

CHILD ABUSE IN PAKISTAN: SOCIETAL FACTORS AND ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

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Summary

Child abuse is on the rise in Pakistan and the major reason can be attributed to the unawareness of the people about religious teachings and guidelines regarding the treatment and rearing of the children. Moreover, there is an apprehension that they do not have knowledge and access to social welfare institutions working for the counselling, rescue and rehabilitation of children. One important factor may be that they are not considering the severity of the act and its implications for a child's life, nor do they wish to address it considering its severity. A survey was conducted to seek answers to these questions and a scale was designed to get the responses. Lahore Division including Lahore, Sheikhpura, Kasur and Nankana Sahab was identified as population and 200 responses were collected and analyzed, both qualitatively and quantitatively, which reflects that generally people are aware of the rising menace of child victimization, and they take child sexual abuse as the worst form of all abuses. Majority of the respondents stated that there are injunctions in Islam regarding children and equally the similar proportion also admitted that those injunctions are not being propagated. Children are not a priority by many as gauged from the responses. Mostly of the respondents agreed that there are injunctions in Islam regarding children and mosque can play its role to bring about a change in the treatment of children by disseminating religious teachings. Research instrument was designed on personal and social level; therefore, it can be resolved through concerted efforts of individuals and institutions.

Keywords: *Child abuse, Social institutions, Islamic injunctions, Safety and protection services*

1. INTRODUCTION

This study was selected in the backdrop of rising number of various forms of child abuse incidents depicting the sufferings of the weaker being whose only fault may be their dependence on others for care and protection. However, they are mostly treated with torture, humiliation, deprivation, sexual violence, and murder. The perspective of Islam on abuse, the injunctions in the Holy Qur'ān, the illustrations from the Sunnah and the teachings and conduct of the pious men (mystics of Islam) should be propagated/highlighted as an example to be followed by others, to find a solution to this menace of child abuse in the religious light. Many children have been subjected to abuse, torture and inhuman treatment since time immemorial and its traces stretch over human history with horrifying details. A dig at the history of abuse and violence makes shocking revelations that how this is so much innate in the human nature thriving on the passions/emotions of lust, power, hunger, fear, wealth, ritual, religion, pride, ignorance, apathy, etc. and the children have been subjected to all kinds of violence and tragedy by whom he was dependent upon, or otherwise, in the most astonishing way. 'Child abuse' has been a pervasive phenomenon, with variation in the extent of abusive treatment, throughout human history ranging from apathy, slapping or scolding to genital mutilation, used as a tool, either to regularize the child or to uphold the social and cultural norms or simply as a passage to vent the simmering emotions of excitement or revulsion with repercussions beyond imagination upon the 'defenseless souls' who deserving care, protection and kindness.



Child abuse is a grave problem with myriad consequences. It is the violation of the very rights of the child, on the part of those upon whom he depends, either by ignoring the rights or behaving with the child in such a way that affects him negatively. It has repercussions to the psyche of the child; damages his emotional well-being, to his health; undermining his growth and development, moreover, it entails threat to the very survival and existence of the child.

Child is defined as ‘progeny; offspring of parentage. Unborn or recently born human being. At common law one who has not attained the age of fourteen years, though the meaning now varies in different statutes’ (Blake, 1991, p.163).

As per Blake’s Law Dictionary ‘Abuse’ is defined as “everything which is contrary to good order established by usage. Departure from reasonable use; immoderate or improper use. Physical or mental maltreatment. Misuse. Deception. To wrong in speech, reproach coarsely, disparage, revile or malign” (Blake, p.5).

Hence, child abuse stands for “any form of cruelty to child’s physical, oral or mental wellbeing. Also used to describe form of sexual attack which may or may not amount to rape” (Blake, p.164).

World Health Organization, founded in 1948, is United Nations’ agency which aims to ‘*keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable*’ defines child abuse / maltreatment as:

“Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results 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” (WHO).

Broadly defined ‘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’ (Report-WHO, 1999, p.15).

A look at the history terrifies the conscience with a sad apprehension that child abuse happened to be prevalent in human history irrespective of region, culture, sex or era. Children have been subjected to all kinds of atrocities either in the name of culture, rituals, victimization, habit or norms with either wide acceptance or passive disdain. Lloyd deMause, in his speech (later published) “The History of Child Abuse” while calling child abuse ‘humanity’s most powerful and successful ritual’ (DeMause, 1998, p.1) bluntly puts it as “...my conclusion from a lifetime of psycho-historical study of childhood and society is that the history of humanity is founded upon the abuse of children” (DeMause, p.1).

Child abuse is such a subject which cannot be studied in isolation, rather, at times, even one kind of child abuse possess traces of multiple types of abuse *exempli gratia* sexual abuse often involves abduction, mutilation, physical abuse, verbal abuse, etc., and in extreme case involves killing or death of the victim. A few cases of children survived fear, victimization, exploitation, and deprivation. While in today’s world, though the plight of children has not much changed but the only difference is that at least mistreatment, abuse and deprivation has been recognized as a problem with concerted efforts to minimize it or at-least its effects on national and international level.

Child Abuse, though practiced widely, is highly despicable phenomenon to any sane mind that all the provinces of Pakistan have made legislations to recognize and curb this heinous practice, as may be suitable to them, to address to the plight of the children. The alarming part is that mostly people are unaware about the gravity of their actions against children, besides generally masses



are unaware about the laws and punishments. Awareness about various child protection and rehabilitation agencies working at national and international level, also the rewards and repercussions of this heinous crime are not being disseminated properly. Repeated negative actions become habits and make one insensitive to the point that one is unable to discern right from wrong.

Corporal punishments, child sexual abuse, sense of fear, exploitation etc., is all what has surfaced, thanks to electronic and social media, in the very recent times raising the questions regarding various social issues including child abuse. The overall picture of child safety and protection has been grim in Pakistan and child abuse has become a norm of the day. 'Pakistan is a densely populated country with approximately one-half of its population being children and adolescents and it is essential to safeguard these children and adolescents to promote their welfare and protect them from harm' (Younus, Chachar, Mian, 2018, p.2). A dig at the cases gives one goosebumps that how children have suffered for no fault of their own and became a victim of anger, aggression, power, terrorism, ignorance, pride and lust of others. For example 'Zainab murder case', 'APS tragedy', 'Javed Iqbal and murder of 100 plus children', 'Malala attack', 'Kasur abuse scandal', 'little Angel shot (Mianwali incident)', 'Kashmore gang rape', 'victims of teachers' furry', 'victims of domestic violence', etc.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in its report published as "State of Human Rights in 2021" based on the 'data provided by child protection organizations, on average, more than ten children are subjected to sexual abuse every day in Pakistan. Data collected from all four provinces of Pakistan in the first six months of 2021 revealed that a total of 1,896 cases of child abuse were reported across Pakistan and out of these 1,084 cases were of sexual abuse against children, 523 were cases of abduction, and 238 cases of missing children. Statistics from the province show that 60 percent of the total cases were reported from Punjab' (HRC Pakistan, 2022, p.40). 'Children between the ages of six and 15 years—both boys and girls—remained the most vulnerable to abuse and violence' (HRC Pakistan, p.20).

An analysis of 'Cruel Numbers 2021' compiled by "Sahil" (NGO working for rescue and rehabilitation of children) is as under:

In the year 2021, the data on child abuse cases shows that a total number of 3852 cases have been reported in 88 national and regional newspapers. These cases were reported from all four provinces including Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Gilgit Baltistan (GB). The data indicates that a total of 3852 cases include reported cases of child sexual abuse (CSA), cases of abduction, cases of missing children, etc. The data shows that more than 10 children have been abused per day during the year 2021. The cases of child abuse have increased by more than 30% as compared to the year 2020. The gender divide shows that out of the total reported cases of child abuse, 54% of victims were girls and 46% were boys. The reported age shows that children are most vulnerable to abuse in the age group of 6-15 years, in which more boys than girl victims were reported. Moreover, children as young as 0-5 years are also sexually abused.

The abuser's category of Cruel Numbers 2021 indicates that mostly acquaintances involved in child sexual abuse, along with service providers, family members, strangers, and women abettors, who have increased from 29 cases in 2020 to 86 cases in 2021. The geographical distribution of the data shows that out of the total 3852 reported cases, Punjab has the maximum number of reported cases. Out of the total 3852 reported cases, 2211(57%) cases are reported from rural areas and 1641(43%) cases are reported from urban areas. Among the total reported cases, over 80% were registered with the police. The cases of only CSA were 2275, with both genders equally victimized. A total number of 92 cases reported murder after sexual abuse. A total number of 1303 cases were reported of abduction, out of which 233 (18%) cases were reported of sexual abuse after the abduction. A total number of 438 cases of missing children were reported (Cruel Numbers 2021).



The year 2022 presents another bleak picture with an alarming rise in child abuse cases in its first six (6) months i.e. from January to June. The statistical representation from 'Sahil' 'Cruel Numbers 2022' highlights that:

'during 2022, January to June, 2,211 children were abused... 'Cruel Number' data reveals that 1,207 girls and 1,004 boys are victims of exploitation. This data brings the numbers of abused children more than 12 per day. This year reported cases under major categories are abduction 803, rape 243, sodomy 298, gang-rape 41 and gang sodomy 87. As many as 17 boys and 13 girls have been murdered after committing sexual abuse. There are more horrible incidents in which 2 boys and a girl were murdered after gang sodomy and rape, and 212 children were found missing. The statistics show that out of total 2,211 there are 1,050 cases where the abusers have acquaintance with victims or victim's family, 409 cases are reported in which strangers are involved in abusing (News International, September 15, 2022).

Victim blaming, especially in the cases of females, has been prevalent in Pakistan. Female gender is but an entity for criticism. It is wondering that how could a minor girl carries herself inappropriately to entice her perpetrators to take it as a treat to entertain themselves. Rather the exposition is different if we look back to the case of 3 years old minor from Kashmore in Sindh, Pakistan (Dawn, November 12, 2020) exposing herself to tell the media what was done to her by the "uncle". Voices of blaming are often being heard from the intelligentsia and custodians of the rights of all the segments of the society and an array of explanation and interpretation notes by the aides of the head of the nation and others. Its explanation can be sought from patriarchal culture from which we hail or because of the incapacity of the state to handle this problem and the simple implication of the victim in the crime against her/him serves the end of doing away with the problem.

