

A Study on Child Abuse

**BREA THE
SILENCE**



END CHILD ABUSE

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a big problem everywhere, affecting many children. Though there are various preventive measures and laws against it, child abuse keeps happening. It affects the well being of the children. This mini-research study aims to delve into the various forms of child abuse, its underlying causes, and potential strategies to prevent and address this alarming issue.

OBJECTIVES

- a. To identify the root causes and contributing factors leading to child abuse.
- b. To examine the short-term and long-term effects of child abuse on victims' physical and emotional, and psychological health.
- c. To analyze the prevalence and types of child abuse in Trichy hub which covers Coimbatore Tiruppur and Salem district.
- d. To explore existing support systems and interventions available for victims of child abuse.
- e. To propose effective strategies and recommendations for preventing child abuse and supporting victims.

METHODOLOGY

- **Review on Existing Study:** Comprehensive review of existing research studies, and case reports related to child abuse.
- **Data Analysis:** Statistical analysis of five years (2018 to 2023) data of Trichy hub(Coimbatore, Tiruppur & Salem) & using Microsoft Excel as a tool.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing child abuse data across different demographic factors such as age, gender, religion, parental status, education and family background.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study was collected using the web tool called Child MISS, which is part of the Homelink Network. The data covers the period from 2018 to 2023 and includes a sample size of 1047 children from Trichy .

LIMITATIONS

The limitation of this study is the potential for sampling bias. The study may have focused on specific regions or populations, making it challenging to generalize the findings in a broader context. Other limitations could include the potential for incomplete or missing data, limited resources or time constraints for data collection, or the inability to control all relevant variables that may influence child abuse.

MEANING OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is a state of emotional, mental, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon.

"According to UNICEF violence against children can be "physical and mental abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. Violence may take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential care facilities, on the streets, in the workplace, in prisons and in places of detention."

"According to WHO, child abuse has many forms: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and exploitation. Any of these that are potentially or actually harmful to a child's health, survival, dignity and development are abuse."

TYPE OF CHILD ABUSE

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse involves causing physical harm or injury to a child through actions such as burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or any other form of physical harm.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse entails engaging in sexual behavior with a child who may not comprehend the nature of such acts. This includes using a child for pornography, sexual exploitation, prostitution, or engaging in unlawful sexual practices with a child.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse, also referred to as verbal abuse, mental abuse, or psychological maltreatment, encompasses acts or omissions by parents or caregivers that result in or could potentially result in significant behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma to a child.

Neglect: Neglect is the failure to fulfill a child's basic needs, which can include physical, educational, or emotional requirements. Physical neglect involves not providing adequate food, clothing, medical care, supervision, or protection from harsh weather conditions. Educational neglect refers to failing to provide appropriate schooling or addressing special educational needs. Psychological neglect involves the absence of emotional support and love, consistent neglect of the child's emotional needs, or exposing the child to substance abuse.

Exploitation: Exploitation, whether commercial or otherwise, occurs when a child is used for some form of labor or activity that benefits others at the expense of the child's well-being. Examples include child labor or child prostitution.

FACTORS LEADING TO CHILD ABUSE

- A personal history of experiencing abuse or neglect during their own childhood.
- Substance use disorder .
- Physical or mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Poor parent-child relationships.
- Socioeconomic stress stemming from financial issues, unemployment, or medical problems.
- Lack of understanding about basic childhood development, leading to unrealistic expectations of children's capabilities.
- Insufficient parenting skills to manage the challenges of raising a child.
- Lack of support from family members, friends, neighbors, or the community.
- Caring for a child with intellectual or physical disabilities that pose additional challenges in providing adequate care.
- Family stress or crisis due to domestic violence, relationship conflicts, separation, or divorce.
- Personal mental health issues, including low self-confidence and feelings of incompetence or shame.

THE BEHAVIORS EXHIBITED BY ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN:

- Ignoring or denying a child's problematic behavior, changes, or difficulties.
- Using language that conveys the perception of the child as worthless or burdensome.
- Expecting physical or academic performances from the child that are beyond their capabilities.
- Encouraging teachers or other caregivers to administer harsh punishments for the child's misbehavior.
- Rarely displaying physical affection towards the child.
- Expressing anger towards the child, particularly in response to misbehavior.
- Demonstrating minimal concern for the child's well-being.



EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE

Short Term Effects

- Fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, and depression.
- Acting out in violence and anger. This may manifest as running away, vandalism, shoplifting, setting fires, or hurting other people or animals.
- Physical harm through injury to their genitals, painful urination, and stomach aches, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.
- Low self-esteem.
- Nightmares and trouble sleeping.
- Sexual behaviour disturbances.
- Poor social function and a lack of desire to be around others.
- Poor grades and skipping school.

Long Term Effects

- Alcohol and drug abuse.
- An abused child who does not get professional help is twice as likely to abuse others as an adult.
- An abused child who does not get professional help and has not recovered is an easy target for abusers.
- Low self-esteem, depression, and suicide.
- As an adult they may become more or less sexually active and develop unhealthy attitudes about sex.
- They may not be able to trust themselves, friends, and other adults in their life.

Counselling is the best way to help and possibly prevent these harmful effects.



REVIEW ON EXISTING STUDY

Child Abuse Instances in India

In India, child abuse manifests in various forms, encompassing physical, sexual, and mental mistreatment. According to a study conducted by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), approximately 55% of children in India have encountered some form of abuse, indicating a significantly prevalent issue that requires urgent attention.

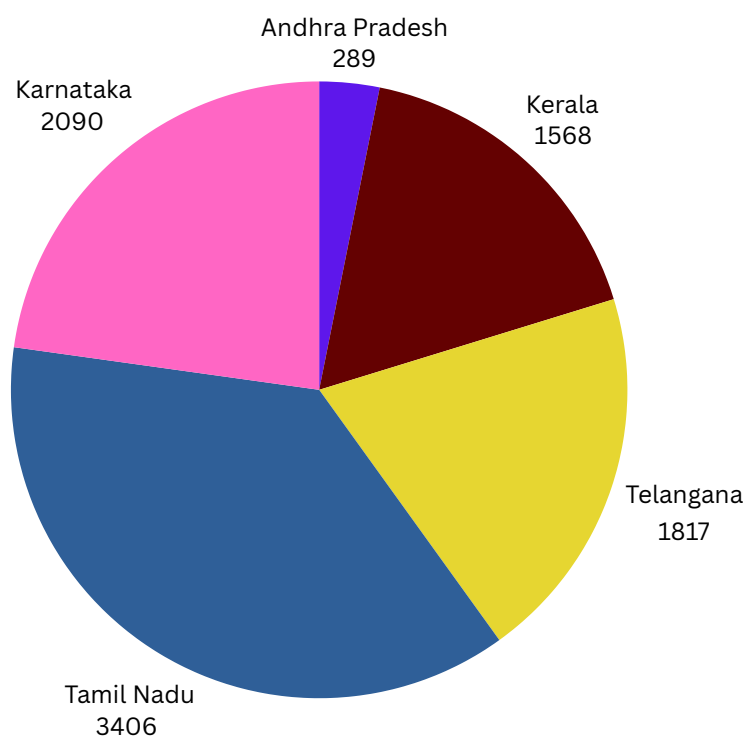
Physical abuse has emerged as a prevalent form of child mistreatment in India, affecting roughly 25% of children at some stage. Common instances include hitting, slapping, burning, and beating. Furthermore, about 16% of children have experienced sexual abuse, ranging from rape to unwanted sexual contact. Regrettably, there is a growing trend of mental harassment, with 11% of children reporting emotional or verbal abuse from their caregivers.

Reference :<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog>.

Rising Child Sexual Abuse in Southern States of India

According to NCRB 2021 data: Tamil Nadu saw a 31 percent increase in child sexual abuse cases, accounting for 4,465 cases registered in 2021 as compared to 3,090 cases reported in 2020, while Karnataka witnessed a hike of 25 percent in registered sexual abuse crimes against minors, Telangana, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh followed with 23, 18, and 3 percent rise in sexual abuse cases.

