



W.P.Achini Shashika Rushanthi Silva
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor's Degree
Social services degree
Thesis, 2020

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN SRILANKA



ABSTRACT

W.P.Achini Shashika Rushanthi Silva
Child protection issues in Sri Lanka
43p and attachments
Published (May 2020)
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor's Degree
Social services Degree programme in English

Child abuse and neglect are the most common types of child maltreatment that impact child well-being. The main aim of this thesis was to find out about the current prevalence of child abuse and neglect issues in Sri-Lanka. In addition, it was aimed to reveal the lacking policies, legislations and services to prevent children from child abuse.

The qualitative research was carried out using primary and secondary data. Two child-care professionals from ChildFund Sri Lanka involved in the interviews using face to face video conversations. The guiding questions for the interview have been generated by the author. The information that has been collected through the interviews and secondary sources was organized and analysed systematically using thematic analysis.

The findings of this study revealed that child sexual abuse, neglect, and corporal punishment are the most commonly prevailing child protection issues in the country. Moreover, findings revealed that poverty is the main root cause for the majority of child prostitution and child sex tourism, and all other forms of child abuse and neglect problems. Furthermore, the lack of policies, cultural norms, and poor awareness of people on child protection issues have worsened the situation. Despite of currently established policies and laws related to child protection, Sri Lanka has a long way to go to achieve globally accepted child protection standards.

Keywords: Child maltreatment, Child Protection, Child abuse and neglect, Sri Lanka

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2 BACKGROUND.....	5
2.1 History of UNCRC	5
2.1.1 The three P’s child rights: Provision, Protection and Participation	6
2.2 Child protection in Denmark, Finland and Norway	7
2.2.1 Child welfare and child protection systems in Finland	7
2.3 Child protection and child welfare system in Sri Lanka.....	8
2.4 ChildFund Sri Lanka.....	10
3 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
3.1 Possible risk factors in child maltreatment issues	11
3.2 Physical abuse.....	13
3.3 Sexual abuse	13
3.4 Neglect.....	14
3.5 Corporal punishment.....	15
3.6 Studies in Sri Lanka similar to thesis topic.....	16
3.6.1 Studies outside side Sri Lanka similar to thesis topic	17
3.7 National laws to protect rights of children in Sri Lanka.....	18
3.8 State programmes to prevent children from violence.....	19
4 RESERACH METHODOLOGY	20
4.1 Data collection methods.....	20
4.2 Research data analysis	21
4.3 The research process and challenges	23
5 RESEARCH ETHICS	25
5.1 Ethical research involving children	25
5.2 General ethical principle of research work.....	25
6 RESULTS	27
6.1 Child abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka	27
6.2 Factors that affect child abuse	31
6.3 Legislative and policy challenges for child protection in Sri Lanka.....	33
6.4 Services that need to be improved	33
7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	35
8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	38
REFERENCES.....	39
9 Appendix 1	43

1 INTRODUCTION

Children are the most vulnerable group in every society, and they are the future generation of the world. Every child has a right to protection, education and to get health and shelter with love and care. Every society, country, culture need to provide children with a quality life and need to expand the opportunities in life despite any circumstances of the gender, culture, country, religion, appearance and race which they are born with. Social policies play a main role to improve the lives of children and their families with prominent welfare services. Even though children should be given recognition within the family, still their basic needs and concerns can remain hidden and unacknowledged. For that reasons, it is important to have strong social policies to protect children's needs and rights.

Children are relying on adults from birth until they become an adult. Adults are the responsible persons whom children expect safety, protection, love and sense of belongings. The family is the most prominent and important influence in a child life. Parents and family form a child's first relationship. Unfortunately, in some contexts, children are harmed by those who they rely upon protection. Child maltreatment is a devastating social problem in every society in the world. Child maltreatment causes suffering to children, families and society and has long term consequences (United Nations).

Child abuse and neglect are the most common types of child maltreatment in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, neglect is frequently going unreported and has given less attention compared to child abuse. Online articles, reports and eBooks about child protection phenomena revealed that child abuse and neglect are the most prevailing child protection problems in Sri-Lanka that impact the well-being of children despite the legislation, policies and services. The services require for the children who have been abused or neglected, including medical care, after care services, special education programs, and government funds need to be improved in a more prominent way and all the policies and legislations need to be improved accordingly in order to protect this vulnerable group.

The main aim of this thesis is to find out about the current prevalence of child abuse and neglect problems in Sri-Lanka. The main objectives behind this type of research are to recognize the lack of policies, legislation and services in order to improve the quality of child protection and child welfare services in a more prominent way. Also, research on child abuse and neglect can directly benefit the victims and their families who could not stand and speak for themselves. Moreover, this type of thesis provides broader knowledge and understanding to the readers about the current prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka. The author is an international student who is a citizen of Sri Lanka. The author decided to conduct this type of research considering her background knowledge and experiences about child maltreatment phenomena in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the author was truly fascinated about this research topic despite so many limitations in the thesis process. Author will be publishing the final thesis on the ChildFund Sri Lanka website and that could help readers to come up with innovative and quality service ideas for the future development of child well-being globally. This type of research will benefit not only ChildFund Sri Lanka, but also government organizations and other non-government organizations in Sri Lanka. It will benefit other international organizations to understand the need for new plans and interventions to protect children from all types of child maltreatments.

The main target group of the interview was childcare professionals from ChildFund Sri-Lanka. Moreover, the thesis topic concerns children below 18 years, but they have not been involved in the interviews. The research questions for this thesis were, what are the common types of child protection problems in Sri-Lanka? What are the common factors that need to be improved to prevent children from child maltreatment?

2 BACKGROUND

This chapter will describe the information about the benchmarking starting point that has been changed the way children being viewed, observed and treated and that has been influenced globally. Moreover, it will describe the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and about three P's provision, protection, and participation that is related to thesis topic and this chapter will describe how UNCRC has been impacted in different countries child welfare and protection systems.

2.1 History of UNCRC

After World War II, the condition of European children was badly affected. To provide these children with food, clothing and health care United Nations established a new agency. In 1946, UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) was established to provide immediate hunger and health care to the children and the mothers in countries that were devastated from World War II. In 1953, UNICEF became a permanent affiliation of UN and together organized a successful global campaign to help millions of children with disfiguring disease which could be cured only through the penicillin (United Nations). In the year of 1959, the UN general assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines basically children's rights to protection, education, health care, shelter, and good nutrition. For a decade, the main focus of UNICEF mostly was towards child health issues and gradually, its focus changed towards children's education. UNICEF initiated teacher training programs and to provide classroom equipment in new independent countries. In the year of 1965, the organization won the Nobel Peace Prize for the promotion of brotherhood among nations. UNICEF's work is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Convention was the benchmarking starting point for child protection and child rights in the history. The Convention changed the way children are viewed, observed and treated. Children, youngsters and adult have same human rights as a human being. Children are not the property of parents or the society and no one could not deliberately or unknowingly destroy their freedom and rights. Children are human beings who needed to be treated equally (United Nations).

2.1.1 The three P's child rights: Provision, Protection and Participation

Children's rights in the UNCRC often divided into three groups of P's which are provision, protection, and participation. UN article 6- Rights to Life, Survival and Development "1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life 2. States parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child" (UNCRC Full Text). Under the UN Article 6 in the three P's of provision stands for the right of the child that facilitate children's growth and development. Children needed to be provided with safe housing, food and, education including efficient childcare services, leisure time and activities, healthy food, and a protective environment to grow. To facilitate children's growth and development children needed to the have best and quality services (Children's Rights and Protection).

