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Child Sexual Abuse in the Estate Sector in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lankan population can be broken down as urban, rural and estate population. They enjoy different infrastructure facilities and have different cultural values and social norms. The Estate sector mainly consists of Tamil ethnic groups who have been working in estate plantations for generations. These people live below the poverty line and they have very low literacy levels and skills as compared with the people in other two sectors of the country. While the estate sector suffers from various socioeconomic inadequacies, their habitual practice the alcohol consumption brings out domestic violence and child abuse.

This study aims at finding the causes of child sexual abuse in the estate sector and the parental role in protecting their children within their environment. The data were collected in 2019 with regard to the child sexual victims in the estate sector families in Nuwaraeliya, Thalawakele and Ruwanwella areas by selecting a random sample of 20 households. Interview schedule and case study methods were used for the data collection from the victims and their family members. The study revealed that the physical and social environment of the estate sector was conducive for committing child sexual abuse. The livelihood of the people of the estate sector also affects the protection of children and their leaving children alone at home during the day time provides opportunities for child sexual abusers to prey on children for sexual abuse. This study suggests creating awareness among parents especially of the rights of children and the protection required for them. The changes in improper practices of parents such as drunkenness and domestic violence and also the enhancement of child protection will help reduce child sexual abuse in the estate sector.

Keywords: Child, Tamil, Estates, Protection, Parents

Introduction

The British brought South Indian Tamils in 1830 to work in plantation industry which was run by the British companies. In 1975 plantations were nationalized and handed over to the Sri Lankan Estate Plantation Corporation and the Janatha Estate Development Board.

After the introduction of the plantation sector, the social stratification of Sri Lanka constitutes three main sectors namely, urban, rural and plantation sectors. The plantation sector is located mainly in rural areas and its main productions are tea and rubber. In the plantation sector the majority of the labor force consist of Tamils, and of them 45% in Nuwara Eliya, 10% in Kandy, 10% in Rathnapura and 19% in Badulla and the rest live in other districts of the country according to the census reports.

As compared to the other two sectors the plantation sector is the least privileged sector from socioeconomic and political aspects. This sector largely lacks education, health, housing, sanitation and infrastructure facilities in comparison to other urban and rural sectors. In terms of poverty indicators, the plantation sector becomes the poorest group of the country. Table 1 indicates the poverty level of each sector.

Sector	Poverty Level %	Poverty Level %
	-2002	(2006/2007)
Sri Lanka	22.7	12.6
Urban	7.9	5
Rural	24.7	13.1
Estate	30	25.8

Table 1: Poverty Level by Sectors (Head count in 2002)

Source: DCS HIES 2006/2007

In discussing about the child sexual abuse, it is appropriate to verify who are identified as children. Oxford Learner's dictionary defines child as young human being below the age of puberty. But it can be seen that different societies have given particular age limit to demarcate a child from an adult. In many countries, including Sri Lanka under eighteen-year individual is considered as a child. Child sexual abuse seemed to have been a long existing phenomenon in many countries of the world and it is not confined to any particular social class or social group. But it is difficult to answer why people sexually abuse their own children or others siblings.

Today we live in a world where children are subject to inhuman exploitation by market forces and thereby becoming the victims of social evils such as crimes, AIDS, and civil wars. A sustainable human development requires a clear focus on children. The capacity for human resources of a nation depends on the efforts and investments made on children. As children play a decisive role as productive agents in future development, they need proper care and guidance to improve their creativity and leadership development. Investment in children is therefore an economic necessity since they are an integral part of development in future.

Although widespread poverty in societies has been cited as the major cause for child deprivation, children cannot wait until poverty is reduced. Actions taken today to improve their mental health and physical capacity will certainly help loosen the grip of self-perpetuating poverty. However, it is argued that if the present patterns of child deprivation are to continue, about 500 million child deaths will occur in South Asia over the decade (Ferguson, 1998). It is also reported that a large number of children have been denied of access to education and human rights and they are subject to various kind of abuses. Hence, the progress in the well-being of children ultimately requires progress on many fronts such as advancement in the battle against poverty in the process of economic growth, social justice and elimination of gender discrimination. The breakdown of traditional social security and the welfare system of children provided by the extended family structure have made a tremendous impact on child sexual abuse. However, it is our moral and ethical responsibility to make use of communication, technology and knowhow we already possess to save the lives of children and help develop the potentials that add up to the future of the nation.