Child Sexual Abuse Cases in South India States -2021

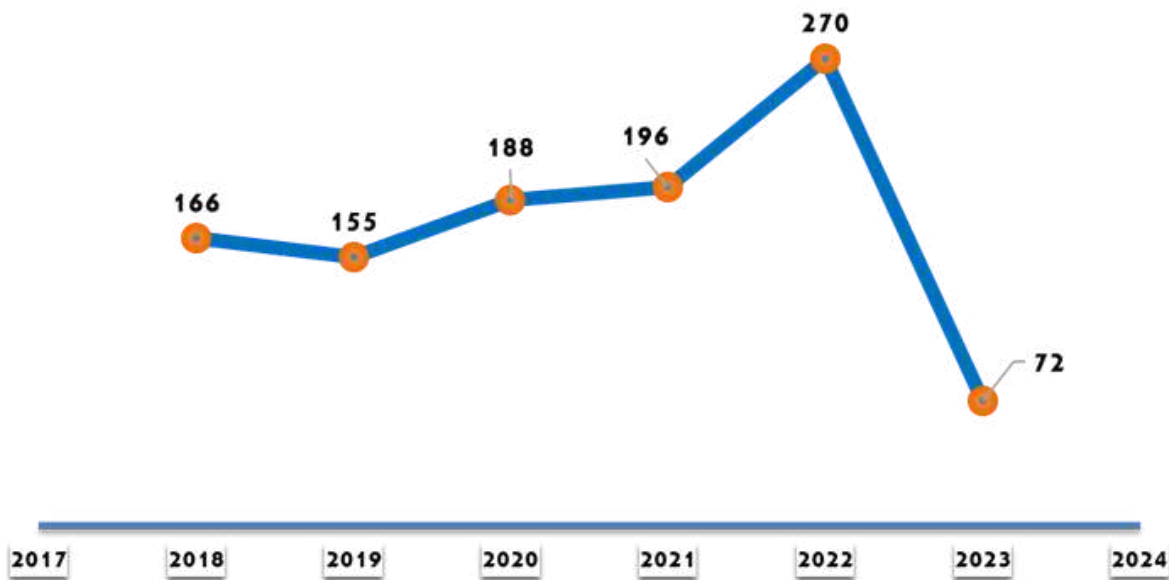


Reference :<https://thesouthfirst.com/tamilnadu/ncrb-2021-data-24-47-hike-in-child-sexual-abuse-cases-in-5-south-india-states-tamil-nadu-4th-in-india>

DATA ANALYSIS

Child abuse is a grave societal issue with far-reaching consequences, affecting the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. To shed light on the prevalence and patterns of child abuse, this mini-research utilizes data collected from the Trichy hub of the Child MISS web tool spanning the years 2018 to 2023. The sample size comprises 1047 cases of reported child abuse incidents along with relevant demographic and situational information.

**Figure 1 : Yearly analysis of child abuse
2018-2023**

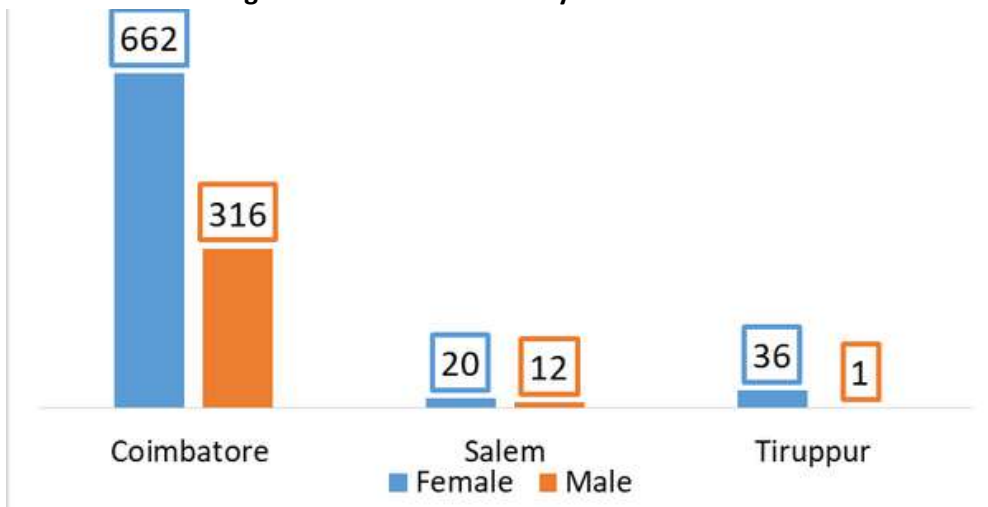


The figure clearly demonstrates that there is gradual increase in the abuse in the year 2020 to 2022 is due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, many children were at home. Parents were also busy with work, so chances of children being abused by their known ones would have increased, as they were in close contact with them, and children trust the people they know. The analysis indicates a noticeable decline in reported child abuse cases in the year 2023 with only 72 cases reported.

