
Attitude of Parents about Child Abuse in M-East Ward of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai

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Keywords

Child Abuse,
Physical Abuse,
Emotional Abuse,
Neglect,
Parents,
Family,
Attitude

Abstract

This study was designed to examine attitude of parents about child abuse. Generally parents are known as the first line of protection of children from all forms of abuse, exploitation and harmful situation but at another side many other studies shows that the incident of child abuse is higher in family environment and person who is known to child. In many cases related to child abuse within or by family, does not appears easily and it is always hidden. So that, before working on the issue of child abuse there is need to understand the stand and view of parent on the topic. Though, this study will help to explore the idea that what is the parents view towards child abuse. The present study comprising a sample of 90 parents including father or mother or both father and mother from M-East ward of Mumbai. Researcher found less number of studies in Indian context, where attitude of parents has been reviewed on the topic of child abuse. The data strongly indicated that their attitude, thinking and belief towards child abuse seem to be injudicious.

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INTRODUCTION

India is home to almost 19 per cent of the world's children. More than one-third of the country's population, around 440 million, is below 18 years (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). Independence India of child welfare and child development programmes have still not been able to control the severe forms of abuse such as female feticide and infanticide, girl child discrimination, child sexual abuse, kidnapping children for organ sale, and exploitative child labour.

United Nation Convention on the Rights of Children has specified four basic rights to children such as right to participation, right to development, right to survival and right to protection. India has also ratified this in the year of 1992 for care and protection of children and entitled to receive it from state. There are various facts related to violation of child rights and especially protection issue need to be focus. Women and children for the eleventh five year plan (2007-12) report mentioned that while on the one hand girls are being killed even before they are born, on the other hand children who are born and survive suffer from a number of violations. The highest number child labours are in India. Adding to this fact India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children and with child below the age of 16 years raped in every 155th minutes (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007).

Even though definition of child abuse is available and it defines what is known as abuse but still there are incidences of abuse takes place in family, school and society, some of the abuses are not considered as abuse. According to WHO definition (1999) "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

Since the history and traditionally in India it has found that the responsibility of care and protection of child has been taken care by parents and family members. But there is also need to focus on the incident of abuse takes place in family by parents. Physical punishment to child, verbally abusing them and neglecting to child by parents are acceptable in society and which is not considered as abuse. The negligence of the issue, avoidance and not considering it as an abuse by parent is transferring from generation to generation and still parents are thinking that they have given birth to child so they can treat him/ her in whatever way they want and practicing the same.

Attitudes are connected to the individual's knowledge, emotion, values and consequently it might change from positive to negative and vice versa. As the result of studying attitudes we identify the emotional attitudes/evaluation of individuals towards child abuse issues. For example, do parents do child abuse? How important this child issue is about? What is the attitude towards child abuse and related facts?

As we know in everyday of life of children the abuse and neglect takes place by parent but it is not considered as abuse. Some of the cultural practices and beliefs surrounding childcare within the family are responsible for child abuse. Child abuse always takes place in the isolation of family. Even today children are considered to be the property of their parents and other caregivers. This child abuse experience can be converted into abuser in future as an adult or even in child to child relationship (Dabir and Nigudkar, 2007).

Child Abuse in India

Reviews of social service literature on child abuse in India indicate a dearth of information on the subject, because even though a problem may exist, it may not be so perceived by human service professionals since terms such as harshness, discipline and abuse are culture-specific, and professionals who come from a similar cultural background may neither perceive nor recognize abuse as a problem (Singh, 1988). Abusive behaviour towards children that deviates from socially accepted norms and is the result of adults' emotional disturbances may not be widespread in India because of strong family support systems and the restraining influences of the extended family. However, it is more likely, that there exists a pervasive apathy towards child abuse in the family that is a result of two inextricably interwoven factors in the Indian society, namely, (a) the widespread acceptance of corporal punishment as part of normal child rearing and control, and (b) the prerogative of the parents in disciplining their children as they will (Proffenberger, 1981).

