

OUT OF SIGHT

(A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY ON THE ISSUE OF MISSING CHILDREN IN THE STATE OF GUJARAT)

A thesis submitted to

The Faculty of Social Work

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work



SEPTEMBER 2012

BARODA

SUBMITTED BY

SYLVIA MAO

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Research Guide

Dr. Leena Mehta

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Sylvia Mao

Certificate

This is to certify that the work embodied in this Phd. thesis titled “Out of Sight- A Socio-Legal Study on the Issue of Missing Children in the State of Gujarat” has been carried out by Smt. Mao Sylvia Robin Shah under my direct guidance and supervision. This thesis incorporates the results of independent investigations carried out by the candidate herself.

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Dr. Leena Mehta

18 September 2012

Abstract

The issue of missing children is a complex, multi-dimensional problem of which very little is known or understood. Moreover, there is no clear definition of missing children and accurate data is not available. Children who go missing are at risk, and there is little being done to prevent it or to bring about systematic changes to tackle the problem. The aim of this research is to find some answers to questions such as who are the children going missing, how do they go missing, what is being done to trace them.

This study establishes the link between poverty and the missing children phenomenon. With empirical data that runaways constitute a large part of the missing children problem, and majority of them in this group being girls, a clear need for preventive measures is needed to be a part of policy solution. Prevention of family breakdown and destitution of children and strengthening of families at risk through supportive services is therefore the first priority and form of intervention.

This study establishes the importance of raising awareness among relevant agencies, government decision makers, the wider community, and missing children themselves about the impacts of going missing and the types of action that each can take to mitigate social and economic impacts. It provides insights on the extensive and pervasive impacts on families and the widely acknowledged need for support for those affected. The recommendations include coordinated efforts, both across agencies and in collaboration with the missing child's families and friends and community, effective prevention strategies, suggested police response to a missing child report and a holistic approach towards addressing this issue.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Margaret Mao,

And to the memory of my father, Dr. Alex Mao.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Leena Mehta, Faculty of Social Work, M.S. University, Baroda without whose motivation and encouragement I would not have considered taking this path. She is the one professor who truly made a difference in my life. It was under her tutelage that I developed a focus and became interested in the issue of missing children. She provided me with motivation, inspiration and helped me throughout the entire process. It was through her persistence, understanding and kindness that I was encouraged to apply for the Phd. program. I am very grateful to her for everything she has done for me.

I would like to thank Dr. M.N. Parmar, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Social Work, M.S. University, Baroda whose expertise added considerably to my doctoral experience. I appreciate his vast knowledge and skills in many areas and his abiding support for all his students at the Faculty.

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My research required the support of The Gujarat State Police Department and Missing Persons Cell, Gandhinagar. I am grateful to all of the people at these institutions who not only provided access to data I required but also valuable discussions about the material. In particular, I would like to thank the parents of missing children for participating in this study. I cannot pretend to understand the depth of their pain and loss.

Prof. M. M. Monippally, Ms. Pooja Susan Thomas and Ms. Diti Shah, my colleagues at IIM Ahmedabad, with whom I enjoyed many intellectual deliberations and occasional rambling sessions with no particular focus, aided in my growth as a person. All my interactions with them were interspersed with much laughter, with food somehow always a part of the equation. Because of them, I will always have the fondest memories of my days at IIMA.

Ram Mahavadia enriches my life with his friendship. His simplicity and generosity of spirit refreshes me, and I admire him for the fine, upright young man he is. I am proud he chooses to call me his friend.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family for always being there for me. My siblings Sophie, Angel and Dominic made this journey with me, and my mother Margaret has, as always, been the quiet force behind this accomplishment. To Sonya, my 8 year old, whose curiosity about my work led her to undertake her own research on dinosaurs- I am grateful for the gap toothed smile which lights up my life, and the million hugs and kisses that makes it all worthwhile.

Grief fills up the room of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me all of his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.

Then have I reasons to be fond of grief.

Fare you well. Had you loss such as I,

I could give better comfort than you do.

King John, Act III, Scene IV,

By William Shakespeare

Preface

On 26th December, 2006, India woke up to the horror of what is now known as the infamous Nithari Case- the discovery of more than a dozen skeletal remains of a number of missing children in the village of Nithari, India on the outskirts of Noida, a township in Uttar Pradesh near New Delhi. The Delhi Police arrested a wealthy and well connected businessman, Moninder Singh Pandher, and Surender Koli, his servant, on numerous charges which include murder, rape and kidnapping as well as criminal conspiracy.

From 2004-2006, at least 38 people, mostly children, disappeared from the area, and residents have accused the police of refusing to hear, much less record, complaints about the missing. Further, the harassment of complainants and collusion with those that should have been apprehended were statements given by the parents of the victims when the crime was finally uncovered. A high-level committee established by the UP government to look into how the police handled the complaints from parents of missing children found two Senior Superintendents of Police, Noida, RKS Rathore and Piyush Mordia guilty of gross dereliction of duty.

Citing the police's criminal indifference, the report stated that FIRs were not lodged even in missing cases which involved minors. The report strongly stated that after the recovery of human skeletons from D-5, Sector 31, in Noida it became clear that the police had no information whatsoever about five victims whose skeletal remains were found. The final report concluded that many of the reports of missing victims were not lodged though information was provided to the police. This was a glaring oversight on the part of the police and gave an idea on how police stations functions.

The researcher was a Jr. MSW student placed with The Women's Protection Cell at The Baroda Urban Police Department at the time these events unfolded. With orders from the top for all cases of missing children to be re-opened across the nation, the spotlight was turned on the issue of missing children for the first time. Dr. Leena Mehta, fieldwork supervisor of the researcher, was instrumental in directing the researcher towards this issue and the multi-dimensional problems related to it.

With permission of the Police Commissioner of Baroda, Mr. P. C. Thakur, the researcher gained access to police data on missing children and joined the missing person's cell as they proceeded to investigate the reopened cases. This exposure provided the researcher with insights on police procedures undertaken on missing children cases, the various categories of children going missing and the impact on the parents. With little attention being given to this issue until Nithari, literature and research on missing children in India were few, and accurate data unavailable.

It was with this experience that the researcher realized the enormity of the problem. Without adequate data on how many children are actually missing, what are the causes for them going missing, measures needed to be taken to address these issues cannot be formed. Policy decisions have the capacity to bring about tangible improvement in the situation, but can only be taken based on reliable research studies. As research is a vital input for development, the need to study social factors which have the potential to make an impact and curtail the problem to a certain extent is essential. With these goals in mind, the research on missing children commenced in a small way and culminated in this doctoral thesis five years later.

The Nithari Case: A grieving mother of a missing child in Nithari



The drain where remains of 19 children were found in Nithari



Source: Google images

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of missing children is a multi-dimensional social problem and it is difficult to obtain an accurate and unambiguous picture of the missing children phenomenon. The complexities of the issue are derived from the changing definition of what actually constitutes a missing or abducted child. The term missing is routinely used by the police authorities and an incident may be listed as a missing child episode even if the circumstances are benign and have a simple explanation.

Many cases of missing children are resolved without serious incident. These cases of missing children actually encompass many different social problems, including abductions by family members, nonfamily (or stranger) abductions, children who run away, children who are abandoned, and children who are lost or injured. Parental abductions, which constitute the overwhelming majority of abducted children are, statistically, not as physically harmful to the victim as stranger abductions. Parents in those situations are usually involved in a custodial feud with their spouses. The most serious type of abductions, which are classified as stereotypical kidnappings, is the rarest and the most dangerous. Over 40 percent of these incidents end with the child's death. (Source: The National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrown away Children, 1990)

In India, more than 40,000 children are reported missing to the police in India each year, and many additional cases of missing children go unreported (National Human Rights Committee Report, 2000). India witnessed the worst case of missing children in December

2006, when the remains of more than 30 missing children were unearthed from a drain in Nithari. The genesis of this study was a result of the Nithari case, which showed the worst forms of abuse, exploitation and the situation that a missing child could have faced. Prior to Nithari, there were other cases which received national attention, with the earliest such case in 1978 in Delhi. Two siblings, Geeta, 16 years, and Sanjay Chopra, 14 years, were kidnapped by two young men, Kuljeet Singh alias Ranga Khus and Jasbir Singh alias Billa , who planned to demand ransom from the parents of the children. They ran away after sexually assaulting Geeta and murdering the two children. They were brought to justice and hanged to death in 1982, a swift action taken to make them pay for their crimes. (Source: Court document, State vs. Kuljeet Singh and Jasbir Singh, 1979)

Between 1990- 1996, Renuka Shinde and Seema Gavit kidnapped a total of 13 children in Maharashtra. The young children were kidnapped from Mumbai, Pune, Kolhapur and Nashik to be used as a front for the two sisters as they committed petty thefts across Maharashtra. The children were killed when they grew older or outlived their utility. Renuka Shinde and Seema Gavit were arrested in 1996 and charges of kidnapping and murder were filed against them. They were sentenced to death by the Supreme Court in June 28, 2001, the first females in India to be awarded capital punishment by the State. (Source: Amnesty international, Public AI Index: ASA 20/021/2006)

In December 2006, Moninder Singh Pandher and his servant Surinder Koli were arrested by the Delhi Police and charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code after more than a dozen skeletal remains of a number of missing children were discovered from a drain in the village of Nithari, near New Delhi. From 2004-2006, at least 38 people, mostly children, had disappeared from the area and it was only after the recovery of the bodies by local people that

action was taken by the police.

A committee set up by the Ministry of Women and Child Development conducted an investigation into the case and presented a report. The Committee observed that the police were insensitive to the woes of poor families, rude in their approach, and their behaviour was generally gender and child insensitive. Almost all the victim families came from poor sections of society, and there was a general perception among these families that police did not care to listen to their problems.

In conclusion, the committee felt that reporting and investigating cases of children missing are not given the necessary priority, especially children from poor families. This is a general situation that prevails across the country. There is also apathy and a general lack of sensitivity about gender and child issues in the police system. Since the act of going missing itself is not a crime, missing children remains a neglected, low-priority intervention area for those in law enforcement. (Report on the Nithari Killings, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007)

There is a need to address all these issues relating to missing children, for which we have to gain an understanding of the prevalence of the missing children problem, how and why children go missing, what happens when they do and what is being done to recover them. The knowledge would aid in policy and decision planning for prevention and intervention measures to combat the problem in addition to bridging the gaps and lapses that are found.

It is important to recognize the enormity of the problem, and tackle it politically, legally, and socially with significant commitment from the State and civil society. Today, the country registers 8-10 per cent growth with claims that India would become a world economic power by 2020. However, with children being abused, exploited and trafficked, and their rights violated, the claims of becoming a world economic power remain questionable.

This chapter commences with an introduction to the missing children problem, continues with a presentation of the nature and scope of the problem as it prevails in India and is followed by conceptualization of the problem of missing children and definition of missing children as it exists in the United States, United Kingdom and in India. It goes on to provide information on the legal provisions in child protection in the United States and India. A brief overview of the institutional mechanisms as instated by the government for child protection in India is presented thereafter. The chapter concludes with a look at the psychosocial aspect of the missing children problem and the impact on affected families.

Nature and Scope of the problem

India is a country in which over 55% of the population comprises of children below the age of 18 years, approximately numbering 400 million. These children represent diverse cultures, communities, castes and socio-economic groups. Despite efforts of the Indian government to ensure the best for the nation's children through various policies and programs, a large number of children are denied basic rights and suffer from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

“There are countless children who go missing every year. These cases of missing children represent a conglomeration of a number of problems, ranging from kidnapping by family member or non-family member, children who run away or are forced to leave home due to a hostile environment, children who are smuggled or trafficked for various exploitative purposes, and children who are lost. All these cases exemplify a number of social problems.” (NHRC, 2007)

As per the National Human Rights Committee report 2005, going by reported statistics, the total number of missing children possibly adds up to more than 50,000 a year on an average. This is based on only those cases that are reported and recorded. On an average, over 40, 000 children in India are reported missing every year, of which approximately 11,000 remain untraced. (Haque: Report on Child Rights 2005) A more recent study in 2008 conducted by Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) has put the annual figure of missing children in India as 90,000.

Since missing children as a group are heterogeneous, it is difficult to provide a specific description for them or to obtain accurate data on the problem. Moreover, many cases of missing children are not reported to the police due to various reasons, and police response to a missing child report varies across the country. All these are serious issues which need to be dealt with in order to put measures in place for the care and protection of the country’s children.

Concept and Definition of Missing Child

The concept of missing children as a global phenomenon is multi-dimensional. Children can be considered missing because of a wide range of circumstances. In USA, concern about missing

and exploited children gained national prominence in 1981 and in 1984 The Missing Children's Assistance Act was passed. It mandated the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to conduct periodic incidence studies to ascertain the number of children reported missing in the country and the number recovered in a given year.

The study titled National Incidence Study on Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America (NISMART- 1) was published in 1990 to fulfill the mandate. It found that determining the incidence of missing children was very complex. The term "missing children" was discovered to have distinct multilevel definitions. Those definitions not only included children who were literally missing because they got lost, injured, or did not adequately communicate with their caretakers about their whereabouts or when they would return home, but also included runaways who had left home without the permission of their parents, abandoned children who were asked to leave the home by their parents, children abducted by a non-custodial parent, as well as children abducted by non-family members or strangers.

Furthermore, it was determined that many of the children in at least four of the above categories were not really missing because caretakers knew their whereabouts, but had difficulty in recovering them. Apparently, this uncertainty led to controversy and confusion about the concept of missing children. Report analysts concluded that because of the lack of a single broad definition for missing children, public policy needed to clarify the missing children's issue by establishing "which children and which situations should be included, what do they have in common, and what are they to be called".(Source: NISMART-1,1990)

In India, there are several inconsistencies in the law regarding the definition of a child.

According to the Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986, a child is a person who is

below the age of 14 years. Also, Indian laws prohibit a child below 14 years from being employed in any type of hazardous jobs but a child below 14 is allowed to work in non-hazardous industries.

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (HMGA) 1956, Section 4, provides that a minor is a person who has not attained the age of 18 years. However, in the event the court have appointed the guardians of a minor the age of majority is 21 years for the purposes of property and person.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, (CMRA) 1929 provides that the minimum age of marriage for girls is 18 years and for boys, it is 21 years. However, Muslim law provides that the marriageable age is around 14 years. Additionally, the personal laws of Muslims grant legality to marriage of a minor Muslim girl and is not void under Indian law. However, Child Marriage Restraint Act can be used to punish participants of such a marriage.

United Nations on Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989, Article 1 defines the holder of rights as ‘every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.’ The Convention clearly specifies the upper age limit for childhood as 18 years, but recognises that majority may be obtained at an earlier age under laws applicable to the child. The article, thus, accommodates the concept of an advancement of majority at an earlier age, either according to the federal or State laws of a country, or personal laws within that country.

Child as defined by the Juvenile Justice Act, (JJA) 2000, includes all persons who have not yet attained the age of 18 years, and we shall adhere by this definition for the purpose of this study.

Missing Child

There is no universal definition of a missing child.

According to Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, USA, the term "missing child" means any individual less than 18 years of age whose whereabouts are unknown to such individual's legal custodian. (Source: NISMART-1, 1990)

In the United Kingdom, there is no unifying, nationwide, concrete definition on what constitutes a missing child. Without a specific definition of the term missing child, missing children is incorporated into the issue of missing persons. The working definition of a 'missing person' in the UK is "anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their wellbeing or otherwise is established". (Source: Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigations on Missing Persons, ACPO, UK, 2005)

In India, there is no working definition of a missing child. For the purpose of this study, we shall define a missing child as a child under the age of 18 whose whereabouts is unknown to his or her parent, guardian or legal custodian.

Classification of Missing Children

The National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrown away Children (NISMART-1), released in 1990, was the first major study done by the US department of Justice on the problem of missing children in America. According to the study, missing children can be

classified into two categories: children who have been taken, and those who have left. These two categories were further be broken down into five different sub-categories in the follow up study released in 2000:

1. Non-family abductions;
2. Family abductions;
3. Runaways;
4. Abandoned; and
5. Lost, injured, or otherwise missing.

Non-Family Abductions

This category of abduction is referred to as "non-family" rather than "stranger" because like many crimes committed against individuals, the offender is usually someone known to the victim. Teenagers and girls tend to be the most common victims of non-family abductions, but infants also can be at risk. The risk of other crimes being committed against the missing child increases with non-family abductions. Homicide, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, pornography, and prostitution are among the most common crimes perpetrated against missing children. (NISMART-2)

Family abductions

Abductions of children by a family member occur almost exclusively in instances of divorce, and when all lines of communication between two parents fail. This type of kidnapping is usually a reaction to dissatisfaction with a custody or visitation agreement. It is considered kidnapping once the abductor violates the custody or visitation agreement, regardless of the specific circumstances. For instance, family abductions range from the non-custodial parent keeping

children overnight, to transporting the children out-of-state. (NISMART-2)

Runaways

Runaways constitute the majority of missing children. Often they are considered delinquents, rebels, and troublemakers. However, these children are usually not running *to* something, but rather *away* from a situation which they feel is intolerable. What is important to remember is that runaways do not represent short-term crises. Long-term physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse are common in runaway cases, and simply returning a runaway to his or her home may not be an appropriate resolution. Both the child and family may need to receive professional support and counseling before a possible reunion. (NISMART-2)

Abandoned

Children who are considered "throwaways" are abandoned, told to leave by a caregiver, or are not allowed to return home once they have left. Many throwaways come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The total number of throwaway children is impossible to estimate. They surface frequently in juvenile detention centers or among the homeless. Often, the only way these children can be accounted for is through shelters where they seek help, as they are rarely reported as missing by parents or caregivers. (NISMART-2)

Lost, injured or otherwise missing

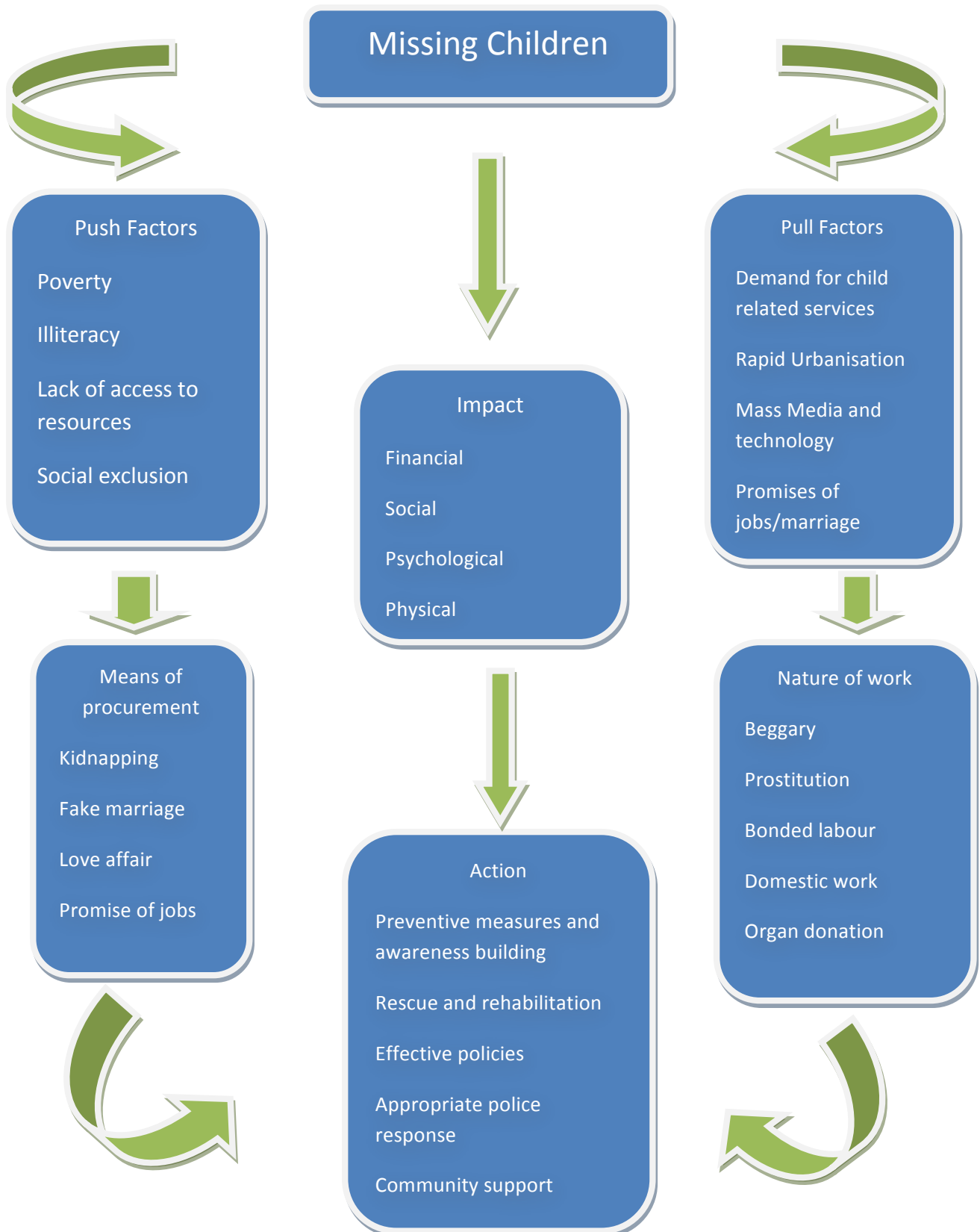
The final sub-category of missing children that do not fit into any of the other four categories are the lost, injured, or otherwise missing children. Children who are hurt, lost, or confused and did not return home when they were expected are not necessarily considered runaway, throwaway, or abduction cases if the circumstances surrounding the disappearance are unclear. (NISMART-2)

Figure 1: Classification of Missing Children



Source: NISMART-2

Figure 2: Missing Children - A conceptual Framework



Missing Children and Law

Law has long been an important part of theories about order and change in society. In socio-legal research the law is considered in the context of broader social and political theories. Therefore it is important to look at whether and how law is implemented and enforced and the role of society in the phenomenon of children going missing. By exploring law's connections with broader social and political forces – domestic and international –a deeper perspective can be gained on the issue of missing children. Since The United States has progressively enacted laws and established programmes to address the issues of child safety and protection, it is worthwhile to focus on the measures that have been taken there in order to deepen one's understanding and knowledge for critical inquiry into India's provisions in the child protection area. The material below has been sourced from The Federal Law Summary, USA.

Missing Children and Law: USA

In USA, significant child protection measures have been created over the years with the collaborated efforts of legislators, courts, other child protection advocates and law enforcement agencies to safely recover missing children and protect others from harm. In this section, a brief overview of significant measures enacted in the United States for the safety and protection of children at risk is presented.

The national government, in reaction to the country's outrage over the infamous Lindbergh infant kidnapping in 1932, enacted the **Federal Kidnapping Act** (FKA, 1932) authorizing U.S. Department of Justice intervention when interstate travel is suspected in kidnapping cases. Law-enforcement officers explicitly understood their role in such crimes as one of immediate

response and aggressive investigation. The laws were clear to law enforcement to recover the victim and apprehend the criminal.

In the 1960s, with an increase in divorce rates, need for a national strategy for addressing custody disputes both locally and from other jurisdictions and states was felt. In response to this need, every state adopted a version of the **Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act (UCCJA)** between 1968 and 1983.

In 1974 people in the United States and their lawmakers made tentative steps toward addressing the issues of child welfare and protection within the juvenile justice system. Those steps had a major impact on the handling of missing children cases by providing more tools for intervention. Many law enforcement officers once considered the limited use of secure detention as the only option available in selected status-offender cases such as controlling the habitual runaway. But increasing numbers of social service professionals and children's rights proponents argued such detention was inappropriate and harmful for children who had committed no crime. Therefore, in 1974 the U.S. Congress passed the **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP, 1974)**.

To encourage jurisdictions to prevent status offenders from being placed in any type of secure detention, the newly created Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), within the U.S. Department of Justice, was authorized to distribute grants and provide support to those states developing alternate procedural methods. This Act provided for nonsecure facilities where youngsters in need received safe shelter, counseling, and education until an effective family reunion could be accomplished.

Towards the 1970's, it quickly became clear communication among law enforcement agencies concerning notification and information about missing children was in need of improvement. Recognizing that need, in 1975 National Crime Information Centre (NCIC), an automated, information sharing system maintained by the FBI, instituted the **Missing Person File**. With the introduction of this file, officers anywhere in the nation could verify the report of a missing child who had been entered into the system and access case information within minutes of its entry by the reporting or originating law enforcement agency. As more states adopted the UCCJA, many followed its recommendation about the need for specific criminal sanctions to make its provisions effective. In drafting statutes to provide for these sanctions, some states made the crime of family abduction a misdemeanor while others made it a felony. The remaining states created degrees of crime in which the basic abduction was considered a misdemeanor while certain aggravating factors, such as danger to the child or leaving the state, moved the offense into the felony range.

As individual states enacted criminal, family abduction statutes, groups representing law enforcement officers; prosecutors; nonprofit, missing children organizations; and families emphasized the need for direction from the federal government in the investigation and adjudication of these cases. In response the U.S. Congress enacted the **Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act** (PKPA, 1980) in 1980. The PKPA had a significant impact on law enforcement since it extended certain federal investigative resources to local authorities for the first time.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s three incidents occurred in the United States which brought nationwide focus on the subject of missing and exploited children. Those events were the

murders of 29 boys and young men in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1979 to 1981; the abduction of 7-year-old Etan Patz from a New York City neighborhood in May of 1979; and the July 1981 abduction and murder of 6-year-old Adam Walsh in Hollywood, Florida.

Families of missing children testified before U.S. Congressional committees and voiced the nation's concern about the tragedy of such incidents and need for additional resources to help in the investigation of each case. In response the U.S. Congress passed the **Missing Children Act** (MCA, 1982) in 1982. Specifically the MCA called on law enforcement to strenuously investigate every missing child case and enter all pertinent information about the incident into the NCIC Missing Person File. It also required the FBI to provide assistance in appropriate cases and confirm NCIC entries for the child's parents/guardians. The MCA announced that the federal government viewed the protection of missing children as a priority issue.

Missing-person investigators acquired a significant resource when NCIC inaugurated the **Unidentified Person File** in June 1983. The records maintained in this file allowed law-enforcement officers to compare information from their missing children cases against descriptions of unidentified bodies from jurisdictions across the country.

A significant enhancement in that resource was obtained in 2000 with the passage of the **Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act** (CAPEA, 2000), and **Jennifer's Law** (U.S.C., Title 42, Chapter 140A). CAPEA amended three previous acts, the Crime Identification Technology Act, Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, and Victims of Crime Act, expanding their existing grants to include preventing child abuse and apprehending offenders. Jennifer's Law

created a new grant source to enable states to improve the reporting of unidentified and missing persons.

The U.S. Congress displayed its continuing commitment to the issue of missing and sexually exploited children by enacting the **Missing Children's Assistance Act (MCAA, 1984)**. In 1984, President Reagan signed into law the Missing Children's Assistance Act, establishing a national clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children. **The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)** is designated by the U.S. Congress to fulfill this role, and opened its doors in Washington, DC in 1984. It also directed the OJJDP to maintain a toll-free, 24-hour, national Hotline to take information about missing and exploited children; provide technical assistance to law enforcement, nonprofit/missing children organizations, and families to help locate missing children; develop training programs to aid law enforcement in the investigation of cases involving missing and sexually exploited children; and heighten the public's awareness concerning the issues of missing and sexually exploited children.

In 1988 when the United States ratified the **Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction**, a treaty governing the return of internationally abducted children, and the implementing **International Child Abduction Remedies Act (ICARA, 1988)** was passed. ICARA established procedures for bringing court actions in the United States seeking the return of abducted children pursuant to this Hague Convention. This Hague Convention has contributed to the successful return of many children when the other nation is also a signatory of the treaty. Through December 2010 this Hague Convention was in force between the United States and 68 other countries.

Additionally in 1988 amendments were made to the JJDPa to create the **Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth** (TLP) in response to the growing concern for those who need long-term, supportive-assistance, emergency-shelter programs were not designed to provide. The TLP was designed to assist homeless children, ages 16 through 21, make a successful transition to self-sufficient living and avoid long-term dependency on social-service programs. While many of the nation's law enforcement agencies came to realize all missing children, including those who left home voluntarily, were at risk of victimization and exploitation, some agencies remained reluctant to take a report of certain missing children, most often runaways. In response the U.S. Congress passed the **National Child Search Assistance Act** in 1990 (NCSAA, 1990) which mandated certain actions including:

- Federal, state, or local law enforcement agency will not establish or observe a waiting period before accepting a missing child case
- All agencies will enter, without delay, reports of missing children younger than 18 years of age into the NCIC Missing Person File
- All agencies will update identifying information about each case in NCIC within 60 days
- Each case will receive proper investigative action
- All investigators will maintain a close liaison with NCMEC about appropriate cases

The **International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act** (IPKCA, 1993) took effect in December 1993. This Act makes it a criminal offense to remove a child from the United States or retain a child, who has been in the United States, outside of the United States with intent to obstruct the lawful exercise of parental rights. The **Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act** (VCCLEA, 1994) was enacted in September 1994. The Act contains several provisions addressing the issue of missing and exploited children including the **Jacob Wetterling Crimes**

Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act, which requires any person convicted of a criminal offense committed against a minor or who is convicted of a sexually violent felony to register a current address with a designated law-enforcement agency for 10 years after release from prison, placement on parole, supervised release, or probation. The Act also permits law enforcement to disclose registration information to the community in the interest of public safety.

The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (Adam Walsh Act, 2006), enacted on July 27, 2006, places more comprehensive registration requirements on sex offenders and state registration programs. States had to implement these new requirements within three years from the date of enactment. Guidelines on state implementation of the Adam Walsh Act were published by the U.S. Department of Justice in July 2008 and supplemental guidelines were effective as of January 11, 2011.

Child Safety Act, which provides for the establishment of supervised visitation centers to permit children at risk of harm from their families to visit them in a safer environment. In 1997 the UCCJEA was drafted and has now been adopted by almost every state. The UCCJEA , intended as an improvement over its predecessor, the UCCJA, clarifies UCCJA provisions that have received conflicting interpretations in courts across the country, codifies practices that have effectively reduced interstate conflict, conforms jurisdictional standards to those of the federal PKPA to help ensure interstate enforceability of orders, and adds protections for victims of domestic violence who move out of state for safe haven.

The **Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003**, otherwise known as the **PROTECT Act**, gives law enforcement authorities valuable tools to deter, detect, investigate, prosecute, and punish crimes committed against children, strengthens laws against child pornography and addresses deficiencies in federal sentencing policies and practices.

Provisions specifically relating to missing or abducted children include base-offense level increase for kidnapping in U.S. sentencing guidelines, 20-year mandatory sentence for an adult offender whose kidnapping victim is a nonfamily member minor and attempt liability for international family kidnapping.

Other measures include **Suzanne's Law**, which requires each federal, state, and local law-enforcement agency to enter information about missing children younger than the age of 21 into the FBI's NCIC database **America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Alert** program provisions calling for the national coordination of state and local AMBER Alert programs and the development of recommended criteria for the issuance and dissemination of AMBER Alerts. The **Code Adam** program requires designated authorities for public buildings to establish procedures for locating a child who is missing in the building.

Most recently, the **Adam Walsh Act** was passed which provides consistency among state sex-offender registration and community notification laws, amends the requirements for entering information about missing children in NCIC, increases penalties for certain federal offenses involving children and gives law-enforcement authorities more resources to investigate and prosecute crimes committed against children on the Internet.

Specific provisions of the **Adam Walsh Act** include

- Registration of sex offenders before release from prison
- In-person periodic verification of registry information
- Federal and state felony penalties for failure to comply with registration duties
- Tracking of fugitive sex offenders by the U.S. Marshals Service
- More comprehensive state sex-offender websites
- Mandatory entry of missing child reports into NCIC within two hours of receipt
- Removal of a statute of limitations for federal felony child sexual offenses
- Mandatory minimum sentences for federal crimes committed against children
- Creation of additional Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force
- Additional Forensic Analysts dedicated to cases of child sexual exploitation

(Source: United States Congress library archives)

Thus it can be seen that considerable efforts have been made in the United States to ensure maximum child safety and protection through the enactment of several laws in response to the need of the times. The 30 year history of nationwide policy has created a coordinated environment which creates the resources, funding, cooperation and authority necessary to effectively recover and protect missing children. It is because of the existence of concrete laws and clear mandates in the United States that law enforcement officials and other agencies in the care and protection of children can work effectively towards assisting a child at risk.

Missing Children and Law: India

In the earlier section, an overview of the historical milestones in the United States in the area of child protection and missing children has been presented. In India, there are no specific laws relating to missing children. However, India has a progressive record on legislations relating to human rights including child rights and child protection. The Constitution of India – the basic law of the country- has special provisions for children guaranteed through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

In 1974, the Government of India adopted a **National Policy for Children**, declaring the nation's children as 'supremely important assets'. This policy laid down recommendations for a comprehensive health programme, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children, nutrition education for mothers, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, non-formal preschool education, promotion of physical education and recreational activities, special consideration for the children of weaker sections of the population like the scheduled castes and the schedule tribes, prevention of exploitation of children and special facilities for children with handicaps. (The History of Child Rights in India, UNICEF)

In 1974, A **National Children's Board** was provided by this policy in order to implement and execute various services for the care and welfare of children.

The Department of Women and Child Development was set up in the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1985. The Department, besides the **Integrated Child Development Scheme, 1975 (ICDS)**, implements several other programmes, undertakes advocacy and inter-sectoral monitoring catering to the needs of women and children.

In pursuance of this, the Department formulated a **National Plan of Action for Children** in 1992. The Government of India ratified the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** on 12 November 1992. By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government is obligated "to review National and State legislation and bring it in line with provisions of the Convention".

There are several laws which revalidate the rights guaranteed to children by the Constitution of India, and are therefore, powerful weapons to combat forces that deny these rights. The child protection laws related to child labour include the following:

Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933 declares any agreement by a parent or guardian to pledge the labour of a child below 15 years of age for payment or benefit other than reasonable wages, illegal and void. It also provides punishment for such parent or guardian as well as those who employ a child whose labour is pledged.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 prohibits forcing a person into bonded labour for debt repayment. The act extinguishes all debt agreements and obligations. It prohibits creation of any new bondage agreement and discharges bonded labourers from all debts for which they were bonded. Compelling a person to render bonded labour is punishable under the law. This includes punishment for parents who pledge their child or other family members to work as a bonded labourer.

Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 prohibits employment of children below 14 years in certain hazardous processes and regulates it in certain other non-hazardous

processes.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 Section 24 of this Act provides punishment for those who procure or employ a child in any hazardous employment, keep her/him in bondage and withhold the child's earning for their own purposes.

The legal framework available for child trafficking is as follows:

- Andhra Pradesh Devadasi's (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1988 or Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982
- Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959.
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976.
- Child Labour Prohibition & Regulation Act, 1986.
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929.
- Guardian ship and Wards Act, 1890.
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986.
- Indian Penal Code, 1860
- Information Technology Act, 2000.
- Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988.
- Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- Transplantation of Human Organ Act, 1994.
- The Goa Children's Act, 2003
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill, 2011

The following section explores in detail the important legal provisions related to the care and protection of children to gain further understanding involving the law in the context of missing children.

The Indian Constitution

The Indian Constitution has a framework within which ample provisions exist for the protection, development and welfare of children. The Constitution of India guarantees all children certain rights, which have been specially included for them. These include:

- Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children in the 6-14 year age group (Article 21 A).
- Right to be protected from any hazardous employment till the age of 14 years (Article 24).
- Right to be protected from being abused and forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength (Article 39(e)).
- Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article 39 (f)).

Besides these they also have rights as equal citizens of India, just as any other adult male or female:

- Right to equality (Article 14).
- Right against discrimination (Article 15).
- Right to personal liberty and due process of law (Article 21).

- Right to being protected from being trafficked and forced into bonded labour (Article 23).
- Right of weaker sections of the people to be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46).

According to the Indian Constitution, the State must:

- Make special provisions for women and children (Article 15 (3)).
- Protect interest of minorities (Article 29).
- Promote educational interests of weaker sections of the people (Article 46).
- Raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health (Article 47).

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000

The Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) was enacted in 2000 in keeping with the standards for child protection provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The JJA is a central legislation that requires each state in India to set up the infrastructure and protocols for implementations of the JJA provisions at the ground level. The JJA was amended in 2006 to further strengthen the juvenile justice process. However, the gap between policy and practice is wide.

This Act classifies children for the purpose of dealing with them into two categories namely Children in conflict with law (including those just allegedly so) and Children in need of Care and Protection. The children in conflict with law are to be dealt by the **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)** usually shortly called as the ‘board’ and the children in need of care and protection are to be dealt by **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)**, usually shortly called as ‘committee’. The

Act makes it mandatory to have one Juvenile Justice Board in each district to deal with matters relating to juveniles in conflict with law and to establish one Child Welfare Committee in each district as the final authority to dispose of cases for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of children in need of care & protection and to provide for their basic needs and protection of human rights.

The JJA recognises cruelty against children by people who have the charge of such children or control over such children as a special offence. Section 23 of this Act provides for punishment for cruelty to a child, which includes assault, abandonment, exposure or willful neglect that is likely to cause mental or physical suffering to the child. This law also helps to ensure care and protection of trafficked children and their restoration and reintegration with their family and community.

According to the JJA a child in need of care and protection means a child who does not have parents and no one is willing to take care of him or whose parents have abandoned him or who is missing and is a runaway child, whose parents cannot be found after reasonable enquiry. Therefore, missing children would come under the category of children needing care and protection, falling under the purview of this legislation.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860

The Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 includes ample legal recourse to punish the criminal activities of abduction, kidnapping and forced labour: Section 340 (wrongful confinement), 361 (kidnapping from lawful guardianship), 362 (abduction), 370 (buying or disposing of any person as slave), 371 (habitual dealing in slaves), 372 (selling minor for purposes of prostitution), 373

(buying minor for purposes of prostitution), and 374 (unlawful compulsory labour); with imprisonment ranging from one year to seven.

United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child

The most significant of all international laws for children is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It was in the 1950s that the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly. This Declaration was accepted by the Government of India.

Significant features of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are:

- Applies equally to both girls and boys up to the age of 18, even if they are married or already have children of their own.
- The convention is guided by the principles of ‘Best Interest of the Child’ and ‘Non-discrimination’ and ‘Respect for views of the child.’
- It emphasises the importance of the family and the need to create an environment that is conducive to the healthy growth and development of children.

It obligates the state to respect and ensure that children get a fair and equitable deal in society and draws attention to four sets of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights- Right to Survival, Right to Protection, Right to Development and Right to Participation.

Since missing children fall within the category of Right to Protection, it is important to expand upon it. Right to Protection includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse, inhuman or degrading treatment and neglect. Further, Children are entitled to special protection in special circumstances such as situations of emergency and armed conflicts, in case of disability etc.

All rights are dependent on each other and are indivisible. Most protection rights fall within the category of immediate rights and therefore demand immediate attention and intervention.

(Source: UNICEF, India)

Palermo Protocol

On 13th May, 2011 India ratified the United Nations Convention against Organised Crime also known as Palermo Protocol and its three protocols. This convention is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime.

It recognizes the need for international cooperation in order to tackle those problems. The convention is further supplemented by three Protocols, which target specific areas of organized crime namely Protocols to combat (1) trafficking in persons (2) migrant smuggling and (3) illicit trafficking in firearms.

According to Article 3 of the UN Protocol, 2002, “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

This ratification is an important milestone in the area of human trafficking as the lack of a comprehensive legislation and policy in India has often been the reason for inefficient law enforcement response. The ratification of this convention means that it is now binding upon

India to develop a law that conforms to the International Convention and its provisions. Thus it has wide range consequences that would help curb transnational trafficking. In most instances criminal gangs involved in large scale kidnappings, abductions and forced labour of children cannot be apprehended as the laws in the country are more biased towards prosecuting the employers or pimps in case of prostitution. The ratification of this protocol therefore brings the traffickers for forced labour within the purview of law in the country. (Source: www.palermoprotocol.com)

Missing children: Institutional Mechanisms

Institutions and structures under the various laws have been provided to protect the rights of the child. The institutions and structures under the Juvenile Justice Act are: Observation Homes, Special Homes, Children's Homes, Shelter Homes, Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), Child Protection Units, and After-care Organizations. In addition, there are Family Courts established under the Family Courts Act, 1984, and the National Commission for Protection of Children Act, 2005.

Shelter Homes function as temporary drop-in centres for children in need of care, protection, and urgent support. The state governments recognize reputed and capable voluntary organizations and provide them with assistance to set up and administer as many shelter homes as required. (Section 37, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000)

Children's Homes have to be established and maintained in every district or group of districts by the state government or voluntary organization certified by the state government, for the

reception of a child in need of care and protection initially during the pendency of any inquiry. After the inquiry is over, the Child Welfare Committee may send the child to the Home for their care, treatment education, training development and rehabilitation. (Section 34, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000)

Observations Homes are set up and maintained in every district or a group of districts by the state governments or voluntary organizations, certified by state governments, for children in conflict with the law. Children in conflict with the law are temporarily placed in Observation Homes during the pendency of any inquiry pertaining to them under the Act. Initially, a juvenile is kept in the reception unit of the observation home for preliminary inquiries, care and classification of the juvenile according to his/her age group, physical and mental status, and nature of offence. (Section 8, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000)

Special Homes have to be established and maintained in every district or group of districts by the state government or voluntary organization certified by the state government for reception and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law. (Section 9, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000)

After-care Organizations have to be established or recognized by the rules under the JJA made by the respective state governments. These organizations are slated to take care of juveniles or children after they leave special homes and children's homes to enable them to lead honest, industrious and useful lives. The report of the probation officer for each child, before his/ her discharge from the Special Home or Children's Homes, and the necessity and nature and period of after-care will be determined for each child. The maximum period of stay in after-care organizations is three years and the juvenile or child must be above 17 years but less than 18

years of age, and s/he would be able to stay there till s/he is 21 years of age. (Section 44, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000)

Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) have to be constituted under the JJA to deal with children in need of care and protection for every district. The Committee consists of the Chairperson and four other members, and among the members, one of them has to be a woman and another an expert on matters concerning children. The Committee has the powers of a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of First Class. A child in need of care and protection can be produced before the CWC by any police officer or a designated police officer or special juvenile police unit, by any public servant, by Childline (a registered voluntary organization) or any state government recognized voluntary organization, or by the child himself or herself. There is a provision in the Act for a social worker or a public-spirited citizen to produce the child before the CWC, provided the child is produced before the CWC within 24 hours. Restoration of a child to his/her parents including adopted and foster parents, guardians, fit persons and fit institutions, and protection to a child are the primary objectives of setting up the CWCs. Members of a CWC have the very serious responsibility of dealing with issues that include victims of child sexual abuse, trafficked children, child labourers, bonded labourers, disabled children, displaced children, migrant children, etc.

The Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) has been constituted under the JJA to deal with juveniles in conflict with the law. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) or Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) must review the pending cases every six months. In case there is a large pendency of cases, they must direct to increase the frequency of sittings of the Board or constitute additional Boards, to clear the pending cases.

The Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) of the police force of a state for dealing with juveniles in conflict with the law or children in need of care and protection has to be formed as mandated by the JJA. In every police station, at least one trained police officer needs to be designated to deal with children (Section 63, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000)

Government Institutions

Government institutions are established structures and mechanisms of social order and co-operation governed by value, structure and process. The government institutions that have been established for the care and protection of children are enumerated as below.

National Institute on Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)

National Institute on Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) is an organization for promotion of voluntary action research, training and documentation in the overall domain of women and child development. It was established in New Delhi in 1966. Besides many key areas of interests, Child Rights and Child Protection, Juvenile Justice, prevention of trafficking of women and children, prevention of child marriage are also important areas. ([www. nipccd.nic.in](http://www.nipccd.nic.in))

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)/ State Human Rights Commission (SHRC)

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the respective commissions in the states were established as per the provisions of The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The commission is an embodiment of India's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights. State Human Rights Commission functions in each state in areas relating to human rights. SHRC operates under the aegis of NHRC. The NHRC had undertaken a pioneering Action research on Trafficking in Women and Children in India in 2002-03. The study done by Dr. P.

M. Nair attempted to collate data on missing persons in India and investigate the links between missing persons and trafficking. The study highlighted the unseen linkages and exposed the poor system of data maintenance and management on missing persons. The research showed the figures of missing children to be as high as 44,000 in a year. (www.nhrc.nic.in)

National Commission for the protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)/ State Commission for the protection of Child Rights (SCPCR)

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a statutory body of the Government of India under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, set up in March 2007 to protect, promote and defend child rights in the country. India ratified the United Nations Child Rights Convention in the year 1992 and this Act was passed as one of the necessary steps to protect the rights of the children in the country.

The National/State Commission consists of seven members, including a Chairperson and six members, of which at least two need to be women. The Act provides for Children's Courts for speedy trial of offences against children or of violation of Child Rights. The Act empowers the state government to notify at least a court in the state or a Court of Sessions in each district as a Children's Court, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court. For every Children's Court, the state government is required to appoint a Public Prosecutor or an advocate who has been in practice for not less than seven years as the Special Public Prosecutor.

The function of the commission is to:

- Examine any law or constitutional provisions to ensure that the safeguards of the law protect child rights
- Provide the central government with recommendations to improve correct the safeguards

- Inquire into child rights violations
- Examine the risk factors for children affected by terrorism, communal violence, riots, natural disasters, domestic violence, HIV/ AIDS, trafficking, maltreatment, torture and exploitation, pornography, and prostitution and recommend appropriate remedial measures
- Look into the special care and protection of children from distress, marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds
- Study and ensure implementations of child rights treaties
- Conduct research in the field of child rights
- Create awareness through various mediums
- Inspect any children's home or observations homes where children have been detained
- Investigate the violation of human rights or the failures of the state or other to prevent a human rights violation

The NCPCR and respective commission in the states ensures that all laws, policies, programmes and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights as enshrined in the constitution of India and UN Convention on Rights of the Child. (www.ncpcr.gov.in)

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

The NCRB was constituted in 1986 under the aegis Ministry of Home Affairs. It functions as a clearing house of information on crime and criminals which also include missing persons. The information on missing child/children is taken care of by the Missing Persons Bureau when it reaches the Police Headquarters normally. At the state level, this bureau is often a wing of the

state police. While taking action, they also forward the information to the State Crime Records Bureau who in turn transfers it to the Missing Persons Wing at the NCRB in New Delhi.

The NCRB, under the Talash information system, maintains a national level database of missing persons under the following broad categories-“missing”, “kidnapped”, “deserted”, “escaped” unidentified dead body etc. The police Stations do not give any feedback to the NCRB when a missing child is traced and therefore the data remains incomplete and unreliable. Despite being the national repository of crime data, NCRB is unaware of children who are missing and those who have returned to their families. (www.ncrb.nic.in)

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS)

Although police are the primary response agency in regards to missing persons, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may also be involved in missing person cases. For instance, NGOs may play a role in providing counseling and other services to family members of the missing child. Newiss G., in his 2005 study titled “A study of the characteristics of outstanding missing persons: implications for the development of police risk assessment” recommended that for certain cases, such as those involving children missing from care, females involved in prostitution, or members of minority ethnic groups, police should work together with additional agencies, such as social services. Given that these agencies would likely have relevant information on these individuals, sharing information with them would improve the efficiency of the official police response. In addition, these agencies may be in a better position to track the missing person, given their potential relationships with relevant communities and their pre-established social networks. (Newiss G., 2005)

Thus, given that NGOs may play an important role in tracking missing children or providing salient information to the police, it is essential that they be involved in any strategy designed to enhance the search for missing children. There are a few non-governmental organizations in India who work on the issue of missing children and offer services to support the affected families. A few of these organizations are mentioned below in alphabetical order.

Childline India Foundation

Founded in June 2006, Childline is a nationwide emergency helpline for children in distress through 1098. It is India's first 24 hour, free emergency phone service for children in need of aid and assistance. Special focus is given to street children, child labourers, domestic help, victims of child trafficking, abandoned children, missing children, mentally challenged children etc. (www.childlineindia.org.in)

Bachpan Bachao Andolan

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) is a movement headed by Kailash Satyarthi and describes its mission as to identify, liberate, rehabilitate and educate children in servitude through direct intervention, child and community participation, coalition building, consumer action, promoting ethical trade practices and mass mobilisation. BBA works to prevent child labour, bonded labour and trafficking through preventative measures. They run campaigns on local, national and international level to change society's attitudes towards child labour as well as improve government policy and legal provisions. (www.bba.org.in)

Don Bosco India

The Don Bosco National Forum for the Young at Risk (YAR) is an initiative reaching out to 90 cities and towns through shelter homes, children's homes, youth hostels, child rights centres etc. The categories served by the YAR forum partners include the street children, child labourers, school dropouts, abandoned orphans, young prisoners or children in conflict with law, refugees, children affected by AIDS etc. Homelink is a technological database started by YAR National office to provide documenting tools for the staff. Homelink has become a common platform for NGOs and currently there are over 68 NGOs working for children who have been linked on YAR network. (www.donboscoindia.com)

National Centre for Missing Children (NCMC)

NCMC is an Indore based NGO in Madhya Pradesh working for missing children. It has a web enabled portal for imparting information on children reported missing, traced and also generates missing kids alerts. Any individual can post information on a missing child and find the status of a missing child if he is traced. (www.missingindiankids.com)

Historical Milestones: Government Initiatives and Court Orders on Missing children

Children going missing in India have been a problem in the country over the years. While there is an urgent need to recognize this issue as a national problem and tackle the root causes, over the years significant efforts have been made by the government and the court which requires to be mentioned. These historical milestones are enumerated as below.

The Supreme Court of India, 2002

In 2002, The Supreme Court of India issued interim directions/guidelines pertaining to missing/kidnapped children as passed in Writ Petition (Crl.) No.610/1996 (Horilal vs. Commissioner of Police, Delhi). These guidelines have been ordered by the Supreme Court to be followed by the Police in all the states in a missing person case:

1. Publish photographs of the missing persons in the Newspaper, telecast them on Television promptly, and in case not later than one week of the Receipt of the complaint. Photographs of a missing person shall be given wide publicity at all the prominent outlets of the city /town / village concerned that is at the Railway Stations , Interstate bus stands , airport , regional passport office and through law enforcement personnel at Border checkpoints. This should be done promptly and in any case not later than one week of the receipt of the complaint. But in case of a minor/major girl such photographs shall not be published without the written consent of the parents /guardians.
2. Make inquiries in the neighbourhood, the place of work/study of the missing girl from friends, colleagues, acquaintances, relatives etc. immediately. Equally all the clues from the papers and belongings of the missing person should be promptly investigated.
3. Contact the Principal, Class teacher and Students at the missing person's most recent school /educational institutions. If the missing girl or woman is employed somewhere, the most recent employer and her colleagues at the place of employment should be contacted.
4. Conduct an inquiry into the whereabouts from the extended family of relatives, neighbours, school teachers including school friends of the missing girl or woman.
5. Make necessary inquiries whether there have been past incidents or reports of violence in the family. (Writ Petition (Crl.) No.610/1996, Horilal vs. Commissioner of Police, Delhi)

Zonal Integrated Police Network (ZIPNET)/ Police, 2007

In the period 2007-2012 Delhi Police collaborated with other neighbouring states to set up the zip net network. The issue of missing children is one of the aspects being covered by ZIPNET along with other cries. ZIPNET helps not only in tracing the missing children but also keeps information related to unidentified found children. ZIPNET works with the objective to help the government, the parents of the missing children and NGOs working in this field to find them. ZIPNET was launched in 2004 under the aegis of Home Ministry, Govt. of India. It is a network of 6 states and one union territory. In 2008, The Home Minister of India announced that by 2012, all the police stations of India will be connected through this network with a mega budget of 2000 crores. The project “Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System” will connect 14000 police station and 600 supervisory officials.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), 2009

In 2006 the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) proposed the adoption of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). In 2009 the central government gave the scheme its approval and has begun the extensive task of providing children with a protection and safe environment to develop and flourish. The purpose of the scheme is to provide for children in difficult circumstances, as well as to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities children have in various situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children.

The specific objectives of the scheme are:

- To institutionalize essential services and strengthen structures
- To enhance capacities at all systems and persons involved in service delivery
- To create database and knowledge base for child protection services
- To strengthen child protection at family and community level
- To coordinate and network with government institutions and non-government institutions to ensure effective implementation of the scheme
- To raise public awareness about child rights, child vulnerability and child protection services.

Within care, support and rehabilitation services the scheme will provide CHILDLINE services, open shelters for children in need in urban and semi-urban areas, offer family based solutions through improving sponsorship, foster-care, adoption and after-care services, improve quality institutional services, and general grant-in-aid for need based/ innovative interventions. Within statutory support services the scheme calls for the strengthening of CWCs, JJBs, SJPU, as well as seeing to the set up of these services in each district. Beyond this ICPS also outlines the need for human resource development for strengthening counselling services, training and capacity building, strengthening the knowledge-base, conduct research studies, create and manage a child tracking system, carry out advocacy and public education programmes, and monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

In order to ensure the objectives and approaches of ICPS are met, the scheme also calls for the establishment of new bodies within a service delivery structure.

At the district level there are:

- District Child Protection Society (DCPS)
- District Child Protection Committee (DCPC)
- Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC)
- Block Level Child Protection Committee
- Village Level Child Protection Committee

At the state level there are:

- State Child Protection Society (SCPS)
- State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA)
- State Child Protection Committee (SCPC)
- State Adoption Advisory Committee

At the regional level there are:

- Child Protection Division in the four Regional Centres of National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
- Four Regional Centres of Childline India Foundation (CIF)

And lastly at the national level there are:

- Childline India Foundation- Headquarters
- Child Protection Division in the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
- Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA)

The scheme outlines a specific implementation plan. It discusses the need of convergence of services to give the child the integrated plan. This is achieved through coordination of all department and ministries and NGOs involved. The annexure of the scheme lays out guidelines on how to achieve each service provided in the scheme. (Source: Integrated Child Protection Scheme- A civil society partnership, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Childline India)

Delhi High Court, 2009

In 2 March 2009, The Delhi High Court had taken a suo moto cognizance and ordered detailed guidelines for Delhi Police. The Court stated that the Police should without any delay register all complaints of missing children as FIRs, along with the following directions:

1. Delhi Police will ensure strict compliance with its revised Standing Order NO. 252 dated 18th March, 2009. The information with regard to missing children shall be immediately uploaded on Delhi Police's web bases ZIPNET programme. The Home Ministry is directed to issue appropriate directions to neighbouring States of Delhi to adopt web based ZIPNET programme with regard to missing children.
2. It shall be mandatory for Delhi Police to forward both by e-mail and by post a copy of each FIR registered with regard to missing children to Delhi Legal Services Authority (hereinafter referred to as "DLSA") along with addresses and contact phone numbers of parents of the missing children.
3. DLSA will in turn constitute a team comprising a lawyer and a social worker to follow up the case with the Delhi Police. The said team will not only provide all possible legal aid to the parents and families of the missing children but shall also act as an interface

between the parents of the missing children and the Delhi Police. DLSA will maintain a record of all cases of missing children.

4. Both DLSA and the Delhi Police shall ensure that the Supreme Court interim directions/guidelines pertaining to missing/kidnapped children passed in Writ Petition (Crl.) No. 610/1996 (Horilal vs. Commissioner of Police, Delhi) and I the case of Lalita Kumari vs. State of U.P. & Ors.(Writ Petition(Crl.) No. 68/2008) are strictly complied with. (details given in guidelines by Supreme Court).
5. Whenever a missing child is traced or he/she comes back on his/her own, the Investigating Officer will examine all relevant angles such as involvement of organized gangs, application of provisions of Bonded Labour Act and such other relevant Acts.
6. Whenever, the involvement of any organized gang is found, it shall be the responsibility of the Investigating Officer to refer the matter to the Crime Branch of Delhi Police or the Special Cell constituted in the CBI. (www.shaktivahini.org)

The Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011

In 2011, the Ministry of Home Affairs published a detailed Advisory to all states for taking steps for tabulating each and every missing case and also the various ways and methods for the Police to recover these cases. The Advisory recognised the fact that trafficking in human beings was a organised crime and the response to the same should also be organised. The advisory was issued on 31st January 2012 after wide scale consultations with State Police agencies through zonal workshops and national level workshops with various stakeholders.

The details in the advisory inter alia include:

1. Implementation of the guidelines of Honourable Supreme Court of India dated 14/11/2002 in Horilal vs Commissioner of Police Delhi and court orders issued on 12/10/2011 in Sampurna Behrua case. These instructions need to be complied and monitoring ensured.
2. Implementation and Monitoring of NHRC guidelines on Missing Children.
3. A officer of the rank of DIG should be declared Nodal Officer in each State.
4. Supervision of investigation of cases by senior police officials of the rank of Addl. SP /Dy. SP.
5. Heinous offences related to organized crime should be transferred to the State CID.
6. Convergence between District Missing Children Unit and Missing Persons squad needs to ensured.
7. All cases of trafficking should be treated as organized crime and real time data and profile of the gang members need to be maintained.
8. Police officials need to be sensitized and trained on Procedural laws, Investigation techniques and data collection and compilation.
9. AHTU should be involved in the Missing persons work at the district level.
10. SP should review all cases of missing children in the Monthly District Review.
11. In International trafficking investigators can network with Interpol for search of the missing child.
12. All missing cases should be uploaded at the District level and data disseminated and the same needs to be updated.
13. At the Police Station Level SHO should ensure that the data on missing children is shared with DCRB and SCRB.

14. Integration of Childline in the search and recovery of missing children needs to be ensured.
15. Police should be trained to take preventive steps.
16. Involvement of Community/Panchayats/Resident Welfare Association needs to be ensured for prevention and protection measures.
17. Community awareness on missing children needs to be ensured at District level. School level sensitization should also be ensured.
18. Appointment of Nodal NGOs at the state level needs to be ensured. Wherever possible NGOs partnership should be evolved for counseling and awareness raising activities.
19. The protocols and SOPs developed by MHA-UNODC project including protocols on interstate transfer of rescued victims should be effectively utilized. (www.nlrd.org)

Missing Children: Psycho-Social Aspects

Missing children can face a variety of risks, and the dangers they are exposed to while missing are numerous. While missing children themselves are in a difficult situation, the people they leave behind can also experience a range of difficulties. The parents themselves undergo great confusion and distress. The affected family members have to deal with a range of emotions. There may be guilt, because members of the family blame themselves for the child going missing, anger at being unable to help their child, and anxiety about the condition of the missing child. (Source: Payne, M., Understanding 'Going Missing': issues for social work and social services, 1995)

Families of missing people face a wide range of experiences and impacts, which can extend to a number of family members and affect every aspect of their lives. Their experiences and emotions are interconnected; practical problems can have a deep emotional impact, while the effort of dealing with a variety of emotions can have an impact on families' lifestyles, jobs, education and relationships. (Source: Holmes, L, Living in Limbo: The experiences of and the impact on families of missing people, 2008)

The grief and loss that family members and friends can experience when someone goes missing have been referred to as ambiguous loss. Ambiguous loss is also known as an unresolved loss. Boss, 1999, defined "ambiguous loss as the grief or distress associated with a loss (usually a person or relationship) in which there is confusion or uncertainty about the finality of the loss". The unresolved grief associated with ambiguous loss impacts the family of a missing child tremendously. For families and friends, ambiguous loss can exist when an individual is physically absent but psychologically present. This is because it is unclear whether their missing family member or friend is alive. When a loved one goes missing, there is none of the rituals performed which provides closure to the ones left behind. The sense of not knowing creates ambiguity and the result is high stress. As a result, ambiguous loss can be the most stressful loss that people can face. (Source: Boss P., Ambiguous Loss: Learning to live with unresolved grief, 1999).

The parents of the missing children tend to completely neglect their own needs and those of the other members of the family; they focus all their energy and attention on searching for their missing children. They may become aloof and withdraw from those around them, thereby cutting

vital support from outside. (Source: Missing persons and their families, International Committee for the Red Cross 2003)

Over and above the emotional trauma, there are financial impacts as well. Financial impacts are caused by a range of factors, including the costs associated with searching for the missing child, the loss of income during the search for the child, the cost of short and long distance travel to investigate all possibilities and even the costs incurred due to health problems in family members caused by the incident.

Thus, it is clear that when children go missing, there are psychological, social, financial and emotional impacts on the affected families. These families waiting for information on the fate of their child have specific emotional, financial, mental and legal needs and often require help from the authorities and various organizations. It is important to recognise that for each missing child the impacts are likely to affect each and every member of a family and therefore steps must be taken to meet these needs. Appropriate systems have to be established for support to the families of missing children taking into consideration the needs at psychological, social and financial levels.

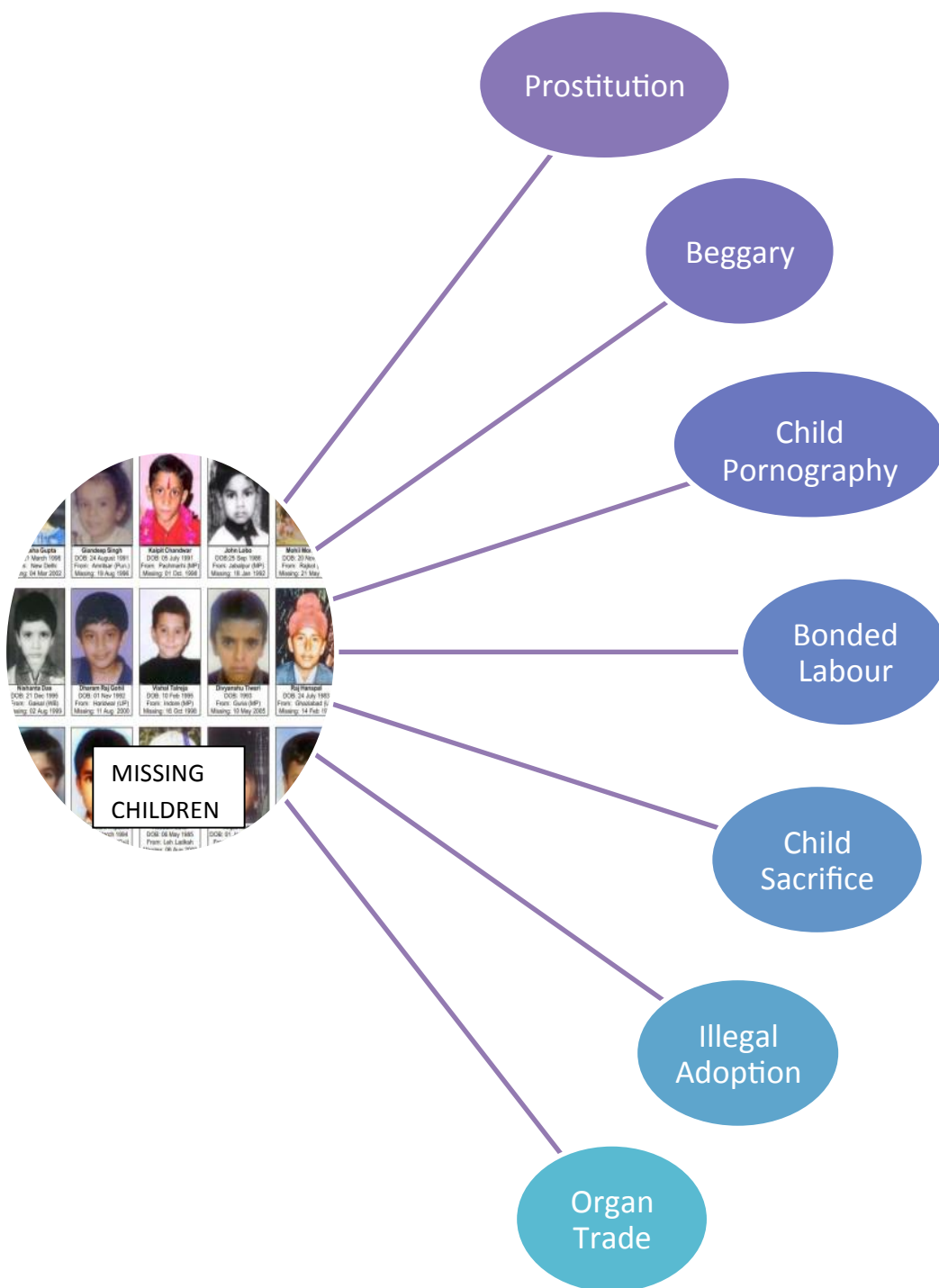
Missing Children: A multi-faceted problem

In conclusion, the concept of missing children represents a conglomeration of a number of problems. The study of the phenomenon of missing children (NISMART or the National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children) published in 1990 in the United States specifies that “the problems frequently lumped together as “missing children” were “extremely dissimilar social problems” affecting different children and different families”.

It is not always achievable to discriminate between various types of missing children episodes at the commencement of an investigation. Each missing child case is unique and signifies a different social problem, but police officials may be approached for assistance to search for the missing child. Furthermore, in numerous instances, missing children cases are not reported to the police, or, as seen in several cases in India, police are often reluctant to file a case when a child is reported missing. Therefore it can be said that the police handle different cases of missing children in a wide variety of ways.

There is a need to address all these issues relating to missing children, for which we have to gain an understanding of the prevalence of missing children problem, how and why children go missing, what happens when they do and what is being done to recover them. The problem of missing children is a social issue of particular concern to police, parents, teachers, counselors and all associated with the welfare of children. It is important to recognize the enormity of the problem, and tackle it politically, legally, and socially with significant commitment from the State and civil society.

Figure 3: Dangers faced by children reported missing



Source: Childline, 2006

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter deals with the review of international and national literature on missing children. Material was collected from published articles, scholarly works, books, journals and websites, which the researcher accessed through the Vikram Sarabhai Library at The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. This chapter provides information on important international studies undertaken on missing children and looks at the scenario concerning missing children as it exists across the world. The second half of the chapter looks at research undertaken in India to understand the phenomenon of missing children as it occurs in India.

A. Global Scenario

In most developed countries such as USA, UK, Canada and Australia, much effort has been made to focus on the missing children issue and recognize it as a social problem. Many research studies have been undertaken on the issue of missing children, but far more research is available in respect of children and young people who run away. There is extensive literature on young runaways, which will be briefly reviewed here. Earlier studies, undertaken between the 1950s and the 1960s in both the UK and the US, tended to focus on the individual characteristics of runaways and attempted to identify an individual pathology associated with running away (Tsunts, 1966; Shellow et al, 1967). During the 1970s, attention shifted to the effects of the environment on runaway behaviour. Attention turned to the family backgrounds of runaways from home and to the institutional environments of absconders from residential institutions (Clarke and Martin, 1971; Sinclair and Clarke, 1973; Brennan et al, 1978; Millham et al, 1978;

Simons and Whitbeck, 1991). The most relevant studies undertaken in other countries have been covered in this review of literature.

In the US, the earliest missing child case which gained unprecedented media attention was in 1932, when the 20-month old baby of celebrity aviator Charles Lindberg was stolen from his cradle. The battered body of the baby was recovered two months later, and investigation into the case lasted for nearly three years before the identity of the killer could be established. As a result of this case, new laws were passed in America making kidnapping a federal offence.

United States of America

The US Department of Justice sponsored a massive research project in an effort to define the missing child problem in 1988. It was the first study of its kind and the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children, known as NISMART, began in 1988. It was followed by an updated survey in 1999, known as NISMART 2. NISMART 2 is the most up to date reliable database on missing children available in the USA.

The two studies provide the best estimates for the number of missing children in USA. The first National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART-1) was released in 1990, and the second, known as NISMART-2, was released in October 2002. According to NISMART-2 study of the year 1999, approximately 797,500 children were reported missing; 203,900 children were abducted by nonfamily members; 115 children were the victims of the most serious, long-term nonfamily abductions called

“stereotypical kidnappings”; and 58,200 children were the victims of family abductions. By the end of 2005, there were 109,531 active missing person records according to the US Department of Justice. Children under the age of 18 account for 58,081 (53.03%) of the records and 11,868 (10.84%) were for young adults between the ages of 18 and 20.