Moreover, UN Article 3 -best interest of the child "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (UNCRC Full Text). Under the article the three P's of protection describe the importance of protect children from all kinds of physical and psychological violence and children needed to be provided with the interventions if some kind of violence occurred. For example, if parents were unable to provide their children protection, care and love. In some cases, children are been exploited by their parents or adults whom they rely on. The Government or state has the responsibility to separate those children from their families as interventions to protect children from violence (Children's Rights and Protection).

Finally, UN Article 12 Rights to be heard "States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UNCRC Full Text). According to the article of three P's, Participation stands for the right to do things, express children's feelings in decision making that involve or affect their life. Even, children's opinions needed to be heard. There are 54 UN articles that describe children's rights most specifically. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most influencing

factor that has been and will be facilitated the development and wellbeing of every child in the world (Report for and with children)

2.2 Child protection in Denmark, Finland and Norway

The origin of child protection legislation in Nordic countries was in twentieth century and first child protection laws were introduced at different times in different countries. Introduction of child protection laws in Nordic countries was pioneered by Denmark in 1905, followed by Finland in 1936 and Norway in 1986 respectively. They were all impacted by the Norwegian model of child protection, which was based on a comprehensive understanding of children and young people in need and in trouble and included both neglect and abuse issues. In the framework of national legislation, public welfare authorities were given the main governance for dealing with child protection issues. The child protection legislation has changed since twentieth century. According to the article child protection legislation most recently changed and new legislation were introduced in 2010 in Denmark, in 2007 in Finland and in 1992 in Norway. However, the overall approach to child protection has not changed. At present, all these three Nordic countries address both abuse and child neglect issues and Nordic countries still been classified as belonging to the welfare approach to the minor crimes. Even, all the child protection agencies at municipality level play main role in Nordic countries and the child protection systems cover the main area of childhood, youth and family conflicts with in-home and out-of-home placements. The concept of in-home services is that the children are parent's responsibility and child protection systems provide only support to enhance the qualities of each other when child is living in same household with the parents. If the in-home care becomes useless or inaccurate, then child may be placed in out-of-home care (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbeak,2013).

2.2.1 Child welfare and child protection systems in Finland

In Finland, preparation of legislation on child welfare and general child welfare services are been organized through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. They are

the responsible and influencing sector who needed to guarantee Children's rights. The main purpose of child welfare is to facilitate children with safe and protective environment to grow. Preventive child welfare and early support play a key role to protect children's rights. The purpose of preventive child welfare is to promote and protect the growth, development and wellbeing of children and youth and to support parenting to safeguard children's rights.

Moreover, in Finland Child welfare Act 417/2007, European Convention on Human Rights and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Act are the acts that mostly safeguard children's rights. In Finland, the local authorities in each municipality are the main responsible actors for promoting and organizing child welfare services. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare facilitates the Local authorities with administering Handbook for child protection, and web services for child welfare professionals with the purpose of fulfilment of Child Welfare Act. The preventive child welfare services mainly focus on providing basic public services for families including maternity and child health clinics, other healthcare services, schools and child day centres, family centres, and youth work. Furthermore, open care, emergency placement, taking into care, substitute care and after care are the other common services that are been provided to prevent and protect children from all types of maltreatment (Child Welfare).

2.3 Child protection and child welfare system in Sri Lanka

In comparison with child welfare and child protection systems in Finland and Nordic countries, since the uphold of UNCRC Acts in year 1991, there has been a slight progress in child rights by enforcing policies and legislations in Sri Lanka. National child protection authority, the department of Probation and childcare services, The National Monitoring committee on CRC and The Secretariat on ECCD are the four main sectors who work under Management of Ministry and they are the actors who are responsible to fulfil Child rights and protection. Several formal sectors of child protection have been established in recent years. There are especial terms of family support programmes at the community level. Public health midwives working with parents and caregivers in community and family level to enhance child development. Family midwives are helping to educate parents on parenting. Furthermore, in Sri Lanka

community-based child protection officers and other responsible actors were not effective in providing community-based child prevention and surveillance services due to lack of resources and technical capacity even parents, teachers, and management of juvenile institutions, and lack appropriate skills to eliminate child protection problems (Save the children).

Moreover, in Sri Lanka the monitoring mechanisms and child protection have been established in all 9 provinces and decisions on child protection problems are always taken at the public administration level across 25 district Secretariats divisions. The primary level of civil administration is Grama Niladhari division which is the smallest administrative unit in Sri Lanka. There are 14,016 Grama Niladari divisions across the country in which community-based child protection mechanism relies on. Furthermore, child protection committees have been categorised groups of 10-24 people including community volunteers, representatives from Community based organizations and child or youth groups, the Grama Niladhari (the lowest administrative officer), the Samurdhi officer, the public midwife, Pre school teacher, School principals, police officer from the children and women's desk, religious leaders and other interested persons (Volunteers) from civil society (Save the Children).

In Sri Lanka the district secretary is responsible for planning and implementing activities at district level. The divisional child protection committees consist with Child rights Protection Officers, Divisional Secretaries, officers from the social service, cultural and youth work, medical health officer, representative from civil society including NGO. Moreover, the district child protection committees consist with the District Secretary, Provisional commissioners of Probation and Childcare and labour, the coordinators from National Child protection Authority, judicial, Medical officer, the Psychiatrist are the some of personals who involved in District level child protection process. Furthermore, Local and international Non-Government organizations representatives involve at District level (Save the Children).

2.4 ChildFund Sri Lanka

For more than 75 years, ChildFund International has been working in more than 65 different countries with a common vision (“world in which all children enjoy their rights and achieve their full potential”). The organization’s mission is to end violence and exploitation against children and overcome poverty and prevent children from the situation where they could achieve their sustainable wellbeing. ChildFund International’s main target is to become a global voice for children.

ChildFund originally started working in Sri Lanka in the year 1985. ChildFund is working together with government, local partner organizations and individuals in order to create a safe, protective, healthy and sustainable environment for children. Currently, ChildFund Sri Lanka is organizing programs focused on improving child nutrition, parenting skills and community-based learning programs for families with children below age 5. ChildFund works to promote child centred education in several ways including, a training program for master teachers who can educate their team members, testing different education methods and encouraging classroom participation and collecting feedback from students. Moreover, child protection is the main part of their responsibilities with school age children and adults whom children spend their time with. They organize awareness programs for the community workers to recognize abuse and violence and to educate them what they need to do if they see abuse or violence take place. This knowledge will be disseminated to families through these local government workers. ChildFund is also working with both national government officials and nongovernmental organizations to develop plans to restrict and prevent corporal punishments. Finally, they also organized fundraising program to help needy children and their families. (Sri Lanka).

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Exposure to intimate partner violence is also sometimes included as a form of child maltreatment (WHO, 2007).

Child maltreatment issues are worldwide phenomena that effects so many child deaths and that let many children to suffer every day, every month and every year. According to the report by The World Health Organization in 2002 which was prepared by Dr. Desmond Runyan, each year an estimated number of 57,000 children are been died from physical abuse. Sexual and psychological abuse are also widespread, and difficult to measure because of lack of information and need to be addressed. Child maltreatment is a global phenomenon that affects thousands of children every year and that with serious life-long consequences to the victims. The life-long consequences of child maltreatment include stress that could affect early brain development, development of nervous and immune systems. Also maltreated children are in a greater risk of behavioural, mental and physical health problems cause obesity, smoking, depression, high risk sexual behaviours, unintended pregnancy, alcohol and drug misuse as adult. These kinds of lifelong consequences can contribute to the heart diseases, cancer, suicide and sexually transmitted infections that impact on economic growth of the country because of unnecessary cost for hospitalization, mental health treatment, child welfare and long-term health costs (WHO).

