

**Sexual abuse among children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia: Survey  
Study**

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Due to low rules on children's safety and a lack of knowledge, sexual abuse of children with disabilities is widespread in developing nations. The objective is to find out the phenomenon of sexual abuse in the case of disabled children in Saudi Arabia.

**Method:** In this quantitative survey study, the prevalence of sexual abuse was evaluated in the region of Tabouk. Forty participants completed the study questionnaire. The study survey questionnaire has 20 items.

**Result:** The results revealed that sexual abuse of children with disabilities is a widespread problem often underreported. Children with intellectual disabilities are more prone to being sexually abused. Ninety percent of individuals said they had been sexually abused as a child with a disability. Besides that, it was found out that physical harassment is the dominant abuse faced by disabled children.

**Conclusion:** The issue of sexual abuse is widespread among disabled children. Besides, that childhood was found to be an extremely vulnerable age stage. In addition, the recent study found that school administration has an important role in mitigating the impacts of sexual abuse on impaired children. Current findings also revealed the significant role of school administration in recognizing the sexual abuse of disabled children.

**Key Words:** Disabled Children, Prevalence, Sexual Abuse, Developmental disabilities, Intellectual disabilities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous research studies show the vulnerability of disabled children to abuse (Jones et al., 2012; Hibbard and Desch, 2017; Finkelhor et al., 2014; Omar et al., 2019). This is because they are physically dependent on others for daily assistance and are socially isolated. The study also shows that compared to 9% of the non-disabled children, 13% of disabled children are exposed to different kinds of abuse.

There is an association between disability and maltreatment of children. However, previous studies do not explain the characteristics of disability that increase the risk of children's maltreatment (Moirangthem et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is imperative to note that in addition to disabilities, other factors enhance the risk of abuse in disabled children.

Despite the increased risk, fewer research studies are available on the nature of sexual abuse to intellectually disabled children (Collin-Vézina et al., 2013; Wissink et al., 2015). Sexual abuse is explained as unwanted contact of sexual nature with disabled children under 18 years of age. It has been reported that in most sexual abuse cases, the perpetrators emotionally pressurise the children, force them or make threats to the children (Shrim, and Baum, 2020).~~It has been reported that in most sexual abuse cases, the perpetrators emotionally pressurize the children, force them or, threaten them him, and Baum, 2020).~~ Hence, the following research study specifically focuses on children with disabilities and investigates how they are more exposed to sexual abuse in the region of Tabouk.

The risk of sexual victimization among individuals with a disability was significantly higher in adult participants compared with the risk in minor participants. Sensory impairment was the type of disability associated with the highest risk of sexual victimization. Odds of sexual victimization among individuals with a disability were significantly higher in African countries

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compared with all others, and odds in Western Europe were significantly lower than in the United States. No significant differences emerged across eras (Amborski et al., 2021).

### ***1.1. Children with Disabilities and Sexual Abuse***

Disability is linked with abuse such as neglect and sexual assault. One of the systematic reviews revealed that disability resulted in 13.7% of sexual violence against children (Jones et al., 2012). However, the studies conducted on child abuse in Bahrain and Egypt revealed that 58% and 29.8% of sexual assault in Bahrain and Egypt respectively (Al-Mahroos et al., 2005; Aboul-Hagag and Hamed, 2012). In Dammam, around 85% of children's hospital cases were of sexual assault (Al-Madani et al., 2012). In one of the studies, it was found that intellectually disabled children are at higher risk of being sexually abused due to their lack of knowledge regarding sexuality (Wissink et al., 2015). These behavioral and physical indicators serve as a benchmark to determine whether a disabled child is abused or not.

The children within Saudi Arabia are exposed to sexual abuse and other violence. 5-10% of men and 20% of women remain the victim of child abuse during childhood. However, the most vulnerable group among these is disabled children (Omar et al., 2019). The children who are sexually abused suffer emotional and psychological problems, especially in the cases where the abuse remains hidden. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) occurs across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups, but some common factors can be linked to sexual abuse. These include disrupted homes, domestic violence, physically disabled children, drivers, and, nannies for care.

