

**Letter to the  
Editor**

## Child Abuse and Neglect

Annam Asif<sup>1</sup>, Asmat Parveen<sup>2</sup>, Afrah Tariq<sup>3</sup>, Maria Shamsher<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> MBBS, FCPS.

### Author's Contribution

<sup>1</sup> Conception of study

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Experimentation/Study conduction

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Manuscript Writing

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Critical Review

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Facilitation and Material analysis

### Corresponding Author

Dr. Annam Asif,  
MBBS, FCPS,  
Rawalpindi  
Email: anamasif.87@gmail.com

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We are living in an era in which children from all across the world face some form of insidious violence, abuse and exploitation. There is no boundary for violence against children. Child abuse refers to any kind of neglect or maltreatment of child by parent or caregiver<sup>1</sup>. It can be physical, sexual, or psychological. In majority of cases, the person who is custodian of a child is found to be involved in such abusive acts<sup>2</sup>.

The issues related to child abuse are worldwide. Developed countries have significant data related to signs of abuse. Unfortunately, no reliable data is there from low-income and underdeveloped countries like Pakistan because many cases are not reported legally<sup>3</sup>. In Pakistan, 8 children were abused every day in one form or the other according to data published by NGO. Among them, 51% of the victims were girls and 49% boys. Unfortunately, with every passing year, the number of reported cases of child abuse is on the rise. According to the report, 'Cruel numbers 2020' compiled by NGO SAHIL, 2020 saw an alarming four percent increase in child abuse cases compared to 2019. This report was based on statistics related to crimes against children including neglect and abuse.

The phenomenon of child abuse is complicated and multidimensional and underlying factors that trigger child abuse are very diverse and interlinked. A number of risk factors have been identified by WHO and ISPCAN which either alone or in relation to one another lead to unfortunate incidents and acts of child abuse. At the personal level, these factors include age, gender and individual's attitude while at level of society they are economic inequality, cultural acts and

norms of physical punishments and lack of legislation<sup>4</sup>.

Consequences related to child abuse are very devastating, widespread and long-lasting for the victims. It does not only affect the individual physically but also psychologically and developmentally<sup>5</sup>. This may subsequently result in increased incidence of chronic illnesses, shortened lifespan and high-risk health behaviours.

The effects of child abuse for the victims could be long-lasting. Under these circumstances in absence of social safety nets, there is significant role of child welfare organizations in provision of secured residence and a healthy environment for victims for their recovery from trauma.

It is the need of the hour to have knowledge about basic methods and interventions at the individual level as well as at the level of society to interrupt a rapid rise in the incidence of child abuse all over the world. Such measures include:

1. Campaigns in school regarding "good touch and bad touch". These can make children acknowledge about baad touch and avoid hazardous scenarios<sup>6</sup>.
2. Pediatricians with the help of social workers could play a vital role in the identification of children at risk of abuse. They can also provide a platform to address underlying triggering factors including maternal depression<sup>7</sup>.
3. Awareness of practices of contraception to avoid unwanted pregnancies because the large

family size and lack of attention would increase the risk of child neglect.

4. Workshops should be conducted to encourage positive parenting skills and child's development in a safe healthy environment<sup>8</sup>.
5. Implementation of laws at the government level to protect child rights and strict punishment for those who show exploitation and violation<sup>8</sup>.

Thus it is clear that in order to prevent the rapidly increasing number of events related to child abuse all across Pakistan, incorporation of knowledge into the general public, identification of individual and cultural risk factors, economic equality, and strict legislation for child rights protection by the government is very important.

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