CHAPTER – I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
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1.1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against children, under any circumstances is not justifiable. All violence against children is preventable. Violence against children is multidimensional and calls for multifaceted presentable measures. Protection of children from violence is a matter of urgency. Children suffer from adult violence, normally unseen, unheard and unreported for centuries. Now the impact of all forms of violence against children is better reported and it is more noticeable.

Children are an important asset for any nation. In the human life span, the childhood period is considered as the most significant, since it is the foundation period not only for their future but the future of nation as well. The way in which those children were treated during their childhood, would play a substantial role in their attitude, confidence and social orientation. The growing complexities of life and the dramatic changes brought about by socio-economic transitions in India, have played a major role in increasing the vulnerability of children to different forms of abuse. However, in India, and in many other countries, there has been no understanding of the extent, magnitude and trend of the issue.

Violence against children obstructs national development and challenges social harmony in a big way. Children contribute to one third of India’s population (440 Million belong to less than 18 years category in India). The home setting, school setting and external social setting, consider children as persons who lack their own thoughts and do not have rights or capability to decide on their own. The Indian
society, is patriarchal in structure where the chain of command is definite and inviolable. In such power structures, parents consider their children as their property and treat them as they like. In the name of care and discipline, children are mishandled. The lack of awareness on child rights provides a setting in which the children are taken for granted and they lose the fundamental right ‘to live with freedom’.

In the Indian context, acceptance of child rights as primary inviolable rights, is fairly recent. In our country, almost in all States except Kerala, patriarchal norms bring women under the control of men, despite the fact that women could not enjoy the rights equally with men. As a result of violation of human rights, Women and Children, especially girls, have to face various forms of violence right from womb to tomb, irrespective of states, religion, caste and class etc.,

Child Abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment, meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and it is a globally prevalent phenomenon. Child Abuse has serious physical and psycho-social consequences which adversely affect the health and overall well being of a child. Moreover, in traditional Indian society, the girls are born only to satisfy the male counterparts. For centuries, they have been discriminated against on various events and many researches pointed out that violation against the girl children starts at her mother’s womb. The myth of the male domination is fed among people for many generations, resulting in denial of human rights. Girl children are not able to enjoy their rights fully due to discrimination in forms of survival and needs. This inequality shatters the dreams and future of girl children.
Child Abuse is a term used for maltreatment and neglect of children. According to World Health Organization (WHO), “Childhood maltreatment and neglect is often divided into four types such as:

i. Physical abuse
ii. Sexual abuse
iii. Emotional/psychological abuse
iv. Neglect

According to the Report of Child Abuse 2007 in India by the Ministry of Women and Children, 65% of school going children reported facing corporal punishment and among them 62% of the corporal punishment was in Government and Municipal schools.

1.2. A WORLDWIDE GLANCE ON CHILD ABUSE

According to WHO, United Nations, Amnesty International and Save the children, Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO), the child abuse is a worldwide phenomenon. The following facts are put forward by these agencies.

- According to the WHO, up to 53,000 children are killed worldwide each year.
- Between 80 and 93 per cent of children suffer some forms of physical punishment in their homes and every third child is punished by using implements.
- In 2002, WHO estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18, experienced some forms of forced sexual intercourse.
- 218 million children worldwide are labourers and 126 million of them work in hazardous environments.
1.8 million children are involved in prostitution or used for pornography and 1.2 million have been trafficked.

Up to 275 million witness domestic abuse annually.

Eight million children worldwide are in residential care.

There are 2,50,000 child soldiers in the world.

According to Amnesty International, 40 percent of soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo are children. 11,000 have yet to be disarmed.

One billion children live in countries where it is legal to beat pupils.

Save the Children reports that one million children worldwide have been imprisoned.

A quarter of all adults reported having been physically abused.

One in 5 women and 1 in 13 men reported that they have been sexually abused.

Consequences of child maltreatment include impaired lifelong physical and mental health, and the social and occupational outcomes can ultimately slow a country’s economic and social development.

SOURCES: WHO, UN, AI and Save The Children

Facts on Global Child Abuse

- Approximately 5 children die every day due to child abuse
- 1 out of 3 girls and 1 out of 5 boys are being sexually abused before they reach the age 18.
- 90% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way. 68% are abused by family members.
- Most children become victims of abuse and neglect at 18 months or younger.
In 2010, 1,537 children died of abuse or neglect. 79.4% were under the age of 4 and 47.7% were under the age of 1. 48.5% of Boys and 51.2% of girls become victims at nearly the same rate.

3.6 million cases of child abuses are reported every year in U.S. Abused and neglected children are 11 times more likely to engage in criminal behavior as adults.

About 80% of 21-years-old were abused children, met criteria for any one form of psychological disorder.

14% of all men and 36% of all women in prison were abused. Abused children practice safe sex and putting them at greater risk for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). They are also 25% more likely to experience teen pregnancy.

1.2.1. Child Abuse in India

According to 2001 Census of India, children constitute 42 percent of its total population; i.e., four out of every ten persons. This is an enormous number of children that the country has to take care of. While articulating its vision of progress, development and equity, India has expressed its recognition of the fact that when its children are educated, healthy, happy and have access to opportunities, they are the India’s greatest human resource. According to Census 2011, the following facts were identified:

- India has the largest young population in the world where more than one-third of its population are below 18 years.
- Only 35% of births are registered, impacting name and nationality.
- One out of 16 children die before they attain the age of 1, and one out of 11 die before they are 5 years old.
About 35% of the developing world’s low-birth-weight babies are born in India.

Around 40% of child malnutrition in the developing world is in India.

The child sex ratio is 914 females for every 1000 male and even less in some states. The declining number of girls in the 0-6 age-group is the cause for alarm.

The share of children (0-6 years) in the total population has showed a decline of 2.8 points in 2011, compared to the Census 2001.

Out of every 100 children, 19 continue to be out of school.

Out of every 100 children who enrol, 70 drop out by the time they reach the secondary level.

Out of every 100 children who drop out of school, 66 are girls.

Around 65% of girls in India are married by the age of 18 and become mothers soon after.

India is home to the highest number of child labourers in the world.

India has the world’s largest number of sexually abused children, with a child below 16 raped every 155 minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour, and at least one in every 10 children sexually abused at some point of time.

Five States such as Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana have recorded sex ratio is below 900.

1.2.2. Status of Children in Tamil Nadu

The State of Tamil Nadu has made rapid progress in social and economic development in addressing women and children's issues over the past decades. Many initiatives from the State have become a model for the rest of the country. Though, the State average for key child survival and development indicators are good, there are
pockets of backwardness where these indicators are almost at the same level as those in poor performing States. Despite great strides in women’s development, the child sex ratio has shown a steady downward trend and it is 940 girls per 1000 boys as per 2011 Census, down from 942 in 2001, indicating the prevalence of increasing number of child abuse such as infanticide and female foeticide.

However, the State presents contradictions and disparities in the levels of social - economic and health care development in different regions and districts.

1. 2. 3. Child Abuse in Sivaganga District

According to the census 2001, Sivaganga District is one of the District with more female sex ratio 1033 for every 1000 male. But the sex ratio decreased in 2011 census with 1000 female for every 1000 male. This shows that the female population lowers for a decade which depicts, the violence against girl children in this district raised and therefore the sex ratio decreases. Sivaganga District consists of seven Taluks and the following table describes the recorded cases of violence against girl children or abuses from these taluks for the year 2014-15.
Table 1.1. Child Abuse in Sivaganga District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Description (Nature &amp; Magnitude)</th>
<th>Name of Block/ Taluk/ GP/village</th>
<th>Quantitative Data/ Information</th>
<th>Existing Interventions</th>
<th>Action taken report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bonded Child Labour</td>
<td>Devakottai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rescue and placed temporarily in Reception Unit</td>
<td>For education support transfer to Tiruvarur District CWC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Child Labour</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Counselling &amp; Referral</td>
<td>Referred to education support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Child Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>Thirupathur - 2, Karaikudi - 3, Sivagangai - 4, Devakottai - 2, Illayangudi - 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Continuing Follow up</td>
<td>All cases / all women report to the concern AWPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Begging Child</td>
<td>Kalaiyarkovil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rescue and Handover to Parents</td>
<td>Counselling &amp; Motivate about Need of Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Child Marriage</td>
<td>Thirupathur - 2, Karaikudi - 1, Sivagangai - 5, Manamadurai - 1, Illayangudi - 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Continuing Follow up</td>
<td>Stopped the marriage and gave protection to the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Street Child</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Continuing Follow up</td>
<td>Rescue &amp; Refer to Child Care Institute for Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Child Protection Unit, Sivaganga District, 2015

1.3. TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

There are several types of child abuses. Children need predictability, structure, clear boundaries and the knowledge that their parents are looking out for their safety. Abused children cannot predict how their parents will act. Their world is unpredictable, frightening place, with no rules. Whether the abuse is a slap, a harsh
comment, stony silence, or not knowing whether there will be dinner on the table tonight, or uncared and alone.