Studies have found that children with disabilities are at higher risks than non-disabled children for maltreatment and sexual abuse. A survey conducted by Al-muneef (2019) on the long-term consequences of sexual abuse with children in Saudi Arabia suggest that childhood sexual abuse (CSA) has become a diverse health problem in Saudi Arabia and the soft target of

CSA are the disabled children. Furthermore, an Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire was conducted, and 10,156 participants were involved in this survey aged above 18 years. Children with diseases such as chronic health issues, diabetes, disabilities, syndrome, and obesity have been more vulnerable to child sexual abuse in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, according to the World Health Organisation [report](#), [report](#), about 15-20% of children face sexual abuse globally (Mogaddam et al., 2015) Furthermore, it has also been found that sexual abuse of disabled children does not involve any attraction. Instead, it is an offensive sexual assault. Disabled children are more vulnerable since they have less defense. [According to Omar and Alkhateeb \(2019\)](#), ~~in~~ In Saudi Arabia, 24% of the children abuse cases have been reported with disabled children [\(Omar and Alkhateeb 2019\)](#). Another study ~~conducted by Al-Eissa et al. (2018)~~ [has](#) found that among the 87 cases of physical abuse, 85% were sexual abuse cases, 12 % were cases of non-sexual abuses with children, and 3% cases included both in the children of Saudi Arabia. This study also validates that children with disabilities are vulnerable to sexual abuse more than other [children \(Al-Eissa et al., 2018\)](#).

As mentioned previously, there is a lack of research regarding sexual abuse with disabled children within the context of Arab States. In these states, the discussion about sexual abuse and violation of personal dignity through it is considered taboo (Omar et al., 2019). Another reason is the religious aspects, which makes the people conservative in discussing the topic of sexual abuse openly among disabled or non-disabled children. Hence, this identified gap is filled through the research as the region of Tabouk has been considered for conducting this research to determine to what extent the children with disabilities are the victims of sexual abuse in Saudi Arabia.

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(Omar and Al-khateeb, 2019).

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### 1.2. The Rationale of the Study

The UN Convention has endorsed the protection of children with disabilities from abusive treatment. According to Article 19 of the UN Convention, it is cardinal to protect the children from mental or physical abuse, violence, maltreatment, and sexual abuse. [Likewise, Article 2](#) of the UN Convention states that all children are entitled to equal rights without discrimination ([Convention on the rights of the child, 1989](#)). Article 23 endorses the rights of disabled children explicitly to promote their self-reliance and ensure their active participation in social activities in the community ([Convention on the rights of the child, 1989](#)). Article 7 directs the authorities to take adequate measures to protect the rights of disabled children ([Convention on the rights of the child, 1989](#); Bretherton et al., 2016). These articles reveal the importance of protecting disabled children from maltreatment and abuse.

There are a variety of indicators that suggest disabled children are being abused. These indicators are classified into two general categories, behavioral and physical. The behavioral indicators include anxiety, lower self-esteem, isolation, depression, substance abuse, lower interpersonal interaction, and lack of social skills (Blanchard-Dallaire and Hebert, 2014). Besides that, some other indicators include rough sleeping and eating patterns, school absence, and agitated behavior (Brilleslijper-Kater et al., 2004). The physical indicators include pain and bruising near the genital area, urinary tract infection, difficulty walking, bruises in the arms and legs.

