

Review Article

# Breaking the Silence: Unveiling Child Abuse in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

Child abuse is a grave global concern that goes beyond geographical, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries. Bangladesh is a country characterized by its rich cultural heritage and diverse population. It's a densely populated South Asian nation, that has made significant strides in improving various aspects of human development over the past decades. However, despite these advancements, child abuse remains a significant challenge that demands urgent attention. Child abuse takes various forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and neglectful abuse, each leaving scars that can impede a child's potential to thrive and contribute positively to society. Moreover, the intricate tapestry of socioeconomic disparities, traditional practices, and limited access to education and healthcare services further compounds the vulnerabilities of children, often exposing them to increased risks of exploitation and maltreatment. This paper will delve into the prevailing cultural norms and societal attitudes that might perpetuate child abuse, exploring how traditional beliefs and practices intersect with modern challenges. By analyzing statistical data, academic research, and expert opinions, the study will provide a nuanced understanding of the scale of the problem, helping to identify gaps in current policy frameworks and protective mechanisms. Additionally, the research will scrutinize the role of various stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies, in addressing child abuse in Bangladesh.

## Keywords

Child Abuse, Bangladesh, Violence, Child Rights, Child Development, Public Awareness

## 1. Introduction

A nation's children are its most valuable asset and constitute the future of the country. [1] No nation can progress unless its children receive healthy physical and mental development. [2] Unfortunately, children in Bangladesh are exposed to many sorts of aggressiveness, which impedes their physical, mental, intellectual, and moral development. Chronic inattention or negligence to the children is also common in Bangladesh which is also a responsible factor of abuse. [3] Child abuse hinders the development and growth of children, which in turn disturbs the destiny of the nation. [4] At present, child abuse has become a common phenomenon in

Bangladesh, and it is increasing alarmingly. [5] In Bangladesh, many children are denied their basic human rights. [6] There are numerous reasons for such deprivation, including poor health, nutrition, education, and other socioeconomic factors. [6] Aside from that, children face physical and mental abuse at home, at schools, at work, and even in public areas. [4]

However, to embark on the route of an investigation into the domain of child abuse in Bangladesh, this article has tried to put together collective efforts to safeguard a secure and more nurturing environment for the state's youngest residents. As a result, this article is expected to conclude by discussing,

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comprehending, identifying causes, and developing prevention strategies for child victimization and assuring the application of child rights.

## 2. Concept of Child Abuse

### 2.1. Who Is a Child

UNICEF defines a child as a human being under the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier. [7] According to The Majority Act of 1875, in Bangladesh, a person reaches the age of majority at the age of 18 years [8] which has been validated by the Children's Act of 2013. [9]

### 2.2. Definition of Child Abuse

The term child abuse is interchangeably used with child maltreatment. [10] It refers to such acts and omissions to a child which may harm whether physically or mentally. [11] In Bangladesh, defining the term child abuse becomes as difficult as it falls into some family's preferred childbearing techniques. [12] However, according to the World Health Organization, 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. [13] In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines child maltreatment as any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that result in harm, potential harm, or threat of harm to a child. [14]

### 2.3. Child Abuse in Bangladesh

Several types of child abuse take place in Bangladesh. Child abuse can occur alone or in combination with other forms. In reality, various types of abuse are discovered together rather than individually. The primary types of child abuse in Bangladesh include the following:

#### 2.3.1. Physical Abuse

Physical child abuse refers to any non-accidental physical injury inflicted on a child by parents or other caregivers. The concept also covers activities or conditions that endanger the child's health or well-being. It may be defined as kicking, hitting by objects, burning by cigarettes or any other hot materials, choking, beating, shaking, hitting by some hard items, slapping, and any other acts that result in physical harm to a child. [15] Aside from physical abuse by parents or other caregivers, corporal punishment in educational institutions is also frequent in Bangladesh, and, sadly, physical abuse at

home or in educational institutions is culturally acceptable in society. Although corporal punishment has been prohibited in Bangladeshi schools since January 2011, there have been several reports of punishments in schools and other educational institutions. Common physical lacerations take the form of skin bruises. [16] A recent report by the Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) drew the attention of the nation. The report discloses that 225 cases have been reported from January to March, 333 from April to June, and 228 from July to September in the year 2023. Among the incidents, 155 abuse was reported to be caused by teachers. In addition, the ASK data reveals that 371 children were killed during the abovementioned time. Those killings were surrounded by rape, physical abuse, and suicide. [17]

#### 2.3.2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual child abuse includes any sexual behavior with or exploitation of a child. It occurs when a child is used by another person for sexual appeasement, which can be illustrated by showing the sexual organs, any sexual function intentionally done in front of the child, intentional touching or molesting of the private parts of the body of a child for sexual satiety, masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in the act of masturbation, kissing, fondling the sex organs of a child, sexual intercourse. [18, 19] The distressing statistics of the report by the Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh gives a rough draft about the sexual assault of 255 girls and 36 boys from January 2023 to September 2023. The age range of most of the victims of both torture and rape falls between 13 to 18 years. [17]

#### 2.3.3. Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse happens when any act or behavior, or omission of conduct, interferes with a child's cognitive development. It also includes repeated vocal abuse of a child, such as shouting, threats, detention, and derogatory or humiliating remarks. When parents or other caregivers communicate their child's worthlessness, flaws, unloved, undesired, or endangered verbally or physically, they are inflicting emotional abuse on that child, which has a longer-lasting impact on the child than other forms of abuse. [4, 18, 20] Furthermore, child marriage in Bangladesh is a primary cause of physical and psychological violence against children. Bangladesh has a high rate of early marriage among females aged 15. [4] In 2017, a cross-sectional survey was done among 1547 children aged 11 to 17 years in the Raiganj sub-district of Sirajganj, Bangladesh in which the response rate was 91.5%. As per this survey, a significant number of female children were maltreated psychologically through various ways of humiliation. For instance, by being called dumb or lazy, not allowed to go out and criticized for their skin complexion, gender, religion, etc. in degrading means while male children were maltreated more by being cursed, inaccessible to the home and keeping unfed. [21]

### 2.3.4. Child Negligence

Child negligence can be defined in terms of omissions of some acts. In such cases, the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, and attachment to and affection from adults. Generally, neglect as a form of abuse is apparent when several incidents come to light rather than a single point of action. For example, a child who suffers multiple minor injuries or feels hungry frequently remains underweight and under height, continuously feels tired and sick, etc. [22, 23] A Bangladeshi study in a rural area of Sirajgonj, a northwestern district of Bangladesh shows that roughly 58% and 78% of children were neglected at least in one event during the year 2016 and the lifetime of the children, respectively. In this study, it was found that the most common methods of neglect were unmet medical needs and leaving the child hungry or thirsty. [21]

## 3. Reasons Behind Child Abuse in Bangladesh

### 3.1. Unawareness of Child Rights

In most low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh, children are deprived of basic human rights and other facilities that are necessary for the development of a child. The parents are not aware of the protection of their children's rights. Moreover, the parent's behavior toward their children is not that supportive of their welfare and total development of them. In both rural and urban areas, children are not allowed to talk, understand, or discuss child rights and such lack of awareness leads to child abuse very often. [4, 15]

### 3.2. Lack of Positive Attitude Towards Children

Instead of being positive, youngsters may become disobedient and subjected to mistreatment by their parents or caretakers. Furthermore, as previously stated, the parents or caregivers do not encourage the children in their daily activities, but rather demonstrate a negative attitude toward them, either purposefully or unintentionally, resulting in abuse in many forms. [4, 24, 25]