3.1 Possible risk factors in child maltreatment issues

Definition of a child: According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the child all persons under the age of 18 are children, unless the child does not become of age earlier, according to the laws covering the child.

There are number of risk factors for child maltreatment issues. It is understandable and important to realize that, children are the victims of child maltreatment and who should never be blamed for maltreatment consequences. Risk factors are characteristics of child or care giver that may increase the probability of child maltreatment. Basically, risk factors are difficult to recognize easily and accurately and may not be noticed and observed. Moreover, some risk factors which may not be noticed during the investigations, can be clinically diagnosed such as psychological problems. According to National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), some possible caregiver risk factors are alcohol abuse of caregiver which means the unlimited and unstoppable use of alcohol. Even, another caregiver risk factor is drug abuse which means unlimited and unstoppable use of drugs (Child Maltreatment, 2018). Furthermore, in the year 2003, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs report illustrated that number of children and their needs have been affected by parental drug abuse since childbirth (Kennison & Goodman, 2008).

According to the NCANDS report from 2016 to 2018, there was an increased number of victims reported with alcohol abuse care giver and according to the national percentage of victims with alcohol abuse care giver risk factor increased from 11.6 in 2016 to 12.3 in 2018. On the other hand, from 2016 to 2018, there was an increased number of victims with drug abuse caregivers. The national percentage of victims reported with the drug abuse care giver increased from 28.9 in 2016 to 30.7 in 2018 (Child Maltreatment, 2018).

Furthermore, there are other personal characteristics of parent or caregiver that may cause increasing the number of child maltreatment. These include inability to adjust and having bonding with the new-born, not providing sufficient nutrition to child, being involved in criminal activity, having been maltreated themselves in the childhood, lacking awareness of child development, lacking literacy and experiencing financial difficulties. Moreover, there are relationship, community and societal factors that involved in increasing the number of maltreatments. Those relationship risk factors include, physical, developmental or mental health problems, family breakdown or violence between other family members, being isolated in the community or lacking a support network. On the other hand, societal risk factors include, gender, social and cultural inequality, lack of accurate hosting or services to support families and institutions, high levels of unemployment or poverty, the easy availability of alcohol and drugs, weak policies and programs to prevent child maltreatment, social and cultural

norms that promote violence towards others and social, economic, health and education policies that lead to poor living standards or to socioeconomic inequality (WHO).

3.2 Physical abuse

“Physical abuse is defined as hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to child” (Beckett, 2007).

Physical abuse of a child occurs when someone knowingly harms or places a child in danger. It may also include disciplining a child with physical punishment that is unacceptable for his or her age or condition. Harmful force or control may also be considered physical abuse. Even, if the caregiver didn't mean to cause injury, but the child is injured, it is abuse. Physical abuse can result in bruises, blisters, burns and cuts, internal injuries and brain damage, broken bones, emotional and psychological harm, life-long injury and death. Also, that may result in different behavioural factors includes, aggression towards peers, pets and other animals, seems afraid of parents or other adults, fear, depression and stress, nightmares and having suicidal feelings or harming themselves or others. As a result of physical abuse, child can be at risk of poor learning or memory problems, a long-term medical condition and may need special attention and support (What is Child Abuse).

3.3 Sexual abuse

“Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual

images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). This would include prostitution and sexual exploitation of a child for commercial or financial gain”(www.SiteWizard.co.uk). Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act) “The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of any child engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct , or rape, and in cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children”.

Sex between a child and an adult is abusive because of the difference of age, use of force and lack of understanding between them. Even, child sexual abuse never is the victim’s fault. All children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm in any circumstances. One of the common factors that is found in child sexual abuse cases are that the abuse is done in return for something beneficial for the victim or perpetrator. Sexual abuse can occur in different places, including home, school and workplaces where child labour is common. According to the worldwide researches, majority of the abused children are girls and abuser is mostly a family member, cousin, neighbour or babysitter who knows the victims. Majority of the sexual abuse cases are committed by men than women. Children who have been the victims of sexual abuse can have long term adverse effects such as, serious mental health problems that lead to suicide, major depression, trauma, aggressive behaviour, anxiety and personality disorders. Even, sexual abuse may have links to other types of crime including child trafficking, domestic abuse, sexual violence in intimate relationships, grooming (including online grooming), abusive images of children and their distribution, drugs related offences and gang related activities (What is Child Abuse).

3.4 Neglect

Neglect includes both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent or other family member to provide for the development and well-being of the child where the parent is not in a position to do so in one or more of the

following areas: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions (WHO,2006).

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and is the most common form of child abuse. Neglect generally includes the categories of Physical (failure to provide necessary food or shelter, lack of appropriate supervision), Medical (failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment), Educational (failure to educate child or failure to provide special educational needs for needy children) and Emotional (give less attention for child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, let a child to use alcohol and drugs). Even, in some cases child may be left hungry or dirty, without sufficient clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. Child may not receive love, attention and care that they need from their parents. A child who's neglected will also suffer from other abuses as well. Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long term damage including death (Kennison & Goodman, 2008)

Abandonment is also considered as a form of neglect. In general, when the child identity is unknown or parents information is unknown and child has been left without any concern about their physical health, safety or welfare and with the truly intention of leaving child or in some cases caregivers fail to provide necessary care for a child living under same roof with them. Some terms of child abandonment include, leaving child with another person without meaningful communication with the child for a period of three months, leaving an infant on a doorstep, in trash cans and dumpsters, and on the side of roads and being unwilling to provide care, support, or supervision for the child (Child Abandonment, 2018).

3.5 Corporal punishment

The committee on the rights of the child in the general comment No. 8 defines 'corporal or physical' punishment as, "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, with the hand or with an implement. In the view of committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the convention. These include, for example, punishment which

belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child” (UNICEF).

‘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 female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage (UNICEF, n.d.).

3.6 Studies in Sri Lanka similar to thesis topic

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi religious country which has a child population of approximately 6.4 million. According to the reports on Sri-Lanka child abuse, neglect and exploitation are increasing and in the year 2013 figures tabled in the Sri-Lankan parliament indicates about 15,000 legal cases pending nationwide and more than 4,000 cases are involved in the forms of violence against children and 1,500 issues that related to the children. In addition to that the reports provide the figures about the 1,750 cases of child rape, 5,475 cases of molestation and 1,194 cases of child abuse in the year 2012. Mostly, the number of actual abuse cases are more than the number of reported cases. There are major reasons for these hidden child abuse cases. Those include, abusive victims and their families usually are unwilling to report about their problems due to sociocultural norms. Even, in most cases children do not report abuse to their parents or caregivers. Moreover, lots of Asians consider that sharing an experience of abuse with the outsiders is a shameful thing. Victims always feel uncomfortable and helpless and they do not get proper support and care to get rid of their long-lasting problems and in worst situations this lead to suicidal thoughts rather any other solutions (Child abuse and neglect in the Jaffna district of Sri Lanka, 2018).

According to the 2006 UN study about violence against children, it is estimated that every year between 41 and 88 million children are exposed to violence at home. Even, it indicates that world’s half of the child brides live in South Asia and 46% of age 20 to 24 women are first married or in union before they reach age 18. Mostly, 44 million children are exposed to child labour across the region. The common child protection

issues that concern the most includes, sexual abuse and exploitation, child trafficking and corporal punishments. Data is lacking on sexual abuse and exploitation and those are remaining unreported most of the time in South Asian countries (Child abuse and neglect in the Jaffna district of Sri Lanka, 2018).