Child sexual abuse is becoming a severe threat. In Saudi Arabia, most child sexual abuse incidents go unreported (Al Eissa et al., 2010). The National Family Safety Registry (NFSR) data revealed that from 2011 to 2016, 14% of cases of child maltreatment were child sexual abuse cases (Al-Eissa et al., 2018). The sexual abuse cases among children with disabilities accounted

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for 56%. Among the patients, 42% of incidents occurred without physical contact, 73% of sexual abuse is about touching, 63% of genital touching, and 56% cases are of intercourse (Wissink et al., 2018). Moreover, the research study consisted of 16,010 high school students, who lie in the age group of 15 to 18 years, also concluded that sexual abuse had been experienced by 13% of the survey population (Al-Eissa et al., 2016). In one of the descriptive analyses conducted in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, it was found that 85% of the reported cases were of sexual assaults (Omar and Alkhateeb, 2019). It is feared that the actual prevalence rate of child sexual abuse is higher than recorded in the National Registry. The primary factor for underreporting is the taboo of discussing sexuality and the dishonor that victims experience (Al-Zayed et al., 2020; Katzenstein et al., 2017). Therefore, most families remain silent on the grave issue of child sexual abuse. The matter just became worse in the case of disabled students, and the victims cannot raise their voices. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the actual prevalence rate of child sexual abuse in Saudi Arabia and formulate a framework to raise awareness among the masses regarding this crime.

### ***1.3. Research Aims and Objective***

The study objective is to find out the phenomenon of sexual abuse in the case of disabled children in Saudi Arabia. Besides that, the current study is also aimed to determine the type of disability that makes children more vulnerable to being sexually abused. In this way, the present study's findings can motivate the authorities to formulate an educational program to enhance sexual knowledge among ~~disabled~~-disabled children.

Moreover, the current study design provides empirical evidence on the prevalence and helps determine the association between different variables that make disabled children of being sexually abused. The nature of the study has been kept quantitative instead of qualitative because

numerical results are easy to interpret with an extensive survey sample, unlike the qualitative research design which requires in-depth analysis ([A. Sahay, 2016](#)).

#### ***1.4. Research Questions***

The research questions that guides the current study include the following:

1. What is the prevalence of sexual abuse in disabled children in Saudi Arabia?
2. What is the most common abuse pattern against disabled children in Saudi Arabia?
3. Which age stage is more vulnerable to be sexually assaulted?
4. Which disability is associated with the increased risk of being sexually abused?
5. What is the correlation between sexual violence, degree of disability, and age?

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### ***2.1. Study Design***

The current study is based on a quantitative survey design. The data acquired in the survey are subject to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. It is designed to evaluate the prevalence of sexual abuse among disabled children. This research design has enabled the researcher to formulate generalized findings as it is more acceptable, focused, fast, objective, and scientific than the qualitative research design. Moreover, when the research philosophy is concerned, the researcher has adopted a positivist research approach instead of interpretivism or pragmatism. This is because the quantitative research design is preferred by positivism, the interpretivism and pragmatism prefer qualitative and mixed research designs respectively. The



research has adopted a deductive approach to test the theory about sexual abuse and disabled children with the help of observations.

## **2.2. Study Participants**

The participants recruited in this study were from the Child Safety Centre in the Tabouk region. The total number of participants selected for this study was 40 as these participants were directly associated with recording and documenting the cases of child maltreatment. The method used to sample the participants was convenience sampling and the participants' eligibility criteria. The participants' eligibility criteria include an individual who deals with handling disabled children at school and who has more than two years of experience in documenting the cases associated with child abuse. The sampling process includes comparing the profile of the employees at Child Safety Centre with eligibility criteria and eliminating the population that does not comply with the requirements. The sample of the study, which consisted of (40), consisted of student guides (15), teachers (15), and psychologists (10) from schools in Tabouk.

**Table No. 1,** shows the study sample. The participants explained the research objectives, and informed consent was obtained. All the participants were chosen to leave the survey in the middle if they wanted to go. The survey questionnaire was administered to all the participants, and the data was collected while considering the monitored/ documented cases as follows, Intellectual disability (16), Hearing Impairment (6), Visual Impairment (4), Motor disability (6), learning disabilities (2).

