

# A Criminological Study on Family Environment Factors Affecting Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka

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## ABSTRACT

Sex crimes are a major category in the classification of crimes in Sri Lanka. Of these, sexual offenses against children are discussed as sexual abuse under child abuse. There are various factors that contribute to the sexual abuse of children. This research has conducted a criminological study of the family environmental factors affecting child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka. The research was conducted in the Kalutara and Colombo districts of the Western Province and 228 sexually abused children were used as the main sample in 2015-2020. Two separate samples were also used for officers on duty with regard to parents and children from the victims. The data obtained from the research have been extensively analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. 87% of victims of sexual abuse are girls. The majority of 42% represent the 15-17 category. 47% of the majority are victims of corruption. The boyfriend (42%) is responsible for most of the abuse. 33% of victims have been sexually abused in their own home and 32% in the home of the abuser. Family vulnerabilities such as family economic difficulties, parental ignorance, extramarital affairs, single parent family, parental separation, family disputes, parental emigration, paternal and drug abuse, various physical and mental disorders of the parents, family moral decline, and breakdown of parent-child cooperation And various problems of children, problems in the social environment can be identified as factors contributing to sexual abuse. A child faces many problems when he or she is sexually abused. This physical, mental and social

impact is detrimental not only to the child affected but also to his family, society and the country as a whole. It can be pointed out that an integrated approach is more effective in controlling and preventing child sexual abuse.

**Keywords:** Child, Child Abuse, Family Background, Sexual Abuse, Victims.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In countries that are developed in the world as well as in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, various types of crime and abuse are more or less the same. The issue of child abuse, which is a violation of children's rights, has also been the subject of much discussion in recent years. There is a tendency for child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka, especially among child abusers, and there appear to be a variety of factors contributing to this. Weaknesses related to the family environment are a major factor contributing to this. International organizations and organizations dealing with children, governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in various countries, have placed special emphasis on the protection of the rights of the child against various forms of child abuse. Therefore, it is clear that the world's attention is focused on children.

This study on Family Environmental Factors Affecting Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka focuses on the concepts of child, family, child abuse and child sexual abuse as well as the impact and issues

of child sexual abuse, child sexual abuse control and prevention.

Age-based interpretation of the child occupies a central and central place in the discussion of the concept of who the child is in Sri Lanka. In addition, the concept of the child can be broadly analyzed as a concept in the fields of law, psychology and sociology.

Inquiries into the law affecting children in Sri Lanka have been interpreted under different age groups. The following table shows the interpretations made by the various ordinances regarding the child.

**Table 1. Analysis of the age of the child by the laws of Sri Lanka**

Serial No.	Act	Minimum Age
01	Employment of Women and Youth and Children Act	14
02	2010 Hazardous Employment Orders	18
03	Penal Code	8, 12, 16, 18
04	Factories Ordinance	14
05	Wandering Ordinance	16
06	Shop and Office Employees Act	14
07	Charter of the Rights of the Child in Sri Lanka	18
08	National Child Protection Authority Act	18

(Source - Department of Labor, 2012: 02-03)

It is clear that the age groups of 08, 12, 14, 16 and 18 have been used in the definition of children according to the laws applicable to children in this country. However, in general, the defined age of a child in Sri Lanka is 18 years.

In the context of the concept of child abuse, child abuse can be simply defined as any act that commits crimes against children, offenses, neglect or violates the rights of the child. In addition to this simple definition, the concept of child abuse can be broadly interpreted both academically and thematically. It is important to look at these interpretations, and interpretations of the British Encyclopedia and the Oxford Dictionary are given prominence in academic interpretations. The fields of medicine, psychology, law, and the social

sciences occupy a prominent place in subject-related interpretation. Also, the World Health Organization (W.H.O) in 1999 issued a unique definition of child abuse. All of the above interpretations of child abuse define physical, mental and sexual abuse and neglect of children as child abuse. Child abuse is also defined as the use of child labor, the use of children in armed struggle, and the harassment of children.

Sexual abuse is one of the most common forms of child abuse. The use of a child for sexual activity can be simply defined as child sexual abuse, and sexual abuse takes many forms. Sexual abuse can occur with or without physical contact. Therefore, simply put, child sexual abuse is a field that can be widely studied. Misdemeanors include child sexual abuse, aggravated sexual assault, sexual misconduct, unnatural misconduct, bullying, and indecent exposure to pornography.