Since the history the existence of the problem of child battering and the sexual and emotional abuse of children within the family, or by caregivers, has become more apparent as it has received increasing coverage in the media. However nevertheless, even the small literature on child abuse in India reveals a major conflict that social scientists face in defining the problem and in distinguishing between intra-familial abuse and societal abuse. Child abuse, or the purposeful maltreatment of children by physically, emotionally or sexually harming them often occurs within the family, and is the result of a variety of combinations of child related factors, parent related factors and situational factors (Segal, 1991).

Other than infanticide, physical abuse such as parental child battering has not been well documented in India. Perhaps, its occurrence is rare because of supports provided by the extended family (Poffenberger, 1981). However, with the increases of industrialization and urbanization, there has been significant movement away from the extended family structure to the nuclear one and with this must come some of the stresses associated with child abuse in the Western countries. Increasing media coverage and a few findings of child guidance clinic have led some social scientists and human service professionals to conclude that child abuse is varied and includes beatings, emotional abuse, abandonment and sexual abuse, and to suggest that this is associated, in addition to industrialization and urbanization, with parental expectations, marital discord, divorce, dual career families, poor housing, poor parental mental health, alcoholism, substance abuse and superstitions (Singh, 1988). Furthermore, the differential levels of infirmities in the two sexes, in rural areas especially, indicate that females, if disabled, are neglected to death (Dandekar, 1979).

Research indicates that among parents both the father and mother are equally abuse their children (Kewalramani, 1992). Opine that what little difference that exists between men and women in terms of their abusive behaviour toward children may probably be due to factors other than gender. According to them, mothers are considered more responsible for the children's behaviour, and hence they tend to spend more time with children, especially, the younger ones. As a consequence, they might exhibit higher rates of violence toward children. However, the most recent National Survey on family violence in the United States found no difference between mothers' and fathers' use of violence toward their children (Prasad, 2001).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Descriptive research design was used to describe, explain and interpret condition of the present. The sample of this research study was collected from the 5 different areas of M-East ward. M-East ward comes under Zone-V of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. The five areas of this ward include, Vashi Naka, Cheeta Camp, Sathe Nagar, Bainganwadi and Shivaji Nagar. The sample size chosen for the study was 90 parents including father or mother or both father and mother. Multistage sampling method was used to collect data.

- **Stage-1:** Selection of 5 areas from available list of 30 areas by simple random method.
- **Stage-2:** Convenience sampling method to select population members from which information can be obtained.

Both primary and secondary source of data collected for the study purpose. Primary source of data was collected directly through interview with parents and secondary source of data was obtained from various sources such as books, journals, magazines, articles, internet and other researches available pertaining to research topic. Semi structured interview schedule was prepared to gather primary data from field. Semi-structured interview schedule was the

combination of both open ended and closed ended questions. The data collected was transferred to computer package called SPSS ('Statistical Package for Social Science', for data entry and analysis). The data summarized numerically using frequency distribution and percentage. Some of the data was graphically represented by using pie-charts, bar diagram and tables. For analysis through SPSS, researcher quantified the qualitative responses of open ended questions. Ethical consideration were maintained during the research process such as consent of the respondents, confidentiality of data, no bias and participants were given option to leave the interview in the middle whenever they found difficult or unwilling to answer the further questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

