



SEXUAL ASSAULT OF MINOR GIRLS. PERPETRATORS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

R. Miteva*

Department of General and clinical pathology, forensic medicine and deontology, Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

The illegality of sexual abuse stems from the age of some of the people involved, the lack of consent and the circumstances under which it occurs. The archived materials for a period of 10 years from 15 Bulgarian district centres were processed. In 2227 of the cases there was sexual assault against minor girls. In 1426 (75.25%) of the cases, the perpetrator was a familiar person. Physical violence was the most commonly used method of break the victims' resistance – for 20.76% whether perpetrator was a familiar person, and 22.37% with an unfamiliar person. When the sexual assailant was a familiar person, the act happened most often at their home, whereas unfamiliar perpetrators committed their abuse in the nature.

Key words: sexual assault perpetrator, sexual abuse of children, sexual assault.

INTRODUCTION

The illegality of sexual abuse stems from the age of some of the people involved, the lack of consent and the circumstances under which it occurs. When a scandal occurs regarding commonly accepted morality, a sexual act can socially unacceptable. The issue of the validity of consent and violence is within the competence of the court. The abuse of children requires special attention and care. The data on minor girls who have been the victims of sexual assault are alarming. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the highest risk group includes ages 8–18 years, which account for 83.2% of all sexual assaults. According to Speizera I. S. et al., (2008), (1), sexual assault is most commonly committed by family members, neighbours, and familiar people.

TASKS AND GOAL

The goal of the current study was to identify the most common perpetrators of sexual assault on minor girls in the Republic of Bulgaria, who are outside the family.

*Correspondence to: Bulgaria, Stara Zagora 6000 Trakia University, Faculty of Medicine, Department "General and clinical pathology, forensic medicine and deontology", Dr. Radostina Miteva, e-mail: drmiteva72@abv.bg

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The forensic medical archives of 15 district centres in Bulgaria were processed, of which 2227 were examinations of minor girls who claimed they were the victims of sexual assault. The people identified as perpetrators were divided into groups: familiar people, unfamiliar people, and various combinations in cases of group violence, whereas the victims were divided into groups of up to 6 years of age, from 7 to 13 years, from 14 to 15 years, and from 16 to 18 years. The method of coercion was also taken into consideration: beating, threat, kidnapping, and combinations of more than one. The location where the act took place was also taken into account.

The examined forensic medical certificates and examinations were studied by the documental method and statistically processed in Excel.

RESULTS

This study registered 2227 cases of minor girls who claimed to be the victims of sexual abuse. Out of that number, 194 examinations were conducted to determine the condition of the hymen by request of the parents, even though there had been no concrete evidence of sexual assault. In 13 of the cases, the perpetrator was a relative, while in the other 1895 cases a person outside the family was involved. In 75.25% (1426) of these cases, the girls

reported that the perpetrator was someone they knew, whereas in 23.11% (438) of the cases the assailant was unfamiliar, and in 1.64% (31) there was a combination of perpetrators –

familiar and unfamiliar, relative and familiar, etc. In 7 cases there was no information on the assailant.

Table 1. Distributions of outside-the-family perpetrators of sexual violence against minor girls

Perpetrators	Number	%
Familiar people	1426	75.25%
Unfamiliar people	438	23.11%
Combinations	31	1.64%
Total	1895	100%

Similar data were encountered in the examined references. According to Diouf et al., (1995), (2), victims know their assailants in 80% of the cases, and he is most often the father, priest, employer, ex-boyfriend, neighbour, etc. Our results differed from what was reported by Kevin L., (2004), (3), according to whom the perpetrators were familiar people in 40.4% of the cases, in 28.7% - unfamiliar, 22.7% - relatives, 3.9% - stepparents and 4.3% - biological parents. Evrard and Domagalski (1994), (4) reported that for 2/3 of the women who were the victims of sexual assault the assailant was a familiar person.

Elbedour S. et al., (2006), (5) reported that Bedouin girls often faced the risk of sexual abuse, with unfamiliar men being the most common assailants, which differs from our results. Similar data were reported by Alikasifoglu M. et al., (2006), (6), according to whom 62% of the girls in the age group of 13-18 years were sexually assaulted by unfamiliar people.

Table 2 shows that when a familiar person was the perpetrator, it was committed by one man in over 80% of the cases. Similar results were observed for sexual assault committed by unfamiliar people. Cases with only one perpetrator were the most common (**Table 3**).

Table 2. Distribution of familiar people as perpetrators per age groups of affected minor girls

	Up to 6 years old		7-13 years		14-15 years		16-17 years	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
1 f. p.	25	100%	282	87.58%	450	85.07%	450	81.82%
2 f. p.			25	7.76%	41	7.75%	65	11.82%
More than 2 f. p.			15	4.66%	38	7.18%	35	6.36%
Total	25	100%	322	100.00%	529	100%	550	100%

* f. p. – familiar person

Table 3. Distribution of unfamiliar people as perpetrators per age groups of affected minor girls

	Up to 6 years old		7-13 years		14-15 years		16-17 years	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
1 u. p.	5	100%	59	71.08%	87	64.44%	141	65.58%
2 u. p.			9	10.84%	27	20.00%	43	20.00%
More than 2 u. p.			15	18.08%	21	15.56%	31	14.42%
Total	5	100%	83	100%	135	100%	215	100%

* u. p. – unfamiliar person

The study clearly shows (**Table 4**) that in 1/3 of the cases of sexual assault perpetrated by familiar and unfamiliar people the used method of violence was not described. When the

assailant was a familiar person, they most commonly resorted to beating (20.76%) and threat (16.69%), and with unfamiliar people - beatings (22.37%).