Abuse of children manifests in various forms including child domestic labor, bonded labor for commodity productions, female trafficking, sexual abuse, forceful recruitment of children by armed groups, verbal abuse at household and community levels. The use of children in professions such as begging and prostitution is also common all over the world. In Sri Lanka, the child abuse takes place in all forms as mentioned above. But some types of child abuses are more prevalent and severe than others. Relative to the other developing countries in South Asia, the Sri Lankan government over the last 40 years has been able to provide certain social services to its population to some satisfactory extent. The country is considered to have the best educational systems in South Asia with a relatively high attendance of children in school, and health services that reach the majority of the population. People's access to media is quite apparent throughout the country.

According to medical definition child abuse encompasses four basic types of maltreatment namely child neglect, physical abuse of a child, emotional abuse of a child and sexual abuse of a child (<https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?>). Child sexual abuse includes both touching and non-touching behavior. All sorts of sexual touching between an adult and a child is known as child sexual abuse. Another definition elucidates that child molestation is also a form of child sexual abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation (eu.wikipedia.org/wiki/child-sexual-abuse).

Nevertheless, the country has poor records in protection of children against various types of abuses. In particular, the sexual abuse of children takes place in households at different community and social levels. Especially, the social levels, economic and cultural factors force some individuals and communities to engage children in sex trade or sexual abuse.

Among all forms of child abuses, child sexual abuse is considered the least frequently reported act. Many scholars believe that child sexual abuse remains the most under reported type of child maltreatment for such activity is surrounded by secrecy and the conspiracy of silence.

However, there is no universal agreement about the exact details of such a definition. For example, how far the age or maturational differences must be. Obviously, individual and cultural factors play a special role in child abuse. But there is widespread international agreement about most of the common situations that confront us in actual practice: sexual practice between adults and pre-pubertal children, between parents and their offspring, and sex acts against children using force and violence.

Child abuse means physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or neglect of children by parents, guardians or the others who are responsible for a child's welfare. Sexual abuse includes molestation, incest, rape, prostitution or use of a child for pornographic purposes. Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, such a child is unable to give consent for an act which he/she is not developmentally prepared. Child sexual abuse is as evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who is by age of development holds a relationship of responsibility, trust or power for the activity committed.

2. Problem Statement

The incidence of child sexual abuse cannot be perceived as a minor social problem as such incidences directly refer to violation of vital social norms as well as laws pertaining to the protection of children. The law alone is not going to protect the children and the social structure and the organization of society are responsible for a considerable contribution to the peace and order of the society including the protection of victims.

In Sri Lankan society each sector has undergone a dramatic change with a serious impact on the social control that it had through the cultural and social structural arrangements. The protection of children which had been assured by the traditional family centered social organizations seems to have collapsed and the existing society has not yet replaced it with a modern system of child protection. This research study is concerned with these social phenomena and it attempts to explore and explain the phenomenon of child sexual abuse stemming from this anomic situation in estate sector. Accordingly, the central research problem is to determine the extent of the child sexual abuse taking place among the families of the estate sector, the least privileged group in the country and the impact of their culture and environment on the child sexual abuse.

3. Significance of the study

It should be noted here that every year over 3.6 million cases are reported to the child protection authorities in the world. The United States carries one of the worst records among the industrial nations for subjecting in average between four and seven children every day to child abuse and child neglect. In every ten seconds, one case of child abuse takes place in America.

Thus, it can be concluded that the second highest form of child abuse is the child sexual abuse. In Sri Lanka, 1469 child abuse cases were reported to the National Child Protection Authority in 2014 and another 2160 cases were in relation to cruelty to children. It is reported that over 50% of sexual abuse related offences against children have been committed either by a parent or a care giver or other relative and in 80% of cases, the abuser was known to the victim. The following table shows the details of the forms of sexual abuse taken place in the country on annual basis.

