

Challenges and Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Korea

Mijeong Lee

Research Fellow, Korean Women's Development Institute

Deuk-Kyoung Yoon

Research Fellow, Korean Women's Development Institute

Mi-Hye Chang

Research Fellow, Korean Women's Development Institute

Abstract

Child sexual abuse (CSA) has emerged as a pressing social issue in South Korea in recent years. The public demand for stronger policy responses to child sexual abuse crimes has been increasing. In this paper, we try to examine the incidence of and responses to CSA from a prevention perspective and offer policy suggestions. A nationwide survey of children in the fourth to sixth grade was conducted to investigate neighborhood safety, school-commute safety, and the risk and experience of being molested. Additionally, focus group interviews with school teachers and mothers were performed. The majority of the children was aware of child sexual abuse and had undergone CSA prevention education. Boys were more likely to be the object of inappropriate touching and other behaviors by schoolmates. The proportion of sexually abused children is found to be higher in this survey than that of official crime statistics. Policy implications are suggested as follows: First, it is important to provide more effective CSA prevention programs to teachers and parents. Second, prompt responses to CSA are required from principals and teachers when it occurs inside a school or children related to the school are involved. Third, children need to be encouraged to inform their parents and teacher of an experience of CSA. Fourth, children with a higher probability of being exposed to CSA should be identified and cared for properly.

Key words: Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), CSA Prevention Education, Inappropriate Touching

1. Introduction

In recent years, a number of cases of sexual abuse of girls were reported through the media. Since 2000, such media reports have caused the issue of child sexual abuse (CSA), which previously had been kept hidden from the public eye, to emerge as a major social issue in South Korea.¹⁾ There is now an increasing demand for stricter policy responses to CSA crimes. The Korean government, among the assorted social actors involved in policy responses to CSA, is

most actively carrying out intervention and policy efforts. Compared to professionals such as researchers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers who design countermeasures against CSA based on accumulated research and clinical experience, the government has been more active and has taken the lead in tackling the issue of CSA by amending laws penalizing CSA perpetrators, establishing a system for the protection of CSA victims, and conducting studies on the issue of CSA.

A consensus appears to have been reached within Korean society that CSA is a serious crime and perpetrators must pay an appropriate price for their wrongdoing. The recently-revised regulations on the punishment of CSA offenders reflect public sentiment towards CSA. However, experts point out that, although perpetrators of CSA must be penalized, there are a number of loopholes in the approach of working to prevent CSA solely through punishment (Pyo, 2009). Although the situation is somewhat improved over the past, there are still many CSA victims and families that attempt to conceal the abuse. Such a tendency becomes an obstacle in exposing the reality of CSA crimes. Crime statistics from the police and prosecutor's office, which is based solely on reported cases, provide only a partial picture of the current status of CSA in Korea. Also, only a limited number of restricted studies have been carried out amidst the absence of a nationwide survey on child sexual assaults (Han et al., 2008).

CSA emerged as a major social issue in Korea before experts were able to accumulate related research or clinical data. Under such circumstances, the Korean government is trying to devise appropriate countermeasures in response to public sentiment over CSA crimes. Despite the government-led efforts, however, the limited research or data on the issue has made it difficult to fully grasp the current state of CSA within Korea. The present study will investigate the current status of CSA from a prevention perspective and discuss countermeasures that may be taken against it.

2. Difficulties with Discovering CSA

1) Victims Conceal Their Abuse

The issue of CSA began to be publicly discussed within Korean society beginning in the early 1990s (Kang, 2010; Lee, M. K., 2007), following the emergence of public discourse on sexual violence against adults. What makes CSA such a matter of serious concern is that very few victims report what they have been sexually abused. According to a study conducted in the U.S. in the 1980s, the majority of CSA victims did not share their experience of abuse with their

1) The paper is based on the research from "Keeping Children Safe from Sexual Abuse" supported by the Korea Women's Development Institute (KWDI) in 2010.

parents or any other adult (Finkelhor, 1984). In fact, at the point at which CSA was first brought to public attention in the U.S., numerous cases remained hidden as parents, teachers, and health practitioners experienced difficulty in identifying CSA (Browning & Boatman, 1977). However, leaving the trauma of abuse in the dark can result in negative consequences for the child's development.

According to their counselors, CSA victims lacking understanding and support of parents or others close to them have often hidden and repressed their past experiences of abuse (Lee, M. K., 2007). Victims conceal their abuse, shunting it away as a shameful and embarrassing part of the past. However, as they receive sexual abuse prevention education as adolescents or receive psychiatric treatment, they begin to acknowledge that they have been victimized (Lee, M. K., 2007).

Children conceal their victimization because they experience guilt or shame for failing to fight off the perpetrator or otherwise avoid the abuse, for submitting to the offender, or for feeling physical arousal at the time of abuse. Unable to understand that they have been sexually abused, children regard their experience as a shameful event and cannot speak of it to others (Lee, M. K., 2007). Adult victims of intra-familial abuse who reveal to their family their childhood trauma are sometimes resented and criticized by family members. CSA prevention education for children and parents has been proven to foster the ability to deal with sexual abuse once it has occurred. The law and other institutions encourage CSA crime reporting. However, if the protection of victims or other reporters of sexual abuse cannot be ensured, concealment of CSA will continue.

