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LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF CHILD ABUSE- A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

AUTHORED BY - ASHUTOSH TRIPATHI

ABSTRACT

India is home to the largest child population in the world, with almost 41 per cent of the total population under eighteen years of age. The health and security of the country's children is integral to any vision for its progress and development. Doctors and health care professionals are often the first point of contact for abused and neglected children. They play a key role in detecting child abuse and neglect, provide immediate and longer term care and support to children. Despite being important stakeholders, often physicians have a limited understanding on how to protect these vulnerable groups. There is an urgent need for systematic training for physicians to prevent, detect and respond to cases of child abuse and neglect in the clinical setting. The purpose of the present article is to provide an overview of child abuse and neglect from a medical assessment to a socio-legal perspective in India, in order to ensure a prompt and comprehensive multidisciplinary response to victims of child abuse and neglect. During their busy clinical practice, medical professionals can also use the telephone help line (CHILDLINE telephone 1098) to refer cases of child abuse, thus connecting them to socio-legal services. The physicians should be aware of the new legislation, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which requires mandatory reporting of cases of child sexual abuse, failing which they can be penalized. Moreover, doctors and allied medical professionals can help prevent child sexual abuse by delivering the message of personal space and privacy to their young patients and parents.

KEYWORDS: Child Abuse, Neglected, Penalized, Vulnerable, Law

INTRODUCTION

India has the highest percentage of children worldwide, accounting for over 41% of the country's total population under the age of 18. Every goal for the country's advancement and development must take the children's health and safety into consideration. For abused and neglected children, doctors and other medical personnel are frequently the initial point of contact. They offer children both short-term and long-term care and support, and they are crucial in identifying cases of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse is described by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1999) as a violation of a child's fundamental human rights. In the context of a relationship involving responsibility, trust, or power, it encompasses all forms of physical or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or careless treatment, as well as commercial or other forms of exploitation that actually or potentially harm a child's health, survival, development, or dignity.

"Child neglect" is defined as follows:

1. when a carer fails to provide a child with health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions;
2. when a carer fails to provide these things within a reasonable range of resources for the family or carers; and
3. when the carer fails to provide these things and it negatively impacts the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. ¹

"Child maltreatment," often known as "child abuse and neglect," refers to any combination of sexual abuse, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation that actually or potentially endangers the child's growth, health, or dignity.

There are five subcategories of child abuse and neglect that can be identified under the broad category given above:

1. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and careless treatment, emotional abuse, and exploitation. Bodily abuse is defined as any interaction that reasonably falls within the control of a parent or other person who holds a position of authority, trust, or responsibility and causes actual or potential bodily injury to the child. There might be a single instance or several.
2. Child Sexual abuse occurs when a kid engages in sexual behaviour that they are not yet completely capable of understanding, cannot provide informed consent to, are not

¹ Smith, J. (2020). Addressing Child Abuse and Neglect in India: Challenges and Solutions. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 10(2), 45-58.

developmentally ready for, or that is against social norms. A child engaging in behaviour with an adult or another child who, due to their age or developmental stage, is in a relationship of authority, responsibility, or trust that is meant to satiate or satisfy the demands of another person is considered to be engaging in child sexual abuse. This can involve, but is not restricted to: forcing or pressuring a minor to participate in any illegal sexual action; abusing a minor by using them for prostitution or other illegal sexual activities; and, the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

3. When a carer fails to offer a suitable and encouraging atmosphere, it is referred to as emotional abuse. This includes actions that negatively impact the emotional growth and well-being of the victim.
4. Neglect is defined as a caregiver's failure to provide for a child's needs in all areas, including health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, within the limits of resources that the family or carers reasonably have access to. It also results in, or is highly likely to result in, harm to the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. This involves not keeping an adequate eye on and shielding kids from harm as much as is practical.
5. The term "exploitation" describes actions taken for the benefit of others, such as child trafficking, or the commercial or other exploitation of children through labour (child labour).²