Child sexual abuse is one of the leading causes of child abuse. In 1999, the World Health Organization presented a unique definition of child sexual abuse. Although the use of children for the sexual gratification of adults is simply defined as sexual abuse, it is clear that extensive studies of it take on a complex nature. Criminology in the social sciences category takes a legal approach to the study of child sexual abuse across the subject. Accordingly, child sexual abuse is a punishable act that violates criminal law. Child sexual abuse is discussed in the legal field as well as in the fields of medicine and psychology. Sexual abuse is discussed in medicine as an activity that can have a variety of physical effects on the child, and is psychologically discussed as a condition that has a psychological impact on the child. Accordingly, it is important to study sexual abuse in depth, depending on its complexity.

Sexual offenses against children in Sri Lanka can be categorized as follows.

- Rape
- Grave Sexual Abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual Exploitation
- Unnatural Offences
- Abduction

- Exposure of Children to pornography
- Incest
- Procuration for Sexual Abuse
- Severe indecent acts among persons

(Sri Lanka Police Department, 1995; 22).

Each of these offenses is interpreted separately and penalized by the Penal Code Amendment Act No. 22 of 1995.

Child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka seems to have developed into a new trend today based on a variety of factors. Child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka has been discussed in the tourism industry as well as in child and child abuse studies. It is important to study the current state of child sexual abuse based on the issues discussed in it and recent reports on child sexual abuse.

Sociologists' research on child sexual abuse in the 1980s and 1990s focused on child prostitutes in Professor Nandasena Ratnapala's book, *Prostitutes in Sri Lanka*. "Tourism, a strong aspect of development that has taken place with the open economy, has had a strong impact on the growth of child sexual abuse. It has been widely reported among tourists that Sri Lanka is a good place to use children for this purpose. Therefore, tourists come to Sri Lanka for this purpose. They take advantage of the current situation in our country" (Ratnapala, 2014; 52). Professor Ratnapala's idea is confirmed by two travel magazines, *Spartacus* and *Little John*. *Spartacus Magazine*, based in

Amsterdam, Netherlands, has named Sri Lanka as a "Paradise for Homosexuality". Also, *Little John* magazine states, "If you want prostitutes, go to Thailand, and if you want boy prostitutes, go to Sri Lanka" (Amarasekara, 2012; 147). The above two magazines have drawn the world's attention to child prostitution in Sri Lanka.

In countries with high levels of tourist attraction, there appears to be an increase in child sexual abuse. Third world countries like Sri Lanka are the countries where child sex work/child sexual abuse is most prevalent. Sri Lanka is world-renowned, especially for its child sex work (Banda, 2014; 10). Accordingly, child sexual abuse has developed in

Sri Lanka as well as in other parts of the world and has become a widely discussed social problem in recent times. According to research papers and reports by sociologists, the number of children involved in prostitution in Sri Lanka is around 80,000. This figure is second only to Thailand, which has about 400,000 child prostitutes compared to other countries in the world. Research in Sri Lanka shows that 18% of boys and 5.4% of girls under the age of 18 are currently sexually abused during childhood (Amarasekara, 2015; 118).

The table below contains statistics reported to the Colombo Police Children and Women's Bureau on child sexual abuse offenses in Sri Lanka.

**Table 2. Child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka**

Sexual Abuse	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sexual harassment	1238	1206	1250	1488	1255	1225	1332	1309	1315
Exposure of Children to pornography	9	12	7	7	6	7	9	7	16
Procuration	55	2	2	9	4	4	7	2	3
Improper Sexual Exploitation	0	24	23	58	36	28	27	20	17
Abduction	814	767	731	809	748	741	819	741	714
Rape	1808	1722	1651	1582	1516	1374	1384	1412	1564
Unnatural Offences	138	22	19	16	22	28	8	10	5
Grave Sexual Abuse	612	811	728	749	584	525	670	640	628
Incest	18	46	32	42	33	29	28	43	42
Severe indecent acts among persons	2	5	3	12	11	21	0	7	2
Total	4694	4617	4446	4772	4215	3982	4284	4191	4306

(Source: Colombo Police Children and Women's Bureau, 2012-2020)

Accordingly, 39,507 cases of child sexual abuse were reported during the nine years from 2012-2020. This figure is very high in a country like Sri Lanka with a one-year average of 4,390. Of the nine years of reported sexual abuse, the most serious were sexual offenses. There were 14,013

rapes, 11,618 sexual assaults, 5,947 Grave sexual abuses and 6,884 abductions.

