

Opinion

Child sexual abuse: increasing pandemic incidence

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Abstract

Introduction: The increase of violence against children is characterized as a serious public health problem. The media has continuously reported cases of: rape perpetrated against children, increased violence against this age group and alarming epidemiological data resulting from the isolation of the pandemic by SARS-CoV-2.

Methods: Studies were identified using large-circulation international journals found in two electronic databases: Scopus and Embase.

Results: Cases of harassment, rape, manipulation of the child's genitals, oral, anal or genital penetration, pedophilia, exploitation, dissemination of erotic images of children in social networks, exhibitionism, masturbation, Voyeurism and incestuous abuse are classified as child sexual abuse. The numbers of legal abortions in child and adolescent victims of rape tends to increase a 100% taking into account the in the first cases of 2020.

Conclusion: discussions for the implementation of public policies and healthcare for children victims of sexual abuse are important for prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into the society, considering all the sequel that this vulnerable group acquires after the crime.

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Isolation and social distancing are measures to prevent the transmission of the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). This microorganism causes COVID-19 disease, and show relevant and worrisome morbidity and mortality rates worldwide.¹⁻³ The isolation resulted in the closure of several sectors including shops, schools, restaurants and industries, which contributes to the families staying longer in their homes.^{2,4,5} These measures have contributed to the increase of violence against children.

Violence is characterized as a serious public health problem. Given this, The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies violence based on the act perpetrated, in physical, psychological, sexual, deprivation, and neglect.⁶ Sexual violence is one of the most aggressive forms as it generates more damage to the victim.^{7,9} The media has continuously reported cases of: rape perpetrated against children, increased violence against this age group and alarming epidemiological data resulting from the isolation of the pandemic by SARS-CoV-2.^{1,10,11}

Cases of harassment, rape, manipulation of the child's genitals, oral, anal or genital penetration, pedophilia, exploitation, dissemination of erotic images of children in social networks, exhibitionism, masturbation, Voyeurism and incestuous abuse are classified as child sexual abuse.¹²⁻¹⁴ 219.717 cases of violence against children were reported in Brazil between 2015 and 2017. 26.42% of these are CSA cases, conditions that harm the child's mental, physical, moral and social health.¹⁵ During the pandemic, these numbers increased on an average of 20%, making the topic relevant in the discussions about the creation and implementation of prevention policies.⁴ Despite this, the numbers of legal abortions in child and adolescent victims of rape tends to increase a 100% taking into account the 24 in the first cases of 2020 in Brazil.¹⁶

A 10-year-old girl who was raped by her uncle and allegedly by her grandfather, was admitted to a hospital with abdominal pain. After medical evaluations, a pregnancy of weeks was discovered and subsequently the preparation and cares for abortion began.¹⁷ Given this, it is notorious the misuse of power of the responsible for the crime, who feel on the right to perpetrate sexual violence against a child.^{11,18,19}

Taking into account that, in such cases, the legislation concerns the right to terminate pregnancy.²⁰ Therefore, it is essential that population know about prevention and orientation measures in cases of child sexual abuse, such as: calling public authorities, dial 100 (violation of human rights), dial 190 (civil police), taking the victim to the nearest emergency department,

taking preventive cares against STIs, knowing about procedures related to pregnancy stemming from rape and treatment of injuries, laboratory tests, referral to the Guardianship Council, refer the child to social assistance.^{21,22}

Therefore, discussions for the implementation of public policies and healthcare for children victims of sexual abuse are important for prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into the society, considering all the sequel that this vulnerable group acquires after the crime.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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