MAGNITUDE AND CONSEQUENCE OF THIS PROBLEM

The US National Child Abuse and Neglect system statistics from 2009 showed that, out of all instances that were recorded, physical abuse accounted for 18% of cases, sexual abuse for 10%, emotional abuse for 8%, and child neglect for the remaining cases (3–4). According to a 2007 survey conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development of the Government of India, there is an incredibly high frequency of all types of child abuse, including physical abuse (66%), sexual abuse (50%) and emotional abuse (50%). (5). A more recent survey by the National Commission for Protection of kid Rights (NCPCR) found that 99% of children get corporal punishment in schools. The study included 6,632 kid respondents from 7 states.³

² National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. (2019). *Report on the Status of Child Abuse and Neglect in India*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncpcr.gov.in>

³Kumar, A., & Garg, R. (2020). *Understanding the Dynamics of Child Abuse in India: A Sociocultural Perspective*. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Behavior*, 8(2), 1-8. DOI: 10.35248/2375-4494.20.8.234.

In developing nations like India, where there is a high population base and an unfavourable socioeconomic status, child neglect is a major public health issue. Early childhood care is severely lacking for children due to poverty, illiteracy, and limited access to family planning and health services. Even publicly accessible services are not well used. Rural communities, migrant populations (a considerable number), and the impoverished urban population are the groups most impacted. Adopted and frequently homeless street children and minors working as labourers in low-paying jobs are major issues in big cities. Children in challenging situations, such as those impacted by natural disasters, those living in conflict areas, refugees, those living with HIV/AIDS, and children with impairments, should be given special attention.

The newborn's circumstances, as well as those of infancy and early childhood, are extremely critical, and the rates of sickness and mortality are still very high. Undernutrition in mothers, hazardous deliveries, and disregard for early childhood development and schooling are serious problems that require urgent attention. Raising children is a reflection of societal standards, and negative customs are frequently carried down from one generation to the next, particularly in communities with low levels of literacy and information. In order to handle child abuse and neglect in this situation and address the numerous ingrained issues, the medical community, acting as guardians of health, must organise and carry out its efforts.

CONSEQUENCES

There are numerous immediate and long-term consequences that child abuse and neglect (CAN) has on children. Regressive behaviours (like going back to bedwetting or thumbsucking), sleep disturbances, eating issues, academic performance issues, sexualized behaviour, externalising symptoms (like bullying or aggression), internalising symptoms (like social disengagement), and complaints of persistent generalised aches and pains are some of the short-term effects of sexual abuse. Complaints of persistent vaginal discharge, dysuria, abdominal pain, and urinary tract infections may also have an impact on one's physical health. Exposure of children to maltreatment can have both immediate and long-term effects on them, such as increased levels of aggression, PTSD, and emotional and mental health issues like melancholy and anxiety. A strong link has been found between emotional experiences during childhood and physical and mental health during adulthood, according to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, a significant American research project examining the

effects of adverse childhood experiences on adult health and well-being.⁴

CHILD ABUSE- THE CONCEPT

Child abuse is defined as any act, inaction, or carelessness on the part of an adult or child that puts a child's life and development in grave danger and has a lasting negative impact on the child's physical and mental health. It can also refer to actual or potential harm to a child's survival, dignity, growth, and socialisation as a result of sexual, physical, emotional, or psychological abuse or exploitation. It is a genuine and well-known situation that typically comes up through well-known people like parents, relatives, and carers.

Child abuse, in all its forms and manifestations, is a worldwide problem that has, over time, been greatly underestimated and misunderstood. It is also quite common in India, where it is heavily ingrained in social, economic, and cultural activities. Numerous governments and nonprofit organisations have attempted to address the issue, but the general public has not been able to comprehend it. Its presence is as well-known as its denial.⁵

Child abuse can occur in a variety of settings, including households, workplaces, schools, foster homes, playgrounds, and social networking sites. Its effects are typically long-lasting and stunt the child's growth, making it useless as a national asset at the same time. Thus, a comprehensive approach to the study of child abuse and its effects on children's lives is required. This includes analysing the current abuse statistics in the nation, outlining the various legal and constitutional provisions for children, illuminating the various government policies and programmes, and, finally, addressing reformative measures that can be taken to create a better future for the next generation.