### ***2.3. Data Collection Instrument***

A survey questionnaire was used to find out the prevalence of sexual abuse of disabled children. The questionnaire contained 20 items, measured on different scales. No detailed demographics of the participants were taken due to confidentiality.

### ***2.4. Data Analysis***

The data of all the 40 participants were collected and entered into SPSS (version 20). The study was designed to evaluate the prevalence of sexual abuse among disabled children; therefore, descriptive statistics were used to determine the percentage, frequencies, and mean, and standard deviation in the collected data. Besides that, linear regression analysis was performed to determine the association between the dependent and independent variables. All the relationships were evaluated at a significance of  $P \leq 0.05$ .

### ***2.5. Validity and Reliability***

The validity and reliability measures of the survey questionnaire were established before conducting research. Content validity of the survey questionnaire was determined; a reviewer went through all the items of the questionnaire and determined if they measured the trait of interest, which in the current case is the prevalence of sexual abuse. The Content validity revealed that all the items are in consonance with the objectives of the research. In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was carried out on a small sample size of 10 participants. George and Mallery (2019) rules were followed to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.752 that lies in the acceptable range of George and Mallery rules (George et al., 2019).

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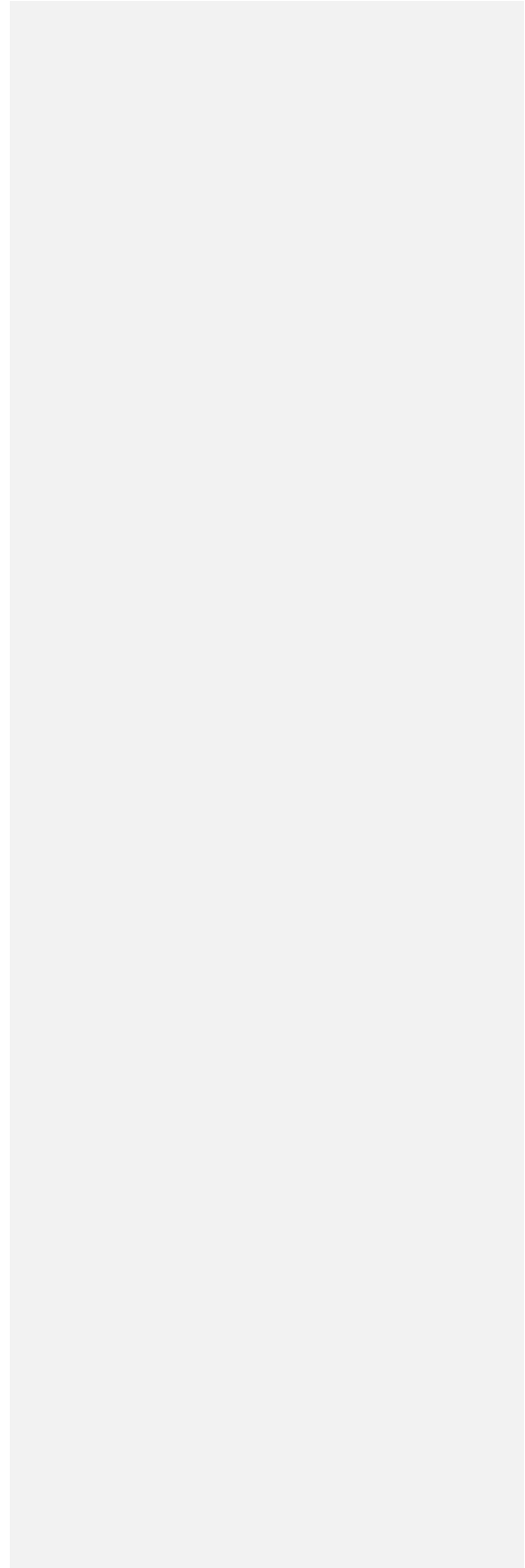
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### ***2.6. Ethical Clearance***

The topic of sexual abuse among disabled children within the region of Saudi is sensitive which requires ethical clearance. The researcher has ensured that any moral or religious beliefs of the research participants are not harmed. The research was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Intellectual Disability Center, Tabouk. The current research obliged the Declaration of Helsinki regarding research ethics. It was ensured that no participant was harmed during the course of data collection. Confidentiality of data was maintained and it was used fairly for the purpose of research. The consent was taken from the research participants as well to ensure that they are willing to participate in the study and are not forced to participate.