**Table 3. Child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka by district**

District	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Colombo	297	296	260	332	280	276	277	249	215
Kalutara	271	307	285	258	217	227	230	239	230
Gampaha	387	331	381	391	306	312	367	263	246
Anuradhapura	361	353	290	444	303	276	263	339	357
Polonnaruwa	219	158	139	177	115	100	121	136	163
Kurunegala	396	413	402	424	355	365	443	356	464
Puttalam	206	211	232	254	189	186	206	208	222
Galle	290	311	300	262	243	210	234	243	201
Matara	231	172	175	208	179	199	207	144	155
Hambantota	222	187	186	223	195	166	192	190	182
Ratnapura	279	321	294	296	289	249	335	300	326
Kegalle	249	255	225	222	207	200	212	208	182
Kandy	220	263	246	233	228	216	239	250	254
Nuwara Eliya	75	92	96	106	129	92	76	100	84
Matale	137	107	127	82	82	88	101	114	137
Badulla	165	178	149	162	185	201	169	149	178
Monaragala	153	171	137	147	134	152	120	161	136
Batticaloa	98	65	62	68	76	75	63	80	84
Ampara	103	100	115	138	117	90	110	100	114
Trincomalee	72	65	76	69	80	79	83	77	98
Jaffna	75	78	75	71	92	66	67	84	87
Kilinochchi	22	26	12	24	39	43	37	45	35
Mullaitivu	33	47	50	60	45	21	34	35	39
Vavuniya	35	33	48	46	50	37	42	57	49
Mannar	34	14	32	21	22	28	15	16	19
National Child Protection Authority	50	43	41	35	20	25	33	37	46
Child & Women Bureau (Police)	14	20	11	19	38	3	8	11	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4694</b>	<b>4617</b>	<b>4446</b>	<b>4772</b>	<b>4215</b>	<b>3982</b>	<b>4284</b>	<b>4191</b>	<b>4306</b>

(Source - Colombo Police Children and Women's Bureau, 2012-2020)

In terms of districts in Sri Lanka, the highest number of child sexual abuse cases have been reported in the above nine years in Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Gampaha, Ratnapura, Colombo, Galle, Kalutara, Kandy, Kegalle and Puttalam respectively. Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Batticaloa districts have reported the lowest number of sexual assaults in the last nine years.

It is also important to look at the causes of child sexual abuse. In particular, the tourism industry, war, family and environmental vulnerabilities, physical and mental disabilities of children, the influence of peer groups, social and cultural factors, communication and technological factors, natural and other disasters have all contributed to child sexual abuse.

The main reason why children are sexually abused is the various problematic situations that arise in

the family environment. Economic poverty, mother's emigration, parent's death, parents' extramarital affairs, parents leaving the family, parents addicted to alcohol and drugs, families with young parents, sudden marriages, underage marriages, mothers Problems such as occupation, parental inaccessibility (distance from bond), paternity issues, divorce, parental and family adult ignorance, and the resulting family environmental factors that make children vulnerable to child sexual abuse (Sarachchandra, 2000; 78-90).

Child sexual abuse can lead to many problems. In particular, this can have long-term and short-term effects on a child's life. This has a huge impact not only on the child but also on the family, relatives and society in which the child lives. As a result, children are not only physically and mentally abused, but also have serious personality disorders, learning disabilities, educational failures, running away from home, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, abortion and becoming prostitutes. The results can be seen up to the risk level.

Controlling and preventing child sexual abuse is essential. It has a profound effect on the progress of society as a whole and the country. Especially here it is important to pay special attention to the family environmental factors that are most prevalent in child sexual abuse.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in collaboration with the Kalutara and Colombo districts to study the family environmental factors affecting child sexual abuse. The total sample of the study was 315 and data were collected using three samples. The main sample was 228 sexually abused children, 119 from Colombo and 109 from Kalutara. The sample of parents of victims includes 47 parents or guardians, and the sample of government officials dealing with children includes 40 officers. The sample of children and parents was selected by simple random sampling method and the sample sample of officers was selected by objective sampling method. Primary and secondary sources have been used to conduct the research. Data collection was

done in two main parts. That is, primary data collection and secondary data collection. Data analysis was done under three main sections. These include quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and geographic information systems analysis.

