, shy and younger boys. In addition, that boys consuming drugs or 'weed' (cannabis) are more likely to be sexually abused, *'The ones who stay on the street are sexually abused'* (Rohan, victim, aged 14). Additionally, boys mentioned that, *'victims are small [by age] and perpetrators are big'* (Bijaya, actor, aged 14); *'those consume 'dendrite' [glue sniffing] at night are more likely to be abused'* (Akash, actor, aged 16).

Although respondents were not asked specifically about experiences of sexual abuse, they described abuse as similar for both girls and boys, where abusers use tactics such as intimidation or isolating a victim by, *taking [them] to a quiet place*

and covering their mouth' (Hathodi, victim, aged 15); *'kidnaping them, some boys take them to toilet and do bad stuffs'* (Sagar, actor, aged 14), or *'touching private parts and hugging with bad intention'* (Neha, girl in general population); *'showing private parts'* (Billa, actor, aged 17). However, the place of penetration mentioned was different, *'boys and girls are penetrated in different body part'* (Sujan, victim, aged 15).

Study participants stated that perpetrators can be anybody without classification; male or female, a familiar face or a stranger:

'Boys become victim of sexual abuse when girls who want money lure them and forcefully have sex' (Bikash, actor, aged 17);

'If boys couldn't find girls, the elder boys will catch young boys, try to convince them by letting them play games in their mobile phone, providing them some weed and have sex with them' (Koshish, actor, aged 16);

'Drugs addicts will take boys to their junction [specified place where drug user generally go to use drug] and touch the body parts and do sex' (Ronaldo, actor, aged 18).

Included in a list of perpetrators one of the respondents mentioned foreign paedophiles, *'foreigners trap boys into sexual activity by promising to give money'* (Sujan, victim, aged 15) and people from high class were also mentioned: *'Rich people with cars promise people to give them a job, in reality they do sexual activities with them'* (Prakash, victim, aged 17).

Perpetrators often persuade vulnerable boys through different acts of allure and take sexual benefit of boys. Some respondents talked of cases where boys agree to have sexual relations with other boys in exchange for money, *'Boys will sleep with a boy if they don't have money for drugs or if they are in need of money'* (Kosish, actor, aged 16), highlighting that short term needs (usually for money) can also be a reason to be involved in sexual activity.

However, study respondents appeared to believe that boys who are brought up in safe family environment are less likely be a victim of sexual abuse, *'If he grows up in a safe environment, he won't get abused'* (Prashant, actor, aged 19).

5. 'A victim becomes isolated': the impact and response to sexual abuse

This finding explores the impact of sexual abuse on victims and the commonly displayed responses from family and friends. Two major issues highlighted by the respondents are the physical and emotional impact.

Respondents mentioned a number of physical impacts of sexual abuse on a victim: *'boy can suffer from different kind of diseases, might have trouble going to toilet and walking or they might have itching problem'* (Akash, actor, aged 16); *'transmission of HIV to the victim'* (Roshan, victim, aged 14); *'mental retardation, physical discomfort, problem in pooping and urinating'* (Ambika, parent of victim).

The emotional impact of sexual abuse appeared to be particularly traumatic for boys because of the conception of masculinity; as boys are socialised not to disclose their emotions. *'Hard to share what boy goes through'* (Samir, victim, aged 15). Emotional impacts were highlighted by both 'actors' and 'victims' of sexual abuse in this study:

'blame himself and even leaves home in some cases' (Kushal, victim, aged 18);

'Feel like hang till death or die by cutting a hand...victim feels bad, curses the abusers for doing vulgarly with him and starts hating himself' (Janak, actor, aged 17);

'Boys will be tense and want to do drugs more' (Hathodi, victim, aged 15);

'He will over think and will try to commit suicide' (Bikram, actor, aged 20);

'Self-esteem of the victim becomes low and everyone will humiliate him' (Sagar, victim, aged 15).

At a personal level, victims reported feeling a sense of loss, anger, hate, fear, confusion and suicidal thoughts, and that the response of a victim's family, friends, and society is extremely significant for the survival and existence of a victim.

In addition, some respondents said that if a boy sexually abused another boy other people will try to advise and counsel the abuser, and tell him not to do bad behaviour, *'In some case, people might bring the abuser and counsel the abuser'* (Mahesh, victim, aged 20) however in some cases *'The abuser and victim both are humiliated by the society'* (Sagar, actor, aged 15).

