CHAPTER-1

PATTERNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN RURAL CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATION

1.1 Theoretical Background-

From the early times industrial researcher have extensively and continuously documented reports of child maltreatment and abuse specially those related with battered baby syndrome. Child battering occurs when, due to any physical abuse or non accidental injuries, sustained as a result of repeated mistreatment or beating, child requires medical attention. Child battering is a tragic and disturbing phenomenon that is often successfully hidden by its perpetrators. This problem of battering is directly the outcome of the economic compulsions and no education. Studies have also shown that children subjected to battering have more possibility of being victim of the emotional, social and nutritional deprivation and other forms of maltreatment.

“Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship responsibility, trust or power (World Report on Violence and Health 2002)”.

1.2 Working Definitions Of Child Abuse-

Child abuse (with in an age of 18 years and even lesser then 16 years of age in some countries) in broader term includes any harmful contact on a child’s body, any kind of verbal and non verbal communication, or transaction with the child that is frightening or guilt causing. Some experts also include any act of (intended or unintended) failing to nurture, or omission of care and upbringing of the children and perceived maltreatment, whether habitual or not, resulting in serious impairment of growth and development, permanent disability or sometimes resulting in death.

These include words or actions committed by a person responsible for the care of child or in any manner related to child care including not only parent, sibling, family member, far away relatives but also a neighbor, a baby-sitter, teacher, friend, or a care provider in day care or orphanage, which damages extrinsic as well as intrinsic worthiness and dignity of the child.
In General ‘Child Abuse And Neglect’ is intentional or non intentional maltreatment of any kind by any of the person, be it parents, relatives or caregivers (also including representing from governmental and non-governmental organizations) or employers leading to impairment of development (physical, mental and psychosocial), or causing disability or even death of children.

1.3 Different Forms: while most accounts now distinguish between physical emotional and sexual abuse, difference form of abuse may overlap or interact with each other. Physical abuse is likely also to involve emotional abuse, emotional abuse can occur independently of the other two forms. Historically, physical abuse was the first to be recognized. It can take many forms including any of the following:

Physical Abuse: involves excessive intentional physical violence, hostile behavior or force exerted on a child by an adult who hurts, injures or kills, even with the intention to discipline or improve the child. Obvious forms of physical abuse are excessive corporal punishment, torture of any kind, kicking, slapping, hitting, beating, shaking with excessive force, dropping child against wall or any other hard surface, submersion in very cold or hot water, intentional burning inflicting pain by any method and in few cases assault of children.

Sexual Abuse: sexual abuse is any act of victimization (by any adult or older more knowledgeable child) by forcing, tickling, bribing, threatening or pressuring for involvement of a child to sexual awareness or activity for pleasure of self or others, including molestation, incest relationship and rape. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal and emotional. It includes

(i) sexually touching offences like forceful kissing, caressing, fondling, forcing child to touch adult sexual organs, and or making genital contact with penis, inserting any object or digital manipulation (without a valid medical reason).

(ii) Non-touching offenses such as - involving in exhibitionism, exposure to pornographic material/books or act of sexual intercourse, any indecent exposure to pose, undress or perform in a sexual manner, masturbating in front of a child, peeping into bathrooms/bedrooms of a child.
In extreme cases sexual abuse involves exploitation (sexual intercourse or its deviations- sodomy/ act of incest, engaging child in prostitution using for pornography), rape, and sex tourism (foreign exchange through sex trade).

**Emotional Abuse:** it is called by various names like verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. It refers to failure to provide a supportive environment or attention to a child.

It could include restricting movement, sarcasm, threatening, excessive criticism, reproachful expression discriminating, name calling, ridiculing, belittling, degradation and insulting remarks, putting excessive pressure to perform, and / or cutting communication.

**Child Neglect:** occurs when child’s basic needs are denied, continuously unattended or not adequately met, by parents or care givers. It includes the following-

**Physical Neglect ;** improper or no food, shelter, improper clothing for proper weather protection (cold, hot or rains), lack of toilet and other facilities, denied or improper medical care, lack of supervision, or sometimes total abandonment.

**Educational Neglect;** no education, inappropriate schooling or not attending special education needs, allowing stay away from school without any apparent reason or taking leave.

**Psychological Neglect;** refers to lack of love, affection and emotional support, leaving child unattended, indifferent treatment, allowing child participating in substance use and, not protecting from a harmful situation and emotional exploitation.