Some parents feel angry and frustrated and do not know where to turn. Raising children is one of the life’s greatest challenges and can trigger anger and frustration even in the most even tempered. If the parents had grown up in a household where screaming and shouting or violence was the norm, possibly, most of them may not know any other way to raise their kids as well. Recognizing that they have a problem is to get help. If the parents were raised in an abusive situation, that can be extremely difficult. Children experience their world as normal. It may have been normal in some families to be slapped or pushed for little to no reason, or that mother was too drunk to cook dinner. It may have been normal for some parents to call their children as stupid, clumsy, or worthless. For some other, it may have been normal to watch their mother get beaten up by their father. It is only as adults that parents have the perspective to step back and take a hard look at what is normal and what is abusive.

Child Abuse is usually classified into three major types: Physical, Sexual and Emotional. There can be multiple effects of abuse on children like self-devaluation, dependency, mistrust, and revictimization, withdrawal from people, emotional trauma, deviant behavior and interpersonal problems. The major causes of child abuse are adaptational failure or environmental maladjustment mostly on the part of the adult perpetrators but to some extent, adults are responsible for family socialization as well. Each major child abuse category has the following recognizable characteristics.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical Abuse involves physical harm or injury to the child. It may be the result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child, but not always. It can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment
that is inappropriate to the child’s age or physical condition. Many physically abusive parents and caregivers insist that their actions are simply forms of discipline—ways to make children learn to behave. But there is a big difference between using physical punishment to discipline and physical abuse. The point of disciplining children is to teach them right from wrong, not to make them live in fear. The indicators of physical abuse in the child are bruises, burns, fractures, lacerations and abrasions, abdominal injuries and human bite marks. The behavioral indicators of physical abuse are the abused child is vary of contact with adults, he /she becomes apprehensive when other children cry, show aggressiveness in behaviour, seem frightened of parents or caretakers and afraid to go home or cries when it is time to go home. The dominant causes of battering children, found in a study, were children disobeying parents, quarrels between the parents and the child is beaten as a scapegoat, child not taking interest in studies, child spending time away from home, child refusing to hand over his total earnings to his parents/guardians and child indulging in deviant behavior like theft and smoking etc.

In physical abuse, unlike physical forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

- **Unpredictability.** The child never knows what is going to set the parent off. There are no clear boundaries or rules. The child is constantly walking on eggshells, never sure what behavior will trigger a physical assault.

- **Lashing out in anger.** Physically abusive parents act out of anger and the desire to assert control and not the motivation to lovingly teach the child. Angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse.

- **Using fear to control behavior.** Parents, who are physically abusive, may believe that their children need to fear them in order to behave, So they use
physical abuse to “keep their child in line.” However, what children are really learning is how to avoid being hit and not how to behave or grow as individuals.

**Emotional Abuse:** It is the neglect or maltreatment of children. It may involve a disregard of the physical, emotional, moral or social needs of the children. Besides these, there are social abuses of children like kidnapping and forcing them to begging in streets. Four important causes of emotional abuse are poverty, deficient parental control & non cordial relations within family, maltreatment faced by parents in their own childhood or intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment and alcoholism of parents. *Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me?* Contrary to this old saying, emotional abuse can severely damage a child’s mental health or social development, leaving lifelong psychological scars. Examples of emotional child abuse include:

- Constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating a child.
- Calling names and making negative comparisons to others.
- Telling a child he or she is “no good,” "worthless," "bad," or "a mistake."
- Frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying.
- Ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving him or her the silent treatment.
- Limited physical contact with the child—no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection.
- Exposing the child to violence or the abuse of others, whether it be the abuse of a parent, a sibling, or even a pet.
Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) - Child Sexual Abuse has been defined as the involvement of dependent and immature children in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend to which they are unable to give informed consent. American Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) 1986 defines Child Sexual Abuse as interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. Sexual abuse is not often identified through physical indictors alone. A child can confide in a trusted person that she/he has been sexually assaulted. There are some physical signs of sexual abuse like difficulty in walking or sitting, pain or itching, bruises or bleeding, venereal disease and pregnancy in early adolescence. The sexually abused child may appear withdrawn or retarded, may have poor peer relationships, may be unwilling to participate in activities, may indulge in delinquent behaviour. The main causes for sexual abuse given are adjustment problems of the perpetrators, family disorganization, victim’s characteristics and the psychological disorders of the abusers.

Child Sexual Abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. It is important to recognize that sexual abuse does not always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved. While news stories of sexual predators are scary, what is even more frightening is that sexual abuse usually occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust—most often close relatives. And contrary to what many believe, it is not just girls who are at risk. Boys and girls, both suffer from sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse of boys may be underreported due to shame and stigma.
**Child Neglect**: It is a very common type of child abuse in which there is a pattern of failing to provide the child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision. Child neglect is not always easy to spot. Sometimes, a parent might become physically or mentally unable to care for a child, such as with a serious injury, untreated depression, or anxiety. Other times, alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe. Older children might not show outward signs of neglect, becoming used to presenting a competent face to the outside world, and even taking on the role of the parent. But at the end of the day, neglected children are not getting their physical and emotional needs met.

### 1.4. GENDER INEQUALITY AND CHILD ABUSE

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women from their childhood. The distinct roles and behaviour may give rise to gender inequalities, i.e. differences between boys and girls that systematically favour one group. In turn, such inequalities can lead to inequities between boys and girls in all spares of their life from childhood itself.

Tamil Nadu stands high in providing education to the children in comparison with other States. Education in the modernised world has become a business and children are forced to pursue courses of their disinclination. At the tender age of 3 years, the children are violated in the name of providing education but in reality, these children are forcibly sent to school where a rigid education system intimidates them. Whether the inherent rights of the children are being protected and restored, is the prime quest of this study.
In Indian childhood, there are several disadvantages to be dealt with, such as poverty, unhappy family situations, trauma, insecure life, abuse and personal issues like stress, frustration, and conflicts. With all these disadvantages, vulnerable children try to maintain their normal life. The child has to develop a mental and social competence. Various policies are made for their future development but children still become victim and are exploited, especially the rights of female children are denied. Gender discrimination against girl children basically starts from the family and extended to the outside environment.

Female foeticide, female infanticide, girl child marriage, child abuse, etc. result from the preferential treatment in accessing rights among male and female children and the need of the hour is to abolish the patriarchy system and to find ways for ensuring the right to live, right to protection, right to participation and right to development as per the Convention on the Rights of the Children 1989.

Gender discrimination is practised from generations to generations without any change, from the mother’s womb to its last breath in the tomb. Women give birth to baby, which a man cannot do. Chromosome within men alone determines the sex of the child. Thus God has given natural sexual characters. But gender is identified with the social responsibilities and roles played by both men and women. For example, men should not cry and it is socially not acceptable.

Research findings say that women contribute two thirds of the world wide tasks. They work 16 to 18 hours a day. They spend 73,000 hours for cooking alone, i.e. 3041 days in their life time approximately. But they possess and enjoy only one percent of the property. Their sacrificial efforts, commitment to family welfare and
other valuable contributions are not recognized. In India, though majority of women are illiterate, their contribution towards the family and the society are uncountable.

Women are discriminated in the ways of foeticide, female infanticide parental care and support, domestic assistances, denial to education, restriction of dress, movement, child abuse, child marriage, forcible marriages, devadashi system, panchali system, sati, dowry, etc.

In our country, hills, rivers, etc have feminine names and the country is called Mother India and the language is known as Mother Tongue, but women are exploited and put down by the patriarchy system. From childhood to old age, women face numerable challenges in family and society. Laws amended for preventing them from such disparities are not effective. It is the myth that women are against their own development since they practise patriarchy in child rearing as it has been fed and unconsciously internalized and do not know the real cause. These should be curbed from childhood.

‘The Study on Violence against Children’ (2006) shows that female children were involved in prostitution and pornography. More girls under 18 experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence and many girls and women in the world have undergone some form of female genital cutting. This is because of gender processing and gender inequality in the society.

In Indian Society, females are often discriminated against their health, education, prosperity and freedom. The problem is worse in conservative Rajasthan than almost anywhere else in India. For example, because girls carry the liability of dowry and leave the parent family home after marriage. Hence, parents prefer to have
male offspring. Many unborn babies are aborted and female children are abandoned or deliberately neglected and underfed, simply because they are girls. This can be seen in the fact that the female mortality rate, among 0-4 years old in India is 106% of the male mortality rate, whereas the comparable number in Western Europe is 74%. The rate is 119% in Rajasthan. Further evidence of the imbalance is that the female/male ratio within the general population of India is unnaturally low at 927/1000 and even lower in Rajasthan at 909/1000.

Gender discrimination is particularly evident in education where boys are more likely to attend school and continue for more years. The traditional place of the woman is home and many parents and children consider education for girls to be a waste of time and money, especially when the child can instead be working or performing domestic chores. The gender parity of adult literacy between men and women is 29%. Child Marriage is another way in which girls are disadvantaged. In addition to limiting educational possibilities and stunting personal development, early marriage carries health risks. A girl under 15 is five times more likely to die during pregnancy and her child is also more likely to die than a woman in her twenties.