2) Mandated Reporters' Passivity in Reporting Cases of CSA

According to the Act on the Protection of Sexual Violence Crime Victims, Act on the Protection of Child and Juvenile from Sexual Abuse, Early Childhood Education Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Welfare of Disabled Persons Act, Infant Care Act, and Act on the Prevention of Sexual Trafficking and Protection, those in charge of educating and protecting children are obliged to report the incidence of child sexual abuse. Those regulations stipulate that a person in charge of, and personnel working for, facilities that protect, educate, and treat children are required to report the sexual abuse of children when they become aware of it. Regulations also prohibit the disclosure of a reporter's personal information, photograph, and identity. When those subject to mandatory reporting fail to carry out their reporting obligation, they may be levied with a fine of up to three million Korean Won.

Despite these regulations, mandated reporters do not actively carry out their duty to report abuse. According to the child abuse hotline "1391", reporting of abuse by mandated reporters in 2003 accounted for a mere 29.1% of total reported cases (Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family

Affairs, 2003). The primary reasons that mandatory reporters are reluctant to report sexual abuse against children are their fear of their identity being disclosed or of being otherwise somehow disadvantaged (Yoon, 2007). Schools are expected to play a central role in CSA prevention. When CSA takes place within the confines of a school, school authorities are expected to provide support so that immediate action can be taken to make inquiries into, discuss, and report the sexual abuse (Pyo, 2009). In a 2009 survey conducted with 2,680 persons attending training for school administrators and mandatory reporters, survey participants were asked why it might be difficult for them to report cases of sexual abuse. 10.4% of respondents replied "because the offender and victim are members of the same institute," 29.6% replied "because of a fear of rumors," 5.4% replied "because of fear of being reprimanded" and 20.2% replied "due to opposition by the guardian of the child" (Lee, H. S., 2010).

3. Study Methodology

Despite media reports that children are exposed to elevated risks of sexual abuse, very few fact-finding studies have been conducted on the topic. Through interviews with fourth to sixth graders throughout South Korea, the present study investigates the current safety status of elementary school students by reviewing issues such as: how safe children may be on their way to and from school, children's views on their surroundings, and their experience of sexual abuse. The study analyzed data from a total of 4,701 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students at elementary schools throughout South Korea. A stratified sampling method was implemented, using schools as the sampling units. The number of sample schools for each of the 16 provinces and metropolitan cities of South Korea were determined based on statistical data from the Office of Education of provinces and designated metropolitan cities. Factors such as the number of elementary school students in each of the 16 provinces and metropolitan cities and the average number of students per class were taken into consideration when determining the number of sample schools. The survey was carried out in schools selected through cooperation with the Office of Education of the 16 provinces and metropolitan cities. A research firm was hired to conduct the survey, which was administered either via school visits or by mail. A structured questionnaire was used in the survey. In addition, focus group interviews (FGI) with 10 parents of elementary school students and five elementary school health teachers were carried out as a means to gather opinions on protecting children from sexual abuse.

4. Incidence of CSA Identified in Official Statistics

The incidence of CSA in South Korea is identified through crime statistics or figures from coun-

seling centers compiled by the government. According to data from the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Korea, the incidence of sexual violence in 2008 amounted to a total of 16,234 cases. This can be converted to 33.4 cases per 100,000 population. The adolescent sexual abuse rate and CSA rate per 100,000 population was found to be 8.6 and 2.5, respectively, in the same year. Meanwhile, the number of adolescent victims per 100,000 persons in the adolescent population was found to be 79.4, whereas 16.9 children per 100,000 of the child population were identified as victims of CSA.

Table 1. The Incidence of Child/Adolescent Sexual Abuse Crimes in Korea (1999-2008)

Sexual Abuse		1999	2002	2005	2008
Crimes	Number of cases	8,830	11,688	13,631	16,234
	Per 100,000 population	18.9	24.5	28.3	33.4
Adolescent Sexual Abuse	Number of cases	2,071	2,509	3,842	4,192
	Per 100,000 population	4.4	5.27	8.0	8.6
	Per 100,000 population	34.0	46.0	74.6	79.4
Child Sexual Abuse	Number of cases	478	595	785	1,194
	Per 100,000 population	1.0	1.25	1.6	2.5
	Per 100,000 in child population	5.5	7.0	10.0	16.9

Note: 1. Adolescents refer to those aged 13 to 20; Children refer to those aged 12 or younger.

2. Source of crime statistics: Analytical Report on Crimes, Supreme Prosecutors' Office

3. Source of demographic statistics: Korea National Statistical Office

Table 2. Number of Child/Adolescent Sexual Abuse Cases Compiled by Sexual Violence Counseling Centers (2002-2009)

(Unit: Number of cases, %)

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of counseling cases		23,284	27,241	27,286	25,443	27,636	33,695
Age of Victims	Under 7	1,063	1,018	1,106	694	1,194	944
	%	4.6	4.2	4.1	2.7	4.3	2.8
	7 to Under 13	2,450	2,885	2,971	2,479	4,127	4,375
	%	10.5	11.9	10.9	9.8	14.9	13
	13 to Under 19	6,071	6,528	6,176	6,202	7,758	10,287
	%	26.1	27	22.6	24.4	28.1	30.6

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2009), 2009 Performance Report of Sexual Violence Counseling Centers and Protection Facilities.

The incidence of sexual violence found through statistics compiled from nationwide Sexual Violence Counseling Centers far exceeded that identified in the statistics of the Supreme Prosecutors' Office (See <Table 2>). In 2008, the number of total counseling cases was 27,636, with victims of 5,321 cases under 13 and victims of 7,785 cases aged 13 to 19. CSA accounted for 19.2% of total sexual violence cases in 2008 and 15.8% in 2009.