CLASSIFICATION OF CHILD ABUSE

While the consequences of child abuse remain the same, them being grave physical or emotional harm, it is necessary to address the different types of Child Abuse to not only understand their occurrence, but to also derive a clear idea to distinguish its different types,

⁴ National Crime Records Bureau. (2018). *Crime in India 2018: Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in/en/crime-india-2018-statistics>.

⁵ Save the Children India. (2019). *Out of the Shadows: A Study on Child Sexual Abuse in India*. Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.in>

enabling to derive and ponder upon possible solutions to the challenge at hand.⁶

PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE

Physical Child Abuse primarily results in potential physical harm from a confrontation or an interaction, which is within the control of a parent or a person in a position of power or authority. The resultant injuries are considered abuse irrespective of whether the intent of the action was to cause hurt. Physical **Child Abuse primarily comprises of following actions/incidents:**

- Excessive Punishments
- Beating / Hitting a child
- Leaving a child in an undignified posture
- Forced Work Conditions
- Bullying

Signs of Physical Child Abuse:

- Unexplained Bruises, welts or cuts etc.
- Fearful or shy behavior etc.

CHILD EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional Abuse is often observed as a pattern of behaviour that hampers the child's emotional development, making it extremely difficult to prove. The lack of evidence in the case of Child Emotional Abuse is considered as a major challenge to the existing Child Protection System. Emotional Abuse is almost always present when other forms of abuses are identified in a child.

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- The Child Emotional Abuse primarily comprises of following instances:
- Isolation or Exclusion of a Child
- Stigmatizing a Child
- Failure to provide a supportive environment
- Caregivers not responding to a child's emotional needs
- Blackmailing a Child

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2019). *Global Study on Homicide 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

Signs of Child Emotional Abuse

- Excessive Shyness and Fear
- Behavioral Extremes
- Antisocial Behaviour
- Inappropriate Age Behaviour

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The Child Sexual Abuse is an involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he/she does not fully understand and approve of. Primarily, the child is naturally uninformed of the sexual activity and while being developmentally unprepared for the act, is unable to give an informed consent. Child Sexual Abuse is primarily divided into two major types:

Contact Type

- Kissing or holding in a sexual manner
- Forcing to touch genital areas
- Vaginal or Anal Intercourse
- Sexual Exploitation
- Incest
- Rape

Non- Contact Type

- Obscene Remarks
- Virtual Sex Online Solicitation
- Exposed to Pornography
- Sexually intrusive comments
- Voyeurism

Signs of Child Sexual Abuse:

- Behavioral signs –The child might display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior or display unusual behavior- either being very aggressive or very passive.
- Physical signs - A child may have trouble sitting or standing, or have stained, bloody or torn underclothes. Swelling, bruises, or bleeding in the genital area is a red flag.

- Caregiver signs – The caregiver may seem to be unusually controlling and protective of the child, limiting contact with other children and adults.⁸

CHILD NEGLECT

A type of abuse known as neglect occurs when a kid is not given enough food, clothes, shelter, supervision, medical attention, or an education. Even though it involves less action and more inaction than the earlier, more active kinds of abuse, neglect nonetheless causes harm to children.