There are various steps towards the realisation of child rights. The following section deals elaborately on the dimensions of Child Rights.

1.5. THEORIES ON CHILD ABUSE

Theories are logically interrelated statements that order, describe, explain, and predict the causes and consequences of personal or social problems. Theories are generally abstract and vary on the micro/macro continuum. Some seek the causes of events within the person, some focus on social interaction, and still others concentrate on the structural domains. To understand the complex phenomenon of child abuse, we
have to consult a range of theoretical orientations. The following two theories are worth discussing, with regard to child abuse.

1.5.1. Patriarchal Theory

Proponents of the patriarchal conception present what at first glance seems to be plausible evidence in support of their position. From early childhood, males are more outwardly aggressive than females, and as adults, they commit the preponderance of violent crimes. Even in the 21st Century, the status of women, as a whole, has yet to reach parity with that of men. Men account for the great majority of elected officials as well as the top business executives and would, therefore, be presumed to have the greater share of institutionalized power. It has been found that the most “patriarchal” states, in which men as a whole had the greatest amount of power, also reported the highest rates of male-on-female partner abuse. The number of male-dominant households (measured according to “who has the final say” in decisions regarding having children, whether a partner should go to work, etc.) exceeded the number of female-dominant households and marital conflict was the highest among the former. Patriarchal explanations are also contradicted by other research findings. First, most men are neither physically assaultive nor controlling. Second, women are as victimized in the same-sex relationships, where patriarchal structures should not exist, as in heterosexual ones and yet violent lesbians include “feminine” as well as “butch” types.

Feminist theorists have not yet explained how patriarchal power translates into personal power in the most relationships. One might suppose that a prominent businessman, who is well-connected politically in a small town, would have an advantage over an uneducated wife, especially if she lacked a network of influential friends. But most men are not so well-connected. Also, the feminist focus on institutional power ignores other forms
of power that are more germane in the home setting. These include (1) the personal power that comes from having a dominant personality and (2) relationship power which can be measured by the extent to which one person is needed by his or her partner. Thus a strong-willed woman who is ready to use whatever tactics are necessary to get her way and is married to a passive man who is emotionally dependent on her will have the power in the relationship, no matter how “patriarchal” the society is in which they live.

Feminists have defined patriarchy in various ways and have integrated it with biology, with other theoretical constructions such as capitalism and psychoanalysis, to explain women's current and historical subordination to men. Radical feminists have generally seen patriarchy as the result of men’s innate desire to have power over and maintain power over women, primarily through controlling women's sexuality. Sheffield (1987) believes that men maintain their power through sexual terrorism, a system by which males frighten and by frightening, dominate and control females. The subordination of women, in all spheres of the society, rests on the power. But patriarchy theory is criticized for many counts. Firstly, it has been inadequately formulated and some accounts of patriarchy reduces the power differential between men and women to biology. Second, it is a simplistic view of some theorists that society is an aggregate of individuals, or the embodiment of a collective will, which in turn acts with rational purpose. Thirdly, feminist theories must show the purpose or goals of men's subordination of women. These theories, which assume that the patriarchy is the result of men's innate desire for power, have not gone far enough in their theorizing.

1.5.2. Gender Theory

Viewing child abuse through the prism of woman battering, reveals that both problems originate in conflicts over gender identity and male authority. Data indicate that
men, not women, typically commit serious child abuse. A study of the mothers of child abuse victims, shows that battering is the most common context for child abuse, that the battering male is the typical child abuser, that the battered mothers have no distinctive pathology in their backgrounds, and that clinicians respond punitively to the battered mothers. The child abuse establishment assigns responsibility for abuse to mothers regardless of who assaults the child and responds punitively to women, withholding vital resources and often removing the child to foster care, if women are battered or otherwise fail to meet expectations of "good mothering." The combination of male control, misleading psychological knowledge about women's propensity for "bonding," and sanctions used to enforce gender stereotypes of motherhood combine to increase the entrapment and inequality from which battering and child abuse originate, a process termed "patriarchal mothering." The best way to prevent child abuse is through "Women empowerment."

Naturally, mothers play a negligible part in sexual abuse and they are much more frequently implicated as abusers in neglect and emotional abuse cases they are slightly more frequently implicated as abusers than fathers in cases of physical abuse. However, figures need further analysis. There is some support for the view that fathers, especially stepfathers, are more likely to abuse children seriously. For example, many child death inquiries indicate that they are known to have been the result of father or male caretaker abuse. Figures for the perpetration of neglect and physical abuse may highlight the fact that mothers spend more time with their children than fathers and are not more likely to physically abuse or neglect them.

Recorded crime rates suggest that sex offending by women is rare. Between 50 and 100 women each year are convicted of sexual offences against children in England and
Studies of female offenders suggest that:

a) they are more likely to have a history of abuse themselves than male offenders
b) they are more likely to abuse boys than girls
c) they are sometimes coerced by men to offend and may co-offend with other women or men
d) mental illness, or at least, psychological distress is commonly found in women abusers.

It is likely that levels of sexual abuse by females have been under reported because abuse by women, particularly mothers, have been a difficult issue for the community to contemplate. It is also possible that female-male abuse has sometimes been seen as a normative sexualisation experience or as of no consequence since males have retrospectively rated it as having no effect. Research has yet failed to come up with a satisfactory explanation of why women are less likely to be the perpetrators of sexual abuse than men.

1.6. EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All types of child abuses and neglect leaves lasting scars. Some of these scars might be physical but emotional scarring has long lasting effects throughout life, damaging a child’s sense of self, ability to have healthy relationships, and ability to function at home, at work and at school. Some effects include:

- Lack of trust and relationship difficulties. There is a saying, “If you can’t trust your parents, whom can you trust?” Abuse by a primary caregiver, damages the most fundamental relationship as a child—that the child will safely, reliably get his/her physical and emotional needs met by the person who is responsible for
his/her care. Without this base, it is very difficult to learn to trust people or know who is trustworthy. This can lead to difficulty in maintaining relationships due to fear of being controlled or abused. It can also lead to unhealthy relationships, because the adult does not know about a good relationship.

- **Core feelings of being “worthless” or “damaged”**: If the child is told again and again that he/she is stupid or no good, it is very difficult to overcome these core feelings. Children may experience them as reality. When they become adults they may not strive for more education, and settle for a job that may not pay enough, because they do not believe that they can do it. Sexual abuse survivors, with the stigma and shame surrounding of abuse, often especially struggle with a feeling of being damaged.

- **Trouble regulating emotions**: Abused children cannot express emotions safely. As a result, the emotions get stuffed down, coming out in unexpected ways. Adult survivors of child abuse can struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression or anger. They may turn to alcohol or drugs to numb out the painful feelings.

- **The problem of shame and guilt in child sexual abuse**: Aside from the physical damage that sexual abuse can cause is more the emotional component, powerful and far reaching. Sexually abused children are tormented by shame and guilt. They may feel that they are responsible for the abuse or somehow brought it upon themselves. This can lead to self-loathing and sexual problems as they grow older—often either excessive promiscuity or an inability to have intimate relations. The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward. They may worry that others will not believe them, will be angry with them, or that will split their family apart. Because of these difficulties, false
accusations of sexual abuse are not common and if a child confides in elders, they should take him or her seriously.

1.6.1. Warning Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

The earlier child abuse is identified, the better the chances of recovery and appropriate treatment for the child. Child abuse is not always obvious. By learning some of the common warning signs of child abuse and neglect, you can catch the problem as early as possible and get both the child and the abuser the help that they need. Of course, just because you see a warning sign does not automatically mean a child is being abused. It is important to dig deeper, looking for a pattern of abusive behavior and warning signs, if you notice something off.

Warning signs of emotional abuse in children

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
- Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).
- Does not seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, tantruming).

Warning signs of physical abuse in children

Warning signs of physical abuse in children includes frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts. Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt, shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home, and wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.
Warning signs of neglect in children

Warning signs of neglect in children includes clothes that are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather, hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor), untreated illnesses and physical injuries, frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments and frequently late or missing from school.

Warning signs of sexual abuse in children

Warning signs of sexual abuse in children includes trouble walking or sitting, displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age or even seductive behavior, makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason, does not want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities, an STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14 and runs away from home.

Child abuse and reactive attachment disorder

Severe abuse early in life can lead to Reactive Attachment Disorder. Children with this disorder, are so disrupted that they have extreme difficulty in establishing normal relationships and attaining normal developmental milestones. They need special treatment and support.

Risk factors for child abuse and neglect

While child abuse and neglect occur in all types of families, even in those that look happy from outside, children are at a much greater risk in certain situations.

❖ Domestic violence: Witnessing domestic violence is terrifying to children and emotionally abusive. Even if the mother does her best to protect her children and keeps them from being physically abused, the situation is still extremely
damaging. If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship, getting out is the best thing for protecting the children.