The relationships of sexual abuse offenders to their victims vary markedly depending on the source of the data. According to data from a nationwide sample of counseling centers, cases in which the offender was a stranger accounted for 14.4% of total cases in 2009. This means that 85.6% of victims were sexually abused by someone they knew. According to analysis of the 12th, 13th, and 14th round of sexual offender identity data, 60.6% of sex offenders were strangers to the victim whereas only 35.4% were individuals known to the child (Kang and Kim, 2010). According to data from the Sunflower Children's Center, an institute dedicated to supporting victims of CSA, a mere 25.1% of perpetrators of child or adolescent sexual abuse were strangers, compared to a whopping 74.9% of offenders who had a pre-existing relationship with the victim.

The presented data reveals that the majority of CSA offenders in the data from counseling centers are individuals who are known to the victim, whereas most of the offenders in the crime data are revealed to be strangers. This indicates that in many cases where the offender is a person that the victim knows, the victim does not press charges against the offender. Recent media reports and the public sentiments stirred by these reports create the impression that most CSA offenders are strangers to the victims. Policies for counteraction are being established based on this assumption. However, policy remedies must take into consideration the fact that incident reporting or legal action-taking are influenced by the relationship between the victim and perpetrator.

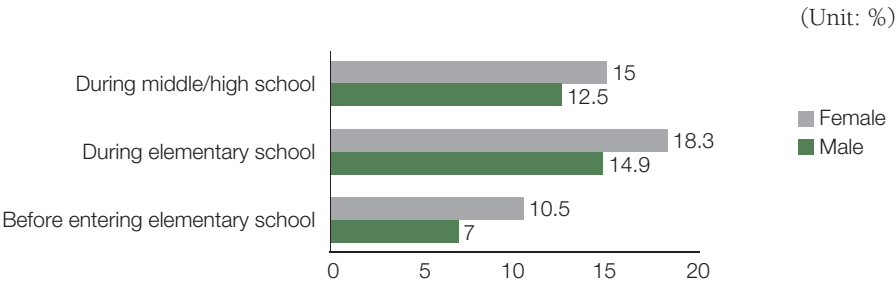
5. Previous Studies on CSA

A 2000 study by Kang Eun-young based on data from 300 CSA cases collected from child protection agencies or counseling centers reveals that 80.7% of total incidences were committed by people familiar to the victims: 36.3% of the offenders were relatives and 21.0% were neighbors of the victim. When a stranger was the offender, sexual abuse was repeated about twice in most cases. However, the abusive acts were found to be more repeated when the offender was a relative, neighbor, or teacher (Kang, 2002).

A 2009 study on sexuality and sexual abuse examined the experiences of molestation and sexual

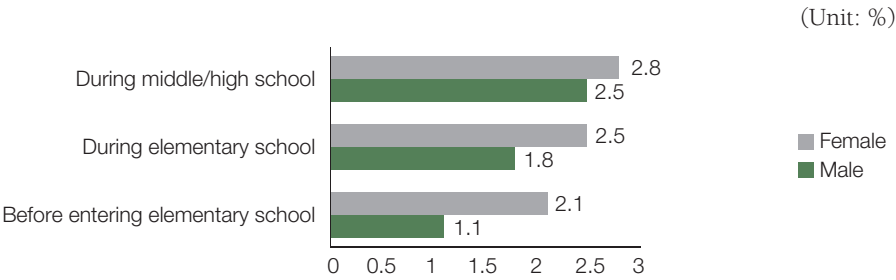
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- 2) When asking the participants' experience of childhood and adolescent molestation or sexual assault, the following definitions were provided. Molestation: The act of another person knowingly touching my breasts, hips, or genitals, or placing his/her genitals against my body against my will. Sexual assault: A sexual act that has been forced upon me against my will. Sexual assault includes sexual acts such as rape, attempted rape, and insertion of objects into genital organs, oral sex and anal sex.

assault during early childhood, childhood, and adolescence of 3,600 young adults nationwide aged 19 to 30 (Lee, M. J. et al., 2009).²⁾ Because this was a retrospective study conducted online, the prevalence of experience of victimization was found to be higher than in other studies. A high incidence of child and adolescent molestation was found among both female and male respondents. 10.5% of total female respondents reported being molested prior to entering elementary school, while 18.3% and 15% replied that they had fallen victim to molestation in elementary school and in middle/high school, respectively. Men who experienced molestation before elementary school, in elementary school, and in middle/high school were found to be 7%, 14.9%, and 12.6%, respectively (See <Figure 1>). Experience of sexual assault among all female respondents was identified as 2.1% before elementary school, 2.5% in elementary school, and 2.8% in middle/high school. For men, the percentage was 1.1%, 1.8%, and 2.5%, respectively, for each of the periods. (See <Figure 2>).



Source: Analyzing data collected in the research Sexuality and Sexual Violence in Intimate Relationships among Young People in Korea (Lee M. J. et al. 2009).

Figure 1. Percentage of Youth Molested by Gender



Source: Analyzing data collected in the research on Sexuality and Sexual Violence in Intimate Relationships among Young People (Lee, M. J. et al. 2009).

Figure 2. Percentage of Youth Sexually Assaulted by Gender

The experience of being molested or sexually assaulted in one development stage was found to have a significant co-relation with a sexual victimization experience in another stage of development (See <Table 3>). The correlation between being molested before entering elementary school and while attending elementary school was found to be .299 and falling victim to molestation before elementary school had a .124 co-relation with victimization of sexual assault during elementary school.