### 3.3. Poverty

In Bangladesh, the families, living deeply under the poverty line, either abandon their children or send them to work at a very early age of their childhood as domestic workers, beggars, factory workers and so forth. In the workplace, children become victims of abuse very often. [4]

### 3.4. Unwillingness to Value the Children's Expressions

In Bangladesh society, children are considered fully dependent on their parents and the children's opinions are rarely acceptable here although this child's right is recognized both by international and domestic provisions of law. However, the parents are not willing to prioritize their children's opinions and are hardly ready to understand their feelings. This phenomenon may ultimately lead to different forms of child abuse. [4, 15, 26]

### 3.5. Poor Implementation of Child Law

Although there are legal provisions regarding the protection of children's rights, they are not implemented adequately in Bangladesh. Criminals can easily escape the lack of implementation of law and order, and for the same reason, people do not hesitate to commit the same crime again and again. Besides, most of the victim's families are from poor families and hence, they can hardly go to court to claim remedy for the fear of expenses. [4] (F. Islam & Akhter, 2016; Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 2013).

### 3.6. Domestic and Street Violence

In many of the households of Bangladesh young children are employed as housemaids or workers. A large number of them are reported to be tortured both verbally and physically. [27, 28] On the other hand, street children, being homeless and helpless, are mostly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. [29] (Unicef, 2017). The felonious networks engage these children in different sorts of criminal activities like sex work, smuggling, stealing and distribution of drugs and weapons. [30]

### 3.7. Moral and Mental Disorder

It has been established that child abusers frequently suffer from medical, psychological, or socio-cultural disorders. The researchers in Bangladesh underlined the need to identify the fundamental cause of child abuse and then seek solutions. The socio-political and economic conditions are recognized as important factors for child abuse. It has been found that the abusers are either mentally sick or lack moral standards, some may even have been molested as children. [31, 32]

## 4. Effects of Child Abuse

Children are the most neglected members of society and hardly have any chance to resist, even within the home. As a result, they consistently become victims of all sorts of abuse easily. Abuse has both immediate and long-term consequences for the victim. Child maltreatment has long been recognized as a hindrance to children's normal physical and

mental development. When a child is mistreated, their behavior changes, and they begin to suffer from insomnia, nightmares, anxiety, and even melancholy. It has been reported that if a child is shaken, slapped, whipped, or beaten by a parent or other guardian or teacher, especially at a young age, certain parts of its brain may be damaged as a consequence which in turn, hampers healthy development. The abused child, as s/he grows up, may have impaired cognitive and language function, face difficulty in coping with studies, and suffer from isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, hyper-vigilance, or extremely impulsive behavior. S/he may find difficulties in trusting people and building relationships; in extreme cases, may even develop chronic diseases. Perhaps due to such consequences, corporal punishment in schools was made illegal in Bangladesh in 2011 by the High Court. [18, 33-35]

The effects of sexual abuse on a child are much more devastating and may be longer lasting than the other forms of abuse. Such effects include the guilty feeling of the victim and self-blaming tendency as s/he may not realize that the abuse is wrong not their fault, suffering from insomnia, nightmares, sexual dysfunctions, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Consequently, victims may feel inadequate, embarrassed, isolated, guilty, shameful, and powerless. [36]

However, the most negative effects of sexual violence on a child can be compounded by the reactions of the child's family members. For example, the near and dear ones of the victim may blame the abused child, not the abuser. Moreover, when a child wonders if the mother or father knew about the abuse but could not take any action to prevent it, s/he can lose trust in both parents. [37]

## 5. Incidents of Child Abuse in Bangladesh

This is lamentable that, spiking into child abuse is always hideous. In Bangladesh, a large number of children become prey to abuse every day. The children are not safe anywhere – home, school, street, workplace, or even in prison. The situation is getting worse day by day. Horrifying incidents are invariably found in the newspapers, television news and in other social media. In 2005, 555 cases of child abuse were reported to the police, by the year of 2010, this number increased to 1,542. [4] It was reported that the number of children killed has increased every year. [38] Some of the conspicuous remorseful incidents are depicted in the following paragraphs.