Child abuse is a taboo topic and, at times, even not considered to be a problem in Pakistan as there is a just a narrow difference between abuse and admonition and it is a justified phenomenon in the rearing of children. As far as child sexual abuse is concerned, usually, people shy away from this topic and it remains limited to mere breaking news, slogans, placards and lightening of candles and then a forgotten incident without delving into the nature of abuse and its prevention. Here the contention has been upheld that usually children suffer at the hands of others and human behaviors, responses, apathy is the root cause to this menace and religious knowledge and teachings are being eulogized as something sacred instead of practical. Most of the works relate the rights of children originating from the Qur'ān and Hadith but do not focus on child abuse and its solution in the light of religion. Since no study has explicitly focused on the topic of child abuse as a problem from the indigenous point of view combined with the role of the religion, therefore, this task was taken up by the authors to explore the public opinion with reference to this phenomenon of child abuse and role of religion.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research intends to explore the attitudes and opinions of the people regarding child abuse while using a quantitative approach. A survey was conducted to collect data from diverse group of people. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed to solicit the responses from the sample drawn from the targeted population.

2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

People of Lahore Division, comprising of District Lahore, Nankana Sahab, Kasur and Sheikhpura, have been selected to get the opinion regarding child abuse. Sample size has been aimed at 200 participants for this research.



3. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

To capture ‘the ethereal attributes of human behavior and performance’ (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Paul 2015, p.397) it is necessary ‘to transform an individual’s subjectivity into an objective reality’ (Joshi et al., p.397). To achieve this, a questionnaire has been designed with Likert’s Scale for gauging the opinion and attitudes of the people. The questionnaire consists of twenty (20) questions, comprising of 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was designed with general and targeted questions to assess / verify some notions and extract opinions on certain questions and issues to arrive at a definitive point. The questionnaire depicts division of questions on three planes viz. individual (personal opinion / response to the problem), social (concern / response to the problem as a member of society) and institutional (role and expectations to tackle the problem of child abuse).

4. DATA COLLECTION

After formulation of questionnaire it was distributed among the targeted population i.e. people of Lahore Division including Kasur, Nankana & Sheikhpura and for this purpose volunteers were assigned the task of the distribution of questionnaire among people of the four regions, with wider access, so that opinions may be solicited from wider range of the same area. The data was collected in ten days’ period extending between 04-11-2022 to 14-11-2022. Considering the fact of targeted sample size of 200, the distributed questionnaires exceeded the original limit in view of no response, lost or not returned and finally the collection was brought to the required level. The population distribution of 200 in the Lahore Division comprising of the following districts is as under

Lahore: 70 Sheikhpura: 50 Kasur: 50 Nankana: 30

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Collection of data proved to be an uphill task as the questionnaire forms were returned either blank or half-filled and where the questionnaire was filled, the personal information of the respondent was scant therefore, extra questionnaires were again distributed to acquire the requisite number of responses to process. After gathering requisite qualitative information, it was refined and quantified. The personal information of the respondents was collected and categorized into different heads. Besides this, all the responses falling under the same category were combined and converted into percentage form and table / charts.

4.1.1 RESPONDENTS’ DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Target population was 200 of Lahore Division which is demographically defined by the following graphical representation.

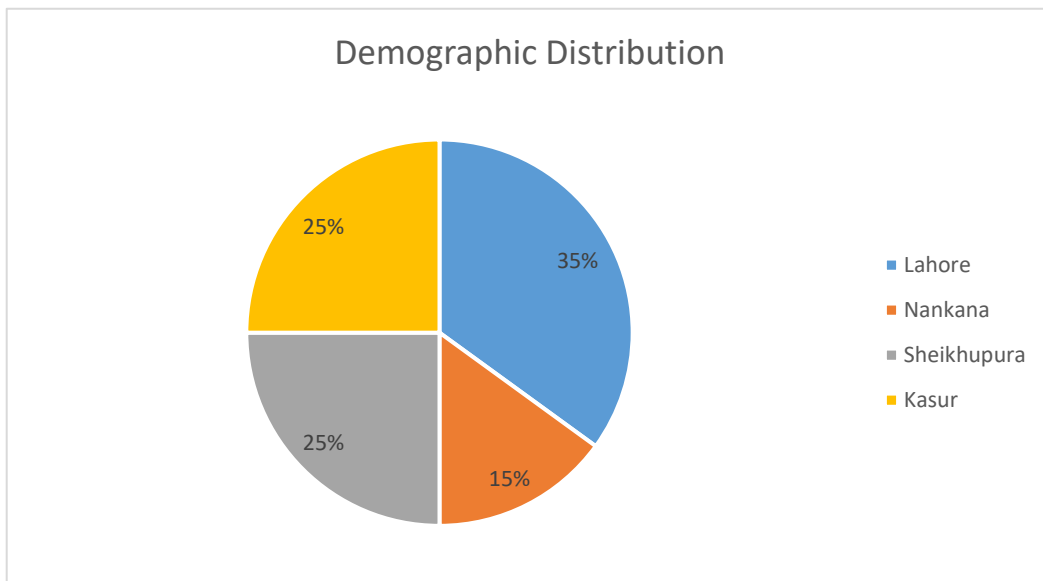
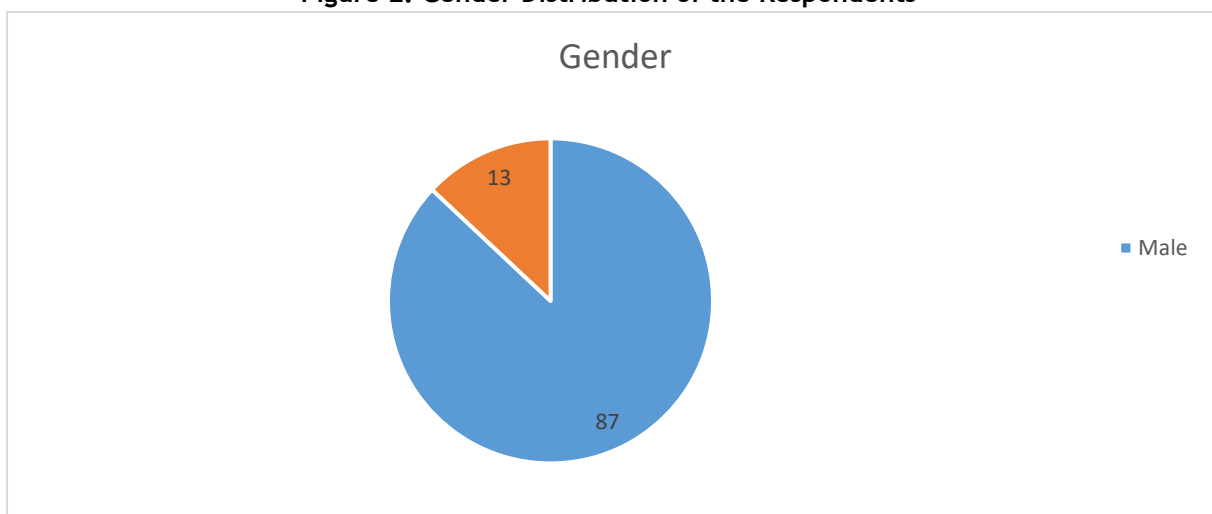


Figure 1: Demographic distribution of the respondents

4.1.2 Gender Division of the Respondents

The gender distribution as per analysis of the data shows that both males and females have put forwarded their opinions with males as higher no. of respondents and the age of all the respondents was above 18 years as gauged from the personal information. The gender distribution is as under

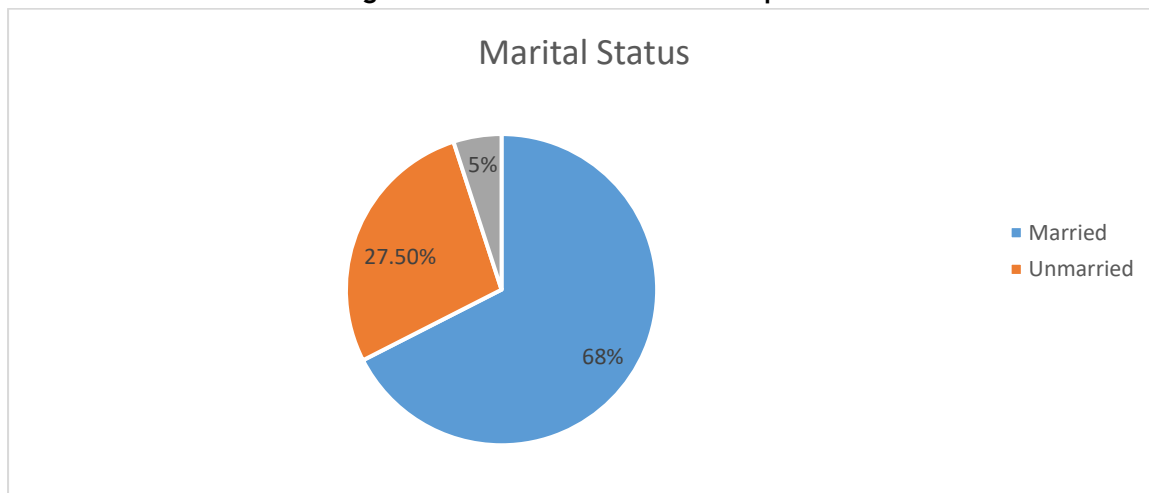
Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents



As marital status is concerned, 135 respondents were married, and 55 respondents were unmarried while 10 of them did not mention anything.