**Child Exploitation:** refers to engaging child in economic activities, specifically, harmful to development and or leading to deprivation. It may include employing children as domestic help, street beggars, as hawkers, as apprentices or engaging in delinquent acts.

**Munchausen’s by Proxy Syndrome:** this is a serious psychological disorder of parents or caregiver having frequent contact with doctors and hospitals by posing child sick (that cannot be medically documented). They fabricate, intentionally or
unintentionally, signs and symptoms of disease or injury in the child, in order to undergo medical tests, hospitalization or even surgical treatment.

1.4 Issue of Child Abuse-

Child abuse has become a global issue that needs to be tackled in a systematic manner. Children are the citizens and future flag bearers of the nation. They have right and privilege of proper nurture and good education. But it is unfortunate that child abuse incidences are often witnessed. It creates many long-term consequences and impact on well being among the abused and neglected children including physical health, mental health as well as emotional and spiritual health.

Psychological Issues of Child Abuse:

Some acts of child abuse and child neglect leave physical injuries that may take years to recover from, sometimes are fatal. Child abuse is more related to psychological impact associated with stresses and often leaves permanent emotional scars and can also create lifelong mental health problems. Some of the noted psychological impacts associated with child abuse and neglect are- low self-esteem, aggression and hostility, difficulty in concentration, low memory, excessive anxiety, feeling of loneliness, mood fluctuations, delinquent behavior, depression, suicidal thoughts and even committing suicides.

Social Issues Of Child Abuse:

Many types of child abuse create huge expenditure towards medical expense and burden of care on others. By and large it leaves scars on our society and economy. The sexual abuse creates shame and feeling of guilt, without any fault of victim. The social negligence makes a child in to delinquent behavior and they become bad and unwanted elements in the society.

1.5 Causes of Child Abuse and Neglect- The existence of child abuse and neglect is sometimes not recognized, because there is lack of general consensus about definition of child abuse and neglect. Cultural norms about what constitutes abuse vary widely among professionals as well as the wider public, people do not agree on what behavior constitutes abuse.
Although it is difficult to lay down specific causes, but most people agree on child abuse as a result of interaction with and reinforcement of multiple stressors. There are certain situational factors often, but not always, precipitating in abuse and neglect. ‘Situational stressors’ are made up of the following components:

- **Relationship Between Parents:** intermarriage conflicts, marital disputes, step-parents or separated or single parents
- **Parent Child Relationship:** spacing between births, size of family, sex of child, unwanted child, parental attachment and unusual parental expectations to child
- **Ecological Stress:** poor housing, unemployment, social isolation, long term illness, threats to parental authority, alcoholic families and excessive poverty
- **Child Produced Stress:** problem child, a child that is incontinent, difficult to discipline, often ill, physically disabled or retarded.
- **Parental Personality Traits:** Am erman & Pats (1996) identified some commonly characteristics of abusive parents - low self esteem, low intelligence, impulsivity, isolation (from family and community), loneliness, fear of rejection, depression, low frustration tolerance, immaturity and criminal behavior, Substance abuse is also a significant defining characteristic.
- **History of Abuse:** Potential of child abuse was more in parents who themselves were abused in their childhood. The closer the relationship of the child to the offender, the stronger is the feeling of betrayal, particularly for longer time. The longer the abuse continues, the more difficult it is for the victim to recover. In many cases it has been observed that children who have disturbed childhoods due to sexual abuse tend to commit similar crimes themselves when grown up.
- **Lack of Parenting Skills:** including no knowledge about child development, unstable discipline- overuse of physical punishment or over permissiveness, no coping with self and others, and lack of interpersonal skills.

1.6 **Different Theories of Child Abuse and Neglect-**

“From the critical theory perspective, the Marxist theory emphasizes that it is the powerless and deprived class who are most at risk of both engaging in crime and being victims of crime. On the contrary the radical feminist theory denies Marxists’ class emphasis, and postulates that patriarchy system is the reason for oppression of
women and children. Women are more marginalized and poorer than men. “Feminist theorization identifies male power, hegemony and socialization as the key causal factors of child abuse, not only within the family but also outside of it, in a wide range of settings (Corby and Goldston 2002)”.

“Theory of the intergenerational transmission of child abuse states that children learn how to be abusive or non-abusive from their parents. Abused children develop low self-esteem, poor management of negative emotions and problem solving, and weak communication and social skills. These traits further make them abusers of children as adults, unless they can break the cycle of abuse (Wiehe, 1992)”.