In Kumargaon, Sylhet – a district in North-Eastern Bangladesh, a 13-year-old boy named Samiul Islam Rajon was hardheartedly beaten to death on July 8, 2015. Some people hit the helpless boy with iron sticks on the head, feet, joints of legs and shoulders; the incident was videoed and uploaded on social media, portraying the inhumane nature of the person since he did not help the poor boy, rather was busy with the

video shooting. Over 64 marks had been found in his body when the police recovered the body from a microbus. The brutality knew no bounds in this incident and finally, the general mass got outraged and the criminals were under legal action. [39]

On August 3, 2015, Rakib Hawlader [12], an under-aged motor mechanic, was tortured to death by pushing air into his abdomen through anus. In spite of his pleas the motor garage owner and his companies continued to pump air into his body till the local people rescued him. The boy was taken to the Khulna Medical College Hospital but did not survive. The incident was added in the series of child murders in Bangladesh and once again, shocked the nation. [40]

In the 1st week of July 2017, Sabina Akhter, an 11-year-old housemaid, endured unspeakable torture by her employer, who reportedly, used to beat her regularly. On that specific day, she just failed to fry an egg, and for this simple fault, she was persecuted brutally. [41]

Raju, a 9-year-old boy from Rajapur upazila of Jhalokati district, was beaten up by three local drug addicts with the accusation of stealing money although the boy denied the charge in early July 2017. But he was tortured inhumanly, his fingers were burnt, and he was nailed to a wooden pole. On July 30, 2017, a girl of only 4 years of age was raped and murdered. The girl was left inside a bathroom by the perpetrators. This heinous act took place in Badda, located in central Dhaka, the capital of the country. In Battery Ghat, Kamrangirchar, Dhaka, a minor girl was raped when she went to ask to turn the water supply on. The victim's family accused Mahbub, the landlord's son, of violating the girl. The latest among the episodes was reported on November 01, 2017. A 4-year-old Piyash was brutally tortured by a youth named Rakib accusing him of stealing a mobile phone. With serious injuries to his eyes and face, Piyush was taken to Noakhali Sadar Hospital for treatment. [42]

A joint survey report of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF shows that in the city corporation areas, 85 per cent of the children in the slums were abused, in comparison to 42% of the children outside the slums. [21, 43] According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 report, the ratio of any physical punishment and psychological violence by caregivers in 2019 is 6.5% higher than in 2012-13. [44]

A survey by the Save the Children and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) revealed the anticipation of 69.62% of parents and caregivers believe that it is justifiable to punish a child when they make any mistake. In this 'Stop Tolerating Violence Against Children' survey, 55.7% of children who participated in the survey mentioned that they faced physical punishment in their homes while 49.29% of children admitted they faced physical punishment in their educational institutions. As per the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh (CRAC, B) report in their 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on child rights 1141 children were killed from 2013 to 2016 and 222 children were



killed during the first eight months of 2017. Some distressing experiences were documented in a report titled 'Violence Against Children and Its Associated Factors in Urban Areas of Dhaka, Bangladesh', conducted by the Bangladesh University of Health Sciences (BUHS). Abdul Subahan, a fourth-grade student at Debidas Government Primary School, while sharing an incident with a news reporter, said- "He was hanging out in a group nearby. My ball hit him, and he came up to me and slapped me. Earlier, another man slapped me when my ball accidentally hit him," He also shared an incident where he was assaulted by a TikTok content creator as he unintentionally appeared in their video at a football ground. He said that children are being frequently targeted by several older individuals while playing on the ground. Ten-year-old Lamia spoke about how she has been physically abused multiple times while performing household chores as her mother cooks for the labourers. During the investigation, the reporter encountered a seven-year-old child who displayed signs of being inattentive and rebellious. After visiting a psychiatrist, it was discovered that the driver who took the child to school had been inappropriately touching the child's genitals and the parents were shocked upon learning this as the child had never shared the fact with them. As it is evident from the aforesaid information, that, there are lots of incidents of child abuse that have been portrayed in different news media and the role of the media to disclose those incidents of child abuse and to raise public awareness in society is remarkable. Almost half of the child abuse cases were alleged physical abuse and sexual abuse amongst all reported incidents, where neglect and emotional or psychological abuse received less exposure. Victims of sexual abuse are mostly female children. The key offenders were males, who were often known to the victims. Among the reported cases of abuse, roughly 32 per cent resulted in death. Those deaths were associated with rape, family violence, administrative negligence, abduction, ransom demand, etc. Incidents of suicidal death were also included in the aforesaid ratio. [45]