- **Alcohol and drug abuse:** Living with an alcoholic or addict is very difficult for children and can easily lead to abuse and neglect. Parents who are drunk or high are unable to care for their children, make good parenting decisions, and control often-dangerous impulses. Substance abuse also commonly leads to physical abuse.

- **Untreated mental illness:** Parents who suffer from depression, an anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, or mental illness will have trouble in taking care of themselves, much less their children. A mentally ill or traumatized parent may be distant and withdrawn from his or her children, or quick to anger without understanding why. Treatment for the caregiver means better care for the children.

- **Lack of parenting skills:** Some caregivers never learned the skills necessary for good parenting. Teen parents, for example, might have unrealistic expectations about how much care babies and small children need or parents who were themselves victims of child abuse, may only know how to raise their children the way they were raised. In such cases, parenting classes, therapy, and caregiver support groups are great resources for learning better parenting skills.

**Stress and lack of support.** Parenting is mainly time-intensive, difficult job, especially if someone is raising children without support from family, friends, or the community or someone is dealing with relationship problems or financial difficulties. Caring for a child with a disability, special needs or difficult behaviors is also a
challenge. It is important to get the support one needs, to emotionally and physically to support the child.

1.7. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND DECLARATIONS ON RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

India is a signatory to a number of international instruments and declarations, pertaining to the rights of children for protection, security and dignity. It has accepted to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992, reaffirming its earlier acceptance of the 1959 UN declaration on the Rights of the Child, and is fully committed to implementation of all provisions of the UNCRC. In 2005, the Government of India accepted the two optional protocols to the UNCRC, addressing the involvement of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child protection and child pornography. India is strengthening its national policy and measures to protect children from those dangerous forms of violence and exploitation. India is also a signatory to the International Conventions on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which apply to the human rights of children as much as adults.

Three important international Instruments for the protection of Child rights that India is signatory to, are as follows;

1.7.1. Conventions on Rights of Children (CRC)

In November 1989, after nearly a decade of negotiations, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CRC is widely accepted in developing countries, including India. The convention prescribes standards to be adhered to by all state parties in securing the best interest of the child and outlines the fundamental rights of children, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation and harmful work and from all forms of sexual exploitation.
and abuse and from physical or emotional violence, as well as ensuring that children will not
be separated from their families against their will. It also recognized the incredible
importance of parents and families in providing the best environment for children to grow.
Although the CRC includes 54 separate articles and three Optional Protocols, the entire
document is based on just four basic principles:

1. Children should be free from discrimination;
2. Government policies should be based on the best interests of the child;
3. Children should survive and develop to their full potential;
4. Children’s views and perspectives are important and need to be heard.

The CRC refers to the family as the fundamental group of society and the natural
environment for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children. The
Preamble recalls the basic principles of the United Nations and specific provisions of
certain relevant human rights treaties and proclamations. It reaffirms the fact that children,
because of their vulnerability, need special care and protection and it places special
emphasis on the primary caring and protective responsibility of the family. It also reaffirms
the need for legal and other protection of the child before and after birth, the importance of
respect for the cultural values of the child’s community and the vital role of international
cooperation in securing children’s rights.

The Committee has incorporated gender concerns in its dialogue with States as
parties since its first session in 1991. The lists of issues and the oral questions raised during
consideration of State parties' reports, increasingly reflect a gender perspective. The
following issues of particular relevance to the girl child have been addressed by the
Committee.
Legal and de facto equality of girls, and measures taken to ensure to girls equal rights;

Discriminatory and stereotypical attitudes, prejudices and practices towards girls;

Marriage age, especially early marriage age of girls, and forced marriage;

Violence against girls, including traditional practices harmful to girls and women, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, incest, trafficking, sexual exploitation, girl servants, bride price, female pre-natal sex selection, rape and impunity for rape when followed by marriage;

Child prostitution, child pornography;

One of the most important features of the CRC is the protection of the girl child.

1.7.2. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Child Abuse

In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which is often described as the international bill of rights for women, which is also applicable to girls under 18 years of age. Adopting such a women-specific treaty was considered necessary because notwithstanding the existence of general human rights treaties, the widespread and systematic discrimination of women and girls in all spheres of life was still a global reality. CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and girls and frames an agenda for action to end such discrimination.

CEDAW defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the
basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

The CEDAW advances girls’ human rights by reinforcing certain rights already covered by the CRC. Both the CEDAW and CRC contribute to the realization of children’s and women’s rights.

The Beijing Platform for Action strives to eliminate harmful attitudes and practices, such as female genital mutilation, son preference, which results in female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, discrimination against girls in food allocation and other practices related to health and well being. It has a special section / critical area on the Girl Child, with the following strategic objectives:

- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against girl child
- Elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls
- Promote and protect the rights of the girl children and increase awareness of their needs and potential
- Elimination of discrimination against girls in education, skill development and training
- Elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition
- Elimination of the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work place
- Eradicate violence against girl children
- Promote the girl child’s awareness and participation in social, economic and political life
- Strengthen the girl child’s awareness and participation in social, economic and political life
- Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl children.
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the two UN human rights committees, have jointly issued a General Recommendation / General Comment (GR/GC), outlining State obligations in preventing and eliminating harmful practices inflicted on women, in particular girl children. These practices are maintained and perpetuated through societal attitudes and passed down through generations. Many evil practices against girl children are celebrated, often masked in a festive mood and believed to bring respect to the girl and family. Widowhood, infanticide, etc are some social evils still inflicted to women. These norms are internalised in childhood and early adolescence through the socialisation process.

The GR/GC explicitly addresses the importance of facilitating discussions among children and those that are in their early adolescence “on social norms, attitudes and expectations that are associated with traditional femininity and masculinity and sex-and gender-linked stereotypical roles; and, working in partnership with them, to support personal and social change aimed at eliminating gender inequality and promoting the importance of education, especially girls’ education, in the effort to eliminate harmful practices that specifically affect pre-adolescent and adolescent girls.”

The committees highlight that harmful practices are “grounded in discrimination” and describe the causes of harmful practices as “multidimensional”, which “include stereotyped sex and gender-based roles, the presumed superiority or inferiority of either of the sexes, the attempt to exert control over the bodies and sexuality of women and girls, social inequalities and the prevalence of male-
dominated power structures.” Although the concept of honour applies to all these practices at varying levels, the GR/GC does not make this explicit.

These practices result from a combination of factors including misinterpretation of religious rulings, customs, tradition, and cultural influences giving rise to Honour Cultures that prescribe strict codes of sexual morality and general behaviour. Honour Values can be termed as an ideology giving power to men for oppressing women and children, and based on gender and sexuality. Men are seen as the custodians of women’s chastity and any loss or damage to their honour is damage to the male kin and collectively to their family. These practices are shown as protection rather than abuse for women and girls when viewed through the honour lens. Sometimes, girls and women are killed or driven to suicide because of the perceived dishonour of their suspected or actual sexual activity or even rape is supposed to have brought on their family. The GR/GC acknowledges that the perpetrators avoid punishment altogether or receive a reduced sanction.

The term “honour” is gender neutral and can carry many meanings such as respect, dignity and reputation. Therefore, what constitutes the “best interest of the child” in communities that observe strict codes of sexual morality and general behaviour can be overshadowed when viewed through the honour lens. Harmful practices, that are enmeshed in honour ideology, can be eliminated gradually, allowing changes to occur organically, to achieve sustainability. The GR/GC has, therefore, emphasised the importance of adopting the rights-based approach to transform social and cultural norms, through cross-cultural and internal dialogue in order to “collectively explore and agree on alternative ways to fulfil their values and
honour/celebrate traditions without causing harm and violating human rights of women and children.”

The CEDAW and CRC Committees lay importance on legislative prohibitions on harmful practices and emphasise that capacity building must include front-line professionals, including health and education, professionals and social workers, traditional and religious leaders, police, immigration authorities, public prosecutors, judges and politicians at all levels. Along with these efforts at raising awareness through the dissemination of the GR/GC, protection services must be strengthened to ensure the sustainability of new social norms. A paradigm shift can be effectively achieved only through holistic approaches, as the Committee proposed. Furthermore, the GR/GC also links practices of forced and childhood marriages and polygamy with poverty and the principle of supply and demand. These factors are relevant in a globalised world where people move from country to country and take their customary laws with them.

Country reports have shown that although child rights have been respected in many State parties, with the attainment of adulthood, the rights afforded by the CRC are not carried through by those signatories to in the CEDAW. This GR/GC, therefore, brings the life cycle perspective to the forefront as well as the importance of working together on women’s rights and children’s rights to tackle the various forms of violation committed against women and children in the name of protecting honour and sexuality.
1.7.3 SAARC Convention on Prevention and combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

It emphasizes that the evil of trafficking in women and children for the purpose of prostitution is incompatible with the dignity and honour of human beings and it is a violation of basic human rights of women and children.

1.8. CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME IN INDIA

1.8.1. UNICEF and Child Protection in India

UNICEF uses the term ‘child protection’ to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage.

UNICEF’s child protection programmes also target children who are uniquely vulnerable to these abuses, such as while living without parental care, in conflict with the law and in armed conflict. Violations of the child’s right to protection take place in every country and there are massive, under-recognized and under-reported barriers to child survival and development, in addition to being human rights violations.