### **3. RESULTS**

**Table 1** shows that more than 95% of participants believed in the widespread phenomenon of sexual abuse of people with disabilities. 85% of participants reported that their institutions have an awareness program to protect people with disabilities from sexual abuse. 90% of participants reported that children with disabilities had been sexually abused. Likewise, 90% of participants believed that social workers have a significant role in this problem. The participants reported that 65% of the abuses were of physical harassment and 27% were of sexual rape. According to 55% of the participants, childhood age was more prone to being sexually abused. 37.5% of participants reported that intellectually disabled people are more vulnerable to sexual abuse. 97.5% reported that the first complaint of sexual abuse is usually filed after the assault has occurred. In the majority of cases, 40% of sexual abuse has been reported by the school administration. Furthermore, the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of all the findings are provided in the tables below.



**Table 1. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse Among Disabled Children, Demographic Characteristics of Victims of Sexual Abuse.**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Are there children who have been sexually abused with disabilities?				
<i>Yes</i>	36	90	0.10	0.304
<i>No</i>	4	10		
Do you think that sexual abuse has become a widespread phenomenon, especially in the environment of people with disabilities?				
<i>Yes</i>	38	95	0.5	0.221
<i>No</i>	2	5		
How many cases have been monitored?				
<i>1</i>	26	65	0.50	0.816
<i>2</i>	10	25		
<i>3</i>	2	5		
<i>More than 4</i>	2	5		
What are the majority of cases of sexual abuse reported to a specialist?				
<i>Verbal Harassment</i>	3	7.5	1.20	0.564
<i>Physical Harassment</i>	26	65		
<i>Sexual Rape</i>	11	27		
<b><i>Demographic Characteristics of Victims of Sexual Abuse</i></b>				
Which age stages are collective sexual abuse behaviour?				
<i>Childhood</i>	22	55	0.50	0.599
<i>Adolescence</i>	16	40		
<i>Youth</i>	2	5		
Which groups of people with disabilities are most vulnerable to sexual abuse?				
<i>Intellectual Disability</i>	15	37.5	1.65	1.929
<i>Down Syndrome</i>	11	27.5		
<i>Visual Impairment</i>	2	5		
<i>Hearing Impairment</i>	5	12.5		
<i>Physical Impairment</i>	2	5		
<i>Autism</i>	2	5		
<i>Multiple Disabilities</i>	3	7.5		

**Table 2**  
*Preventive Services to Manage Cases of Child Sexual Abuse, Reported Perpetrators.*

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Does your institution have preventive sexual awareness programs for people with disabilities?				
<i>Yes</i>	34	85	0.15	0.362
<i>No</i>	6	15		
Does the social worker have a role in providing awareness regarding sexual assaults?				
<i>Yes</i>	36	90	0.10	0.304
<i>No</i>	4	10		
When do you get a complaint or problem?				
<i>After the assault occurs</i>	39	97.5	1.03	0.158
<i>During the assault occurs</i>	1	2.5		
Who reported the case of sexual abuse?				
<i>Family</i>	14	35	0.90	0.778
<i>School</i>	16	40		
<i>The child</i>	10	25		
Do you find it difficult to recognize a child with sexual abuse quickly?				
<i>Yes</i>	38	95	0.05	0.221
<i>No</i>	2	5		
<b>Reported Perpetrators</b>				
Usually, a child with a disability is sexually abused by:				
<i>Relatives</i>	29	72.5	0.43	0.747
<i>Friends</i>	5	12.5		
<i>Strangers</i>	6	15		
Is the family notified if their child is sexually abused?				
<i>Yes</i>	39	97.5	0.03	0.158
<i>No</i>	1	2.5		