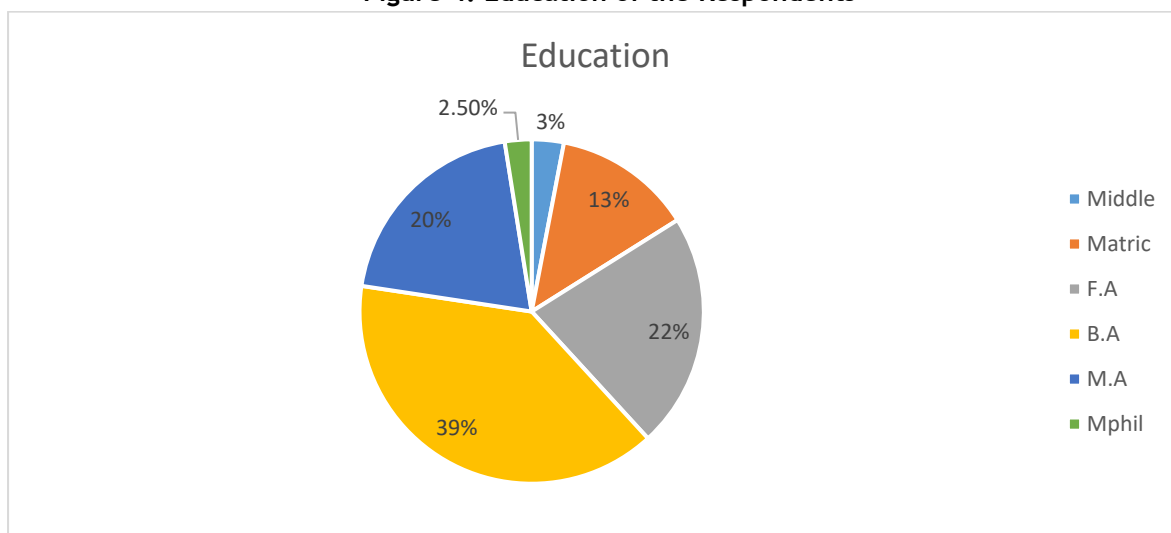
Figure 3: Marital Status of the Respondents



5. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

All the respondents had diverse educational backgrounds ranging between Grade 8 (middle) to MPhil.

Figure 4: Education of the Respondents



5.1 OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

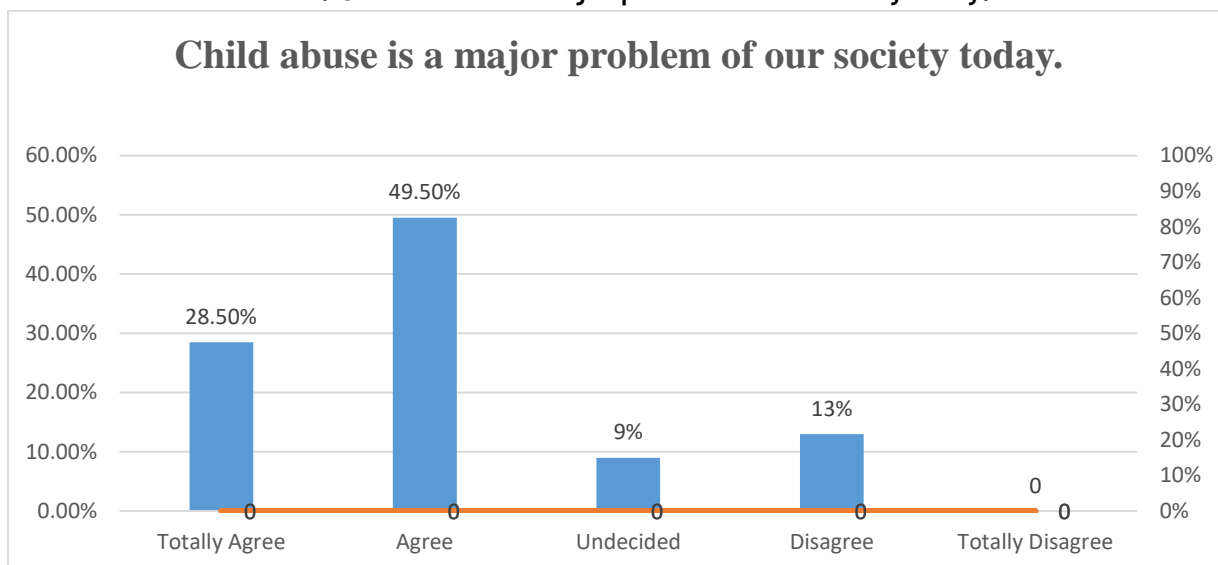
The way respondents depicted diverse educational background, similarly, their profession description was myriad. They were students, doctors, government servants, lawyers, teachers, laborer, electrician, pharmacist, businessman, tailor, mechanic, shopkeeper, factory worker, private job holder, blacksmith, housewife and unemployed.

6. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Out of 200 respondents over three-fourth agree and totally agree (combined) to the statement that child abuse is a major problem of our society today while 13 % replied that they don't consider that child abuse is the biggest problem (disagree / totally disagree) and 9% were undecided to comment.

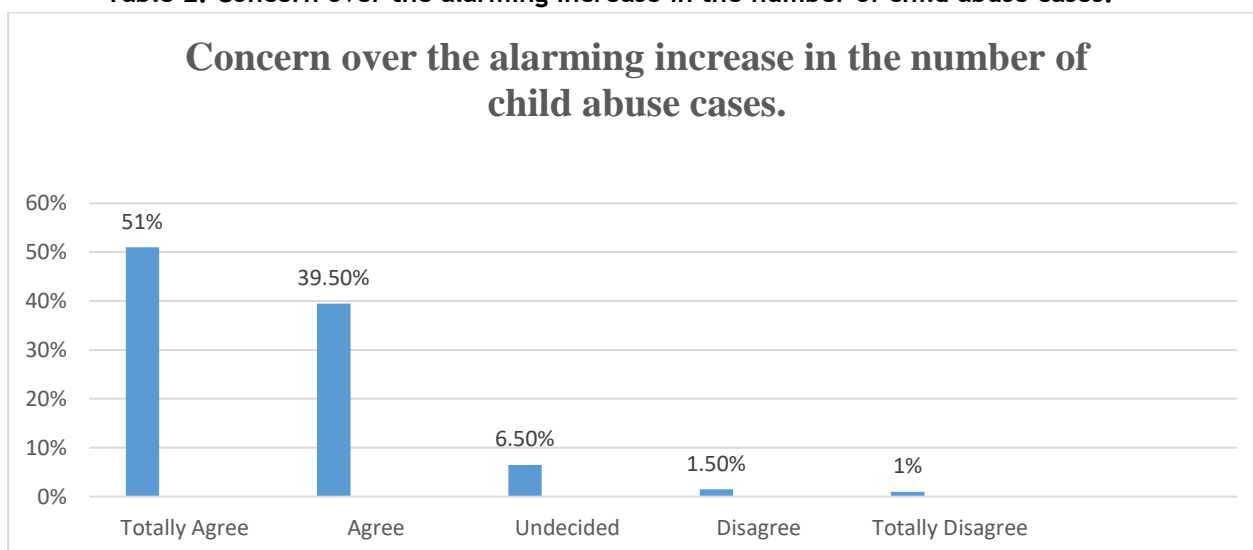


Table 1: Child abuse is a major problem of our society today.



A vast majority of the respondents showed their personal concern (agree / totally agree) over the alarming increase in the child abuse cases while 6.5% were undecided to opine and 2.5% didn't show concern (disagree / totally disagree) and 1 respondent left the question unanswered.

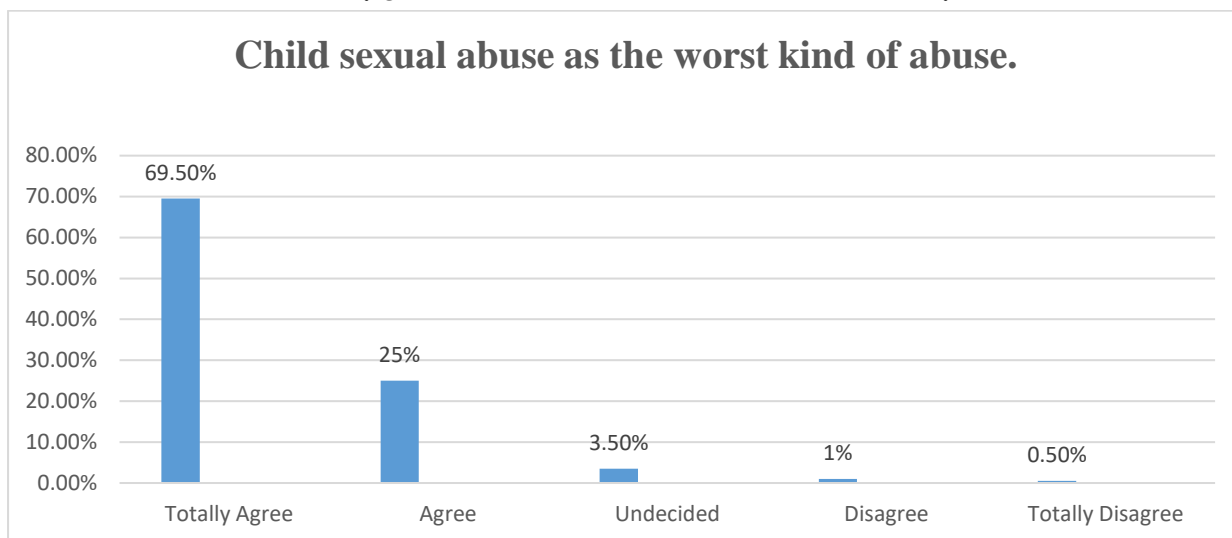
Table 2: Concern over the alarming increase in the number of child abuse cases.



Over 90.0% of the respondents replied (agree / totally agree) that child sexual abuse is the worst kind of abuse. 3.5% remained undecided to answer while 1.5% disagree / totally disagree and 1 respondent left the question blank.

