

Child Sexual Abuse and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

(Awareness Seminars for Senior School Students)

An “Eye-Opener” for Students

The seminar on POCSO and CSA was an eye-opener. I was not aware of my rights. I did not know what legal action could be taken against groping. Such behaviour, unfortunately, is a prevalent problem, especially in public transportation. Every child must know that they are not alone and all they have to do is talk to a trusted adult or friend. More awareness needs to be created to empower vulnerable children.

Nihar Roy
Class 12 A
Nilgiri House

The Seminar was informative and helpful. Besides becoming aware of CSA and our rights, we also learned how this problem has affected our society and what we can do to prevent it. I thank the Counsellor for raising awareness and discussing such a controversial topic. It was indeed supportive.

Rehan Abbas
Class 11 A
Aravalli House

‘It’s never your fault’ - How often do we discuss pressing issues not openly spoken about? For instance, child sexual abuse. In this seminar, we were informed of our rights and how to protect ourselves and fight back using the law.

The POCSO, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, was implemented in 2012. This act defines sexual crimes against those who are under 18 as well as the punishment for the same. Before the POCSO Act, no law protected underage boys who were equally at risk of sexual abuse.

The Act describes the types of sexual offences against children - penetrative sexual assault, sexual assault, aggravated offence, child pornography and sexual harassment. The punishment for each crime varies from 3 years to life imprisonment to the death penalty.

We were made aware of the situation we might face and how to resolve it. Sexual offenders are, more often, people we know or trust. Instead of blaming ourselves, we must report the incident to a trusted adult or authority figure in such a situation.

This session gave us the knowledge to protect our rights and help others. Children can use helplines (1098) to report sexual offences or seek help when unsafe. We have progressed to speak about such issues openly while encouraging victims to feel heard.

Ipshita Chanda
Class 11B
Sumeru House

Every second child in India experiences sexual abuse. Unfortunately, most of them do not have even the slightest idea of what to do afterwards. Even the most educated remain silent, thinking it is their fault.

Before 2012, no law protected boys from child sexual abuse. Surveys show that 53% of boys are sexually abused in India. However, most fear seeking help, believing it would make them look weak.

Any sexual act against a minor (child under 18 years of age) is considered a criminal offence, whether consensual or non-consensual.

The offender can be of any gender and age and, in most cases, is known to the victim. This is where the POCSO Act comes in. The POCSO Act helps all victims to get justice. The punishment for sexual crimes against children is severe and even results in the death penalty.

There are two types of sexual abuse - Physical and Non-physical. Physical sexual abuse is further divided into penetrative and non-penetrative sexual abuse. Penetration of a penis, finger(s), hand, or objects into a child's vagina, anus, urethra or mouth is penetrative sexual assault. Fondling, kissing, touching the genitals of a child or making the child touch another's genitals accounts for non-penetrative sexual assault.

Non-physical sexual abuse includes taking inappropriate pictures or videos of a child, showing pornography to a child, voyeurism, exhibitionism, making lewd gestures/comments, playing sexualised games and stalking.

Instigating, conspiring to commit an offence, and intentionally aiding or trafficking a child is also considered a crime under the POCSO Act.

People wrongly believe it is not a crime if the above is consensual. It is a crime whether it is consensual or non-consensual. Even eloping before the age of 18 is considered kidnapping; mostly, the male is the accused.

Another sensitive topic we come across nowadays is cyber grooming. The victims of cyber grooming are usually lonely, emotionally sensitive, impulsive or rebellious teenagers or people with family issues. It takes only 8 minutes for the offender to *groom* a victim or to befriend the victim and their trust online. The International Centre of Missing & Exploited Children reported that 8 million children go missing yearly, and many are victims of cyber grooming.

If you or someone you know is going through the above, report the matter to a trusted adult.

Remember, it is not your fault.

Cyber grooming and any form of cybercrime can be reported at cybercrime.gov.in

You can also call 1098, the Childline number.

I want to conclude by emphasising six things:

1. Live and let live.
2. Keep your hands and legs to yourself.
3. Watch your words - online and offline.
4. Practise self-control.
5. Maintain healthy boundaries.
6. Respect others' boundaries.

Tansi Prakash
Class 9C
Aravalli House