Respondents reported little support for victims of sexual abuse, rather, they said they were humiliated and isolated by friends and society and generally re-victimised:

'a victim becomes isolated' (Prakash, victim, aged 17);

'Friends make fun of the victim' (Janak, actor, aged 17);

'When a boy gets sexually abused, people don't say much to him except like he must be naive and innocent and was easily taken advantage. People will also blame a victim for not defending and protecting himself' (Mukesh, actor, aged 19);

'sexually abused boys are not appropriate to give to daughters in marriage' (Sun, boy in general population).

In addition, the family's response to victims ranged from purposefully ignoring their exploitation to discriminating against them or disowning them, *'a victim brings money, but family doesn't ask where he brought the money from'* (Prakash, victim, aged 17); *'Some parents want to talk about the abuse and help their child, but some might suppress the case of abuse'* (Ambika, parent of the victim); *'some families say, 'We are not associated to him'* (Bijaya, victim, aged 17); *'Family feels bad that their son has to go through sexual abuse, family lose confidence to face the society as they have to hear a lot of bad things about their son and family'* (Binod, actor, aged 19 talking about victims).

A few respondents also mentioned that some families and friends support victims. *'People show sympathy to the victim and support him'*(Roshan, victim, aged 14). Victims of sexual abuse said that it was confusing for a boy to understand why the abuse happened and they felt anger, rage and fear, but that the way family, friends and society reacted and responded to their pain and emotion linked to their future coping mechanisms.

6. Legal process and reporting of boys' sexual abuse

This finding explores participants' views on the existing laws on boys' sexual abuse and the challenges faced by those reporting sexual abuse. This finding explores the current legal and social practices and interventions in Nepal on the sexual abuse of boys. In a key informant interview a lawyer explains the legal situation:

'In the legal papers, the term sexual abuse is included. However, rape of boys is not mentioned in our legal terms. It is termed as 'unnatural sex'. The Supreme Court has talked about the rape of boys but the law does not. The statistics for male and female sexual abuse are different, as boys having sex with each other is termed 'unnatural' and the cases are not reported, so the statistics are lower.'

Commenting on the lower rates of reporting of the sexual abuse of boys, and noting that generally cases of the sexual abuse of boys are ignored, a police officer interviewed states:

'I have mostly dealt with the cases related to girls rather than boys. As per the data of the last fiscal year i.e. 2017/18, there was one case reported against a foreigner who abused boys. Other than that, there was also a case of one boy touching private body parts of another boy.'

In addition, those who are aware of abuse taking place, including the victims, are hesitant to come forward, cases rarely conclude in a conviction:

'A foreigner sexually abused Nepalese children and the case was filed with the Supreme Court. In reality, he abused many children for a long time but only one boy came up and talked about it. Others did not show up.' (KII with advocate);

'The legal process is very lengthy and time consuming, so the legal process must be easy to report the cases. People should be made aware about the legal provisions.' (KII with social worker).

During data collection for this study child respondents mentioned that they would report such cases to their family, police, organizations like VOC, CPCS or child helpline numbers, *'I would tell the police first and foremost'* (Rohit, actor, aged 15). One victim, Samir, aged 15, even praised the work of the Nepali government for rescuing and rehabilitating street children *'Government have done good. They have not let these children to stay on streets and have taken them to different organizations, and that is effective'* Despite respondents saying that they will report cases of sexual abuse to the authorities there was a fear among respondents, especially victims and actors, in approaching family, police or other organizations:

'I am scared of visiting any organization because I feel that I will be beaten there.' (Bent, victim, aged 14);

'For me I cannot talk openly in front of the police.' (Motu, victim, aged 15);

'Be in trap [not believing in lack of evidence and re-victimization] of police if report' (Sujan, victim, aged 15);

'[I am] afraid of helping in fear of being scolded.' (Ninja Hathaodi, victim, aged 15);

'Stress of negative thoughts [rough treatment] and loss of social prestige by reporting police.' (Naruto, actor, aged 14);

'Phones get unreachable to whoever you try to contact so that moment it is really difficult to inform or report.' (Benten, victim, aged 14).