Type of Sexual Abuse	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rape/Incest of Children	1861	1835	2008	1654	1685
Unnatural Offences/Grievous Sexual Abuse	758	790	560	833	716
Sexual Exploitation of Children	122	571	377	75	49
Sexual abuse	1208	1258	-	1459	-
Obscene Publication relating to Children	14	3	-	8	-
Attempting to commit sexual harassment	31	40	-	20	-

Table:1 Grave Crimes Committed Against Children - 2012 to 2016

Source: Administration Reports of IGP, Sri Lanka. 2012-2016

According to the above table rape of children and incest had gradually increased from 2012 to 2016 except for the year 2013 and 2015. Sexual abuse of children shows similar pattern. In 2012, it indicates 1208 cases while this has increased up to 1459 cases in 2015.

It is worth noting here that no one can explicitly conclude that it is only the incidence of child sexual abuse indicated in the above table occur annually in Sri Lanka. Because child abuse is a hidden crime and above table indicates only such data reported to the police. However, it is clear that crimes against children such as rape and incest, unnatural sexual abuse and grievous sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and sexual abuse, obscene publication relating to children, and attempting to commit sexual harassment against children often take place in Sri Lanka. Many of these crimes had shown an increase by the year 2016. Further the magazines such as the Spartacus and the Little John point out that Sri Lanka is a paradise for child prostitution. All these factors reveal that child sexual abuse has become a serious social problem in the country and it is of vital importance to conduct an in-depth study in this regard.

The significance of this study is evident from number of aspects such as academic, practical and social perspective. As a social issue, the problem of child abuse seemed to have assumed alarming proportion during the last couple of decades in Sri Lanka. The statistics on crime and delinquency clearly show a gradual deterioration of security of children in the country and there has been dramatic increase in certain types of crimes against children. A civilized society does not accept the existing issues of child protection escalated into dangerous proportions. However, what is evident from the annual reports of crimes is the precipitous increase in the rate of crime against children compared to the 1960s and 1970s. The official records compiled by the police provide only the cases complained to the police and a few cases detected by the police itself. As the victims are not in a position to complain about the crime committed against them, it can be assumed that a considerable number of crimes against children remain as hidden crimes. Therefore, the seriousness of this social problem should be ascertained with reference to both official statistics as well as the dark figures of child sexual abuse and other crimes. Accordingly, this study has been specially designed with the objective of looking into the hidden aspect of crimes against children and their causal factors. Sri Lanka needs to assure the protection of all citizens and therefore the children of Sri Lanka deserve special protection from the state and society in case of the increasing rate of crime against them.

In addressing the causal factors of child abuse in Sri Lanka, any study in the contemporary society has to pay special attention to the family. Family being the traditional and responsible primary institution of reproduction, child rearing and taking care of children requires due analysis of its functional effectiveness in the current society. This study reveals the real characteristics of the existing system of child care and protection and the issues that the people of the plantation sector confront in modern society in response to the changes in the traditional social system. In particular, the timely importance of this study lies in its endeavor to identify the direct and indirect family related causes of child abuse and other factors which have been conducive to the perpetration of crimes against children in a social environment of the estate sector.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the facilities available for the protection of children in the estate sector in Sri Lanka
- To identify the main causes of child sexual abuse in estate sector in Sri Lanka

Methodology

This study explored the main causes of the child sexual abuse in the estate sector of Sri Lanka and identified the facilities available for the protection of children in this sector. The study was conducted in Nuwara Eliya district and Kegalle district of Sri Lanka in 2019. For this study the data were collected by using random sample through the use of interviewer administered questionnaire and in-depth interviews with the twenty victims of child sexual abuse and their respective parents. Further, this study has utilized the case study method to collect data from several victims.

Age of the Victims

Table 2 indicates the age categories of the victims. All the victims were five years and above. As compared to the other categories of age groups, 16-18 years group represented the highest number of victims and they stand at 45% (n=9). The other 40% (n=8) belonged to the 11-15 year age category.

Age Group	Frequency
5-Jan	2
10-Jun	1
15-Nov	8
16-18	9
Total	20

Table 2 – Age Distribution of the Victims

Source: Field Study 2019

It was found that the many abusers were known to the victim. As the Table 3 shows 40% (n=8) of the sexual abuses have been committed by the male friends of the victims. Visitors have committed 25% (n=5) of sexual abuses while neighbors have contributed to child sexual abuse committing 15% (n=3) of them.