The primary reason attributed to the decrease in reported cases is the transition of the Child help line service from the organization to a government department. This change likely disrupted the reporting mechanism and affected the accessibility and efficiency of reporting child abuse incidents in Homelink Network.

ANALYSIS ON GEOGRAPHICAL DISPARITIES

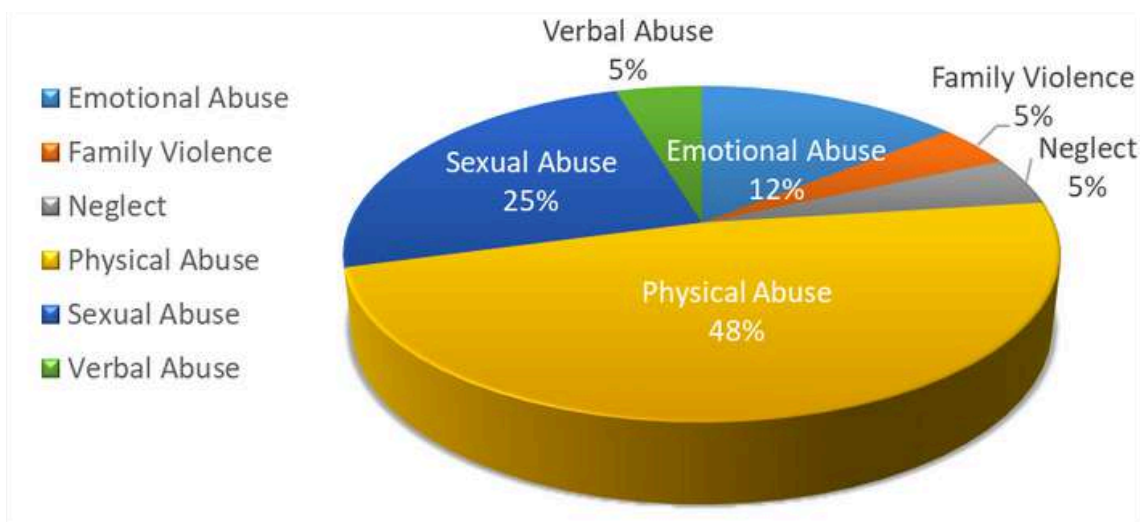
Figure 2 : District wise analysis of child abuse



The graph presents a district-wise analysis of reported cases of child abuse, highlighting significant variations across different district. It prominently displays Coimbatore District with a notably higher number of reported cases, totaling 978 incidents.

In contrast to Coimbatore's high number of reported cases, districts like Salem and Tiruppur show considerably lower figures, with around 32 and 37 reported cases, respectively. Such disparities suggest variations in reporting practices or perhaps differing levels of awareness and accessibility to reporting mechanisms across districts.