Children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect are at risk of death, poor physical and mental health, HIV/AIDS infection, educational problems, displacement, homelessness, vagrancy and poor parenting skills later in life.

Child Protection is an issue in every country and a high priority for UNICEF. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties, all children have the right to be protected from harm. UNICEF activities are guided by
the existing international normative framework for the rights of the child, as well as decisions and policies agreed in United Nations intergovernmental bodies.

1.8.1.a. A Protective Environment for all Children

Preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse is essential to ensure children’s rights to survival, development and well being. The vision and approach of UNICEF was to create a protective environment, where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation, and unnecessary separation from family and where laws, services, behaviours and practices minimize children’s vulnerability, address known risk factors and strengthen children’s own resilience.

This approach is human rights-based and emphasizes prevention as well as the accountability of governments.

This protective environment rests in two strategic pillars: strengthening of national systems and social change, which translate into the following eight key strategies:

1. Governmental commitment to fulfilling protection rights: includes social welfare policies, adequate budgets, public acknowledgement and ratification of international instruments.

2. Legislation and enforcement: includes an adequate legislative framework, its consistent implementation, accountability and a lack of impunity.

3. Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and practices: includes social norms and traditions that condemn injurious practices and support those that are protective.
4. Open discussion, including the engagement of media and civil society: acknowledges silence as a major impediment to secure government commitment, supporting positive practices and ensure the involvement of children and families.

5. Children’s life skills, knowledge and participation: includes children, both girls and boys, as actors in their own protection through use of knowledge of their protection rights and ways of avoiding and responding to risks.

6. Capacity of those in contact with the child: includes the knowledge, motivation and support needed by families and by community members, teachers, health and social workers and police, in order to protect children.

7. Basic and Targeted Services: includes the basic social services, health and education to which children have the right, without discrimination, and also specific services that help to prevent violence and exploitation, and provide care, support and reintegration assistance in situations of violence, abuse and separation.

8. Monitoring and oversight: includes effective systems of monitoring such as data collection, and oversight of trends and responses.

1.8.1.b. Role of UNICEF in Child Protection in India

The goal of the programme is to prevent violence against children and to strengthen protection services for children in vulnerable situations.

It supports the implementation of the Government of India’s newly launched Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), to create a protective environment for
children through the improvement and expansion of services for children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law, under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and related legislation.

UNICEF also supports the Government in order to contribute to a reduction of child labour, by strengthening child protection structures, to adequately protect children against exploitation and abuse, improving the quality of education to increase enrolment and retention, raising awareness and empowering families and communities so that they take collective action against child labour and addressing exclusion of vulnerable families to service provision and social protection schemes.

UNICEF also works closely with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and other stakeholders, to reduce the incidence of child marriage, ensure implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and addressing the social norms that underline this practice.

Other areas where UNICEF supports the Government of India and other partners are on the prevention of child trafficking and the rehabilitation, return, and integration of trafficked children the fight against corporal punishment, promotion of birth registration and strengthening its knowledge base on the situation of children and child protection issues in the country.

1.8.2. Integrated Child Protection Scheme

In 2006, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) proposed the adoption of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and in 2009 the Scheme was implemented. The purpose of the Scheme is to provide protection for children in difficult circumstances as well as to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities
children have in various situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children.

The specific objectives of the Scheme are:

- To institutionalize essential services and strengthen structures
- To enhance capacities at all systems and persons involved in service delivery
- To create database and knowledge base for child protection services
- To strengthen child protection at family and community level
- To coordinate and network with government institutions and non-government institutions to ensure effective implementation of the scheme
- To raise public awareness about child rights, child vulnerability and child protection services.

Within the parameter of care, support and rehabilitation services, the Scheme provides CHILD LINE services, open shelters for children in need in urban and semi-urban areas, offers family-based solutions through improving sponsorship, foster care, adoption and after care services, improves quality institutional services, and general grant-in-aid for need based/ innovative interventions. Within the given statutory support services, the Scheme calls for the strengthening of CWCs, JJBs, SJPUs, as well as setting up of these services in each District. Beyond this, ICPS also outlines the need for human resource development for strengthening counselling services, training and capacity building, strengthening the knowledge-base, conducting research studies, creating and managing a child tracking system, carrying out advocacy and public education programmes, and monitoring and evaluating the Scheme.
In order to ensure the objectives and approaches of ICPS are met, the Scheme also calls for the establishment of new bodies, within a service delivery structure.

At the District level, there are

- District Child Protection Society (DCPS)
- District Child Protection Committee (DCPC)
- Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC)
- Block Level Child Protection Committee
- Village Level Child Protection Committee

At the State level, there are

- State Child Protection Society (SCPS)
- State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA)
- State Child Protection Committee (SCPC)
- State Adoption Advisory Committee

At the Regional level, there are

- Child Protection Division in the four Regional Centres of National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
- Four Regional Centres of CHILD LINE India Foundation (CIF)

The National level, there are

- CHILDLINE India Foundation- Headquarters
- Child Protection Division in the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
- Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA)
The Scheme outlines a specific implementation plan. It discusses the need for the convergence of services, to give the child the advantages of an integrated plan. This is achieved through coordination of all departments and ministries and NGOs involved. The annexure of the Scheme lays out guidelines on how to achieve each service provided in the Scheme.

1.8.3. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act was established in 2000, by replacing the old law on child protection. In this Act a child or juvenile is defined as a person, who has not completed his/her 18th year of age. It outlines two target groups: Children in need of care and protection and Juveniles in conflict with law. This Act protects not only the rights of children but also a person's rights when he/she was a child. In other words, if a crime or an incident took place while the person was a child and then during the preceding the juvenile ceased to be of age, the case would continue as if the juvenile has not turned eighteen yet.

The Objective of the Act

- To lay down a legal structure for the juvenile justice system in the country
- To provide a special approach to the protection and treatment of juveniles
- To outline the machinery and infrastructure required for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of juveniles
- To establish norms and standards for administration of juvenile justice
- To establish linkages and co-ordination between the formal system of juvenile justice and voluntary efforts in the welfare of juveniles
- To constitute special offences in relation to juveniles and provide punishment.
Salient features of JJA

1. The Act known as ‘The Reformatory Act’ deals with two categories of children, namely children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law.

b. The competent authority to deal with children in need of care and protection is the Child Welfare Committee which constitutes a Chairperson and four other members, one of whom at least should be a woman. Chapter IV of this Module would focus in detail about Children in need of care and protection and the functioning of the CWC in rehabilitation and disposition of cases.

c. Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) is the competent authority to deal with children in conflict with law which comprises of three members. The Chairperson of the Board should be a First Class Judicial Magistrate and two honorary social workers out of whom at least one should be a woman. Special provisions for children in conflict with law and the responsibilities of the Board are discussed in detail in Chapter III of this Module.

2. The Act provides for the establishment of various kinds of Institutions such as Children’s Home for the reception of child in need of care and protection.

Special Homes for the reception of child in conflict with law and Observation Homes which are meant for the temporary reception of children during the pendency of any inquiry.

After care Organizations are meant for the purpose of taking care of children after they have been discharged from Children’s Home or Special Homes.
3. A few sections in the Act (Sec 23 – 26) are focused on the offences committed by anyone against a child such as assault, causing mental or physical suffering and employment of a child which are considered as non bailable offences.

Rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 (56 of 2000) and the Amendment Act 33 of 2006):

The Ministry of Women and Child Development at New Delhi, notified the Model Rules under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 and the Amendment Act 2006 to be administered by the States for better implementation and administration of the provisions of the Act in its true spirit and substance.

These rules called the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules, 2007 have come into force on the date of its publication in the Official Gazette and these Rules will be conformed to until the respective State Government formulates Rules, specific for the State, with effect from the implementation of the JJ Act.

The Act in Section 68 prescribes various areas wherein the Rules can be applied for better Implementation of the Act, specifically with management of the Homes, standards to be adhered to, roles and responsibilities of the JJ functionaries, procedures and functioning of the competent authorities, rehabilitation mechanism and operation of JJ Fund.

It is recommended that the Act is implemented in line with the Rules to promote better understanding of the Act in order to benefit the children who come in contact with the JJ System.
1.8.4. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, was passed by the Lok Sabha on 22nd May, 2012. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 was drafted to strengthen the legal provisions for the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation. For the first time, a special law has been passed to address the issue of sexual offences against children. Sexual offences are currently covered under different sections of IPC. The IPC does not provide for all types of sexual offences against children and more importantly, does not distinguish between adult and child victims.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides protection to all children under the age of 18 years from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. These offences have been clearly defined for the first time in law. The Act provides for stringent punishments, which have been graded as per the gravity of the offence. The punishments range from simple to rigorous imprisonment of varying periods. There is also provision for fine, which is to be decided by the Court.

An offence is treated as "aggravated" when committed by a person in a position of trust or authority of child such as a member of security forces, police officer, public servant, etc.