Perpetrator	Frequency
Neighbors	3
Male friend	8
Father	1
Relative	2
Visitor	5
Principal	1
Total	20

Table 3 – Nature of Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse

Source: Field Study 2019

It is important to note here that the father of a victim has also committed child sexual abuse. Eight girls (40%) had eloped with their male friends and had stayed their male counterpart's house or his friend's house for several days but two girls had not been sexually abused by their male partners. Another two girls (10%) had been raped forcefully by unknown persons. In one incident, a girl (n=1) had been abducted and raped by four young men by force while another girl (n=1) had been stopped on her way to the boarding house and raped in a bus by two persons employed in a private bus. A mentally retarded girl (5%) had been raped by a neighbour after cheating her. Relatives had sexually abused two girls (10%) after cheating them. A principal who was also involved in a business enterprise had sexually abused a boy (n=1) at his trade Centre while an employee of a school had harassed a female student (n=1) at the school toilet.

Venue	Frequency
Victim's home	4
Abuser's house	6
House of Abuser's friend	3
School	1
Bus	1
Woods	2
In a Hotel	2
In an Isolated Road	1
Total	20

Table 4 -Venue of the Sexual Abuse

Source: Field Study 2019

As Table 4 indicates, most of the child sexual abusers 30% (n=6) had chosen their houses and 15% (n=3) their friends' houses to carry out sexual abuse as protective places. Some victims were compelled to elope with their male friends. In some families (20%; n=4), the victim's parents had gone to work in the morning and got back home in the evening. The sexual abusers had approached these girls when their parents were not at home and sexual abuse had taken place at victim's house in the woods nearby. In some families there weren't any friendly relationship between parents and they had always led with quarrel each other. In those families, the father had taken to alcohol and he did not fulfill his obligations of protecting his children from becoming sexual victims.

Abuser	Frequency
Neighbor	3
Teacher	1
Student	1
Male friend	8
Father	1
Known person	1
Unknown Person	5
Total	20

Table 5 – Abuser's Relationship to the Victim

Table 5 shows that most of the persons who committed child sexual abuse were living in the same community with the victims. Some of them as father, teacher, neighbor or male friend had a close relationship with the victim in their day to day life.

Addiction Type	Frequency
Alcohol alone	6
Alcohol and Drugs	3
Don't Know	11
Total	20

Table 6 – Addiction in Alcohol and Drugs by Sexual Abusers

Source: Field Study 2019

In this study, alcohol and substance abuse of child sexual abusers were solicited. According to the victims of child sexual abuse 45% (n=9) of abusers were addicted to alcohol. Among them there were three individuals who were addicted to drugs too. It should be mentioned here that research has found that over 95% of estate workers consume alcohol as a cultural habit. Estate workers believe that it is an essential need for them to have alcohol every day to 'warm up' and cope with the cold climatic condition of the up country in Sri Lanka (Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, 2010). Estate women justify their husbands consuming alcohol as means of enduring physical hardship and sometimes women themselves take alcohol to get rid of stress that they face in everyday life. However, many estate workers behave aggressively and beat their wives and children when they get back home in the evening after consuming alcohol. Tension develops at houses in the estate sector after the head of the household returns home after a drink. The heads of the households scold and use filthy words against their wives and children in everyday life as a

cultural value for the males. Further they practice sexual intercourse forcibly with their wives in dingy rooms crowded with their children after they return home drunk. Accommodating children in line rooms is a serious problem for the parents as their line rooms do not consist of adequate space for sexual activity for a married couple. This situation has direct impact on child sexual abuse because the drunkards do not concentrate much about their children when they behave as married couples at home. In those families the children motivated to develop premature sexual relationships with their male friends and thus fall prey to sexual abusers. On the other hand, the drunkards tend to seek sexual satisfaction by abusing children sexually without thinking the seriousness of their actions. Within this scenario, even children tend to develop unacceptable romantic relationships with the outsiders when they become teenagers. These romantic affairs of the children finally end up with eloping with their male counterparts or carrying on sexual relationships with them.