**Table 2-** sShows the involvement institution in helping the victims report the complaints against the bullies. 85% of the participants agreed with the involvement of institution being helpful with 90% of social workers being impactful where 95% agreed receiving complaints against abuse

of such kind. Almost 72% of the participants agreed of relative being the abuser in many cases and 97.5% agreed on notifying reporting to the victim's family.

**Table 3**  
*Treatment Options Available for Child Sexual Abuse Victims.*

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Does the abused child receive treatment?				
<i>Yes</i>	34	85	0.15	0.362
<i>No</i>	6	15		
Do you have programs that specialize in treating this type of abuse?				
<i>Yes</i>	32	80	0.20	0.405
<i>No</i>	8	20		
Does the family work with you to solve the problem?				
<i>Yes</i>	34	85	0.15	0.362
<i>No</i>	6	15		
What forms or modes of treatment are available to victims of sexual abuse?				
<i>Medical</i>	2	5	1.28	0.554
<i>Psychological</i>	25	62.5		
<i>Both</i>	13	32.5		
Is there cooperation from the school administration with the mentor to address and reduce the effects of sexual abuse?				
<i>Yes</i>	39	97.5	0.03	0.158
<i>No</i>	1	2.5		
Do you notice that a child who has been sexually abused with repeated abuse from time to time has become accustomed to and liked to abuse?				
<i>Yes</i>	38	95	0.05	0.221
<i>No</i>	2	5		

85% of the participants agreed on [the treatment being providebeing provided](#) to the victims in many cases. And 80% of the recruited population agreed on programs being helpful and involvement of family being helpful. Medical and psychological treatments should be provided to the victims but 62% of the participants chose psychological treatment to be more helpful. As shown in **Table 3**, 97.5% of the participants agreed on school administration being helpful in mentoring and reducing the effects of sexual abuse.

Linear ~~Regression~~-regression analysis was conducted to determine the significance of the association between the type of violence such as verbal, physical or sexual rape, the age stage, and the significant disability as shown in **Table 4**. The model summary of the linear regression analysis revealed that there is a variance of 2.5% in the scores that can be predicted from the variables type of disability and the age stages vulnerable to sexual abuse.

~~Table 4~~  
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~~Linear Regression Model Summary~~

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Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimates
1	0.157 <sup>a</sup>	0.025	-0.028	0.572

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a. Predictors: (Constant), which groups of people with disabilities are most vulnerable to sexual abuse? Which age group is most vulnerable to be victimized by sexual abuse?

**Table 5**, shows the ANOVA statistics from the Regression analysis. The P-value associated with the F value of Regression is used to answer the research question that independent variables predict the dependent variables. In the current study, it was found that the F value is 0.466, and the p-value at this F-value was found to be 0.043 which is smaller than the alpha level (0.05). This result shows the reliable prediction of independent variables over dependent variables.

~~Table 5~~  
~~ANOVA~~

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>

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<i>Regression</i>	0.305	2	0.152	0.466	0.043 <sup>B</sup>
<i>Residual</i>	12.095	37	0.327		
<i>Total</i>	12.400	39			

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#### 4. DISCUSSION

The research has conducted an in-depth analysis of the quantitative data collected from the study participants and it has been ensured by the researcher that the outcomes provided in the previous section are in complete alignment with the research objectives. The findings have been divided and discussed in portions as per the research objectives.