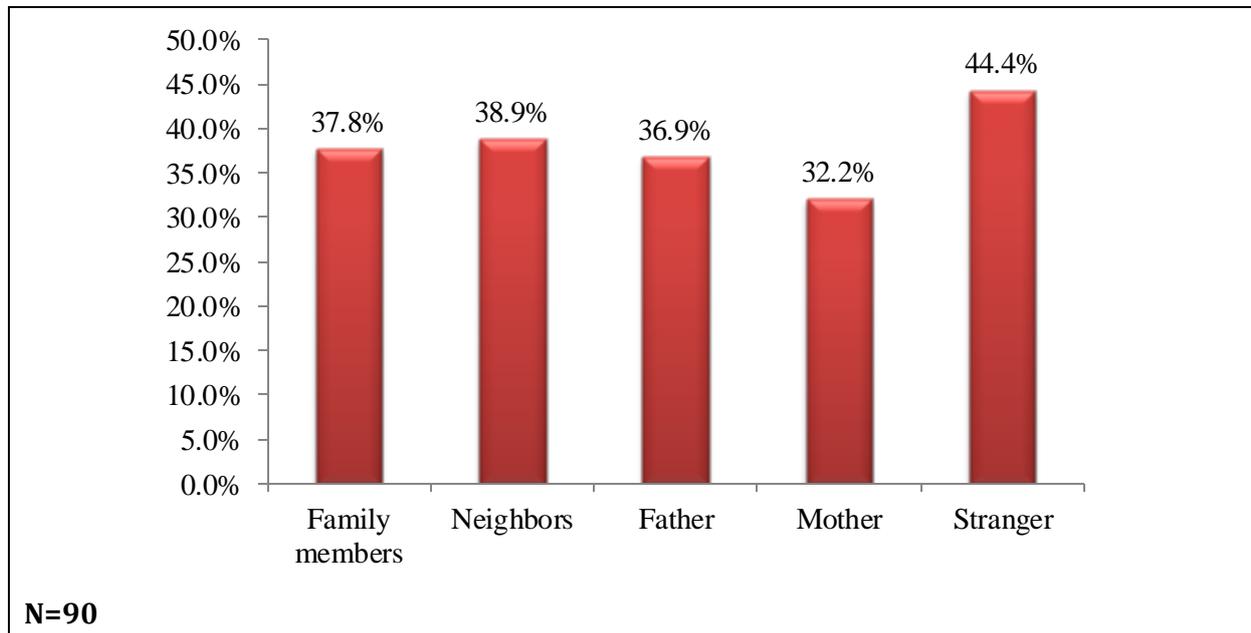
In the present study the 35.6 percent of the respondents were father, 64.4 percent of the respondents were mother. The mean age of respondents was 36.83 years, while the majority of the respondents (38.9 percent) were aged between 31 and 40 years suggesting a youthful age group. Most of the respondents belong to Hindu religion that is 57.8 percent as compared to other Muslim, Christian and Buddhist. The majority of the parents who participated in this study were educated with most of them having acquired primary and higher secondary education with the least qualification recorded being graduate and above. The majority of the fathers are employee (37.8 percent) and self-employed (36.7 percent). The highest percentages of mother are home makers and only 16.7 percent are employee. Only 4.4 percent of the father respondents are in government job. Further 86.7 percent of the parent's family belongs to nuclear family and rest others are from joint family.

Table 1: Most likely Perpetrators of Child Abuse

Statements	Rank					Don't know	Total
	1	2	3	4	5		
Family members	20%	23.3%	37.8%	6.7%	8.9%	3.3%	100%
Neighbors	10%	38.9%	28.9%	11.1%	7.8%	3.3%	100%
Father	13.3%	13.8%	13.8%	36.9%	18.9%	3.3%	100%
Mother	16%	18.4%	16.7%	13.3%	32.2%	3.3%	100%
Stranger	44.4%	12.2%	15.6%	16.7%	7.8%	3.3%	100%