3.6.1 Studies outside side Sri Lanka similar to thesis topic

A report on the scale, scope and context of the sexual exploitation of the children revealed that Italy has over 60 million population including 9,761,000 children. The country has been affected with economic crisis due to a large number of migrations in recent years. Basically, migration is one of the common facts that impact the increasing number of sexual exploitations. The exploitation of children in prostitution is a common issue which is linked to trafficking of children in south of Italy. Italy is a main destination and source country for children subjected to trafficking for sexual purposes. Most of the victims are originally from Nigeria, China and Eastern Europe. Even, majority of children who are exposed to sexual abuse belongs to the families with parents who are addicted alcohol or who are exposed to sexual and domestic violence in their childhood. The exploitation is usually common in low income families who could not afford basic living needs. In some cases, children are forced into prostitution by family members to earn money for necessary goods. Poverty, unemployment and insufficient social structures are the common causes that effect for child exploitation issues in Italy (ECPAT).

According to the report from survey child protection in 73 countries revealed that social conditions and behaviours that have been impacted in child safety, health and development. Moreover, it revealed that child sexual abuse of prostituting child has the highest rate of 92%, internet solicitation for sex 86%, child marriage 80% and female genital mutilation 80% respectively in the international census. Furthermore, it described that many abuse cases are never reported to authorities due to limited time and true prevalence of child sexual abuse is 30 times higher than the officially reported incidents in annual reports. It has been emerged in the study that there were various risk factors that effect for Child abuse nationally or regionally including a parental history of child abuse victimization, intimate partner violence between the child's

parents, parental substance abuse, psychological and physiological disorders of parents, family separation, social isolation are the some risk factors that effects on child abuse (Simon, Luetzow, & Conte, 2020).

3.7 National laws to protect rights of children in Sri Lanka

Establishment of National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) in the year 1988 was the formation of child protection services in Sri Lanka. The main purpose of this establishment is to advise the government on policies and laws to prevent and protect children from child abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence and harm, and to secure all the affected children receive prominent support and services to develop their childhood into adult hood appropriately (National Child Protection Authority)

The national child protection authority act is related to the establishment of the NCPA and to formulate a national policy on the prevention of child abuse and the protection and treatment of children who are victims of such abuse and for coordinating and monitoring of action against all forms of child abuse The children and young person's Law is applicable to children in conflict and children in need of care and protection. Children and Young Persons Act is the legislation enhanced to a protect children from harmful publications, selling and having in possession of obscene books/ songs and obscene photographs and films. Citizenship Act enables children to acquire. nationality from both parents, whereas under the previous law it was only the father who was able to pass on Sri Lankan Nationality. The act on civil aspects of international child abduction provides for the return of children wrongfully removed from Sri Lanka or their country of habitual residence and retained in any specified country or Sri Lanka. Penal code act extends the duty to prevent and report child abuse and made debt bondage, serfdom, forced or compulsory labour, slavery and recruitment of children for used in armed conflict a punishable offence. Employment of women young persons and children's Ordinance strengthens child labour law by increasing the minimum age of employment from 12 to 14 years and prohibiting the employment of children under 14 while enhancing the sentence for violation of this provision. Prevention of domestic

violence act provides protection orders to safeguard women and children who are suffering and vulnerable for domestic violence (National Child Protection Authority).

3.8 State programmes to prevent children from violence

There are State programmes and sectors including public education, nutrition and public health, education and role of law to provide citizens that could directly or indirectly benefit for safety and development of children. These programs focus on eliminating child marriages and providing support to families with children who are vulnerable to domestic violence. Programme to raise public awareness and influence policies and practice that effect children's lives and development. Moreover, training programs to police and military professionals on communicating with children in a child-friendly manner. Emergency telephone services are established to report violence against children. In addition, awareness on child abuse is given through media, exhibition, and mobile services throughout the country. Support systems to strength the rehabilitation and after-carer services for children in difficult circumstances. Contribute and work towards strengthening and networking with global child protection systems in ensuring children's voices are heard (National Child Protection Authority).

4 RESERACH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the detail information about data collection methods, data analysing methods that has been used to collect and analyse the data. Moreover, it includes the information on research process and challenges.

4.1 Data collection methods

Qualitative research is collecting, analyzing and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. Qualitative research refers to the meanings, definitions, characteristics, symbols, metaphors, and description of things. Qualitative research is much more subjective and uses very different methods of collecting information, individual, in-depth interviews and focus groups. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open ended. Small number of people are interviewed in depth and or a small number of focus groups are conducted (Luo,2019).

This research contains data on neglect and abuse towards children in Sri Lanka. The main focus group of the thesis was 0-18 years old children. However, children were not involved in the interviews. Both primary and secondary data have been used for the research. “Primary data provides raw information and first-hand evidence including interview transcripts, statistical data, and works of art. A primary source gives you direct access to the subject of your research” (Streefkerk, 2019).

Primary data were collected through face to face video conversations using WhatsApp and Skype. The above data collection methods were used because the research was focusing on Sri Lanka which is geographically far away from Finland. Basically, the interview was well organized. All the questions and detailed information about the research had been sent to the child protection professionals before the interview in order to prepare themselves with the answers that could help both parties with time-saving. The list of guiding questions for the interviews is annexed to the thesis

(Appendix 1). Two Advocacy and child protection professional advisors from the ChildFund Sri Lanka (Chapter 2) were involved in the interviews. The reason to involve only two participants in the interview due to limited resources and lack of professionals in relevant fields. Two interviewees were contacted through electronic mails before and after the interview in order to collect relevant information related to thesis. Though the research topic is related to Child protection problems, child victims could not be involved in the interviews directly. For that reason, two professionals have been involved in the interviews instead of direct victims. Two interviews were conducted on two separate dates. The duration of one interview was sixty minutes. As a result of limited time and limited consents and reply from the childcare professionals only two interviews have been conducted to gather information. The author has sent electronic mails to different professionals but, she got reply from only two participants. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews to gather related information on the research topic. The short interview answers were written down during the interview and detail information related to answers such as links for secondary reports, newspapers, and articles relevant to research topic and long answers related research questions have been sent to the interviewer through electronic mail by the interviewees. The telephone interviews have not been recorded due to limited technical resources and network problems.

On the other hand, detailed information which has been collected through secondary sources include eBooks, articles, scientific reviews and academic books will help the reader to get a wider knowledge about the thesis topic. Sources of secondary data could also be collected during the interviews. “Secondary sources provide second-hand information and commentary from other researches. A secondary source describes, interprets, or synthesizes primary source” (Streefkerk, 2019). Secondary sources are useful techniques to gather all the relevant information accurately and writer gets understanding about how other researches approached the similar topic.

4.2 Research data analysis

“The thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of research questions. It is method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing and reporting themes found within a data set”. Furthermore, it is also described as a translator for those speaking the languages of qualitative analysis, enabling researchers who use different research methods to communicate with each other (Nowell, Norris, white, & Moules, 2017).

The author has used both primary and secondary data for analysis. The method thematic analysis has been used to summarise the key features of large data set systematically and accurately. The author has organized and analysed data using bellow six phases of thematic analysis.

In the first step, the text and notes that have been collected trough the interviews and secondary sources were transcribed systematically. To get familiarized with and to come up with idea for the further steps transcribed data has been read carefully several times. Moreover, the author has noted down her initial ideas about further thesis process.

The second step was coding which was an important step in the thesis process. Once the author has completed reading and familiarize herself with the data coding was generated. In this step the author has worked through the data set systematically with full attention. The large data set has been converted into small sections relevant to research topic and research questions. All the relevant and interesting data has been highlighted systematically.

Third step was the searching for themes. In this step all the data that has been coded already organized systematically in order to come up with interesting and meaningful themes relevant to thesis topic. In this step the author has created themes and sub themes accordingly that related to thesis questions.