Table 3. Correlation between Victimization during Stages of Life among Youth

	Molested BEES	Molested DES	Molested DMHS	Molested AHSG	Sexually Assaulted BEES	Sexually Assaulted DES	Sexually Assaulted DMHS	Sexually Assaulted AHSG
Molested BEES	1							
Molested DES	.299**	1						
Molested DMHS	.169**	.233**	1					
Molested AHSG	.092**	.180**	.284**	1				
Sexually Assaulted BEES	.355**	.127**	.067**	.050**	1			
Sexually Assaulted DES	.124**	.224**	.103**	.047**	.304**	1		
Sexually Assaulted DMHS	.087**	.096**	.292**	.102**	.154**	.221**	1	
Sexually Assaulted AHSG	.073**	.104**	.127**	.284**	.146**	.141**	.278**	1

Source: Lee, M. J. et al. (2009:134). Sexuality and Sexual Violence in Intimate Relationship among Young People in Korea.

Note: 1. ** p < 0.01 two-tailed, * p < 0.05 two-tailed

2. BEES: Before Entering Elementary School DES: During Elementary School
DMHS: During Middle/High School AHSG: After High School Graduation

Experience of child and adolescent sexual abuse was found to have been repeated among particular groups of individuals rather than being spread out across the population. Such groups can be viewed as having greater exposure to risk of child or adolescent sexual abuse, and it is important to identify the individual and socio-economic characteristics of these groups.

In 2008, Han et al. investigated 2,037 men and women aged 19 and over to identify the incidence of sexual abuse prior to the age of 18. In this survey, the proportion of individuals who had experienced CSA was high at 20.8% (Han et al., 2008), when “being subject to sexual jokes

or ridicule, or forced to watch obscene material” was included in the definition of sexual abuse. Children from households with income had a 1.6% higher likelihood of being sexually abused, whereas the existence of siblings was found to have an inverse relationship with the occurrence of childhood sexual abuse (Han et al., 2008). The study finds that the existence of multiple siblings serves as protection against CSA. Children living in high-crime areas had 1.7 times greater likelihood of being sexually abused than did children who do not. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between single-parent families or insufficient time for childcare by parents and the incidence of CSA (Han et al., 2008).

6. Child Safety and Sexual Abuse among Elementary School Students

1) Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of elementary school students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade who participated in the survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 4. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents ¹⁾
(Unit: Persons, %)

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency (Percentage)
Gender	
Female	2,334 (50.6)
Male	2,279 (49.4)
Age ²⁾	
10 year old	1,329 (28.8)
11 year old	1,847 (40.0)
12 year old	1,434 (31.1)
Form of Family ³⁾	
Two-parent family	4,208 (90.7)
Single-parent family (father)	146 (3.1)
Single-parent family (mother)	221 (4.8)
Grandparent-grandchild family	57 (1.2)
Other	7 (0.2)
Household Economic Status ⁴⁾	
Very wealthy	743 (16.0)
Wealthy	3,269 (70.6)
Not so wealthy	541 (11.7)
Not wealthy at all	77 (1.7)

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency (Percentage)
Parents' Economic Activities ⁵⁾	
Both parents in economic activities	2,610 (63.6)
Father only in economic activities	1,080 (26.3)
Mother only in economic activities	24 (0.6)
Both parents not in economic activities	18 (0.4)
Do not know	370 (9.0)
Size of area ⁶⁾	
Large city	1,907 (42.9)
Small- and mid-sized city	1,634 (36.7)
Rural area	908 (20.4)

Note: 1) Survey participants were asked their year of birth. In the data analysis, participants born in 1997 and 1998 were categorized as being 10 years of age, and those born in 2000 and 2001 were categorized as being 12 years of age.

2) Participants were requested to identify all family members with which they lived.

3) Participants were asked to answer whether they viewed their families to be economically well-off.

4) Participants were asked about their parents' economic activities.

5) A separate survey questionnaire was provided to the teachers of respondents.

Girls made up 50.6% of the sample. 28.8% of total participants were 10 years old, 40% were 11 years old and 31.1% were 12 years old. By family type, 90.7% of the respondents were found to be children of two-parent families, 3.1% were in single-parent (father) families, 4.8% were in single-parent (mother) families, and 1.2% was in grandparent-grandchild families. In terms of parents' economic activities, 63.6% of participants responded that both their parents engaged in economic activities, 26.3% replied that only their fathers engaged in economic activities, and 0.6% answered that only their mothers engaged in economic activities. 0.4% of total respondents replied that both their parents did not engage in economic activities. Children's subjective evaluation of their family's economic well-being was asked in order to identify their household economic status. 86.6% of total respondents replied that they viewed their family to be "very wealthy" or "wealthy". 13.4% of the total replied that they viewed their family as "not wealthy" or "not wealthy at all". 42.9% of total survey participants attended schools in large cities, 36.7% went to schools in small- or mid-sized cities, and 20.4% resided in rural areas.

2) Children's Safety and Victimization of Sexual Abuse

Table 5 illustrates children's ability to assess or cope with sexual abuse risks by the extent of their communication with parents. The figures presented are the percentage of participants who

answered positively to the given questions. The manner in which children deal with being approached by strangers or their knowledge of Child Safety Houses [u6]was found to be affected by the extent of the communication that the children enjoy with their parents.

Table 5. Children's Ability to Assess and Cope with Sexual Abuse by Communication with Parents

(Unit : %, Persons)

	Aware of child sexual abuse cases	Received sex education/sexual abuse prevention education	Dealing with Strangers	Aware of Child Safety Houses
Extensive communication	90.8 (1,751)	95.5 (1,873)	95.8 (1,880)	72.0 (1,416)
Limited communication	90.3 (2,355)	93.5 (2,498)	87.3 (2,333)	64.5 (1,727)
Number of cases	4,106	4,371	4,213	3,143

Note: 1. Percentage of children answering yes to the question.