Punishments for Offences covered in the Act are

- Penetrative Sexual Assault (Section 3) - Not less than seven years which may extend to imprisonment for life, and fine (Section 4)
- Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault (Section 5) - Not less than ten years which may extend to imprisonment for life, and fine (Section 6)
- Sexual Assault (Section 7) - Not less than three years which may extend to five years, and fine (Section 8)
- Aggravated Sexual Assault (Section 9) - Not less than five years which may extend to seven years, and fine (Section 10)
- Sexual Harassment of the Child (Section 11) - Three years and fine (Section 12)
- Use of Child for Pornographic Purposes (Section 13) - Five years and fine and in the event of subsequent conviction, seven years and fine (Section 14 (1))
- The Act provides for the establishment of Special Courts for trial of offences under the Act, keeping the best interests of the child as of paramount importance at every stage of the judicial process. The Act incorporates child friendly procedures for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and trial of offences. These include:
  - Recording the statement of the child at the residence of the child or at the place of his choice, preferably by a woman police officer not below the rank of sub-inspector
  - No child to be detained in the police station in the night for any reason.
  - Police officer to be in uniform while recording the statement of the child
  - The statement of the child to be recorded as spoken by the child
  - Assistance of an interpreter or translator or an expert as per the need of the child
  - Assistance of special educator or any person familiar with the manner of communication of the child in case child is disabled
  - Medical examination of the child to be conducted in the presence of the parent of the child or any other person in whom the child has trust or confidence.
- In case the victim is a girl child, the medical examination shall be conducted by a woman doctor.

- Frequent breaks for the child during trial

- Child not to be called repeatedly to testify

- No aggressive questioning or character assassination of the child

- In camera trial of cases

The Act recognizes that the intent to commit an offence, even when unsuccessful for whatever reason, needs to be penalized. The attempt to commit an offence under the Act, has been made liable for punishment for up to half the punishment prescribed for the commission of the offence. The Act also provides for punishment for abetment of the offence, which is the same as for the commission of the offence. This would cover trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

For the more heinous offences of Penetrative Sexual Assault, Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault and Aggravated Sexual Assault, the burden of proof is shifted on the accused. This provision has been made, keeping in view the greater vulnerability and innocence of children. At the same time, to prevent misuse of the law, punishment has been provided for making false complaint or proving false information with malicious intent. Such punishment has been kept relatively light (six months) to encourage reporting. If false complaint is made against a child, punishment is higher (one year).

The media have been barred from disclosing the identity of the child, without the permission of the Special Court. The punishment for breaching this provision by media, may be from six months to one year. For speedy trial, the Act provides for the
evidence of the child to be recorded, within a period of 30 days. Also, the Special Court is to complete the trial, within a period of one year, as far as possible.

To provide for relief and rehabilitation of the child, as soon as the complaint is made to the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or local police, they should make immediate arrangements to give the child, care and protection such as admitting the child into shelter home or to the nearest hospital within twenty-four hours of the report. The SJPU or the local police are also required to report the matter to the Child Welfare Committee, within 24 hours of recording the complaint, for long term rehabilitation of the child.

The Act casts a duty on the Central and State Governments, to spread awareness through media including the television, radio and the print media, at regular intervals, to make the general public, children as well as their parents and guardians aware of the provisions of this Act. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the Designated Authority to monitor the implementation of the Act.
### 1.9. STRATEGIES OF CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Table 1.2: Strategies for preventing child abuse by developmental stage and level of influence

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Level of Intervention</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Societal and community</td>
<td>Implementing legal reform and human rights</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Translating the convention on the Rights of the Child into national laws</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Strengthening police and judicial systems</td>
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<td>- Promoting social, economic and cultural rights</td>
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<td>Introducing beneficial social and economic policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Providing early childhood education and care</td>
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<td>- Ensuring universal primary and secondary education</td>
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<td>- Taking measures to reduce unemployment and mitigate its adverse consequences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Investing in good social protection systems</td>
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<td>Changing cultural and social norms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Changing cultural and social norms that support violence against children and adults</td>
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<td>Reducing economic inequalities</td>
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<td>- Tackling poverty</td>
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<td>- Reducing income and gender inequalities</td>
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<td>Environmental risk factor reduction</td>
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<td>- Reducing the availability of alcohol</td>
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<td>- Monitoring levels of lead and removing environmental toxins</td>
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<td>General</td>
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<td></td>
<td>❖ Shelters and crisis centres for battered women and their children</td>
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<td>❖ Training health care professionals to identify and refer adult survivors of child abuse</td>
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<td>Relationship</td>
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<td>❖ Home visitation programme</td>
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<td>❖ Training in parenting</td>
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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>❖ Reducing unintended pregnancies</td>
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<td>❖ Training children to recognize and avoid potentially abusive situation</td>
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**Societal and community strategies**

At the societal level, factors that create an environment in which abuse can flourish, include:

❖ Economic, social, health and education policies that preserve or increase economic and social inequalities

❖ Social and cultural norms that support the use of violence

❖ Ineffective or nonexistent policies on children and the family

❖ Poor preventive health care

❖ Inadequate social welfare

❖ Weak systems of criminal justice.

The community level refers to the contexts in which social relationships occur such as neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and other institutions. Here, factors such
as concentrated poverty, high residential mobility and unemployment, overcrowding and low levels of social capital, appear to increase the risk of abuse. Table 1.1 lists four groups of strategies on child abuse prevention that cut across all developmental stages and one group of strategies specific to adulthood. All five groups of prevention strategy are likely to be effective across various types of child abuse. The potential for prevention of strategies at the community level, can be enhanced by linking prevention programmes with other community programmes that reach out to “high-risk” groups. These include alcohol and drug rehabilitation services, programmes for children with disabilities and mental health services.

**Relationship Strategies**

Established risk factors for child maltreatment include

- Inadequate parenting, including the failure of any infant-parent attachment
- Unrealistic expectations of child development
- A belief in the effectiveness and social acceptability of harsh physical punishment
- Inability to provide high quality child care when the parent is absent.

Conversely, various strategies that promote early and secure infant-parent attachment and non-violent modes of discipline, that create the conditions within the family for the positive mental health development of the child, have been proved effective in preventing child maltreatment. The evidence that programmes focusing on parenting improvement and support, are effective in preventing child maltreatment, is strong. The two most widely evaluated and widely applied models for delivering these strategies are Home Visitation Programmes and Training in Parenting.
Individual Strategies

Strategies at the individual level, to prevent child maltreatment, are designed to change an individual’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviours directly and can be delivered in any setting.

Reducing Unintended Pregnancies

Unintended Pregnancy has been linked to substandard prenatal care, low birth weight, increased risk of infant mortality, child maltreatment and shortfalls in infant and child development. Efforts to reduce unintended pregnancy, could help reduce child maltreatment, although such programmes have not been adequately evaluated in terms of reducing child maltreatment.

Increasing Access to Prenatal and Postnatal Services

Programmes to provide and encourage women, to seek proper prenatal and postnatal care, show promise in preventing the maltreatment of infants aged 0–3 years. The goal is to reduce the proportion of newborn children who are premature or have low birth weight, illness or physical and mental handicaps, which may interfere with attachment and bonding and make the child more susceptible to maltreatment. Promoting the use of good prenatal and postnatal care is, therefore, believed to be crucial in ensuring better birth outcomes. Although these interventions remain to be properly evaluated, their potential for prevention is likely to be high especially since they could be applied to entire population irrespective of individual-level and group-level differences in risk. The delivery of prenatal and postnatal care also provides opportunities to recruit prospective parents and new parents into home visitation and training programmes for parents, the two relationship -level interventions for which
there is strong and consistent evidence of effectiveness in preventing child maltreatment.

**Training Children to Avoid Potentially Abusive Situations**

Programmes of this type are designed to teach children how to recognize threatening situations and to provide them with skills to protect themselves. The concepts underlying the programmes are that children own and can control access to their bodies and that there are different types of physical contact. Children are taught how to tell an adult if they are asked to do something they find uncomfortable. Researchers agree that children can develop knowledge and acquire skills to protect themselves against abuse. However, there is uncertainty about whether these skills are retained over time and whether they would in fact protect a child in every type of abusive situation, particularly if the perpetrator was someone well known to and trusted by the child. There is, therefore, a need to demonstrate scientifically that the skills learnt are actually effective in preventing maltreatment in real-life situations.

**1.9.1. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Child abuse and neglect prevention covers a broad spectrum of services like public awareness, parent education, home visitation, for audiences ranging from the general public to people who have abused or neglected a child. Community groups, social services agencies, schools, and other concerned citizens may provide these services. Typically, prevention activities attempt to

- Deter predictable problems
- Protect existing states of health
- Promote desired life objectives
Prevention efforts are likely to occur before a problem develops so that the problem itself or some manifestation of the problem, can be stopped or lessened (Willis, Holden, and Rosenberg, 1992). Specific risk factors, found to be associated with child maltreatment, include parental substance abuse, childhood disability and domestic violence. To prevent child abuse and neglect, programs may focus on one or several risk factors.