The fourth step was reviewing themes. In this step the author has been read all the data set that has been arranged with each theme to find out whether the data fit into those themes. The data which was not fit into themes identified and rearranged accordingly.

The fifth step was defining and naming themes. The author determined what aspects of the data each theme captures and identifies and what is interesting about those themes and the reason for that (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). In this step the author has considered how each theme fits into the overall data set and how the sub themes are related to each main theme. Moreover, in this step the author has generated meaningful names for each theme which could give the reader an idea of what the themes is about.

Finally, the sixth and the last step was writing the report. The collected data was examined carefully and arranged systematically based on research findings. In this step the author has finalized all the findings related to thesis topic and thesis questions and the conclusions were made. Once the author has completed writing the thesis report, the final version of the thesis paper will be published.

4.3 The research process and challenges

This thesis topic is related to child abuse and neglect problems in Sri Lanka. The country which is related to thesis was geographically far away from Finland. That was the main challenging factor that has been impacted throughout the thesis process. At first, the author gathered information through secondary sources related to thesis topic due to lack of opportunities and resources to conduct interviews with the childcare professionals. Fortunately, the author found the professional interviewees contact details through one of Sri Lankan student who came to Finland for studies. Once the author got the contact details, she has sent electronic mails to the first interviewee with detail information about her degree program, research plan, topic, and aims. Unfortunately, the author got reply for her first electronic mail after two weeks. For that reason, interviews could only be arranged at a time which was very close to thesis manuscript publication. The author has been given contact details of another child protection professional by the first interviewee and as a result, a second interview was also conducted.

The childcare professionals did not require a thesis permission letter from the author. The author directly contacted interviewees through electronic mails and once professionals agreed to involve in the interviews, the list of guiding questions was sent to them. When both professionals from ChildFund Sri Lanka agreed to participate, date and time were fixed. As agreed, the author was prepared for her first interview. Unfortunately, it has been postponed three times because of their busy schedule and time difference between Finland and Sri Lanka. Moreover, the author was expected to interview a child protection expert (child rights protection and promotion program manager) from Foundation for innovative social development. The interview has been cancelled because of her busy project work. The interviews were conducted through face to face video conversation. The interviewees answered for the questions referring to secondary data sources which they have been following in their working environment. At the same time, the professionals answered the questions with their own knowledge and experiences. They were careful with their answers due to fact that questions related to children. They have been mentioned in their answers “You can find more detail information about this question by referring to the secondary sources. I will attach my answers with relevant detail information about secondary sources that you could read because it is difficult to explain everything in short answers”. Professionals have been clearly mentioned that they also gathered majority of important information about child protection problems through the secondary sources.

The author has selected the research topic considering the current situation in Sri Lanka even the research topic was wide. At first, it was difficult to come up with suitable thesis topic and research questions. Even after the selection of research topic it was difficult narrow down the topic into subtopics. There was limitation to find books, eBooks and statistics related to thesis topic due to fact that thesis was focusing on Sri Lanka that is not available in Finland libraries and there was only limited statistics and eBooks online related to Sri Lanka.

5 RESEARCH ETHICS

“Research ethics refers to a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that help constitute and regulate scientific activity. Research ethics is a codification of ethics of science in practice. It is based on general ethics of science; just as general ethics is based on common sense morality” (Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences). This chapter will describe about general research ethics that have been considered in this research.

5.1 Ethical research involving children

In the research work, the human dignity of children needs to be respect and their rights and wellbeing need to be considered regardless of situation. Research involving children is about understanding children’s life experiences and perspectives such as relational experiences of children within their communities, including family, peers and social structures. Moreover, systematic information that has been found through the research could be involved in the process of strengthening the laws, policies, and practices that enhance their human dignity, rights, and wellbeing. In this thesis, children are been involved indirectly. For that reason, the information that has been collected through qualitative research has been reported accurately with consideration of research ethics (Graham, Powell, Anderson, Fitzgerald, & Taylor, 2013).

5.2 General ethical principle of research work

“The author is to respect the work by others and refer to their publication adequately” (Finnish advisory board on research integrity, 2012). In the research work, it is highly recommended to follow the research ethics. Author needs to be honest with the data collection and reporting results using accurate methods. Research results have been reported honestly without any plagiarism. “Literacy theft. Plagiarism occurs when a writer duplicates another writer’s language or ideas and then calls the work his or her own. Copyright laws protect writers’ words as their legal property. To avoid the charge

of plagiarism, writers take care to credit those from whom they borrow and quote” (Plagiarism, n.d.). Moreover, research have been conducted with respect for human dignity in the research topic and protected identity, privacy and self-determination of the people and information. In the research process author have been respected and obey to the relevant legislations of research work (Research Guides: Research Methods: Ethics in Research).

In this research, interviewer has provided the interviewees with sufficient data and information related to the research objectives, expectations and requirement in detail beforehand to get interviewees consent for the interview. “In order to get children involved in the research work interviewer must get consent from the guardians. This means the respecting the autonomy, human rights and privacy of a person being researched, as well as his/her right to refuse to participate at any phase” (Nikander & Zencher 2006, 518). Even though the thesis topic is related to children, children were not involved directly for the research work. For that reason, the author did not need to have consent from the parents. The author only had consent from the interviewees.

The author has respected for the values and views of the participants while conducting the interview. Research is often concerned with human behaviour and values such as religious groups, ethnic minorities, youth groups or political subcultures. The author needs to avoid taking self-image seriously in research work and needs to respect the values and motives of others in the research process. The author needs to be respectful and loyal towards the cultures in which research is being conducted and do not need to accept conditions such as discrimination or culturally motivated abuse. Furthermore, author has been loyal towards the participants. All the data that has been collected through the interviews was kept confidentially and further all the data has been organized and analysed systematically considering research ethics. Moreover, the author has used good reference practices in this research work with reporting most accurate references (Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences).

6 RESULTS

This chapter describes about research findings that has been received through the online interview and online research. Chapter includes some figures of common child protection problems child abuse, neglect and corporal punishment in Sri Lanka and it describe the common factors that effect for child abuse and neglect. Moreover, the chapter includes the services and legislations that needs to be more strengthened in order to prevent children from all types of physical and psychological violence.

6.1 Child abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka

According to the figures from the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) over 12 000 cases of child abuse were reported in 2015 and that is considerably higher than previous year and this number includes over 735 cases of sexual harassment and 433 cases of rape. Despite developmental progress, too many children miss out their opportunities to reach full possibilities. According to the data gathered from interviews, out of 2,389 cases reported on child abuse, 14 percent of female children had been exposed to some form of child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a study related medico-legal examination conducted among the 353 children found that, the perpetrator in most of the abuse cases is a person known to the victims. Even, it is clear that in many parts of Sri Lanka, victims of such abuse and violence usually do not have access for rehabilitation and support services. Furthermore, they do not get justice easily for their issues despite they reported and file a case against the perpetrator due to delay or mishandling (Child protection in middle childhood).

According to the child protection professional interviewed, children in Sri Lanka are been exposed to prostitution, trafficking girls for sexual exploitation, child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children at home and schools are common problems. According to secondary data, there are approximately 40 000 children in Sri Lanka who are vulnerable to prostitution and the number of boys exploited by tourists for commercial sex ranges from 5 000 to 30 000. It also reveals that poverty was the main root cause for the sexual exploitation for 70 percent of the child abuse cases. The

offenders are mainly short-term and long-term tourists. Report indicates that, majority of the boys are exploited by tourists while girls are exploited by locals including military workers, police officers, drivers, businessmen and daily labours. Even, Sri Lanka is the country where women and children are been trafficked internally and internationally to countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Middle east countries solely for forced labour and sexual exploitation (Child protection in middle childhood).