2. Extent of communication with parents: Response to "my parents and I speak openly about any topic" and answer to "my parents know what I am doing when I am out" were summed.

Table 6. Safety of Children's Environment by Household Economic Status

(Unit: %, Persons)

	Visits by Strangers	Opened the Door to Strangers	Experience of Going to a Public Rest Room Alone	Passing by Sketchy Neighborhood on Way To and From School
Very Wealthy	27.6 (204)	21.8 (43)	60.8 (448)	20.1 (148)
Wealthy	29.3 (954)	23.7 (222)	68.3 (2,219)	18.8 (613)
Not Especially Wealthy	32.7 (176)	27.6 (48)	67.7 (363)	30.0 (162)
Not Wealthy at All	31.2 (24)	47.8 (11)	56.0 (42)	30.3 (23)
Number of cases	4,605	1,331	4,598	4,606

Note: 1. Percentage of children answering yes to the question.

The surrounding environment and ability to cope with risk factors by household economic status is shown in Table 6. The likelihood of a child opening the door to a stranger when alone at home increased among children with lower household economic status. The likelihood of a child being required to pass through a questionable section of the neighborhood on the way to and from school also grew with a decrease in household economic status. CSA is defined as an act perpetrated by an adult or someone older than the child victim, whereas child sexual violence encompasses offenders of all ages. The present study has found that classmates accounted for a considerable percentage of offenders. Inability to rightly assess and acknowledge inappropriate physical contact among peers could later result in sexual violence.

Table 7. Percentage of Children Experiencing Inappropriate Touch and Behaviors by Schoolmates

(Unit: %, Persons)

	Lifting skirt	Removing pants	Peeping in restroom	Anal poking	Touching breast	Touching genitals	Viewing obscene photos
Gender (n=4,613, female=2,334, male=2,279)							
Female	3.0 (71)	0.7 (16)	1.5 (35)	9.2 (214)	0.8 (18)	0.0 (1)	2.0 (46)
Male	0.2 (4)	12.4 (282)	2.0 (45)	30.1 (685)	1.3 (30)	8.9 (203)	4.3 (98)
Age (n=4,610, 10 years old=1,329, 11 years old=1,847, 12 years old=1,434)							
10 year old	1.7 (23)	2.8 (37)	1.3 (17)	14.4 (191)	0.9 (11)	3.4 (45)	3.4 (45)
11 year old	1.5 (27)	6.4 (118)	1.7 (32)	19.5 (358)	1.2 (22)	4.2 (77)	2.6 (47)
12 year old	1.7 (25)	10.1 (144)	2.2 (31)	24.5 (351)	1.1 (15)	5.8 (82)	3.6 (52)
Geographical Location of Residence (n=4,449, large city=1,907, small and medium sized city=1,634, rural area=908)							
Large city	1.4 (27)	5.4 (103)	1.6 (31)	18.8 (358)	0.8 (16)	4.2 (79)	2.6 (50)
Small/medium city	1.8 (29)	5.2 (85)	1.4 (23)	18.3 (298)	0.7 (12)	4.7 (76)	3.5 (56)
Rural areas	1.7 (15)	9.7 (88)	2.4 (22)	24.5 (222)	1.1 (10)	4.2 (38)	3.5 (32)
Total N=4,701							

Note: "Obscene photo watching" means that a respondent was forced by schoolmates to watch obscene photos.

Table 7 shows the results of a survey on inappropriate sexual contact and behaviors that elementary school students were subjected to by schoolmates. 3% of the girls surveyed said their peers had lifted their skirts and 12.4% of the boys reported having their pants removed. Boys are more likely to experience inappropriate sexual contact and behaviors such as anal poking,

breast touching[u8], genital touching and unwanted watching of obscene photos than are girls, with figures at 30.1%, 1.3%, 8.9%, and 4.3%, respectively for boys, and 9.2%, 0.8%, 0.0% and 2.0%, respectively for girls.

Table 8. Number and Percentage of Children Molested by Gender and Age

(Unit: Persons, %)

	Forced kissing	Forced hugging	Breast touched	Genitals touched	Forced genital exposure	Forced genital touching
Yes	43 (0.9)	93 (2.0)	38 (0.8)	123 (2.6)	76 (1.6)	23 (0.5)
Gender (n=4,613, Female=2,334, Male=2,279)						
Female	20	32	18	6	28	10
Male	22	57	19	113	44	11
Total (%)	42 (0.9)	89 (1.9)	37 (0.8)	119 (2.6)	72 (1.6)	21 (0.5)
Age (n=4,610, 10 years old=1,329, 11 years old=1,847, 12 years old=1,434)						
10 years old	8	17	4	24	20	4
11 years old	18	32	21	46	24	9
12 years old	15	39	11	48	27	7
Total (%)	41 (0.9)	88 (1.9)	36 (0.8)	118 (2.6)	71 (1.5)	20 (0.4)

Note: 1. A forced kiss means that a respondent was forcibly kissed by someone.

2. A forced hug means that a respondent was forcibly hugged by someone

3. Breast touched means that a respondent's breast was touched by someone, although he/she did not want it to happen.

4. Genitals touched mean that a respondent's genitals were touched by someone, although he/she did not want it to happen.

