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## Prevalence Of Child Maltreatment In India

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### Abstract

All people share the experience of childhood independent of social divisions. Natural freedom belongs to every person starting from the moment of emergence because they exist. Governments do not grant these basic rights since they stem from human nature. The rights which belong to everyone start from conception. A foetus maintains rights which continue after birth even while inside the uterus before birth. Dignity can only be attained when people have human rights since these fundamental values form the foundation needed for personal growth and survival. These inherent rights provide all people equal access to reach their maximum potential as they transcend every person and cannot be fractured.

**Keywords:** Human rights, children protection act, children rights, child labour

### Introduction

Child mortality rates experienced significant reductions throughout the previous twenty years. The global death rates of children under age five decreased from 12.6 million in 1990 to 5.3 million in 2018 based on UNICEF statistics. The right to survive is insufficient because each child possesses an essential right to experience growth and achievements. Social status and geographic place along with ethnicity and disability and religion create barriers for the development of 200 million children. The essential elements for healthy development require children to receive proper nutrition and quality healthcare services combined with caring home and school and community settings. Early childhood development forms the fundamental blocks that shape intelligence and personality alongside motivation and social behavior and collaborative skills which extend into the adult stage of life.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes child maltreatment as all types of mistreatment/slender-harm directed at children younger than 18 years who face physical abuse and emotional abuse and sexual abuse and neglect that cause injuries. Child maltreatment affects the entire world according to research findings because one quarter of adults reveal experiencing physical abuse in their youth. The literature shows children exposed to adverse situations normally receive inadequate care and education combined with poor nutrition mainly in developing nations like India. The additional hardships of conflict and political instability along with community violence commonly affect children who reside here. India lacks sufficient research data regarding early childhood adversity since studies are sparse and based on short-term design or lack proper time-based follow-up. The combination of abuse and neglect with risky underage behaviors including drinking alcohol and smoking has produced negative physical and mental health results that also lead to health disparities as well as early death. The psychological challenges of children often increase due to socioeconomic differences and urban structure and caste system prejudices.

Through his work in *Bitter Chocolate* Virani examines how children survive in the patriarchal Indian society where physical discipline consisting of hitting and physical violence serves as standard behavioral correction methods. The challenges faced by children in India become worse because of its economic growth together with dual urban-rural living conditions and religious conflicts and international conflicts. The World Bank alongside UNICEF present findings about worldwide child rights which demonstrate Indian children experience multiple threats from restricted educational opportunities together with healthcare obstacles in addition to child labor exploitation and early marriages. Medical investigations demonstrate that child maltreatment produces major changes in neural pathways along with breakdowns in nervous system development and endocrine function and immunological function and triggers extended physical and emotional and psychological damage.

### **Indian context**

Among the global population of 19% which resides in India the country confronts an escalating problem of child sexual abuse and physical mistreatment. The data indicates that approximately fifty percent of Indian children experience abuse. The National Crime Records Bureau reports that child sexual abuse occurs every 15 minutes across India and those assaults commonly originate from within the family network composed of relatives and teachers along with parents. The prevalence rates for childhood sexual violence worldwide show 20% for females and 8% for males in wealthy nations but India demonstrates a large range of estimated victimization between 4% and 66% among females and between 4% and 57% among males. Multiple factors skew the statistics low because of poor childhood adversity systems and widespread stigma especially directed at girls and insufficient reports by law enforcement services and healthcare providers and cultural prejudices toward survivor status. The frequency of child abuse changes according to which areas people live in (such as urban and rural zones and slums) in addition to what specific communities they belong to (including schools and hospitals and individuals who have been trafficked).

High economic migration levels in India cause the movement of poverty from rural regions to urban areas thus generating a major urban poverty problem throughout the country. The percentage of disadvantaged populations decreased from 45% in 1994 to 22% in 2012 yet one sixth of urban Indians live in slums. Health disparities resulting from accumulated poverty and fast-paced urban development require immediate attention since resolving maltreatment of children and abuse against females and girls will help achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Bywaters et al. demonstrate that lower socioeconomic status directly influences the probability of child abuse and neglect to occur. The levels of child maltreatment intensify along with their frequency patterns in poorly economic urban slum communities. The study presented by Deb and Modak shows violence being associated with financial Standing in addition to cultural norms and social expectations. Children belonging to high-income groups endure about four times more physical abuse incidents than those from lower-income groups. The pattern is mostly explained by how parental expectations about academic achievements have increased and parents fail to recognize child autonomy in their family hierarchy. Child welfare connects with socio-economic factors and urban growth because parents who lack economic resources tend to neglect their children most strongly with special attention directed toward female children. This paper analyzes how socioeconomic factors together with urban growth patterns affect child abuse rates specifically regarding the distinct abuse experiences of boys and girls.