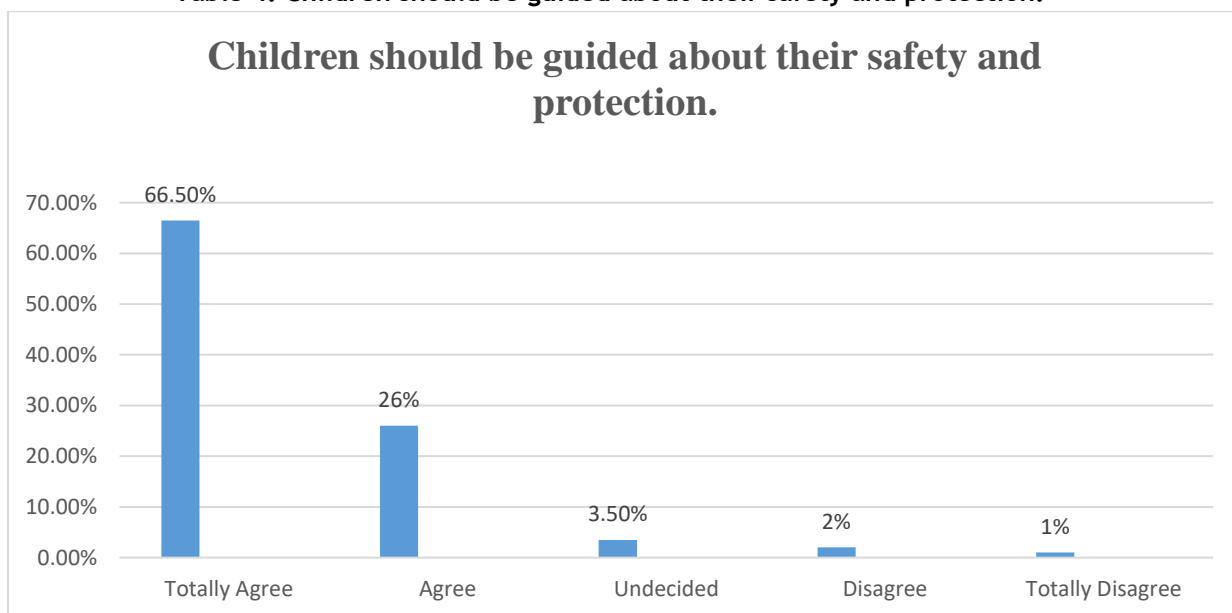


Table 3: Child sexual abuse is the worst kind of abuse.



Most of the population agree / totally agree that children should be guided about their safety and sanctity. 3.5% remained undecided to opine and 3% disagree / totally disagree to the statement. 2 respondents didn't answer the question.

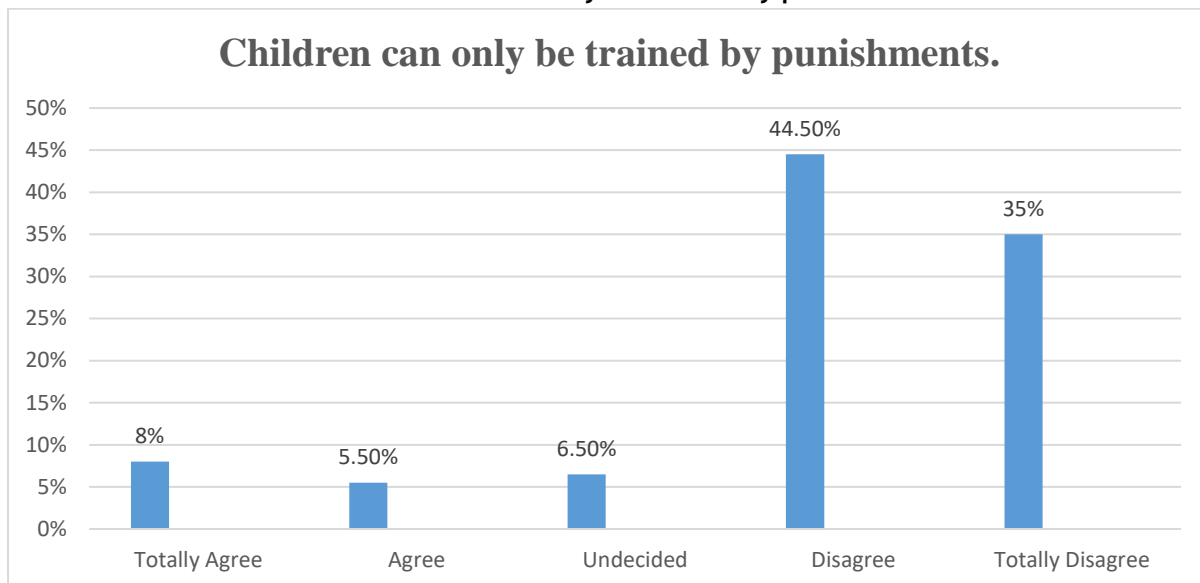
Table 4: Children should be guided about their safety and protection.



Almost 80.0% of the respondents disagree / totally disagree that children can only be trained by punishments while 13.5% agreed / totally agreed that punishment is necessary to train kids and 6.5 % remained silent on the issue. 1 respondent left the space blank.

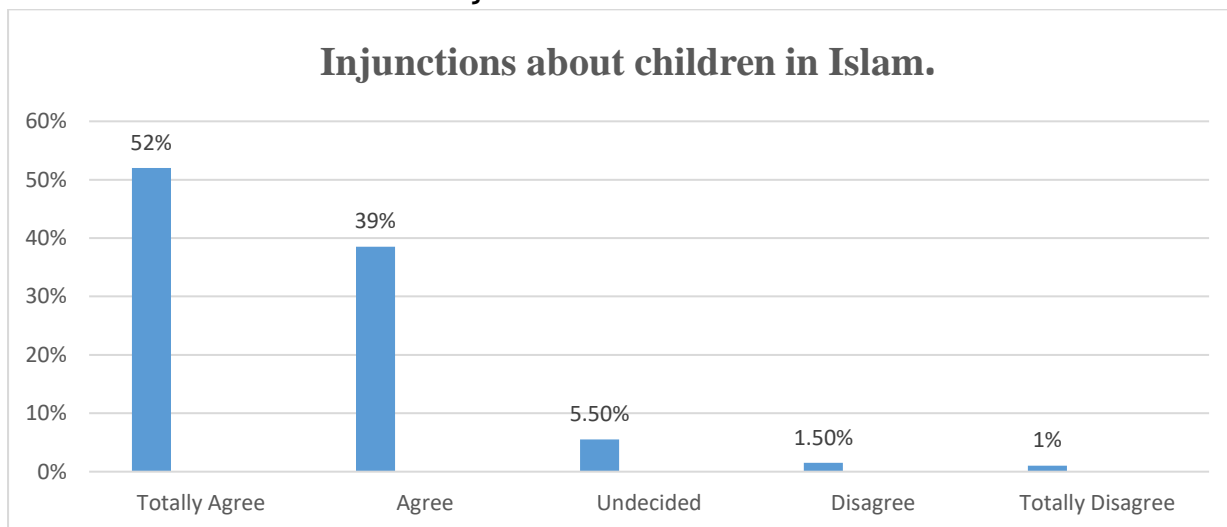


Table 5: Children can only be trained by punishments.



A whopping 90.5% of the population agreed that there are injunctions in Islam regarding treatment of children and 5.5% remained undecided 2.5 disagree/ totally disagree and a very few left the space unanswered.

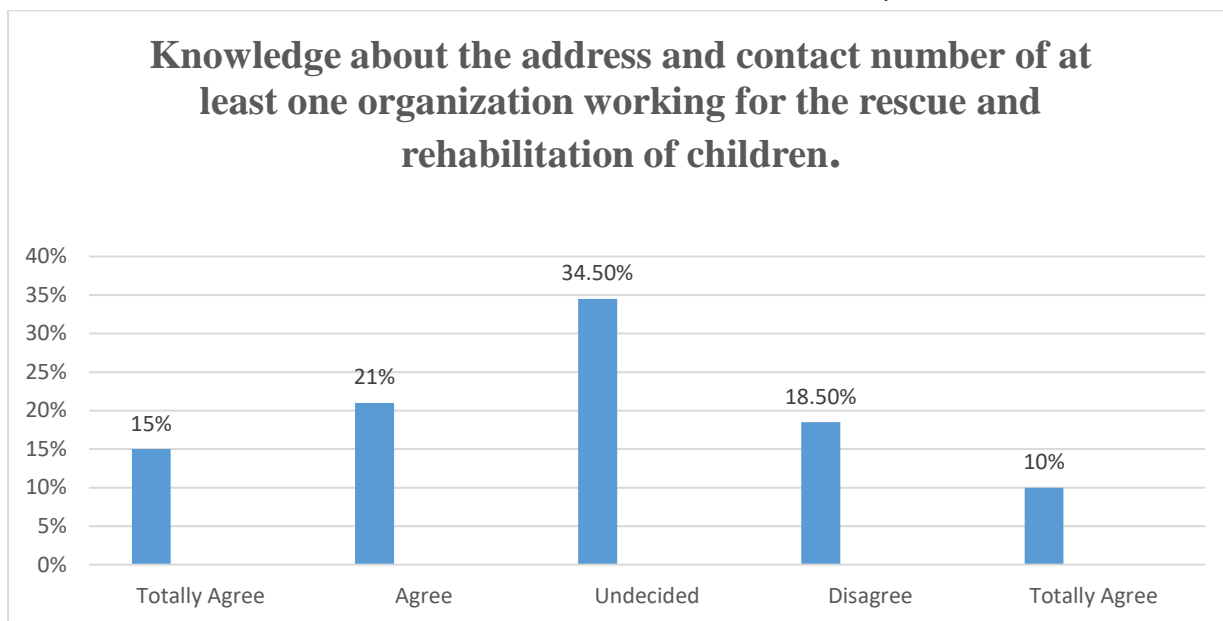
Table 6: Injunction about children in Islam.



There was a limited number of the respondents who knew about organizations working for the rescue and rehabilitation of children. Over one-third of the respondents replied positive (agree / totally agree) while almost a similar proportion remained undecided to answer whether they know of it or not. Over one-fourth claimed that they don't have any information about such bodies (disagree / totally disagree) while a very few left the space blank.