For the purposes of identifying the prevention programmes for child abuse “Daro and Donnelly (1993) have classified the theoretical frameworks on cause for child abuse, although these causes only deal with parental abuse, into four general groups:

- Psychodynamic theory suggests that parents would be less abusive if they better understood themselves and their role as parents.
- Learning theory suggests that parents would be less abusive if they knew, more specifically, how best to care for their children.
- Environmental theory suggests that parents would be less abusive if they had greater resources available to them in terms of supportive material or social support for a given set of actions.
- Ecological theory suggests that parents would be less abusive if a network of services or support existed to compensate for individual, situational, and environmental shortcomings”.

1.7 Prevalence of Child Abuse And Neglect-

According to the AIHW (2014) “There were 184,216 Australian children suspected of being harmed or at risk of harm from abuse and/or neglect. 272,980 notifications being issued by state and territory authorities, (a rate of 35.5 notifications per 1,000 Australian children). The total number of notifications represents an increase of 7.9% from the 252,962 reports made in the previous year.”
According to the report of USDHHS (2007) “Boys or girls is equally likely to suffer child abuse. 47.3 % of child victims were boys, and 50.7 % were girls. Victimization rates were highest among the youngest population of children, birth to 3 years, at a rate of 16.5 per 1,000 children. 49.7 % of children who were child abuse were white, 23.1 % were African American, and 17.4 % were Hispanic. American Indians and Alaska Natives accounted for 1.2 % of victims, and Asian-Pacific Islanders accounted for less than 1 % of victims”).

According to (2007) “Report of Ministry of women and child development, Government of India on study Child abuse, (covering 12447 children in 13 states with 5 evidence groups: children in the family environment, children in school, children at work, children in the street, and children in institutions). It was the young children, in the 5-12 year group, who are the most at risk of abuse and exploitation”.

Across different kind of abuse-

Physical Abuse
- Over 69% children (54.68% were boys) in all 13 sample states were being subjected to one or the other form of physical abuse.
- Most children did not report the matter to anyone.
- The states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Delhi have almost consistently reported higher rates of abuse in all forms as compared to other states.
- Out of those children physically abused in family situations, 88.6% were physically abused by parent.
- 65% of school going children reported facing corporal punishment (62% in government and municipal school). Percentage of abuse in correctional institutions (56.37%) and street children (66.8%) was every high.

Sexual Abuse
- 53.22% children reported having faced one of more forms, 21.90% facing severe forms, of sexual abuse.
- Out of the children respondents 5.69% reporting sexually assaulted.
- Children on street, children at work and children in institutional care reported the highest incidence of sexual assault.
Introduction

- 50% abuses are persons known to the child or in a position of trust and responsibility.

Emotional Abuse and Girl Child Neglect
- Every second child, both girls and boys, reported facing emotional abuse.
- In 83% of the cases parents were the abusers.
- 48.4% of girls wished they were boys.

It is evident that child abuse and neglect is present in one or another form across the globe. Types and intensity may differ with time and space.

1.8 Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect-

“Children’s experiences of abuse and neglect have many deleterious consequences over both the short-and long-time; example includes: behavioral problems, poor self esteem, and feeling of isolation, depression, self-injurious behaviors including substance abuse, suicidal ideas and behaviors, revictimization, academic and vocational problems, sexual dysfunctions, and criminal behaviors” (Gorey & Lesile 1997) and is highly correlated to delinquency, teenage pregnancy and other psychosocial problems.”

1.9 Protective Measures Against Child Abuse-

According to the traditional theories on causes of child abuse, the preventive programmes should include parent education and social support networks. Although focusing on ways of prevention of abuse is more important than paying close attention to the consequences or effect on a child of being abused

According to article 19 (2) of the UNCRC, “Such protective measures should include social programmes to provide support, prevention, identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up, and, for judicial involvement”.

Further, article 39 of the UNCRC mandates physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of a child victim.

“According to the article 19 (1) of the United Nations convention on the right of the child (UNCRC 1989), (which is ratified by India) States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect
the child form all form of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents(s), legal guardians(s) or any other person who has the care of the child”.

Perusal of the literature reveals that child abuse and neglect is a very complex problem with a variety of causes. Misunderstanding of child rearing patterns by members of one culture viewing another can lead to the mislabeling of a particular practice as child abuse. Recent studies from the western countries have reported adverse effects of childhood abuse on physical and mental health and adult life. Recently, the government of India has decided to constitute a National commission for children that would be a statutory body set up by an act of parliament to give further protection to children and act as an ombudsman for them.