The main categories of neglect include the following:

- Not protecting the child from injury;
- Not paying attention to the care;
- Not reporting bruises;
- Not providing nutrition;
- Not monitoring the child's progress

Signs of Neglect:

- Child seems to be unsupervised
- Child may appear to have consistently bad hygiene
- The child might show troublesome, disruptive behavior

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN RELATED TO CHILD

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The goal of the country's constitution writers was to protect and uplift the children from their impoverished and backward conditions, ensure their comprehensive growth and development, ensure their survival through a decrease in the death rate and malnutrition, and involve them in the nation's overall advancement and development. As a result, they placed a special emphasis on granting children's fundamental and inalienable rights and directed policymakers to strive in the same manner to protect and advance these rights.⁹

⁸ Sahil. (2020). *Understanding Child Sexual Abuse in India: A Study of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children*. Retrieved from <http://www.sahil.org>.

⁹ Gupta, A. (2019). *A Comprehensive Study on Child Labour in India: Causes, Consequences, and Policy Implications*. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(33), 22-28. Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in>.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The life-cycle of a child revolves around four main objectives, Vis a Vis survival, development, protection and participation. There are multiple provisions in the Indian Constitution that impose the primary responsibility on the state to promote the welfare of children and ensure their dignity and sustainability.

- Article 14 of the Indian Constitution ensures that every citizen – man, woman and child is equal in the realm of law.
- Article 15 of the constitution provides for prohibition of discrimination and along with that it empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children.
- Article 21A makes it mandatory for the state to provide free and compulsory education to children in the 6-14 age group.
- Article 23 prohibits trafficking of Human beings and forced labour.
- Article 24 prohibits Child Labour and the employment of children below 14 years of age in factories, mines or other hazardous work environments.

DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

- Article 39(e) of the constitution enjoins the State to ensure that the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender age of children are not abused.
- Article 39(f) directs the State to ensure that children are provided with opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner It directs the State to ensure that children develop in a free and dignified environment and that their childhood and youth is protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.
- Article 45 provides for the State's duty to ensure early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

SPECIFIC SUB-GROUPS AT THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A. GIRL CHILD

The Indian census data has revealed some disturbing statistics: a high rate of female feticide (an act of aborting a fetus because it is female). The sex ratio of boys to girls in the 0-6 age group in India has risen from the typical 102.4 males per 100 females in 1961, to 104.1 In 1981, to 107.8 in 2001, to 108.8 in 2011. (16-17). Moreover, the child sex ratio is significantly higher in northwestern states such as Punjab (118) and Haryana (120). In these locations, female

feticide can be seen through a cultural backdrop, where male kids are desired since they provide socio-economic advantages and success in the family lineage.

The surge in female feticide has been linked to the availability of inexpensive ultrasound sex detection technology, initially launched in India's metropolitan regions in 1980s, and later widely used in rural village areas by 2000s. This has evolved to a thriving business of "travelling ultrasonologists" in the communities of northern India. A study suggested that 100,000 abortions are performed every year in India merely because the fetus is female. The Government of India has initiated multi-pronged tactics to combat female feticide, which include legal measures such as Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act in 2004, advocacy, awareness building and programmes for socio-economic development of women.¹⁰

There is evidence that 'Girl child' is systemically ignored from before birth and right through their life cycle. A study found significant variations in gender violence and access to food, healthcare, vaccines between male and female youngsters. This leads to significant infant and childhood mortality among girls, which causes alterations in sex ratio. Girls may lack formal recognition (e.g. birth registration), legal protection, and social networks; married early (child marriage), they are disproportionately burdened both at home with household chores and at outside home doing domestic labor, and are less likely to be in secondary education or in the formal paid workforce.¹¹

B. DISABLED CHILD:

Several international studies have established that children with disabilities are at greater risk of child maltreatment (24-27). Children with disabilities may comprise about up to 10% of school going children and as such their needs are even more likely to be ignored in developing countries. Inadequacies in the school system fail to meet children's special educational needs; leads to neglect, beyond parental control.

C. CHILD LABOUR

Child labour is a significant infringement of fundamental rights of children. It deprives children

¹⁰ National Human Rights Commission. (2017). *Report on the Rights of the Child in India*. Retrieved from <https://nhrc.nic.in/report-rights-child-india>.