- A child went missing every 40 seconds in the U.S, over 2,100 per day.
- In excess of 800,000 children were reported missing each year.
- Another 500,000 went missing without ever being reported.

(Source: National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children, U.S. Department of Justice Report, 2009)

Another research study “Investigating Potential Child Abduction Cases: A Developmental Perspective” by Lord, W. D.; Boudreaux, M. C.; and Lanning, K. V. was undertaken in 2001 which classified the child abduction typologies by age. The findings are given as below:

Newborn (birth to one month) abductions are of two types- maternal desire abduction and infant abduction. Maternal desire abduction usually involved a young child being abducted by a female stranger to raise as her own. These abductions usually occurred at a hospital which the perpetrator had scanned thoroughly. She usually faked a pregnancy to prepare others for the baby's sudden appearance. Therefore, the race of the victim matched that of the abductor. Usually anger was the driving force for the second type of infant abduction, which was an emotional reaction from thoughts of revenge or frustration. The biological mother, the most frequent offender, sought revenge on the other parent by abducting the child. The abduction often hid the death of the child, and usually disposed of the body close to the child's home.

Infants (1–12 months) comprised the second category of child abduction. Maternal desire abductions became less frequent, as a two-month-old infant was more likely to draw the attention of outsiders to the actual age of the baby. Most of these abductions were emotion based. Males faced a higher risk of victimization, and males, usually the biological father, were the perpetrators in these cases. These abductions usually resulted in the death of the child, usually on impulse, and the body of the child was disposed of close to home in a familiar, yet private, area of the family's property.

Preschool children (3–5 years) comprised the third category. Preschoolers were not always in parental view because of their increased mobility. Sexual crimes were one of the causes of abductions usually by strangers or acquaintances, not by parents. The victims were usually female, and the race of the child and abductor usually matched the local demographics. The preschool child was usually abducted from their yard by a male who was an acquaintance of the victim, commonly a neighbor with a history of sexual misconduct. Profit based offenses—drug related or ransom—involving preschool children were rare. Some were emotion based, usually involving the father or boyfriend. When the offender killed the child, the body was usually found within a hundred yards of the home.

Elementary and middle-school children (6–14 years) constituted the fourth category. Victimization rates were triple for this age, and school-age females were at least three times more likely than males to be abducted and murdered. Sex was the major reason for abduction, usually by a male perpetrator with a history of sexual misconduct, violence, and substance abuse. The abductor was usually an acquaintance or a stranger but rarely a family member. With

middle-school children, the abductors were mostly likely to be strangers. Schoolyard access, physical maturity, and vulnerability helped facilitate these abductions by strangers. Unlike familial abductions, the bodies of these children were usually found unconcealed or only slightly covered.

High school children and older teens (15–17 years) comprised the final category. Profit- and emotion-based offenses were more prevalent in this group, perhaps due to the possession of money or other valuables, as well as an increase in the availability of drugs. Profit-based abduction usually victimized males and involved the sale and distribution of drugs. Emotion-based crimes were similar to domestic violence and typically involved teenage females abused by boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, or stalkers. Sexually motivated crimes involved a female victim and a male offender—usually either a stranger or an acquaintance of the victim—who abducted the victim in a public area away from the victim's home. When murdered, the victim's remains were usually found within five miles of the home, slightly covered or not covered at all.

(Source: “Investigating Potential Child Abduction Cases: A Developmental Perspective” by Lord, W. D.; Boudreaux, M. C.; and Lanning, K. V., 2001)

A research undertaken by Stepp in 2001 studied the causes for increased missing children's cases in the US. Increased rate of abductions in the United States were attributed to the following causes:

- The increase in two-career parents and single heads of households that left more children home alone

- Urbanization, suburbanization, and the geographic mobility of the modern workforce leading families to move into communities with no family or friends to provide a safety net for children
- Inadequate criminal data banks that made running background checks on would-be abusers difficult for schools, day-care, and youth organizations
- The lack of cooperation between governmental agencies that impeded tracing abductors across state lines (Source: Missing children: the ultimate nightmare, Stepp I. S., 1994).

United Kingdom

Every Five Minutes: A review of the available data on missing children in the UK (Parents and Children Together, 2005) examined available sources to establish how many children go missing in the UK every year. The report stated that it was impossible to obtain an accurate and comprehensive picture of the nature or scale of the problem (estimated range was between 100,000 and 180,000). Different methods of data collection was used for missing children cases and these data could not be termed reliable as the methods of data collection and source of the data were scattered and uncentralised. The problem was compounded by inconsistent definitions of different types of missing children.

The report concluded that the response to missing children was very fragmented and disorganised. Parents and Children Together (PACT) believed that the only solution for remedying this situation was through the creation of a National Resource Center, based on the American model. Such a center would bring together under one roof representatives of the relevant government and NGOs to work as a united front. This would eliminate layers of

bureaucracy and help coordinate effective policies to support missing and abducted children and their families as well as provide a single national help-line for children and parents.

(Source: Every Five Minutes: A review of the available data on missing children in the UK (Parents and Children Together, 2005))

Research Studies on Runaways

A nationwide survey in the UK of young people running away found that, although the majority reported that they had run away, almost one fifth said that they had been forced to leave home. The study found that one in nine young people (11%) in the UK run away from home, or are forced to leave, and stay away overnight before the age of 16. This suggests that around 77,000 young people under the age of 16 are likely to run away for the first time each year. However, since one in eight of the young people surveyed had run away more than three times, the study estimated that there were approximately 129,000 incidents of young people running away overnight each year. This study found that the prevalence rate was similar across different types of areas, irrespective of population density and economic prosperity. In other words, young people are likely to run away in all parts of the UK (urban, suburban and rural) and from more as well as less affluent families. (Source: Still running: children on the streets in the UK, Safe on the Streets Research Team, 1999).

Going Missing (Wade & Biehal, 1998) was the first major study in the United Kingdom of young people who run away from residential and foster homes. Conducted over a three-year period and sponsored by the United Kingdom's Department of Health, it sought to understand

why young people run away from substitute care and what happens when they do. In the first of the two stages of the research, the authors conducted two surveys of patterns of absences from substitute care in four English local authorities. The absences took place from July 1995 through July 1996. In the second stage, they convened 14 focus groups with young people social workers, and residential land foster caregivers, and they conducted in-depth interviews with 36 young people, their social workers, and their caregivers. The researchers mapped patterns, motivations, and responses and examined the effect of going missing on young people.

The findings from the study are summarized as below:

- One in nine young people ran away at least once before the age of 16.
- Young people who were looked after were more likely to run away than those living at home, and those in residential care were the most likely to go missing.
- The proportion of young people going missing from residential care varied between different local authorities, ranging from 25% to 71% of all those looked after in children's homes during a year.
- There were wide variations in running away rates between different children's homes, even where their intake was similar.
- The average age of first going missing was 13 but many began before the age of 11.
- Few left their local area while they were missing.
- Many stayed with friends, acquaintances or relatives, but between a quarter and a third of runaways slept on the streets.
- There was a strong association between running away and non-attendance at school, due to truancy or exclusion.

- The most common reasons for running away from home were conflicts with parents or stepparents, physical or sexual abuse, rejection and neglect.

(Source: Going Missing ,Wade & Biehal, 1998)

Recent studies in the UK have been concerned with identifying the prevalence of going missing, understanding more about what motivates young people to be away from home, their experiences while they are away (including the risks they face) and in highlighting service needs. Runaways: Exploding the Myths, Abrahams C and Mungall R, 1992, Children Who Go Missing; Research, Policy and Practice, Biehal, N., and J. Wade, 2002, Working With Young Runaways: Learning From Practice, Rees, G, 2001 are examples of relevant studies the findings of which have been summarized as below.

The findings include:

- Young people were as much at risk on the first occasion they go missing as after multiple absences.
- Equally, repeat runaways were just as vulnerable as others, although they were often viewed more as ‘problems’ in themselves rather than as ‘at risk’ - and sufficient consideration should be given as to why they were persistently absenting themselves.
- Young people who go missing were at risk of violence and victimisation, including sexual assault, especially if they slept on the streets.
- Young people who go missing were vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including involvement in prostitution.
- Runaways were at risk of involvement in offending, and this was especially true for those who went missing often from placements in residential care.

- Most young people run away only once or twice, but a substantial minority went missing repeatedly and this group was at greatest risk of depression, offending, detachment from school and drug or alcohol abuse.
- Young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties were more likely than others to go missing repeatedly from care.
- Young people who run away repeatedly from home had often experienced severe family problems and disruption or abuse.
- Persistent running away may be a precursor to adult homelessness.

The studies conclude that children at greatest risk were those who had run away once or twice due to abuse or depression, had run away three or more times, especially if they began before the age of 11 and those who had become detached from their families for lengthy periods (6 months or more).

(Source: Runaways: Exploding the Myths, Abrahams C and Mungall R, 1992, Children Who Go Missing; Research, Policy and Practice, Biehal, N., and J. Wade, 2002, Working With Young Runaways: Learning From Practice, Rees, G, 2001)

Research Studies on Affected Families: Psychosocial Aspects

Research suggests that the loss of a child to homicide or abduction was the most arduous type of loss a parent can endure. Parents are expected to protect their children from harm. Clearly, parents are unprepared psychologically to cope with a tragedy of this magnitude. The unexpected, sudden loss of a child may be more difficult to grieve than anticipated death (Maxwell, Parental bereavement and coping in two types of loss: Sudden infant death syndrome and non-familial abduction, 1994). The trauma is so significant that it leads to a “structural collapse,” resulting in a sense of helplessness and loss of identity (Benyakar, Kutz, Dasberg, & Stern, The collapse of a structure: A structural approach to trauma, 1989). Three fundamental beliefs are compromised: benevolence, meaning, and self worth (Janoff-Bulman, Shattering assumptions: Toward a new psychology of trauma, 1992).

Parental survivors may ultimately be required to confront the gruesome details of the murder or abduction if, and when, a criminal trial ensues. Upon discovery of the murdered or long-term missing child’s body, parents are immediately faced with an onslaught of bereavement symptoms. Understanding the multitude of likely symptoms that follow and developing coping strategies can help the grieving process (Bucholz, Homicide survivors: The misunderstood grievers, 1999).

The most common responses to abduction and homicide include a deep sense of shock; preoccupation with the loss of the abducted or deceased; concern with the cruelty and violence associated with the act; intense anger toward the perpetrator or criminal justice system; intense inquiry into the details of the investigation; disruption of appetite and sleep patterns; depression

and hopelessness; and an inability to move forward through identifiable stages of bereavement (Rinear, Parental response to child murder: An exploratory study, 1988).

The grieving process, as it applies to homicide and abduction, is unique in that the grieving process is the strong, emotional response to the sudden loss. The response is unavoidable and normal. These emotional responses are both psychological and physiological. Typical examples include, shock, denial, depression, helplessness, guilt, anger, and alienation. Bereavement is characterized by a synergism of loss, trauma, and victimization. Bereavement, as it relates to homicide or abduction, is unlike other forms of bereavement on a personal, as well as, a social level. On a personal level, the survivor experiences loss, trauma, and victimization. Victimization results from the stigma attached to the murder. Personal and social changes result in threats of deterioration and opportunities for growth for the surviving parent (Bucholz, 1999).

Survivors of abducted or murdered children are suddenly faced with an intense feeling of loss of control and unpredictability in a world which is presumed to be safe, secure, fair, and just (Janoff-Bulman, Shattering assumptions: Toward a new psychology of trauma, 1992).

Corr, Nabe, and Corr (Death and dying, life and living, 1997) identified four stages in the bereavement process. Initially, a survivor needs to acknowledge the reality of the loss. Second, a survivor must work through the anguish of the grief. Third, a survivor needs to adjust to the reality that the loss may be final. Finally, the survivor must emotionally displace the deceased and move forward with one's life (Mille, Death education and grief counseling, 1997).

The grief response to the long-term abduction or murder of a child varies with the age of the child. This was believed to be due to the ever-changing relationship that exists between the parent and the child at various stages of development and maturity. A sense of mortality and a loss of continuity can consume the parental survivor. It was reported that the loss of an adolescent child tends to produce severe responses of anger and guilt, often making it difficult to establish resolution. In contrast, the loss of adult children, although grieved no less, provides an environment more amenable to resolution for the parental survivor (Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement*, 1983)

Two components are identified as critical to dealing with the loss of a child: the relationship that exists between the parents and societal gender role expectations. Anger can be targeted from one parent to another, leading to a breakdown in the relationship. Personal intimacy and social interaction can impede the effort to move through the stages of bereavement. This can be the result of gender role expectations placed on parental survivors by society. The roles are clear under normal circumstances: The mother is expected to externalize the emotional response, actively seeking support. The father, in contrast, is strong and supportive, internalizing emotional responses. Yet in the world of child abduction and murder, normal circumstances are different. Society will question the lack of emotional response on the part of the father or the over-exaggerated response of the mother. These conflicting expectations can lead to miscommunication, in which one parent fails to recognize that the other parent is mourning (Donnelly, *Recovering From the Loss of a Child*, 1982).

In 2008, The Missing People Research Programme, UK, conducted a study to provide an exploratory examination of the range of experiences of, and impacts on, family members left

behind when someone goes missing. The study was a small scale, in-depth study of a number of family members' experiences, aiming to provide a rich and deep account of the ways in which the disappearance had affected them. The research identified three key domains of experience faced by the families of missing people: emotional and social experiences; financial, legal and other practical impacts; and experiences with service providers and the media. The findings are enumerated as below.

Emotional and social experiences

- Families may experience a range of emotions such as sadness, worry, guilt, anger and hope. They can experience 'highs' of hopefulness as well as 'lows' of despair.
- Emotional impacts may result in physical symptoms, such as sleeplessness, stress and deteriorating health.
- Emotional impacts do not diminish over time; families live 'in limbo' as long as their family member remains missing.
- Families' emotional experiences are affected by their perception of the disappearance; whether they believe the person left deliberately, and whether they believe their family member is still alive. What family members believe can affect not only their individual emotions, but also their relationships with other family members.
- Participants described a number of coping strategies they used to try to live with the disappearance. Examples of coping strategies include counseling, medication, religious faith, consulting psychics and mediums, and turning to friends and family.
- While some families actively seek to tell as many people as possible about the disappearance, others fear negative reactions and are wary about whom they tell.

Experiences varied among participants, indicating that no one approach to coping works for all families.

Financial, legal and other practical impacts

- The cost of conducting their own search affects some families, particularly the search efforts that take place before relevant support services are accessed. Such efforts include producing posters and leaflets and travelling in the UK and abroad.
- Disruption to family members' work, caused by emotional or practical pressures, can have financial consequences for families.
- The loss of the missing person's income can have a significant effect for families in which the missing person had financial responsibilities, such as paying bills or supporting other family members.
- Dealing with financial and legal affairs can be costly to the families of missing people, particularly where expert advice is required, as well as being a cause of stress and worry.
- Some family members find themselves in a position of paying the missing person's bills, or covering their debts, for reasons such as wishing to maintain the missing person's lifestyle for when they return or fearing the consequences of defaulting on payments.
- A particular area of confusion is that around the length of time for which a person must remain missing before their estate may be administered, their marriage dissolved, or for an official presumption of death to be declared.

Recommendations of the study included improving access to support services to families eg. access to enhanced range of advice literature about the emotional and practical support available to them and about other potential sources (in the voluntary and statutory sector) of assistance.

It also called for working with relevant government departments and non-departmental public bodies (etc.) to maximise the opportunities for ‘mainstreaming’ a range of support services tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of families of missing people.

The study also recommended that the ACPO and the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) should encourage police forces routinely to inform the family members of missing people of the range of support services available to them. Finally, it advocated the consultation with families of missing people to be at the heart of service development and planning.

Clarifying the legal and financial position was the second key recommendation area. It recommended the availability of legal and financial advice and support to the families of missing people and provision of instructions to appropriate resources to direct families.

It further recommended that any opportunity to provide a robust legal framework for dealing with the estate and other affairs of missing people who are presumed dead, and for improving clarity for family members, should be pursued.

Recommendations for the police service included the importance of the initial and continuing police response on the emotional impact on families, particularly with regard to families’ concerns that everything possible is done to find the missing person. The family members of a missing person should have a clearly identified single point of contact with the police force dealing with their case. Investigating officers should consider families’ need to know, as far as possible, what actions have been taken to find their missing family member.

(Source: Living In Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people, UK 2008)

Australia

A substantial proportion of the research conducted into missing persons has been conducted in Australia. The data collected in the recent study discussed above (James, Anderson, & Putt, 2008), suggested that approximately 35,000 people (approximately 1.7 per 1,000 Australians) were reported missing in Australia between 2005 and 2006.

However, the authors cautioned that this was likely an underestimation given that it was difficult to count certain sub-groups of the missing, such as homeless individuals, members of the indigenous population, or members of a sexual minority orientation (James et al., 2008).

In terms of the profile of missing Australians, the results indicated that males and females were nearly equally likely to be reported missing. However, with respect to young adults between the ages of 13 and 17 years old, which was the majority of cases, females were more likely to be reported missing than males. In fact, youth between the ages of 13 and 15 years old were the most likely age group to be reported missing (James et al., 2008).

Despite the higher frequency of young people going missing, adults were more likely to be missing for greater periods of time (James et al., 2008). In fact, only 2% of missing persons in Australia remained missing for more than six months; of those who were missing for these longer periods, they were more likely to be adult males (James et al., 2008; Newiss, 2005).

An earlier study in Australia identified that most of the 505 people who were reported missing in a one-week period in Australia were subsequently located alive within one week (86 per cent) (Henderson, Henderson, & Kiernan, 2000). In this study, only three individuals were found

deceased, and only two remained missing one year after the study.

These findings were similar to previous results reported by Henderson and Henderson (1998) in which only 2% of missing persons remain missing after six months. Data collected in Australia suggested that adults who went missing experienced a number of specific risk factors, such as desiring to escape a negative life situation, family conflict, substance abuse, or mental health issues. As mentioned above, in 2005 and 2006, police in two jurisdictions (New South Wales and South Australia) identified that over one-quarter of persons who had gone missing appeared to have a mental health issue. Furthermore, many adults over the age of 65 years old who had gone missing were classified as having gotten lost or wandered off suggesting the possible influence of age-related mental health problems (Source: James M, Anderson J & Putt J Missing persons in Australia. Research and public policy series no. 86. Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008.)

Considering the profiles of missing persons from the research conducted in Australia, the vast majority of those who were missing could be said to be young persons who ran away from their families and/or schools, or adults experiencing mental health issues who had left negative life situations, such as family or relationship conflict or additional pressures, such as those related to finances. Still, most of these missing persons were subsequently located by their families or the police within a short period of time.

Canada

Research into missing persons in Canada has not been as prevalent as that in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The research that has been conducted often involved

cases of missing children. For instance, in 2006, the National Missing Children Service assisted in 129 missing Canadian children, 230 missing American children, and 146 international missing children cases (Dalley, 2006). Overall, in 2006, there were 60,461 missing children reports filed with the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of these cases were removed within 24 hours of being listed on CPIC. The vast majority (82 per cent) of these cases involved youth between the ages of 14 to 17 years old. Nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of children and youth missing in 2006 were identified as having substance use issues. Approximately one-third (32 per cent) went missing from their family's residence, while 14% went missing from child care and 20% from foster care. Nearly one-fifth (18 per cent) went missing from an institution, including their school or a youth detention centre. Less than 1% went missing while on vacation, while shopping in a mall, or from work (Dalley, Missing Children Reference Reports, Ottawa, 2006).

In terms of the reason for children to be missing, all categories (run away, stranger abduction, parental abduction, accident, wandered off, unknown, or other) decreased in 2006, apart from "stranger abduction", which increased from 30 to 46 between 2005 and 2006. Female children were more likely (65 per cent) than male children to be abducted by a stranger. Over one-quarter (28 per cent) of these abductions occurred with youth between the ages of 14 and 15 years old, while another one-quarter (26 per cent) involved children under the age of 12 months old. Interestingly, over one-quarter (28 per cent) of missing children had a previous history of going missing. Finally, half of these children went missing from their family home (Dalley, Missing Children Reference Reports, Ottawa, 2006).

Parental abduction was the classification for 326 cases in 2006; this was a decrease from 349 in 2005. Parental abduction occurred slightly more often for female children (54 per cent), most of whom were five years old or younger (48 per cent). A minority (16 per cent) of cases were repeat abductions. The vast majority (73 per cent) of children who were abducted by a parent were taken from their home; only 5% were taken from school and 4% from their foster home. Over half (56 per cent) of the cases did not have a custody order in place at the time of the abduction (Dalley, 2006).

Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of the youth who were missing in 2006 were identified as having run away; more frequently involving young females (53 per cent) than young males, and most frequently occurred among 14 and 15 year olds (53 per cent of females and 45 per cent of males). Most of these youth (82 per cent) had also run away in the past. Youth were commonly reported as missing from their family's house (29 per cent) or from a foster home (20 per cent) (Dalley, 2006).

Only 24 youth in 2006 were missing due to an accident; a slight decrease from 21 in 2005. The accidental category of missing is used to refer to cases where an individual goes missing as the result of some form of a natural disaster or other displacement, such as an airplane crash, a boating accident, an avalanche, or a fire. In effect, an accidental cause is given until a body is recovered, at which point the victim is removed from the list of missing persons.

The number of children and youth who "wandered off" also decreased between 2005 (704) and 2006 (567). The wandering off category is often used to refer to youth who have left a facility or

home and not returned. Dalley (2006) also noted that Canadian law enforcement used this category to refer to children and youth missing from social services care. While the missing categories of unknown (10,761) and other (2,009) both decreased from 2005 (12,079 and 2,061 respectively), they continued to be very common in 2006.

“Unknown” is used when there is a lack of information regarding how the child went missing. In contrast, “other” is often used to refer to a youth who has failed to return to a youth detention centre (Dalley, Missing Children Reference Reports, Ottawa, 2006). Dalley (2006) also reported on an additional study conducted with 19 parents who experienced the abduction and subsequent return of their child by the other parent. At the time of the abduction, the mean age of the victim was 8 years old. Many of the children were living with their mother at the time of their abduction. All the children were said to have experienced verbal and emotional abuse as a result of the abduction incident. With respect to the recovery of the child, slightly more than half (53 per cent) were found within the first year. Slightly more than one-third (37 per cent) were found in Canada, another 37% were found in the United States, and approximately one-quarter (26 per cent) were found in another country.

In terms of the relationship between the parents, over half were either separated or divorced, and most described their relationship as “poor”. Over three-quarters of the parents had a court order in effect at the time of the abduction. Many of the “left-behind” parents described that they perceived the abduction to be caused by the abductor’s need to control or have revenge against them. The left-behind parents tended to have a better education and higher income than the abducting parent.

With respect to missing persons in British Columbia, Patterson (2005) reviewed 2,290 missing person cases recorded on CPIC over a period of 54 years (1950 to 2004). In addition to providing a profile of those reported missing, she reviewed the probable cause of the disappearance. Interestingly, the profile of persons missing in British Columbia over this 54 year period did not drastically change. Overall, the profile of a missing person in British Columbia commonly referred to an adult white male. While those reported missing closer to the 1950's had most commonly disappeared as the result of a fishing accident and were presumed drowned, the nature of this profile changed over the years; by the 1990's, missing persons were more likely to be missing from their home as the result of unknown circumstances that likely involved suicide or foul play. This change in profile was likely the result of an increasing number of prostitutes going missing from the streets of Vancouver, British Columbia. The overall trends identified by Patterson suggested a general shift from missing persons coming from coastal fishing communities to major urban centres. In effect, the trends indicated a decrease in drowning accidents as the primary cause of missing persons and an increased number of runaways, prostitutes, and youth going missing.

The Royal Canadian Police Force released the first Canadian statistics on missing children in 1987. There were 57,233 children reported missing that year. In 2008, there were 56,102 children reported missing in Canada. An analysis of the 2009 reports showed that the total number of missing children reports decreased from 56,102 in 2008 to 50,492 in 2009. The number of reports in all categories of missing children decreased, whereas in 2008 only the runaway, and wandered off reports decreased.

The runaway category composed almost three-quarters of the missing children reports. More females than males ran away and more often (28%) from their family residence, while 23 per cent ran away from foster homes. Eighty-three per cent of runaway children had a history of repeat or chronic running episodes. Seventeen per cent had no history of missing.

The parental abductions reports, both custody and non custody, totaled 237 incidents, the lowest number since the service opened in 1987. In 2008 and 2009, more male children than females were abducted, a change from 2006 when more females were reported missing. In 2008, the majority of the parental abduction missing cases had a custody order in place, but in 2009 more reports were made without a custody order. Forty-one per cent of the children were under the age of 5, 31 per cent between ages of 6 and 11, and 28 per cent between the ages of 12 and 17. Sixty-eight per cent were last seen at their family residence and 5% at foster care.

Stranger abduction reported incidents decreased from 56 to 50 incidents. More females than males were reported missing. Fifty-eight per cent of the children disappeared from their family residence and 16% from foster care. Twenty-eight per cent were under the age of one, 30 per cent were age 14 and 15, and 20 per cent were age 16 and 17, showing a trend toward missing adolescents. (Source: The Royal Canadian Police Force Report, 2009).

South East Asia

The United Nations states that the children of South-East Asia are the most vulnerable in the world. It estimates that 1 million Asian children are traded every single day. Burma is a destination country for child sex tourism. Urban poor and street children in Rangoon and

Mandalay are at risk of involuntary conscription as child soldiers by the Burmese junta. Thousands of children are forced to serve in Burma's national army as desertions of men in the army rise. Some children are threatened with jail if they did not agree to join the army. Ethnic insurgent groups also use compulsory labor of adults and engaged in the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers. (Source: United Nations, 2008).

South-East Asia is also characterized by high incidences of child migration, domestically and across borders. Women and children are not only trafficked for sexual exploitation, but also for other types of work. South-East Asia has been highlighted in existing literature as having great significance with regard to extensive intra-regional trafficking taking place around Thailand, one of the major source, transit, and destination countries for trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Another country that has emerged as a sending, receiving, and transit area for both domestic and international trafficking is Indonesia. In Malaysia, figures obtained from the police on missing persons in 2003 show that the majority were female between the ages of ten and 17, with 1,405 cases reported, effectively establishing the link between missing children and trafficking.

(Source: Archavanitkul, K., Combating the Trafficking in Children and their Exploitation in Prostitution and Other Intolerable Forms of Child Labor in Mekong Basin Countries, 1998)

Bangladesh

The International Organisation for migration (IOM) initiated a mapping exercise of Mapping of missing, kidnapped and trafficked children and women in Bangladesh. The aim of the project was to gather information about missing and trafficked women and children including causes, origin, routes and rescue efforts in order to better understand the trends of missing, kidnapped

and trafficked children. This mapping exercise was undertaken by compiling media reports of missing, kidnapped and trafficked children from January 1990- December 1999. In addition, abduction and trafficking of women were also documented from January 1997-December 1999.

The study revealed that about 3,391 children were missing during the ten year period as of media reporting. Of these, majority were boys in the age group between 10-16 years while for girls it was below the age of 10 years. The highest number of missing children were in the year 1997, numbering 417. Majority of the missing children were from Dhaka where there is massive urbanization with vast number of migrants, street children, beggar children and destitute children. The rescue rate was found be negligible, with 1.2% for boys and 3.4% for girls, and this was mainly from Dhaka.

Compared to missing children, the number of kidnapped children was 987, of which the overwhelming majority were girls and only 346 were boys. Majority of the kidnapped girls were in the age group of 11-16 years, while the boys were below 10 years of age, so that they could be used as camel jockeys. About 3,397 children were found to be trafficked, of whom 1,683 were boys and 1,714 were girls. Of the 3397 children who were trafficked, only 9% of the children were rescued within Bangladesh.

The study found that three factors explain the existence of the heaviest trafficking routes. First, traffickers seek routes that allow easy movement of people. Therefore, trafficked children are sent through well- recognized legal migration routes such as India. The second factor is profitability of the route, namely, centres of sex tourism such as Kolkata or Mumbai. Thirdly, traffickers send trafficked women and children to the Gulf countries, which is another lucrative destination.

The study suggested a number of recommendations to effectively combat the kidnapping and trafficking of women and children. The recommendations included:

- Promoting political will to address the issue
- Strengthening government machinery especially the law enforcement agencies in border management
- Raising awareness at the grassroots level
- Developing alternative skills and micro-enterprise programmes for girls
- Promoting dialogue on the issue
- Creating a media watch dog group
- Building NGO capacity to combat trafficking (Source: Mapping of missing, kidnapped and trafficked children and women: Bangladesh Perspective, International Organisation for migration, 2000)

China

According to the 2007 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons report, domestic trafficking "remains the most significant problem in China." Certain sources say that there are up to 20,000 children each year who are abducted to be sold in the black market. However, this is an underground practice and therefore impossible to track or crack down on it. Some sources put the number of abducted children as 70,000, while the Chinese government provides the number as 10,000.

Based on conservative estimates, an average of 192 children goes missing per day. The majority of those missing are boys, a direct consequence of The One Child Policy. The One Child Policy

has resulted in prohibitive family-planning laws in China: prospective parents must have a birth permit before conceiving, and while rural families are allowed a second child if their first is a girl, urban families must pay a fine for flouting the one-child rule. The easiest solution is to buy a stolen child, gender already determined.

Many parents have complained of a lack of support and effort on the part of the police in tracing their lost children. The current police system requires parents to provide evidence to prove their child has been abducted before the case can be officially filed. Moreover, the police will not accept a report until a child has been missing at least 24 hours – which means precious time is lost in rescuing the victim and catching the criminals.

According to the police, many crimes involve the kidnapping of children who are then sold in other provinces. Tracking the criminals would require cross-border cooperation, but currently such cooperation between independent provincial police systems is not common. (Source: U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons report, 2007)

Child Abduction

One of the reasons for a child going missing is abduction. Child abduction is defined as the offense of abducting or kidnapping a child by an older person. The US research by Finkelhor, D., G., Hotaling and A. Sedlak, 1990 titled “Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America First Report: Numbers and Characteristics National Incidence Studies” have studied child abduction in detail, and identified two types of child abduction namely, stereotypical abduction and legal abduction.

Types of Abductions

According to Finkelhor (1990) there are two different types of child abduction: a. stereotypical abduction b. Legal abduction

Stereotypical abduction: Stereotypical abduction is the type of abduction in which a child is taken from the home, yard or bed, kept for ransom and/or sexual exploitation, and sometimes murdered. This type of abduction is usually committed by a stranger and is rare occurrence. This abduction is often referred to as a stereotypical abduction.

Legal Abduction: The situation in which the child is taken for a short period of time or transported a short distance from the point of abduction is referred to as the legal abduction.. This type of abduction is a more general form of abduction, and one which occurs most frequently.

In an attempt to distinguish between these two types of abductions, the following explanation is provided. The **stereotypical** definition includes "the removal of a child from his or her home for an extended period of time primarily for purposes of ransom, sadistic or sexual assault, or even murder" (Finkelhor et al, 1992, Asdigian et al, 1995). The stereotypical abduction term applies to those severe circumstances "where strangers are perpetrators and a) the child was gone overnight, or b) the child was transported more than 50 miles or more from the point of abduction, or c) the child was killed, or d) the child was ransomed, or e) the perpetrator evidenced an intent to keep the child permanently" (Finkelhor et al, 1992).

The **legal** definition includes the following: the coerced and unauthorized taking of a child into a building, vehicle, or distance of more than 20 feet; the detention of a child for a period of more than an hour; the luring of a child for the purposes of committing another crime by someone other than a family member; the perpetrator is known to both the parent or the child; the child may be held for only a short period of time, and then released even before the parent or guardian realizes that the child has been missing; the abduction or coerced movement may be masked under another more serious crime, such as sexual assault, homicide, and the like (Steidel, 1994; Collins, 1993). Furthermore, this definition varies between countries and police departments. Considering the subtle differences in the two definitions, police often find it difficult to distinguish between the two. Also, a number of legal definition abductions may not be reported to the police if the victim feels ashamed of the assault or intimidated by the offender (Finkelhor et al, 1990). It is common for controversy to appear when non-family or stranger abductions are counted using the legal definition, but, the results are interpreted using the stereotypical definition, as is commonly the case. (Source: Finkelhor, D., G., Hotaling and A. Sedlak, Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America First Report: Numbers and Characteristics National Incidence Studies, 1990).

Abductor

Four categories of abductors have been classified by the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). These are as follows:

a. **Paedophiles** – The people in this category constitute the single largest number of child abductors. Paedophiles seem to identify with children better than with adults which is the reason why they are able to seduce/lure children easily. They appear to understand the likes and dislikes of children and show a genuine concern for their well-being.

b. **Profiteers** – This is an individual who is a criminal exploiter who sells children to pornographers or adoption rings, mostly in the black-market industry.

c. **Serial Killers** – The actions of these individuals are methodical and ritualized, with power, dominance, and control as the most frequent motivator.

d. **Childless Psychotics** – These individuals tend to abduct children when they are unable to have children of their own or have lost a child and seek another to fill its place (Source: Tedisco, J. N., & Paludi, M. A. Missing children: A psychological approach to understanding the causes and consequences of stranger and non-stranger abduction of children, 1996).

Abductors are generally male and they tend to target victims within their own ethnic group. Their behavioural patterns seem to be dependent upon gender, motivation, and relationship to the victim. To explain further, female offenders rarely abduct for sexual gratification, or profit, but more for emotional satisfaction.

The majority of child abductors who murder their victims have a history of violence. The United States missing children homicide investigative study by Hanfland et al, (1997) revealed that 60%

had prior arrests for violent crimes. Almost two-thirds of the killers who were strangers to the victims had committed prior crimes against children, whereas 41% of the child abduction killers who were friends and acquaintances of the victim had committed crimes against other children.

Hanfland et al, (1997) stated that when the child is abducted and murdered, “contrary to the popular belief, child killers are not aged perverts or dirty old men.” The abductor’s average age is around 27 years and much younger than the average killer. They are predominately unmarried (85%), half of them live alone or with their parents, half are unemployed, they have a history of sexual, alcohol, drug and mental problems, two thirds have been arrested for violent crimes with slightly half of these prior crimes against children, and many move or change residence often.