### 3. Results and discussion

By the nature of sexual abuse, the majority of children have been raped. The percentage of victims of rape is 47%. 35% were sexually abused, 6% were sexually assaulted, 5% were sexually abused, 3% were sexually abused, 1% were sexually abused, and 1% were sexually abused. Has been. When it comes to people who have been sexually abused, most children are abused by their boyfriends. The percentage of boyfriend abusers is 42%. Then there are 14% neighbors, 13% relatives, 9% fathers, 8% acquaintances, 4% teachers and priests, 3% fathers and strangers, and 1% friends respectively. Have become sexually abusive. The place where the sexual abuse took place was also identified here. Accordingly, the majority, or 33%, have been abused in their own homes. 32% have been sexually assaulted in the abuser's home. The above places can be identified as the two most vulnerable places to be sexually abused and it seems that the majority of the victims of sexual abuse also have their consent. 31% of victims have been sexually abused by this abuser in the past. After the abuse, 24% of the victims were repeatedly abused by him. Of particular note is the fact that 65% of abusers go to the victim's home and have contact. Also, 21% of victims have been sexually abused by another abuser. 43% of victims are victims of voluntary abuse. 55% did not expect any benefit from being sexually abused. However, 30% of the victims are promised marriage, 12% love, 9% money, 4% sexual desire and the need for food and drink at home.

The causes and risk factors for sexual abuse were identified in the research. They can be categorized as victims' issues, family issues and social environment issues. Considering the victim factors, their gender, age, level of education, and certain behavioral characteristics and interpersonal relationships have all contributed to sexual harassment. The majority of victims of sexual

abuse are girls. Accordingly, 87% of the victims are girls and 13% are boys. Age is also a risk factor for sexual abuse. The vast majority of abusers, 42%, are in the 15-17 age group. 33% in the 12-14 age group, 17% in the 9-11 age group, and 9% in the 6-8 age group were abused. Accordingly, children over 12 years of age, especially girls over 12 years of age, are at high risk. 35% of the victims are in grades 10-11, 31% are in the GCE Ordinary Level examination, 18% are in grades 7-9, 10% are in grades 4-6 and 2% are in grades 1-3. Is also educated. The percentage of those who pass the GCE Ordinary Level Examination is 4% and the percentage of students who pass the Advanced Level is 1%. At present the school enrollment percentage is 44%. 7% of victims suffer from various physical and mental ailments. This disability has a direct impact on sexual abuse. The research also found that certain behavioral characteristics of the majority of victims also contributed to sexual harassment. Victims' phone use, internet use, premarital sex, and certain abusive behaviors have a significant impact on sexual harassment. Only 66% of parents reported problems affecting victims and 34% chose other people to report problems. 13% did not tell anyone about the problems that affected them. 24% of victims are reported to be extremely angry with residents, which is a shortcoming in maintaining interpersonal relationships. This has a huge impact on direct as well as indirect sexual abuse.

Family vulnerabilities of victims of sexual abuse are strongly influenced. Accordingly, family economic vulnerabilities, poor parental education, parental death, single parental family, parental separation, parental extramarital affairs, parental second marriage, parental emigration, parental alcohol abuse, low parental attention, family conflict, both parents employed. The research study identified factors such as engagement, parental discipline, and inadequate home facilities as influential factors in child sexual abuse. Of the 228 children who were sexually abused, 84 or 37% lost both parents. This is a factor that has a profound effect on abuse. It can be seen that the level of education received by the fathers is less than the level of education received by the mothers. 68% of fathers are unable to get a higher education in grades 10-11. This percentage of mothers is 62%.