- Substance abuse treatment programs for parents with children
- Respite care programs for families with children having disabilities
- Parent education programs and support groups for families, affected by domestic violence.

In addition, many prevention programs are focusing efforts on strengthening child and family protective factors, such as the knowledge and skills children need to protect themselves from sexual abuse, the promotion of positive interactions between children and parents and the knowledge and skills, parents need to raise healthy, happy children.

**Different Types of Prevention Activities**

Child abuse and neglect prevention activities generally occur at three basic levels that reflect the audience targeted to receive the service

- Primary Prevention Activities are directed at the general population with the goal of stopping the occurrence of maltreatment before it starts.
- Secondary Prevention Activities target families, at high risk of maltreatment, to alleviate conditions associated with the problem.
Tertiary Prevention directs services to families where maltreatment has occurred, to reduce the negative consequences of the maltreatment and to prevent its recurrence.

Examples of each type of prevention activity are described below.

**Primary Prevention**

Primary Prevention Activities raise the awareness of the general public, service providers and decision makers about the scope and problems associated with child maltreatment. Primary prevention activities may include:

- Public service announcements, on the radio or television, encouraging parents to use nonviolent forms of discipline
- Parent education programs and group teaching, parents age-appropriate expectations
- Public awareness campaigns, informing citizens, how and where to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

**Secondary Prevention**

Secondary Prevention Activities focus efforts and resources on children and families, known to be at higher risk for maltreatment. Several risk factors such as substance abuse, young maternal age, developmental disabilities, and poverty are associated with child maltreatment. Programs may direct services to communities or neighbourhoods that have a high incidence of any or all of these risk factors. Examples of secondary prevention programs include:

- Parent education programs, located in high schools for teen mothers
- Substance abuse treatment programs for parents and families with young children
- Respite care for families who have children with special needs
Family resource centres, offering information and referral services, to families living in low-income neighbourhoods.

**Tertiary Prevention**

Tertiary Prevention Activities focus efforts on families where cases of abuse and/or neglect have already occurred. The goal of these programs is to prevent maltreatment from recurring and to reduce the negative consequences, associated with maltreatment (e.g., social-emotional problems in children, lower academic achievement, decreased family functioning). These prevention programs may include services such as

- Intensive family preservation services, with trained mental health counsellors, available to families 24 hours per day, for a short period of time (e.g, 6-8 weeks)
- Parent mentor programs, with stable, non-abusive families, acting as "role models" and providing support to families in crisis
- Mental health services, for children and families, affected by maltreatment to improve family communication and functioning.

**Major Prevention Program Models**

Prevention activities range from broad public awareness campaigns to targeted services such as parent skills training and home visitation. Generally, prevention programs are patterned after one of four models

- Public Awareness Activities
- Parent Education Programs
- Skills-based Curricula for Children
- Home Visitation Programs.
Examples of each program model are provided below.

**Public Awareness Activities**

Public awareness activities are an important part of an overall approach to address child abuse and neglect. Such activities have the potential to reach diverse community audiences like parents and prospective parents, children and community members, especially professionals, who are critical to the identification and reporting of abuse. In designing prevention education and public information activities, national, state, and local organizations use a variety of media, to promote these activities, including

- Public service announcements
- Press releases
- Posters
- Information kits and brochures
- Television or video documentaries and dramas.

Through these media, communities are able to promote support for healthy parenting practices, child safety skills, and protocols for reporting suspected maltreatment.

**Public Awareness**

Public Awareness Initiatives focus on the prevention of child abuse. In these programmes, contacts are established to ensure that all professionals involved in the care of children (e.g., teachers, physicians, nurses, home visitors, and parent educators) would become aware of the dangers associated with child abuse. In addition to professionals, these campaigns target parents, to alert them to the dangers of child abuse as well as rearing their children in certain ways. These programmes
also teach the parents about the dangers involved in handling their babies (e.g., throwing the baby in the air, bouncing the baby on a knee, twisting the baby in the air). Some organizations engage in public awareness activities by developing comic books that address child sexual abuse and child safety issues. They also distribute information packets each year to assist community groups planning like Child Abuse Prevention Month activities. There are many such initiatives, both at national and state levels to provide public awareness and other activities to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Additionally, Children's Trust Funds exist at state level with specific goals of preventing child maltreatment. They coordinate prevention activities throughout the state by promoting and funding a variety of community-based programs, including public awareness campaigns, home visitation programs, skill-based curricula for children, and parent education and support activities. In addition, many Children Trusts develop and distribute posters for community groups, schools, and many other professionals working with children. The poster may encourage parents to use positive discipline techniques or encourage children to protect them from abusers.

**Parent Education Programmes**

Parent education programs focus on decreasing parental practices and behaviours associated with child abuse and neglect, and typically target teen parents and highly stressed parents as well as their children. These programs address issues such as

- Developing and practising positive discipline techniques
- Learning age-appropriate child development skills
- Promoting positive play interaction between parents and children
- Locating and accessing community services and supports.
Parent Education Programs are designed and structured differently, usually depending on the curriculum being used and the target audience. Programs may be short term, offering classes once a week, for 6 to 12 weeks or programs may be more intensive, offering services more than once a week and for up to an year. Popular parent education programs include Parents and Teachers, Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC) and the Nurturing Program. In addition to parent education programs, parent support groups may also strengthen families and prevent child maltreatment. A programme named, Parents Anonymous State affiliates works within their communities, to provide support and resources to overwhelmed families and other families struggling with everyday stresses and strains.

**Skill-Based Curricula for Children**

Many schools and local community social service organizations offer skill-based curricula, to teach children about safety and protection skills. Most of these programs focus efforts on preventing child sexual abuse and teaching children to distinguish appropriate touching from inappropriate touching. Many curricula have a parent education component, to give parents and other caregivers, the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and discuss sexual abuse with their children. Curricula may use various methods to teach children skills including

- Workshops and school lessons
- Puppet shows and role-playing activities
- Films and videos
- Workbooks, storybooks, and comics.

Examples of skill-based curricula include programs such as Talk About Touching, Safe Child, Reach, Recovery, Challenge, Good Touch/Bad Touch, Kids on the Block, and Illusion Theatre.
Home Visitation Programmes

Home Visitation Programs that emphasize the health and well being of children and families, have existed in USA since the 19th Century. Many home visitation programs exist throughout the world. Large and small organizations are establishing programs and providing community-based services to a wide ranging population. Rather than a specific activity, home visitation is a strategy for service delivery. Organizations and agencies in fields as varied as education, maternal and child health, and health and human services, use home visitation programs, to accomplish their goals related to strengthening families. Home visitation programs reduce the incidence of child maltreatment. Following this success, an increasing number of communities have turned towards home visitation programs. Home visitation programs offer a variety of family-focused services to pregnant mothers and/or families with new babies. Activities encompass structured visits in the family's home, informal visits and telephone calls. Topics covered through these programs, may include

- Positive parenting practices and non violent discipline techniques
- Child development
- Availability and accessibility of social services
- Establishment of social supports and networks
- Advocacy for self (parent), child and family
- Maternal and child health issues
- Prevention of accidental childhood injuries, through the development of safe home environments.
1.10 PREVENTION SERVICE PROVIDERS

To stem the rising tide of child maltreatment throughout the world, many organizations and government agencies are refocusing their energy on prevention activities. Health care providers, community organizations, social services agencies, schools, and employers are becoming increasingly involved in the well-being of children and families. The following section describes how these organizations provide prevention services to strengthen and support families.

Health Care Providers

Health care providers are in a unique position to assist in the prevention of child maltreatment. These professionals have routine access to children and families through well-child visits, immunizations, and sick-child visits. Additionally, primary care providers emphasize the prevention of disease and the promotion of health and well being. With this foundation, they have a natural role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Activities that protect and promote the health of children and their parents, also contribute to the prevention of child maltreatment and they include

- Prenatal and early childhood health care that improves pregnancy outcomes and health among new mothers and young children
- Family-centred birthing and prenatal coaching that strengthens early attachment between parents and their children
- Home health visitation that provides support, education, and community linkages for new parents
- Support programs that assist parents of children with special health and developmental problems.
1.10.1 Community-Based Organizations

Many community organizations offer a wide range of services for children and families. Boys and Girls Clubs, scouting troops, and local YMCA/YWCAs provide social and recreational opportunities for children and families. Community centres, food banks, emergency assistance programs, and shelters offer various family support services, to increase family resources and decrease stress. Exchange clubs, fraternal organizations, advocacy groups and ethnic, cultural and religious organizations also support child maltreatment prevention activities. Specific examples of prevention activities, found within community-based organizations, include

- Self-help and mutual aid groups, providing nonjudgmental support and assistance to troubled families
- Natural support networks, providing families with informal "helpers" and community resources
- Child and respite care programs to reduce the stress for employed parents and provide positive modelling and contact for parents and children

1.10.2. Social Service Agencies

Increasingly, social service agencies and professionals are expanding their focus to include programs, that prevent family problems from escalating into violence. Particularly, effective social service initiatives, for strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment, include

- Parent education services which help parents to develop adequate child-rearing knowledge and skills
- Parent aid programs which provide supportive one-on-one relationships for parents
- Crisis and emergency services, which support parents and children at times of exceptional stress or crisis
- Treatment for abused children, which prevents an intergenerational repetition of family violence.

