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## The Role of Police in Safeguarding Children from Crime at the National Level

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### ABSTRACT

Children's safety and well-being are vital considerations in any society, and law enforcement organisations play a critical role in protecting children from crime on a nationwide scale. This paper provides an overview of a comprehensive study that investigates the diverse function of police in numerous elements of child protection. The study investigates the many functions of the police force in dealing with crimes against children, such as prevention, intervention, and response. It dives into the legislative and policy frameworks that regulate police child protection actions, emphasising the need of coordination with other stakeholders such as social agencies, schools etc.

Furthermore, the study examines the problems that law enforcement organisations confront in their efforts to safeguard children from crime, such as resource constraints, training requirements, and the developing nature of threats in the digital era. The paper also emphasises effective tactics and best practises by police for increasing child protection efforts and improving outcomes.

**KEYWORD:** - Child Crime, Police, Role of Law Enforcement, Best Strategies.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

India has a population that is over 50% under 25 years old. More than any other nation in the world, India has one of the largest youths. Currently, 25% of people are under 25, 65% are under 35, and one third of people are younger than 14. India's average age is projected to be 29 years old by 2022, compared to 37 years old in China and 45 years old in Europe. India will have the biggest working-age population in the world by 2030, with over 96 crores (960 million) people, accounting for two third of the total population. More than half of India's population will be under 32 by 2030. According to these statistics, children and youth are important because they will play significant roles in the future, hence our police need to be effective in dealing with children's crimes. Children have long been victims of one form of abuse or another. Though it is difficult to believe, where we consider children to be the future of our nation, it is not incorrect to state that they have been severely neglected. Crimes against children are not limited to any particular gender or age group; rather, they occur due to their inability to comprehend the nature of the offences being committed against them and

the consequences thereof, making them a soft target for the offender. Their natural innocence and maturity, which are typically associated with a child's age, make them an offender's preferred victim.

In this paper, we have specifically discussed the many types of problems encountered by children at the national level, and ideas on crime against children in India. Here, we will look at many strategies, ideas, norms, and laws established up concerning child rights, as well as the challenges faced by children and the solutions to them. Finally, we will look at and recommend current police methods, schemes, and strategies to ensure the safety of children.

## **2. The following includes the crimes against children that are being committed in India:**

- Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
- Cruelty
- Employment of child for begging
- Intoxicating a Child
- Child Pornography
- Early marriage,
- Domestic abuse, violence at home and in school,
- Trafficking,
- Online violence,
- Child labour and bullying.

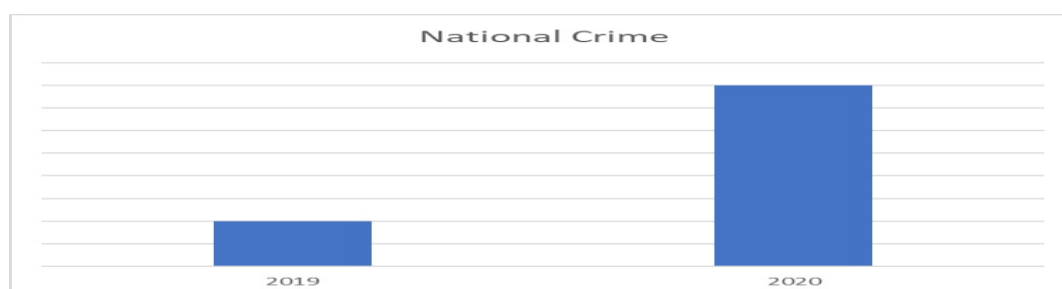
## **3. These organisations in India are concerned with children's rights and protection:**

In India, there is a relatively broad policy and legislative framework addressing children's rights and protection, offering chances to guarantee that all children have equitable access to high-quality protective services:

- 1) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006),
- 2) The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012),
- 3) The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act (2000, amended in 2015),
- 4) The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986, amended in 2016)<sup>1</sup>