Younger offenders, which include adolescent offenders, attract their victims using different approaches, such as taking away privileges, giving gifts, making threats, and using weapons. In essence, they may need to do more to control their victims. In general though, child abductors are usually skilled in choosing their victims.

Tedisco and Paludi (1996) stated: "Abductors use the advantage of their physical strength over their victims or wield a gun or a knife. Abductors also use age, social position, economic power, authority, and/or manipulative lures as their weapons.

They rely on their victims' fear, vulnerability, and obedience to adults' authority. Child abductors are characteristically habitual offenders and carry out their assaults in a highly stereotypical *modus operandi*".

It is also important to consider the fact that most abductors are usually highly skilled in the art of manipulation. "They use seduction techniques, competition, peer pressure, motivation

techniques, and threats to get children to comply with their requests to engage in sex, steal, abuse drugs, or participate in prostitution or pornography" (Tedisco & Paludi, 1996). More simply expressed, in order to be successful, they must lower the children's inhibitions or make them afraid of the consequences if they do not comply.

To help explain an abductors approach, researchers identified two types of offender modus operandi; the "blitz attack" and the "confidence" or "con" assault (Tedisco & Paludi, 1996).

The Blitz Attack – "A stranger appears suddenly. Children's responses resemble reactions to any other sudden, unexpected, dangerous event in their lives: (a) they are in so much shock that it interferes with any defensive action they might take; (b) the shock of the stranger's behavior precludes seeing or remembering much of the incident, so that they may have considerable difficulty recognizing and identifying the individual at a later time; and (c) they label the experience as an assault and themselves as survivors". This type of attack may or may not involve an assault with a weapon.

The Confidence "Con" Assault – An elaborate scheme is set up by the abductor. It is more of a psychological assault than it is a physical assault. Initially, the abductor has to gain "the confidence of the targeted child/youth. The target's trust is used to manipulate her or him into physical and psychological vulnerability. The victim begins to notice a change in the behaviour of the abductor from a nice person to an aggressor. However, by the time this realization takes place, the abductor has already assessed his or her potential for escape; many of the child's options are thus eliminated. Trust is devastated after such a con assault. The key to continuing

the con assault is to have the abuser convince the victim that he or she is a participant in the crime; the he or she shares the responsibility for the abuse or has no other alternatives".

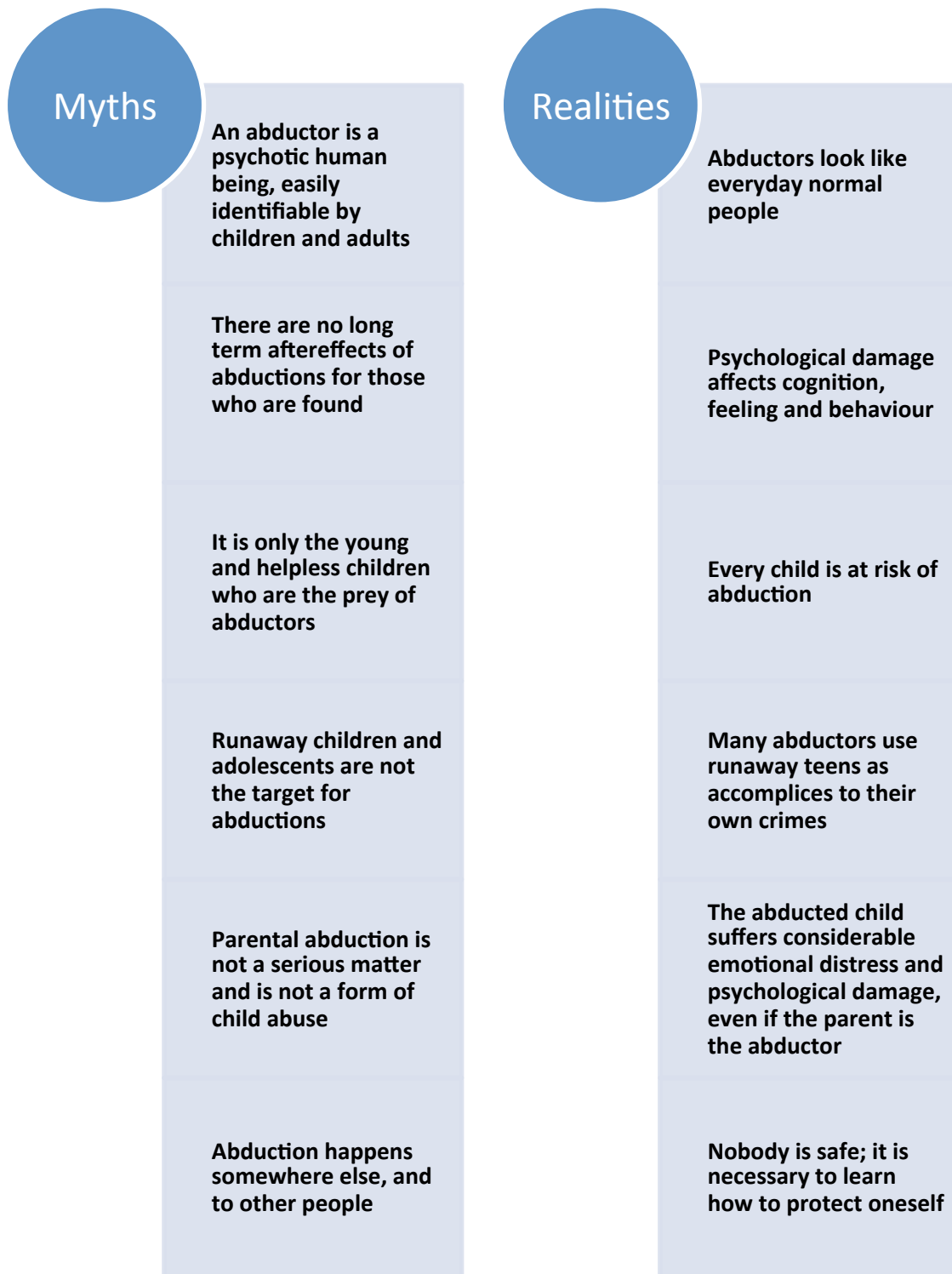
Relationship between the Offender and Victim

The relationship between the offender and victim appears to change with the age of the child. Family members and acquaintances often abduct younger children, up to seven years of age, while strangers tend to abduct school age victims (Boudreaux et al, 1999). Further, younger females, one to five years of age, tend to be killed by friends or acquaintances, while older females, 16 to 17 years of age, tend to be killed by strangers. Contrarily, the findings are different for male victims. The younger male victims, one to five years of age are more likely to be killed by strangers, as are teenage males, 13 to 17 years of age (Hanfland et al, 1997).

Family Characteristics

Researchers have suggested that in many cases, children "from a dysfunctional family and who may already be the victim of sexual and/or physical abuse" are prime abduction targets (Tedisco & Paludi, 1996). Contradictory, Hanfland et al, (1997) reported that most, 66%, of victims of non-family abduction and murder were described by those who knew them as normal kids with a good relationship with the family and typically of low risk. It may be noted here that those predators who murder children may do so when the opportunity arises. Therefore, any child could be at risk. On the other hand, children with low self confidence may be more likely to become prey for the potential kidnapper.

Figure 4: Abduction- Myths and Realities



(Source: James N. Tedisco, Michele A. Paludi, 1991)

Homicide

Finkelhor (1997) stated that "homicide is one of the five leading causes of death among children in the United States". In general, child homicide rates tend to vary with age (Boudreaux et al, 2001; Dalley, 2000). Child homicide appears to have a bimodal pattern; children younger than the age of four and those adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 tend to be at the highest risk. When examined closely, children under two years of age are at the highest risk for murder. A study conducted by Crittenden and Craig (1990) suggested that "the rate for homicide for children was highest in the first month of life, decreasing as the child aged". The young child is usually killed by parents or family members using personal weapons, such as the hands or feet. Older children and youth are usually victimized by peers and acquaintances and killed by the use of firearms (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Dalley, 2000).

Considering the factors of gender and age, males between the ages of thirteen and seventeen outnumber the risk to female victims of the same age group (Boudreaux et al, 2001). It is speculated that males may be more violent and aggressive toward any rival peers during the period of adolescence.

Abduction Homicide

It has been reported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention that "one in four children abducted by parents or relatives was later found to have been murdered by his or her abductors" (Boudreaux et al., 2001). When an abductor murders a child, abductors are more

likely to conceal the body than murderers in general. Furthermore, the body is most often found in a rural area, usually at a site greater than one and a half miles from the victim's home. Only five percent were found in the killers residence (Hanfland et al, 1997).

However, for the most part, children are usually considered at low risk for kidnapping and murder. With regard to younger children, gender is usually not a factor in the murder of a child. Very young children are commonly victims of maternal desire or emotion-based crimes. However, Boudreaux et al, (2001) stated that "female children from preschool through high school age were at least three times more likely to be abducted and murdered than male children". Females are also more at risk for abduction-homicide in adolescence.

Physical Setting Related to Abduction Opportunities

In a book "My child is not missing: a parents' guidebook for the prevention and recovery of missing children", Beverly Huttinger described some physical situations that caused children to be more vulnerable to victimization. Huttinger listed these as follows:

- walking alone to or from school (especially before and after normal school hours);
- waiting for a school bus alone;
- playing in a public park or playground after hours or late in the evening or playing unsupervised at any time;
- exploring remote areas;
- using enclosed, poorly lit stairways, corridors, and public rooms (e.g., apartment laundries);
- riding a bicycle alone or at night;

- waiting in public parking lots (e.g., at malls) after dark or in normal working hours;
- walking unattended in a crowded mall or other public places; and
- wearing articles of clothing that have their name prominently displayed allowing abductors to portray familiarity .

(Source: My child is not missing: a parents' guidebook for the prevention and recovery of missing children, Huttinger B, 1984).

Investigative Considerations

The greatest majority of missing children are runaway youth. Each year, most runaway children have multiple episodes of running away, some as many as forty times a year. In 2002, this group of children created over 52,000 reports and 74% were repeat occurrences. Children who are abducted by a parent created 429 reports and those abducted by a stranger, including relatives, neighbours and close friends, created 35 reports.

Consequently, on occasion, missing children approaching the age of adolescence tend not to draw the immediate attention of investigators. Many think that older kids and youth are just being irresponsible by missing a curfew and so forth. The police response to an incident is considered routine if the youth has a history of missing. For children under the age of 16 years, police agencies have a protocol in place for investigators to follow but after this age there appears to exist a "grey area". On occasion, a missing episode is considered routine, and unfortunately the youth is abducted by a stranger. (Source: Dalley, M.L. The Killing of Children by Parent (s) or Guardians (s): Characteristics and Trends 1990 to 1993, 2002).

B. Indian Studies

There is a dearth of studies on the missing children phenomena in India. Literature on missing children per se is sparse, though there are many studies on child labour, child prostitution and trafficking wherein the link between missing children and most forms of child exploitation has been established. The first comprehensive information in India on missing children was the collection of information by National Crime Record Bureau which commenced in 1953. One of the earliest efforts was spearheaded by UNICEF in 1996 (A report on child prostitution B. Bhamati, UNICEF 1996) which established the link between child trafficking and missing children. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted a research study on trafficking of women and children in India in 2004, again providing evidence of the link between missing children and human trafficking. In 2007, an enquiry was initiated by NHRC following the recovery of the mutilated bodies of 19 children who were originally reported missing in Nithari. The report concentrated on the issue of policy gaps that existed in the system. Therefore it can be clearly seen that initiatives at the national level on studying the problem of missing children has been few and far between.

This section provides the chronological presentation of major Indian studies on the issue of missing children and their findings.

Kidnapping of Children in India (1968) was one of the earliest studies undertaken by the Central Bureau of Correctional Services. A committee under the Central Bureau of Correctional Services was set up by the Government of India to study the kidnapping and maiming of children. According to the census of 1961, there were 100,000 child beggars in India under the

age of 14, representing 10% of all beggars and vagrants. Surveys done in four cities indicated that they formed 25%. A proportion of them are believed to have been kidnapped and maimed to provide a source of income. A police drive in 1965 succeeded in rescuing 22 children and to arrest a kidnapping gang operating across India. . A four year review (1963-67) showed that 25 children were kidnapped annually for the purposes of begging, though none were maimed. The study recommended that the Missing Persons Bureau needed to be strengthened at the State, district and city levels. (Source: Kidnapping of Children in India, Jyotsna Shah, 1976)

The National Human Rights Committee (2000) took the initiative to undertake the first major study in India on trafficking which was published in 2004. It established the link between missing children and Human Trafficking when it was published in 2004. The study reported that children who went missing were trafficked for specific purposes, such as performing in circus, camel jockeying, begging, domestic labour, marriage, organ donation, adoption and debt bondage. (Source: Trafficking in Women and Children India, National Human Rights Committee Action research, Nair P.C. and Sen S., 2004)

Childline (2007) undertook a study titled “Missing Children Of India: Issues and Approaches”. It observed that the average number of children declared “missing” annually in the country was calculated at 44,476. The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), the nation's central crime research organization, tabulates only cases of kidnapped children which it puts at 3196 for the year 2005 figures show a gradual upswing in the number of missing children in several states, led by Maharashtra (yearly average: 13,881), followed by Delhi (6,227) and Madhya Pradesh (4,915).

- Mumbai is number one when it comes to missing children. In 2006 alone, Mumbai's

missing minor registers recorded 948 children as untraced

- The Patna High Court, while hearing a PIL on kidnappings, sought figures from district judges. Statistics showed that over 1,800 kidnapping cases were lodged in 2006 and 1,697 in 2005
- An estimated 3,497 children, a majority of them girls, went missing last year and only 1,585 were recovered.
- On an average, 170 kids go missing in Rajasthan every year
- Over a thousand children went missing in Kerela in 2005.
- As of December 31 2005, the number of untraced children in MP was 1913.
- Of the 15,000 who went missing from the Capital last year, 7,000 were minors. From 2003 to 2006, of the 8,681 children who went missing, 8,014 were “traced” and 667 were recorded as 'untraced'
- In Assam from 2001 to 2005, for which complete figures are available, 3,673 children were reported missing.
- In UP, as many as 3,649 children went missing in the State in 2005 (Source: Childline, 2007).

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) ordered an enquiry into the rape and murder of 19 children in Nithari in 2007. The report stated that the police were insensitive to the woes of poor families, rude in their approach, and their behaviour was generally gender and child insensitive when it came to handling of missing children cases. Almost all the victim families came from poor sections of society, and there was a general perception among these families that police did not care to listen to their problems. Thus it was felt that reporting and investigating

cases of children missing were not given the necessary priority, especially children from poor families. This was a general situation that prevailed across the country.

There was also apathy and a general lack of sensitivity about gender and child issues in the police system. Citing the police's criminal indifference, the report stated that FIRs were not lodged even in missing cases which involved minors. The report strongly stated that after the recovery of human skeletons from D-5, Sector 31, in Noida it became clear that the police had no information whatsoever about five victims whose skeletal remains were found. The final report further said, "There is a strong possibility that the reports (about the missing victims) were not lodged even after their kin had informed the police that they were missing. This is a grave error and indicates how this police station functioned." (Source: Report of the Committee investigating into allegations of large scale sexual abuse, rape and murder of children in Nithari village of Noida, UP, Krishnan, Manjula., 2007)

Figure 5: Missing Children in India



States	No. of missing Children (2008-2010)
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1. Maharashtra	26,211
2. West Bengal	25,413
3. Delhi	13,570
4. Madhya Pradesh	12,777
5. Karnataka	9,956
6. Uttar Pradesh	9,482

(Source: Bachpan Bachao Andolan, 2010)

Save the Children, Kolkata (2008) undertook a study to understand the dynamics of trafficking and migration of children (missing) in selected endemic blocks of West Bengal, to collect reliable information on the number of children trafficked, and among them the number of missing children. The report stated that the National Crime Records Bureau website displays about 149 children missing from Sandeshkhali (142) and Patharpratima (7), while data reveals that in Patharpratima since 2005, 71 children were reported missing for which General Diary/FIR has been filed, while 28 missing children were recovered during this period for most of which General Diary/FIR may have been filed earlier. Similarly, data received from Sandeshkhali police station reveals that from 2004 to 2006 a total of 302 children were reported missing, while 30 children have been traced during this period.

Other findings pertaining to missing children in the study include:

- a) 66.67% are girls, while the remaining 33.33% are boys
- b) 49.06% children were between the age of 15 to 18, while 29.96% were between (13 - 14) yrs and 20.97% below 12 years of age
- c) 15.04% children never attended school, while 76.69% children studied only till 5th standard. Amongst girls 64.61% attended school only till 3rd standard and 14.61% of the girls never attended
- d) 82.92% children left their homes for work and 11.67% of children were taken out of their homes for marriage
- e) Only 16.18% cases were reported to the police or the Panchayat. In 83.82% cases, the parents either tried to get information on the child either themselves or through other contacts.

The study further included the recommendations that as mandated under Section 63 of the Juvenile Justice Act 2000, all police stations should have an officer designated as Child Welfare Officer. At the state level, an officer of the rank of DIG should be designated as the Nodal Officer in charge of missing children. All stakeholders, including police administration and community representatives, should be sensitized on the issue of missing children.(Source: Save the Children, Kolkata, 2008).

SATHI (Society for Assistance to Children in Difficult Situation) 2008 undertook a study titled “Study of databases on Missing Children in India”. The study attempted to understand how governmental and non-governmental agencies dealt with the data of missing children and to what degree they could have consistent data that was shared among all who were involved in the area of missing children. The list included six non-government organizations across the country, and two governmental mechanisms namely, the Kolkata Police and The National Crime Records

The research findings are as follows:

- Forms did not have standardized Fields (Data fields are not same in all forms):

For instance the National Centre for Missing Children (NCMC) form asked whether the child wore glasses or not whereas the HomeLink Network (Don Bosco) as well as Kolkata CID data fields did not ask for that specific information.

- There was no standardization of the form containing these data fields:

In most forms, data items were free formatted. This made it very difficult to ensure uniformity of descriptions. An important lapse that was found was that there was no standardization as to what should be put in the field for Place of Missing or Place where last found. This was left blank in

many examples that were seen on the Kolkata CID data base. Usually the data field was found to be empty or the standard phrase “From the house” was used. The research observed that the place of missing if filled appropriately could be one of the good search criteria.

- There was no basic check on data entered:

The research found that in many records of children who were found a) there was no image of the child found, b) body weight was entered as zero kg and c) the place where the child was found was not mentioned.

- There was lack of standard and easy field for searching:

The search item found being used the most was the name of the child, the study found. It noted that while the State District and Police Station (PS) in the district played a very important role in reporting missing and found children, there was no mechanism to search the records using these as search parameters. Similarly, there was no way to search by age of the missing child.

- There was difficulty in comparing databases across the organisations:

Given the fact that there are atleast four to five major sources of data on missing and found children – the State Crime Record Bureaus (SCRBs), the NCRB, NCMC, HomeLink and ChildLine, lack of a proper mechanism for synchronization of databases was found. For the NCRB and SCRB there was a mechanism for uploading but that process is manual. Additionally, there was no mechanism to ensure regular updating of the records.

- Language Medium used:

In all the websites, it was found that the medium of information is English. The West Bengal website has indicated the intention of using Hindi and Bangla but is yet to be implemented.

- No use of biometrics :

The final observation of the study was the complete lack of collecting and matching bio markers in the process of recovering missing children. The argument was that if the DNA sample of the parents is kept it might provide an opportunity of quick matching against children who are eventually traced. However, biomarkers have not found a place in the system yet, probably due to financial, legal and societal reasons. (Source: SATHI, 2008)

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (2008) undertook a research project to understand the nature and extent of the missing children problem across the country. The data was collected and classified from 20 states and 4 union territories of India for the period of 2 years from January 2008 to January 2010. The missing children data was classified under three major headings - Reported Missing, Traced and Untraced.

The findings were as follows: 1,17,480 children were reported missing, 74,209 were traced and 41,546 remained untraced in two years between 2008 and 2010. Among 20 states and 4 UTs, Maharashtra (26,211) had highest number of children reported missing followed by West Bengal (25,413), Delhi (13,570) and Madhya Pradesh (12,777). Karnataka (9956) and Uttar Pradesh (U.P) (9,482) were the last two among the top six states. Maharashtra (18,706) had the highest number of children being traced followed by Delhi (11,870), Madhya Pradesh (9,537), Uttar Pradesh (7,586), West Bengal (6,653) and Karnataka (3,522). 41,546 untraced children

constituted more than 1/3rd of the total children reported missing nationally. West Bengal had maximum number of untraced children. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh came next in the line.

According to the study, as much as 45% of the total reported missing children have still not been found. The border districts of West Bengal, such as 24 Pargana, Midnapur, Malda, Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Nadia etc, had large number of untraced children. Data from 392 districts show that 1,17,480 children were reported missing within a span of 2 years. The report further elaborated that if the average number of 150 reported missing children per district (from available data) is extrapolated to all 640 districts in the country, the total number of missing children in India every year would be in the figure of 96,000. (Source: Bachpan Bacchao Andolan, 2008)

Priyanka Dubey, Tehelka (2012) in an investigative report stated that poor children are picked up from the remotest slums of Delhi and sold to the sugarcane farmers of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The Ministry of Home Affairs had put the figure of Delhi kids going missing at an average of 14 per day. The investigation showed that besides the regular and predictable endpoints of being forced into prostitution, used for organ trade and injected into the beggary cycle, there was a completely new trafficking racket in place. This sent children to the sugarcane fields of the neighbouring states. This trend of abducting, trafficking and selling children was more rampant in districts like Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat and Meerut of western Uttar Pradesh along with adjacent districts of Haryana. With a scattered but efficient network, middlemen abduct children from poor settlements of Delhi and then sell them off to sugarcane farmers working in numerous fields surrounding Delhi. (Source: Tehelka, Priyanka Dubey 2012)

Research at the Local Level:

Mao S, Mehta L, (2007) from The Faculty of Social Work, Baroda, conducted a local level research on missing children in Baroda in 2006. According to the Prevention of Crime Branch police records, 58 children were reported missing in the city of Baroda. The majority of the missing children were between 15-18 years of age. There were 52 children missing between the ages 15-18 as compared with 2 missing children in the ages between 5-9 and 3 missing children between the ages 11-14. Majority of the missing children were runaways, and returned home on their own. There were two cases in which the female had eloped to get married. Females were more likely to go missing than males and accounted for 33 of the total missing children cases in 2006 as compared with 25 males. Of the 58 missing children, 44 have been found and there are 14 still missing. Most of the runaways had gone to their relatives place or taken a trip outside the city and eventually returned back to their homes. One child was found from the Goa Remand home by the police and was returned to his parents. There were two cases in which the child suffered from a mental disorder. Of the 13 children still missing, 6 are males and 8 are females. All the females still missing are between 15-18 years of age. (Source: Missing Children in Baroda, Mao S, Mehta L, 2007)

This was a first attempt of the researcher and her guide to explore uncharted territory, the findings of which increased the quest for further research, resulting in the current study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that while researchers in other countries have covered several dimensions relating to missing children, and have undertaken in depth studies on various aspects including the causes for children going missing, focusing on victims as well as perpetrators and

the modus operandi of the perpetrators. Furthermore, studies have also been undertaken on police response, the families affected, and children who were reported missing and eventually found murdered.

So far in India the issue of missing children is yet to be recognized as a serious social problem. Indian researchers have not concentrated on generating information related to this issue except for a few studies given here which provides information on the prevalence of the issue as a whole. No studies were found specifically examining the impact of missing people as a whole, on families, society and the community at large. There is a need for research into the various aspects concerning missing children to understand the missing children problem in accordance with India's unique multi-cultural context. Research studies need to be undertaken to study causal factors related to the various types of missing children episodes. Studies examining the impact on families of missing children would provide essential information to aid in policy and planning decisions in India.

Figure 6: Missing Children in Gujarat (2000-2009)



City	Missing Children
1. Surat	3,458
2. Ahmedabad	2,764
3. Rajkot	1,437
4. Baroda	1,241

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the research methodology adopted by the researcher to study the missing children problem. As seen in the earlier chapter through other international and national studies, the missing children problem is multi-faceted and encompasses diverse issues. The main aim of the research is to provide valid and accurate information based on empirical data, and the research methodology has been designed and developed accordingly.

Rationale of the study

The issue of missing children is taking on enormous proportions across India, and research is needed for the design and implementation of programs and policies for child protection and intervention. This study is an attempt to explore the issue of missing children, aims to understand the phenomenon and provide some accurate information on the subject. The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of the problem. It is an exploratory study since the problem of missing children is complex and multi-faceted. This entails exploring the family environment, circumstances under which the child went missing and the response of the police authorities to the situation.

This research can help in making early intervention and prevention frameworks that address the risk and protective factors surrounding why children go missing. Relevant frameworks would include developmental crime prevention and early intervention, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and family and domestic violence.

This research also aims to identify the steps that could address the gaps in the missing children agenda, implementing strategies and educating police, stakeholders and the public on missing children. The study can be a resource for Government agencies, Law Implementation agencies, Juvenile Justice System and social organizations working in the area of Child Rights and Child Protection and has the overall aim of recommending and justifying action taken to prevent, protect, provide for, or rehabilitate children who are at the risk of going missing, are already missing or have been traced and require rehabilitation.

Research usually takes place in a world where important decisions are taken by those with the most power (governments, elite, donors, international agencies). Those with the least power are far removed from decision making. Research on the worst forms of child exploitation, including trafficking, deals with some of the most powerless members of society. If exploited and abused children are involved in research, this can challenge existing hierarchies and power relations.

The overall purpose of this research is to develop information which will provide guidance for policies that will address effective, efficient handling of missing children's cases for their quick and safe recovery as well as enable stakeholders to take preventive measures for keeping children safe.

Significance of the problem in Social Work Perspective

Missing children is a significant issue which requires a child-focused response. The implications of a child going missing are severe, and impact the child, family and society as a whole. Protection and safeguards are required to be put in place for safety of children, and interventions

at several levels are necessary to address and combat the issue of missing children and the affected families. The police hold the most essential position of authority when a child is reported missing, but a holistic approach is required in the care and protection of children, which involves the stakeholders at the government level, the community level and the individual level. It is the responsibility of social work practitioners to bridge that gap and support those that have responsibility and primacy for the safety of children who live in their communities.

The emotional and societal cost of a child going missing is incalculable, such as the emotional impact on the child's family, and the child's future contribution to society. A study done in UK, Report of the Parliamentary Panel (2007) Safeguarding Children and Young People who Runaway or go Missing from Home or Care attempted to quantify the cost of missing children to the police service and the figure was estimated to be at £ 222 million. While no study has been done in India to ascertain the same, there is no doubt that the implications of the missing children problem is huge, and social work interventions are urgently required to address the issue keeping in focus the needs of the child, family and society.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To create a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and the problem of missing children. It includes nature, extent, significance and problems related to existing social norms and legal framework dealing with it and the challenges in the implementation of the rules and regulations.

- To evaluate and analyze the policy level gaps in addressing the problem of missing children.
- To highlight the problem of missing children and sensitize the general public and government machinery about the serious threat posed by the phenomena of missing children supported by various case studies.
- To draw the attention of all concerned with child rights to focus their attention on the problem and take steps to combat the same.
- To provide stakeholders in the child protection system with information giving them a better understanding of the affected families' needs.

Research Design

In order to design programmes to combat the problem of missing children, valid, accurate information is needed - to identify the most urgent problems and the most effective ways to intervene. This research is designed with this as its primary goal. While academic research is designed mainly to prove or disprove a hypothesis, this study aims to collect information needed for an action to take place, in order to design practical solutions to a practical problem.

Qualitative as well as quantitative data collection approaches have been used in an attempt to collect the necessary information on the causes, nature and extent of missing children in Gujarat.

Quantitative data collection was vital to determine the magnitude of missing children. Qualitative data was essential to establish the aspects of missing children not directly amenable to quantification but which determined or influenced the whole phenomena of missing children.

Field research was carried out to understand the current situation of missing children in Gujarat.

The study has been done by adopting the Interview schedule method, data collection from primary and secondary sources, discussion, observation and interview of parents of missing children.

Theoretical and Operational Definitions

There is no universal definition of a missing child.

In USA, children are considered missing if they have disappeared from the guardianship of their legal custodian. Additionally, children who purposely leave without the intention of returning, sometimes referred to as runaways, are considered missing. They are considered missing until they are either found (alive or otherwise) or until a certain length of time has passed after which they are considered dead; the period of time varies by jurisdiction. (Source: NISMART-1)

In the UK, where until today there has been no clear separation between adults and children in the data collection, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has defined a missing person as: “anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established”. (Source: Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigations on Missing Persons, ACPO, UK, 2005)

In India there is no working definition of a missing child. For the purpose of this study, we shall define a missing child as “a child under the age of 18 whose whereabouts is unknown to his or

her parent, guardian or legal custodian”.

Data Source

The design of the research required two forms of data source, both primary and secondary to be obtained to gain insights into the missing children problem.

Primary Data: Primary data was collected from the parents of missing children through in depth interviews following separate interview schedules along with observation.

Secondary Data: Quantitative Government data of reported cases has been compiled, analysed and interpreted from social work perspective. Secondary data was obtained from Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar.

The study was conducted over two phases and incorporated both a quantitative phase based on the analysis of secondary data sources and a qualitative phase based on semi-structured interviews with key informants, namely, parents of missing children, police personnel and NGOs.

Phase one of the research involved the analysis of secondary quantitative data available from Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar. This data do not distinguish the numbers of children, that is persons under 18 years from the other adult categories of missing persons.

Data was provided detailing the age and gender of missing children reports by the Missing Person's Bureau, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar from 2000-2011 and it is upon this data that the analysis is based. Further information was not centrally available.

In phase two of the research semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of missing children and a more detailed breakdown relating to the missing children in terms of age, gender,

family background and incident leading to and police response to the missing episode was compiled. In the absence of substantive data on the actual numbers of children reported as missing, interviews sought to qualitatively assess the extent of the problem.

Universe and Sample

The study involved the use of in depth, semi-structured interview during the pilot study which provided the researcher with several insights. On the basis of the pilot study, the researcher restructured interview questions and altered the language of the interview questions in accordance with the comfort level of the respondent. At the onset of the data collection process, the researcher commenced with random sampling process, having procured the list of potential respondents, i.e, parents of missing children from data provided by the police during secondary data collection. However, certain developments occurred – the case of Vishwa Patel, an 11 year old girl who went missing in January 2012 brought media attention to the issue of missing children and parents of missing children united to form a group to highlight their distress. The movement gained increasing momentum and parents of missing children were united in their efforts to raise public awareness in the community.

When the researcher visited one of the parents involved in the movement, it resulted in the respondent identifying other potential or key informants who were later contacted. Therefore snowball sampling procedure came about as a natural outcome during the process of data collection in the light of these developments.

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher obtained informed consent from the key respondents before proceeding with the interview process. The sensitive nature of the study made it imperative for the researcher to follow an informal approach during the interview process. Care was taken to ensure that the respondents' feelings were respected which entailed altering the sequence of questions on several occasions. During the pilot study the researcher found that the parents were unwilling to refer to their children in the past tense, and preferred to talk about their child as though they were still present in the family. With the respondents becoming emotional at several stages during the interview process, the researcher was required to be understanding and comforting while being objective in recording the responses.

In addition to the interviews with parents of missing children who were the key respondents, several police officers were instrumental in providing additional information and shared their views on the issue of missing children.

The tools of data collection can therefore be summarized as below:

- **Semi-structured interviews:** The areas of discussion were predetermined through an interview schedule, but the subjects were permitted to approach these in their own way. A typical interview lasted around 40-45 minutes.
- **Observation:** Observation by the researcher made it possible to confirm much of the data about economic conditions, relations within community and family, and other elements related to the missing child episode, such as police response to the matter. During interviews and throughout field visits, field notes were taken of observations of

respondent parents and their environment as well police officers responding to the situation.

Inclusion Criteria

The study contains only reported cases of missing children.

Exclusion Criteria

The study has not included unreported cases and cases of missing children who have eventually been found as homicide victims. Further, children missing from State Homes has not been included in this study as it involves an entirely different focus altogether and is a topic for a new research undertaking.

Limitations of the Study

The study relied on the data available with the police which, as the study shows, have limitations and simply do not tell us the number of children reported as missing. The arising methodological difficulty from the police data is that the figures relate to the numbers of reports of missing children and not the numbers of actual children.

This study establishes the facts pertaining to missing children according to current available information and interview data. It incorporates information gathered from NCRB, NGOs and Police. It is important to emphasize here the small-scale nature of the study; therefore the researcher has not attempted to address all the issues relating to this problem. All efforts have however, been made to provide and present findings based on empirical data.

Researcher Experience

Establishing trust and rapport with the respondents were the most important aspects of the study as the subject was very emotional and parents were reluctant to answer questions to a stranger with a questionnaire. Trust and rapport were built over time, almost always requiring several visits. Repeated meetings helped the researcher to establish trust and build relationships.

The researcher consciously worked hard to be accurate and objective, and to fairly and accurately record the responses of the parents as well as depict the lapses on the part of the system as it is. It was not part of the researcher's job to push an agenda, but rather to be relentlessly objective and prevent any sort of bias to seep in during the course of this study.

During the initial interview, the researcher found that parents were reluctant to refer to their children in the past tense. Therefore respecting the sentiments of the respondents, the researcher asked questions in the present tense as though the children were still a part of the household. The most sensitive questions were left until the end of an interview, during which time the researcher had built up understanding of the general situation and broader context. It was important for the researcher to respect the local customs and norms, and be appropriately attired during home visits. All the respondents were assured of confidentiality and assured that their names as well as the names of their children would be changed in the research report, which allowed the parents to be honest in their responses.

It was important for the researcher to emphasize that the research study was an academic exercise which would aid in implementation of policies and laws for protection of children and help contain the problem. The parents were almost always hopeful that the researcher would somehow assist in tracing their children, and which the researcher found particularly painful to

address. However, it was essential to clarify that participating in the study would not in any way ensure the child's safe return.