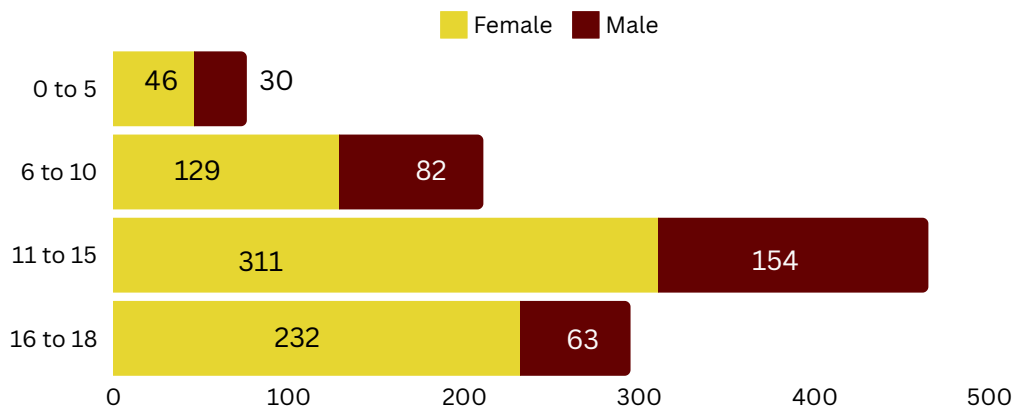
Figure 3: Analysis on types of abuse



The pie chart provides a comprehensive breakdown of the different types of child abuse reported, illustrating the prevalence of each category. Understanding the distribution of abuse types is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems to address the diverse needs of victims.

DEMOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION

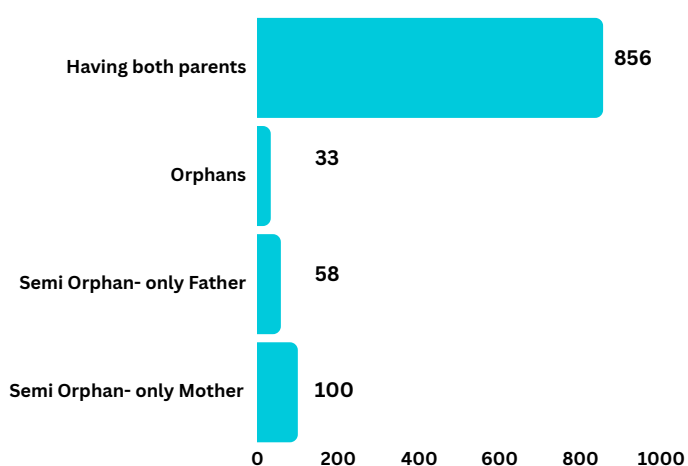
Figure : 4 Analysis on age of abused children



The graph reveals that children in the age groups of 11 to 15 and 16 to 18 are the primary victims of all types of abuse. These age groups represent critical developmental stages where children may face increased risks due to factors such as increased independence, peer influences, and exposure to various environments outside the home.

This analysis highlights the heightened vulnerability of children to various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, family violence, and neglect. By understanding the age distribution of victims and the types of abuse they experience, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions and support systems that effectively protect children from harm and promote their overall well-being throughout their developmental journey.

Figure : 5 Analysis on parental status of abused children



The analysis of parental status among abused children reveals complex dynamics within family structures and highlights the varied pathways through which abuse can occur. While the presence of both parents may provide a sense of stability and support, it does not guarantee protection from abuse. Factors such as family dysfunction, socioeconomic stressors, and caregiver behaviors can contribute to heightened risks within these households.

Moreover, the findings concerning semi-orphans and orphans underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the vulnerabilities faced by children who have lost one or both parents. These children lack traditional support systems and are more susceptible to exploitation and abuse without adequate protective measures in place.

Figure : 6 Analysis on gender



The analysis of cases involving abused children indicates a notable disparity in the prevalence of abuse based on gender. Specifically, the data reveals that female children experience a significantly higher rate of abuse compared to their male counterparts. This finding underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the specific vulnerabilities faced by girls in situations of abuse. By recognizing and addressing this gender disparity, we can work towards creating a more equitable and protective environment for all children, regardless of gender.



EXISTING LAWS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is an immoral act that demands strong condemnation and severe punishment. Unfortunately, it is alarmingly prevalent in India and often remains unaddressed.

To safeguard our children from abuse, India has implemented various laws targeting different aspects of child mis-treatment.





- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
- The Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act [JJ Act], 2015
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which is a comprehensive legislation addressing all forms of child sexual abuse.

These legal frameworks aim to combat child abuse and ensure the protection and well-being of children across the nation.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATION

What to do if you suspect child abuse

If you suspect that a child is being abused, immediate action is crucial. Here's what you can do:

-  Start by reporting the abuse to the police. You can contact your local police station or visit the Child Protection Unit in your state.
-  Call the 24-hour helpline (1098) dedicated to reporting child abuse and safeguarding children from exploitation.
-  Reach out to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) or the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) or the District Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) for additional support and assistance.
-  Consider filing a complaint with the Child Welfare Committee to safeguard the rights of the abused child and secure legal representation.