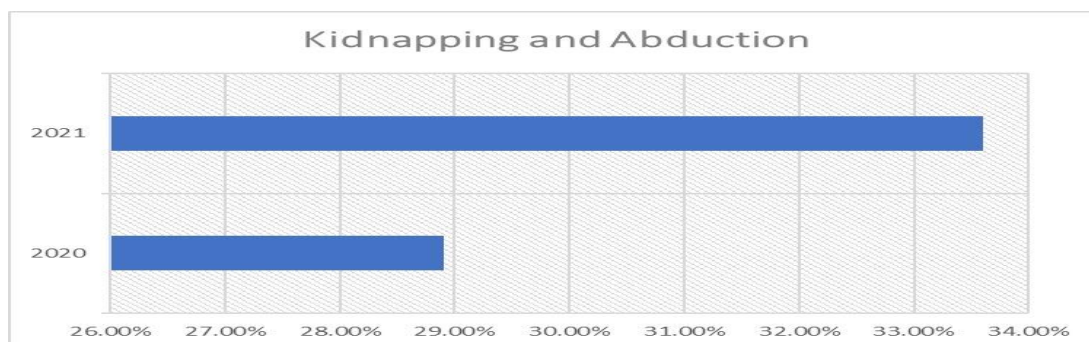
## **4. The latest data released by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) on Crime against Children:**

- The National Crime Records Bureau released new data that highlights the increasing susceptibility of children. In 2021, there were over 1.49 lakh incidences of crime against children reported. This is a noteworthy 16.2% rise from 2020 (1.28 lakh instances).



<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/india/child-protection>. Last accessed on 2023, October 28.

- Kidnapping and abduction accounted for 45% of all crimes, with sexual offences, including child rape, accounting for an alarming 38.1% of occurrences. In 2021, there were 33.6 recorded crimes per lakh children, compared to 28.9 in 2020.



- In 2020, there was a 13.2% decrease in child abuse cases compared to the 1.48 lakh cases in 2019, a year when the pandemic led to lockdowns and restrictions. The "Crime in India" report, however, presents a serious image because there were more incidents in 2021 than there were in 2019.
- 2020 saw a 42.6% increase in kidnapping and abduction cases, followed by 38.8% increase in sexual offence cases, including child rape, as defined by the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. In 2019, POCSO cases comprised 35.5% of all cases. 54,359 victims were involved in 53,874 cases under various POCSO sections in 2021. The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data was cited by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in its data, which showed that from 12 instances in 2019 to 31 cases in 2021, the number of cases recorded under the POCSO Act grew by 158.33%.
- Among union territories, Delhi had the highest rate of crimes against children in 2021.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the most recent data issued by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cybercrimes against minors increased dramatically by more than 400% in 2020 compared to 2019. Most of these charges had to do with disseminating or publishing content that featured youngsters engaging in sexually explicit behaviour. Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Odisha, in that order, witnessed the highest number of such offences against kids.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/ rise-in-crimes-against-kids-report>. Last accessed on 2023, October 27.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cyber-crimes-against-children>. Last accessed on 2023, October 29.

## 5. The Police's Role in Combating and Preventing Crime against Children: Methodologies, Government Schemes and Strategies, Community Policing Tactics, and Smart Policing Strategies:

- Procedures for Recording a Child's Statement under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012
- The child's statement shall be documented in the child's residence, a place where he normally resides, or a place of his choice, and as far as practical by a woman police officer not lower than the rank of sub-inspector.
- The police officer recording the child's statement shall not be in uniform.
- The police officer conducting the inquiry must ensure that the kid has no contact with the accused at any time while examining the youngster.
- For whatever reason, no child shall be kept in a police station at night.
- The State Government has establish a Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) in each district and city to coordinate all police functions pertaining to children.
- When a FIR is filed for an offence against a child, a copy of the FIR should be given to the child victim, and when the investigation is finished, a copy of the investigation report and other relevant documents should be given to the complainant or any person authorized to act on his behalf.
- A Child Welfare Police Officer is a trained officer who deals with crimes perpetrated by or against children. According to the JJ Act, each thana has a CWPO who can be contacted. The CWPO reports to the SJPU and serves as a watchdog for legal protection against all forms of child abuse and exploitation.
- A community policing programme for children called Children and Police (CAP) is proposed as an affection-driven, solution-focused, problem-oriented stakeholder collaborative effort by Police. CAP establishes a positive forum for communication between the Police, Children, and other stakeholders, such as the Civil Society.<sup>4</sup>