The researcher's experience during the collection of secondary data was positive, with all police officers and concerned authorities being co-operative and approachable. They were honest with their opinions and pragmatic about the situation and possible solutions, accepting for the most part limitations and lapses in the system. However, most officials are unanimous in their opinion that the onus lies on the part of the parents when it comes to child safety. During visits to the police station with parents, a marked difference was observed. While the researcher was always treated with a certain respect, the police extended no such courtesy to the parents, and empathy with the situation of the parents was found to be lacking. The issues that have been identified in this study are complex, and attempt to address them all in a comprehensive manner is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, the aim is to provide a framework of reference for further research so that effective measures can be taken based on these studies and bring about reforms in child safety and protection.

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CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter contains analysis and interpretation of data. Since there were two sources of data collection, Primary and Secondary Data, this chapter has two sections dealing with both data sources and its analysis. The first section presents the analysis of primary data which was gathered through interviews with parents of missing children. In the second section of this chapter, quantitative Government data of reported cases from the year 2000- 2011 has been compiled, analyzed and interpreted from social work perspective. Secondary data was obtained from Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar and police officials provided additional information related to the data.

A. Primary Data: Interview with Parents of Missing Children

The researcher obtained informed consent from the key respondents before proceeding with the interview process. The sensitive nature of the study made it imperative for the researcher to follow an informal approach during the interview process. Care was taken to ensure that the respondents' feelings were respected which entailed altering the sequence of questions on several occasions.

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1. Background of the Missing child

Table 1: Age of the child when missing

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 -3 years	3	4.11	1	0.87	4	2.13
4-8 years	10	13.70	12	10.43	22	11.7
9-12 years	18	24.66	9	7.83	27	14.36
13- 18 years	42	57.53	93	80.87	135	71.81
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 2.13% of the missing children were between 0-3 years of age, 11.7% were between 4-8 years of age, 14.36 were between 9-12 years of age and 71.81% were between 13-18 years of age at the time they went missing.

The highest number of children missing is from the age group 13-17 years, with females constituting the bulk of the missing at 80%. This finding is consistent with all studies conducted elsewhere in the world. It provides credence to the belief held by the Police that the majority of missing children listed every year are actually runaways and are not taken against their will. According to a study in the UK, the average age at which young people first go missing from both home and care is 13 years (Wade et al 1998; Graham and Bowling 1995; Rees 1993). However, a substantial minority first go missing much younger than that. The Safe on the Streets survey found that a quarter had first run away or been forced to leave home before the age of 11, while the York University survey of runaways from care found that one fifth had first gone missing (from home or care) before the age of 12 (Safe on the Streets 1999; Wade et al 1998). There is also evidence that those who first go missing at an early age are more likely to run away more often (Safe on the Streets 1999).

According to Betty-Ann Blaine, in a study done by the organization Hear the Children Cry, deterioration of family life; instability/shifting households; crippling levels of poverty; lack of adequate social support systems and heartbreaking levels of hopelessness are key factors leading to children running away from homes.

Table 2: Occupation of respondent parents

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Service	21	28.77	42	36.52	63	33.51
Daily wager	38	52.05	50	43.48	88	46.81
Self-employed	14	19.18	23	20	37	19.68
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 33.51% of the parents are employees, 46.81% are daily wagers, 19.68% are self-employed. Majority of the missing children come from impoverished backgrounds with parents who eke out a living and live a hand to mouth existence. The parents of all the missing children at Nithari were poor, migrant labourers who settled in the Noida suburb to make a living. Poverty and the issue of missing children are interlinked. People living a hand to mouth existence are less likely to have access to safe places for their children or have adequate resources to meet the needs of their children, much less ensure their child's safety.

In Bangladesh, majority of children who go missing are children of pavement dwellers, the most vulnerable of society. According to UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, 400 women and children are victims of trafficking in Bangladesh each month. They are forced to become domestic slaves, camel jockeys while many are forced into the sex industry.

Table 3: Total Annual Income

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-2 lacs	52	71.23	63	54.78	115	61.17
2-3 lacs	13	17.81	33	28.70	46	24.47
More than 4 lacs	8	10.96	19	16.52	27	14.36
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 61.17% have an annual income of 1-2 lacs, 24.47% have an annual income of 2-3 lacs and 14.36% have an annual income exceeding 4 lacs.

According to a study done by a unit in the Department of Local Government in Jamaica, there is a strong link between missing children and poverty levels. The majority of children who go missing are driven from home because of poor economic circumstances which deprive them of some basic needs. The study further points out that the authorities had noticed this pattern years prior to 2009. The study confirms that the children from working-class homes are the most vulnerable in society because of the breakdown in family life. Many of the homes are single-parent households (mostly mothers only) and lack the economic means to implement safeguards for their children.

The needs brought on by the dire financial straits of lower middle-class homes often result in parents sending the children out on the streets to sell quick-cash items in a desperate bid to supplement the family's already thin disposable income. These children are put at risk and their vulnerability is further advanced with their exposure in the public domain, states the study.

Table 4: Marital Status

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	43	58.90	61	53.04	104	55.32
Separated	11	15.07	21	18.26	32	17.02
Divorced	7	9.59	13	11.30	20	10.64
Widowed	12	16.44	20	17.39	32	17.02
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 55.32% of the parents interviewed are married, 17.02% are separated, 10.64% are divorced and 17.02% are widowed. While the many of the missing children have both parents present in the home, a large segment belong to single parent units, whether it is separation, divorce or death. Children with a single parent are more vulnerable as their needs might not be adequately fulfilled in a setting where a single parent is solely responsible for providing for the children as well as raising them.

Within the family setting, there are numerous issues which result in parents being alienated from their children. The issues include parenting problems, greater need for independence on the part of the children and absence of support in the family. This leads some children to actually leave the house for a period of time.

According to The Office of national Statistics, UK, children growing up in one-parent homes are more likely to suffer health issues, perform badly at school and take to drugs and crime when they are teenagers.

Table 5: Household description

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Both parents present, married	43	58.90	61	53.04	104	55.32
Single parent, Father only	5	6.85	12	10.43	17	9.04
Single Parent, mother only	25	34.25	42	36.52	67	35.64
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 55.32% of the missing children have both the parents present at home, 9.04% have only fathers and 35.64% have only mothers.

According to Kirkland who studied runaways, most of the children who run away are from single-parent households, with issues within the home proving to be a major push factor. Abuse is a common problem. A lot of them are mentally abused at home and a few of them are sexually abused. Most of them are unhappy at home. Those who runaway are unhappy as they feel neglected and unloved, also not having money to pay for essential things added to their woes.

These are the factors causing them to run away as they believe there is something out there better than what they have. Kirkland also states that a lot of the cases involve women who are economically destitute leaving the older ones to take care of younger siblings, resulting in some of them leaving the household.

Kirkland believes that in order to solve the missing-children crisis, the problem of poor parenting has to be tackled. The vast majority of young people run away due to problems at home (Safe on the Streets 1999; Brennan et al 1978). The Safe on the Streets study found that, where disharmony in families is less severe, young people living in stepfamilies or with a lone parent are significantly more likely to run away than those living with both birth parents. However, where family disharmony is severe, young people are equally likely to run away from any type

of family. Repeated runaways have been found to have particularly high levels of family problems.

Table 6: General level of adjustment in the household

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good- things are fairly harmonious at home	11	15.07	35	30.43	46	24.47
Fairly good- problems from time to time but nothing serious	19	26.03	26	22.61	45	23.94
Somewhat poor- there are problems which needs attention	27	36.99	34	29.57	61	32.45
Very poor- there are many serious issues	16	21.92	20	17.39	36	19.15
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 24.47% of the parents described the general level of adjustment in their household to be very good, 23.94% described it as fairly good, 32.45% described it as somewhat poor with some problems needing attention, while 19.15% described it as very poor, with several serious issues.

International studies have shown that breakdown in family life and the prevalence of poverty are major factors in the developing countries for the staggering statistics on missing children. A household which have many serious issues due to or arising out of poverty such as an alcoholic father can result in breakdown of the family. Children from disharmonious homes are more likely to run away or be lured away.

A report for the Children's Society in UK found one child runs away from their parents, foster family or care home every five minutes. Those from broken homes are three times more likely to run away as those who have a stable background. Arguments and other family conflict play a massive part in a child's runaway episode. Often young people feel helpless because of poor

quality family relationships and neglectful parenting. Approximately 70,000 children aged between 14 and 16 run away from home each year and numerous younger children also runaway as well.

2. Behavior of Child

Table 7: Usual behaviour of the child at home

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very well- behaviour is not a concern	9	12.33	24	20.87	33	17.55
Fairly well- minor problem behaviour	21	28.77	30	26.09	51	27.13
Fair- Some problem behaviour need attention	11	15.07	23	20.00	34	18.09
Poor- serious problem behaviour	32	43.84	38	33.04	70	37.23
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 17.55% of parents described the usual behavior of the missing child as very well with behavior not a concern, 27.13% described it as fairly well with minor problem behavior, 18.09% described it as fair, with only some problem behavior which needed attention while 37.23% described it as poor with the missing child exhibiting serious problem behavior.

Behaviour of the child can be a useful indicator in assessing the situation when a child goes missing. Problem behaviours usually emerge on the onset of teen years and it is during this time that conflicts arise between parents and their children.

With 37% of children being classified as their parents as having had serious behavior problems, it can be interpreted that there were conflict situation at home with frequent clashes between the parents and child, ultimately resulting in the child running away. More males are reported to

have had serious problem behavior than females. However, more females are reported to have had some behavior issues.

Most runaways are older teenagers aged 15-17. Juveniles of different races run away at about the same rates and equal proportions of boys and girls run away. The majority of runaways are from working-class and lower-income homes, and that could be due to lack of resources causing additional stress.

Table 8: Temperament of the child

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Argues excessively with parent/parents	21	28.77	20	17.39	41	21.81
Has frequent temper tantrums	12	16.44	23	20.00	35	18.62
Fights excessively with other children	9	12.33	4	3.48	13	6.91
Has friends parents do not approve of	13	17.81	18	15.65	31	16.49
Refuses to follow rules	11	15.07	14	12.17	25	13.30
None of these traits	7	9.58	36	31.30	43	22.87
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 21.81% of the missing children argued excessively with their parents, 18.62% had frequent temper tantrums, 6.91% fought excessively with other children, 16.49% had friends the parents did not approve of, 13.30% refused to follow rules, while 22.87% did not possess any of these traits. More females are reported by parents that they had friends that the

parents did not approve of, and more males are reported to have had excessive arguments with parents.

In many cases involving young teenage girls, relationship with members of the opposite sex which parents disapprove of is often a cause for conflict. A high number of children are reported to have excessive arguments with their parents which requires investigation and intervention in order to prevent relationship breakdown in the family. While the temperament of the child is important for the kind of relationship a child has with his parents, it is equally important that parents have the necessary communication skills to deal with their children and relate to them in a better and more effective way in accordance with the needs of the child.

Table 9: Academic performance at school

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not attend school	11	15.07	29	25.22	40	21.28
Excellent	9	12.33	16	13.91	25	13.30
Good	14	19.18	19	16.52	33	17.55
Average	27	36.99	29	25.22	56	29.79
Poor	12	16.44	22	19.13	34	18.09
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 21.28% of children did not attend school, 13.30% have been described by their parents as excellent students, 17.55% have been described as good, 29.79% as average and 18.09% were described by their parents as having poor academic performance.

The Relationship between Academic Factors and Running Away among Adolescents was a study conducted by Kimberly Thut Rogers, Elizabeth A. Segal and Michael Graham in which they explored the attitude toward school and academic competency of young people who decide to

run away from home. The study established that teens with poor academic performance and other delinquent tendencies have a higher probability of going missing, and have higher chances of running away from home. Runaways have been found to have higher rates of depression, problems at school, suffer from physical and sexual abuse, problems with peers as well alcohol and drug problems and delinquency than with young people who do not run away.

Table 10: Child's behaviour at school

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not attend school	11	15.07	29	25.22	40	21.28
Excellent	3	4.11	10	8.70	13	6.91
Good	15	20.55	16	13.91	31	16.49
Average	21	28.77	27	23.48	48	25.53
Fair	10	13.70	21	18.26	31	16.49
Poor	13	17.81	12	10.43	25	13.30
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 21.28% of the children did not attend school, 6.91% of the parents described the missing child's behavior at school as excellent, 16.49% as good, 25.53% as average, 16.49% as fair, and 13.30% as poor.

According to Biehal and Wade, 2002, there is a strong association between running away and non-attendance at school, due to exclusion from peers or bunking class. The study further state that young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties are more likely than others to go missing repeatedly. Inability to adjust to academic routine and peer group leads to a sense of isolation and cause the child to run away from a distressing situation. Bullying at school,

rejection, and feelings of inferiority might cause frustration in the child and attempt to address the situation by escaping from it would seem to be a solution to the child.

Table 11: Activities during spare time in the day

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not have any spare time	9	12.33	16	13.91	25	13.30
Does homework	12	16.44	25	21.74	37	19.68
Plays with friends	29	39.73	28	24.35	57	30.32
Watches TV at home	18	24.66	39	33.91	57	30.32
None	5	6.85	7	6.09	12	6.38
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 13.30% of the missing children did not have any spare time for activities during the day, 19.68% did homework, 30.32% played with friends, 30.32% watched television at home, while 6.38% were described as doing none of these activities.

The incidence of children who watch television during the day is fairly high. Many parents are unable to monitor children as they watch unsuitable content. Such children are exposed to violence and glamour of a fast life as depicted on television, and are often unable to process what they see, resulting in picking up attitudes and behavior which are often undesirable.

Table 12: Frequency of delinquent behaviour

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Skiping school	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Stealing money	12	16.44	9	7.83	21	11.17

Begging	8	10.96	2	1.74	10	5.32
Consuming Alcohol/Drugs	9	12.33	0	0	9	4.79
None of these	28	38.36	91	79.13	119	63.30
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the missing children were described by their parents as having delinquent behavior of skipping school, 11.17% stole money, 5.32% had the habit of begging, 4.79% consumed alcohol/drugs, while 63.30% did not exhibit any of these delinquent tendencies.

The frequency of delinquent behavior is not high, which is an encouraging sign. Most children are reported not to possess any delinquent behavior, and among those who do possess such traits, majority of them prefer to skip school. Schools therefore need to monitor children who have the tendency to be absent and ensure preventive measures to curtail this problem.

3. Parental satisfaction with Police response

Table 13: Initial contact with Police

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Called emergency number	12	16.44	17	14.78	29	15.43
Walked to police station	55	75.34	84	73.04	139	73.94
Approached a policeman on the street	6	8.22	14	12.17	20	10.64
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the parents initial contact with the police was by calling the emergency number, 73.94% walked to the police station and 10.64% approached a policeman on the street.

From this table it is known that the maximum number of parents have directly gone to the police station to report the missing child. The implication is that police need to be trained to deal with face to face interactions of parents who come to report a missing child. The approach of the police in dealing with parents who would obviously be distressed is of great importance. A sensitive attitude and courteous demeanor needs to be inculcated in the general behavior of the police officers when dealing with parents of missing children.

Table 14: Initial response of the police

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Told you to call or come back later	18	24.66	21	18.26	39	20.74
Took basic identifying information about the incident	28	38.36	42	36.52	70	37.23
Suggested ways to look for your child	22	30.14	34	29.57	56	29.79
Did not respond	5	6.85	18	15.65	23	12.23
Total	73	100	115	100	188	99.99

The above table shows that 20.74% of the parents described the initial response of the police as asking them to call or come back later, 37.23% said the police took basic identifying information about the incident, 29.79% said the police suggested ways to look for the missing child, while 12.23% said the police did not respond.

The police officer's attitude was most commonly cited as not particularly helpful at the reporting stage. Delays in taking action were most commonly cited as the area for improvement at this stage. A number of respondents stated that police would take no action until 24 hours after the child was reported missing. As most missing children's cases are resolved with no apparent harm to the child, the police give more priority in responding to reports of crime. The police have to

deal with limited resources and cannot afford to invest substantial resources in trying to locate a missing child.

It is very important for the police to be supportive and display a non-judgmental attitude. A sympathetic and sensitive approach by police can help alleviate some of the distress experienced by families when a child goes missing. This can be inculcated within the police force through frequent sensitization programmes.

Table 15: Initial steps taken by the police

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Took basic information along with child's photo	73	100%	115	100%	188	100%
Asked for friends/relatives to contact	14	19.18 %	24	20.86%	38	20.21%
Searched house/ neighbourhood	10	13.70%	20	17.39%	30	15.95%
Put out an announcement	32	43.82%	45	39.14%	77	40.95%

The above table shows that in all the cases the police took basic information of the child along with photo, 21.21% of the police asked for friends /relatives to contact, 15.95% searched house /neighbourhood and 40.95% put out an announcement of the missing child.

The table depicts that there is a lack of a standard operating procedure when it comes to initial police response to report of a missing child. There is a crucial need for detailed, police procedures and policies for responding to missing child cases as it would result in more proactive investigations. As well as describing the roles and responsibilities of officers or units assigned to specific investigative functions, search and rescue, and analytical functions, comprehensive policies and procedures should include directions concerning the actions to take place when a report is first received.

Actions taken by the police officers during the preliminary stages of a missing child incident are of extreme importance, especially if the case develops into a criminal matter or long term investigation.

Table 16: Instructions given by the Police

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suggest where to look for the child	11	15.07	12	10.43	23	12.23
Suggest you call child's friends/ relatives	50	68.49	94	81.74	144	76.60
Describe investigative process	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tell you to contact about more information	12	16.43	9	7.83	21	11.17
Total	73	99.99	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 12.23% of the parents said that the police suggested ways to look for their child, 76.60% suggested them to call child's friends/relatives, 0% of the parents said that the police described the investigative process to them, while 11.17% of the parents said that they were asked to contact the police again for more information.

Table 17: Overall satisfaction with Police response

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Extremely satisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairly satisfied	28	38.36	19	16.52	47	25
Not satisfied	45	61.64	96	83.48	141	75
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that none of the parents expressed extreme satisfaction with the police response, 25% of the parents are fairly satisfied, while 75% of the parents are not satisfied with the response they received from the police.

According to NISMART, a study done in USA, an overwhelming 84% of parents stated that they were satisfied with the police response when they reported a missing child. This is in stark contrast to 25% of parents in this study, with 75% of parents stating that they were not satisfied that the Police handled the case adequately to trace their missing child.

There are differences in perception between the parents and the police on how aggressively the police should investigate cases. There are typical disparities in the way the parents and the police view the risks and the expected police response. The major reason for the disparity between the police and the parents is likely to rest on a parent's belief that the child is in more danger than the police think to be the case. In addition, lack of empathy and laidback attitude of the police aggravates the feeling of dissatisfaction in police response. The result is therefore an overall dissatisfaction in a significant percentage of the case.

4. Parental description of the episode

Table 18: Incident as best described

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Runaway	25	34.25	51	44.35	76	40.43
Family abduction	1	1.37	0	0	1	0.53
Stranger abduction	8	10.96	11	9.57	19	10.11
Lost	6	8.22	15	13.04	21	11.17
Unknown	33	45.2	38	33.04	71	37.77
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 40.43% of the parents described the missing child as having run away, 0.53% as a case of family abduction, 10.11% parents suspected a stranger of abducting their child, 11.17% of parents described the incident as the child getting lost, while 37.77% of parents said they do not know.

While majority of the parents are of the belief that their child ran away from home, many parents are clueless as to how and why their child went missing. The reasons could be abduction or the child simply wandering away and getting lost. With increase in crimes against children and organized gangs involved in child prostitution and child labour, there is a need for cases of missing children to be treated as a serious incident and swift response taken accordingly.

Table 19: Realisation that child is missing

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Did not return home from school	11	15.07	12	10.43	23	12.23
Did not return home by mealtime	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Did not return home by bedtime	12	16.44	34	29.57	46	24.47
Was gone overnight	34	46.58	56	48.70	90	47.87
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 12.23% of the parents realized their child was missing when he/she did not return home from school, 15.43% did not return home by mealtime, 24.47% did not return home by bedtime and 47.87% of the parents realized their child was missing when they were gone overnight.

Majority of the parents have reported that their child is missing only when they have been gone overnight. It could be interpreted that most of these children are left largely unsupervised while the parents do about their daily chores. Community centres where children are able to spend their time in productive activities would keep them engaged while their parents earn a livelihood. Such community programmes could consist of volunteers who would conduct activities for children while their parents are at work.

Table 20: Incident leading to the child's missing episode

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Argument about money	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Scolding by parents over watching television	12	16.44	31	26.96	43	22.87
Scolding by parent's over school performance	22	30.14	14	12.17	36	19.15
Disapproval of child's romantic relationship	10	13.70	43	37.39	53	28.19
None of the above	13	17.81	14	12.17	27	14.36
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the parents described the incident leading to the child's missing episode was argument about money, 22.87% was scolding by parents over watching television, 19.15% was scolding by parents over school performance, 28.19% was disapproval of

the child's romantic relationship, while 14.36% of the parents said none of these were the cause of the child's missing episode.

The majority of the children has been in conflict with their parents over a romantic relationship and is consistent with the majority of the missing children being runaways. In many instances, girls are groomed by traffickers and lured away with false promises of marriage and a better life.

In all instances, there is usually a trigger which causes the child to run away, such as scolding by parents. The reasons for the scolding are varied, such as poor performance in school, watching too much television but the result is the child feeling isolated and resentful. This results in the child trying to escape the situation at home.

5. Parental concerns

Table 21: Financial distress caused by missing episode

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Moderate- slight change in finances	26	35.62	32	27.83	58	30.85
Serious - unable to afford some necessities	29	39.73	46	40	75	39.89
Extreme- unable to afford many necessities	18	24.65	37	32.17	55	29.26
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 30.85% of the parents experienced moderate financial distress caused by the missing episode, 39.89% of the parents experienced serious financial distress – unable to afford some necessities, while 29.26% of the parents experienced extreme financial distress – being unable to afford many necessities.

According to an Australian study Missing People- Issues for the Australian Community, families and friends (and in some cases missing children themselves) suffer significant health, work, quality of life, emotional, relationship, economic and other impacts associated with the missing person incident. For every case of a missing person, an average of at least 12 people are affected in some way, either emotionally, by health or employment related impacts, effects on quality of life or on relationships, or a combination of some or all of these. (M. Henderson, 1998)

For the parents concerned, there are also substantial economic implications as well as the significant individual and societal impact attached to children going missing, One father left his job to hunt for his missing son, resulting in loss of income and stressful living conditions. Another respondent stated that making copies of his missing child's photographs, daily visits to the police station, making trips to places where he believed his son might be found, all required resources and for which his daily wages was grossly inadequate. Therefore, one of the major impacts of having a child go missing is an economic impact on the family, apart from emotional and psychological.

Table 22: Psychological reactions experienced by parents

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Disturbed sleep	36	49.32	56	48.70	92	48.94
Repeated dreams of the missing child	25	34.25	38	33.04	63	33.51
Sudden feelings of anxiety	12	16.44	21	18.26	33	17.55
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 48.94% of the parents reported disturbed sleep due to the child being missing, 33.51% parents had repeated dreams of the missing child, while 17.55% experienced sudden feelings of anxiety.

According to research studies, the loss of a child is one of the most distressing events an adult can experience (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Klass, 1988). The loss affected parents' everyday interactions with a redefinition of social roles, or, as some parents describe, a loss of a part of oneself (Conrad, 1998; Klass, 1988). Although most abduction cases are resolved without grave harm to children, the children may still suffer adverse consequences. Parents experience this trauma vicariously with their children, and parents also may struggle with their own feelings of incompetence, guilt, helplessness, or insecurity (Conrad, 1998; Klass, 1988; Rando, 1986).

Sarah K. Spilman's study on how parents of family and nonfamily abducted children cope with stress after their child went missing showed that all parents experience acute distress. The study also discovered that other factors such as prior family stress, age of the child, recovery status of the child, and measures of social support were associated with the stress of having a child missing. However, support from friends has been found to decrease parents' levels of distress. Unhelpful friends were known to increase the distress suffered by the family.

Since little is known about how parents actually cope with the grief of their child going missing, research is required in this area so that provision of adequate support can be made for these parents.

Table 23: Parental expectation of child's return

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very hopeful	38	52.05	59	51.30	97	51.60
Moderately hopeful	27	36.99	32	27.83	59	31.38
No hope at all	8	10.96	24	20.87	32	17.02
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 51.60% of the parents are very hopeful that the child will return eventually, 31.38% of the parents are moderately hopeful, while 17.02% of the parents have no hope at all.

Majority of the parents express strong hope that they will see their children again. Parents who have no expectation of their children returning home are those who have been missing for more than five years. Parents are likely to hold on to the belief that their children will return eventually as a way to cope. One parent described that keeping their hopes alive was their way of not giving up. Another parent expressed their fear of coming across their child and not recognizing him, or of their child having forgotten them.

The pain of the parents is indescribable, and losing a child without knowing what happened to the child prevents the parents from moving on. Further studies are required to study the needs of the affected families and of the other siblings who are left behind. With the loss of a child, the family dynamics undergo a tremendous change and in order to provide help and support to the affected families, it is required to understand what parents go through, how they cope, what support they require and how the rest of the siblings are affected.

B. Secondary Data: An analysis of Police Records 2000-2011

A study of the police records from the period of 2000-2011 reveal interesting trends.

The number of missing children is seen to have increased in the state of Gujarat. This could be attributed to the increase in population and urbanization with upsurge of migrants from various parts of the country.

In 2000, there were 1568 children reported missing in Gujarat, out of which 935 were boys and 633 were girls. 1434 were found and 134 remain missing.

In 2001, there were 1576 children reported missing in Gujarat, out of which 908 were boys and 668 were girls. 1420 were found and 156 remain missing.

Children reported missing in 2002 were 1542 in number, with 1329 eventually found. The missing boys totaled 869, while the number of missing girls was 673. 213 remain missing. A scrutiny of the reported police cases reveals a higher number of minority children missing in this year.

In 2003, a total of 1676 children were reported missing, with 955 being boys and 721 being girls. Out of these, 869 boys and 650 girls were found while 157 remain missing.

In 2004, the police began keeping records of missing children according to the age group. In the age group 0-6 years, 129 were reported missing, while 123 were found. In the age group 7-14 years, 515 went missing with 483 being found. There were 1203 missing children in the age

group of 15-18 years, with 1088 returning eventually home. A total of 153 children of all age groups remain missing.

In 2005, a total of 2046 were reported missing. Out of these 1899 have been found, while 147 still remain missing. In the age group 0-6 years, the number of missing children was 143, 7-14 years the number was 548 while the highest number was in the age group of 15-18 years, which totaled 1355 in number.

In 2006, a total of 2264 children went missing, and 2060 was found. The highest number of missing children was in the age group of 15-18 years totaling 1515 in number, while the second highest was 7-14 years with the number being 579. The lowest number of missing children was in the age group of 0-6 years, a total of 173, out of which 17 still remain missing. 14 remain missing in the 4-14 years category while 139 remain missing in the 15-18 years category.

In 2007, there were 2438 missing children reported, out of which 1993 were found. The highest number of missing children- 1616- is seen to be in the age group of 15-18 years. The number is 652 in the age group of 7-14 years, while the lowest number is 170 in the age group of 0-6 years.

2008 has the lowest number of missing children. A total of 395 children went missing with 196 being recovered. 26 missing children were from the age group of 0-5 years, 59 from age group of 6-12 years, and 310 from the age group of 13-18 years.

The figure rose again in 2009, with 2700 children reported missing. Out of these, 1591 still remain to be found. This number of children still missing is the largest so far. An alarmingly high number of girls – 1467- went missing in the 13-18 years category, while the number of boys in the same category remained half at 754.

In 2010, the police recorded 2890 cases of missing children, out of which 1818 were girls and 1072 were boys. Out of these, 1290 girls and 896 boys were traced. 528 girls and 176 boys are still missing.

In 2011, a total of 2559 children were reported missing. 1783 of those missing were girls and 776 were boys. 797 girls and 435 boys were found. 996 girls and 347 boys still remain untraced.

A review of the 2000-2011 data shows that a total of 23501 children have been reported missing. Out of these, 18053 have been found. A total number of 5448 missing children are yet to be found. The majority of those missing are boys and girls in the age group of 15-18 years. Females in the age group of 13-18 form the major bulk of missing children.

The highest concentration of missing children cases are reported from Surat, followed by Ahmedabad, Rajkot and Vadodara. Massive urbanization with vast number of migrant children, street children and destitute children in the cities of Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara account for children being neglected and lost, especially from impoverished households. With the majority of the missing children in the age group of 13-18 years, the main reason for them going missing is running away, as reported by police. In studies done in US and UK, the highest

number of missing children cases involves runaways.

The vast majority of young people run away due to problems at home (Safe on the Streets 1999; Brennan et al 1978). The Safe on the Streets study found that, where disharmony in families is less severe, young people living in stepfamilies or with a lone parent are significantly more likely to run away than those living with both birth parents. young people are equally likely to run away from any type of family where family conflict is severe. For repeated episodes of runaways, researchers have identified particularly high levels of family problems and disruption.

While conflicts may most often trigger running away, these may be symptomatic of deeper seated difficulties within families. Many young runaways have been found to have experienced a high level of disruption in their lives due to relationship breakdown, conflict and violence and some have spent time in care earlier in their lives (Stein et al 1994; Newman 1989). This is consistent with the findings of research in the USA, which has indicated that persistent runaways may be attempting to escape severely abusive parents (Simons and Whitbeck 1991; Brennan et al 1978). Both British and American studies have identified physical abuse as an important factor underlying the decision to run away (Rees 1993; Johnson and Carter 1990; Newman 1989; Farber 1984), and this may be especially the case for those who first run away from home before the age of 11 (Safe on the Streets 1999).

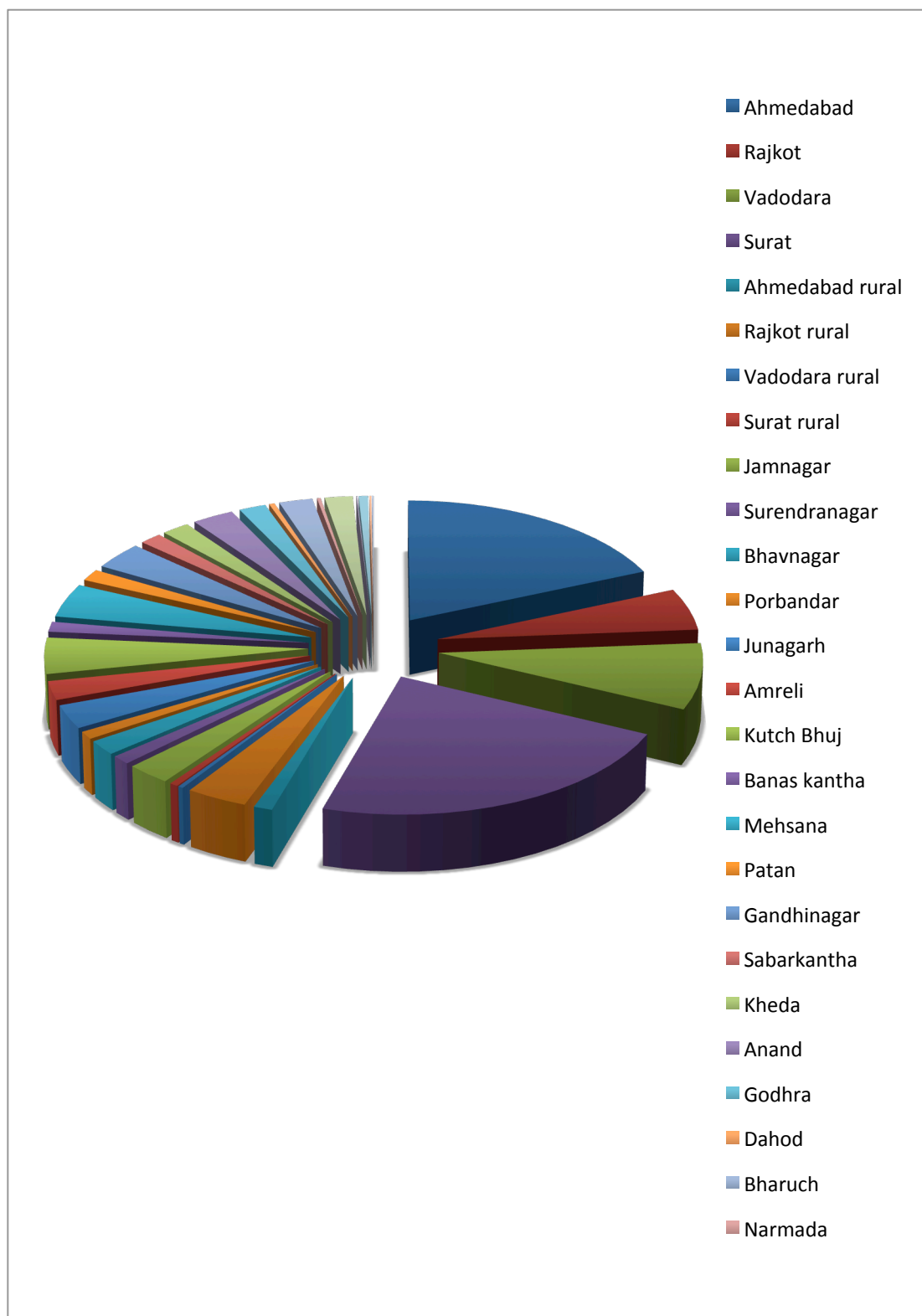
Police response

Police agencies are faced with the need to make a number of decisions when they receive a report of a missing child or youth. They must make judgments about the type of case that may be reported (case clarification) and the risk of harm that may be involved (risk assessment). They must decide what kind and level of resources will be committed to the case (investigative response). Often, police must play a social service posture to respond appropriately to cases, such as by attempting to mediate family conflicts. Moreover, decisions must frequently be made with insufficient information, in the context of inadequate or inappropriate resource availability and about matters police are not formally mandated to concern themselves.

Most missing children cases are not regarded as serious by the police. Typically, they are runaways who return home safely within hours or days, are lost children who are found quickly or involve custody disputes between estranged parents that are resolved quickly without harm befalling the child. These events may be emotionally traumatic and have long term negative consequences for parents and their children. But from the police perspective they do not involve serious law violations or risk of harm and thus do not warrant the heavy commitment of police resources. These police judgments are occasionally wrong with tragic consequences as when a routine case turns out to involve serious injury or death. The typically nonserious nature of most missing children's cases however, inclines the police to a low commitment of their resources.