Cause	Frequency
No one at Victim's home	4
Negligence of parents	1
No objection by victims	8
Ignorance of victims	1
Broken family	2
Uncivilized Nature of Abuser	2
Alcohol and Drug use	2

Table 7 – Causes for the Child Sexual Abuse

Source: Field Study 2019

According to Table 7, many incidents of child sexual abuse had occurred at the time that the victims were alone at home. The abusers had chosen to find their sexual prey when the victims were alone and their parents were at their work places. Both parents were at work in plantation or some other places as a mean of earning their livelihood. Therefore, they were not much concerned about the security of their children were at home. Some girls (10%; n=2) were not aware about the sexual activities as they were too young, so this ignorance should have paved the way for the abusers to get their sexual desires fulfilled through such young girls. The lack of mother's care for the children had not been adequately substituted with father's or by the affection of the rest of the members in the family.

Impact	Frequency
Stopped schooling	8
Transferred to another school	4
Disappeared from home	1
Social humiliation	4
No revelation of the sexual abuse	2
Physical and Mental Agony	1
Total	20

Table 8 – The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Victims

Source: Field Study 2019

As indicated in Table 8, the impact of the child sexual abuse caused the victims to change their normal behavior. Only a few families (10%) had succeeded in hiding the incidence from the public. Consequently, they did not receive any mal-responses from the public. As a result of social humiliation, 20% (n=4) of the victims had stopped their schooling while 20% (n=4) had been transferred to another school to avoid public humiliation. One victim (5%) had isolated herself to prevent the public humiliation and later she had disappeared from home to elude it. Another two of the victims (10%) expressed their feeling of hatred towards the society for being victims of physical and mental abuse.

Case study 1

Kovindi was a seventeen-year-old Tamil girl who lived in Vinayapuram in Nuwaraeliya with her 20-year-old married brother as her parent had died at her young age. Kovindi's brother lives with his wife and a 6-month old child in a small house which has only two rooms. He works as a mason in the town council which leading a hand-to-mouth existence.

Three years ago, when Kovindi was 15 years she was seized and taken to a van forcefully by four youths aged between 25 and 27 years. Later she had been taken to a hotel in Nuwaraeliya and raped by those four individuals. After that she had returned home escaping from them. Then she and her brother had gone to the police and made a complaint regarding the matter. Kovindi had been admitted to the hospital and she was discharged from the hospital after three days. Meanwhile the police had arrested the suspects and produced before the court. At the trial, the girl had identified the four individuals who had raped her in succession. The trial of the case had been continuing and the girl had appeared two times. As her brother said Kovindi was thereby upset about the incident and did not go outside because of the public humiliation and the inquisitiveness of her neighbors. The incident eschewed her meeting with neighbors. At last she had run away from home after taking her cloths due to social stigma and mental problems created by that incident. So far no one has been aware where she had gone.

Case 2

Sarojini is a 16 year old girl who lives at Sanigama in Vahakula, Ruwanwella. She has a twelve-year-old younger brother who goes to Vahakula school. Her parents worked in the Vahakula estate as labourers. During the day time there was no one at home until the children get back home from the school.

One day Sarojini had returned home in the afternoon after school. At that time there was no one at home. An old man presumably over sixty had visited her house knowing that no one was at home except Sarojini. The old man had raped her and left the house after threatening to kill her if she were to reveal the incident to any other person. In desperation she managed to keep the incident as a secret until she became pregnant. Once her pregnancy was known to her parents they became panic and admitted her to hospital. Subsequently, the doctor had informed the incident to the hospital police and the rapist was taken into the custody. The police have produced the rapist before the court. The rapist has been remanded and further investigation was carried out.

Later, the victim had delivered a baby at the hospital and the child has been given to another family for adoption. The court finally decided to hold a DNA test to verify the father of the child. Due to this incident her school education of the girl had stopped for a certain period. But after sometime her physical and mental suffering changed to some extent and her parents were able to change her school and made opportunity for her to continue her schooling.

When the researcher went to obtain information, the girl was at home with an elderly woman who was said to be her grandmother. The grandmother was very weak and she had asked for something to eat from the researcher. The girl's family was poverty stricken and thus environment was very conducive to commit child sexual abuse shrouded in secrecy.

