

Breaking the Silence: Conversations on Child Sexual Abuse & POCSO Act, February 19, 2025

The Psychology Department organized an awareness session, Breaking the Silence: Conversations on Child Sexual Abuse & POCSO Act, on February 19, 2025, led by Dr. Kalpana Purushothaman, a queer-affirmative therapist and child rights activist. The session aimed to educate students on the psychological, legal, and social dimensions of child sexual abuse (CSA) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Dr. Kalpana emphasized the fear and insecurity felt by CSA survivors, the cultural taboos that prevent open discussions, and the urgent need to break the silence so children can report abuse without fear. She explained how CSA thrives on secrecy, power imbalances, and grooming tactics, often making children feel guilty or powerless. Addressing intervention, she stressed that immediate action is crucial for ongoing abuse, while past survivors require psychological care. She also shed light on child-to-child abuse, an often-overlooked issue. She provided an overview of the POCSO and Juvenile Justice (JJ) Acts, explaining legal provisions such as mandatory CSA reporting and child-friendly legal processes. Dr. Kalpana discussed the severe psychological and physical consequences of CSA, including trauma, PTSD, and chronic illnesses, underscoring the need for trauma-informed care. She also criticized societal attitudes toward consent, highlighting the lack of legal recognition for marital rape in India. The session concluded with discussions on the barriers to CSA reporting, including stigma and fear, urging students to support survivors, promote awareness, and advocate for systemic change to ensure child safety.