1.10.3. Schools

With increased public and professional attention to the serious social problems affecting children and adolescents, schools have become the focus for many new prevention efforts, which includes

- Comprehensive, integrated prevention curricula, to provide children with the skills, knowledge, and information, necessary to cope successfully with the challenges of childhood and adolescence
- Policies eliminating corporal punishment
- Support programs, for children with special needs, to help reduce the stress on families with a "special" or disabled child.

1.10.4. Employers

As the number of parents working outside home continues to grow, the need increases for employment and workplace policies to enhance family functioning and prevent child maltreatment. For all working parents, a supportive work environment can help ease the stress of the dual responsibilities of work and family. For some already-vulnerable parents, a supportive work climate may prevent family dysfunction, breakdown, abuse and neglect. Family-focused initiatives for the workplace include

- Flexible work schedules and benefits that help families to balance the demands of their work and parental commitments
Parental leave policies that reduce stress on new parents and help facilitate positive attachments between parents and their infants

- Employer-supported child care

1.11 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While gender discrimination exists almost all over the world, it is much greater in some countries. India is definitely one of them. Girls are in vulnerable situations such as poverty, disability, homelessness etc. and they find themselves doubly disadvantaged, by their gender and the physical, geographic, economic, political, and social situations that they find themselves in. It is, therefore, imperative to take a gender perspective into account while examining the situation of children. Abuse of girl children is widely prevalent in Tamil Nadu. Already some measures have been taken to reduce child abuse. To increase the application of prevention strategies against child abuse, more outcome studies are urgently needed, especially from low-and middle-income backgrounds. These studies should include attempts to find out the outcomes of the existing strategies. They should provide practical guidance on how to plan, select, design and implement prevention strategies in a way that they will generate evidence as to how effective they are. Realizing this, the Researcher has focused on child issues and carried out this research on the “A Gender Perspective Study on Child Abuse”. This research is aimed at dealing with child abuse, its categories, how gender plays a vital role in child abuse, how it affects the overall progress of the country, legal provisions related to child issues and strategies to be followed. Against this background, the Researcher decided to undertake a comprehensive study on child abuse and how gender drives girl children to undergo various forms of abuses.
1.12 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Indian childhood, there are several disadvantages to be dealt with, such as poverty, unhappy family situations, trauma, insecure life, abuse and personal issues like stress, frustration, and conflicts. With all these disadvantages, vulnerable children try to maintain their normal life. The child has to develop a mental and social competence. Various policies are made for their future development but children still become victim and they are exploited. Especially the rights of female children are denied. Gender discrimination against girl children basically starts with the family and extends to the outside environment. Female foeticide, female infanticide, girl children marriage, child abuse, etc. are the result of gendering. Hence the need to study the preferential treatment, in accessing rights among male and female children, is the need of the hour to eradicate child abuses and to find ways for ensuring the right to live, right to protection, right to participation and to development, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Children 1989.

The specific problem addressed by the study is that Government Institutions currently lack understanding of child abuse, which is proliferating deeply into the society like cancer. Do the Governments and public use the laws and amendments properly for abolishing child abuse? For what purposes do these laws and conventions were amended? What are the significant differences among various strata of the stakeholders in their views about child abuse? All these are some of the questions for which answers have been sought in the study entitled, “A GENDER PERSPECTIVE STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE”.

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1.13 CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Child

According to the Convention of Rights of Children (CRC), the Article 1, defines ‘the child as every human being below the age of 18 years. The Convention clearly specifies the upper age limit for childhood as 18 years but recognises that the majority may be obtained at an earlier age, under the laws applicable to the child.

Child Abuse

Child abuse is doing something or failing to do something that results in harm to a child or put a child at risk of harm. Child abuse can be physical, verbal or sexual. Neglect or not providing for child’s need also are a form of abuse.

Child Abuse may be physical, emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment of children, as well as commercial or other exploitation.

Gender Perspective

Gender Perspective is about the ways women and men interact and their ability to access resources and opportunities in their communities depending on they being a woman or a man.

Gender Perception

Gender Perception is a term used to describe how individuals are classified as male, female or transgendered. These types of perceptions are frequently dependent upon physical cues such as genitalia, facial hair and body structure. As a term, gender perception may be used to describe group perceptions about gender as well as individual perceptions about one's own gender.


Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system in which power is held by men, through Cultural norms and customs that favour men and withhold opportunity from women. Patriarchy refers to a family or society, in which authority is vested in males, through whom descent and inheritance are traced. It is a community in which the father or the oldest male is the supreme authority and descent is traced through the male line.

Gender Discrimination

Gender Discrimination means discrimination based on a person's gender or sex. Under Gender Discrimination, women do not have the same opportunities as men and boys for education, meaningful careers, political influence, and economic advancement. It is a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a woman/ girl is treated less well than a man/boy.

Gender Discrimination is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex. Sexism can affect any gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls.

Gender Inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. Gender Inequality means unequal treatment and opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life such as health, education, economic and political areas.

Gender Equality

Gender Equality is a status where both men and women receive equal treatment without discrimination against in any form of gender.
**Child Protection**

Child Protection indicates the mechanism to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour, denial of rights and harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage. Child Protection aims at creating a protective environment in which children can live and develop all respects of their fundamental rights.

**Domestic Violence**

Domestic Violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviours that intimidates, manipulates, humiliates, isolates, frightens, terrorizes, coerces, threatens, blames, hurts, injures, or wounds someone.

Children, who grow up witnessing domestic violence, are among those seriously affected by this crime. Frequent exposure to violence at home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physical problems, but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life and has increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers.

**Impact of Domestic Violence on Children**

Children and youth, who are exposed to domestic violence, experience emotional, mental, and social damage that can affect their developmental growth. Some children lose the ability to feel empathy for others. Others feel socially isolated, unable to make friends as easily due to social discomfort or confusion over what is acceptable.
1.14. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the present study are

1. To study the socio-economic background of the children in the study areas
2. To study the profile of the children at school environment
3. To study the forms of child abuses, the children encountered in the recent years
4. To identify gender discrimination practices in the family
5. To find out the causes of child abuse in the specific area of research
6. To assess the level of awareness of child protection schemes available among the children
7. To suggest strategies for addressing and preventing the issues of child abuse

1.15. **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study has focused on child abuse and the respondents views and experiences. The findings of this study would be of importance to the academic and the research community. In India, very few studies have been conducted so far in this field and hence this study may help the future researchers to conduct new studies, with different settings and variables.

This study would be very much useful for the teachers, social scientists, leaders, women empowerment NGOs, educational administrators, curriculum planners, activists and the Government. By understanding the child abuse problem thoroughly, the society may modify their views about child abuse and mend their ways to protect the child rights.

Before implementing any new programme or schemes, it is necessary to identify the usage and attitudes of the respective stakeholders toward that issue. In this
respect, this Study would help the social experts to identify the problem of child abuse and diagnose its causes and explore the methods to completely eradicate this menace.

1.16. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations

Limitations of a study are potential weaknesses in the study that are mostly out of the researcher’s control. Limited funding, choice of research design, statistical model constraints, the sample, time limit in successfully completing the research, the background of the respondents, the honesty of all responses and so forth, can all affect the of research findings. Accordingly, the limitations of the present study are as follows

1. In order to bring the original causes of abuse children, a structured questionnaire was distributed among 560 students, both boys and girls, studying in 9th standard to 11th in various schools in Karaikudi and Tiruppathur Taluks of Sivaganga District and data were collected. This was considered an appropriate method to bring the causes and bitter experiences, without any hesitation rather than narrating in words in front of other peers. The veracity of the information, the reliability of the data, and whether the children had understood the problem in the correct way, all are subjective. This was out of the control of the researcher. Then the questionnaire was scrutinized according to the respondents, family which had both male and female children for the analysis. Finally, the sample for the research was confined to only 300 respondents.
Delimitations

Creswell (2009) defined delimitations as identifying factors that narrow the scope of the research and define research boundaries. Delimitations thus identify what is not included or intended in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). As opposed to limitations, delimitations are within the Researcher's scope of control (Simon, 2011). The following are some delimitations of the present study

1. The study was conducted only in Karaikudi and Thirupathur taluk.
2. School going children, both boys and girls, in the age group of 13 to 18 were selected for this study.
3. The study was conducted among the students in eight schools.

1.17. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The Thesis was organized in the following chapters.

- In the First Chapter, research problem is introduced with historical and current perspectives
- Review of studies, related to the topic in India and abroad, are presented in the Second Chapter
- The Third Chapter deals with the tools developed for the survey procedure, and the data collection methodology.
- A detailed discussion on the data analysis, statistical techniques used and the interpretation are presented in the Fourth Chapter
- The Last Chapter presents a summary of the findings, recommendations, scope for further research and conclusion.