5. A forced genital exposure means that someone showed his/her genitals to a respondent, although he/she did not want it to happen.

6. A forced genital touch means that someone asked a respondent to touch his/her genitals, although the respondent did not want it to happen.

More boys tend to be molested than girls (See <Table 8>). In case of being with genitally abused, boys constitute the majority of victims. Students aged 10 years old tend to harassed more with inappropriate sexual contact. The higher incidence of molestation among boys might result from the fact that the majority of harassers are schoolmates. Another survey was performed to determine whether or not sexually abused children alert their parents or teachers about their victimization (See Table 9). As indicated in the table below, while most respondents did not report their experience of sexual abuse to their parents, they would tend to go to their parents

over their teachers if it were to be reported. It was found that far more boys than girls told no one about the sexual abuse they experienced.

Table 9. Number of Children Reporting Molestation to Adults by Gender
(Unit: Persons)

	Forced kiss			Forced hug			Breast touched			Genitals touched			Forced genital exposure			Forced genitals touch		
Yes	43 (0.9)			93 (2.0)			38 (0.8)			123 (2.6)			76 (1.6)			23 (0.5)		
Report to:	P	T	N/A	P	T	N/A	P	T	N/A	P	T	N/A	P	T	N/A	P	T	N/A
Gender (n=4,613, female=2,334, male=2,279)																		
Female	13	3	3	13	3	6	11	2	2	3	0	2	18	2	3	6	0	2
Male	7	0	9	9	0	24	4	0	8	12	13	47	4	3	18	1	0	5
Total	20	3	12	22	3	30	15	2	10	15	13	49	22	5	21	7	0	7

Note: Report to P: Telling their parents, T: Telling their teachers, N/A : Telling no one.

7. Reality of Child Sexual Abuse from the Perspective of Parents and Teachers

There has been a growing interest in the prevention of child sexual abuse apace with its emergence as a social concern in Korean society. Children, parents and teachers are the most important stakeholders in CSA prevention. In this section, the views of parents and teachers toward CSA prevention education are reviewed and the current status and challenges regarding CSA that they face are presented. Despite the heightened awareness of the importance of CSA prevention education, the reality is still glum.

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MoGEF) in 2008, only 11.6% of parents answered that they always provided CSA prevention education to their children, whereas 62.6% said “sometimes” and about a quarter of parents rarely or never provided such education. Regarding the challenges of offering CSA prevention education to their children, a majority of the parents said they don’t know how to educate their children. When parents were asked at what age their children should begin receiving CSA prevention education, 74.4% replied at the ages of four to seven (MoGEF, 2008).

Meanwhile, a mere 16.5% of teachers were found to provide regular CSA prevention education to their students. For a vast majority of them, it was offered only when there was sufficient time [u9]for it or when a related incident had occurred. On the challenges in offering such education to their students, many teachers also pointed to a lack of understanding of how to

educate them. Insufficient materials and available time were cited as other major hindrances to providing CSA prevention education. 62.2% of teachers replied that children at the ages of 4 to 7 should start receiving this education (MoGEF, 2008).

1) Is the Issue of CSA a New Emerging Concern?

With the recent uptick in public and media interest in child sexual abuse, teachers were asked whether they believe it is due to an increase in the prevalence of CSA or because it has been returned to the public's attention after a long period of concealment.

It would be more accurate to say that cases that had not been brought to public attention have now surfaced rather than to say state that new cases that would not have occurred in the past have emerged. Perspective [on sexual abuse] has changed as well. Sexual harassment of children wasn't taken seriously, and was dismissed as a way of adults merely expressing how adorable they thought the kids were. [But that's changed] (Health teacher at an elementary school in Seodaemun-gu, 51 years old).

Such issues probably existed in the past as well. In the past, mothers feared that even if their child at school were to be sexually harassed by a male teacher, because sexual abuse was largely a taboo topic then, they would be reluctant to raise the issue. [They feared that their child may be disadvantaged]... so they kept things quiet. A few phone calls were made to deal with the problem, but mothers these days are more enlightened, or parents, if their child has been sexually abused, do not regard it to be as shameful or as much of an humiliation as they did in the past (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 52 years old).

Experienced health teachers point out that the recent increasing interest in CSA stems from the fact that it was concealed in the past or that there was an insufficient awareness and understanding of CSA, rather than seeing it as a novel phenomenon.

A change in perceptions toward children as objects of protection has tended to bring the issue of CSA into the spotlight. Health teachers testify that sexual harassment in school settings was quite common in the past; generally, tacit acceptance was given to elementary school teachers who attempted to sexually harass students, which offered them to an almost unlimited opportunity to go ahead and do so.

Because I work at a school, I see quite a lot of cases by teachers. They place girl students on their laps, and those kinds of things could be seen in schools from way back, even about 20 years ago. But they've really gotten rarer. Because there is a lot of talk [about sexual abuse

by teachers] they've really disappeared a lot. In the past... [How was it in the past?] I was appointed as a teacher in 1983, Hmm not in 1983, but in 1984, and I was young at the time. 28 [years old], I was about that age. Now we have online messaging programs, but back then, we had to go directly to the classrooms. And one time a teacher in his mid-40s had a girl student on his lap. Being so young at the time, that looked really strange to my eyes. So I said, "How can you put her in your lap?" And the teacher seemed to be a bit embarrassed. [What grade was she in?] She was a sixth-grader (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 54 years old).

2) Confusion in CSA Prevention Education

While parents broadly welcome the public discourse on the newly-emerging issue of child sexual abuse through various channels such as the media, they often feel confused about providing CSA prevention education to their children since it implicitly encourages children to distrust people and may weaken the long-standing values of trust and helping the needy in our society.