Past literature suggests that child maltreatment usually appears together with multiple forms of abuse which co-occur simultaneously. Community-based research has investigated physical and emotional abuse and sexual assault but few extensive studies exist about this subject in Indian settings. Choudhry et al.'s systematic review introduced essential findings about the widespread occurrence of child sexual abuse (CSA) in India. The authors noted that sexual abuse does not happen alone since child maltreatment exists in different forms simultaneously. The examination in this review develops existing research through an analysis of interrelationships among diverse forms of child mistreatment in different economic classes and metropolitan areas.

### **Childhood adversity in India**

Scientists have intensively studied Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) throughout the last twenty years specifically regarding childhood maltreatment along with direct and indirect household dysfunction. Studies by Felitti and his colleagues established that exposing children to abuse or family dysfunction leads to an adulthood mortality rate increase which worsens as the degree of exposure intensifies. Multiple studies demonstrate how ACEs trigger a range of health disorders that lead to heart disease together with cancer and psychological illnesses. Though important to the field the ACEs framework exhibits specific drawbacks especially when trying to apply its principles across various populations. People experience challenges when using this approach because different exposures and insufficient frequency measurements alongside insufficient severity exploration and the framework focuses mostly on wide-scale policies instead of individual circumstances. Among low- and middle-income countries such as India the Current Adversity

and Resilience framework fails to detect all hardships which young people endure especially poverty together with community violence and political instability.

A wider assessment of adversities that extends the Felitti's ACEs framework improves scholars' understanding of how such experiences affect both entire communities as well as individual health throughout extended periods. Research about ACEs in India is scarce despite the existence of child maltreatment data across Indian states and settings. Recent research investigations focus on determining how often ACEs appear within certain communities. Researchers Damodaran and Paul conducted a research project focused on youth child abuse occurrences throughout Kerala zone of South India. The study involved 600 young respondents who participated in research and demonstrated that 91% of them had undergone at least one ACE and more than half faced three or more ACEs. The research showed females and males experience different abuse levels in which male participants reported worse physical and sexual mistreatment instances than female participants.

India faces three main challenges which combine to raise the likelihood of child neglect and abuse because of low income and inadequate living standards and domestic violence incidents. Scientific knowledge about the relationship among child sexual abuse and additional maltreatment types such as emotional abuse and neglect remains insufficient at the individual level of research. Researchers and clinicians in addition to policymakers and legislators in India focus extensively on child sexual abuse but adverse childhood experiences have received limited scholarly scrutiny. Numerous forms of child abuse exist in broad popularity while needing immediate methodical study and proper presentation as a structured body of knowledge.

### **Effect of gender**

Research data demonstrates the intricate way gender interacts with child mistreatment in Indian society. The legal ban against gender identification fails to stop Indian girls from wishing they had male genders. Various sources show female children are subjected to sexual abuse more frequently however research that examines hospital intakes and care service records reveals both genders demonstrate similar rates of sexual abuse occurrence. According to Deb the number of reported abusers may be higher among boys than girls because girls struggle to recognize abusive experiences and fear judgment and shame prevents them from reporting these incidents. Societal opinions commonly ignore the abuse of boys because patriarchal system values the protection of girls above all else.

Proof shows that girls encounter major disadvantages from neglect especially when it concerns food supply and educational opportunities. The population of India stands as the sole example of any nation where female under-five mortality rates exceed male under-five mortality rates. The breastfeeding period for Indian girls is generally shorter while these girls receive less breast milk than male infants do. The deep-rooted preference for boys creates unequal opportunities that boys receive through better dietary care and medical services as well as educational access. Multiple factors hinder the ability to make wide-reaching conclusions because research involves few studies and methodological issues derived from small samples

and difficulties explaining results between different social economic areas and geographic locations. The situation becomes more complex because both urbanization and socio-economic status influence how far gender inequalities exist between remote tribal communities and affluent urban regions. The use of parental food diaries as reporting tools introduces possible inaccuracies to the collected data.