It was revealed during the interview that a number of children from Sri Lanka are being trafficked each year across the world and are subjected to prostitution network against their consent despite child protection and trafficking is being illegal in Sri Lanka. Also, most of child pornography videos have been filmed in Sri Lanka, Philippines and Thailand and 250 million estimated videos are been distributed world-wide. The majority of child prostitution around Sri Lanka occurs due to the number of child sex tourism. Tourists (Offenders) who usually travel to Sri Lanka with the main purpose of child prostitution. According to the report, there have been 40,000 estimated child sex workers in Sri Lanka and 5,000 to 30,000 child sex workers among them used by child sex tourists (Ousmand, 2020).

According to the report, which was published in the year 2018, when considering five years back, Sri Lanka was the primary destination for traffickers who have been trafficked children, women and men for sex trafficking and force labour. Some victims who have been migrated to Middle East, Afghanistan and Southeast Asia forced to work in the construction fields, garment and other domestic service sectors. Moreover, physically abnormal children and those children from socially vulnerable groups are been forced to beg and engage in criminal activities (United Nations).

According to the study that has been conducted, National Child Protection Authority in the year 2017, it was clear that, 80.4% of students exposed to at least one type of corporal punishment while 53.2% students were exposed to physical abuse and 72.5% of students are been exposed to at least one type of Psychological aggression in the past term. According to the report in the year 2010, there were 905 cases on inhumanity towards children out of 3892 cases on child abuse. On the other hand, in the year of 2018, 2413 inhumanity cases towards children were reported out of total 7342 child abuse cases and it is comparatively higher than the previous year (Gunasekara, 2020).

Moreover, according to the findings of study it was revealed that physical, sexual and emotional violence against children is being tolerated throughout Sri-Lanka as a result of blindly believed social and cultural norms. Further, parents, teachers, and children are often unaware of the long-term consequences which may affect the victims and they do not know how to reach and access the child protection services. Moreover, despite important child protection principles, it is difficult to work appropriately in the connected sectors of health, education, social protection, and justice because of poor coordination at national, district and divisional levels. To provide a quality and proper child protection services and to address poor coordination, child protection service sectors need to hire and train more child protection personnel urgently, need to have greater engagement with children, families and schools to help change attitudes and social norms where applicable. Most importantly, in Sri-Lanka, stakeholders at every level do not follow nationally accepted child protection framework. This situation creates more challenges to the policy makers where they do not obtain the sufficient and prominent evidence and data to access and react to the challenges on the ground (Child Protection, n.d.).

Moreover, according to the Clinical Psychiatrist, Dr. N. Kumaranayaka, “As a clinical psychiatrist my experience has shown that many of our children are being abused in various way in society, it is hidden, and many do not understand”. In the year 2015 2,317 cases related to cruelty to the children, 1,463 cases of not receiving proper education, 885 neglecting of children, 735 on sexual harassment and 433 on rape and other 365 cases due to grave sexual abuse have been reported. According to the Dr. N. Kumaranayakas’ statement in which he expressed his feelings and experience, “I handled a boy aged 15 years who had the symptoms of stealing, lying and was impulsive. He was doing well in studies but dropped his academic at the age of 10 after his mother left the country for a job in the Middle east and when his father became an alcoholic, his behaviour becoming violent the boy said”. Thereafter the boy had to spend an isolated and lonely life. He gradually reached his friends and got addicted to cannabis. Dr. Kumaranayaka identified the boys’ condition as “conduct disorder “in which have been common problem in Sri Lanka (Inayathullah, 2018).

The below statistical data received to Child Helpline service are not the only child abuse cases that have been reported in the year 2019. National Child Protection Authority receives complaints on child abuse in different ways. A large number of complaints were received through Child helpline service while other complaints were received through orally by being present at the NCPA, and written complaints which were sent through the letters.

TABLE 1. Number of complain reported to 1929 Child Helpline (01st Jan. 2019-31st December. 2019)

	Types of Abuse	Total
1	Obscene Publication	23
2	Procuring to beg	299
3	Cruelty to children	2342
4	Sexual Harassment	594
5	Kidnapping from lawful guardianship	109
6	Abduction	44
7	Trafficking	119
8	Rape	294
9	Unnatural offence	1
10	Grave Sexual Abuse	288
11	Neglect of Children	906
12	Child Labour	265
13	Compulsory Education	1290
14	Domestic violence	79
15	Juvenile Delinquency	337
16	Miscellaneous	1504
17	Trafficking Restricted Articles	29
18	Gross Indecency	1
19	Sale Of tobacco	1
20	Restriction on Payment	1
21	Soliciting a child	14
22	Incest	1
23	Exposure and abandonment	2
24	Sexual Exploitation of Children	4
25	Unlawful Custody	4
26	Child or Young person in need of care and protection	7
Grand Total		8,558

(National Child Protection Authority, 2019)

According to the both professionals interviewed, child protection issues in Sri Lanka are a national crisis. Recently, in the first fifteen days of 2020 Sri Lankan parliament has been reported with 54 cases of child abuse and 42 cases of serious sexual abuse out of 142 rape cases that have been reported from different police divisions in the country. A story related to 6 years old girl participating in oral sex pictures on social media was the most shocking incident that took public demonstrations attention while government authorities remain silent. Even, in Gampaha district of Sri Lanka, a 13 years old female student appealed a case against corporal punishment at school where student is been tortured by teachers with the canes every single day (Gunasekara, 2020). Moreover, the Sunday Morning news reported that, within January and February of year 2020, the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) has been reported over 2,500 child abuse cases (Child abuse - Over 2,500 cases in first 60 days of 2020).

6.2 Factors that affect child abuse

It was revealed in the interview that the main reasons for neglect is rising number of female migration and teenage pregnancy in Sri Lanka. Even poverty impacts on most of neglect cases where mother abandoning their children when they are not capable enough to look after themselves. Even in some cases despite parents' best interest in their children they unable to provide protection safety to their children due to lack of social support systems and accessible and affordable assistance. Also, lack of awareness about existing services is the other common factor that mainly impacts on child protection systems. Mostly specific essential services related to children with disabilities are not affordable for families with disabled children or simply do not exist in Sri Lanka accordingly. In that case, disable children at risk of been exploited to child abuse

According to the professionals, the common factors that affect most for child physical/ mental/ sexual abuse are, poverty, lack of education, parental neglect, and separated families. Among those factors, poverty is the main factor that effects in children's lives in different ways such as, lack of health facilities. Poor families with children in Sri Lanka are unable to afford basic health facilities for their children due to their low income, low education, geographical locations and lack of infrastructure services such as transportation. As a result of poverty, majority of children are suffering from child

malnutrition. Moreover, poverty and low education make children left behind. In Sri Lanka, majority of women migrate with the motive of strengthening family well-being. When mother is migrated, children are left behind with their fathers or close relatives whom education level is lower than the migrated mothers. Children aged from 6 months 5 and half years are left behind in low income families. Most migrants (96.3%) were housemaids and other (2.5%) skilled workers and 1% of professional and unskilled workers. According to the survey, at the time of mother's first departure, nearly half (48.8%) of the children were less than 6 years and 30.5% children were less than 3 years old (Kudagammana, 2011). This is a most critical stage of children's development where they need attention, love and care from their parents. Parental neglect can affect their brain development, physical and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, in this critical age, children could not understand what is happening around them and if something happened, they are not able to cope with it. The professionals revealed that left behind children certainly have negative behavioural changes after they were separated from their mother. These children are easily vulnerable to child abuse issues in absence of their mothers. In majority of child abuse cases, fathers or other care givers were failed to give protection, love and safety for children in absent of their mothers. Moreover, lack of parenting skills is another cause for child abuse. In Sri Lanka, a majority of teen parents who do not have necessary skills to be a good parent. Majority of mother's give birth to their children but, at in reality, they do not know how much love and care infants and small children need from their parents. Also, parents who have been experienced child abuse themselves do not know how to treat their children. Those parents tend to treat their children exactly the same way that they have been treated by their parents (National Institute of Social Development, 2013).