1.10 Indian Context of Child Abuse and Neglect-

Factors contributing to this lack of knowledge include: few Indian social workers trained in modern family assessment, lack of acceptance and trust by Indian clients, incomplete record due, in part, to institutional barriers that prevent interagency access to records and lack of systematic follow-up by cases. As a first step to close this information gap, the summarized cases that serve to demonstrate unique patterns of child abuse and neglect in Indian communities and the problems faced during intervention.

1.11 Cultural Misunderstanding or Child Neglect-

Living among relative: one such Indian practice is living among relatives. In traditional Indian families it is common for children to be raised by relative, each of whom contributes to the care of child, with the effect that the child feels at the home within the extended family. Another similar pattern of living among relatives would be neglect, if instead of nurturance; a child is passed back and forth as an unwelcome burden. Such children show developmental delays and difficulties in interpersonal relationship.

Sibling Caretakers: a second practice that has been misinterpreted as neglectful (lack of supervision) is sibling caretaking. Adults are not for away and children have been
trained in this function. On the other hand, this practice would be regarded as neglectful if the family should leave for several days at a time or leave very young children unattended. Sibling caretakers could also prove to be hazardous, and thus neglectful, if an Indian family should move to the city.

**Poverty:** child abuses have been observed more frequently among the poor, it has been seen among all strata of Indian society. There are poor families where children are nurtured effectively and affluent families where children are abused. Poverty and its attendant stresses—joblessness (as high as 70% in some Indian communities), poor housing, under nutrition, poor sanitation and health—contribute to family dysfunction and thereby to child abuse and neglect. In many Indian communities, however factors that might be interpreted by outsiders as inductive of dysfunction are often typical or traditional Indian living and good family function. These include small living areas, no running water or electricity, limited parental education, large families, and use of traditional healers.

**Alcoholism:** alcohol related child abuse and neglect cases are a heterogeneous group, reflecting the many different patterns of Indian drinking. In some families, alcoholism has become a way of life, with severe and permanent family disintegration and chaos. The extended family may be similarly affected and, therefore unable to provide substitute parenting. Children from such medical care, failure to thrive, behavior problems, school failure, substance abuse etc. the prognosis for such children is poor and permanent substitute homes are usually needed, particularly if there have been repeated treatment failure.

**Situational Stress with Ineffective Social Support:** probably the most common precipitating cause of abuse and neglect is extreme social stress for parents who lack of effective supports and coping mechanism. Once more serious and long-standing problems have been ruled out and family strengths and limitations identified, intervention through short term counseling, social services and other local support mechanisms including traditional healers can effectively restore family functioning.

There is a common belief that the child maltreatment is a significant problem in rural areas. There are forms of punishment which can be categorized as violence
even though the intention may be to correct the child. Some children may suffer a greater risk of corporal punishment due to their family or cast or ethnic background.

In India numbers of child abuse cases are hard to attain, as most of these cases go unreported especially when it happens in the home or by family members. Focus of researchers with regards to abuse has generally been more in the public domain such as child labour, prostitution, marriage, etc. Societal abuses that are a result of poverty such as malnutrition, lack of education, poor health, neglect etc are recognized in various forms by the Indian legal system but abuse that takes place in the families or institutions such as schools, orphanages or other government institutions go unattended.

In India there is no clear cut law that protection of children against abuse in the home. It is the need of the hour to find out some elementary measures/ responses that parents can adopt to prevent child abuse and also to respond and deal with the problem in a culturally-appropriate manner once the child indicates abuse and neglect of any kind. This will help in planning child abuse education in schools and also to devise content of child abuse education for parents and community as a whole. In view of the above facts study has been stated as follows-

PATTERNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN RURAL CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATION

Present study was planned to explore the contexts in which child abuse and neglect occur with the following objectives-

1.12 Objectives of the Study –

- To find out the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in family and school setting with reference to frequency and severity
- To analyze different forms of neglect and abuse such as physical, emotional
- To find out the socio-psycho characteristics of abused children and their parents
- To find out the gender difference and association of inside (within home) and outside (school) neglect and abuse
1.13 Delimitations of the Study-

- The present study was limited to school children from 6th to 8th standards of some selected schools in Baghpat district.
- The Study was limited to schools of rural area in Baghpat.
- Child abuse and neglect included non-accidental physical or emotional harm to child, by older siblings and parents in the family and teachers in school.
- Responses were based on children’s perceptions about different variables under study (teacher and parents were not included in the study). Teacher rating on some variables was taken at the time of data collection.