These incidents reflect less than the tip of the iceberg. Child abuse has grown to be a hidden epidemic. The government, along with non-government organizations, should take immediate necessary steps to delimit this monstrous criminal act.

## 6. Laws Relating to Children's Rights in Bangladesh

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities (Lundy, 2014). Article 19 of the UNCRC stated that state parties should take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of abuse and such protective measures should include

effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child. [46]

Since Bangladesh has ratified the above-mentioned Convention, the Government of Bangladesh must take necessary steps regarding the protection of child rights. [47] The children have basic rights that include food, clothing, education, health and nutrition, hygiene, participation and nevertheless, protection from child abuse. [24] Child abuse or maltreatment is always considered a barrier to the growth and development of children. [48]. In Bangladesh, children are vulnerable to abuse irrespective of their age, sex, status, and religion. [49] However, there are several laws in Bangladesh which have been framed for the protection of the interests of the children.

### 6.1. The Divorce Act, 1869

It deals with the custody, maintenance, and education of minor children while their parents are engaged in a suit for separation. The court may order the maintenance, custody, and education of children. This Act is applicable for Christians only. According to Section 21 of this Act, when a marriage becomes void because a former husband or wife is still alive, and it is declared that the subsequent marriage was not contracted with mala fide intention and the parties believed that the former husband or wife was dead, or when a marriage becomes void due to insanity, children born before the decree is made are specified in the decree and are not deprived of succession. Such children will have the same rights as legitimate children to the estate of the parent who was legally capable of contracting at the time of marriage. [50]

### 6.2. The Guardian and Wards Act, 1890 and the Family Court Ordinance, 1985

The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 (G&W Act) was enacted in 1890 to consolidate and alter all laws relating to a child for whom a guardian has been appointed. The G&W Act applies to all people, regardless of their religion or status. There is no clear provision in the G&W Act establishing it as prevailing law. This Act does not exclude the appointment or declaration of a guardian under any other legislation already in existence. However, according to Section 8 of the G&W Act, any person - desirous of being, or claiming to be, the guardian of the child, any relative or friend of the minor, or the Collector of the district - are entitled to apply for guardianship of a minor. Because the Family Courts Ordinance (FCO) was created in 1985, Family Courts have exclusive jurisdiction to hear cases involving "guardianship and custody of children," among other specific circumstances. Though the FCO has granted the Family Courts exclusive competence to hear guardianship cases, it has not specifically invalidated the application of the G&W Act to guardianship issues before the Family Courts. Rather, Section 24 of the FCO requires the

Family Court to follow the method outlined in the G&W Act when dealing with guardianship of a minor. [51]