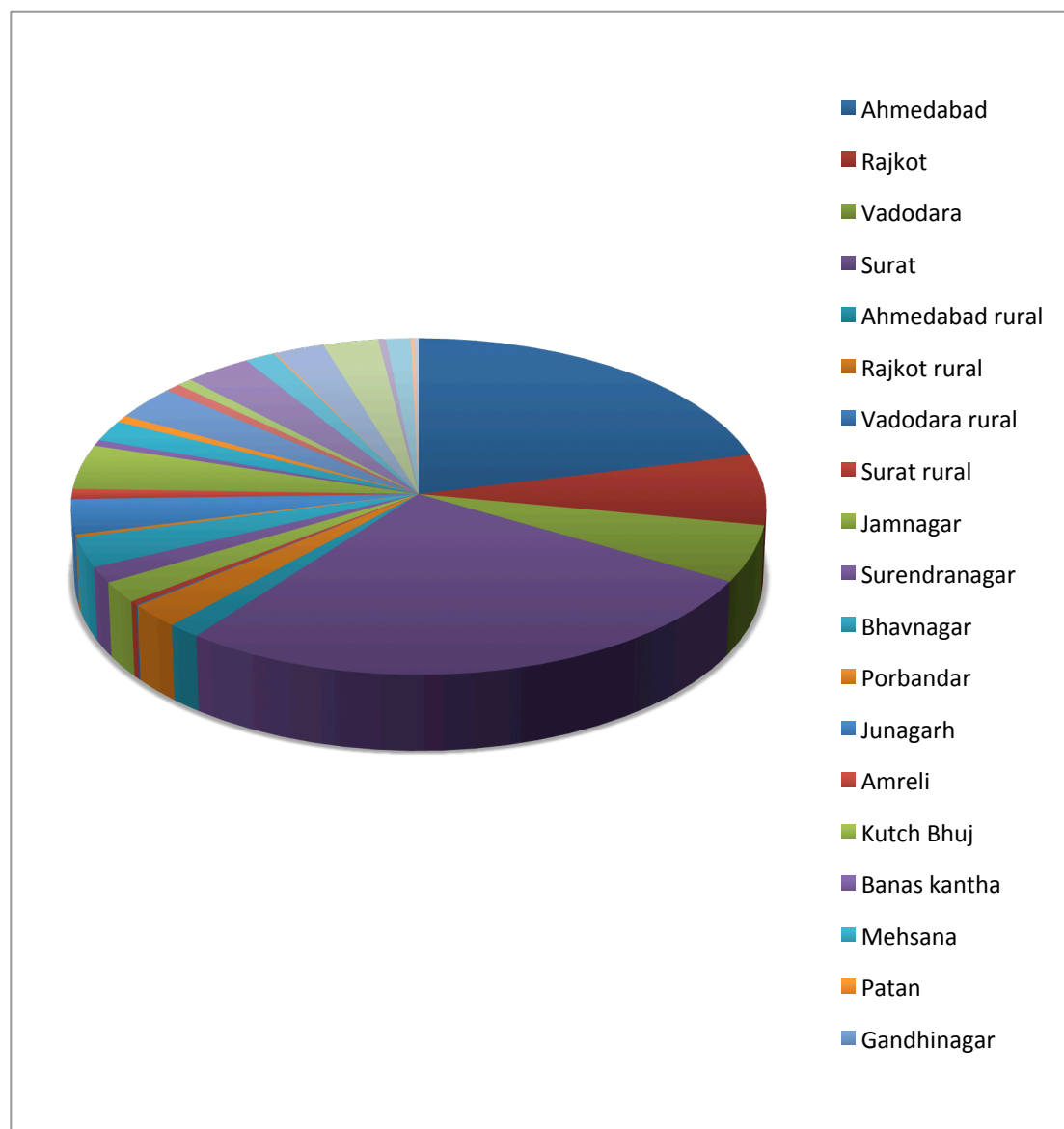
Police are also inclined towards the nonaggressive investigation of most runaway cases as they are viewed as "family" matters. Running away from home is not a violation of law, and runaway cases are seen as problems in the home that are not resolvable by police intervention, and are viewed by police as outside the scope of their authority.

Exhibit 1: Missing Girls in 2009



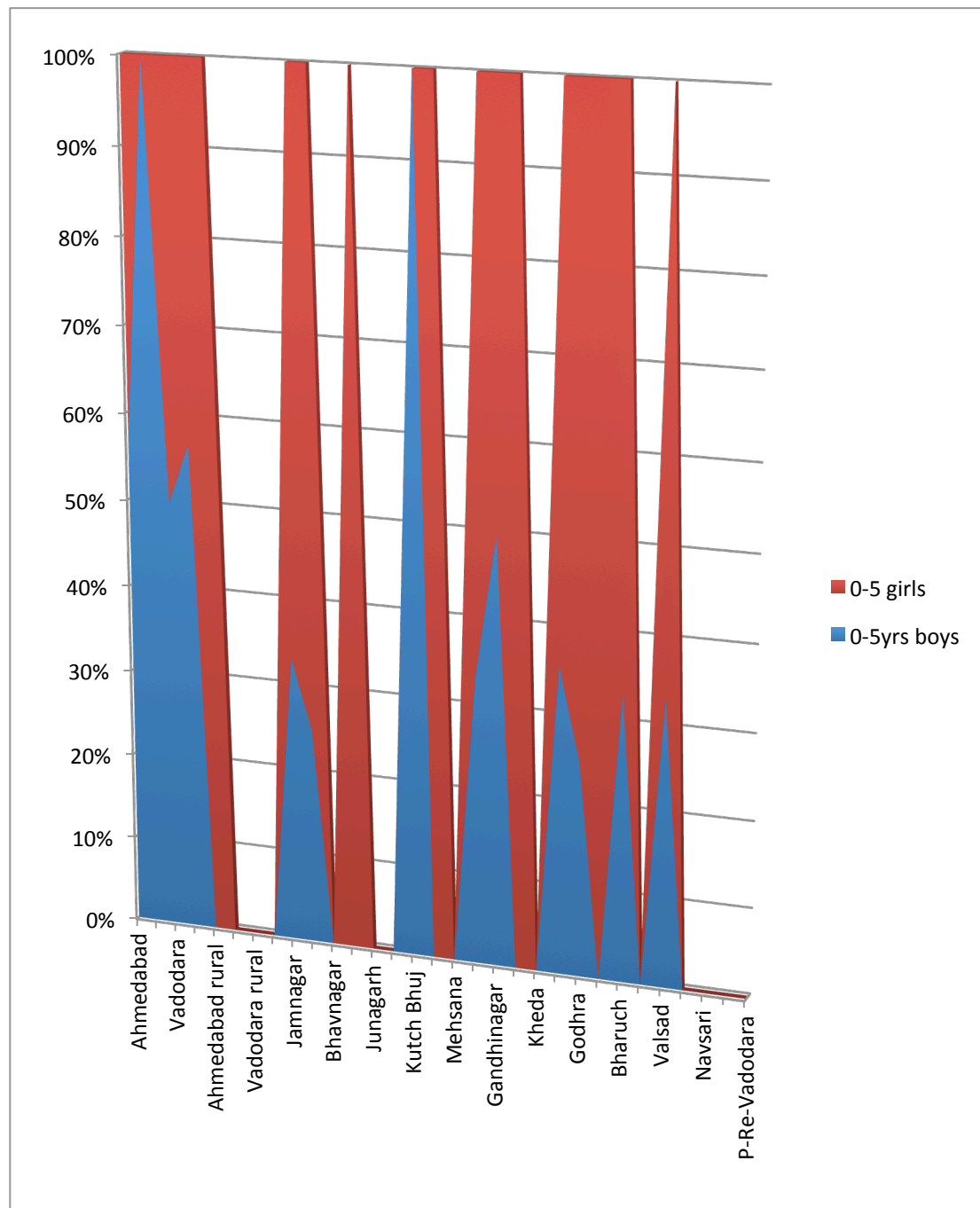
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 2: Missing Boys in 2009



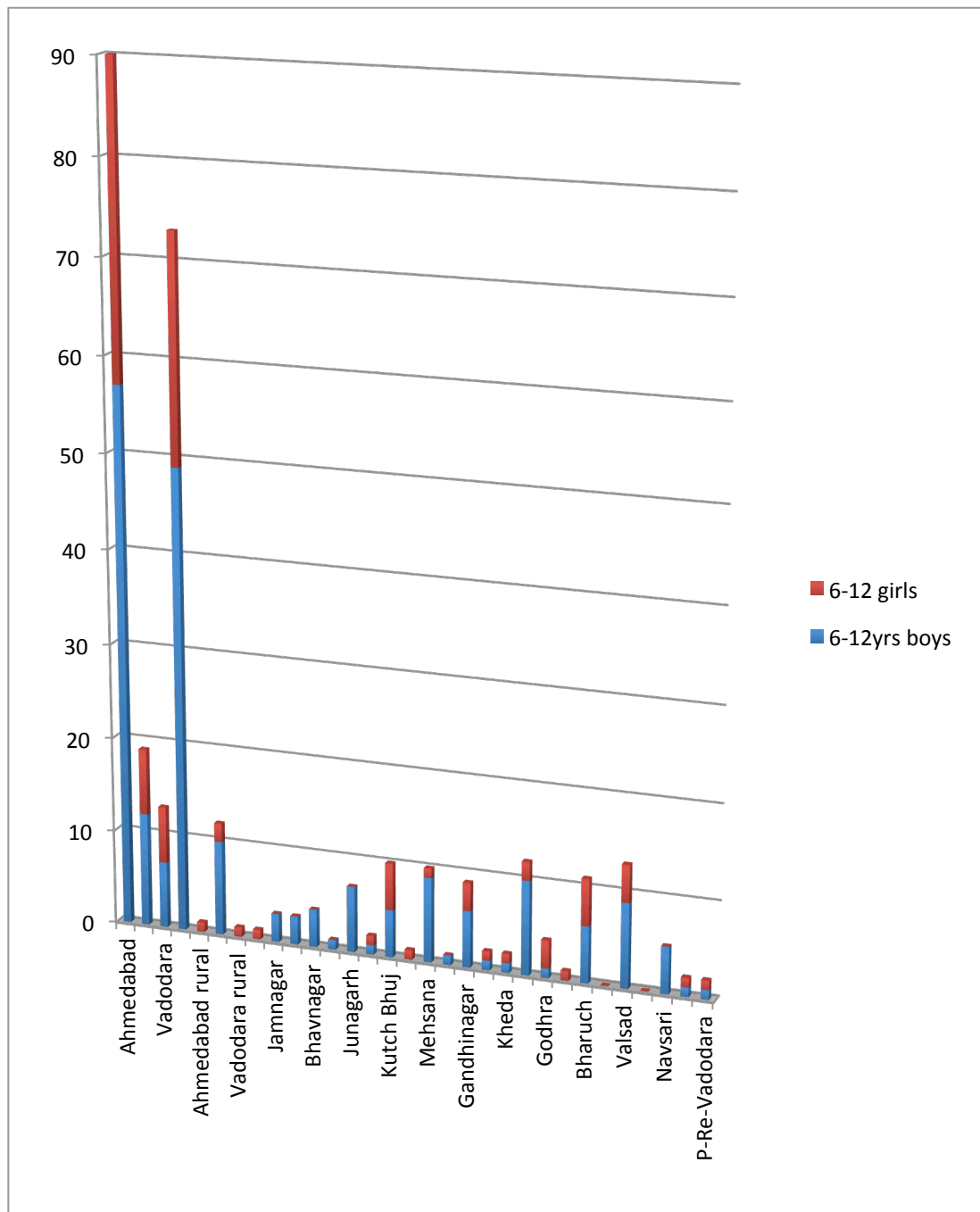
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 3: 2009- Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 1-5 yrs



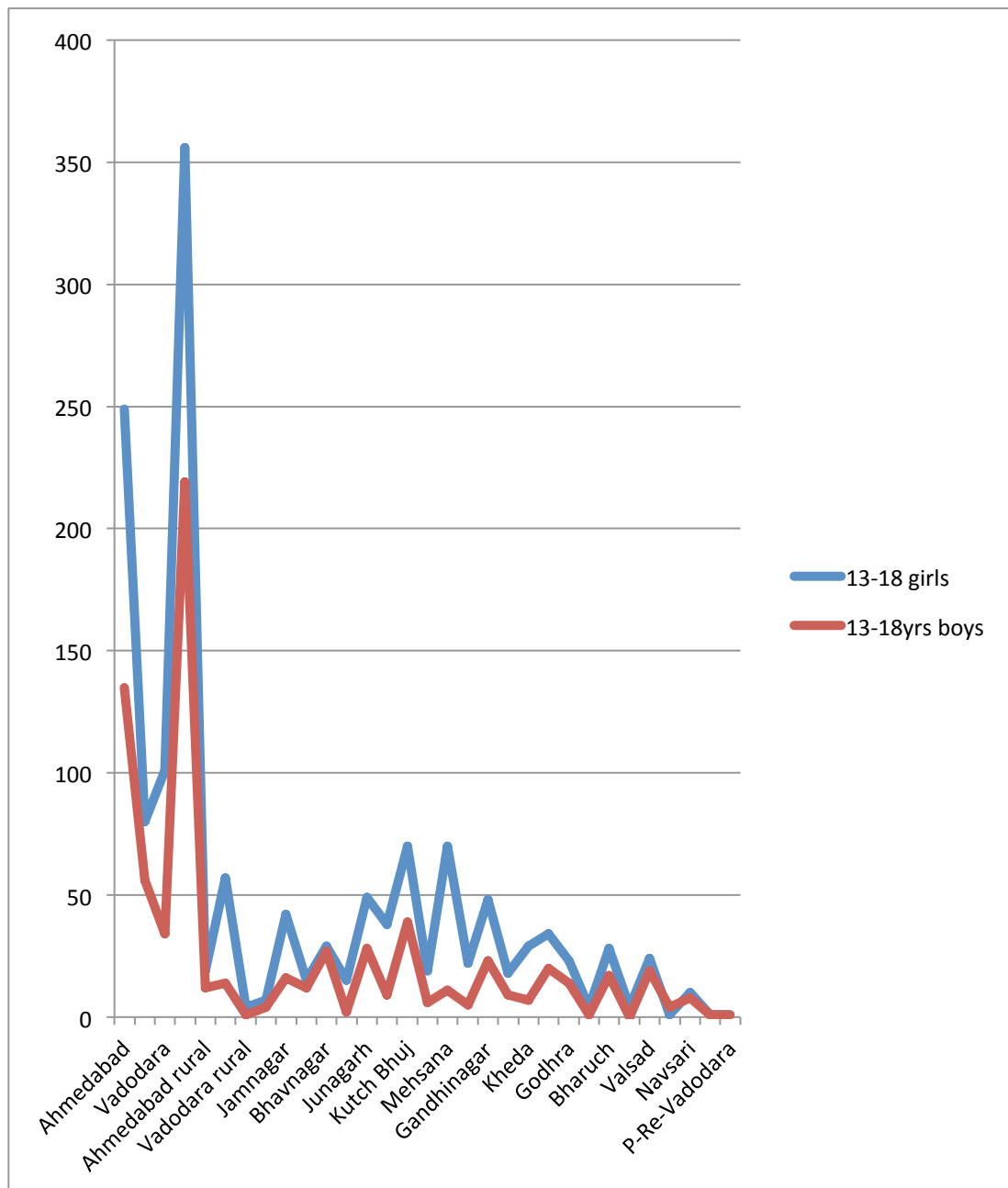
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 4: 2009- Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 6-12 yrs



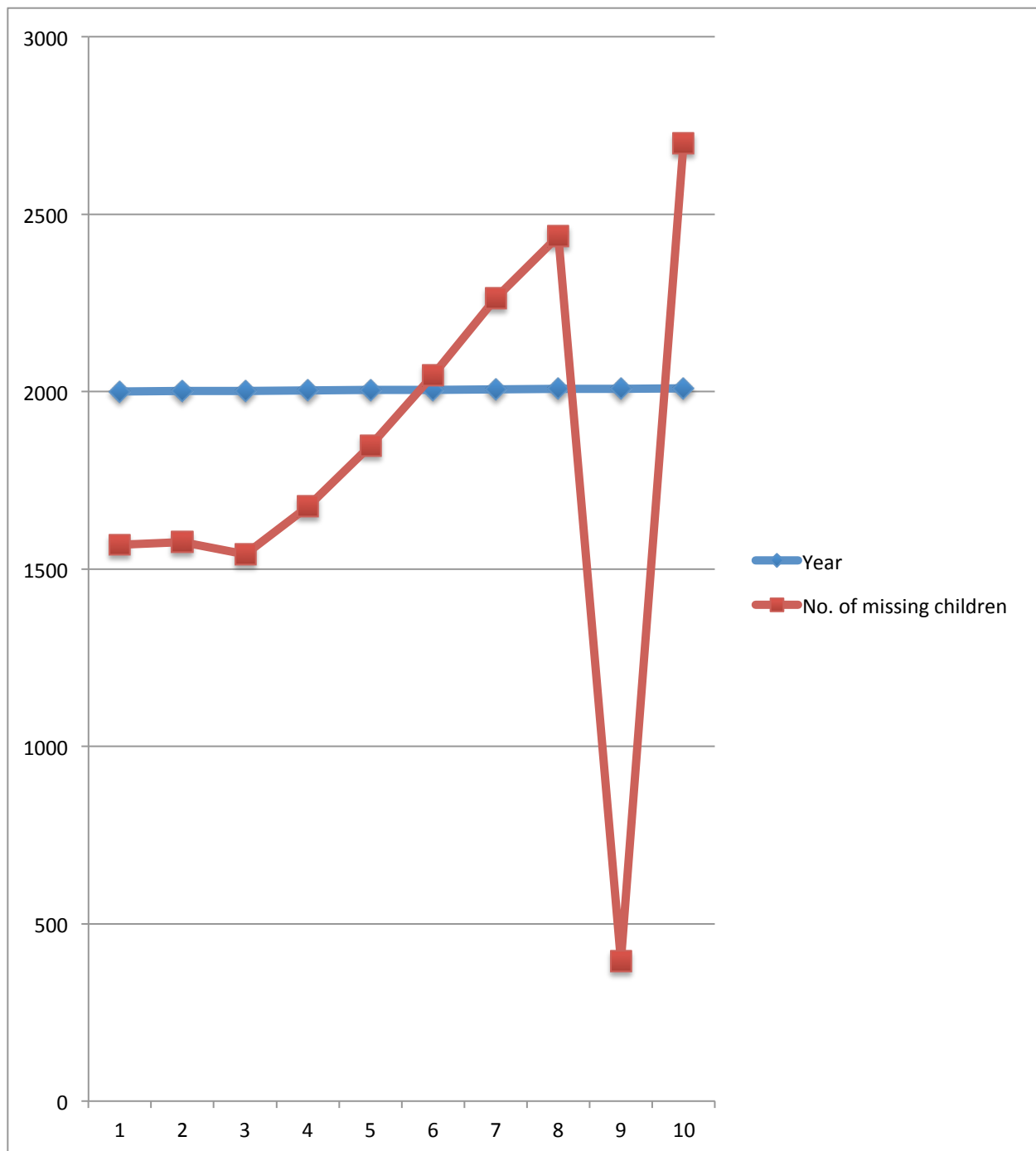
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 5: Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 13-18 yrs 2009



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 6: Missing children 2000-2011



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 7: Missing children in Gujarat 2000

Name of district and city	Missing Boys	Found	Untraced	Missing Girls	Found	Untraced
Ahmedabad	182	172	10	106	101	5
Rajkot	100	100	0	65	63	2
Vadodara	40	30	10	41	33	8
Surat	190	165	25	144	117	27
Ahmedabad rural	15	15	0	14	14	0
Rajkot rural	34	31	3	12	12	0
Vadodara rural	5	4	1	2	0	2
Surat rural	13	6	7	6	4	2
Jamnagar	41	40	1	17	15	2
Surendranagar	3	3	0	11	11	0
Bhavnagar	21	18	3	14	13	1
Porbandar	6	6	0	4	4	0
Junagarh	26	26	0	11	11	0
Amreli	7	6	1	2	2	0
Kutch Bhuj	18	18	0	18	18	0
Banas kantha	21	21	0	4	5	0
Mehsana	14	14	0	25	25	0
Patan	14	14	0	5	5	0
Gandhinagar	33	32	1	27	27	0
Sabarkantha	10	8	2	8	8	0
Kheda	16	15	1	23	20	3
Anand	38	35	3	24	23	1
Godhra	21	18	3	8	6	2
Dahod	1	1	0	2	2	0
Bharuch	30	29	1	15	15	0
Narmada	7	7	0	0	0	0
Valsad	13	12	1	13	12	1
Ahwa Dang	0	0	0	0	0	0
Navsari	15	12	3	9	9	0
P-Re-Vadodara	1	0	1	2	1	1
total	935	858	77	633	576	57

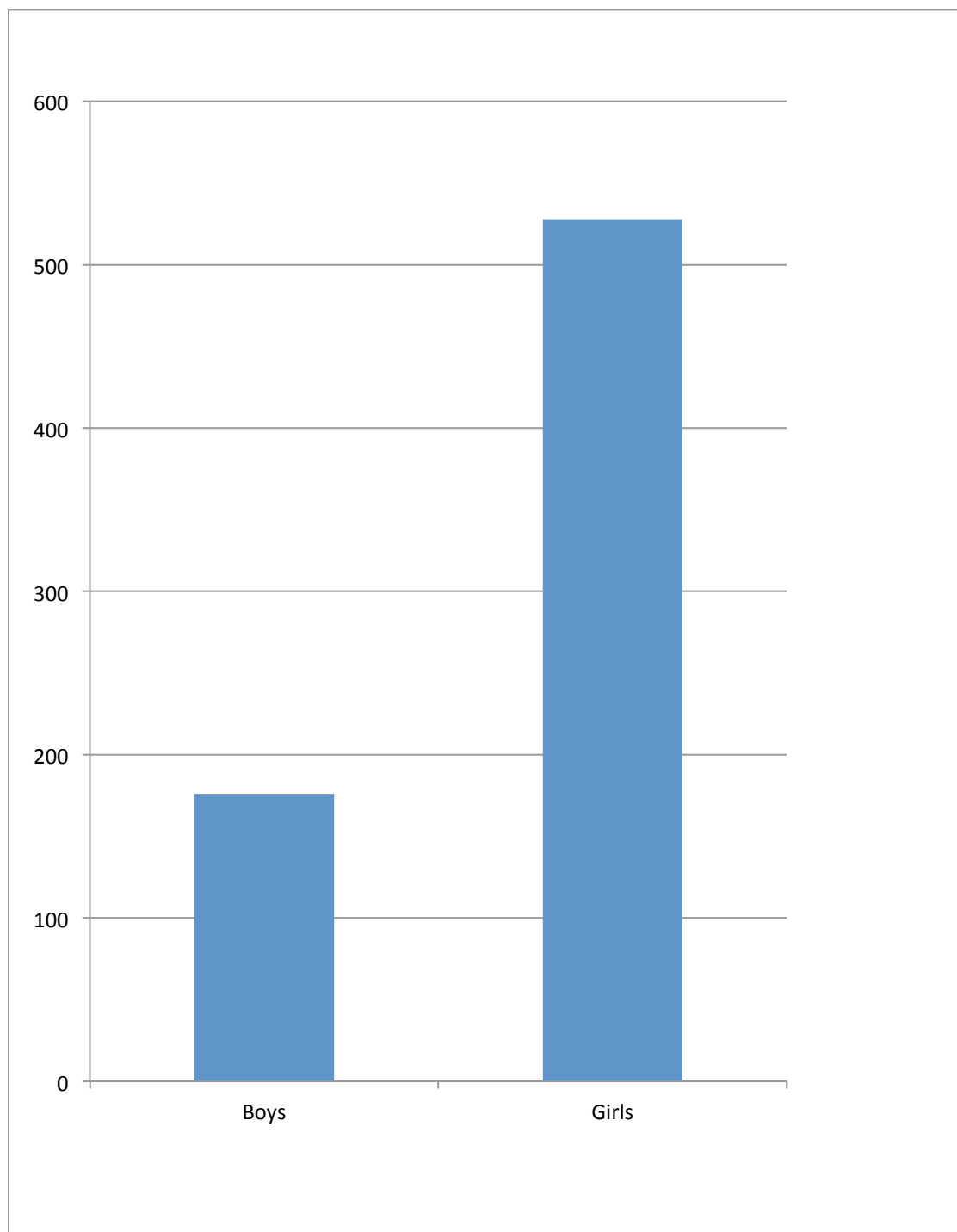
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 8: Missing children in Gujarat 2009

Name of district and city	Missing boys	Found	Missing girls	Found	Total	Untraced
Ahmedabad	222	118	306	137	528	255
Rajkot	71	48	87	37	158	85
Vadodara	57	22	137	46	194	68
Surat	282	147	372	151	654	298
Ahmedabad rural	15	3	18	2	33	5
Rajkot rural	24	15	59	16	83	31
Vadodara rural	1	0	5	1	6	1
Surat rural	4	0	8	1	12	1
Jamnagar	21	2	43	5	64	7
Surendranagar	16	5	18	3	34	8
Bhavnagar	30	23	30	12	60	35
Porbandar	3	3	16	6	19	9
Junagarh	35	23	49	13	84	36
Amreli	10	8	39	16	49	24
Kutch Bhuj	45	27	75	29	120	56
Banas kantha	6	1	21	2	27	3
Mehsana	21	10	70	7	91	17
Patan	7	1	24	6	31	7
Gandhinagar	34	22	56	23	90	45
Sabarkantha	8	5	24	9	32	14
Kheda	8	3	30	7	38	10
Anand	35	14	45	15	80	29
Godhra	16	5	29	6	45	11
Dahod	1	0	6	1	7	1
Bharuch	26	16	36	13	62	29
Narmada	0	0	4	1	4	1
Valsad	29	5	30	3	59	8
Ahwa Dang	4	2	1	1	5	3
Navsari	13	5	10	3	23	8
Tapi	2	1	2	1	4	2
P-Re-Vadodara	2	1	2	1	4	2
Total	1048	535	1652	574	2700	1109

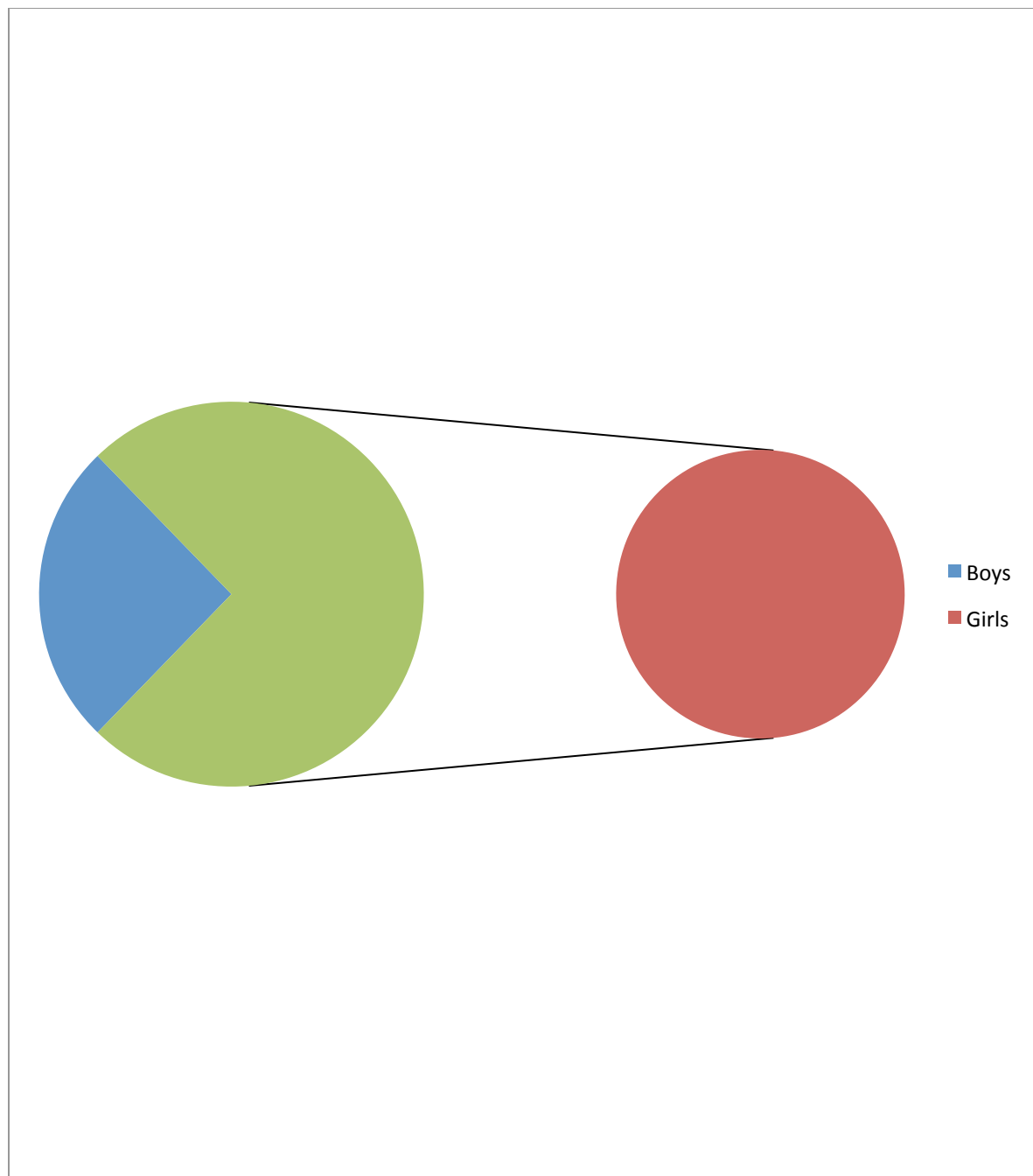
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 9: Missing children in Gujarat 2010



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 10: Missing children in Gujarat 2011



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

CHAPTER 5
MISSING CHILDREN: CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 6

MISSING CHILDREN: CASE STUDIES

This chapter covers five case studies of missing children. As it has been seen in chapter 1, missing children can be classified into five categories (NISMART-1, 1990). The researcher attempts to provide insights into the different facets and dimensions involving the issue of missing children through the case studies depicted in this chapter. The case studies reflect the unique circumstances and situations relating to each particular case, in the discussion following each case study, the observations of the researcher in respect to each case is provided.

Case Study 1: Stanger Abduction

Manju is 22 years old, a careworn mother of two children whose haggard face and scrawny limbs make her look much older than she is. She is eager to talk to the researcher and believes that the researcher would somehow assist her in locating her missing child. Meeting Manju at her rented lodgings in a congested Ahmedabad chawl, the small dwelling is clean, and her meagre belongings are arranged neatly with everything in its place. This is in sharp contrast to the filth in the narrow lanes of the slum outside, where dogs, rats and flies inhabit surrounding area along with the human inhabitants. There are half-naked children peering curiously inside the house, and run away in a fit of giggles when the researcher attempts to beckon them inside. Manju's 5 year old son stares at the researcher solemnly, cautiously staying by his mother's side. The father has left for work and will spend his day providing his services as a human mule, loading and unloading heavy sacks of grains from trucks at a local warehouse. Manju supplements her husband's income by working as a domestic help at five houses at a nearby residential society which she describes as having many big cars.

Manju settles down after she rummages through a worn cloth bag containing some papers, a tattered diary, and pictures of various gods and goddesses. In her hand she has a dog-eared family photograph which she offers to the researcher. The researcher sees a younger looking Manju, wearing a yellow saree with her head covered and holding a 24 month old baby girl. Manju's husband is staring vacantly at the camera, standing stiffly beside Manju while her little boy is next to his father looking slightly bewildered. The picture is ordinary, there is nothing special about it. But two things make this photo important. This picture, taken nearly two years ago, is the only one that Manju has of her daughter, Janvi. Janvi, now four years old, disappeared in November 2011. It is through this photograph Manju relives memories of her little girl, and this is what she could produce to the police when she was asked for a picture of her daughter. It was rejected, an outdated photograph understandably not of any use to the police.

With tears in her eyes, Manju begs me to help her find her little girl, whom she believes has been abducted to be sold into a life of prostitution. She narrates the sequence of that fateful day, describing how she dressed up her daughter in a red sweater, a slight chill in the air indicating the onset of winter. She had kneaded dough to make a few thick rotis for a hurried breakfast, keeping two as usual for the children to snack on during her absence while she went about her chores at the houses she worked for. The researcher interrupts, wanting to know who took care of her children while she was away at work. Manju says she has always left the children alone, they would amuse themselves playing in the lane outside their home with other children. She does not have any other alternative, her parents and in-laws are in their ancestral village and she does not have extended family in the city. When she returned home from work, her daughter was gone. She does not know the precise time when her little girl went missing, and her son, just a year older, cannot provide any answers.

“Every day I look at this picture, I look at my daughter's little clothes, and I go to the police station to beg them to help me,” Manjua says. “But often the police just refuse to let me in. They've told me to give up, that it will be better for me if I think of my daughter as dead.”

The researcher accompanies Manju to the police station, another fruitless journey where Manju is turned away without any assurance of hope from the police, or even a token display of interest in her case. The police officer present on this day recognizes her, and brushes her off rudely. “Why give birth to children if you are not able to take care of them?” the officer asks Manju. The officer is less condescending towards the researcher when the purpose is explained to him. He speaks in a conspiratorial whisper, stating that parents often sell their own children when they have too many mouths to feed.

Police are often tempted to blame the victim. But four-year-old Janvi, who will indeed likely never be found, whether she was lost, stolen, sold or murdered, bears no blame for what happened. Manju says she feels guilty because she knows she failed her daughter. A mother, she says, is supposed to protect her children. “What kind of a mother am I”, she asks the researcher, “that I could not even keep my child safe?”