### **Effect of urbanisation**

Investigations about child abuse frequency across rural, slum and urban areas in regions of varying urbanization levels have received limited study. The studies examining rural and urban communities combined comprise only two while most existing cross-sectional research focuses on urban India. The range of reported prevalence rates between 32% for boy victims and 42% for girls stems from differing sample sizes and socioeconomic conditions and healthcare accessibility and child maltreatment definition methods and basically makes it impossible to make direct comparisons. Banerjee discovered that child maltreatment occurred more often in metropolitan areas than in rural regions and physical abuse was the most common form of maltreatment among slum and pavement dwellers despite its lower levels of severity being reported. Children between ages 4 and 5 must work part-time because of living in urban poverty which was shown to be a major cause according to research findings at 78.4%. This research demonstrated the need for area-specific investigations into child maltreatment tendencies that use urbanization metrics. More than half of the homeless children who reside in drainage pipes or under tarpaulins or flyovers or without shelter have suffered child sexual abuse. The prevalence of CSA together with other maltreatment types seems higher within urban slums but rural areas have issues with reporting these incidents properly. Child abuse incidents are hidden in cultural practices including child marriage and dowry traditions because of both economic limitations and disrupted financial stability.

### **Effect of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act**

Through the Indian government enacted the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act in 2012 to protect children from sexual abuse along with associated offenses. Under this legislation authorities must report sexual offenses while these timelines for documentation and prosecution and evidence collection need to finish inside thirty days. People debate how the recent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act affects reported sexual abuse cases. Indian authorities maintain a need to develop comprehensive care procedures based on psychological and legal victim support alongside family care despite recognizing this as the optimal standard. This paper makes an important policy contribution because it examines the single Indian law which deals exclusively with child sexual abuse (CSA). Research evaluates the complete effects of POCSO by analysing pre-2012 and post-2012 child abuse patterns because different abuse forms stay interconnected. The research area involving the influence of POCSO on child abuse assessment and management remains understudied according to Choudhry et al. however experts indicated this topic needs further examination.



## Rationale

Research lacks sufficient data about how different types of child maltreatment cross with gender-based effects. Research gaps persist because insufficient studies focus on identification and motivation methods of abusers combined with assessment of what children know about their rights plus their understanding of maltreatment experiences and their willingness to seek help. The available literature demonstrates insufficient exploration regarding reporting factors and protective and risk factors of child maltreatment.

- **Child physical abuse**

The intentional acts of harming children lead to physical abuse which results in bodily injuries including bruising and burns among other traumatic effects. Physical abuse involves two main types of misconduct: administration errors with medication through unnecessary prescription or withholding vital illness treatment. Physical abuse takes various forms between which kicking and shaking join slapping and throwing and poisoning and drowning. In India physical harm is described using additional terms "spanking," "rap" or "pasting" alongside similar acts that cause injury.

- **Child sexual abuse**

Sexual exploitation of children occurs through psychologically controlling or deceiving conduct that forces them to perform sexual acts. The different forms of child sexual abuse include touching combined with physical closeness through kissing or oral sex as well as the non-contact methods that involve exposing oneself indecently to children or making them watch sexual activities or sharing photos or videos of children for exploitative purposes.

- **Child emotional abuse**

Tangible emotional mistreatment consists of parental actions which belittle children through steadfast criticism and verbal offenses as well as needless shouting and excessive blaming or assigning blame to the child. Such abuse contains manipulative actions as well as intentional social interaction restraint and the deliberate withholding of affirmative words such as encouragement or praise. Such treatment fosters feelings of unworthiness, inadequacy, and a lack of love in the child.

- **Child physical and emotional neglect**

The repeated omission of essential care requirements for children ranks as a child abuse form under the definition of neglect. Essential necessities like food and shelter or appropriate clothing are withheld from children during physical neglect while permitting children to stay without supervision in dangerous surroundings constitutes a type of physical neglect. A child suffers emotional neglect because they lack essential care together with the necessary affection and development-triggering stimulation. The evaluation

of child maltreatment throughout low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) including India faces numerous obstacles because the problem itself is commonly widespread. Alarming cases of child abuse continue to persist through the practices of forced labor and street begging and corporal punishment and child abandonment. Standardized assessment methods exist yet child self-reports and insights from pediatricians and child psychologists along with social workers and law enforcement professionals should be treated as equally important information sources.

### **Initiative at National Level**

The Indian nation shows deep dedication to child well-being through a combination of constitutional frameworks and national strategies. The employment ban for hazardous work applies to children aged 14 years and younger through Indian Constitution Article 24 next to Article 45 which ensures children receive free basic education before reaching age 14. Through the Directive Principles of State Policy the government shows its commitment to safeguarding children together with their development.

Through the National Policy on Children from 1974 the government has established its obligation to promote child wellbeing. India stands as one of the select countries globally that has created its own child welfare approach to nurture children physically and socially and mentally from before birth until after it. The policy functions as an organizational blueprint for creating programs and initiatives that support child welfare operations.