Case 3

Nirosha is a 17- year old Tamil girl who lives at Medakumbura New Michel estate in Nuwara Eliya. She is the third of the family and she has two married elder sisters and one younger brother. This child was subject to sexual abuse when she was thirteen years old.

On the particular day, she had returned home from school and at that time only her elder sister's husband was present at home. As there was no one else he had raped her and subsequently threatened her not to divulge it anyone. Upon the arrival of her mother she had informed her about her traumatic experience to be soon hospitalized by her mother. The hospital police have taken necessary action to produce the abuser before the court. After sometime, the girl had become pregnant and as she was schooling parents had decided to make her an abortion. Later the girl was directed to a doctor for an abortion. But rumor and gossip had spread like fire in dry grass and the doctor was arrested in no time. The case is being heard in the high court at present.

The girl's mother still repents over the incident she is reluctant to take legal action against her elder daughter's husband. This incident has brought and end to the schooling of the girl.

Case 4

Kamalini is a 17- years old Tamil girl living in Bambarakele division in Nuwara-Eliya. She is the eldest in the family and lives with her parents and her younger brother and sister. This particular incidence had occurred when she was 14 years and that age she had a boy friend too. On the day of the incident she was returning from the school and her boyfriend had forcefully accompanied her to a relative's house in Colombo. She was in school uniform and was kept in Colombo for three days. After that her boyfriend had dropped her in Nuwara-Eliya town at about 2.00 a.m.

After the incident the girl's parents had made a complaint at the police but the abuser had managed to go into hiding for about one year. Later the abuser was arrested and brought before the law. The court case is still going on and the girl has found a job in Colombo.

Case 5

Kumari is a Tamil girl living in Oliphant Estate in Nuwara-Eliya with her parents and a younger brother. Now she is 7 years old and she had succumbed to the child sexual abuse when she was 4 ½ years old. On that particular day she had returned home early from Montessori. She had gone to the near by well and she was pouring water into the bucket. Then a relative of the child had come to the well and the girl was taken to his house promising her some fruits. At the abuser's house the girl was grievously sexually abused. After the incident, Kumari's father had quarreled with the abuser and then the abuser had injured him grievously with a knife. Later the girl and her father were both hospitalized for treatment. The girl's mother has made a complaint to the hospital police about the incident. Consequently, the abuser has been taken into custody and brought to justice. There were three allegations against the abuser namely, child sexual abuse, grievous hurt and intimidation. The court case continues.

The girl's parents have taken their children to a relative's house in Jaffna and the children attend a school there for their protection.

Case 6

Saman is a 14- year old Sinhala boy who lives with his parents and two elder sisters at Kalukele in Nuwara-Eliya. He was in grade 10 at school. On the day of the incident Saman had been lured into a bicycle shop in the town by its owner a retired principal. The shop owner had closed shop after the boy came inside the shop at about 2.p.m.

The abuser was over 65-years of age and had touched the boy's body and removed the cloths. Then the abuser had sexually abused the boy. According to Saman's mother the abuser was a notorious person for child sexual abuse in the area as he has committed similar crime in several occasions. The police have brought the abuser before law and the court has ordered him to pay 75,000.00 as compensation to the child. But the boy's parents were not satisfied with the punishment. The incident has badly affected the child's schooling.

Case 7

Kundumani is a 21-year old Tamil woman who lives with her parents and two brothers at Vadakimale estate in Nuwara Eliya. She is a mentally retarded woman who was raped at the age of 17 by a man who was in his 40s.

She used to go to a well situated close to the abuser's house. One day the abuser had come into the scene and suddenly covered the girl's face and the he had taken her to the woods nearby. There the girl had been raped by the abuser. The girl had not revealed anything about the incident for four months till her parents noticed a change in her body with the sign in pregnancy. Then her parents have made a complaint to the police about the incident. Upon the request of the police the girl had shown the place where she was raped and had identified the rapist. The police have brought the abuser before the court and trial of the case still continues.

As a result of this event the mentally retarded woman has got a four-year-old child suffering from a hearing problem.