¹¹ Pandey, R. (2018). *Domestic Violence and Its Impact on Children: Evidence from India*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 80, 263-270. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.007.

of their childhood potential and their dignity, and it is bad to their physical and mental development. It is fundamentally a socio-economic problem, inexorably related to poverty and illiteracy. There is a consensus forming that when a youngster is not in school, the child would perform be part of the labour pool. In tying child labour to education, the aims of eliminating child labour and of universalizing education have become identical. There is an essential need in poor nations to implement a comprehensive plan to withdraw children from work and mainstream them into schools, in order to guarantee them basic right to education. The Government should regard this as a working challenge in trying to access youngsters in need -- in institutions, in street groups, in work-places, on the move, or even in jails. Linkage with NGOs associated to such kinds of situations may be explored as an outreach approach.

U.N CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF CHILD & MORAL IMPERATIVE

The most commonly accepted child rights law in the world is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), which India ratified in 1992 and defines children as all people under the age of eighteen. "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or sexual abuse," states Article 19 of the UNCRC, which defines violence and children's protection rights. Mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while under the supervision of the child's parent(s), legal guardian(s), or other caregiver."

A number of developed nations worldwide possess highly sophisticated child protection systems, mainly centred around required reporting, identification and investigation of impacted children, and frequently involving coercive measures. The system, which needs to provide more resources, is equally burdened by the huge volume of alerts and investigations as are the families. In these circumstances, the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect in India warrant careful and comprehensive thought, especially with regard to the impoverished rural and urban populations where child protection systems are either nonexistent or not well-developed.

The term "protection" relates to protection from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Based on our understanding, the Indian Child Abuse, Neglect & Child Labour (ICANCL) group, Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) has strongly propagated the view that in Indian perspective the term "child protection" must also include prevention from disease, poor nutrition and illiteracy in addition to action against abuse and exploitation. This underlines the importance of anticipating and averting what might happen to damage and demean a child --

not just response to hurt inflicted. The 9th ISPCAN Asia Pacific Conference of Child Abuse & Neglect (APCCAN 2011) conference outcome document “Delhi Declaration” re-affirmed and pledged to stand against the neglect and abuse of children and to strive for achievement of child rights and the building of a caring community for every child, free of violence and discrimination. It urged and asserted the urgent need to integrate principles, standards and measures in national planning processes, to prevent and respond to violence against children.¹²

REPORTING OF ABUSE AND ROLE OF DOCTORS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS

One of our main responsibilities is to protect our children, and we also owe it to society to act quickly to stop child abuse when it is evident. Recognising vulnerable children and situations and acting promptly are the duties of parents and educators. Despite being aware of the abuse, professionals frequently chose not to disclose it because they believed the effects on the child and the family would be disastrous. A small number of physicians also shied away from reporting due to the complicated legal requirements that could interfere with their regular business operations. According to a study by Inanci et al., 50% of the primary care physicians who took part in the study did not report the case or seek assistance after dealing with an abuse case at least once in their careers, making up 21.5% of the sample. Participants' answers to a questionnaire revealed that their ignorance of the notification procedures and their fear of receiving the wrong diagnosis—which yielded mean scores of 3.48 and 2.93 on a 5-point scale—were the main contributing causes to this act of omission. The same group found that parents abusing drugs or alcohol, and children with mental health issues were the most significant risk factors, scoring 4.3 out of 5.¹³

According to a study on family doctors' ability to recognise child abuse instances and respond appropriately when they do, 39.7% of the 375 participants in the study were not trained about child abuse during their undergraduate or graduate studies. This demonstrates how little weight is placed on this subject in the medical curriculum and how urgent it is to instill it in our system. A mnemonic, "TEN-4," which stands for "torso, ears, neck," and 4 for the age of 4, was proposed by Pierce et al. This means that primary care physicians should be suspicious of any

¹² Childline India Foundation. (2019). *Annual Report 2019: Child Helpline 1098*. Retrieved from <https://www.childlineindia.org.in/annual-report.php>.

