

THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL DIMENSIONS
OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE
AND NEGLECT WITHIN THE
FAMILY /GUARDIANSHIP IN
SRI LANKA - SOME
CASE PROFILES

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education
University of Colombo in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Education

C₂-69



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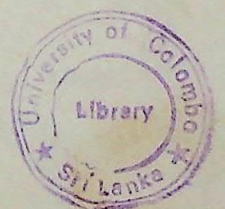
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February 1995



ABSTRACT

The study provides an overview of the psycho-social dimensions associated with the problem of child abuse and neglect within the family/guardianship in Sri Lanka.

The psycho-social dimensions of the impact of abuse and neglect have been presented in relation to signs of psychological and social deficits exhibited in behavioral responses observed in an age-determined sample of children who are among victims of neglect and abuse presently admitted to two of the largest State institutions in the island. They have been referred through the Court system for their care and protection or rehabilitation as deemed necessary.

In the absence of an international definition of the terms child-abuse and neglect, some definitions adopted by some countries in the Asian Region have been presented. for the purpose of this study, any act of omission and commission on the part of the care-giver which endangers or impairs the normal psycho-social development of the child is conceptualized as abuse and neglect.

The poverty syndrome has emerged as the overriding factor in child-abuse and neglect, as inferred from the background data pertaining to the child and the family that have been obtained by means of a questionnaire, and available documentation.

The source of the problem of child abuse and neglect was seen primarily as the cumulative destructive effect of a combination of psychosocial stressors arising from poverty which produce family, as well as social disorganization inducing personal disorganization.

This is reflected in the case profiles that have been presented. The impact of seriously deficient child care and parenting is reflected in adverse psycho-social developmental outcomes for the child who suffers various forms of neglect and abuse within such dysfunctional family/guardianship.

Non-implementation of, and loopholes in the law undermine the care and protection that the child is entitled to. Particularly in a context where traditional safeguards have broken down as well, the adverse impact of resulting social disorganization in the form of social isolation and marginalization constitute societal abuse.

The need for a community-based family support system with community participation has become strongly evident. Equally, the need has been shown for child-oriented, family targeted policies and programmes backed by strict law enforcement to ensure the rights of women and children. For, the welfare of children is inextricably linked with the welfare of women. The welfare of each family is linked with the welfare of the whole community.