Taking these steps is essential to ensure that justice is served and the child's well-being is protected.

UNICEF -SIX STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

1. Supporting parents, caregivers and families

Educating families, caregivers and parents on their child's early development increases the likelihood that they will use positive disciplining methods. This reduces the risk of violence within the home.

2. Helping children and adolescents manage risks and challenges

Giving children and adolescents the skills to cope and manage risks and challenges without the use of violence and to seek appropriate support when violence does occur is crucial for reducing violence in schools and communities.

3. Changing attitudes and social norms that encourage violence and discrimination

Changing the attitudes and social norms that hide violence in plain sight is the surest way to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

4. Promoting and providing support services for children

Encouraging children to seek quality professional support and report incidents of violence helps them to better cope with and resolve experiences of violence.

5. Implementing laws and policies that protect children

Implementing and enforcing laws and policies that protect children sends a strong message to society that violence is unacceptable and will be punished.

6. Carrying out data collection and research

Knowing about violence – where it occurs, in what forms, and which age groups and communities of children are most affected – is essential to planning and designing intervention strategies, and setting numerical and time-bound targets to monitor progress and end violence.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDG Targets focused on Ending Violence or harmful practices against girls and boys including adolescents .



Target 4.(a). Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all .

Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.



Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere Target 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

RECOMMENDATION

Preventing child abuse is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires efforts at various levels of society. Here are some recommendations for preventing child abuse:

Education and Awareness: Promote awareness about the different forms of child abuse, its consequences, and how to recognize signs of abuse.

Parenting Support and Education: Provide resources and support for parents to learn positive parenting techniques, stress management, and coping strategies.

Early Intervention Programs: Implement programs that identify families at risk of child abuse early on and provide them with the necessary support and resources.

Promote Positive Discipline: Encourage the use of positive discipline techniques that focus on teaching and guiding children rather than punitive measures.

Strengthening Families: Support initiatives that promote family stability, economic security, and access to basic needs such as housing, healthcare, and childcare.

Community Engagement: Encourage community involvement in child protection efforts, including reporting suspected cases of abuse and providing support to families in need.

Legislation and Policy: Advocate for and support laws and policies that protect children from abuse and ensure perpetrators are held accountable.

Training for Professionals: Provide training for professionals who work with children to recognize signs of abuse, respond appropriately, and know how to support victims and their families.

Media Literacy: Promote media literacy programs that teach children and parents to critically evaluate media messages. Help children understand their rights and boundaries in relationships.

Encourage Open Communication: Foster open communication between children and trusted adults, encouraging children to speak up if they feel unsafe or if they witness abuse.

CONCLUSION

This mini-research provides valuable insights into the prevalence and patterns of child abuse based on the data collected from the Coimbatore hub of the Child MISS web tool. By understanding the underlying factors contributing to child abuse, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and social workers can develop more effective strategies to protect vulnerable children and create safer environments for their growth and development. Efforts should focus on raising awareness, strengthening prevention measures, and providing support services tailored to the specific needs of victims based on the type of abuse experienced.

Collaborative initiatives involving government agencies, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, educators, and community organizations are essential for effectively addressing child abuse and promoting the safety and well-being of children.

Further research incorporating longitudinal data and qualitative analysis is necessary to deepen our understanding of this complex issue.

GRATITUDE TO COIMBATORE HUB NETWORKING ORGANIZATIONS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Don Bosco Anbu Illam, Salem, Don Bosco Anbu Illam, Coimbatore, Marialaya - Tiruppur and other YaR Centres in Trichy Province for their invaluable contribution and support in facilitating this mini-research study. Their collaboration has been instrumental in advancing our understanding of child abuse and its prevention strategies. I am thankful to all the individuals involved in data entry and the process. Their dedication and effort have been essential in gathering and organizing the necessary information for this study.



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4. <https://www.healthline.com/health/causes-of-child-abuse>
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HOMELINK NETWORK

HomeLink Network is an ongoing initiative started by DB YaR Forum in 2002, to ensure appropriate, timely and real-time response to the needs of the young at risk, based on accurate documentation and data analysis supported by the best of technologies available today.

SUPPORTED BY

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