

A Retrospective Observational Study of Cases of Sexual Assault at Tertiary Care Center

Niranjan N Chavan¹, Akanksha Arun Barkase², Darshana Ajmera³, Deepali Kapote⁴, Ashwini Sakhalkar⁵, Shreya Kampoowale⁶, Manan Boob⁷, Divita Arun Kamble⁸, Pradnya Changede⁹, Shruti Rane¹⁰, Radhika Bhutada¹¹, Rakesh Dadmal¹², Priyanka Damodar G¹³, Sonam Simpatwar¹⁴, Zeba Pathan¹⁵, Umme Ammara Mohammad Ibrahim Iqbal¹⁶, Hera Mirza¹⁷, Shalini Mahapatra¹⁸, Hitendrasing Rajput¹⁹, Shikhanshi²⁰, Prasad Deshmukh²¹, Zubin Sheriar²²

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To conduct a retrospective study to determine the profiles of victims of sexual assault and to study demographical factors in them.

Materials and method: This retrospective observational study was conducted at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India for a duration of 8 years (from January 2014 to July 2022). Data were collected from case records of the hospital.

Results

- A total of 75 cases were below the age of 18 years, 36 cases were falling into the age group of 18–25 years, 16 cases were in the age group of 25–40 years while only 3 cases were above 40 years of age.
- A total of 25.38% (33 cases) gave a history of sexual assault while 74.61% (total of 97 cases) victims had both physical and sexual assault.
- The time interval between incidence and reporting to professionals were noted, and as per the observation, 20.7% (27 cases) reported the incidence within 24 hours, while 11 cases (8.4%), 41 cases (31.53%), and 44 cases (33.84%) reported within 1 week, 1 month, and within 1 year, respectively.
- A total of 43 cases (33.07%) were having intact hymen while 60 cases (46.15%) had hymenal tears at multiple sites.

Conclusion and clinical significance

- The more commonly affected age group is found to be between 0 and 18 years. Considering their educational background, mainly students of primary school are victims of assault.
- Maximum incidences were reported within 1 month to 1 year of the assault which indicates a delay in reporting the incidence and also a delay in medical examination of the victim.
- There is an increased rate of unwanted pregnancies in victims and delayed diagnosis. Most of these were teenage pregnancies, increasing physical and emotional stress on unmarried mothers.
- Most of the victims were the target of both physical and sexual abuse.
- Only 24.16% of cases had been reported within 72 hours of the incidence and were eligible for taking samples.
- For the majority of the assaults, the accused was a "known to" victim.

Keywords: Physical assault, Rape victim, Sexual assault.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault is a common offense in India and most of the time young girls are targeted. National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) has reported the rate of rape-related crime increased from 11.6 in 2001 to 19.8 in 2018 per 100,000 women.¹ The wide variations in rape-related crime rates are probably due to the under-reporting, biased system.

Sexual assault is also called "sexual violence," which is a broad term that includes intimidation to acquiescence to sex, molestation, unwanted touching of genitalia, and rape.² As per the Indian constitution, a man is said to commit "rape" if he

- penetrates his penis, to any extent, into the vagina, mouth, urethra or anus of a woman, or makes her do so with him or any other person; or
- inserts, to any extent, any object or a part of the body, not being the penis, into the vagina, the urethra or anus of a woman, or makes her do so with him or any other person; or

¹⁻²²Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Akanksha Arun Barkase, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, Phone: +91 9404653114, e-mail: akanksh75@gmail.com

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- manipulates any part of the body of a woman so as to cause penetration into the vagina, urethra, anus or any part of the body of such a woman or makes her do so with him or any other person; or

- applies his mouth to the vagina, anus, or urethra of a woman or makes her do so with him or any other person.²

In this study, we have analyzed data from all sexual assault cases examined at the tertiary care center (Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India) over 8 years (January 2014 to July 2022).¹ Retrospective observational study is done to determine the common age group of sexual assault victims, their socioeconomic status, demographic study, and the victim's relation with the accused. Physical examination findings were noted and statistics were obtained.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offense (POCSO) bill 2019 seeks to provide punishment to those involved in the sexual offense against children.^{3,4} According to this study, girls in the age group 0–18 years were more commonly affected by sexual assault.

Aim

To conduct a retrospective study to determine the profiles of victims of sexual assault and to study demographical factors in them.

- Inclusion criteria: All cases of sexual assault who reported to the emergency room (from January 2014 to July 2022 in Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India).
- Exclusion Criteria: Nil

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This retrospective observational study was conducted at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India for a

duration of 8 years (from January 2014 to July 2022). Data were collected from case records of the hospital. All medicolegal cases of sexual assault who came to emergency services or the outpatient department of a tertiary center are included. Cases who were not willing for examination are mentioned separately. The sample size was 130 cases.

RESULTS

A total of 130 cases of sexual assault were studied according to different categories.

