

ICCP/SL/OP/339

Analysis of crimes against children in Kurunegala police jurisdiction in Sri Lanka

Kitulwatte SC^{*1}, Kitulwatte IDG¹, Meshel DSS¹, Gamage WGEP¹, Perera ASTC¹,
Samarakoon KGCS²

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

²*National Police Academy, Katana, Sri Lanka*

[*sammanikitulwatte@gmail.com](mailto:sammanikitulwatte@gmail.com)

Background: Despite increased awareness and reformed legislation regarding child protection efforts, there is a clear rise in child abuse and mortality in today's society. In Sri Lanka, especially, crimes against children are a topic that is very infrequently canvassed. This study was aimed to analyze the characteristics of contemporary crimes against children in Kurunegala police area so as to devise better measures to protect our children.

Methods: A retrospective descriptive study was conducted based on the crimes reported to Kurunegala Police jurisdiction during the years 2019-2023.

Results: Over the 6-year time period that was considered, there was a recorded total of 166 crimes against children, that showed a promising albeit inconsistent downward trend over the years. The commonest reported crime was rape (28%) with sexual abuse (26%) a close second. Notably, crimes were commoner at home (25%) and perpetrated by known people (lovers: 47%, family relatives: 23%). Children in the 6–10-year age cohort were most vulnerable (33%) with 11–15-year-olds (30%) a close second. With regards to the suspects of these crimes, majority 28% were within 20-25 years of age, but interestingly, 26% were below the age of 20 and many minors themselves. 46% of suspects were unemployed; 93% had no past criminal record.

Conclusions: This study unearths some interesting premises: firstly, that despite society's belief that a child is safer at home with their nearest and dearest, perhaps children should be better protected among more familiar environments and people rather than unfamiliar ones; secondly, better reforms should be devised to predict likely perpetrators as current efforts based on past criminal records seem grossly inadequate; and thirdly, children themselves should be better educated regarding what constitutes a 'crime' and better values instilled in them in order to prevent them from becoming perpetrators themselves.

Keywords: Crimes against children, analysis of characteristics, child protection, juvenile crime.