Victims reported that it is not only fear but also difficult to explain sexual abuse to the authorities *'[it is] hard to share what the victim has been through'* (Samir, victim, aged 15). Other challenges shared were: *'an abuser will threaten the person who supports the victim'* (Prakash, victim, aged 17). There is also a fear that the victim will be re-victimized if they report abuse, *'the victim [may] have fear that he himself will be sent to jail'* (Rohan, victim, aged 15); *'[I have] fear of policeman of being caught, fear of parents finding out the truth and getting scolded and beaten by them, fear of friends might kill him'* (Kosish, actor aged 16).

When reporting the harmful sexual behaviour of boys, respondents mentioned similar answers as for victims of sexual abuse and both victims and actors suggested providing further support to actors *'Provide sex education and make them aware about the issue.'* (Billa, actor, aged 15); *'[if] he goes to the police it will be difficult for him to openly talk in fear that the police will do something to him give him an opportunity to change himself.'* (Doreman, victim, aged 14); *'[His] family could help him, suggest good things for him to do and convince him not to do bad things.'* (Kosish, actor, aged 16).

Parents of victims, in particular, recommend that immediate action may not be the appropriate solution in all the cases of harmful sexual behaviour and further enquiry into the situation should be undertaken: *'Not every person has the ability to understand the reason behind displaying harmful sexual behaviour and some families support while some blame and ignore the issue. It might be useful to advise him through counselling not to do such things in the future. If it does not work, rehabilitation support is needed.'* (Sapana, parent of victim).

Another major challenge mentioned in reporting cases of the sexual abuse of boys was a lack of awareness or knowledge about topic of boys' sexual abuse:

'Oh God! Today from you I heard about it. Is it true?' (Cheedi, parent in general population);

'I was unaware about boys' sexual abuse, thank you for educating me, now onwards I will be vigilant and will also think from this perspective as I also run a boys centre' (worker from a rehabilitation centre).

'Awareness is important as the boys who display such behaviours themselves have no idea that this is wrong. Other than that, we need to sensitize the parents too so that they can provide proper guidance to their children.' (police officer);

'It is really difficult for the victim of sexual abuse to express about the incident with others. Many do not share about it, especially boys. Therefore, we need to create such environments where the victim can express what happened to them. The boys who display harmful sexual behaviour must be corrected and government should make strict rules for abusers.' (teacher).

'Awareness is the key as the boy or his family has little or no idea about this issue, and another thing is deterrence since the public have no awareness, they do not report the cases either. This shows that society is ignoring the fact. If children are abused and do not report, it encourages the abuser. There are legal provisions in Nepal for this but if no case is reported, the law does not activate itself.' (advocate);

'Victim friendly interviews and proactive investigation techniques should be implemented.' (lawyer).

It appears that the legal ambiguities around the sexual abuse of boys - as an 'unnatural' act - lead to silenced voices of the victim and unreported cases. Furthermore, for victims this is compounded by the fear of being re-victimized, humiliated and not supported. Therefore, many respondents focused on the need for awareness raising.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Key findings from the study suggested that being as a male child, boys feel physical and emotional differences compared to a girl child however, and social construction of masculinity is major inducing factor that is contributing and creating the dissimilarities in boys and girls. Masculinity is socially constructed through socialization process from boyhood to manhood and sexuality is learned through digital platforms, peer groups, family and society. The existing social construction allows sexual activity within the institution of marriage and norms are not flexible enough for boys to explore their sexual orientation outside of this - linking masculinity to heterosexuality. Socially constructed norms put pressure on boys to maintain their image of masculinity and heterosexuality.

Further key findings reflected the view that girls are more likely to be sexually abused compared to boys. However boys are equally vulnerable and are victims of sexual abuse with magnified impact. Social construction of masculine traits and images limit boy's sexual abuse to be revealed compared to girls. Respondents saw perpetrators take sexual benefit out of the vulnerability of boys, however, they also reported that some boys also agree themselves to be involved in sexual activity for money. It was reported that boys brought up in safe family environments, aware about issues of abuse, outspoken and grown up are less likely to be victims of sexual abuse compared to unprotected boys such as those from street, innocent, shy and younger boys.

Study participants talked about victims of sexual abuse going through physical and emotional impact however due to their social upbringing and the image of masculinity engraved in boys since childhood, boys found it difficult to express their emotions despite the different emotions and feelings of trauma they experienced. In the key findings, it was found that family and friends purposefully ignored or humiliated the victims of sexual abuse, however, not all family and friends did so and some even further extended their support to help the victims.