Source: Primary Data

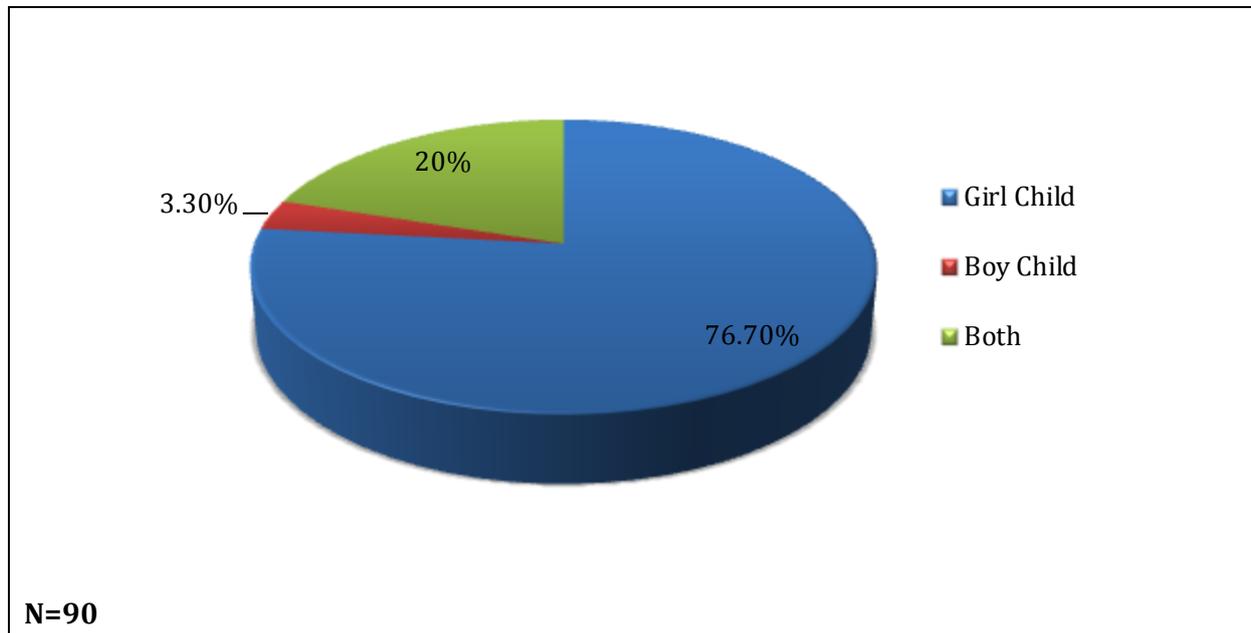
Figure 1: Most likely Perpetrators of Child Abuse



Source: Primary Data

In the above table and figure 1, respondents were asked about the most likely perpetrator of child abuse and according to them majority of the respondents has given preference to stranger as perpetrator of child abuse, followed by neighbor, family members, father and mother. But other studies and literature shows that the know member or parents or close relatives are most likely perpetrators of the child abuse. For example, the 2002 national data on child abuse in the USA released by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (April, 2004) revealed that parents were the abusers in 77 percent of the confirmed cases, other relatives in 11 percent (Essam Al-Shail, 2012). Another study on Child Abuse in India, 2007 report also shows that, out of those children physically abused in family situations, 88.6 percent were physically abused by parents and in case of emotional abuse and girl child neglect, 83 percent of the parents were the abusers (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). The findings of the study shows the stranger to be most likely perpetrator of child abuse which is true but if we will see other studies it mention that most of the child abuse occurs within the family or by someone to whom children know but not a stranger.

