

Original Article

An Overview of Missing Children scenario 2020 in Pakistan

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Author's Contribution

² Conception of study³ Experimentation/Study conduction¹ Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion¹ Manuscript Writing² Critical Review³ Facilitation and Material analysis

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Abstract

Objectives: To determine the frequency of missing children in Pakistan with respect to their provincial placement along with age and gender based distribution.

Subjects & Methods: A cross-sectional survey was done by gathering the data of missing children from Sahil NGO regarding their provincial belonging and their age as well as gender grouping. The data was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel 2010.

Results: Of the total 345 missing children, most (55.6%) of the children belonged to Sindh followed by 20% from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and 14.8% from Punjab. First Information Report (FIR) of only 209 was registered at police station. 43.8% of the missing children were 11-15 years old and about 86.1% of the missing were boys.

Conclusion: Boys in 11-15 years age group residing in Sindh, KPK and Punjab are most likely to be missed.

Keywords: missing children, provincial placement.

Introduction

Missing of the children is recurrently reported in Pakistan. Approximately 2-3 children including both boys and girls have been reported at national police stations for misplacement since last one year¹. According to international statistics, there are about 1.5 million street children in Pakistan and approximately 115 children were missed during 2016². Children have the same human rights as those of adults. Even they are bestowed with some explicit rights in accordance with their distinct needs. Certain rights declared in Convention on the Child's Rights should be recognized by all to ensure growth of children to their full potential³. International Missing Children's Day is celebrated across the globe on 25th May. Around 1 million children are quantified annually as missing. International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) is devoted to save every missing child⁴. On scrutinizing the cause of children's missing; they are known to be abducted, kidnapped or even brutally killed. With rise in missing children cases. However some are also determined as runaway cases⁵.

Missing or abduction of children is reported every 40 seconds at United States. Although most of them are recovered within hours but still majority seems to be permanently missed. About 1 out of 7 children are 10-18 years old and they are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and develop suicidal tendency due to indulgence in certain illegal and suspicious activities⁶. Missing Children's Network is a non-profit organization that was established in 1985 with an intention to sensitize and inform the public about safety of children. Moreover, this Network was meant to get the people aware of relevant laws and steering agencies to facilitate the recovery of missing children⁷. In Convention on Right of Children ratified by General Assembly on 20th November 1989, it was affirmed that childhood is authorized to receive special consideration regarding their personal growth and fulfillment of all basic human rights including provision of remarkable care and legal defense⁸. The current study is intended to highlight the countrywide cases of missed children that were reported by Sahil during 2020. Sahil is a Non-Government Organization that is committed to establish child protection across the country. This organization has also reported the increase in child abuse cases by 17% in 2020⁹. The findings of this survey would prove beneficial to our society by sensitization of our policy makers pertinent

to misplacement of children and discerning its grave consequences.

Subjects and Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted by assembling the data of missing children from Sahil NGO. This NGO is working dedicatedly for protection of children nationwide⁹. The data was collected from this organization about the missing children with respect to their provincial placement and their age distribution as well as gender grouping. The data was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel 2010. Percentages and frequencies of all variables were computed.

Results

Of the total 345 reported cases of missing children, most (55.6%) belonged to Sindh province as illustrated below in Figure 1.