¹³ Kacker, L., Varadan, S., & Kumar, P. (2017). *Study on Child Abuse: India 2007*. Retrieved from <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Child%20abuse%20report%202%5B1%5D.pdf>.

injuries in these regions that occur during the first four years of life. It was further improved to "TEN FACE sp," which included sub-conjunctival haemorrhage, patterned bruising, and injuries to the frenulum, angle of the jaw, cheeks, and eyelids. In terms of anticipating misuse, this rule of thumb was 87% specific and 97% sensitive.

In a congested emergency room, child abuse may go unnoticed, so it's critical to have "child protection service" departments with specialists trained in handling these situations. A research by Tiyyagura et al. revealed that there was a rise in the reporting of child abuse (from 10.7% to 32.6%) when community emergency departments sent cases to a specialised child protection team upon discovering any of the aforementioned TEN-FACE-sp injuries. In addition to recognising these warning indicators, a primary care physician should carefully record the child's and parents' medical history, both jointly and separately. Any disparity may serve as a warning sign for possible abuse. Seeing how the family interacts may also provide some hints. Social class is irrelevant because children from all social classes have been shown to be victims of this evil.

These kids' guardian angels are their parents and teachers, and school ought to be their second home. These individuals have the ability to detect even the slightest shift in a child's behaviour or overall wellbeing, and they ought to look into it by getting to know the child in question. Teachers have a professional duty to protect their young charges from harm so that they can grow up to be valuable members of the country. Teachers are hesitant to report because they are afraid it would damage their relationship with the student and their family, that incorrect reporting of a sensational issue will have negative effects, that reporting could lead to more torture and abuse, and that foster homes are ineffective. Training of teachers to improve their skill and accuracy in detecting this evil and awareness of the various laws to safeguard children will also enhance their confidence in this regard. Prompt action from doctors, police, and legal experts is also essential to ensure smooth running of the safeguarding machinery.¹⁴

POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

¹⁴ Srivastava, R. (2019). *Child Trafficking in India: Patterns, Causes, and Policy Responses*. International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, 57, 60-74. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijlcj.2018.12.005.

After providing for the above mentioned constitutional provisions, the State additionally looks for the welfare of children by adopting various policies and programmes and institutionalising different national and provincial level authorities and organisations.

National Policy for Children 1974 is the first child centric programme launched by the government of India for the all-round development, care and protection of children. It recognises children as the ultimate asset of the country and guarantees that their rights, as enshrined in the constitution and the UN Declaration of Rights, are implemented. National Policy on Education 1986 called for a specific emphasis on equality in the sphere of educational opportunity. It argued for a child centred approach in primary education.

National Policy on Child Labour 1987 is an initiative of the government to strictly implement the articles of the constitution pertaining to the prohibition of Child Labour and works towards the betterment of the conditions of working children. National Charter for Children 2003 is a comprehensive document that empowers children with the right of being a child and enjoying their childhood to the fullest. It instructs the State, the society, the community and the families to provide a healthy, safe and good environment for the growth of every child in the country. It also ensures the right of adolescent children to good education and other facilities, that would lead them to be productive citizens for the nation.

National Plan of Action for Children 2005 strives to handle the various problems in a child's existence. It works on the prohibition of child marriage, abolition of female foeticide, female infanticide and upholding and guaranteeing the rights of children in challenging conditions such as abuse, exploitation and neglect. Child-line Services have been launched by the government especially after the Twelfth Five Year Plan to help children in case of emergency or in situations where they cannot seek help from anywhere else. It is essentially run by Childline India Foundation, the mother body for this project in the country. Over the years, the Childline has received over millions of calls, primarily related with issues of medical care, housing for neglected or abandoned children, emotional guidance and protection from abuse amongst others.