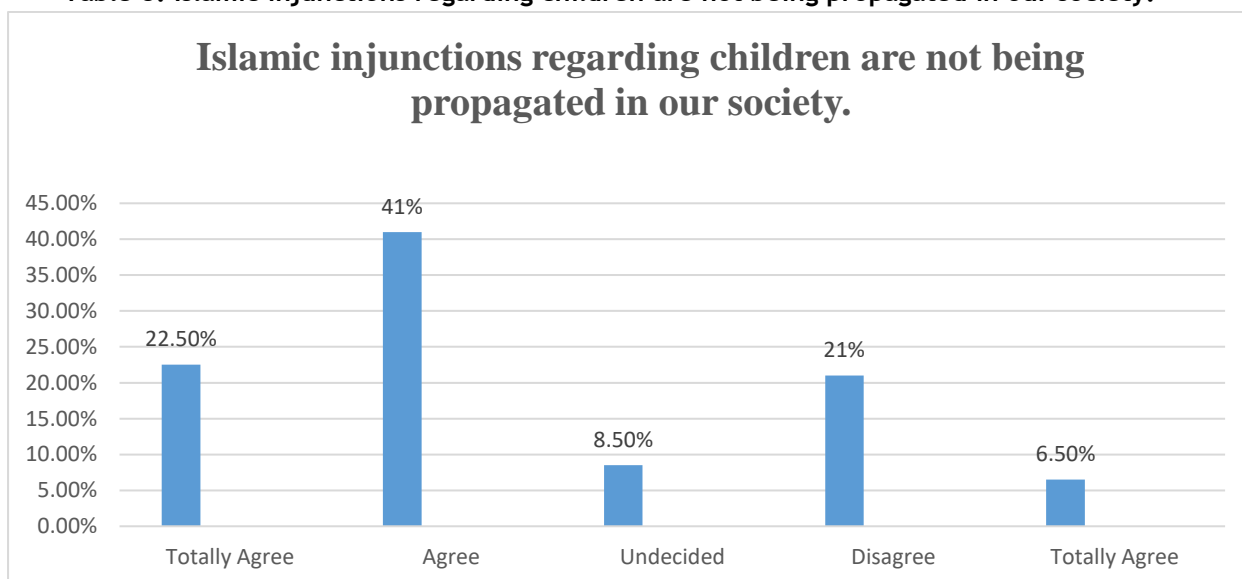


Table 7: Knowledge about the address and contact number of at least one organization working for the rescue and rehabilitation of children.



Over two-third of the respondents agree / totally agree that Islamic injunctions are not being highlighted in our society while 27.5% of the population disagree / totally disagree to the statement and 8.5% remained silent to answer and 1 respondent gave no response.

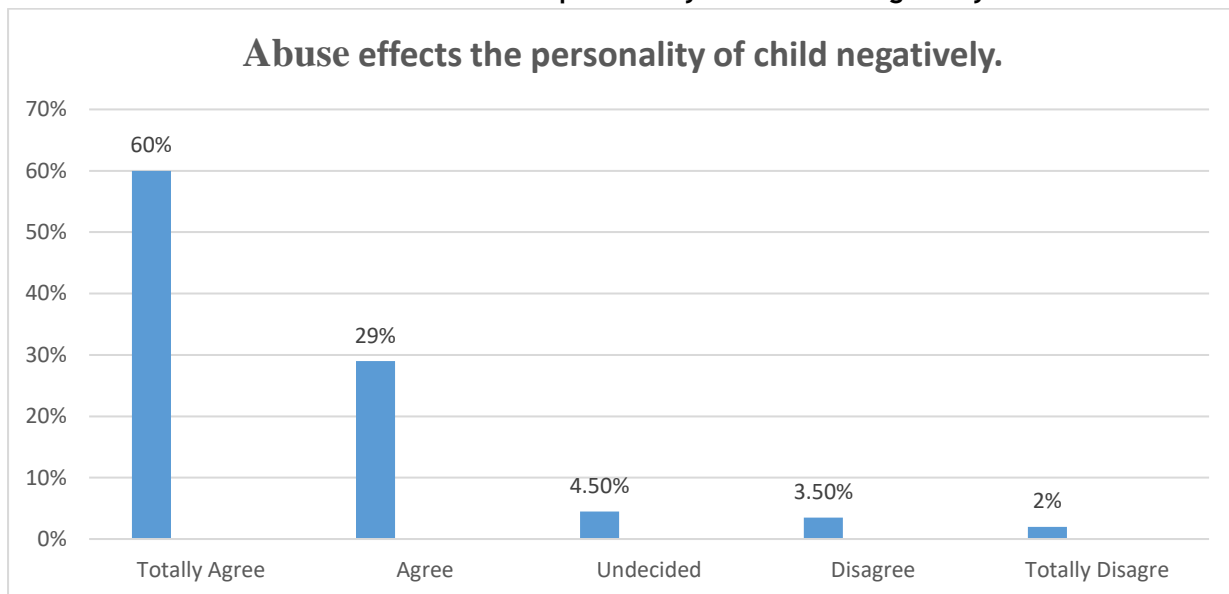
Table 8: Islamic injunctions regarding children are not being propagated in our society.



A vast majority of the respondents agree and strongly agree that abusive behavior with children affects their personality and 4.5% remained silent/undecided and 5.5% disagree and totally disagree with it. One percent did not answer the question.

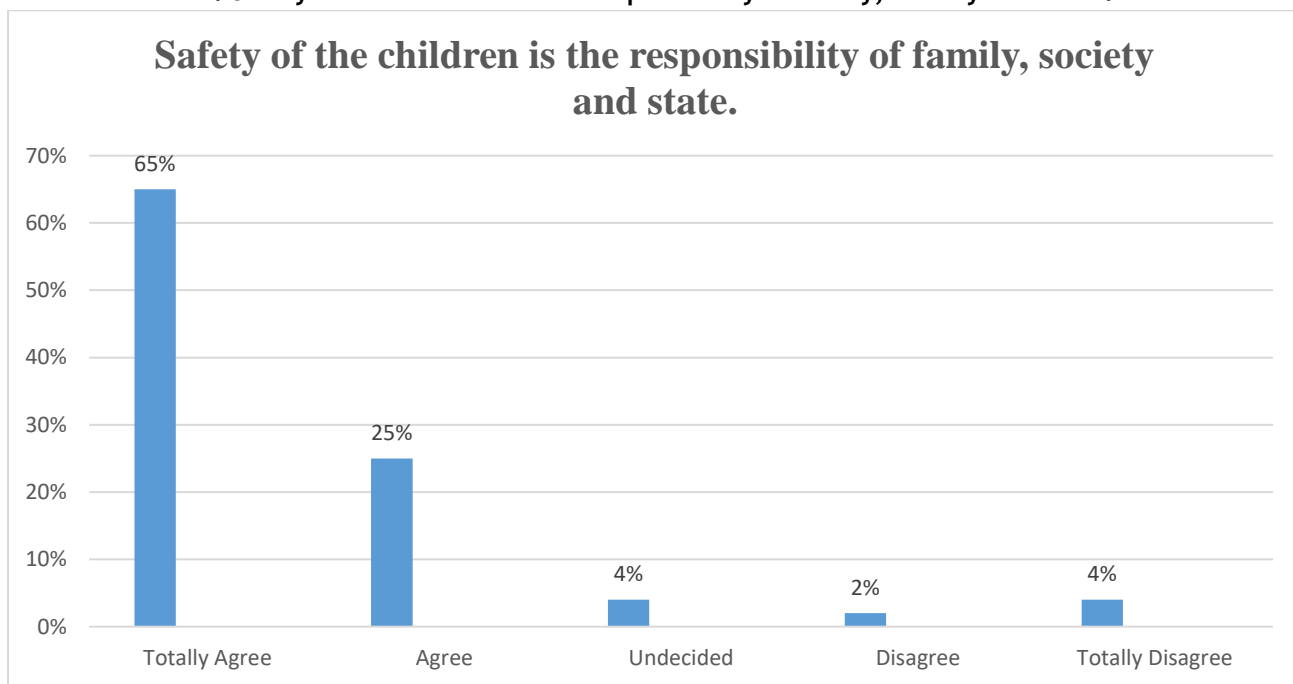


Table 9: Abuse effects the personality of the child negatively.



Most of the respondents believed (agree / strongly agree) that safety of the child is the responsibility of all the major institutions including family, society and state. 4% remained undecided while 6% disagree / totally disagree with the statement.

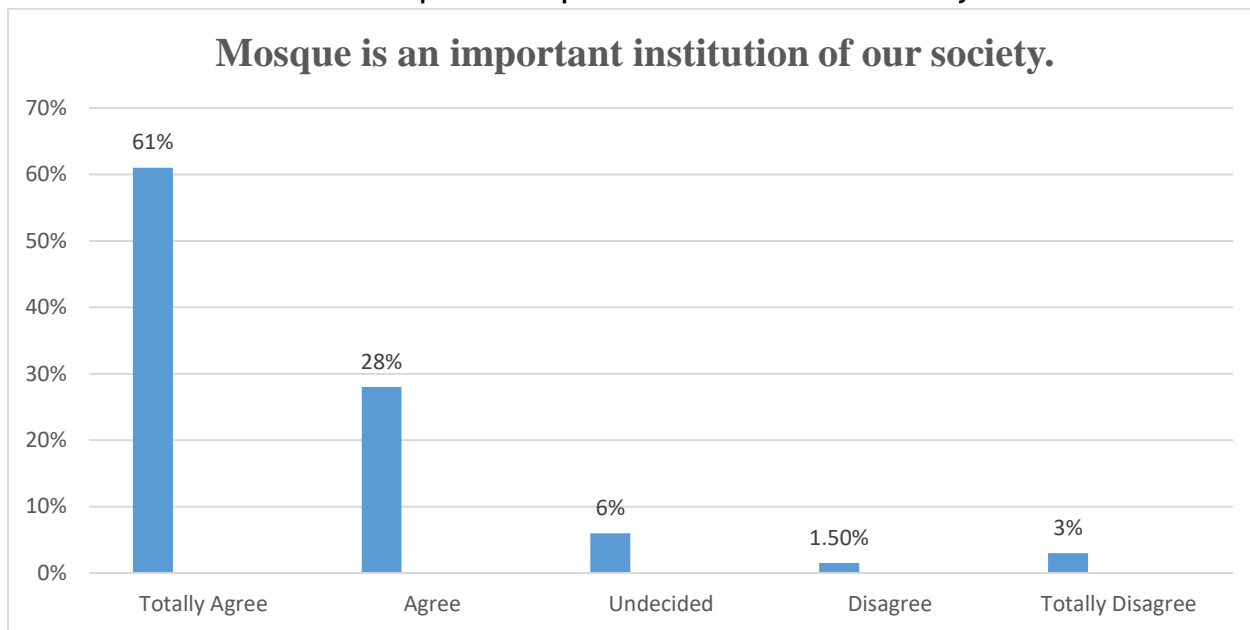
Table 10: Safety of the children is the responsibility of family, society and state.