Table 1 shows the age-wise distribution of the total cases, of which 75 cases (57.69%) were below the age of 18 years, 36 cases (27.69%) were falling in the age group of 18–25 years, 16 cases (12.35) were in between 25–40 years while only 3 cases (2.3%) were above 40 years of age.

Figure 1 depicts a pictorial presentation of the age-wise distribution of cases.

Table 2 indicates the educational background of the victims, of all 14 cases (10.7%) were illiterate, 79 cases (60.76%) were students, and 37 (28.46%) had completed their graduation/diploma.

Table 3 shows the socioeconomic status of victims, 82.5% were from low socioeconomic strata, and 17.5% were from the middle class.

As depicted in **Table 4**, 109 cases (83.84%) were from nearby areas while 21 cases (16.17%) were from the distant locality.

The time interval between incidence and reporting to professionals was noted, and as per the observation, 20.7% (27 cases) reported the incidence within 24 hours, while 11 cases (8.4%), 41 cases (31.53%), and 44 cases (33.84%) reported within 1 week, 1 month, and within 1 year, respectively. Out of all cases, 7 cases (5.3%) had reported the incidence after 1 year. The total number and distribution of these cases are given in **Table 5**.

Table 6 shows distribution as per the type of assault and as per that 25.38% of cases gave the history of sexual assault while 74.61% victims had both physical and sexual assault.

Table 1: Distribution according to the age of the victim

S. No.	Age group (years)	Number of victims	%
1	0–18	75	57.69
2	18–25	36	27.69
3	25–40	16	12.30
4	>40	3	2.3
	Total	130	

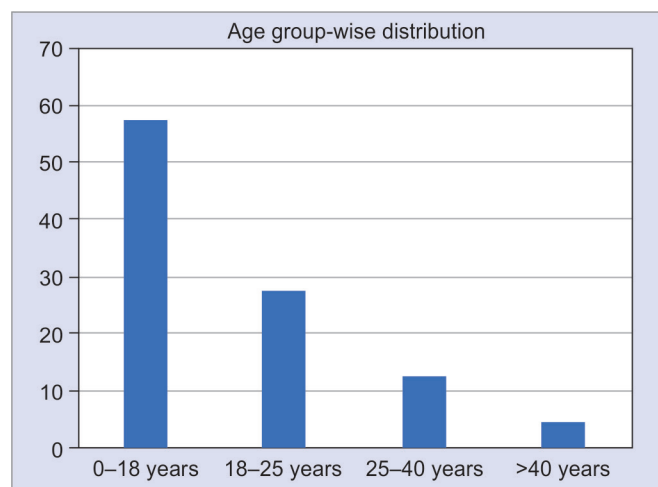


Fig. 1: Age group-wise distribution of cases

Table 2: Distribution according to the educational status of the victims

S. No.	Education	Number of victims	%
1	Illiterate	14	10.7
2	Primary education	79	60.76
3	Graduation	37	28.46
	Total	130	

Table 3: Distribution according to the socioeconomic status of the victims

S. No.	Socioeconomic status	Number of victims	%
1	Low	107	82.5
2	Middle	23	17.5
	Total	130	

Table 4: Distribution according to the locality of the incident

S. No.	Locality	Number of victims	%
1	Nearby area	109	83.84
2	Distant area	21	16.15
	Total	130	

Table 5: Distribution according to time of reporting the incident

S. No.	Time interval	Number of victims	%
1	Within 24 hours	27	20.7
2	Within 1 week	11	8.46
3	Within 1 month	41	31.53
4	Within 1 year	44	33.84
5	After 1 year	7	5.38
	Total	130	