From analysis of the legal process of cases of boy's sexual abuse the key findings suggested there are legal ambiguities and under-reporting of such cases despite child sexual abuse is being covered extensively in laws and legal provisions of Nepal in gender neutral arrangement. Furthermore, respondents reported that the victim's

fear of being re-victimized and humiliated came as a hindrance, despite having knowledge on reporting procedures hence unawareness about the issue of sexual violence of boys is also a cause of under reporting of the cases.

There are gender-neutral legal provisions in Nepal that protect boys from sexual abuse, however a joint effort from stakeholders is required to implement the existing legal provisions and there is a need to develop victim and actor oriented interventions to help boys recover from their experiences of sexual violence. Furthermore, nation-wide extensive study on the topic of sexual violence of boys is needed to address this issue intensively and both preventive and corrective measures are required at different levels. Corrective actions are oriented towards the rectification of the damage caused by sexual violence and preventive interventions are proactive actions to reduce the risks of boys experiencing sexual violence or a recurrence of sexual violence.

Based on the above-mentioned key findings and conclusion the following are the recommendations for further support of victims and actors of sexual violence.

Primary Interventions

- Address the existing social construction of masculinity that is creating differences in gender and supporting in ignoring the voices of boys. Through multi-layered programs activities like teaching families and communities on focusing equally on both boys and girls by providing them with equal opportunity of education, same level of work, protection, love and care including information about vulnerability of boys - and gradually differences can be reduced.
- Link boys who are victims of sexual abuse to responsible local authority personnel such as child protection officers, police, medical persons and lawyers for further support such as medical aid, psycho-social support and legal services. Link boys as an actors of harmful sexual behaviour with psycho-social counsellors for further support and guidance.
- Raise the self-confidence of boys affected by sexual violence through life-skills trainings, support boys and their families by addressing their emotional/psycho-social or financial needs.
- Enable boys to understand their emotions and educate them about sex, sexuality, masculinity, sexual violence and self-protection/defence mechanisms.

- Run awareness and counselling programs with families from vulnerable communities like slum, squatters and gradually to general population families through social workers and counsellors. The programs should focus on the sexuality of boys including awareness about sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour and the support available. Encourage parents to discuss about the topic responsively at home along with awareness on how boys unattached with family love and care are prone to become a victim or actor of sexual violence.

Secondary Interventions

- Increase the understanding of school management committees and teachers on the issue of sexual violence and boys through delivery of training programs for school staff that enables them to identify and respond to sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour in boys and to refer boys to appropriate support services. Training programs can be on awareness about the causes and consequences of sexual violence such as learning about sex through unsupervised use of digital platform which can lead children towards online sexual violence. School management committees should appoint trained counsellors, social workers or teachers to support a child in crisis/trauma. Schools should discuss and educate students about sex and sexual orientation regularly and amenably.
- Schools and NGO's can form child clubs in schools and train them to raise awareness or help victims and actors via a child-to-child approach as it is easy for children to share their issues in their peer group and friends and furthermore, child clubs can link the children in need to dedicated teachers or social workers.
- Schools, NGO's working as childcare institutions, rural municipalities, ward and municipalities should develop or adapt child protection policies, guidelines and/or a code of conduct on sexual abuse/harmful sexual behaviour that include the issue of sexual violence and boys and include provisions for further actions.

Tertiary Interventions

- Train and sensitize local government bodies, child protection officers, police, medical persons, lawyers and judges in all seven provinces about sexual violence, its causes, consequences and interventions that could provide support.

- Advocate at the national level to include references to the rape/sexual abuse of boys in relevant national laws and remove references to 'unnatural' sex.
- Advocate and develop child (boy)-friendly juvenile justice services in all provinces and safe houses for boys as a victims of sexual abuse and/or actors of harmful sexual behaviour. NGO's and government should provide joint trainings to professional service providers such as child protection officers of government bodies to help them identify and support boys affected by sexual violence.
- Raise awareness with all the municipalities, rural municipalities and ward offices of the seven provinces about the availability of child friendly internet services provided by internet delivering companies and also about the Children's Act of 2018 to ensure information within acts are widely circulated for implementation of existing laws and further legal actions where and when required .
- Raise awareness with the media to adhere to their journalist code of conduct and include reports on the issue of boy's sexual violence responsively. The media should also be encouraged to be responsible towards reducing gender differences in social constructions as the media has great influence in the public.

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