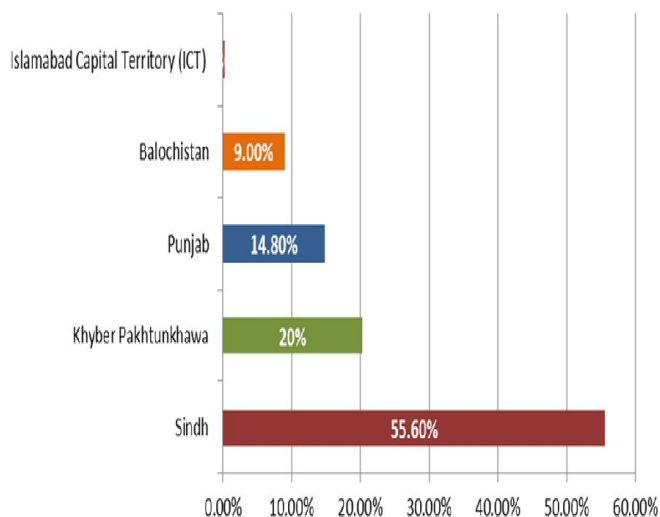


Figure 1: Provincial distribution of the missing children

Out of 345 missing children, about 209 were registered in police station while police refused to register the case of 2 kids and registration status of 134 children was not evident. Most (297) of the missing kids were boys. However majority of the missing boys and girls were of 11-15 years of age; age of 88 boys and 9 girls was unknown as depicted below in Figure 2.

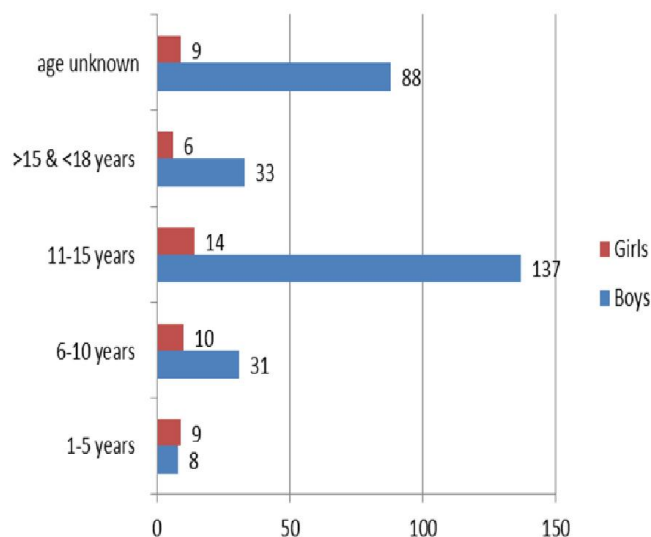


Figure 2: Age distribution of the missing children

Discussion

Child protection is averting and reacting to child exploitation happenings including their abuse and trafficking¹⁰. In current study, maximum propensity (55.6%) of the missing children was residents of Sindh. Although in present study Punjab appears to be afflicted for this distressful happening; of all the provinces of Pakistan, Punjab seems to be particularly targeted in the context of misplacement of children¹¹. Similarly data retrieved from another NGO (Roshni) revealed that bodies of 30 missing children were recovered from different territories of Punjab and Sindh during 2018. Despite the registration of FIR about 18 missing children, the police could not gather any information or evidence pertinent to these cases¹². Thousands of children are known to be missed in Pakistan annually; numerous are abducted in order to demand huge ransom from their parents and countless are reduced to slavery¹³. The missing of the children is quite distressing not only for their parents but also frightening with respect to deterioration of their rights. Our provinces at risk of this menace should be given due consideration for prevention of child misplacement with an intention to minimize the confrontation of victims with resultant violence or abuse.

Of the 345 missing children presented in our study, the highest frequency (151) were determined to be in 11-15 years age bracket and among them about 90.7% were boys. A similar research carried out by Dawson M et al in order to determine the association of child missing with social exclusion also illustrated that about 47.6%

of the missing persons were above 15 years of age¹⁴. Similarly in England and Wales, approximately 60% of all missing children were reported to be less than 18 years old¹⁵. Likewise 35% of the missing individuals detected in United States were under 18 years¹⁶. A research done in 2018 disclosed the association of racial differences with missing of children as well¹⁷. Although missing of children in our society is attributed to social crimes due to poor law and order implementation but sensitivity of adolescence should also be deliberated for avoidance of such adversities in the community.

A child can be considered missed due to run away from home, abduction by someone or confrontation with certain mishap on his way to home¹⁸. Searching the details for this threat can help the parents as well as legal authorities extensively in mitigating such misfortunes.

Conclusion

Boys 11-15 years old belonging to Sindh, KPK and Punjab are determined to be more at risk of missing. This might be due to their more indulgence in outdoor activities. However, scrutinizing the reasons for getting missed and spreading awareness via social media can substantially facilitate in minimizing the escalating trend of this social issue.

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