



CHILD ABUSE - GS I AND II MAINS

Q. Childhood abuse has been increasing recently and had its own mental and emotional consequences. Elucidate (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *Reporting animal cruelty makes children safer*

What's in the news?

- Recently, 2007, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development published the largest empirical study about the incidence of child abuse in India.

Key details of the study:

- **Focus of the study:** The study specifically examined the prevalence of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and girl child neglect in India.
- **Status of Child abuse:** It found that two out of every three children were physically abused, over half the children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse, and every second child reported facing emotional abuse.

Causes of Increasing Child abuse in India:

Social cultural reasons:

- The cases often go unreported as a culture of privacy, fear of in dignity and social humiliation thereby preventing the disclosure of such crimes which further embolden the culprits.
- Also, there is increased guilt and reluctance of reporting in the cases of intra familial abuse.

Risk factors:

- The childhood sexual abuse of an occurs alongside other forms of abuse or neglect in family environment in which there may be low family support, high poverty, low parental education, parental substance abuses all domestic violence.
- It has been observed that children who are impulsive, emotionally needy and have learning or physical disabilities, mental health problems or substance used may be at increased risk.
- Also, the out-of-home youth is at increased risk because they may be exploited and forced to trade sex for survival needs like food, shelter, money or drugs.

Lack of medical evidence:

- Generally, the direct evidence is lost since reporting of sexual violence is sometimes delayed for weeks or even months, which further leads to low conviction rates in the cases because of the loss of essential biological trace evidence.



Unmonitored access to technology:

- Though, Technology provides limitless ways to nurture children's education and creativity, unfortunately it is also a perpetrator's playground.
- The internet provides significantly greater access to potential targets along with added enormity and ability to keep things secret.

Misunderstanding boundaries:

- Children who have insufficient education or understanding about boundaries are at most significant risk of abuse.
- Such children are not able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior

Impact of abuse on Children:

- **Psychological impact:** It is generally observed that experience of child sexual abuse has a strong association with feelings of hopelessness, suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts.
- **Traumatization:** The child sexual abuse survivors are not able to express their feelings and experience due to various emotional, social and cultural factors.
 - This generally leads to traumatization of children and has long lasting negative effects on mental health.
- **Poly Victimization:** Children experiencing intrafamilial reviews may be more subject to cumulative impact of poly victimization due to exposure to both sexual and emotional abuse.
- **Interpersonal relationship:** The child sexual abuse has a damaging impact on the ability of child to form and maintain close and loving relationships
 - It affects the relationships that victims and survivors have at the time of abuse and for the rest of their lives.

Government initiatives:

- **POCSO Act:** The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 address the crimes of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children through stringent legal provisions.
- **POCSO e-Box:** Online complaint management system for easy and direct reporting of sexual offenses against children and timely action against offenders.
- **NCPCR:** The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) ensures that all Laws, Policies and Programmes are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Integrated Child Protection Scheme:** Aimed at building a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances through Government-Civil Society Partnership.
- **Operation Smile:** Operation Smile, also called Operation MUSKAAN is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to rescue/rehabilitate missing children.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Role of NGOs:** NGOs and other social organizations can reach out to schools and start educating students about good touch and bad touch to prevent their exploitation.
- **Role of schools:** Teachers can also play a major role to make children aware, the school authorities have an important responsibility of identifying signs of disturbance in child's mind and keep a watch for abnormal behavior.
- **Better implementation of schemes:** The Ministry of women and child development has established one stop centers, Sakhi in 2015 preferably within hospital or medical facility to provide support and assistance to victims of gender violence which include holistic facilities under one roof.
- **Institutional measures:** A former Supreme Court judge has stressed on the need for greater sensitization of judges towards child rights and child abuse.
 - The judges need to ensure a speedy trial so that a child victim of sexual abuse, who has already gone through a traumatizing experience, should not be made to live through the trauma again and again.



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