It doesn't seem like an irrelevant issue to me. I think everyone is exposed to the risks. I began to think, "What countermeasures should I have in place." Of course there should be countermeasures throughout society but as you know, that can't be everything. When I educate my children, I tell my children to "do this or that" and eventually, I end up telling my children to doubt others. When I teach my children about character, I tell them to love and help others. But whenever, a case like this occurs, I end up teaching them things that are at odds with what I've been telling them, and I end up confused myself when I'm saying such things (Mother of 9-year old son and 7-year old daughter).

Although it is clear that parents and teachers are the primary providers of CSA prevention education, both feel uncomfortable when it comes to conversations with children about sex. Especially school principals, for example, are often suffer under the misapprehension that sex education and CSA prevention education may unnecessarily provide knowledge of sex to students and lead them into physical wrongdoings. Such conservative mindsets and uneasiness regarding talking about sex with students has become an obstacle to successful CSA prevention education.

[How in-depth do you think sex education should be?] It's hard to say. If you teach them too much, you may end up stimulating their curiosity, but if you teach them too little, that may also be a problem because kids will not be able to really understand it. (Mother of daughter in sixth grade and son in fourth grade).

3) Children at and on their Way to School Are Unsafe

News reports have revealed cases of children sexually abused at and while commuting to school. Parents and teachers both agree that children in a school environment are exposed to risks related to sexual abuse. Parents are told that CSA cases have occurred in classrooms and school restrooms as well as during school commutes.

There was an incident in our school's restroom. The offender was a kind of strange person who lived near the school. [Was the offender caught?] Yes. Yes. The offender was caught. It was a case that happened when a student went to the restroom alone during class hours... That wasn't a good experience for the school. Students weren't allowed to go to the restroom even during break times. If they wanted to go, they had to go in pairs. They were not even allowed to go to the school clinic. Whenever possible, they were sent between classes (Health teacher at an elementary school in Seodaemun-gu, 53 years old).

For a while, the elementary school told students not to come to school too early in the morning. The school was concerned that something bad might happen... the reason the school sent out a memo preventing children from coming to school early in the morning was because there are people exercising on the school grounds during early morning hours and you never know what may happen inside the classrooms. Most students arrive at school about 20 to 40 minutes after the teacher arrives, so we were advised not to send our children before that time (Mother of sons in sixth and seventh grades).

Schools to which strangers have an easy access cannot be safe for children when their daily commutes are made alone. Schools have put efforts into improving the safety of children's commutes, such as entrance controls, visitor screening and installation of CCTV; nevertheless, the trust being gained from the parents remains low.

[Are there CCTVs within the school?] Yes. But [they are placed] only in places such as the front and back gates. There are actually three located in the front and back gate areas. Those should be effective for prevention but there's nobody monitoring them. The monitor is placed inside the teachers' office, so teachers, everyone, including the vice principal, are busy doing their work. Who would be looking at that (Health teacher at an elementary school in Seodaemun-gu, 53 years old).

Meanwhile, children living in low-income areas say they feel distinctly safer in school. Some CSA cases have been identified involving adult and senior men in the neighborhood as offenders.

I, on the other hand, think that schools are rather safe. Once [students are] in schools, they are safe. You know, there are a lot of small supermarkets and bathhouses in the neighborhood. And the sketchier the area is, the later the mothers get off work. They come home at 2 a.m. after serving tables in restaurants. In some sense, that can also be viewed as negligence. The kids have nothing to do. (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 54 years old).

4) Incidence and Response to CSA

Although a consensus has been reached in Korean society to perceive CSA as a crime and the government is making vigorous efforts in creating necessary measures, those who specialize in CSA cases suggest that the level of protection and support for victims is yet to achieve adequacy. The government is striving to develop legislation to eliminate CSA and to formulate a complete and well-designed system that enables full support and assistance to victims. Still, addressing the damage from this heinous act remains a great challenge in the field.

School Responses to CSA

When a sexually abused child is identified, the victim is often reported to the concerned authorities by a reluctant school principal only following a strong insistence by the teacher of the victimized child. This means that the mandated reporter fails to make a prompt report on the CSA case.

Our school principal was strongly against making this case public. [As the health teacher] I said we should let the parents know, but [the principal said] we shouldn't inform the parents. I said we could be reprimanded if we didn't report the case, but [the principal] said we should first wait and not report it. [The principal], who first told us not to report the case, reluctantly reported it after I said that we could get caught if we don't, but was very unhappy about reporting. It hasn't been long since punishment for failing to report a case of which we are aware has been institutionalized... but then, the father questioned whether we had reported the case to the police. (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 52 years old).

There should be improvement in promoting the safety and comfort of abused children during the investigation of CSA allegations.

There is no space set aside for counseling inside the police station. I felt sorry for the child. The child is sleepy and falls asleep while answering questions. Female police officers are the ones who ask detailed questions. But they are sent to the child only after the child gets

a checkup at the obstetrics and gynecology clinic. I believe that the buildings and the atmosphere within a room affects children. Children should be given an environment where they can feel safe and relax. Even if there is a separate room in a police station, the atmosphere there is cold. The child is very confused - you've become a victim, the police come to see you, you have to go to the hospital and police station. That's how it is. (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 52 years old).

Poor accessibility to advocacy centers for sexually abused children discourages people who hope to use such facilities.

The Sunflower center nearby is alright, but it's too inconvenient to use the one far away. The father also asked to go to a nearby hospital because the Police Hospital was too far away (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 52 years old).