Manju fights poverty, an indifferent society and an equally indifferent police system. She does not have the luxury of staying at home and caring for her children, and society does not provide her with child services she can avail of when she is forced to leave her children and go to work. When she loses her child, she is blamed for being careless. The researcher tells Manju it is not her but the society who has failed her daughter. The researcher leaves Manju as she holds on to the forlorn hope that her child will return home eventually.

Discussion

This is obviously a case of stranger abduction, as a three year old cannot vanish from the vicinity of her home. Even if she wandered off and got lost, any person coming across a distressed toddler on her own would immediately take the child to the local police station. There are various levels at which intervention is needed as seen from this case study. Firstly, a missing child complaint does not come under cognizable offences. Police action therefore can oscillate between being helpful or lackadaisical and treat the matter as being the lowest in its priority list.

The attitude and approach taken when responding to a report of a missing child may determine whether the child is recovered promptly and safely or remains missing and/or in an exploitative environment. Each stage of the case therefore, from initial report to case closure, forms a critical component of the child protection response.

The Police Department must therefore provide each officer with the necessary tools and training to enable them to act quickly and decisively when confronted with reports of missing or abducted children. An important tool is a clearly worded policy containing logical procedures and best practices to follow when receiving reports pertaining to these incidents.

Secondly, Manju did not have any safe place to keep her children while she went to work. With nuclear families more a norm today than an exception, and rising costs forcing both parents to earn, adequate facilities for child care need to be established where working mothers can leave their children for the duration of their working hours. Anganwadis are already a fixture in every ward, and its premises can be utilized to provide a safe place to keep children at no extra cost to the government. Effective prevention and an informed community can reduce the social and economic costs associated with missing children.

Case Study 2: Lost

Rajesh, a nine year old boy, ventured out of his home to watch a religious procession. He never returned home. He was still in his school uniform when his mother last saw him. Since that day the poor parents have made countless rounds to the police station to recover their missing child. When the police first refused to file a complaint, Rajesh's school principal intervened and helped to file a case on behalf of the parents. Without any help from the police, father Harishbhai who works as labourer, exhausted his meager savings to search for his son all over Gujarat and even Rajasthan. Rajesh's mother is a cart-puller and went around with his photo in desperate attempts to trace her child. She and her husband are upset with the lack of interest on the part of the police officials.

“The police asked us to wait for our son's return, stressing that he would return on his own. They refused to file a complaint.” says Rajesh's mother. “The police did not lift a finger to help in searching for our child. They even refused to meet us whenever we went to the police station.”

Rajesh's parents are in a dilemma — if they go searching for their child, the rest of the family would starve but still they continue to search for their child. The father tells the researcher that the police refused to file a complaint when he went to the station to seek help. He was asked to wait a couple of days and told that the child was a possible runaway and would return on his own.

For the mother, as she tells the researcher, the worst part is when they sit for their meals and she sees the empty spot where her son used to sit.

Discussion

The apathy of the police in dealing with the parents of missing children when they visit the police station is a refrain echoed by majority of the parents. The Police and provincial authorities have a moral and legal responsibility, as well as the power and resource, to provide timely help. The reluctance of the Police to file an FIR has been documented even by the committee investigating the Police lapses on the Nithari case. This is further confirmed by the parents the researcher interacted with for the study. There is a crucial need for a change of attitude on the part of the Police. It should be made mandatory for the Police to register an FIR immediately when a missing child is reported.

The level of support for parents of missing children is insufficient. Coping with the trauma of having a child who is missing demands courage and determination on the part of parents and other family members. When the parents are poor, they are caught between looking for their missing child and earning a living. These parents battle the pain of a missing child and the guilt at having to choose between earning a livelihood and searching for their child. An agency where parents of missing children can obtain guidance, emotional support and resources needs to be established. Counseling services to enable them to deal with the trauma and learn coping skills should be set up.

Missing person incident cause significant impacts to families, friends and the missing people themselves. The impacts are financial, emotional, psychological, material and work related. An Australian research has shown at least 12 people are affected for each missing person's case.

Families need to be connected with support services to assist them to cope with the impacts while the missing person is located and with the reconnection to ensure that issues influencing the disappearance are addressed.

Case Study 3: Unknown reason

Every new visitor fills Salim Khan with the hope that there might be some news of his son, Arif. Two years ago, the 12 year old left home in the morning to go to school and never returned. Khan, a resident of Ahmedabad's old city, shows the researcher a photograph of a smiling boy wearing a school uniform. He excelled in studies, his father proudly says, and aspired to be a doctor. Khan pleads to the researcher for help in finding his son, wiping away tears as he sits on a run-down cot, the only piece of furniture in a tiny dilapidated dwelling. The congested lane where he lives has many children running around gleefully, oblivious to the suffering of a missing child's father.

The father continues talking about his son to the researcher, remembering how happy he was at school, and how he enjoyed getting into mischief with his friends. Khan believes his son was abducted on his way to school. He did not even reach school that day, says the distraught father. He feels helpless, he tells the researcher. "Who will listen to a penniless driver", he says. He blames his poverty in his inability to help his son. His two younger children live like orphans now, his wife having passed away in the last year waiting for their son to return. Life has conspired against him, Khan says. The disappearance of his son destroyed his family. As if being poor was not enough, Khan tells the researcher bitterly.

“How can a child vanish into thin air?” asks Khan. The researcher enquires about police action in searching for his son. Khan describes the apathy of the police when he went to the police station to report his child as missing. They were reluctant to file a report he says, assuring him that the child must have skipped school to have some fun and would be back soon. Unable to get the police to take any action, he says he went searching at the main bus terminal at Gita Mandir, and keeps making rounds of the railway station, and also his relatives place in the hope that his son had decided to visit them. When the police finally registered his report, all they did was come for a visit to his house and enquire if the boy had returned. Khan has never been told what is being done to trace his child.

Khan continues to feel guilty, he believes he could have done something to protect his child. At times his despair is so great he wishes for death. But he has to live for his two younger sons, and he goes through each day hoping for a miracle. He still wants to believe his son will return someday, he tells the researcher.

Discussion

This case study depicts the emotional trauma that family members face when a child has gone missing. Disappearance of a child has an effect on the individual, his/her family and the community as a whole. The problems that family members of missing children face are complex and can be overwhelming. Besides the uncertainty about the fate of their child, they usually have to cope with economic, social and legal problems as well. Many parents have searched in vain for their beloved child, year after year. In many cases, family members of missing children suffer from symptoms of complicated grief and often find it hard to cope with necessary activities at

work and at home. There is a need for acknowledgement of the consequences of the disappearance of a missing child to the child's family. Khan lost his son, and his wife died within a year of his son's disappearance. His two children, as Khan acknowledged, are more like orphans, as he struggles to keep his sanity in coping with the death of his wife, earning a livelihood, raising his children alone and still make attempts to search for his missing son.

There is a need for an agency capable of providing the immediate type of emotional assistance and support that the family of a missing child requires. The parent of a missing child could experience many different emotions like anger, frustration, and helplessness. The parent may experience emotional and perhaps physical shock. At most times, parents simply do not know what to do and how to cope. Support can be provided through assisting the parent in establishing physical and emotional guidelines for his or her thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Parents also need to know that while the missing child may totally consume the consciousness and awareness of the parent, their other children have needs which cannot be ignored. Typically, children cannot developmentally deal with intense emotions or situations and there is a necessity for the remaining siblings to survive the situation. Parents need to be counseled to ensure that the daily structure is followed while fulfilling the siblings' basic needs.

Case Study 4: Runaway

Savita is a woman in her mid thirties, living with her husband who works as a security guard at a residential society in Ahmedabad. She meets the researcher at her one room dwelling allocated to them at the society where her husband works. Her niece, Moni, has been missing for more than three years. She was 15 when she went missing and would be 18 now. Savita tells the researcher

that Moni lived in a village with her parents in Kheda before she came to join her uncle in Ahmedabad. Her parents had sent her to the city in the hope that she would add to the family's income by working as a domestic help along with her aunt Savita. They entrusted their daughter to the uncle's care, believing that she would be safe living with him in the city.

Savita tells the researcher that Moni was a quiet girl and settled easily with them. She helped her aunt with the chores at home every morning before they left together to work at various houses in the vicinity. Savita says Moni was with them for nearly 6 months before she disappeared without leaving any message. Abduction has been ruled out, she went out of her own free will, Savita says. When the researcher asks why she believes so, Savita says Moni's few belongings were gone the day she went missing. She has never contacted her family since then, not even to let them know where she is or how she is doing.

It is not difficult to understand what happened to Moni, her aunt says. When they began their search for her, it emerged that she had befriended a man at one of the societies where they did domestic work. The man was in his twenties called Aakash and worked as a security guard. They would meet in secret, they were told by neighbours who had seen them. The day Moni went missing, Aakash had disappeared as well. Moni's relatives reported the matter to the police. The police, she says, were unhelpful. The girl has eloped, the police told them, and added that there was nothing they could do.

The researcher questions Savita on whether they have any hopes of Moni's return. The shame caused by Moni to her family is immense, Savita tells the researcher. She feels that it is better to

forget about her niece, and her parents have no wish to search for her either. Even if she comes back, Savita says, there would not be any place for her in the community.

Discussion

While the case of Moni on the surface displays the cause of her going missing as elopement, it should not be forgotten that she was a minor at the time of her disappearance. Young teens are impressionable and easily manipulated; they do not realize the danger of running away with someone whom they think cares for them. Since Moni is yet untraced, it is impossible to ascertain her fate. There is a possibility of her being happily married to the man she ran away with, but the chances of her landing in a prostitution ring is far greater.

According to CEOP (2009) Strategic Threat Assessment on Child Trafficking in the UK, there has been growing concern over the grooming of children and young people (mainly girls) into sexual exploitation. The principal profile of sexual grooming is that of older males who befriend vulnerable girls, gaining their trust, and eventually becoming their ‘boyfriends’. These relationships are carefully planned so that the groomer gains control, placing them in a position of power and enabling them to perpetrate and facilitate varied and serious sexual offences against vulnerable girls, often by groups of men. (CEOP (2009))

The police are of the view that most cases of a missing female between the ages of 15-18 are routine elopement cases. They blame extreme poverty and illiteracy and are of the opinion that parents tend to have a casual attitude in bringing up their children. Police sources cite difficulty in prevention of elopement of young girls and blame their parents for failing to control them. The

attitude of the police is extremely negative when it comes to young girls going missing. When a young girl went missing in Uttar Pradesh and her father went to DIG S. K. Mathur for his help in recovering his daughter, the DIG suggested his daughter had in fact eloped and said had it been one of his relatives he would have shot her dead

There is an urgent need for sensitization programmes for the police to bring about a change in the way they view and approach cases of missing children as a whole, and young girls in particular. Raising awareness among young people and those responsible for them is the best form of preventing children and young teens from falling prey to people with nefarious intentions. By sensitively informing young people of the risks they face and the services they can access, they will be empowered to protect themselves.

Case Study 5: Benign Explanations

In many cases, there are benign explanations for a child being reported missing. Such cases are resolved quickly without requiring police intervention and without the child coming to any harm.

A 5-year-old boy wandered away from his home while playing by himself. His mother was occupied with household chores and did not notice his disappearance. After an hour when she called him for lunch, she became alarmed when he did not respond. The community members gathered together to trace the missing child and a report was filed immediately with the police. Upon searching, the child was found sleeping at a kirana store a few blocks away from the chawl. The shopkeeper had seen the boy crying and led him to his shop. He fed the child and after eating the child fell asleep. The community members found the child unharmed and returned the boy to his mother. The child was found before the police arrived. The records however show that the child is still missing.

A 14-year-old girl and her 10-year-old brother were at Kankaria Lake with their father. While he was busy buying ice-cream, they went ahead and inadvertently got separated from him and got lost. Losing sight of his children caused the father to be very alarmed, and asked any person he came across for help. While he was searching for the children, they were trying to find him, the police was informed. It took a few hours before the father found his children unharmed. The police records still show the children as untraced.

A 13-year-old boy was scolded by his parents for not being interested in his studies and spending more time playing cricket. Upset at the scolding he received, the boy stole some money from the

house and ran away. When the boy's absence was discovered, the police was informed. The boy was gone for 3 days before he returned home safely. He had intended to go to his uncle's place in Rajkot, but his money ran out. He called his father from a local phone booth and asked to be retrieved from the bus stop in Anand.

Discussion

The cases described as above depict instances of children being reported missing with benign explanations requiring little police intervention. The police routinely receive such complaints and usually matters are resolved without requiring police assistance. This understandably leads the police to assume every report of a missing child to a trivial matter, not requiring urgent action. Therefore, police officers' initial response to a report of a missing child is to make certain that the level of response is justified to the circumstance of the missing episode. The emergency response is definite in the cases where risk and danger to the child is present. In other situations where the circumstances are not clear, officers should keep the missing child's safety in mind and act accordingly.

To eliminate chances of police dismissing a missing child report as benign incidents in which the child is expected to be recovered eventually, there should be a mandatory risk factor assessment to be done by the police in every missing child's case. The level of risk can be categorized as low, medium and high, with every level having specific assessment criteria.

Conclusion

The issue of missing children is a complex and multi-layered one requiring a coordinated multi-agency response. The case studies attempt to cover the spectrum of missing children's cases and highlight the areas where attention should be focused, interventions required and measures undertaken to address them. While the onus is on the effective and prompt response of the police to a missing child report, the parents have the primary responsibility to ensure the safety of their children. At the community level, adequate infrastructure is required for families with both parents working. Levels of support to families of the missing children are felt to be insufficient and need to be addressed urgently.

In the parents' own words

“I remember my son 50-100 times a day...When someone knocks at the door there is the feeling that he has come back. The pain...I cannot describe.”

Mother of Santosh, missing since 2006

“I do not cook any of my son's favourite food anymore.”

Mother of Hitesh, missing since 2009

“Even if my child is dead, it is fine. It is not knowing that is killing me. I just want to know if my child is alive or dead”

Father of Payal, missing since 2011

“I am always hopeful that my child will come back. I dream of her often.”

Father of Vishwa, missing since 2012

“I wish my child was dead. Not because that would make me stop missing him, but because then I would know that he would stop missing me. He was only four years old.”

Mother of Rahul, missing since 2006

“If it is raining, I wonder if my child will get wet.”

Mother of Mukesh, missing since 2007

Parents holding a demonstration in Ahmedabad to create awareness on the issue of missing children



Source: Google images

Banners put up by parents of missing children in Ahmedabad as part of “Search my Child” campaign.



Source: Google images

CHAPTER 5
**DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study on missing children is an initiative which aims to identify the overall framework of legislation, policies, societal perception and causes and ways in which the problem of missing children can be effectively addressed. The seriousness of the problem can be judged from the alarming rise of missing children in Ahmedabad from the beginning of the year 2012 with the disappearance of 11 year old Vishwa Patel who is yet to be traced as of this moment. The media has taken up this issue resulting in increased awareness among the public and a forum for parents of missing children to voice their distress.

Discussion

This research has examined background of the children who went missing, behavior of the child at home and at school before going missing, satisfaction of the parents with the police response to the missing child incident, the episode of the child going missing as best described by the parents and the concerns of the parents. In this section discussion on the findings in each category is depicted.

Background of the Missing Child

Studying the socio-economic background of missing children provides an insight on the missing children problem. The profile that emerges is that most missing children come from poor economic backgrounds, and is more likely than not from single parent families, mostly mothers.

According to this study, the highest number of missing children is from the age group 13-17 years. This finding is consistent with the studies done in other countries such as USA, Canada

and UK and supports the conviction of the police that majority of missing children listed every year are actually runaways and are not taken against their will. The finding that the bulk of the missing children consist of females can be linked to trafficking, but there is no empirical data to make such a suggestion.

According to research studies in the US, majority of missing children cases involved suspected runaways. One percent of the total report were abduction cases, those committed by family members were the most frequent form of abduction. 88 % of the children reported missing were age 13 or older with 60% being girls. According to Betty-Ann Blaine, in a study done by the organization Hear the Children Cry, deterioration of family life; instability/shifting households; crippling levels of poverty; lack of adequate social support systems and heartbreaking levels of hopelessness are key factors leading to children running away from homes. The annual report of the Pakistan-based organisation Lawyers For Human Rights And Legal Aid revealed that 4500 Bangladeshi girls are sold in Pakistan in a single year.

This study shows that most of the missing children come from impoverished backgrounds with parents who have little economic security. The parents of all the missing children at Nithari were poor, migrant labourers who settled in the Noida suburb to make a living. Poverty and the issue of missing children are interlinked. People living a hand to mouth existence are less likely to have access to safe places for their children or have adequate resources to meet the needs of their children, much less ensure their child's safety.

The study reveals that majority of parents earn income of less than 2 lacs annually, putting them in the lower socio-economic bracket. According to a study done by a unit in the Department of Local Government in Jamaica, there is a strong link between missing children and poverty levels.

The majority of children who go missing are driven from home because of poor economic circumstances which deprive them of some basic needs. The study further points out that the authorities had noticed this pattern years prior to 2009. The study confirms that the children from working-class homes are the most vulnerable in society because of the breakdown in family life. Many of the homes are single-parent households (mostly mothers only) that, and lack the financial means to safeguard their children by implementing security measures unlike upper class families. The needs brought on by the dire financial straits of lower middle-class homes often result in parents sending the children out on the streets to sell quick-cash items in a desperate bid to supplement the family's already thin disposable income. These children are put at risk and their vulnerability is further advanced with their exposure in the public domain, states the study.

This study has shown that half of the parents interviewed are married, while the other half consisted of single parent homes due to separation, divorce or death. While the many of the missing children have both parents present in the home, a large segment belong to single parent units, whether it is separation, divorce or death. Children with a single parent are more vulnerable as their needs might not be adequately fulfilled in a setting where a single parent is solely responsible for providing for the children as well as raising them. Within the family setting, there are numerous issues which result in parents being alienated from their children. These include issues of parenting, of children believing that at that age they need greater independence or there might be an absence of sufficient family support. That would lead some children to actually leave the house for a period of time.

Another glaring issue is that when single parents go to earn a livelihood, their children are usually left unmonitored and vulnerable, causing them to be at risk of various forms of dangers.

According to The Office of national Statistics, UK, Children who grow up in one-parent homes are more likely to suffer poor health, do badly at school and fall into crime or drug abuse when they are teenagers.

The level of harmony in the household and behaviour of the missing child are useful indicators in making an assessment of the level of risk to the child and also their vulnerability to outside forces. For example, a child is more likely to indulge in similar behavior when he has friends who are involved with alcohol and other anti-social behaviours and cause family conflict. With parents unable to communicate with the child, arguments occur and there is failure to address the issue effectively. Such children are more likely to run away from what they believe is an unacceptable situation. This study found that parents have described their children in the age group of 13-18 as having had some behavior issues at home and at school and the highest number of missing children in this age group is most likely to have run away.

Behaviour of Child

It has been found that 19.15% of children had poor levels of adjustment in the family, with several serious issues and 37.23% of the missing child exhibiting serious problem behavior and 21.81% of the parents stating that they argued excessively with their parents. Problem behavior at school is also an indicator. While 22% of the respondents said that their child did not attend school, which could be attributed to several reasons such as poverty and migration, 13.30% have been described by their parents as excellent students, and 18.09% are described by their parents as having had poor academic performance. While excessive pressure on children to perform well

at school can be a factor for a child running away, poor performance at school leads to the child to feel isolated, rejected and resentful towards authority figures. These are two extremes and a balanced approach on the part of the parents and school authorities is required to tackle the problem.

According to the study, a significant number of children are said to watch television for more than two hours a day. There is empirical data to prove that children who spent more than two hours a day at a screen had a 60% higher risk of psychological problems than children who had fewer viewing hours. A small percentage of children have been reported by their parents as consuming drugs and alcohol at 4.79%, but this data cannot be ascertained as the parents may well be unaware if their child had such a habit.

Parental satisfaction with Police response

One of the findings of this study is that there is a lack of a standard operating procedure when it comes to initial police response to report of a missing child. There is a crucial need for detailed, police procedures and policies for responding to missing child cases as it would result in more proactive investigations. As well as describing the roles and responsibilities of officers or units assigned to specific investigative functions, search and rescue, and analytical functions, comprehensive policies and procedures should include directions concerning the actions to take place when a report is first received.

The police play a key role in the missing children issue. They are also well equipped to be a single point of contact for missing children and their families to receive appropriate support.

Safeguarding of the young and vulnerable is the responsibility of everyone, including the police. The police have a responsibility to ensure that the child is found safe when they are notified of a missing child. The temptation for the police to view the report of a missing child as simply an administrative exercise (i.e. a matter of filling the form in rather than genuine police enquiry) appears to be the norm. Most parents have stated that the police instructed them to wait for two days before filing they were persuaded to file a report.

Parental Description of the episode

This study has found that majority of the missing children cases constitute runaways. This may be one of the reasons why the police are reluctant to take missing children cases as a priority issue, and assure the parents that the children would return on their own. Majority of the parents have described their child as having run away after an argument over money. Scolding from parents over watching television, school performance were the second major issues of conflict between parents and children described as having run away from home. More female runaways were having conflict with parents over romantic relationships.

Parental Concerns

The picture that emerges from this study is of a large group of families striving simultaneously to cope with the practical effects of the loss of their missing child – especially the economic impact – while enduring the emotional strain of not knowing what happened to their child, what circumstances their child is living in and whether their child is alive or dead. The difficulties

faced by the families to trace their missing child are numerous and interlinked and affect various aspects of their daily lives.

Majority of the parents have suffered financial distress caused by having a child going missing. Losing wages due to their search for the child is a common occurrence, and much of their earnings have to be spent on making short trips to the police station, long trips to other regions in search of their child and railway stations, bus terminals and orphanages.

Conclusion

The issue of missing children is a complex and multi-layered one requiring a coordinated multi-agency response. At the outset, the first problem is that there is no clear cut definition of a missing child, or trafficking. The only statute that deals with trafficking is the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act which deals with prostitution and not trafficking on the whole. Therefore, response of law enforcement and investigating agencies to trafficking tend to be perfunctory at best. As a result, maximum children who go missing may become victims of trafficking at one stage or another. This phenomenon is not understood or even investigated and therefore no logical conclusion can be drawn from it.

At the mezzo level, there is lack of adequate knowledge management system. Database of missing children at all levels are haphazard and fragmented, and cannot be shared across systems. Therefore, a child missing in one state and found in another cannot be reunited with his family at the earliest, if at all. Lack of coordination among various departments aggravates the problem. Ideally, a case of a missing child can be dealt with at the district level while working in sync with the police, child welfare committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, Children's Homes, Management of Shelter Homes, district legal services authority and any child rights commission.

The police do not have a standard operating procedure on how to respond to a case of a missing child. In several countries throughout the world, An AMBER Alert or a Child Abduction Emergency -a child abduction alert bulletin- is issued upon the suspected abduction of a child, since 1996. Light emitting diode billboards and wireless device SMS text messages are also used.

Response protocol such as Amber Alert is not in place within our police system. A standardised mechanism on how to proceed with investigation of a missing child has not been established resulting in haphazard and ineffective police action.

Human resources at the level of the police station are inadequate. Qualified and adequately trained personnel in the police to handle missing children cases are desperately needed. Professional social welfare workers in Child Protection agencies are required. Lack of financial resources to address the issue of missing children is also a hurdle. Budget allocation should be made towards setting up of systems, providing training, procuring equipment and setting up data banks within a centralized system.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The suggestions and recommendations will have to take into account the various stakeholders without which effective solutions cannot be undertaken. There is the need for comprehensive cross-agency working, for effective information sharing, for good quality and well researched information and communication. Therefore in formulating suggestions and recommendations, we have to create partnerships between government entities, voluntary organizations and the community to develop effective, all-inclusive policies and procedures. However, with the police being the most important authority in the case of missing children, they have the responsibility of providing leadership to the community in relation to missing children issues by encouraging partnerships and building capacity of the community.

The suggestions and recommendations therefore have been made for the following categories of stakeholders in the community on dealing with the issue of missing children:

- a. Parents
- b. Schools
- c. Police
- d. Government
- e. Civil society

Parents

Child safety begins with the parents. Parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that their children are kept safe, and that the opportunity for their children to become victims is eliminated or at the very least, minimized. The first step is to be aware that children are not immune to abduction because they are close to home. The most important single thing that parents can do is

to make sure that their children are supervised, even if they are in their own society playground or neighborhood street.

Children should be taught about personal safety with age appropriate instructions being given to them. Parents should warn children of the danger of talking to strangers, or accepting any gifts from them. Children need to be cautioned not to be lured by any person, even if familiar to the child, into a car.

When a child goes missing, reasonable searches and enquiries should be made by the parents in an attempt to establish the whereabouts of the missing child. The police should be informed as soon as the child is confirmed missing and all efforts must be made to provide accurate description of the child along with a recent photograph. Where the child is located without police knowledge and assistance, it remains the responsibility of the parents/ agency that has care of the child to notify the police immediately.

When a child goes missing from home, the parents should search the house especially the closets/ almirahs, trunks and suitcases, in the beds especially the beds with boxes and under beds, inside large appliances like fridge, washing machines, and inside vehicles, and all other places where a child can crawl and hide. The police should be notified immediately if the parents are still unable to locate the child after a thorough search of the house and surrounding area. The parents should dial 100 or visit the nearest police station with all the details like appearance, age, cloths the child is wearing along with the most recent photograph of the child. A detailed description of the clothing worn by the child and the personal items he or she had at the time of the disappearance should be provided to the police. Any personal identification marks, such as

birthmarks, scars, tattoos, or mannerisms that may help in finding the child should be included. A picture of the child that shows these identification marks should be provided to the police.

It is important for the parents to limit access to their home until police arrives and has collected possible evidence. Parents should take care not to touch or remove anything from the child's room or from the home as many things could provide clues to the police as to the child's whereabouts.

If a child disappears in a market, the police should be notified immediately and the parking attendants and security officers should be alerted. The police need to be told about special identification features of the child, like birthmarks. The precise time that the parent noticed that the child was missing and what clothing he or she was wearing should be provided to the police along with a list of friends and sites most frequented by the child. All extortion attempts should be reported to law enforcement. (Adapted from Case Management of Missing Children Homicide Investigations, OJJDP, 1997)

Schools

Schools are required to become the center of prevention efforts. Children learn a great deal in the classroom about the basic rules for living. Schools offer an already existing system for delivering educational messages. Thus, it is important for schools to provide children with accurate information about their personal safety. Programmes on child safety should be taught in schools. These programmes should be designed to increase children's ability to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations and help better protect themselves. Equally important is the

development of self-esteem at every level of the educational process, because children with self-confidence are less likely to be victimized.

The school based programs should be based on the following goals: enhancing a child's ability to avoid victimization, enhancing a child's self esteem, reducing the feelings of guilt and blame that often are associated with victimization, promoting disclosure of abuse and victimization, enhancing communication between parents and children about personal safety. Children can be taught to recognize appropriate and inappropriate touches and understand the difference. They can be taught assertiveness skills to help avoid an offender's advances. If the knowledge, self-confidence, and assertiveness skills of children are improved, they would be safer because they would be better able to recognize danger and resist potential offenders. Ensuring that children learn these valuable skills need to be a part of the school curriculum goals.

Police

The Police form the most important authority involved in the missing children issue. The response parents/guardians receive from them when approaching the police station to report a missing or abducted child is one of the most critical process in the entire investigation. When a missing child is reported to the police, in most instances there are no clues as to what happened , whether it is a benign case or the child is in danger. This information can only be determined by investigating facts of the case and avoiding preconceived judgments. The assessment and approach the police officers take during the initial response to these situations may have profound implications for whether the child is recovered and returned home safely or remains missing or worse, is not found alive.

A Standard Operating Procedure needs to be put in place so that swift action can be taken as soon as a child is reported missing. Models are available in other countries which can be studied and reworked to suit local conditions after which it can be set up in India. A highly skilled investigation and rapid response task force on missing children needs to be created. Training and capacity building of police officers and other stakeholders at the field level should be conducted periodically to ensure that their approach towards the parents and children would be more sympathetic. Special beat policemen should be placed at key areas like railway stations and bus terminals since children often get separated from their parents at these crowded places. These special officers should be trained to spot children in distress and take necessary action. All complaints of missing children need to be registered and treated as a cognizable crime and investigations conducted on priority basis.

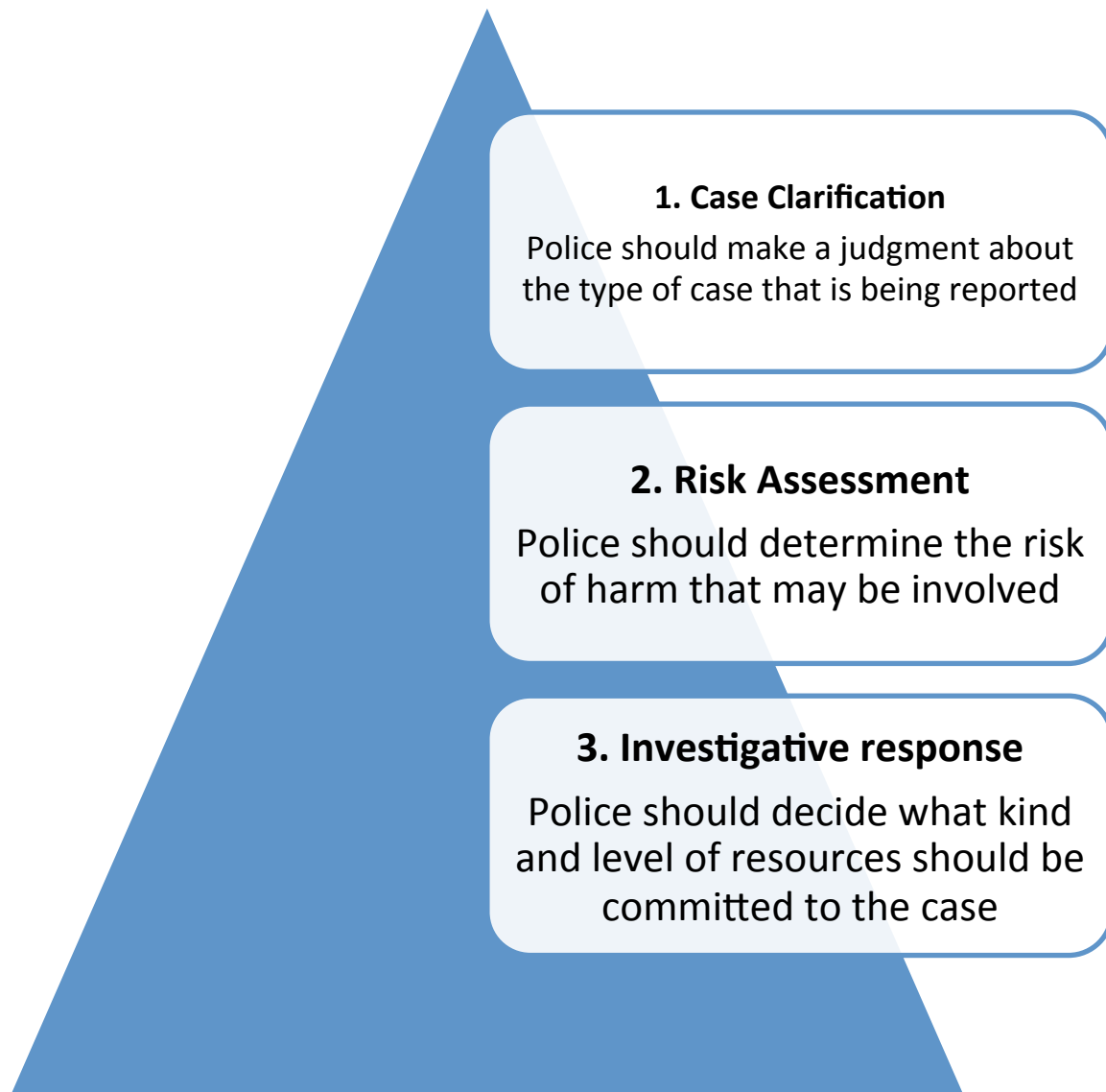
The Police Station should set up a Neighbourhood Watch System along with the citizens of a particular locality. Collaboration and coordination of the police with the local people would enhance trust in the system while making the citizens more responsible and aware.

All police stations should maintain separate registers for missing children. It should be made mandatory for the police to file an FIR (First Information Report). The report should contain the following information in detail: what exactly happened- name and description of child, the facts of the episode, sequence of events, date and time of the child discovered missing, place last seen, names and addresses of witnesses (if any) and name and address of the complainant.

A case file should be individually maintained on every missing child report. The following details should be recorded which would provide valuable information. These details should include:

- Age of child
- Photograph of the child
- History of absence(s)
- Time of day/night of missing episode
- Physical/learning difficulties of the child, if any
- Previous behaviour patterns
- Child's medical history
- Mental state of the child at the time of going missing
- Whether child is trying to escape from a situation at home or go to somebody
- Previous missing or runaway episodes
- Group and peer behaviour
- Other suspicious behavior related to the incident
- A full record must be maintained of all actions taken and messages received/given. This recording should be made in the child's file within the system maintained by the Police.

Figure 6: Proposed steps for Police Action on report of missing child



Source: Sylvia Mao

Government

The complexity of the missing children issue and the significant resources that are required to address the problem effectively requires government support. The Police cannot address this complex challenge alone. Coordination and communication between stakeholders are essential. There needs to exist a partnership between states and across the country as a whole. The government has to assume responsibility and acknowledge that the issue of missing children requires attention and effective mechanisms are required to be put in place to address it.

There are several steps which can be taken at the onset which are given as follows. A concrete definition of a Missing Child is necessary. A National Centre for Missing and Exploited children needs to be established on a priority basis by the government. A centralized database of missing children needs to set up. There should be a system for centrally collating relevant information relating to all incidents of a child/young person going missing from home, in order to develop a multi-agency coordinated response. Nodal officers on missing children should be present in every district. The officials should be given specific responsibilities to trace and provide care and protection to the missing child. The nodal officer is to be made accountable for ensuring that all steps are taken to trace the missing child. He should be made point of contact for all information related to the missing child for the parents of the missing child, the police, the NGOs and other systems. All efforts should be made to unite rescued children and placed in homes with their parents and legal custodians.