Family is the most important and influencing factor in children's lives. If child has strong family relationship with the biological parents, those children are at low risk for abuse while the children who live with their stepparents or single parent had increased risk of abuse. The interviews revealed that children who live in foster care are 10 times more likely to get abused than children who live with both biological parents. According to the reports, currently there are 414 institutional care for children who have been neglected or abandoned by the parents. There were 8,538 girls (60.2%) and 5,641 boys (39.8%) who have been institutionalized. The majority of Child Care institution in Sri Lanka were organized by non-

governmental organizations under the registration of Department of Probation and Child Care Services. Furthermore, 50% of children who have been referred to institutions were from single parents' families, 32% of children were from both parents' families and rest of 18% children were orphans. The main reasons for institutionalized of children were poverty, divorced parents, alcoholism, mother migration and insecurity at home mainly for girls. Female children are mostly exposed to sexual abused by neighbours, close relatives including their own fathers (National Institute of Social Development, 2013).

6.3 Legislative and policy challenges for child protection in Sri Lanka

The definition of a child is not consistent across the legal infrastructure in Sri Lanka. The lack of consensus on how child is defined, creates gaps in how the substantive law is applied. The Penal Code on Sexual Exploitation of children has many shortfalls. The current legislation in Sri Lanka on child pornography or Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) does not adequately cover Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE). Further, the legal framework in Sri Lanka fails to codify grooming as a crime. The Children and Young Persons Ordinance which applies to children between 12 and 14 years and young persons between 14 to 16 years, due to laws delays when cases are heard after children reach 18 years, they are treated adults. The OCSE does not have a section on computer crimes and it is problematic. Male victims of OCSE are not recognized as victims of OCSE in Sri Lanka. The current substantive law in Sri Lanka uses gendered pronouns within the definition of the crimes thus creating a vacuum for male child victims. This is especially a challenging situation for prevention of child sex tourism industry in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka supplementary Report, 2017).

6.4 Services that need to be improved

The professionals highlighted the importance of developing child protection legislations and policies during interviews. Law enforcement officers need to be trained at

national, district and divisional level. In addition, a victim-friendly complaint mechanism is needed to report the cases of exploitation. Professionals should be trained on criminal justice. It was also mentioned that education children on how to recognize trusted persons and to identify physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, and bullying. Sectors of education and health should be improved with accessible services for care and rehabilitation for children who are vulnerable and suffering from child protection problems. Reporting and complaints mechanisms need to be improved in more prominent way such as, raising awareness programme among children, communities and public about available helplines and complains reporting services. Awareness programme for parents, caregivers and teachers about the negative impact in the use of physical and humiliating punishment. Further, the interviewed professionals brought up that counselling services should reach rural areas of the country as well as urban areas. They have identified that it is important to advocate government authorities to create policies and structures to prevent child abuse and neglect to make the society a safer place for children.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above analysis on child protection issues and child protection authorities in Sri Lanka revealed that child sexual abuse, neglect and, corporal punishment and trafficking are the most commonly prevailing child protection issues in the country. Despite of currently established policies and laws related to child protection, Sri Lanka has a long way to go to achieve globally accepted child protection standards.

According to the understanding of the author, the mindset of the majority of the Sri Lankans are adopted to tolerate physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children due to social and cultural norms. Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country with a great majority of Sinhala Buddhists followed by Hindu Tamils and Islamic Muslims respectively. People are blindly believing that children should be punished for their wrong doings and in most cases, these punishments become physical and psychological violence against children. Despite the number of government and non-government organizations working on eliminating violence against children in the country, it has become very difficult to change the mindset of people which believes that corporal punishment is good to discipline the children. According to the findings, the educational level of parents and caregivers play a great role in eliminating violence against children. It is clear that, occurrence of corporal punishment is comparatively in families with parents or caregivers from low level of education. This might be due inefficiency of currently available interventions in the country as those interventions are not able to reach lower classes of the society.

According to the report about corporal punishment in Sri Lanka it is clear that, school corporal punishment is justified. People believe that it helps to correct misbehaviours of children and it help children to become responsible adults. It also mentioned that some children and adults believe that corporal punishments improve academic performances (A study on Child Disciplinary Methods).

Most of the interventions and awareness on child protection is done in urban settings of the country due to the difficulty of transportation and lack of availability of resource persons in rural and estate communities in Sri Lanka in which the majority of low-educated and low-income families live. At present, the authorities are carrying on media campaigns to enhance the awareness on child protection in the country using television and newspaper advertisements, but there is a great doubt about the effectiveness and reachability of those campaigns as the people in the lowest education and income segment of the country may not even have a television at their households and they might not buy or read newspapers. Therefore, the current channels of knowledge dissemination used by these interventions should be modified or changed in order to enhance the reach and suitability to the different sectors of the community. Rather than using a uniform set of interventions for the whole country, Author would suggest designing interventions for different segments of the society considering the education level, economic status, religious and cultural norms of the people in those social segments.

Sri Lanka is a popular destination in the world tourism sector for child prostitution. Child prostitution is commonly done in coastal areas of Sri Lanka that are popular tourist destinations. Poverty is the main reason for increased child prostitution in Sri Lanka. Majority of the children are engaged into prostitution against their will by their parents or elders to earn money. In addition, there is another set of children, especially teenagers who engage in child prostitution according to their will. But according to the Sri Lankan law, having a sexual relationship with a person below 16 years of age is a crime despite the will of that under-age person. However, it is clear that poverty is the main root cause for child prostitution in Sri Lanka. Low education level of parents leads to unemployment or less paid jobs. In addition, alcoholism is common in these communities and it causes increased family conflicts among parents. Family conflicts lead to parent separation. When parents are separated, children live with their mothers in most of the cases. However, mothers in low-educated communities have lower income compared to fathers and this causes poverty. To earn money to fulfil basic needs of the family such as food, water, and energy sources, parents tend to engage their children in child prostitution. To solve this issue, the most effective method would be interventions to avoid poverty. In addition, vulnerable communities should be made

aware about cash management practices which is very important in managing family expenses from daily wages from less-paid jobs.

The findings of this study support the available data on child abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka. Further, this study presents findings in combinations of child abuse and neglect. These findings can be helpful for the readers who are interested in gaining knowledge on current situation related to child abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka and to understand the challenges and limitations of child protection procedures.

In conclusion, child abuse and neglect are the most common child protection problems in Sri Lanka. Even though laws and structures on child protection are available in Sri Lanka, those should be further strengthened. Especially, policies and laws on online child sexual exploitation, child grooming, and laws for male child victims should be established. Further, awareness should be given to rural areas on how to access child protection services and report child protection problems. Child abuse and neglect are serious threats that impact the wellbeing of children in Sri Lanka and the whole world. The interventions to prevent children from all forms of physical and psychological violence need to be established in a more prominent way. Every individual in the family, community, country, and the world have a responsibility to provide and protect children's rights.