##### 4.1. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Saudi Arabia

From the analysis of the results in the previous section, it has been highlighted that to a greater extent, the cases of sexual abuse among children with disabilities have been significantly increased in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The finding of the following research study can be confirmed by the previously conducted studies that sexual abuse of disabled people is a widespread problem (Basile et al., 2016; Collin-Vezina et al., 2013). The current study revealed that institutions are conducting awareness programs to aware of people the issues of sexual abuse of disabled people. In developed countries, the higher authorities conduct awareness programs to make the people aware of their rights and protect them from any abuse (Petersen et al., 2014).

The current findings also revealed that intellectual disability is the major disorder that makes children at risk of being sexually assaulted. These findings are validated by another study that reported children with intellectual disabilities are prone to be sexually abused (N. Phasha, 2012). It was reported that children with intellectual disabilities are unable to understand their rights and sexually abusive ~~behaviour~~ behavior. Therefore, children with intellectual disabilities become prey to perpetrators of sexual abuse. In the current study, it was found that school administration plays a vital role in reporting cases of sexual abuse. Moreover, it was also reported that it is difficult for healthcare professionals to recognise the sexual abuse of children. The sexually abused children with disabilities were provided psychological treatment to ensure their active development and well-being in adulthood.

#### **4.2. Most common Abuse pattern**

The abuse patterns among the disabled children, which are identified in the study, include verbal harassment, physical harassment and ~~sexual~~ [sexual abuse/rape](#). Among these patterns, it has been identified that physical harassment has remained the most common abuse pattern among children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. This can be supported by the research study of Al\_Madani (2012), who revealed that to a greater extent, disabled children are physically abused as they are dependent on others and cannot communicate effectively to their carers when they are sexually or physically abused.

One interesting finding of the current study is that relatives were the primary perpetrators of the sexual abuse of children with disabilities. It is consistent with the studies conducted in other countries that relatives abused disabled children (Di Giulio et al., 2014). The current study also demonstrated that school administration plays an active role in reducing the effects of sexual abuse on disabled children. Moreover, the current study also revealed that sexually abused children are often accustomed to abuse; therefore, it is imperative to provide adequate care and support services to these children.

#### **4.3. Most vulnerable age and nature of disability exposed to sexual assaults**

The findings of the current study also revealed a statistically significant association between the significant predictors such as the type of disability and age stage of the children with the type of abuse. As per the results of the study, childhood is the most vulnerable phase to sexual assaults. Moreover, intellectual disabilities among children are the most vulnerable group of disabilities exposed to sexual abuse as compared to visual, hearing, or physical impairments. The findings demonstrate the urgency to teach children to recognise, avoid, and disclose abusive assaults. Children with disabilities should be taught about appropriate and inappropriate physical contact (Blanchard-Dallaire and Hebert, 2014). The previous studies ~~suggests~~ [suggest](#) that sex education intervention substantially builds the capacity of children with intellectual disabilities to protect themselves from sexual assault.

#### **4.4. Role of Institutional Administration:-**

The result calculations resulted on how important school and other educational institutions plays a vital role in helping children with disability in reporting cases of sexual abuse. Often there is a stronger bond between instructor and children regardless of any disability, where they report and share almost every detail of their eventful lives.

Teachers are considered to be emotionally welcoming person, especially with children. They not only shape them better for their future but also unfold them and groom their personality to their maximum potential and help them increase their level of readiness, competence, and confidence that help children not only in the classroom but also in real life (Gallavan & Nancy P, 2005).

#### ***4.5. Limitation of Prevention Strategies***

Due to confidentiality issues, the question questionnaire missed demographic information of the victims such as the age limitations and gender bias data. The data collecting tool carried items of very limited variables, mostly focusing on sexual abuse on children with disabilities and the role of institutions and mentors cater to the needs and prevention against such abuses.