## 6. Smart Policing and Digital Initiative by the Indian Police Department to Safeguard Children from Crime:

- **Student Police Cadet Programme:** Enabling children to grow into responsible and capable citizens of a democratic society by instilling in them respect for the law, inner capability, self-discipline, civic sense, empathy for vulnerable members of society, and opposition to social evils. The Union Home Minister launched the SPC programme nationally.
- **Project ORC (Our Responsibility to Children):** Identifying and addressing children's behavioural, emotional, and social deviance, as well as other vulnerabilities, and integrating them into the

<sup>4</sup> Responsibilities of the Police towards the Children. (2021). National Human Rights Commission. Published by National Human Rights Commission, Manav Adhikar Bhawan, C-Block GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi. Last accessed on 2023, October 30.

mainstream through counselling, professional assistance, enhancing life skills, nurturing strengths, addressing vulnerabilities, and promoting mentoring and good parenting.

- **Project HOPE:** To enhance confidence, self-worth and skills of children who fail/drop out of schools before successful completion of XIIth STD by Strength & Difficulty 'The Think Tank for Indian Police' 'Promoting Good Practices and Standards' assessment, mentoring, coaching, skill development and supporting job placements
- **Child Friendly Police Stations**, also known as CAP stations, are those that exhibit a child-friendly mind set, atmosphere, infrastructure, protocol, and enforcement. They serve as knowledge centres, promote collaboration, and strictly enforce rules pertaining to children.<sup>5</sup>

### A smart Policing initiative: Digital Police

- The Hon. Prime Minister's SMART Policing programme, known as the DIGITAL POLICE portal, aims to assist effective police investigations and offer services to residents through the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- In order to aid in policy analysis and response, the portal also creates a variety of themed reports detailing trends in crime occurrence nationwide. Reports on crimes against women and children, crime trends in society, national database of human traffickers, crime patterns involving groups of people with specific ages or educational backgrounds, and more, as well as crimes that are more common in specific locations, can all be created using the data in this portal.<sup>6</sup>
- **Operation Muskaan:** As per the MHA's instructions. The CID had launched "Operation Muskaan" because one of the major problems the police force was confronting was the problem of missing children. It was felt that a comprehensive operation should be started to address the issue of police in the state because of the steadily increasing numbers over time.
  - ❖ The primary goals of "Operation Muskaan" is to rescue and rehabilitate the youngsters who went missing.
  - Combining the operations with state-run child protection initiatives.
  - Increasing the district level SJPU's capacity to address the missing children issue.
  - As part of the district-level implementation of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, the Social Welfare department employees, CWCs, SJPU's, NGOs, and community organisations should coordinate more effectively.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bprd.nic.in>. CommunityPolicingInitiativeforChildren. Last accessed on 2023, October 29.

<sup>6</sup> <https://digitalpolice.gov.in>. Last accessed on 2023, October 29.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from [jhpolic.gov.in/muskaan](http://jhpolic.gov.in/muskaan). Last accessed on 2023, October 30.

## 8. Conclusion

Children are the country's most vital human resource, and the country's future success is dependent on how its children progress and grow. Community policing, educational programmes, and outreach activities are critical in fostering trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This proactive strategy of policing assists in deterring future crimes and creating a safer environment for children to grow and thrive in. Police officers are frequently the first responders in incidents of child abuse or emergencies involving children. In addition, the police are an important link in the cycle of help and justice for child victims. They work with child protective services, social workers, and legal authorities to ensure that child victims receive the care and support they require and that those who abuse are held accountable for their crimes. As a result of the digitalisation of police and the use of cutting-edge approaches to detect such things, the function of police in India has evolved in recent years.

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