The percentage of fathers who have completed ninth grade and below is 50% and the percentage of mothers who are 40%. Accordingly, it is clear that the parents of the victims have received less education. The total percentage of fathers working in the public and private sectors is 24% and the percentage of mothers is 14%. Accordingly, the remaining fathers are all laborers, self-employed and run small businesses. Maternal employment is also done under this category and the percentage of non-working mothers is 39%. The nature of the jobs of the majority has caused their economy to plummet. A monthly income of Rs. 30,000 is not enough for a family with several members. 48% of these families have been identified. 91% of families have no other source of income. The fact that 33% of the affected families are entitled to any state subsidy explains the economic poverty of those families. Also, 56% of families are in debt for various reasons. Also, the home facilities of a significant number of people are minimal. 9% of the mothers of the victims were abroad at the time of the abuse. Only 41% stay home with their parents until their parents return home from work. 59% stay alone or with someone else. The percentage of second time married parents is 17%. Fifty-three percent of victims report that their parents pay less attention to them. The vast majority, or 80%, of fathers are known to use alcohol. Alcohol and drug abuse accounted for 42% of family conflicts, while 41% of family conflicts were due to other factors. 52% of those conflicts are due to the extramarital affair of the mother and father. Also, 15% of the parents of the victims suffer from various persistent physical and mental illnesses. Parents' interactions with their children are also weak. Only a fraction of 11% of parents set aside a specific or specific time of the day to spend with their children alone. Eighty five percent of parents do not inquire about their children's daily routine. The caregivers themselves have admitted that they have paid less attention to their children. The accepted percentage is 57%. 60% of parents find out about their child's sexual abuse through someone else or in some other way. This is a situation that further explains the poor interaction between children and parents. 79% of caregivers do not educate their children about sexual abuse prevention strategies. In the parent sample, 62% of the guardians were identified as

having casual relationships. 30% of parents have been sexually abused during their childhood. Sixty-one percent of trustees are involved in police legal matters and 21 percent in court cases due to various misconducts. The issues described above are family problems identified by research that have directly led to child sexual abuse.

Victims of sexual abuse face a number of problems that can be classified as short-term and long-term effects. Accordingly, the victims have faced several major issues such as health, law, education, social and family issues and problems such as pregnancy and change of residence. When the effects of each problem were presented separately, 79% of the total sample experienced health problems. 99.6% are facing legal issues, 84% are facing education issues, 88% are facing social issues and 55% are facing family issues. 14% are victims of pregnancy. 6% of victims and their families have fled their homes due to problems and inconveniences caused by sexual abuse.

Data contributors representing the three samples made suggestions for the control and prevention of child sexual abuse. The proposal put forward by the majority of victims to control sexual abuse is to impose harsher punishments on the perpetrators. 64% of victims have submitted this proposal. Other proposals include child awareness, parent and community awareness, increased parental attention, activism in a positive family background, and the effectiveness of child-dealing officers in controlling sexual abuse.

The research also focuses on the prevention of child sexual abuse. 49% of victims state that child sexual abuse can be prevented by enforcing and enforcing strict regulations. In addition, the proposals presented in these three samples summarize the importance of building a strong family environment, educating parents, educating the community, providing greater parental protection and care, educating children, focusing parents on children, educating targeted groups, and sex education. Granting are important proposals put forward for the prevention of child sexual abuse.

### **3. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Parental ignorance and lack of knowledge about sex education are closely linked to child sexual abuse. The majority of victimized families have

poor interactions with their neighbors and society. Children who have lost a parent, who live in a single-parent family, or who live under another guardian are at higher risk of sexual abuse. Parental casual relationships and second marriages or other marriages also contribute to child sexual abuse. The economic hardships of the family are also a high risk factor for sexual abuse of children in those families. Father's alcohol and drug abuse, parents' emigration, mother's work, lack of good interaction between children and parents, occurrence of family conflicts, various physical and mental disorders of parents, nature of work of parents, anti social behavior patterns of parents, lack of skills and attitudes of parents Child sexual abuse, lack of alternative care, family religious moral decline, and the close relationship between abusers and families are all linked to child sexual abuse. It can be concluded that the influence of peer groups, underage premarital relationships, child abuse patterns, children's fashion use, their various physical and mental disorders, telephone and internet use and various vulnerabilities in the living social environment also contribute to child sexual abuse. The abuser and the abuser have a close relationship with the victim. The vast majority of sexual abuse is at the behest of the victim. Sexual abuse can lead to a number of problems, some of which can have a devastating effect on children in the long run.

The suggestions identified in this research for the control and prevention of child sexual abuse can be summarized and presented under four main sections.

01. Empowering self-defense by developing skills, attitudes and knowledge in children - Personal level
02. Ensuring child protection by building a child-friendly, strong family environment - Family level
03. Prevention of Sexual Abuse by Close Relationships and Community Empowerment Techniques - Intimate Relationships and Community Levels
04. Maintaining and managing social and cultural conditions to ensure child protection - Social and cultural level.

The control and prevention of child sexual abuse cannot be done by just one of the above groups. For this, the child, the family, the community and other

social groups must work together in a integrated approach.

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