There are various preventive strategies for child sexual abuse. However, the currently available strategies lack systematic prevention. There is a lack of rigorous evaluation before establishing a preventive strategy to protect disabled children from abuse (Finkelhor et al., 2014). One of the main reasons for ineffective preventive strategies is the lack of funds and insufficient focus on victims and offenders (Letourneau, Eaton, Bass, Berlin, and Moore. 2014).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In sum, the current study demonstrated the prevalence of sexual abuse in children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. The issue of sexual abuse is widespread and children with intellectual disabilities are more prone to being sexually assaulted. Besides, that childhood was found to be an extremely vulnerable age stage. Current findings also revealed the significant role of school administration in recognising the sexual abuse of disabled children. The prevalence found in the study can help the concern authorities' work on preventative measure against abuse of such kind. The school administration and social workers need to work with the parents and policymakers to formulate a robust policy to prevent sexual assault on disabled children and bring justice to the perpetrators of sexual abuse of disabled children.

Child sexual abuse is forceful sexual abuse without consent. Disable children are at higher risk of sexual abuse in Saudi Arabia because they are socially isolated, soft targets, and depend on other people. Maltreatment of disable children in Saudi Arabia results from the threats that are given to the children. There are some certain weaknesses in the study as well. This study follows a primary quantitative design and biases of the participants pose serious limitations to the results and findings of the study. Stereotypes and conventional wisdom of individuals may also weaken the results and findings of the study. In addition to that, time constraints also restrict the findings of the study while scheduling surveys from the respondents. Ethical considerations regarding the confidentiality and privacy of the information collected from the participants may also pose limitations to the study.

In order to reduce and prevent childhood sexual abuse particularly of disable children parent education and awareness are highly recommended. Since disable children find difficulties to learn and educating parents to help to protect disabled children from sexual abuse. Rules and regulations should be determined to maintain healthy and professional limits with disable children. Training and education of the staff members those work in the centres of disabled children management should also be practised. Educating others about the harms of sexual abuse with disable children is also recommended to reduce the sexual abuse. Finally, the government in Saudi Arabia should constitute strict laws and regulations regarding the punishment against sexual abuse of disabled children.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

#### CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

The authors declare no competing interest, financial or otherwise.

#### ~~6.~~ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author ~~declare~~declares that there was no conflict of interest

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### Appendix

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Studies Reviewed	Aim	Method	Findings
Jones et al. (2016)	To determine the risk and prevalence of violence among disabled children	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Disabled children are more exposed to violence as compared to other children who are not disabled
Al-Mahroos et al. (2015)	To identify the pattern of child abuse among children	Retrospective study	Bruises are the most common injuries in child abuse, but intercourse and swelling are other patterns as well. However, it is difficult to find evidence of sexual abuse among children.
Aboul-Hagag et al. (2012)	Determination of child sexual abuse among college children of Egypt	Cross-sectional survey	The main predators of child abuse are males and female children are more exposed to sexual abuse.
AlMadani et al. (2012)	To describe the forensic and socio-	Descriptive case series	Most victims of sexual abuse are



	medical characteristics of child abuse in children and maternity hospitals of Dammam.		females and 85% of sexual assaults also take place in hospitals
Wissink et al. (2015)	Determination of sexual abuse among children with disabilities	A narrative review of literature	Disabled children are more exposed to sexual abuse
Blanchard- Dallaire and Hebert (2014)	To determine the social relation of the children who have encountered sexual abuse	Primary quantitative	Interpersonal trust is less among sexually abused children
Brilleslijper-Kater et al. (2004)	To determine the emotional reaction and sexual knowledge among young children who encountered sexual abuse	Primary mixed research	Nearly 25% to 35% of the children who are under the age of 7 have experienced sexual abuse.
Almuneef et al. (2019)	This study aims to investigate the long-term consequences of child abuse of disabled children in Saudi Arabia	Primary quantitative	Results have found that disabled children are at higher risk of sexual abuse and it impacts them psychologically
Omar and Alkhateeb (2019)	This study aims to explore the rate of	Secondary qualitative	Results suggest that children with

	child sexual abuse in Saudi Arabia		disabilities are more vulnerable to child sexual abuse for their dependence on others.
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