Table 4. Distribution of sexual abuse perpetrators according to the method of coercion they used to break the victim's resistance

Coercion method	Familiar people		Unfamiliar people		Combined	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Beating	296	20.76%	98	22.37%	8	25.81%
Threat	238	16.69%	51	11.64%	4	12.90%
Beating and threat	110	7.71%	36	8.22%	5	16.13%
Kidnapping	193	13.53%	43	9.82%	3	9.68%
Kidnapping and battery	49	3.44%	20	4.57%	2	6.45%
Kidnapping and threat	39	2.74%	18	4.11%	2	6.45%
No data	420	29.45%	134	30.59%	3	9.68%
Combinations	81	5.68%	38	8.68%	4	12.90%
Total	1426	100%	438	100%	31	100%

Wilson and Swartz, (1972), (7) reported that familiar people often take advantage of times when the woman is in a condition when she is unable to resist – intoxication, sleep, whereas unfamiliar people usually use weapons and rough brutal methods to break the victim's

resistance, inflicting more trauma. Heger A. et al., (2002), (8), reported that biological parents rarely engage in cruel or aggressive assault, compared to unrelated perpetrators (familiar or unfamiliar people).

Table 5. Distribution of perpetrators of sexual abuse on minor girls in accordance with the location of the incriminating deed.

Location	Familiar people		Unfamiliar people		Combined	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Victim's home	84	5.89%	8	1.83%	1	3.23%
Perpetrator's home	254	17.81%	22	5.02%	2	6.45%
Other home	175	12.27%	33	7.53%	4	12.90%
Nature	183	12.83%	89	20.32%	4	12.90%
Car	64	4.49%	22	5.02%	4	12.90%
Establishment	32	2.24%	17	3.88%	2	6.45%
No data	509	35.69%	168	38.36%	8	25.82%
Elsewhere	125	8.78%	79	18.04%	6	19.35%
	1426	100%	438	100%	31	100%

When the perpetrator was a familiar person, the sexual assault happened most often at their

home – 254 cases (17.81%), while with unfamiliar people it was most often in nature –

89 cases (20.32%). In a range of 1/4 to 1/3 of the examined cases from the gathered documents there were no data about the location where the criminal act occurred. According to Jewkes et al. (2001), (9) in more than 65% of the cases the assault happened at the perpetrator's or the victim's home, with the assailants being familiar to the victims in 82% of the cases.

Sexual assault by familiar people usually occurred at home (10) – the victim's or the perpetrator's, whereas assaults by unfamiliar people occurred in nature or in a car.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The most common perpetrator of sexual assault on minor girls in Bulgaria is one familiar person.
2. Sexual abuse is committed most often by familiar people in their homes (17.81%), or in nature by unfamiliar people (20.32%).
3. Both familiar and unfamiliar perpetrators of sexual assault on minor girls use beating to break the victim's resistance.

REFERENCES

1. Speizera I. S., M. Goodwinb, L. Whittleb, M. Clydeb, J. Rogersc, 2008. Dimensions of child sexual abuse before age 15 in three Central American countries: Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32, 455-462
2. [Diouf A](#), [A. Gaye](#), [M. Sangare](#), [M. Ba Gueye](#), F. Diadhiou, 1995. Medical evaluation of the alleged sexual assault victims in Dakar, Senegal. Report of 25 cases. 23, (4), 267-270

3. Kevin L. Child sexual abuse in sub-Saharan Africa: a literature review, *Child Abuse Neglect*. 2004, 28, 439–460
4. Evrard JR, Domagalski LR., 1994. Epidemiology of Adolescent Sexual Assault. *Obstet'Gynecol*, 84:5; 867-71
5. Elbedour S, S.Abu-Bader, A J. Onwuegbuzie, A. Abu-Rabia, S. El-Aassam, 2006. The scope of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse in a Bedouin-Arab community of female adolescents: The interplay of racism, urbanization, polygamy, family honor, and the social marginalization of women, *Child Abuse Neglect*, 30, 215–229
6. Alikasifoglu M., E.Erginoz, O.Ercan, D Albayrak-Kaymak, O. Uysal, O. Ilter, 2006. Sexual abuse among female high school students in Istanbul, Turkey, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, (30) 247–255
7. Wilson F, D.Swartz, 1972. Coital injuries of the Vaginal. *Obstetec*. 39,182-184.
8. Heger A., Tcson L., Velasquez , Bernier R., 2002. Children referred for possible sexual abuse& medical findings in 2384 children, 26 (6-7): 645-59
9. Jewkes R. et al., 2001. Relationship dynamics and adolescent pregnancy in South Africa. *Socia/ Science alld Medicine*. 5, 733-744.
10. Koval E,. 1989. Violence in dating relationships. *J Pediatr Health Care*;3:298-304