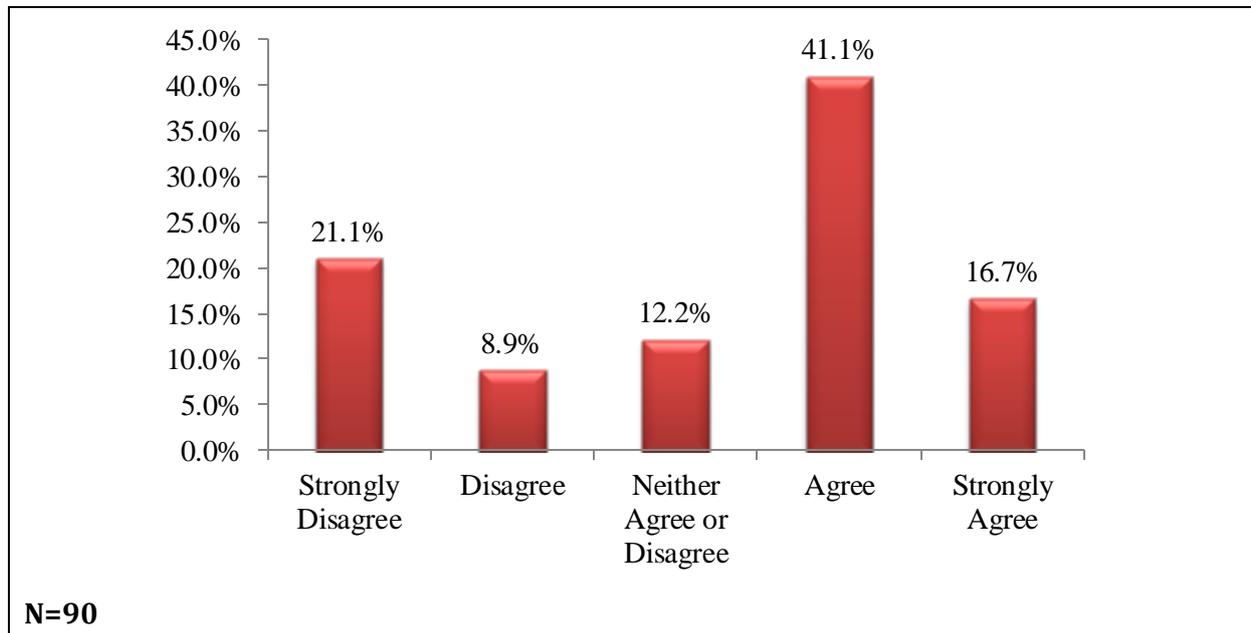
Figure 2: Attitude towards Vulnerability based on Sex of Child



Source: Primary Data

The above figure 2 shows that 76.7 percent of the respondents think that girl children are more vulnerable to abuse whereas only 3.3 percent of the respondents think about boy children. 20 percent of the respondents think both boy and girl children are equally vulnerable to abuse. Those who said girl child is more vulnerable to abuse, according to them they are vulnerable because of various reason such as, they are always vulnerable, because she is girl, her dressing style, abuse generally happens with girl child, lack of care, support and attention by parents and discrimination. In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) released a study report on child abuse and in the same study it was found that 65.99 percent of boys and 67.92 percent of girls living on the street reported being physically abused by their family members and other people. 70.57 percent of girls reported having been neglected by family members. 48.4 percent of girls wished they were boys. 27.33 percent of girls reported getting less food than their brothers. When it comes to overall vulnerability the girl child always has been at the lower level. Study revealed that girl children are most vulnerable to abuse, which is not completely true but both the gender are equally vulnerable because they are children and considered weaker and vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and harm.

