

THE HINDU

Paedophiles are difficult to identify, say psychologists

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BANGALORE: The arrest of a skating instructor on Sunday on the charge of raping a six-year-old at a private school in the city has put the focus on child sexual abuse and paedophilia. Known to be as a sexual orientation towards children, some studies done on the subject have deemed it as an abnormality that has no cure. Even more chilling is the fact that it is difficult to tell who is a paedophile.

Shailaja Shastri, Head of Department of Postgraduate and Research Studies in Psychology, Jain University, said paedophiles are most often normal people, leading perfect family lives and good at image management.

"As they are covert, it is difficult to trace them until caught red-handed," she said. Admitting that paedophiles are often people known to the child, she said the reasons for their behaviour could be many, including an "unpleasant childhood and a dominating, undemocratic and overpowering mother." B.R. Madhukar, senior visiting consultant, Department of Psychiatry, St. Martha's Hospital, said little is known about the cause for paedophilia. "There is no stereotypical family pattern and the sexual orientation is developed over time. But if he/she has been a victim, there is a big risk of him/her becoming a perpetrator," he

KEEP A CHECK

Who are PAEDOPHILES?

- They lead a normal front life and are difficult to distinguish
- They are people with low self-esteem
- Often, they have had a difficult childhood
- Anyone could be a paedophile: teacher, parent, grandparent, relative or caretaker
- They win the trust of the child before taking advantage

What guardians SHOULD DO

- Parents must give a thorough listening to children
- Train children to say 'no', and to identify 'good touch' and 'bad touch'
- In case of abuse, do not hesitate to report it
- Children who are victims are affected physically and psychologically



INDICATORS OF ABUSE IN CHILDREN

BEHAVIOURAL: abrupt changes in behaviour, reluctance to go home, low self-esteem, wearing many layers of clothing regardless of weather, recurrent nightmares, regression, aggression, poor peer relationships, eating disturbances, negative coping skills (including substance abuse), temper tantrums, fear of a particular person or object, poor school performance, knowing more about sexual behaviour than is expected of a child of that age, hating own genitals, disliking his/her own gender, sexualised play



PHYSICAL: sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, complaints of pain or itching in genital area, difficulty in walking or sitting, repeated unusual injuries, pain during urination, frequent yeast infections

explained. There is no medication for paedophilia, Dr. Madhukar said treatment includes prolonged psychological intervention. The Ministry of Women and

Child Development published model guidelines under Section 39 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, last year for the use of professionals.