Approximately 90% of the population agreed that Mosque holds importance in our society (agree / strongly agree). Some remained undecided and 4.5% disagree / totally disagree to the statement. 1 respondent did not answer the question.

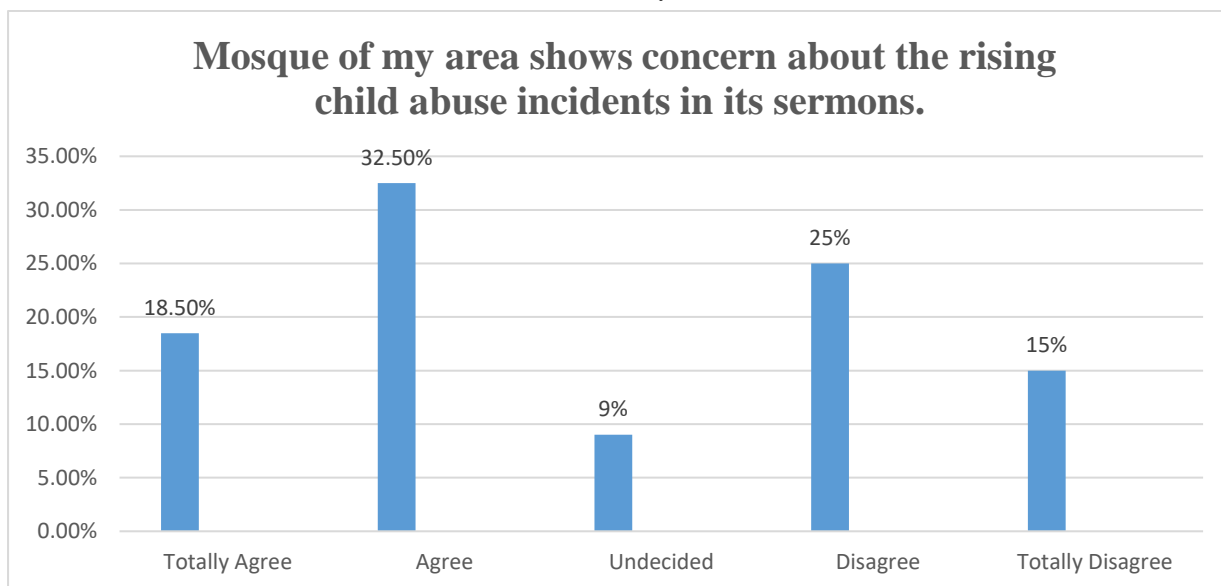


Table 11: Mosque is an important institution of our society.



Over one-half of the respondent replied (agree / strongly agree) that their mosque shows concern over the rising number of child abuse incidents while some were undecided and 40% disagree / totally disagree that mosque shows concern over the plight of children.

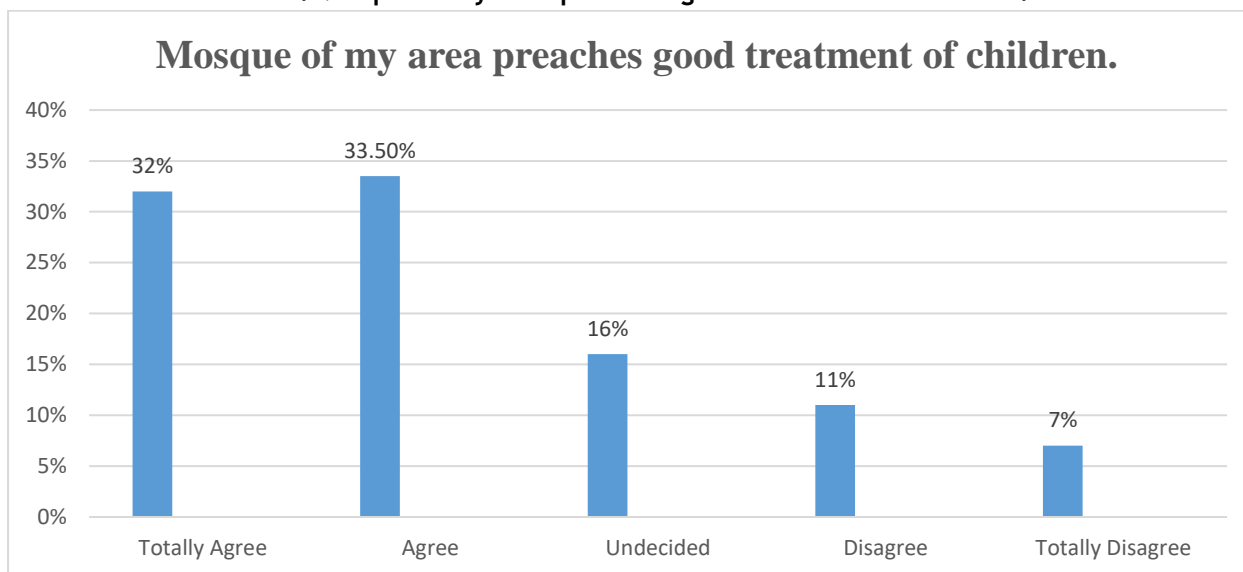
Table 12: Mosque of my area shows concern about the rising child abuse incidents in its sermons.



Over one-third of the respondents agree / totally agree that the mosque of their area preaches the good conduct to the children 16% remained undecided 18% disagree or totally disagree to the statement and only one respondent did not answer.

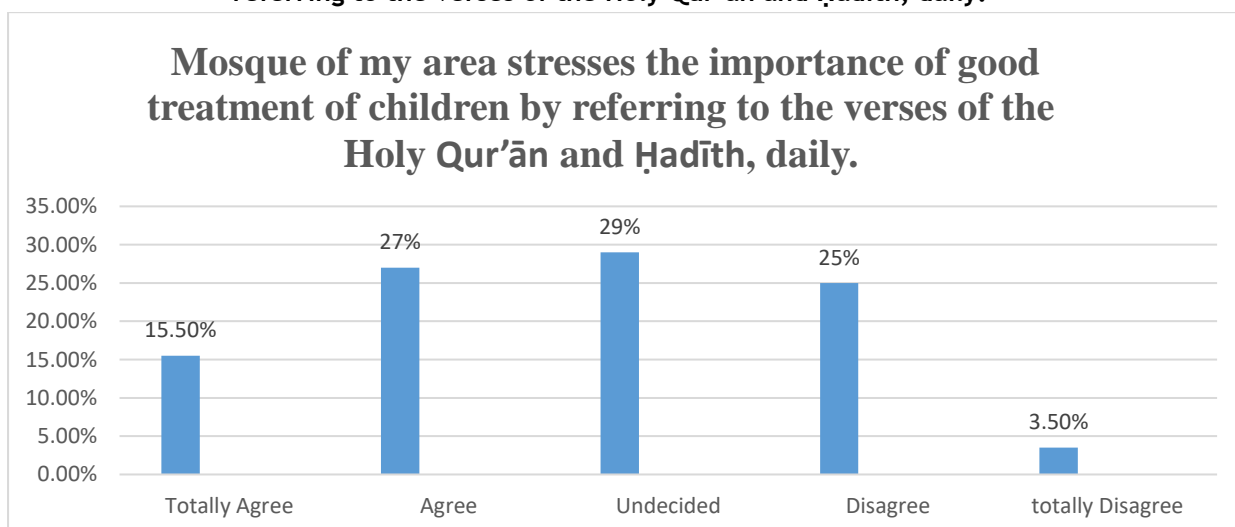


Table 13: Mosque of my area preaches good treatment of children.



Less than one half of the respondents agree / totally agree that the mosque of their area propagates good treatment of children with reference to the verses of the Holy Qur’ān or hadith / tradition of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting), daily. A reasonable proportion among them remained undecided on the question and 28.5% disagree / totally disagree that their mosque gives reference from Qur’ān and Sunnah daily.

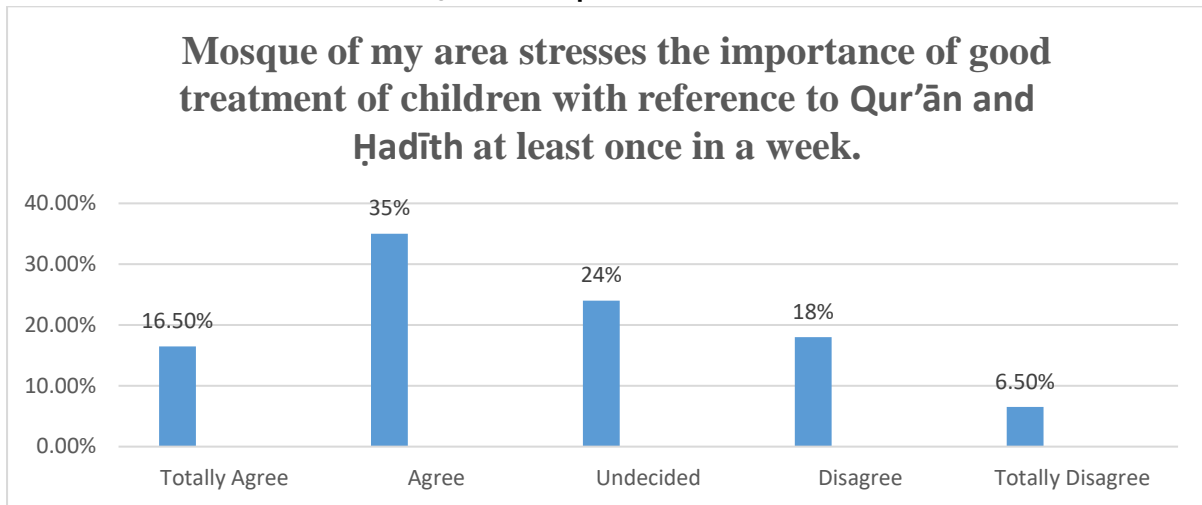
Table 14: Mosque of my area stresses the importance of good treatment of children by referring to the verses of the Holy Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, daily.