Table 6: Distribution according to the type of assault

S. No.	Type of assault	Number of victims	%
1	Sexual	33	25.38
2	Both physical and sexual	97	74.61
	Total	130	

Table 7: Distribution according to the IPC section applied

S. No.	IPC section	Number of victims	%
1	POCSO	75	57.6
2	376 (with or without POSCO)	118	90.7
3	Other sections	12	9.2

Table 8: Distribution according to UPT status

S. No.	UPT	Victims	%
1	Positive	21	16.15
2	Negative	111	85.38
	Total	130	

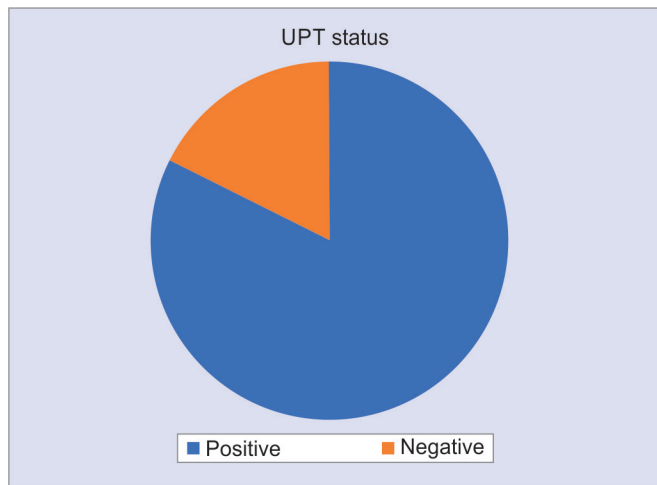


Fig. 2: Distribution according to UPT reports

Table 9: Distribution according to hymenal status on examination

S. No.	Hymen	Victims	%
1	Intact	43	33.07
2	Not intact	60	46.15
3	Examination not done	27	20.76
	Total	130	

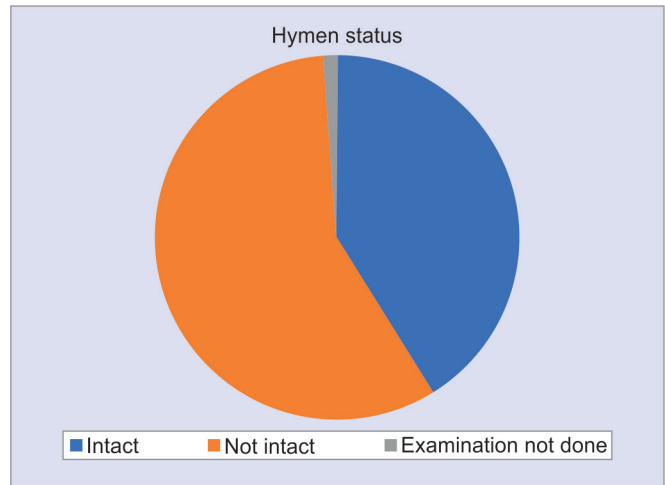


Fig. 3: Distribution according to hymen status on local examination

Table 10: Distribution according to relationship with the accused

S. No.	Relation with the accused	Number of victims	%
1	Known person	103	79.23
2	Unknown person	27	20.76

Table 7 shows the number of cases and the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections applied to them. For 118 cases (90.75%), section IPC-376 was applied (including POCSO cases) while other sections, namely, IPC-363, -354, -508, -324, -326, -36, etc. were applicable for around 12 cases (9.2%).

As shown in Table 8, a urine pregnancy test (UPT) was done for all 130 cases in labor room, of which it came out as a positive test in 21 cases (16.15%) while it was negative in the rest of 111 cases (85.38%). Figure 2 shows pictorial distribution as per the UPT status of victims.

As depicted in Table 9, all cases of sexual assault were advised physical examination, 27 cases (20.76%) were not willing for the examination and gave negative consent for it. On local examination of genitalia hymen status was noted; 43 cases (33.07%) were having intact hymen while 60 cases (46.15%) had hymenal tears at multiple sites.

Figure 3 depicts the pictorial distribution of the hymenal status of victims on local examination.

Table 10 shows the relationship between the accused and the victim. In the majority of the cases of sexual assault, the accused was a known person to the victim or was related to the victim. Only 20.76% accused were unknown to the victims.

CONCLUSION

- In this observational retrospective study, a total of 130 cases of sexual assault, who came to the emergency room were studied. Cases of over 8 years were analyzed and statistics were made according to the age of the victim, time of reporting the incidence, demographic parameters, relations with the accused, associated injuries, and findings of clinical examination for hymenal status.
- According to this study, the 0–18 years age group is found to be more commonly affected by sexual assault as 57% of total cases were from this age group. Considering the educational

background, mainly students of primary school are victims of assault, the percentage being 60.76%.

- Maximum incidences were reported within 1 month to 1 year of the assault (31 and 33%, respectively), which indicates a delay in reporting the incidence and also a delay in the medical examination of the victim.
- Pregnancy rates in these cases are around 16.15% indicating an increased rate of unwanted pregnancies in victims and delayed diagnosis. Also, most of these were teenage pregnancies, increasing physical and emotional stress on unmarried mothers.
- In around 33% of cases, on local examination of the genitalia, the hymen was found to be intact, indicating a non-penetrating type of sexual assault. Most of the victims were targets of both physical and sexual abuse.
- Only 24.16% of cases had been reported within 72 hours of the incidence and were eligible for taking samples. Reporting was delayed in the rest of the cases due to multiple factors.
- Only 20.7% of all cases, that is, 27 cases had no relationship with the accused. For the majority of the assaults, the accused was "known to" the victim or was related to the victim.
- After history taking and physical examination, swab collection for medical and forensic examination was done for all cases, except for those who were not willing for the examination. Cases who presented within 72 hours of incidence were 32, that is, 24.16%, and this number of cases were fit for taking

samples. Pubic hair, nail sample, urethral smear, vaginal smear, and buccal smear were taken.

ORCID

Niranjana N Chavan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4643-240X>

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