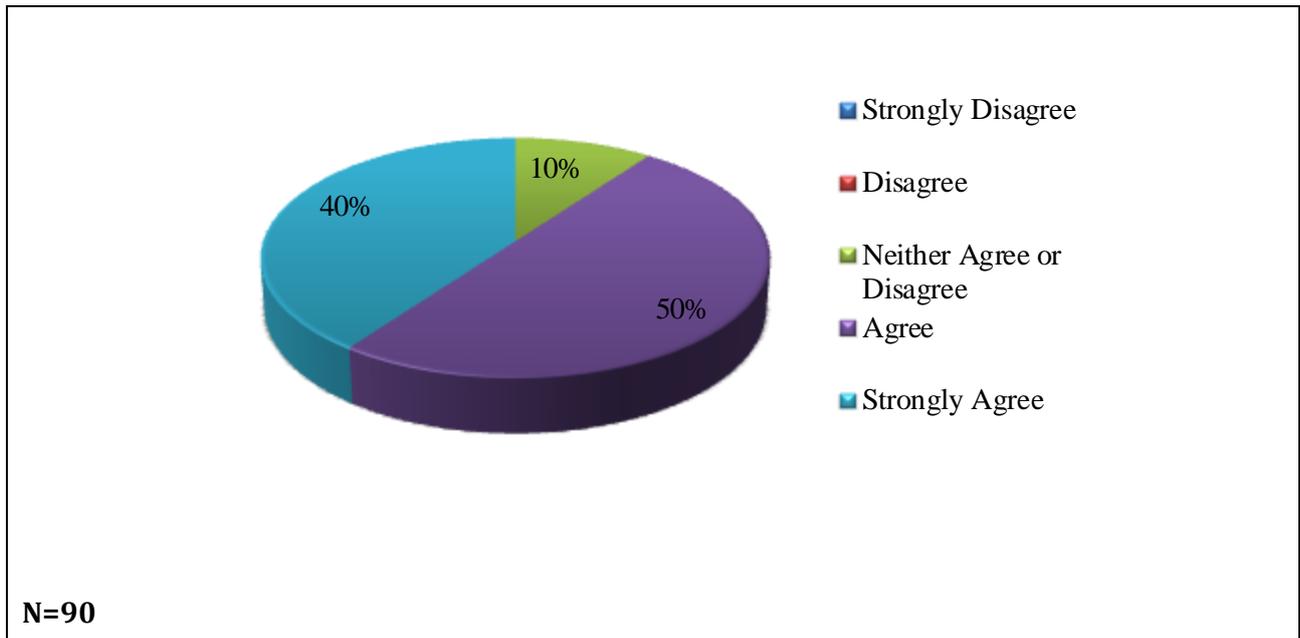
Figure 3: Child is Safer to Stay with Relatives



Source: Primary Data

Figure 3 shows that 41.1 percent of the respondents agree with the statement that child is safer to stay with relatives and 21.1 percent of the respondents are strongly disagree with the same statement. The study on child abuse in India, 2007 report has revealed that the majority of abuse cases take place within the family environment, the perpetrators being close family relatives (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). Another study on an epidemiological overview of child sexual abuse shows that in most (95 percent) of the cases, the perpetrator is known to the child (relatives, neighbors, step parents, highly trusted people) (Singh, 2014). It has been mentioned that the most of the child abuse incident takes place by the known person and; relatives are also one of them, so it cannot be assume or cannot generalize that child is safer being with relatives.

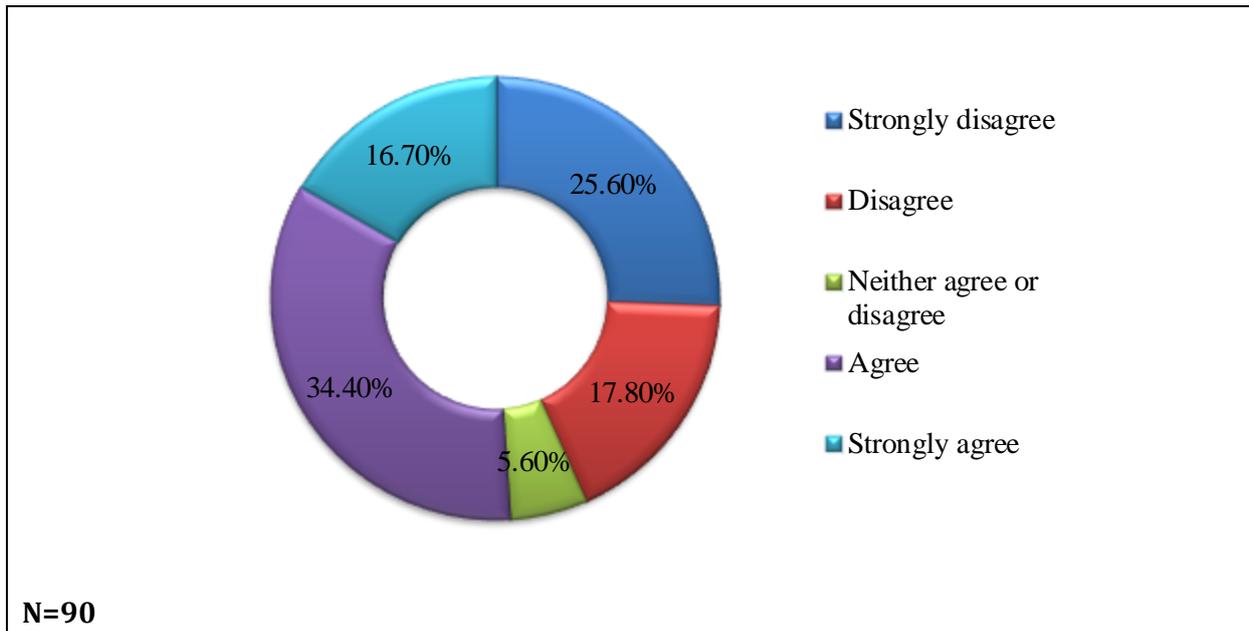
Figure 4: Home is the Best Place to Take Care of Child