[In relation to sexual abuse cases being reflected in evaluations of principals] Yes. In a subtle manner, you find who is responsible and then say 'there's nothing good about the case being publicized.' There's no evaluation score given to the principals, but they end up being judged negatively. It starts with the school being 'negatively judged by other schools'. The next most dreaded thing is the media (Health teacher at an elementary school in Seodaemun-gu, 51 years old).

Schools tend to stay passive, despite their prompt support and response being critical once a CSA case is identified. The interviews with teachers and parents support the notion that a school's reluctance to report comes in part from its being afraid of possible repercussions, such as in the performance evaluations of the school principal and other teachers, arising from a disclosure to the municipal education office and police of sexual victimization of a child under the school's supervision. A change in the assessment criteria for the handling of CSA by school principals and teachers is needed. If the assessment is focused only on the number of CSA cases, schools will invariably desire to hide such incidences.

As stated above, support from relevant organizations in dealing with CSA remains inadequate despite government calls for reporting CSA. Additionally, if parents recognize the painful investigation process their child must undergo after the identification of sexual abuse, they will attempt to address it personally rather than reporting the case to a law enforcement authority. The fact that the government has made it mandatory to report child sexual abuse with a punitive provision upon failure to report demonstrates its strong will and commitment to eliminating child sexual abuse and providing due support to the victims of the crime. A more appropriate field support system should be emplaced to meet these goals.

Although the Cho Doo-soon case became highly publicized, the investigation process focuses solely on the case itself and fails to consider the status of the child. So, the child may end up being hurt emotionally for a second or a third time. That's why, unless it's a really serious case, mothers are reluctant to request an official investigation of their case. Because they are afraid of the shock their child might have. (Mother with sons in sixth and seventh grades).

Handling of CSA Offenses Committed by Men Residing in the Same Neighborhood as the Victim

According to teachers with experience with reporting CSA offenses by neighborhood adult or elderly men after disclosure by an abused child, the offenders tend to be rapidly released. This may dampen the willingness of teachers and parents to report them and make the children grow accustomed to such violence.

The offenders [They] always touch children, and even if you report the offender... [What would you do if you hear from children that there are people who engage in such actions?] In those cases, we are authorized to report them. And we do report them. But it's no use. I would like to learn more about the law. How can those [offenders] be released so easily after being reported? [They are reported but then they are released?] Yes. They seem to be released with just a warning (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 54 years old).

Offenders tend to be owners of neighborhood supermarkets as well as neighborhood seniors. Most of them are in their 60s. The owner of the supermarket, who is an old man, says he'll take out the ice cream bar for children and then touches them, standing behind them. [Are children well aware of this?] Yes. The children know it all too well. They are very outspoken about it. I found the situation to be so absurd, so reporting... [What do you do after that?] So I say, "Let's go report him." And the children say, "There's no use reporting him." Their mothers reported him but he was released just a few days later (Health teacher at an elementary school in Mapo-gu, 54 years old).

8. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to identify and review the incidence of child sexual abuse, an emerging social issue in South Korea, and explore strategies to prevent and cope with it. It is crucial to understand that CSA is a social phenomenon that has been newly discovered after

being long kept in the shadows. Despite a dearth of research and statistical support for helping to understand CSA and develop necessary measures, the concerned government agencies and the National Assembly of Korea have made prompt and concerted efforts to devise appropriate policy measures amidst an increasing public demand.

Although the public's attention turned to CSA a bit late, there is cause for optimism that a national consensus has been achieved that CSA is a heinous offense and crime. This will serve to promote its prevention and deterrence. As compared with adult sexual violence, the government has a greater role to play in amending relevant regulations, building and expanding a support structure, and developing education programs to prevent child sexual abuse. A governmental commitment to these endeavors will significantly support the creation of a favorable environment to prevent and curb CSA in a short period of time.

Meanwhile, detailed research and studies on how the characteristics of CSA victims, their individual and family backgrounds relate to the incidence and prevention of CSA will have great implications for future policy direction and prevention programs. Given the different properties and characteristics of CSA statistics based on criminal records-based and other research data, far-reaching studies and research should be undertaken at a national level to estimate the prevalence and incidence of CSA.

The following outlines the policy recommendations drawn from the results of this study:

First, access to CSA prevention education programs should be improved to ensure that the parents and school teachers who have the closest relationships with children are able to utilize them. As numerous parents and teachers express a particular interest in CSA prevention but are unaware of how to go about it, we should provide educational materials either in paper format or electronically via the Internet and/or TV/radio programs. Second, a prompt response by schools to an incidence of CSA is required. Improvement in the CSA assessment structure for faculty and schools will help ensure a more proactive and prompt response on their part. More aggressive participation by schools is anticipated if they are evaluated based on how well they have handled a CSA cases after its identification, rather than only considering the number of cases which have occurred. Third, CSA prevention education should additionally focus on encouraging children to inform their parents or teachers of an experience of sexual abuse. According to this study, there are a great deal of sexually abused children who maintain such experiences in secrecy without disclosing them to their parents and teachers. Research on the causes for non-disclosure of CSA by children is needed. Last but not least, groups of children at high risk of CSA should be identified; more research and additional studies are needed to better understand what specific individual and family backgrounds have to do with CSA and how they are related. It seems that the focus of current media coverage and government policies is based on the premise that most CSA perpetrators are individuals previously unknown to the child. Extensive research and data collection related to this issue will help create public consensus through the media and contribute to government policies.

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