### 6.3. Women & Children Repression Act 2000

The Women & Children Repression Act of 2000 addresses abuse against women and children. This act of 2000 prohibits the trafficking of women and children for economic exploitation or involuntary servitude. This Act also addresses other offenses such as rape, murder, and offense by inflammatory drug. Under this Act, both the perpetrators and the abettors of the crime would be penalized. However, the Act expressly stipulates that the offenders of this Act would be tried before a special tribunal formed under this Act. This tribunal has sole jurisdiction to hear the case under this Act. Section 26 of this Act refers to the tribunal as the 'Prevention of Women and Children Repression Tribunal'. Section 13 of this Act states that if a child is born as a result of rape, the infant must be cared for by the mother or maternal relatives. That kid will have the right to be acquainted with or introduced to the identity of its father, mother, or both. If the child is female, the government will provide for her maintenance until she marries and reaches the age of adulthood. The government will collect money for the child's maintenance from the rapist. [52]

### 6.4. The Penal Code, 1860

Kidnapping, abduction, slavery, sexual exploitation, selling and buying minors for prostitution, unnatural offenses, and forced labour are all prohibited and punishable under Bangladesh's Penal Code. For example, Section 363 stipulates that if anybody kidnaps anyone from Bangladesh or from lawful guardianship, they will be imprisoned for up to 7 years and fined. Section 370 states that anyone who imports, exports, removes, buys, sells, or disposes of any person as a slave, or accepts, receives, or detains any person as a slave against his will, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term that may extend to seven years. Furthermore, anyone who habitually imports, exports, removes, buys, sells, traffics, or deals in slaves shall be punished with life imprisonment or imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding ten years, as well as a fine under Section 371 of the Penal Code, 1860. Similarly, the Bangladesh Penal Code deems forced labor a crime under section 374(1), as well as sexual exploitation, which is punishable under section 372. According to Section 372, "whoever sells, lets to hire, or otherwise disposes of any person under the age of eighteen years with the intent that such person shall at any age be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution, illegal intercourse with any person, or for any unlawful purpose" shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years and a fine. Additionally, Section 373 states that anyone who buys or obtains possession of a person under the age of eighteen with the intent to use the same person for prostitution or illicit intercourse with another person is punishable by

imprisonment for up to ten years and a fine. According to the Penal Code, a girl under the age of 14 cannot consent to have sex with a male, and even if she does, the court will not recognize it. As a result, any sexual intercourse with such a girl will constitute to rape, and the alleged shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment not exceeding ten years and a fine under section 377 of The Penal Code, 1860. [53] However, Sections 82 and 83 of the Penal Code provide protection to children by stating that nothing done by a child under the age of nine shall constitute an offense, and anything done by a child over the age of nine but under the age of twelve shall not constitute an offense. [54]

### 6.5. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017

This Act makes child marriage an offense and prohibits any marriage in which either or both of the contracting parties are minors. According to the same Act, a minor is defined as a person who, if a male, has not reached the age of 21, and if a female, has not reached the age of 18. [55] Child marriage can result in sexual abuse of a child. Because approaching a youngster in a way that causes him or her pain or discomfort is sexual abuse or exploitation. [56] Early marriage increases the risk of serious health problems for both young women and their children. These women are more likely to report early, frequent, and unplanned pregnancies than those who married as adults. Aside from health repercussions, child marriage also has educational, socioeconomic, and gender equity consequences. [57] Thus, for the welfare of the children, child marriage has been declared an offence in Bangladesh by The Child Marriage Restraint Act, of 2017 and this Act provides various types of penalty for child marriage in various sections.

### 6.6. The Child Act 2013

The Child Act, 2013 considers as crime and proved penalty for cruelty to child, engaging a child in begging, intoxicating liquor, or injurious medicine to a child, using a child for carrying firearms for committing terrorist actions, exploitation of Child, etc. For example, Section 70 of the Child Act of 2013 imposes a punishment for child maltreatment. According to this section, anyone who has custody, charge, or care of a child and abuses, assaults, neglects, abandons unprotected, uses for personal service, or exposes in an obscene manner, causing unnecessary suffering or injury to the child's sight or hearing, injury to any limb or organ, or causing mental derailment, shall be punished with imprisonment for up to five years, a fine of up to 100,000 taka, or both. In the same method. Similarly, Section 80 of this Act states that if any person leads a child to a dishonest path, prostitution, or immoral activity, he is deemed to have committed an offence under this Act and is punishable by imprisonment for up to five years, a fine of up to one lac taka, or both. [58]