According to Rane (1986) the strategy demonstrates three main weaknesses because it fails to address girl child needs and contains insufficient regulations regarding child labor and abuse. The policies supporting population management and health service delivery as well as educational support fail to integrate for promoting optimal child development. The policy needs evaluation based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to achieve an improved approach for child welfare.

#### **a) Ministry for Women and Child Development**

Tracing its history to 1985, the Ministry of Human Resource Development transformed into the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to create a specific division for women and children welfare promotion. The government department leads women and children toward potential achievement through policy development and program implementation and vital legislative changes and operational cooperation with non-governmental and governmental organizations focused on child uplift. Through its administrative responsibilities the ministry operates different forward-thinking programs which serve to enhance young women and children.

#### **b) National Human Rights Commission**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) exists as an independent governmental agency that gained establishment through the Human Rights Commission Act of 1997. National human rights institutions in India received their establishment mandate from the Paris Principles guidelines that specify

institution requirements. United Nations-sponsored conferences in Paris during 1991 established these principles which then received approval from both the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The NHRC follows these principles by using them to develop organizational policies while performing its various duties.

### **c) National Commission for Protection of the Child Rights (NCPCR)**

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 created both National Commission at the central level and Corresponding State Commissions across different states. The government established a dedicated body through enactment in 2007 for protecting children's rights. The main goal of this organization focuses on implementing child protection laws and policies to guarantee correct execution of all welfare programs for children.

### **d) Central Advisory Board on Child Labour**

On March 4, 1981 the Central Advisory Board on Child Labour received its establishment to observe how the national government carries out existing laws. The Board evaluates child labour regulation compliance while developing social welfare and legislative strategies to aid working children as well as examining welfare programs created for their well-being. The organization actively works to identify sectors along with locations where the abolition of child labor should follow a step-by-step approach.

### **Role of Voluntary Organisations**

Voluntary organizations have proved essential for developing children's services while developing new approaches to their delivery. Non-profits working together with the government have proven essential to solving multiple child-related problems. These organizations receive crucial backing from the National Policy for Children alongside the National Plan of Action to guarantee effective combination of public sector activities and private sector work. National and state-level voluntary agencies send representatives who participate in governance bodies such as advisory panels and consultative committees and expert working groups and task forces created by the government. The bodies focus their work on developing new programs and evaluating present schemes together with identifying specific challenges that affect children.

The national child policies received substantial direction from non-profit entities which also advanced both family-centered and community-oriented child service systems. Non-profit organizations use their efforts to defend what children need and work to establish appropriate interventions which help create social acceptance of developing child rights. Multiple organizations have implemented leadership roles for advancing child empowerment projects.

The organization of UNICEF demonstrated evolving directions by publishing its report marking the organization's 50th anniversary during 1996. From child protection programs in 1950s the organization shifted to developmental approaches in the subsequent decade. Through the 1990s the organization transformed its focus to rights-based support which enables governments to accomplish goals targeting



children. Save the Children together with CARE and the International Council on Child Welfare and Catholic Relief Services conduct substantial efforts toward youth development. The Save the Children Fund (UK) documented those actions in its book Towards a Children's Agenda: New Challenges for Social Development.

## Conclusion

A nation's youngest population stands as its most essential capital because they will build the people who will drive its progress forward. The development methods employed to raise young citizens create enduring benefits for national welfare and economic growth. According to the renowned poet John Milton children mirror their future selves through the development of their adult personalities in the same way that dawn signals the arrival of daytime. Society must take its essential duty to make an environment where children can grow because their futures depend on it.

Future society relies on children to transmit accumulated wisdom along with historical knowledge and cultural standards through time. Children possess the potential to grow into future leaders and doctors and scientists together with engineers and policymakers as well as educators. Millions of children in multiple countries suffer from maltreatment through being denied their right of basic education and secure living conditions. Current legislative and policy initiatives regarding human trafficking alongside child marriage together with child work and bondage practices are all brought forward but face difficulties in actual execution.

Several laws along with programs and initiatives exist in India to protect children under all provisions of their rights and maintain their welfare. The real evaluation point depends on how well these regulations get effectively executed. All implementation of these initiatives depends on the collaborative efforts between different stakeholders such as judicial bodies along with law enforcement entities, government departments, autonomous entities, those from public enterprises, academic research facilities and non-profit organizations (NGOs). The essential goal for safeguarding children's rights and promoting their social participation requires unified dedication from all involved entities.

The protection of every child in India faces significant challenges because of its large population migration combined with severe economic disparities and ongoing social conflicts. The country's builders, children require priority nurturing for their wellbeing. Developing a strong and fair society depends on taking care of every aspect of human well-being thus it is both a moral obligation and a necessary step.

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