8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bachelor of Social Services degree in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences was a benchmarking starting point of my future professional career as a social worker. Throughout the degree programme, I have completed different types of individual and group assignments, reports, projects, research, and practice placements. Those types of learning methods helped me to improve and enhance the knowledge and experiences of different subjects related to the social work field. Throughout those learning assignments, I could improve communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, time management, research, and project management skills. This knowledge and experiences motivated me to conduct online interviews for my thesis work with self-confidence and professional knowledge.

The three practice placements that I completed gave me the opportunity to improve my knowledge and experience as an apprentice. To begin with, during my first-year practice placement I was given the opportunity to work with younger children in a Finnish day care center. That was my first working experience in the Finnish environment as an international student. Despite my previous personal and professional knowledge and experience working with children, I could acknowledge new methods and systems that have been used to work with children. Working with children has motivated me to choose the path to my future career as a childcare social worker. With that future ambition and passion, I chose children-related work for my other two practice placements. Considering those working and personal experience and knowledge, I decided to research on Child Protection Issues in Sri Lanka for my first professional research. During the research process, I gained knowledge about the importance of conducting research using accurate research methods. I acknowledged how to use research ethics, data collection methods, data analysing methods, and standard referencing methods.

Finally, I could enhance my knowledge of child protection problems and needs and opportunities to strengthen child protection procedures in a global scale. The feedback sessions in the research process from peer students and lectures were very supportive for me to improve my mistakes and I could learn new things while correcting my mistakes.

REFERENCES

- Bbamantra. (2018, September 2). Research Methodology - Introduction - Notes for Students. Retrieved from <https://bbamantra.com/research-methodology/>
- Beckett, C. (2007). *Child protection: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications. Belfast: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
- Brief Reports on Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms Supported by Plan Asia. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/14118/pdf/icprec_brief_cbcpm_report_sri_lanka_final_2012.
- Child Abandonment. (2018, December 27). Retrieved from <https://criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-charges/child-abandonment.html>
- Child abuse - Over 2,500 cases in first 60 days of 2020. (2020, March 10). Retrieved from <http://www.themorning.lk/child-abuse-over-2500-cases-in-first-60-days-of-2020/>
- Child Abuse & Neglect. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/>
- Child abuse and neglect in the Jaffna district of Sri ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://bmcpediatr.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12887-018-1138-3>
- Child maltreatment. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/child-maltreatment>
- Child Maltreatment. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>.
- Child protection for early childhood. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/child-protection-early-childhood>
- Child protection in middle childhood. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/child-protection-middle-childhood#_ftn1
- Child protection. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/child-protection>
- Children. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/children/index.html>
- Children's Rights and Protection. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/children-and-youth/resources/childrens-rights-and-protection>

- Child welfare. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://stm.fi/en/social-services/child-welfare>
- Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland.* (2016). current status of the Child Care Institutions and the institutionalized children in Sri Lanka. (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reports/current-status-child-care-institutions-and-institutionalized-children-sri-lanka>
- ECPACT. *A Report on the Scale, Scope and Context of the Sexual Exploitation of Children.* www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ECO_Italy_FINAL_6February2019.pdf.
- Graham, A., Powell, M. A., Anderson, D., Fitzgerald, R., & Taylor, N. J. (2013). *Ethical research involving children.* Florence: UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti.
- Gunasekara, M. (2020, March 1). Child Protection in Sri Lanka Is A National Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/child-protection-in-sri-lanka-is-a-national-crisis/>
- GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH ETHICS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, LAW ... (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://graduateschool.nd.edu/assets/21765/guidelinesresearchethicsinthesocialscienceslawhumanities.pdf>
- Inayathullah, H. (2018, October 21). child abuse on rise. *Sunday Observer*. Retrieved from <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2018/10/21/focus/child-abuse-rise>
- Kennison, P., & Goodman, A. (2008). *Children as victims.* Exeter: Learning Matters.
- Kudagammana, S. (2011). Defining and Comprehending Child Abuse at Present Times. An Appraisal. *Sri Lanka Journal of Forensic Medicine, Science & Law*, 1(2), 28. doi: 10.4038/sljfmsl.v1i2.2726
- Luo, A. (2019, October 31). Content Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide with Examples. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/content-analysis/>
- Ministry of Safety and Justice. (2016, June 29). Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. Retrieved from <https://www.dutchrapporteur.nl/sexualviolenceagainstchildren/SECTT/secct.aspx>
- National Policy on Child Protection. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.childwom-enmin.gov.lk/storage/app/media/Draft-National-Policy-on-Child-Protection-SINHALA.pdf.

- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 160940691773384. doi: 10.1177/1609406917733847
- Ousmand, M. (2020, February 18). Child Prostitution In Sri Lanka. Retrieved from <http://www.pulse.lk/everythingelse/child-prostitution-in-sri-lanka/>
- Preventing child maltreatment: A guide to taking action and generating evidence.* (2007). Genève (Suisse): World Health Organization.
- Protecting children from violence. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/eca/child-protection/protecting-children-violence>
- Research Guides: Research Methods: Ethics in Research. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://libguides.library.cityu.edu.hk/researchmethods/ethics>
- Report for and with children. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/it-guidelines-background-document-policy-guidance-on-empowering-protect/168093b644>
- Save the Children Sri Lanka. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/publishers/save-children-sri-lanka>
- Simon, J., Luetzow, A., & Conte, J. R. (2020). Thirty years of the convention on the rights of the child: Developments in child sexual abuse and exploitation. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 104399. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104399
- Sri Lanka Supplementary Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (2017). Retrieved from https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared Documents/LKA/INT_CRC_NGO_LKA_27121_E.pdf
- Sri Lanka. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.childfund.org/Sri-Lanka/>
- SRSR Reports | UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/srsg-reports-1>
- Streefkerk, R. (2019, September 23). Primary vs Secondary Sources: Explained with Easy Examples. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/citing-sources/primary-and-secondary-sources>
- Tarja Pösö, Marit Skivenes & Anne-Dorthe Hestbæk (2014) Child protection systems within the Danish, Finnish and Norwegian welfare states—time for a child centric approach?, *European Journal of Social Work*, 17:4, 475-490, DOI: [10.1080/13691457.2013.829802](https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2013.829802)

Tiedonhaun oppaat: Resource Guides: Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR): Guide: Ethical principles. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://lib-guides.diak.fi/c.php?g=656123&p=4611984>

United Nations. (n.d.). 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report - Sri Lanka. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b3e0a79a.html>

UNCRC Full Text. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/full-uncrc/#2>

What is child abuse and neglect? (2018, September 02). Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>

What is Child Abuse. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse>

What is child Protection? - UNICEF. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/What_is_Child_Protection.pdf

World report on violence and health. (2014, June 11). Retrieved from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/chapters/en/

www.SiteWizard.co.uk. (n.d.). What is child sexual abuse. Retrieved from <https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/what-is-child-sexual-abuse.htm>

9 Appendix 1

Guiding questions for the interviews

1. General information about the organization and Interviewees

What kind of organization is Childfund? Is it a government or non-government organization?

What is your organization's common vision?

What kind of aims and goals do you expecting to achieve as an organization?

How long have you been working with ChildFund?

What is your position at work?

How far you have been involved in the programs that organized for children?

How well do you know about the child maltreatment situation in Sri Lanka?

2. Information related to child maltreatment situation in Sri Lanka

What are the common types of child protection problems in Sri Lanka?

How the cases were reported to you?

What are the common reasons for those types of child protection problems?

Which kind of prevention programs did you arranged for children who need help?

Do you work with children directly? Or Indirectly?

What kind of activities or services you offered for the service users?

Who are the stakeholders and partners you are cooperating with?

How far have you been contributed in policy changes for a child-friendly manner?

What kind of prevention methods that needs to be improved?

Who were your target group?

How do you reach to your target group?

Do you have any future plans for children who are in need for help?