

Six months Cruel Numbers 2021: A Distressing Scenario of Pakistan

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Author's Contribution

¹ Conception of study

¹ Experimentation/Study conduction

² Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion

³ Manuscript Writing

² Critical Review

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Abstract

Objective: To determine the frequency of different child abuse acts reported in Pakistan during January-June 2021.

Materials & Methods: A cross-sectional survey was carried out by retrieving the child abuse data 2021 from Sahil NGO. The data was gathered about all the cases of child abuse reported during January-June 2021 pertinent to their provincial and regional placement, age, and gender distribution. The relationship of the child abuser with the victimized child was also investigated. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2010. Percentages and frequencies of all variables were computed.

Results: Of the total 1896 child abuse cases reported during Jan-Jun 2021 in Pakistan, sexual abuse was maximally (57.2%) registered followed by the cases of abduction (27.6%), missing children (12.5%), and child marriages (2.7%). About 53% of the victimized children were 6-15 years old girls. The majority (60%) of them belonged to Punjab and 58% were residents of the rural community. Approximately 62.2% of the afflicted children were abused by their acquaintances while 25.6%, 2.9%, 2.3%, and 1.9% of the children were mistreated by strangers, relatives, neighbors, and family members respectively.

Conclusion: Child abuse is an exceedingly growing social issue in the Punjab province.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, child marriage, abduction, missing children.

Introduction

Child abuse is a broad terminology that encompasses a variety of crimes associated with hampering of physical growth, mental development, survival, or dignity of an afflicted child.¹ According to World Health Organization, about 1 billion 2-17 years old children across the globe are subjected to physical, sexual, or emotional harm either by their caregivers or strangers.² Of the 162 targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, one of the target is to eradicate all sorts of child abuse including trafficking and violence.³

Although Article 25 of Pakistan strictly condemns the subjection of a child to any kind of cruelty, inhuman act, or punishment; but this legislation lacks adequate protection of a child against ill-treatment that should be the prerogative of the concerned authorities to restrict such adversities.⁴ Although the national child abuse law is passed by the Parliament of Pakistan in 2020 to imprison the life of the victim⁵; however current data for 2021 reveals an increase in child abuse offenses to two cases per day relative to last year's statistics.⁶

Missing children is also one of the commonly encountered social issues worldwide that need the attention of our stakeholders to mitigate its frequency.⁷ In addition to kidnapping and abduction of children in our community, some are reported as runaway cases as well.⁸ By signing the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), the state of Pakistan is now destined to develop a comprehensive child protection system through the implementation of multi-dimensional strategies.⁹ Due to the connectivity of child abuse with the health and behavior of the afflicted child¹⁰, this matter needs consideration of all parents and society as a whole for the protection of our children from all misfortunes.

The current study is therefore planned to highlight the various facets of child abuse prevailing in our community by analyzing the data gathered by SAHIL NGO.¹¹ Reflecting the true picture of this issue impeding child protection is imperative to comprehend the gravity of its existence and hence for the motivation of all human beings deemed necessary for its eradication.

Subjects and Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted by getting the data pertinent to child abuse from Sahil NGO. This

NGO has missionized to protect the children against all kinds of violence, particularly child abuse.¹¹ The data was collected from this organization about all the cases of child abuse reported during Jan-Jun 2021 with respect to their provincial and regional placement, age distribution as well as gender categorization. The association of the child abuser with the afflicted child was also scrutinized. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2010. Percentages and frequencies of all variables were calculated.

Results

About 1896 cases of child abuse were reported from all the provinces of Pakistan from January-June 2021.

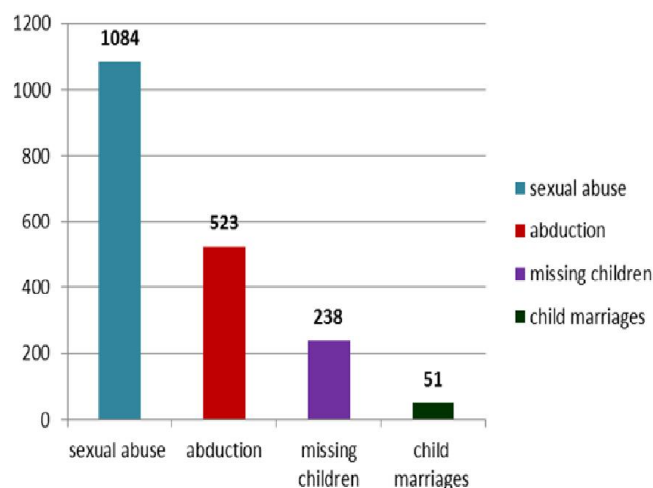


Figure 1: Frequency of Pakistani children subjected to various worrisome situations

