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Statutory rape of girl children in the Ratnapura Police division: A retrospective analysis (2019–2023)

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Background: Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a critical issue in Sri Lanka, with significant socio-legal implications. Understanding the risk factors, socio-economic conditions, and offender demographics is essential for targeted prevention. This study examines cases indicated as statutory rape reported in Ratnapura Police Division (2019–2023), focusing on parental employment, caregiving structures, and perpetrator characteristics. Objectives of this study are to analyze socio-economic determinants, caregiving arrangements, and offender profiles in CSA cases and identify key risk factors.

Method: A retrospective quantitative analysis of 85 CSA cases was conducted using secondary police data.

Results: Among the 85 cases, 63% (n=54) had working mothers, including 10% (n=8) employed abroad. 18% (n=15) had fathers who were deceased or had abandoned them. Of the 70 girls with living fathers, 96% (n=67) had employed fathers. Notably, in 53% (n=45) of cases, both parents were employed. When analyzing the Caregiver arrangements during maternal absence 58% (n=28) by grandparents, 19% (n=9) by siblings, 10% (n=5) by relatives, 6% (n=3) by family friends. Perpetrator-victim relationships showed a high incidence of cases involved boyfriends 85% (n=72), 7% (n=6) stepfathers, 5% (n=4) relatives/friends, 3% (n=3) biological fathers/grandfathers. Perpetrator age groups showed 64% (n=54) aged 20–29, 14% (n=12) aged 15–19, 9% (n=8) aged 40–49, 8% (n=7) aged 30–39, 5% (n=4) over 50.

Conclusions: Findings reveal parental employment, inadequate supervision, and adolescent relationships as major CSA risk factors. The high incidence of boyfriend-perpetrated abuse (85%) emphasizes the need for adolescent education, consent awareness, and parental guidance. Strengthening child protection systems and community-based interventions is essential for mitigating CSA prevalence.

Keywords: Statutory rape, child sexual abuse, Sri Lanka.