Case 8

Neththie is an 8-year-old child who lives with her grandmother. Her mother has divorced from her father for he is an alcoholic. She lives with her grandmother at Galvez village in Nuwara-Eliya. She was grievously sexually abused by a 18-year-old youth living in a neighbouring house. The incident had occurred at 11.00 a.m. when no one was at the victim's house. The girl had been hospitalized for a week. The police have arrested the abuser and produced before the court. The case has been heard for three years and finally the two parties have reached at a reconciliation. Owing to the grandmother's inability to bring up the girl, Neththie has been given to the SOS village to be brought up.

Case 9

Rohini is a fifteen-year old Tamil girl who lives at Hollywood place in Nuwara-Eliya with her parents and younger brother and a sister. At the age of 14 she had a 20-year old boyfriend. One day at dawn before her parents woke up she had eloped with her boyfriend upon his request to Avissawella area. She had been in Avissawella for three days with her boyfriend when her parents found her. The parents had hospitalized the girl and the medical officer had informed them no sexual damaged done to her by the boyfriend. The parents have kept her at her uncle's house and transferred her into a school the area. The police has proceeded with legal action against the boy and the court has informed the girl that she need not attend the trial as she is still schooling.

Case 10

Nimali is a 21-years old Tamil girl living with her father at Hollywood place, Watagoda in Thalawakele. Her mother had deserted her family. At the age of 17 she was raped by her father and that practice had continued for some period. Later she has found a 25-year old boyfriend who had also seduced her. Nimali had informed the previous incident to her grandfather who made a complaint at the police. Consequently, her father had been arrested and produced before the court and after that he had been remanded. The court case continues. As a result of this incident she was subjected to social humiliation subsequently Nimali had to stop her schooling.

Conclusions

The findings of the research revealed that child abuses in the selected area were committed by the associates of the victims and their families. Only a very few child sexual abusers were found as the unknown of the victims. In most occasions, neighbours and the male friends of the victims abused the children outside the victim's homes in the absence of their parents. Sometimes children were abused in their own houses as their parents were working in the plantations during the day time. The estate sector and its environment were conducive for sexual offenders to carry out their crimes. Parents had failed to perform their role and responsibilities to restrain their children from evil such as sexual misconduct and provide protection to prevent such activities. Parents had neither trained nor made their children aware of the need to be involved in positive activities and avoid evil. Absence of both parents at home during the day time as they work outside in the plantations has badly affected children's protection and such children had often fallen prey to sexual abusers. This research study reveals some important social requirements should be fulfilled by people in order to control and prevent criminal acts against children including child sexual abuses. Most of the estate employees do not consider child sexual abuse as a grievous crime as the communities in rural and urban areas. The reason is that the literacy level of the estate workers is lower than that of other communities and their daily work is confined to the plantation field in that they are often away from home during the day time.

In the estate sector girls in their early teenage often find male friends which is quite unusual as compared to the other communities in rural and urban areas. When some girls find male friends, they tend to elope with them as a mean of finding relief for their burning problems such as poverty,

drunkenness of their parents, family disputes, lack of entertainment or future aspirations and non-availability of employment opportunities. In this study it was found that a girl had eloped with three male friends consecutively.

It was found in the present study that the estate workers lacked of knowledge about the criminal justice system and the way they should make a complaint at the police and the proceeding at courts. They knew very little about the children's rights against any form of abuse, which has placed them in very vulnerable situations in their social setup. Further this community is most likely to succumb to child abuses and other violations yet they do not seek redress due to their ignorance, cultural values and the lack of world views that are perpetuated through the process of socialization. Within this scenario the young female teenagers often entangle in romance with their male friends and finally thereby become sexually abused without any awareness of their parents.

The study revealed that the family members were not socialized enough to learn about their roles in terms of the cultural values and norms. In this context, estates children are quite vulnerable to be victimized sexually by their neighbors and their counterparts. In order to make them aware of the child protection and their rights community-based rehabilitation programs can be organized together with the active participation of the parents, children, teachers and students, employers and employees, religious leaders and followers etc. The study concludes that if the parents had been able to fulfill the parental responsibilities, the child sexual abuse in the estate sector would have been prevented to a large extent.

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