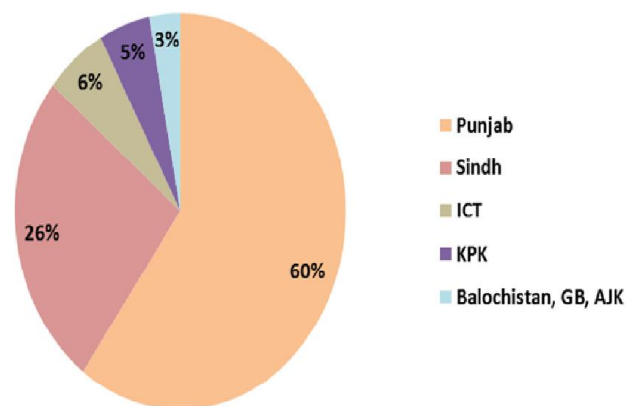


Figure 2: Province-wise distribution of Child abuse cases in 2021

Around 33.8% and 21.6% of the children subjected to such misfortunes were 11-15 years and 6-10 years old respectively. The staff of Sahil NGO was able to investigate the relationship of abusers with about 1676 children who were abused one way or the other and approximately 62.35% of the abusers were close contacts as revealed below in Figure 3.

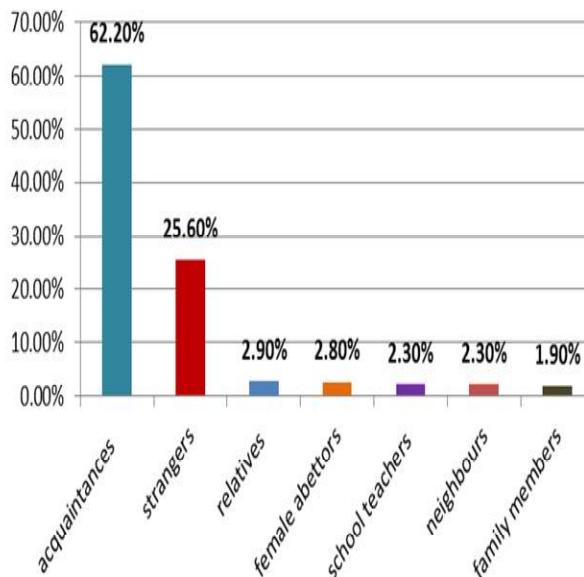


Figure 3: Relationship of the child abusers

Discussion

Of the 1896 children reported with child abuse from January–July 2021 in all provinces of Pakistan, sexual abuse was identified as the greatest afflicted crime (57.2%) followed by abduction (27.6%), missing children (12.5%), and child marriages (2.7%). Approximately 53% of female children 6-15 years old specifically 11-15 years of age were more subjected to child abuse with 60% of the cases detected in Punjab province. About 24 lac child abuse cases with the victimization of approximately 80% girls under 14 years of age were testified in India from 2017-2020. According to National Crime Record Bureau, more than 100 children on daily basis are confronted with any kind of abuse.¹³ On the other hand, around 618,399 children residing in the United States were subjected to abusive acts during 2020 and this figure was relatively determined to be the lowest than that of 2012 when 656,372 children were victimized.¹⁴ In-depth review of United States statistics 2020 revealed that Asians residing there were least victimized at the rate of 1.6 per 1000 children.¹⁵ In addition to law

enforcement, National Center for missing and exploited children is also established in the United States for child safety and delinquency prevention¹⁶. The decline in cases during 2020 in the west might be attributed to this enactment. Physical and mental impairment among our children is partially attributed to this social stigma as well that is being carried out even in homes, schools, and other academies. Law enforcement and stringent implementation against such criminalities are imperative in Asian regions of the globe as well for their elimination from society.

Although child marriage in the present study is detected as the minimally prevailing crime (Figure 1), still this issue needs contemplation of the legislators to root out this evil from our civilization. Child marriage is perceived to be alarmingly high across the globe that needs due consideration by policymakers for its diminution. Apart from the deterioration of development goals of child-like health and education, other human rights are also adversely violated.¹⁷ Financial instability and illiteracy were determined to be the main attributes of child marriages in African and South Asian countries.¹⁸ Although the law is formulated in Pakistan for the prohibition of child marriage; still, grave consequences resulting from child marriage are being faced primarily in deprived regions of the country.¹⁹ One of the targets related to Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) to be achieved by 2030 is to abolish all illegal practices detrimental to a child including early and forced marriage.²⁰ Rigorous monitoring of such social issues is the need of the hour in order to refrain our children from the devastating consequences.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Child abuse is alarming rising in Pakistan predominantly in the Punjab province. Strict observance of the law against child abuse by the concerned officials is the need of time to suppress this brutal act in our society.

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