

A Sexually Abused Child Who Committed Suicide: Case Report

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Abstract

The sexual abuse of children is defined to be used for sexual satisfaction of an adult. In this case report forensic, and medical files of a 16-year-old girl who had committed suicide by drug overdose were investigated. It is learned that about 18 months ago she had begun to date with her 20-year-old boy friend from the same village. At the beginning mutual tolerance and willingness governed their love affair. However for the previous year she had been forced, threatened, and kidnapped for sexual intercourse. She had told that she couldn't break up her relationship because of his fearful and insulting threats, and subsequently she had been a victim of frequent sexual assaults. Finally, while she had been forced, and retained for a sexual intercourse in the barn, her family informed the legal authorities of her absence. When she had been found, she had declared that her boyfriend gave him a glass of cola drink, and battered her on the neck, so she couldn't recall everything fully. Her physical examination revealed signs of trauma on her head, and extremities, and her psychological, evaluation demonstrated a disordered mental health state because of sexual assaults she had been exposed to. She had been hospitalized in a psychiatry clinic, and discharged in ten days. Five days after her discharge from the hospital, she attempted suicide by swallowing 24 different kinds of tablets routinely used by her grandmother. According to hospital records, despite appropriate treatment she had a cardiac arrest and died. It was concluded that the victim who had a history of sexual assault nearly two weeks ago, had died of visceral organ bleeding, and cardiac arrhythmia due to intake of multiple drugs with the intent of committing suicide. The abuse case among the risky groups for suicide is an important public health problem. About the prevention of the sexual abuses and the suicides; education, treatment, social rehabilitation should be provided, and the safety precautions must be taken.

Key Words: Child, abuse, sexually abuse, suicide, forensic medicine.

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Introduction

Child sexual abuse is defined as maltreatment of a small child who has not completed his/her psychosocial maturation by an adolescent or an adult for sexual stimulation and satisfaction. In sexually abused children, development of adverse outcomes such as damaged sexuality, feeling of betrayal, helplessness, and being stigmatized can be observed [1]. In many different studies, the relationship between traumatic events experienced during childhood, and physically harmful behaviors, and suicidal attempts has been obviously disclosed [2]. Children exposed to physical and sexual abuse or assaults are considered among groups with higher suicidal risk. Suicidal attempt in adolescents is a multifaceted behavioral pattern where social-cultural characteristics, hereditary and biological predisposition, psychological problems, distress, heavy living conditions, and inadequate social support play important roles [3,4].

In this study, inadequate medical and social support provided for victims of sexual abuse, and insufficient training offered for the victim and his/her family which increasingly aggravate and sustain psychological trauma leading to suicidal attempt of the sufferer have been discussed. Besides in this study, crucial importance of early recognition, and awareness of the suicidal attempt which is the most devastating outcome of the sexual abuse, and organization of medical therapy, and social rehabilitation programs have been emphasized.

Case Report

In this case report forensic, and medical files of a 16-year-old girl who had been reportedly committed suicide by drug overdose were investigated. Accordingly, from files it was learned that about 18 months ago she had begun to date with her 20-year-old boy friend from the same village. At the beginning mutual tolerance and willingness governed their love affair. However for the previous year she had been forced, threatened, and kidnapped for sexual intercourse. She had told that despite her strong desire to abandon him, she couldn't break up her relationship because of his fearful and insulting threats, and subsequently she had been a victim of frequent sexual assaults. Finally, while she had been forced, and retained for a sexual intercourse in the barn, her family informed the legal authorities of her absence. When she had been found, she had declared that her boyfriend gave him a glass of cola drink, and

battered her on the neck, so she couldn't recall everything fully. From her records it had been disclosed that her physical examination had revealed signs of trauma on her head, and extremities, and her psychological, and psychiatric examinations had demonstrated a disordered mental health state because of sexual assaults she had been exposed to. Eventually she had been hospitalized in a psychiatry clinic, and discharged ten days with necessary recommendations.

Fifteen days after her discharge from the hospital, at 11:00 PM, she attempted suicide by swallowing 24 different kinds of tablets routinely used by her grandmother, and brought to the state hospital of the district where she had been evaluated, and applied gastric lavage, and activated charcoal. Later she had been sent to the university hospital. According to hospital records, she had a cardiac arrest at 03:45 AM during her medical observation. Since she couldn't be resuscitated despite nearly two hours of cardiopulmonary resuscitation application, she was recorded as "exitus" in her medical files. After examination, and autopsy of the deceased, her post-mortem examinations were completed. As a cause of her death, it was concluded that the victim who had a history of sexual assault nearly two weeks ago had died of visceral organ bleeding, and cardiac arrhythmia due to intake of multiple drugs with the intent of committing suicide.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our 16-year-old female case engaged in a mutual love affair with a 20-year-old boy living in the same village, which later turned out to be multiple coercive sexual assaults by her boyfriend. Many authors have reported that mostly (83 %) girls aged between 11-18 years are exposed to sexual assaults which increase in number as the years go by [5].

Deliberate intake of excessive doses of drugs has been reported as the most prevalent mode of suicidal attempt among adolescents [6]. In their study, Zoroğlu et al. [2] indicated that boys commit suicide by cutting a vessel or stabbing a vital organ, while girls attempt suicide by taking extremely higher doses of drugs. Our case committed suicide by taking her grandmother's drugs intentionally, and in excessive amounts. In their investigation, Cutajar et al. [7], reported that the incidence of suicidal death by intake of excessive doses of drugs among female victims of sexual assault were 40 times higher relative to the normal population.

Child abuse is an important public health problem which critically affects the present, and future of the community, prevents upbringing of healthy generations, and results in physical, and psychological problems. Especially lack of medical, social, and educational support centers available for victims of sexual abuse, and their families, and absence of social rehabilitation, and social adaptation programs in addition to social pressure imposed on the sufferers; previously experienced psychological traumas can not be deleted from memories during one's life time. Earlier recognition of suicidal risk factors, providing medical and social welfare, (in case of need) isolation of the victim from his/her family, and inner circle, and offering medical, and social support carry a vital importance in the prevention of suicidal attempts which are the most devastating outcomes of sexual abuse.

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