Source: Primary Data

Present study shows that majority (90%) of the parents are agree that home is the best place to take care of children but another side UNICEF (2009) study conducted in South America shows that 68% of all sexual abuse occurs in the home. It has also seen that generally, parents are said to be the most frequent perpetrators of emotional abuse in the home, especially mothers. In the same study it is also found that worldwide, 275 million children a year are victims of violence in their homes – a place that should offer protection, affection and protection of their rights. Child abuse in the home is closely related to and increases with the presence of violence against women, either when they were girls or as mothers and wives. National report shows that the government assisted 359 children who were victim of violence and in 85% of the cases the abusers were family members. In addition, 83% of adults surveyed in the Montevideo metropolitan area reported having used some kind of physical or psychological violence against a child in home (UNICEF, 2009).

Figure 5: Using Physical Punishment by Parents is their Right



Source: Primary Data

The above figure 5 shows that, 34.4 percent of the respondents agreed that physical punishment by parents is their rights whereas 25.6 percent were strongly disagree with the same statement. In a survey of households in Romania found that 4.6% of children reported suffering severe and frequent physical abuse, including being hit with an object, being burned or being deprived of food. Nearly half of Romanian parents admitted to beating their children “regularly” and 16% to beating their children with objects (WHO, 2002). Unicef in their article also mentioned that parents think that beating, slapping or hitting is the correct way to prevent undesirable behavior or to punish unwanted behavior among children. But hitting a child is not effective method of parenting. Hitting, slapping, beating, thumping, pinching or boxing a child only reinforces violence and it is abuse¹. Beating or abusing children is not the right of their parents or this is not the correct way of behaving with children. An expert says that the child who had been experience of beaten is more likely to develop a violent behavior in future life. It’s not just about the abuse but it’s also the violation of human rights.

CONCLUSION

It has been proven that the most likely perpetrator of child abuse is someone known to child, because easily known person can approach children and abuse them. In terms of gender, both the male and female are equally vulnerable to abuse but in the present study in contradiction to the attitude or thinking of parents the other research studies at national and international level also shows both boys child and girl child are vulnerable to abuse and at the same time it is also

¹ http://www.unicef.org/jamaica/parenting_corner_2904.htm

considered that female are more weaker than male but in the context of child it differ from adults. In the study, most of the parent's attitude towards beating their children are seems to be Ok. This shocking fact has been revealed from the study and this attitude needs to be change. Beating is not the solution of correcting children but negatively it's going to impact on the child's mental and physical health as well as there are chances of developing violent behavior in later stage of life.

The facts revealed from the study need to be looked carefully and there is really need to work further with family and need to create awareness on the topic of child abuse among parents and family members. Not only parents and family members but children should also be taught about basics of different kinds of abuse and if anything happens with them, in that situation what they should do and to whom they should approach? So that they themselves can come forward and speak about issues to bring positive changes. Parents are the one who spend most of the time with children and provide love, care, protection and basic necessities to children. From the reflection of the study it is necessary to change the attitude of parents and need to look into the issue and provide strong guidelines for parents abusing child. That will help alleviate child suffering from daily abuse by their parents.

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