## 7. Recommendations

Today's children are the strength of the future. Any kind of child abuse destroys the potentiality of a child. A society cannot be called civilized if the children are not free from abuse therein. Therefore, every country must give protection to children from all types of abuse and ensure child rights. Here are some suggestions to combat the issues of child abuse-

1. Poverty is the leading cause of child abuse. The poor children are forced to work from a very early age as domestic labourers, industrial workers, and beggars. In the workplace, they get abused easily. The government should take strong steps to eradicate poverty so that no child needs to work outside at such an age when they are supposed to concentrate on their studies only.
2. Public awareness should be increased to stop and reduce child abuse by arranging seminars, distributing leaflets, showing drama on the consequences of child abuse, etc.
3. Association is an important factor for a child. A wrong selection of friends may make a child victimized as they get involved with various types of criminal activities. Hence, parents and other caregivers should pay attention to the associations of their children.
4. Parents or other caregivers should be made more sensitized about the signs of child abuse. In our country, it is a common ideology that punishment is necessary to build up the moral character of a child. Thus, the parents do not hesitate to batter their children. However extreme punishments may damage the children both physically and mentally. Hence, positive parental guidance should be ensured.
5. The government and the judiciary should be more conscientious towards the protection of child rights. Strong laws should be introduced regarding child abuse and the same should be implemented strictly.
6. Children should be given the primary idea and consciousness about abusive behaviors and avoid this kind of scenario. For this purpose, Children should be provided with the necessary basic knowledge about all the forms of child abuse and for this they need to get primary education in school.

## 8. Conclusion

To establish a proper civilized nation, it is important to ensure a secure, healthy, child-friendly society where children will be free from all kinds of abuse and will get maximum protection of their rights to which they are entitled. Child abuse in Bangladesh has been a burning issue in recent years. But still, there is no sign of improvement; rather, it has been turning into an epidemic. The laws and administrative institutions have not been as effective as tackling some other issues. There should be a general awareness of our responsibility to create an environment favorable to the protection

of children and their rights. However, alone laws would not lend a hand to combat the issues of child abuse as long as public awareness is not combined with legal provisions of law. Everybody who is associated with a child should know the signs of abuse and the way to report the same. Child abuse is a social crime and therefore a society's welfare, security and development are threatened if child abuse continues in that society. It is all of our responsibility to ensure a child-friendly, child right enriched, and discrimination-free environment to make a civilized nation. Unfortunately, even after considering the legal measures and awareness crusade undertaken to combat child aggression, children continue to suffer. Distressing reports of children being abused by a guardian, stepparent, siblings or other relative or outside the home, for example, by a friend, neighbor, childcare person, tutor or an unfamiliar person and the workplace keep driving on, while the country's administrative as well as judicial failure in child protection and remedies of child abuse become more and more evident. However, children need to get the primary idea and perception of abusive behavior and avoid such kind of situations. Besides, Children should be provided with all the basic knowledge about this silent crime and for this they need to get primary education at home along with school. Here the parents and another caregiver can play the most important role in creating consciousness among their children. Moreover, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have to work together to combat the heinous issue of child abuse by raising mass awareness. Last but not least, to check child abuse, there should be a strategy for ensuring speedy trial and exemplary punishment, rapid execution of the verdict, and measures to ensure the safety of victims and plaintiffs.

## Abbreviations

UNICEF: United Nations Children Fund  
 ASK: Ain O Shalish Kendra  
 CRAC, B: Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh  
 BUHS: Bangladesh University of Health Sciences  
 UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child  
 G & W Act: The Guardians and Wards Act  
 FCO: Family Courts Ordinance

## Author Contributions

Salma Morium is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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