Over one-half of the respondents agree / totally agree that mosque of their area preaches about the good treatment of children by narrating Qur’ān and Sunnah at least once in a week. One-fourth of them disagree / totally disagree and an equal number of respondents remained undecided.

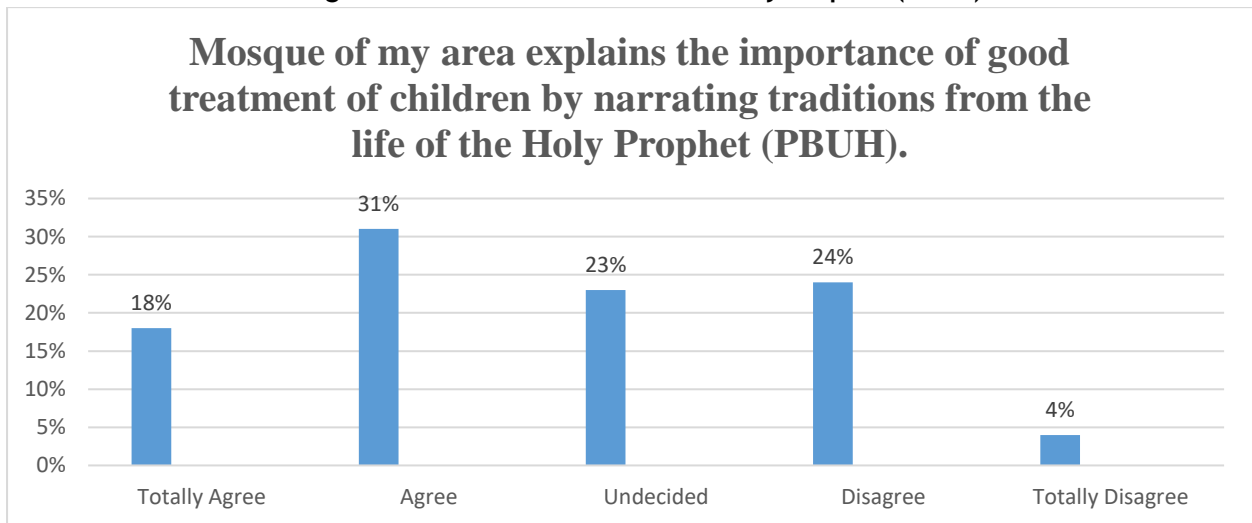


Table 15: Mosque of my area stresses the importance of good treatment of children with reference to Qur’ān and Ḥadīth at least once in a week.



Around one-half of the respondents agree / totally agree that mosque of their area preaches about the good treatment of children by narrating traditions from the life of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting). 28% disagree / totally disagree and an equal number of respondents 23% remained undecided.

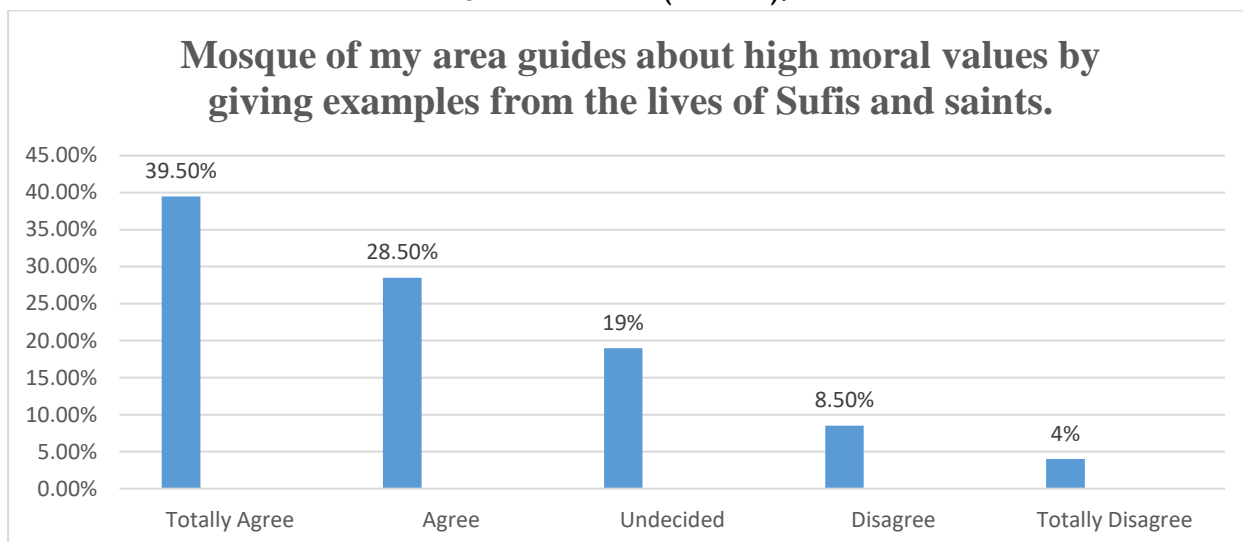
Table 16: Mosque of my area explains the importance of good treatment of children by narrating traditions from the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).



One-third of the respondents agree / totally agree that their mosques stress upon the good values and morals by narrating examples from the lives of mystics of Islam. Some of them disagree / totally disagree and 19% were undecided. Only one respondent did not answer.

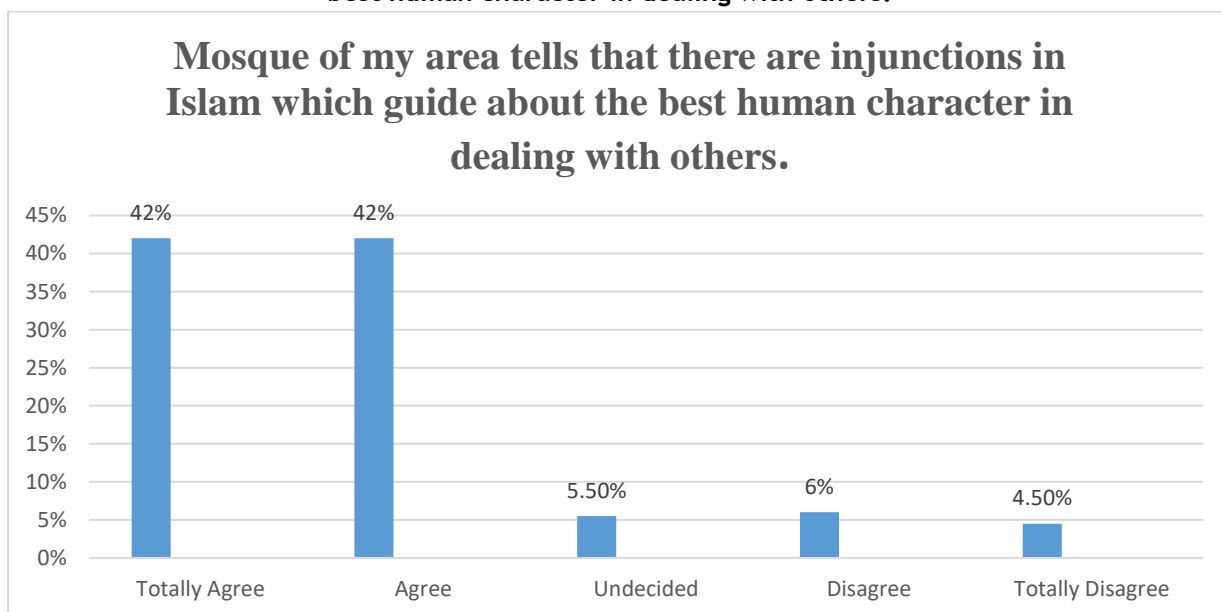


Table 17: Mosque of my area guides about high moral values by giving examples from the lives of Sufis and saints (of Islam).



Most of the respondents agree / totally agree that mosque of their area preaches that Islam guides to improve human conduct 10.5% disagree / totally disagree while 5.5% remained undecided about the opinion.

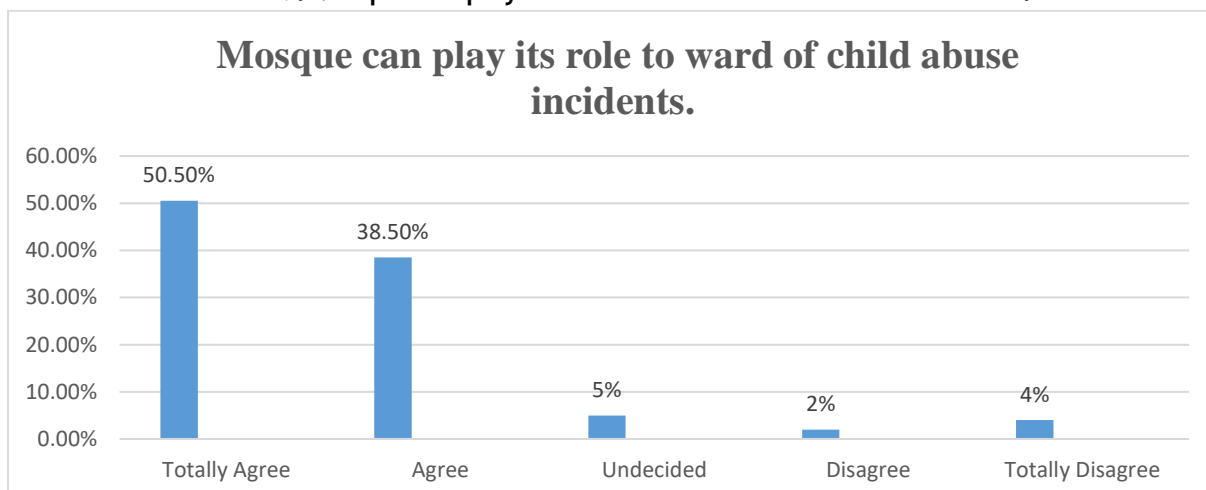
Table 18: Mosque of my area tells that there are injunctions in Islam which guide about the best human character in dealing with others.