National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development is the primary organisation for the documentation and collection of research and projects connected to women and child

development. It works in the fields of child protection, child care support services, awareness against abuse and exploitation and the rights of children. The Twelfth Five Year Plan was launched in the year 2012 which focused on child development and achieving higher sex ratio in the country. It was an important governmental step towards strengthening the status and condition of children in India, especially the female child.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT

The psychological consequence of child abuse includes age-inappropriate sexualisation of the youngster. This implies that the youngster indulges in improper sexual behaviours at a very immature age and conceptualises sex as explained by the abuser which is often distorted. It also leads to a lack of awareness of sexual identity for the child. The child would find it difficult to understand his own anatomy, which might even contribute to preconceptions of homosexuality.

Anxiety in daily activities of life and terror from specific individuals or objects (objects of abuse) or strangers or to the 'touch' of people is a general impact of physical or sexual abuse. Eating and sleeping difficulties are one of the principal consequences of child abuse. The child may suffer nightmares and fall short of sleep. He would also have issues in forming trust relationships with people owing to his past experiences.

Sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect are one of the major reasons behind depression in children. Parent's unusually high expectations of good behaviour or academic success push children into a perpetual state of dilemma and disdain. Child maltreatment adversely impacts the child's confidence and self-esteem. The child might become emotionally weak and sensitive. It might also show submissiveness in behaviour.

PHYSICAL IMPACT

Physical injury to the kid is a resultant of abuse, especially in cases of physical or sexual abuse. This harm is in the form of bruises, markings, burns, wounds, or bleeding, swelling, scratches etc. At times frustration from the work environment for victims of child labour manifests its way into heightened violence or intensified sensitivity. The child could express these by abusing other children. It can also lead to degradation of parent-child relationships, disdain for

moral values etc. Recapitulation of maltreatment, is more profound in boys when compared to girls.

Physical impacts of abuse result in self-mutilation of body parts or even at times it leads to suicidal attempts by the child. Children who are diagnosed with Sexually Transmitted Diseases are generally related with an abused past. Child labourers in industries or mines subsequently acquire heart and lung illnesses with the passage of time. They also suffer lack of antibody to airborne infections and face an early old age. Neglecting a child can contribute to its under-development. It can also cause lack of mental growth and the child may succumb to seclusion and isolation from its surroundings - friends, relatives, teachers etc. When children are neglected, they are easily prone to obesity and malnutrition.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

While the data clearly highlights an increase in the atrocities against children, the author has also aimed to translate the impacts of child abuse on the overall growth and inclusive development of the nation.

Awareness programmes and workshops should be performed on a larger scale by governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, including schools and colleges. Children must be educated about Child Protection programmes and Childline Services at a young age so that they could benefit from these policies and become better knowledgeable about their rights. Talking about sex should be as normal as talking about the other changes in the body of a teenager. This would make it easier for children to share and discuss their ailments to the people they trust. People need to know that child abuse is existent and can happen anywhere around you. It is important that citizens become more vigilant to their rights and not naive to the abuse happening around them. Vigilant parents can teach their children about self-protective practices such as the difference between a good touch and a harmful touch, emergency practices in cases of abuse etc.

A basic awareness of the meaning of child abuse not just as physical or sexual abuse but as

¹⁵ Tiwari, A., & Saxena, R. (2018). *Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Child Abuse and Neglect in India*. Journal of Child and Adolescent Behavior, 6(1), 1-5. DOI: 10.4172/2375-4494.1000368.

emotional abuse and neglect also needs to be fostered amongst the general masses. While the analysis clearly draws distinction between different sorts of abuse that are encountered by the Indian children, it also underlines the urgent necessity to bring about the muchneeded reforms in this sector. This research note aims to indicate the fact that child abuse not only damages the child's productivity but also vandalises the process of socialisation of the youngster. It is therefore required that the society awakens to the call of protecting and enhancing their childhood. This would not only allow greater engagement of youngsters in the process of innovation and evolution but would also complement to the greater good of the world civilization.