A vast majority of the respondents agree / totally agree that mosque can play role to reduce child abuse incidents while 6% disagree / totally disagree and 5% remained undecided.

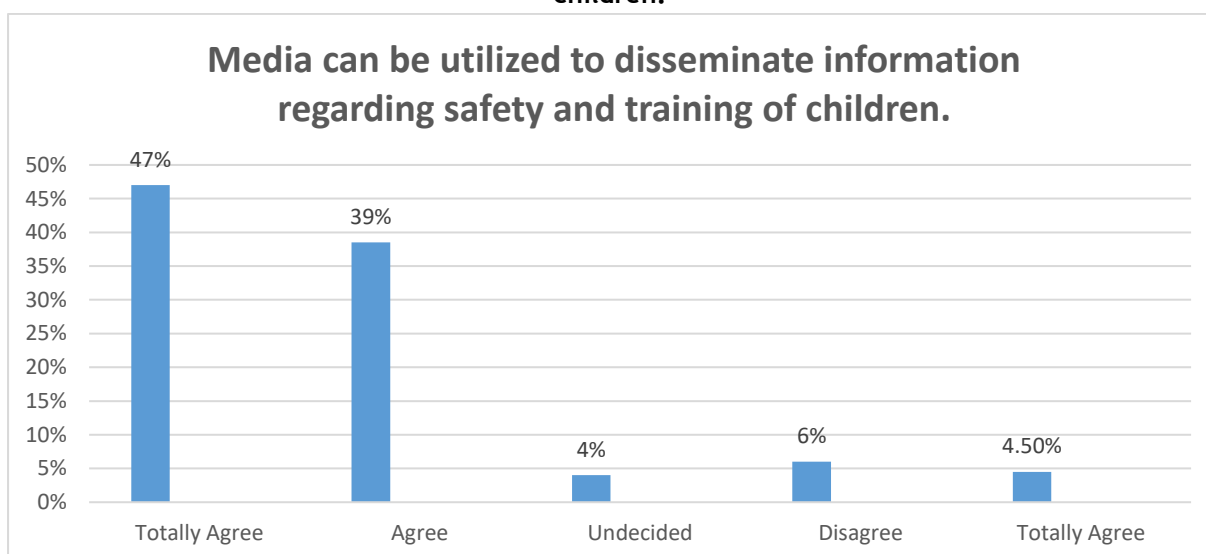


Table 19: Mosque can play its role to ward of child abuse incidents.



Over 80.0% of the respondents agreed / totally agreed that media can play its role to guide the children about their safety and training while 10.5% disagreed/ totally disagreed and 4% remained undecided on the statement.

Table 20: Media can be utilized to disseminate information regarding safety and training of children.



The analysis of the above data suggests that child abuse is the biggest problem of this time (78%). People are sensitive about this issue and have shown personal concern over the alarming increase in child abuse cases (90.5%). Child sexual abuse has been established as the worst kind of abuse and the society, in general, acknowledges this fact (94.5%). In the face of the wrongs that children suffer, it is need of the hour to guide them about their safety, security and sanctity and majority has opined in the favour of imparting self-protection education to the children (92.5%). There can be as many ways to train children as may be their number. Each personality is different, and punishment is highly derisive and not a solution to the problem of training the kids. The majority of the population (79.5%) disagreed that punishment is necessary to train children. There are injunctions in Islam which guide human conduct with reference to children (90.5%). Very few people know whom to turn to in the face of child abuse issues. A very scant population knew about such governmental and non-governmental organizations (36%) and around, equally, that number of populations is silent on this point (34.5%). It is an important to note that where most of the



population (90.5%) agreed on, earlier, that there are injunctions and teachings regarding treatment and rearing of the children Islam there also a significant number of respondents showed concern that the same are not being propagated for the benefit of children and others (63.5%). Child abuse is the grim reality of our society and affects the personality of the sufferer badly or negatively which means that child abuse has consequences. The majority of the population was of the opinion that child abuse has repercussions for the child, beyond explanation (89%). The problem of child abuse cannot be tackled in isolation and all the stake holders should participate for the safety, rescue, and rehabilitation of this weak and dependent population of society. Most of the respondents agreed that children are the responsibility of all and a joint endeavor imbibing the efforts of family, society and state are needed to improve the lot of the kids. Mosque is an important institution in a Muslim society and performs various religious and social functions and it is the prime source of dissemination of religious learning and training. Most of the population agreed that mosque is an important institution of society (89%). A just slight majority agreed that mosque holds children important and shows concern over their plight (51%) while a significant number of respondent (40%) replied that mosque doesn't show concern over children.

To arrive at a solution for the problem of child abuse it needs a multi-disciplinary approach imbibing education, health, law, religion, state, media and social service sector. Child abuse, in all its forms and manifestations, has become an undeniable reality of today's world. The primitive people, blinded by their hopes and fears, committed crimes against children but in today's civilized world the increasing cruelty and intolerance towards children is incomprehensible. Being living in an Islamic country, bounded by Islamic principles, and surrounded by established cultures of respect, harmony and compassion, the inhuman treatment of the weaker and dependent segment of society is indigestible. It is need of the hour that all the stake holders take the responsibility to fix the problem on war footings.

The nature of child abuse, of all kinds, has not yet been determined in Pakistan therefore, we are short of viable solution. It may prove to be an uphill task to determine the nature of child abuse as either way it is a complex problem where the victim may be the one that is child but the components which take part in his exploitation and misery may be myriad. Child abuse arising in the family circle is usually overlooked and not reported, therefore, it cannot be determined for sure that what are the reasons that lie behind abuse and cruelty to children in the family domain that whether it is the result of socio-economic status or the parents and care-givers were themselves the victim of violence in their own childhood and this is like letting loose of one's own hidden emotions and disdain for the weak and defenseless. Moreover, there is lack of mantle in state institutions to implement the laws in their letter and spirit and bring the culprits of heinous crimes against children to book. The children are being subjected to torture in educational institutions and religious seminaries, which is usually termed as the prerogative of matrons and essential for the training of the child and other heinous crimes are also being committed with impunity. In the face of less developed and less accessible social service institutions, with lack of determination of the nature of child abuse and weak criminal justice system, an individual and collective effort should be emphasized.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

To conclude, it can be mentioned that rising child abuse incidents have instilled a sense of fear and shame, at the same time. The issue of child abuse has not yet been sensitized in Pakistan to such an extent where it can be referred to concern of all and the occasional hue and cry has not proved a deterrence to ward of this menace. Usually, people shy away from this topic altogether and abuse is often upheld as a norm of child rearing patterns. The dissemination of religious moral values can give a ray of hope to the distressed souls as Muslims eye on reward not only in this world but in the hereafter as well. But the stark reality is that, contrary to religious declaration, problem of child abuse is more colored by cultural tinge and personal whims and limitations, therefore, not strictly



taken as a problem at all. Human behaviors are personal and individual, usually regulated by culture and religion. Pakistan is an Islamic Republic, with diversity in culture and cultural traditions but bounded by religious thread, though this very thread may be tinged with variation in religious interpretations, but in no way it compromises the basic precepts of Islam. The abuse of children, in all its manifestations, arising either out of cultural norms or human behaviors can be tackled by the guidelines of religion (Islam) originating in the Qur'ān, sunnah and mystic guidance of saints and sufis.

Child abuse is on the rise in Pakistan and the major reason that can be attributed to the unawareness of the people about religious teachings and guidelines regarding the treatment and rearing of the children. Besides this, there is an apprehension that they don't have knowledge and access to social welfare institutions working for the counselling, rescue and rehabilitation of children. One important factor may be that they are not making a conscious effort to find any pertinent solution. The major problem in Pakistan is that the nature of child abuse is still undetermined. Main reasons for child abuse and detrimental effect of abuse need to be further explored. By abuse we mean all the major kinds of abuse including, physical, sexual, verbal, deprivation etc. If the nature gets determined only then a solution can be reached at. This aim of determination of nature of child abuse in Pakistan falls in the domain of medical and psychology / psychiatry profession with the help of social and state institutions. However,

1. To tackle the problem of child abuse, wisely, it is pre-requisite to make the criminal justice system strong and vigilant for the implementation of rules and laws which aim at the protection, welfare, and benefit of the children.
2. Besides this, a comprehensive survey must be conducted about the culprits of child abuse of various kinds especially that of child sexual abuse, pornography, torture, etc. to know that what made them to commit a such a heinous crime against the innocent beings to look for the solution.
3. Thirdly, medical practitioners and pediatricians should be trained in such a way that if they are treating a case of suspected abuse then they should also take a note of cause of that injury, disease and malnutrition, etc. The data, thus, compiled would be helpful, later, for policy formulation for the benefit of the children.
4. Educationists, scholars and religious seminaries should be watchful of the conditions of the children and if they ever suspect abuse should make effort to alleviate that by providing counselling to the child or by taking up matter with parents and caregivers and social welfare institutions but in a well thought out way.
5. One last and important thing which comes in the purview of all, and which is practicable as well is the dissemination and practice of religious injunctions regarding rearing of children and treatment of children.
6. Media, in all its various forms, be it electronic, print or social media, must be utilized for the cause of children. It can give space to the content relating to programmes centered on children with special reference to their training.

Scholars, intellectual, philanthropist, parents, doctors, civil societies all can put their share to bring glad tidings in the lot of poor children. It is general perception that, now a-days, we only see what is being portrayed by media and it mostly thrives on political discourse with a limited space to social issues without follow up. In today's world media can play a much wider role. It can uphold the cause of the safety of children better than anyone else through airing programmes on personal wellbeing and concept of dignity and respect for others along with psychological counselling of children by expert doctors, philanthropists, intellectual and teachers. It can also train the minds of the children to make them involve in positive activities with individual and group designed tasks and strategies to make them grow as a conscious member of society. It can be utilized in building up a safe and secure world for our children but in a well thought out way.

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