State Governments should take necessary action and investigate the crime, wherever police

negligence or inaction has been reported. The Daily Diary Register maintained by the Police should be regularly monitored to ensure that all missing children reports entered therein have been duly taken cognizance of and FIRs filed.

The following recommendations for the government can be classified into four broad themes:

- Establishment of government funded programmes relating to missing children. Operation of a national toll-free telephone line for individuals to report information regarding the location of any missing child, or other child 13 years old or younger whose whereabouts are unknown.
- Establishment and operation of a national resource center which would provide technical assistance to state and local governments and police agencies, disseminate information about innovative and model missing children's programmes, and periodically conduct national incidence studies to determine the number of missing children.
- Creation, compilation and publication of research on missing children, with emphasis on effective models of inter-governmental coordination and effective programmes designed to promote community awareness of missing children, among others.
- Prepare an annual comprehensive plan for facilitating cooperation and coordination among all agencies and organizations with responsibilities related to missing children.

It is imperative for the government to come to recognize that all missing children, regardless of the reason they are missing, may be at risk of violence, victimization, and exploitation. Once this realization occurs, it will change the present laissez-faire attitude towards this issue and effective policies and procedures aimed at child safety and protection can be formulated. Much of the progress required in law enforcement's response to missing children lies on the enactment of effective legislation and creation of valuable resources which only the government can provide.

Civil Society

It is important to realize that different agencies in the community cannot afford to address the missing children problem while working in isolation. The entire civil society have a common interest in addressing the problem of missing children, and can find more efficient and effective ways to achieve eliminating this problem by working together.

More anganwadis and crèches need to be set up so that children are kept in a safe place when the parents are working. Consideration needs to be given as to why children run away from home and measures taken to prevent repeat runaway episodes. The development of family support community based services and effective individual work with children are required. Family advocacy services should be set up to provide support, crisis-intervention, and technical assistance to families and law enforcement agencies.

A statewide initiative to educate families about keeping children safer should be initiated. There should be school meetings and conferences about child safety. Urban communities should be engaged in protecting children from becoming victims of sexual exploitation. Campaigns to

educate families about measures to help keep children safer from individuals who seek to harm children, to help families respond in the event a child becomes missing, and to assist families with recognizing symptoms in suspected cases of sexual exploitation needs to be put in place. Developing and disseminating programs and information to the general public, schools, and other entities about the prevention of child abduction, sexual exploitation, and child safety through community outreach efforts should be organized.

Citizens need to be aware of strangers and unusual behavior in their neighborhood. They need to have presence of mind and write down descriptions of people, vehicles and license numbers. For example, when a child is being pulled into a car by an individual in a public place, most people would tend to believe it is a parent trying to control his own child, and mostly this is what it is. However, a citizen should be alert to the possibility that a child is in danger of being abducted and note down license numbers and alert the authorities to prevent a crime from taking place.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTION PLANS

Action Plan at the Micro Level: For Expectant Parents

A program at healthcare facilities can be initiated which educates and informs expectant parents to prevent infant abduction. It can be initiated in hospitals and maternal homes. Personnel in healthcare facilities and at prenatal visits should remind parents of the measures they should take to provide maximum child protection. The guidelines listed below provide a few parenting techniques that can also help prevent abduction of infants while in the healthcare facility where the baby is born and once the parents take the baby home. They should be shared with expectant parents at appropriate times. Infants' risk levels of abduction are substantially elevated when parents are not properly educated about the safety issues involved.

Guidelines for parents: At the hospital

- It is of paramount important for the parents to be deliberately watchful over the newborn infant.
- At some point before the birth of the baby, parents should investigate security procedures at the facility where they plan to give birth to the baby and request a copy of the facility's written guidelines about procedures for "special care" and security procedures in the maternity ward. It is essential to know all of the facility's procedures in place to safeguard the infant while staying in that facility.
- Parents should never leave the infant out of their direct, line-of-sight even when they go to the restroom or take a nap. When possible, parents keep the infant's cradle on the side of the bed away from the door leading out of the room.

- After admission to the facility, parents should ask about the facility's protocols concerning the routine nursery procedures, feeding and visitation hours, and security measures. Parents should not hesitate to politely ask direct questions and settle for nothing less than an acceptable explanation.
- Parents should not give their infant to anyone without properly verified identification as issued by that facility. It is important to find out what additional or special identification is being worn to further identify facility personnel who have authority to transport the infant. Parents should speak to a person in authority (*e.g.*, unit director, charge nurse) if they have any questions or concerns. Parents should make sure everyone who is helping them watch the infant while they are in the facility understands these safeguards and does not release the infant to any unauthorized person.
- Parents should become familiar with the staff members who work in the maternity unit. During short stays in the facility, parents can ask to be introduced to the nurse assigned to the mother and the infant.
- Parents should question unfamiliar persons entering their room or inquiring about their infant — even if they are in the facility's attire or seem to have a reason for being there. They should alert the nurses' station immediately.
- It is important to determine where the infant will be when taken for tests, and how long the tests will take. Parents should find out who has authorized the tests. If the parents are uncomfortable with anyone who requests to take their infant or unable to clarify what testing is being done or why the infant is being taken from their room, it is appropriate to go with the infant to observe the procedure. Or if the parents are unable to accompany the infant, they can request a family member to go along.

- For the records to take home, parents need to have at least one color photograph of the infant (full, front-face view) and compile a complete written description of the infant including hair and eye color, length, weight, date of birth, and specific physical characteristics.

At Home

- Only allow persons into the home who are well-known by the mother. It is ill advised to allow a mere or recent acquaintance into the house. There have been several cases where an abductor has made initial contact with a mother and infant in the hospital setting and then subsequently abducted the infant from the family home.
- If anyone should arrive at the home claiming to be affiliated with the healthcare facility where the infant was born or other healthcare provider, they should immediately call up the hospital and make enquiries. A high degree of diligence should be exercised by family members when home with the infant.
- The infant's family is the primarily responsible for the infant's safety, and all family members should be sensitive to any suspicious visitors.
- In the age of social media, parents should use caution in posting photographs of their infant on websites. When doing so, access should be limited to those they know personally and trust. To limit anyone else's potential misuse of a photograph of their infant, parents should carefully consider anyone's request to take a picture of their infant and only share photographs of their infant with those they know personally and trust.

At public places

- If parents must take their infant out, whenever possible, they should take a trusted friend or family member as an extra set of hands and eyes to protect and constantly observe the infant.
- Parents must never leave a child alone in a motor vehicle. They should always take the child with them.
- Parents should never let someone they don't know pick up or hold their child.

Runaways

One of the findings of this study is that majority of the missing children constitute runaways. It is always difficult to establish why a young person runs away from home and there is a need to understand the domestic scenario. However, Christine Vincent, in *Teenage Runaways: What Can a Parent Do?* has identified six reasons. The six reasons identified are:

Excitement/ Adventure: There are some young people who have been influenced by peers and/or the media and think that home is too restrictive or dull. They mistakenly believe that by running away, life will be full of freedom and good times. These young people believe they are 'running to' freedom, adventure, new places, experiences and people. It is not that home is a bad place but the young person thinks there is a more exciting and rewarding world to meet.

Arguments at home: Many more young people run away to escape from certain consequences such as anticipation of scolding by parents for poor results.. Some young people run away impulsively following an argument with parents or from fear of punishment by parents for some action. For example, a young boy may run away after an argument with a parent over his desire to spend an evening with his friends. He may return once he is no longer angry. A teenager may

also run away on discovering that he has failed an exam or his inability to please his parents academically.

Domestic conflict: Some teenagers run away for far more serious reasons. This may usually involve conflict with parents which has escalated over time. The conflict results usually from: skipping school, failure in exams, use of alcohol, the teenager's association with friends who his parents disapprove of. Sometimes the teenager might feel that many restrictions are being placed on him by his parents.

Abuse and neglect: Children may run away from different forms of abuse and neglect. It may have continued over long periods within the family. Young people may run away from being subject to violence due to frequent fighting with his parents. Children who are sexually abused by a parent or family member may run away. Some parents are abusive to their children verbally and psychologically traumatise them through rejection and excessive demands. Such behaviour can lead a child to run away to escape from the situation. Other parents neglect their child by not providing them the basic level of care and protection.

Rejection and abandonment: Other young people have been thrown out of their homes by parents or guardians. This form of rejection occurs after escalated conflict at home, poverty or inability of the parents or guardians to raise the child.

Institutional runaways: At times a teenager is placed in a government institution or in the care of the state. They may be sent to a remand home or institution for a short period of time or at certain occasions, permanently. If these young people run away from such institutions, they are classified as missing persons. (*Christine Vincent, Teenage Runaways: What Can a Parent Do?*)

Runaways - signs of preparation

Many more children run away from home than are abducted. Parents should be aware of signs which points towards a child's possible departure from the home. If such signs are observed by the parents and acted upon, many runaway cases could be prevented. These include:

- **growing isolation** - greater reticence than normal in a child
- **excessive arguing** - increased irritation erupting into rows
- **abrupt mood swings** - increased frequency and/or intensity of mood swings
- **increased home discipline infractions** - a greater number of rule infractions pertaining to the home and family life increased school violations - truancy, slipping grades, indiscipline
- **increased sleeping** - can be indicative of underlying problems and/or depression sufficient to result in running away reduced communication with family members generally
- **parental arguments** - personal, financial and marital problems resulting in parental conflict. Some children may alleviate their anxiety in the face of such circumstances by removing themselves from the scene.
- **threats to run away** - take them seriously and try to remove the causes of the child's dissatisfaction. Talk through the dissatisfaction but do not counter with threats of punishment as, if they do eventually run away, such threats might deter a return.
- **family crisis** - such as distressing death of parent or sibling
- **sudden change in friends**

- **unexplained money or possessions** and/or the making of mysterious phone calls - could indicate an intention to run away and/or involvement in dishonest or immoral practices.

Source: The US National Network of Runaway and Youth Services

Many of these behavior symptoms can be a part of the normal developmental process of a child in the early teen years and most children may manifest some of these signs at various times in their lives. But a child's dissatisfaction with his/her environment should be acted upon, just as we respond to early signs of an illness. Parents are required to exercise commonsense in interpreting such cues but, if they are convinced of its significance, assistance should be sought from the right professionals. Sources of assistance include school counselors, social workers and local government health and mental health services.

Runaways - prevention

Adolescent children in particular undergo stresses in coping with their social environments, especially their families. Parents are advised to improve communication with their offspring through the following ways:

- **Pay attention** - really listen to what your children say
- **Give them respect** - support your child's struggle to grow and accept the maturity he/she has already achieved
- **Try to understand** - consider things from your child's point of view
- **Avoid labels** - identify the real problem in your household without resorting to meaningless labels
- **Do not hassle** - show interest without probing; too many questions can cut off information

- **Do not use emotional blackmail** - children resent being manipulated into conforming with the wishes of parents
- **Use team work** - work together in identifying problems and their solutions
- **Do not always give answers** - encourage your child to arrive at her own answer to some problems
- **Make children responsible** - offer your children options rather than orders but help them understand the consequences of their actions
- **Praise the positives** - describe to your child his/her positive as well as negative behaviour and how such behaviour effects those around them; ensure you reinforce positive behaviour rather than negative behaviour
- **Talk about feelings** - share your feelings with your child and vice versa; love in the home is perhaps the best method of preventing children running away.

Source: Preventing Missing Children by Gerald Arenberg et al (1984)

Action Plan at the Macro Level: For the Police

The initial attitude and approach the Police Department and its officers are crucial when it comes to missing children. It may determine the success or failure of the recovery of the child. Whether the child is recovered swiftly, remains missing for a long period of time or never traced at all depends on the attitude and mindset of the police. A thorough and efficient police response is absolutely critical in each stage of the case, from the initial investigation to the successful recovery of the child.

The Police Department must provide its officers with the knowledge and tools required to enable them to act decisively when confronted with reports of missing children. A clearly worded policy directive containing understandable procedures for officers to follow as a guide through each stage of the investigation is the single, most important tool an agency can provide.

Policies and procedures are of limited value, however, unless the Police Department ensures every member receives direct instruction about the policy's intent. Additionally, specific training and awareness about the overall issue of missing children will help each officer understand the critical role he or she plays in this important area of child protection.

Police officers require to know and be aware that there may be many different of missing children cases they may encounter. Each case would require a different approach as well. They include the types of cases noted below as provided by NISMART.

A. **Nonfamily abduction** involves a child who has been wrongfully taken by a nonfamily perpetrator through the use of physical force, persuasion, or threat of bodily harm.

B. **Family abduction** occurs when, in violation of a court order, a decree, or other legitimate custodial rights, a member of the child's family, or someone acting on behalf of a family member, takes or fails to return a child. This is also referred to as parental kidnapping and custodial interference.

C. A **Runaway** child, often a teenager, leaves home voluntarily for a variety of reasons. This would include any child 17 years of age or younger.

D. The **Throwaway** is a child whose caretaker makes no effort to recover the child after running away, who has been abandoned or deserted, or who has been asked to leave his or her home and not allowed to return. While not necessarily reported to authorities as missing, children in this category frequently come to the attention of law enforcement.

E. The **Lost, Injured, or Otherwise Missing** child is defined as a child who has disappeared under unknown circumstances. The incident may range from the child wandering away and becoming lost to the child being abducted, wherein no one witnessed the act. These circumstances sometimes involve foul play where those reporting the incident are attempting to cover-up a crime involving the child. (NISMART-1 and 2)

When developing policy and procedures regarding missing children cases, it is essential each response, regardless of what the initial indicators may be, should be governed by an assumption

the child is in jeopardy until significant facts to the contrary are confirmed. Police officers are more likely to respond to a situation more effectively and collect evidence when the safety of the child is their paramount concern. For example, the Police should refer troubled runaways to appropriate social or mental health service agencies. Youths who repeatedly run away from home or runaways with other serious problems should be referred for evaluation or services. This would not be a difficult or a costly set of activities for the police to undertake. Often, it simply would require someone to recognize the need and initiate discussions between the appropriate agencies. The Police should build bridges with the necessary community agencies which deal with Family and Children providing such services.

Pre-incident Planning and Resource Development

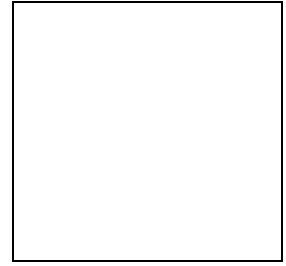
An effective Police response to reports of missing children requires the creation of a written policy and procedure. It also includes pre-incident planning and resource development. An effective and comprehensive plan can result only if these three factors are given equal importance.

In an effort to more efficiently investigate, manage, and resolve cases of missing children and minimize the emotional stresses associated with these incidents, the Police Department should involve the communities and hold preplanning sessions to assess roles, identify resources, and agree on responsibilities. When implemented, this protocol would not only spell out specific responsibilities, but also serve as the basis for ongoing communication and cooperation.

A lot of time is lost when the Police respond to the report of a missing child without a plan. It is crucial to adopt planned strategies through which officers will be able to exercise more control over events. It will also assist the officials in responding more effectively to unforeseen occurrences, and enhance the chances of successful outcomes.

In the next section, two forms for the police have been developed and presented to be used when a child is reported missing. There is a need to have a standardized police intake form across the country and across agencies for a match in agency information nationwide. The two forms presented here is an attempt to bridge this gap. The first form is an intake form for capturing essential details to aid in the case investigation. The second form is to assess the level of risk to the child which alerts the police to the situation of the child and would help to gauge the level of risk and instigate appropriate police response.

Police Intake form for Missing Child Report: A model



Recent Photo

a) Basic information about the Missing Child

Full name _____
Date of birth _____
Birthplace _____
Nicknames, if any _____
Current and previous addresses. Who else lived there? _____

b) Physical description of the Missing Child

Height _____
Weight _____
Age _____
Build _____
Hair Color/Length of Hair _____
Eye color? _____
Any Distinguishing Marks – such as tattoos, birthmarks, scars, etc. _____
Most recent photo of the missing person Yes/No _____

c) Habits and Personality of Missing Child

What type of recreation or activities does the child engage in including hobbies?

Are there particular habits that the child has? For instance, does he/she go to a particular spot to play each day?

What type of personality does the child have? Is the child outgoing or quiet? Is the child friendly or depressed?

Did the child face any problems at home or at school?

Did the individual use recreational drugs or alcohol? Yes/No

d) Clothing that the Missing Child was wearing the last time seen

Style and color of shirt

Style and color of pants

Style and color of jacket or outerwear, if any

Type of headwear, if applicable

Type of glasses, if applicable

Type of footwear

e) Activities/Plans of the Missing Child the day they went missing

What were the missing person's plans and/or activities on the day they went missing?

Where was he/she going?

Why was he/she going there?

Provide information about any vehicle or mode of travel the missing child may have access to.

f) Information about the last time the Missing Child was seen

The time and location of where he/she was last seen

The name of the individual who last saw the missing child

The name of the individual who last talked at length with the missing child

The direction the missing child was traveling the last time seen.

The attitude of the missing child the last time seen

Was the missing child complaining of or concerned about anything before he/she went missing?

g) Overall health and condition of the Missing Child

Physical condition

Any known medical problems

Any handicaps or disabilities

Any psychological problems

Any medication that the child is taking

Any addictions that the individual has

h) Potential People that the Missing Child would contact

List all of the child's friends and acquaintances who the missing child may try to contact. Include addresses and telephone numbers.

Risk Assessment Form for Police

1. Name of the child: _____

2. Age of the child: _____

3. Previous behaviour patterns: _____

4. The child's state of mind at the time of absence: _____

5. Does the child have any physical/learning difficulties : _____

6. Does the child have any health problems : _____

7. Behaviour of peers that child is associating with: _____

8. Is the child perceived as running to someone or running from a situation: _____

9. Home environment / family history: _____

10. Any particular circumstance at time of incident: _____

After the completion of the risk assessment sheet, this case is indicated as: (Tick one which applies)

- **Low Risk**

There is no apparent significant risk of harm to the child

- **Medium Risk**

The child is likely at risk of harm.

- **High Risk**

The child is at immediate risk of significant harm. Action is to be taken immediately.

Details of Personnel completing the Risk Assessment Form

Name	Position	Date/Time

Action Plan at the Mezzo Level: For the Government

The government has to assume responsibility and acknowledge that the issue of missing children requires attention and effective mechanisms are required to be put in place to address it. The immediate need is to have a concrete definition of a missing child, and to clearly articulate certain mandates through a legislative act.

The government should establish A Missing Children's Act which mandates the following:

- Immediate response of the Police to reports of missing children.
- No establishment or observance of a waiting period before accepting a case.
- Entry must be made by law enforcement within two hours of receipt of a report of a missing or abducted child.
- Recognize the need for greater government coordination of local and state efforts to recover missing children.
- Establish a government agency solely dedicated to missing children.

The agency established should have master-level trained social service professionals. These social service professionals should be adequately equipped to work proactively in order to provide a support network for child victims and their families as well as coordinate effectively with the police, hospitals, government and other stakeholders.

These services should include:

- Counseling
- Training

- Referrals
- Support for runaways, parents/guardians, and families
- Crisis-intervention services

The Government should work with the Police, NGOs and the civil society to ensure correct measures are in place for monitoring and assessment of performance on missing incidents. Furthermore, the Government, in conjunction with stakeholders, needs to develop a shared risk assessment model for practitioners to use across all sectors. It should scope the options for extending and improving the support available to families of the missing, identifying mechanisms by which every family gets the support it needs; and better information should be provided to families on the support available from Police, other agencies and NGOs.

Summary

Significant progress can be made into tackling the problem of missing children episodes as evidenced by the work done in the developed countries by the law enforcement authorities and relevant agencies, as well as to reduce the reports of such cases by a proactive approach. It is extremely necessary to adopt strategic framework for a problem solving approach. This will help to reduce the number of children going missing and lower the risk factor of harm coming to these vulnerable children. This can only be achieved by understanding the causes and circumstances surrounding the missing children episodes.

A child going missing should be regarded as an indicator of other issues. Such incidents may lead to uncovering exploitative and criminal behaviour against vulnerable children and teenagers. There is usually a reason why a child goes missing. The police and other relevant authorities

would have the opportunity to identify intervention measures by understanding the causes and reasons why the problem occurs. Furthermore, it will assist in drawing attention to creating safeguarding measures related to investigation of such crimes, and identification of the perpetrators of these crimes. It is also crucial for all involved that a non judgmental attitude is adopted on receiving complaint of a parent reporting a missing child, and care should be taken to ensure that the parents, who are already distressed, receive support and empathy at all levels and stages of their ordeal.

Whilst there are numerous facets to the missing children phenomena, the efforts of all agencies involved can be grouped into achieving four key outcomes:

Ensuring the immediate safety of the child who goes missing

Whilst most children who go missing are found quickly, each child that goes missing is in a vulnerable situation and at risk of potential harm. There is an immediate need to assess the likely risk posed to each child reported missing, and to act accordingly to ensure their safety. Whilst the police have the leading role to play in this situation, there is a need to harness and coordinate the important contribution that can be made by other organisations such as care homes, social services, health units, local voluntary and non- governmental organisations, and individuals in the community.

Resolving cases expediently

Many missing persons incidents are resolved quickly but many more remain open for a long period of time. This increases the risk to the missing person and also places a huge burden to the family and friends of the missing person. There is a need to develop and utilise existing and new methods of resolving disappearances of missing children. This requires political will, awareness, willingness to change attitudes and the mindset of the relevant authorities.

Preventing children from going missing

Whilst children go missing for many different reasons, but there are cases where prevention is possible, such as those involving runaways. The key to prevention lies in understanding local problems and developing local solutions. There is an urgent need for better information on who goes missing, why and from where; and for a host of local organisations and individuals to act and intervene.

Support for the families left behind

Families suffer pain and turmoil when a child goes missing. While the emotional distress they suffer is unavoidable, being left unsupported and having to cope with systematic failures in relieving the burdens imposed on them are avoidable. There is an immediate need to improve the quantity and quality of emotional support available to families. An awareness across the social, governmental and economic sectors is urgently required to address this issue.

Figure 7: Four major areas for intervention



Source: Sylvia Mao

Need for further research

Without adequate data on how many children are actually missing, what are the causes for them going missing, measures needed to be taken to address these issues cannot be formed. Therefore it is crucial for more research to be done on this issue. As this study reveals, there are several areas which requiring urgent intervention in the area of policy implementation and coordination. Tangible improvement in the situation can be brought about by policy changes and only research findings based on ground realities can be used to do so.

As research is a vital input for development, researchers can study social factors which have the potential to make an impact and curtail the problem to a certain extent. For example, this study has found that runaway children constitute the majority of missing cases. Further research studies can be undertaken to study this phenomenon and preventive measures can be put in place to avert runaway episodes. Findings can guide program improvements designed to prevent future running away.

There are many reasons why a child goes missing. The police and other relevant authorities can come up with intervention strategies to curtail this problem by making an attempt to understand the causes and underlying circumstances. Additionally, attention will be drawn to the safeguarding issues related to going missing and assist in the identification and investigation of crimes which are linked to, or are the cause of, a child going missing. Research in these key areas will provide valuable aid in establishing prevention strategies and in taking proactive action.

There is a need for research on affected families of missing children, to understand their needs and the support they require to cope with the situation. Requirement for effective support services would differ according to each family, some might require practical search assistance, information and advice, for another it might be practical support in the home so that they could concentrate their efforts on the search. It is also important to understand how families deal with their grief, the coping strategies they use and the kind of support they require from the community.

Studies on runaways need to be undertaken so that early intervention and prevention measures can be put in place. Lack of research in this area would make it difficult to address the issue of children running away from their homes. Research in this area would assist in the establishment of relevant prevention frameworks.

To conclude, as the Report of the United Nations Secretary- General's Study on Violence against Children notes: "no violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable." As Kofi Annan said, "while legal obligations lie with States, all sectors of society, all individuals, share the responsibility of condemning and preventing children going missing and responding to the missing children issue. Children's uniqueness – their human potential, their initial fragility and vulnerability, their dependence on adults for their growth and development – make an unassailable case for more, not less, investment to ensure prevention and protection from harm" (United Nations, 11 Oct 2006).



APPENDICES

Girl, 11, goes missing from Anandnagar

Vishwa Patel, a class 6 student of Vidhyanagar School, left home on Friday to attend a wedding reception in her society and did not return

JIGNESH VORA



Cops clueless about missing Vishwa

JCP Ajay Tomar held a meeting with cops to review all aspects of the case; to take help of CID Crime

Ahmedabad Mirror Bureau
amfeedback@indiatimes.com

The investigation in the mysterious disappearance of 11-year-old Vishwa Patel near her home at Mira Mangal Flats in Anandnagar on January 27 is heading nowhere it seems. The reason behind her disappearance is yet to be known.

A review meeting was held by Joint Commissioner of Police Sector-I Ajay Tomar on Thursday to discuss the issue.

The police are looking at all aspects of the case. The police are not able to decide whether Vishwa was kidnapped or she ran away from home. According to sources, the city police will be taking help from the Missing Cell as well as Human Trafficking Cell of CID Crime in this regard.

This apart, residents of Mira Mangal Flats and the neighbouring societies will be questioned by the police.

A class VI student of Vidhyanagar High School, Vishwa had gone missing after attending a wedding in the



Vishwa Patel is missing since January 27

Anandnagar. She had left her house between 1.30 pm and 2 pm on January 27 to attend a marriage reception in the

The image shows silhouettes of missing children, categorized by age and gender. The categories and counts are as follows:

Age Group	Gender	Count
1-5 YEARS	BOY	1
	GIRL	0
6-10 YEARS	BOY	1
	GIRL	0
11-15 YEARS	GIRLS	2
	BOYS	9
16-17 YEARS	GIRLS	10
	BOYS	3

SQUAD FOR MISSING KIDS ITSELF MISSING

With 26 minors missing in Feb alone, need for a special squad is sorely felt. Time lapse, insufficient information database and ineffective tracking system minimises kids' chances of coming back home

Mehul Jani
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Ahmedabad has misplaced its young. In February alone, 26 minors have been reported missing. There is little that the police can do to trace the kids as their missing person squad is missing, too.

Of the 26 minors missing, 12 are girls. The youngest child is 5 years old, the eldest 17 years old. Eleven children are between 11 and 15 years of age, and 13 fall in the 16-20 years bracket. Most of these children remain traceless except for odd ones like Rohan Patel and Parthik Patel, Class 9 students of Mangaldeep School in Nava Vadaj who ran away to Mumbai to be a star like Salman Khan. They returned home on their own volition.

APATHETIC COPS

The cops' record in tracing missing children is dismal. Take the case of Vishwa Patel who went missing on January 27 after attending a wedding in the common plot of her society in Vejalpur. Over 200 policemen are looking for the girl but a month later, they remain clueless.

Not much importance is given to deal with missing persons. Many a times, relatives find it tough to get an FIR registered. The response they receive is 'wait for a day or two. The missing person will come back on his own'.

Even when a complaint is registered, the biggest hindrance is police investigation or lack thereof.

Atish Desai, a 12-year-old resident of Kabir Chowk in Sabarmati, went

PAGE 8 »

Form emergency system to trace missing kids: Parents

More than 700 people gathered at Law Garden to pressure government and police to take such cases seriously

Zahid Qureshi
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Misfortune is a great leveller. No one knows this better than parents of missing children who gathered in force at Law Garden on Wednesday to decide on the future course of action to tackle the issue. Whether the voices belonged to the rich or the poor, the young or the old, the question was the same: Where's our child? Forming a pressure group, they demanded that the authorities form an emergency system like 108 to trace missing children.

Over 700 people took part in the meeting where parents of missing children from across the state wanted the government to remove inadequacies in the state machinery and enable it to find their children. "We need a mechanism where a parent can report a missing child immediately. If the police are short-staffed, funds should be allotted to reward those who find missing kids. This would encourage the public to be on the lookout," suggested Rajendra Padiachi, a Khokhra resident whose son Kartik is missing for 45 days now.

Most parents voiced their grouse against the police. "They do not file a complaint immediately. They ask us to wait for 24 hours by which time a child



Tears flowed down parents' cheeks as they exhorted government to strengthen state machinery so their kids could be traced

can reach another state! If somehow a complaint is registered, they make no concentrated efforts to trace the child. More often than not, they claim the child ran away due to the parent's fault," said parents.

"The police told me to inform them when I find my son. What are they there for if I am to find my son on my own," said a teary-eyed father who refused to be named fearing police harassment.

With lack of proper tracking mechanisms, parents rely mostly on unsubstantiated information and rush to different places on hearing rumours of

children who resemble their kids being spotted in the area. Or they stick poster of their children at hospitals, orphanages and public institutions.

Mehram Khamana, 15, went missing in August 2010. He was an orphan from Rajkot who was living with his sister in Paldi before he disappeared. "Whenever we visit the police station, they make us wait for 2-3 hours. Then they ask us to come the next day as they do not have time to deal with us. But they do nothing to trace the child," said Mehram's sister.

Manish Baria, 16, went missing from Makarpura in Vadodara on



DILIP THAKER

WHERE ARE THE MISSING KIDS?

YEAR	REGISTERED MISSING	FOUND	STILL MISSING
2008	2655	2286	369
2009	2681	2196	485
2010	2890	2186	704
2011	2558	974	1584
Total:	10784	5642	3142

WEBSITE LAUNCHED

A website — www.searchmychild.in — was launched at the meet where 78 kids were registered as missing. Sanjay Joshi, a human rights activist, said, "We will put up the name, photograph, contact number and other details of these children on the website. This will help us reach more people and attract parents who are yet to find their children."

Spotted in the crowd were two young kids. Dhruv, 13, and Meet, 10, were there for their mother. "Our mother Ramaben went missing from Bapunagar a month ago. We heard they was a meeting for missing kids at Law Garden. We thought we could find someone to look for our mother here. Please bring her back," they pleaded.

September 26.

"The cops did nothing to trace him. After a while, we found that their records showed he had been traced. When we pointed it out, they apologised and put him back in the missing list," said his parents.

Mukesh Patel, whose son Sagar is missing since December 20, said, "I felt lonely in my search for my son till I met Vishwa Patel and Kartik's parents. On seeing so many parents gathered here, I am hopeful that if we stand together we might get our kids back. At least, we will force the government to take up the issue of missing kids seriously."

Four teens go missing from Khokhra

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Four teens went missing from their school in Khokhra on Monday. Police officials said that the group might have left home without informing their family members.

According to Khokhra police officials, Gopi Kishan Naikar, 17, his brother Suraj, 16, his sister Manisha, 14, and cousin Jayesh, 11, all residents of Yalavnagar, Hatkeshwar, study at Municipal Tamil School in Khokhra and go to school in the morning together. As per a complaint by Nagraj Naikar, Gopi, Suraj and Manisha's maternal uncle and Jayesh's father, the group went to school on Monday and did not return home at their usual time. They searched for them at school and their friends' residences, but in vain. They went to police officials who asked them to wait for a day and registered a missing persons' report on Tuesday evening.

"Gopi, Suraj and Manisha were living with their maternal grandmother Sneeta and Nagraj after their mother Raswati died six years ago. Their fa-



The children who disappeared from their school

ther had left home 12 years ago. Except Jayesh, none of them are good at studies. Gopi studies in class V and Suraj studies in class VII. We believe that they have left home intentionally. We are contacting their relatives to know their whereabouts and have also informed city police control room about the incident," said a Khokhra police official.

The city police are in a tizzy as a number of missing children complaints have started pouring in from beginning of the year. While some got solved, some remain a mystery.

Website launched to find state's vanished children

Ahmedabad: A group of parents whose children have gone missing launched a website and a Facebook page on Tuesday to engage web users to search for the children. The website will also become a meeting ground for the parents, said the website hosts. Sanjay Joshi, a human rights activist, told TOI that they have launched www.searchmychild.in on the eve of the state-level meet of parents of the missing children that will be held at Law Garden on 4 pm on Wednesday. TNN



Acronyms

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers (UK)
AHTU	Anti Human Trafficking Unit
CARA	Central Adoption resource Agency
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CCNTS	Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIF	Childline India Foundation
CLPRA	Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act
CMRA	Child Marriage restraint Act
CRC	Convention on Rights of the Child
CSE	Commercial Sexual Exploitation
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DCP	Deputy Commissioner of Police
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DCWC	Documentation Centre for Women and Children
DMPU	District Missing Persons Unit
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
FIR	First Information Report
GRP	General Railway Police
HDI	Human Development Index
HMGA	Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme
ICARA	International Child Abduction Remedies Act
IPC	Indian Penal Code
JAPU	Juvenile Aid Police Unit
JJA	Juvenile Justice Act

JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
NCIC	National Crime Information Centre (USA)
NCMC	National Centre for Missing Children
NCPCR	National Commission for the protection of Child Rights
NCMEC	National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (USA)
NCR	National Capital Region
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NCW	National Council for Women
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NISMART	National Incidence Study on Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children in America
NPC	National Policy for Children
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (USA)
PACT	Parents and Children Together (UK)
RTI	Right to Information
SCPCR	State Commission for protection of Child Rights
SHRC	State Human Rights Commission
SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Unit
TIS	Talash Information Services
UN	United Nations
ZIPNET	Zonal Integrated Police Network

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS OF MISSING CHILD

BACKGROUND OF THE MISSING CHILD

1.Age of the child when missing

- a. 0-3 b. 4-8 c. 9-12 d. 13-18

2.Occupation of respondent parents

- a. service b. daily wager c. self-employed

3.Total Annual Income:

- a. 1-2 lacs b. 2-3 lacs c. More than 4 lacs

4.Marital Status

- a. married b. separated c. divorced d. widowed

5.Which best describes your household?

- a. Both parents present, married
b. Single parent, mother only
c. Single parent, father only

6.What is the general level of adjustment in the household?

- a. Very good- things are fairly harmonious at home
b. Fairly good, problems from time to time but nothing serious
c. Somewhat poor- there are some problems which needs attention
d. Very poor- there are many serious issues, intervention is needed

BEHAVIOR OF CHILD

7.How well does the child usually behave at home?

- a. very well- problem behaviour not a concern

- b. Fairly well- minor problem behavior
- c. Fair- some problem behavior need attention
- d. Poor- serious problem behavior, needs intervention

8.Does the child behave in the following ways?

- a. Argues excessively with parent/parents
- b. Has frequent temper tantrums
- c. Fights excessively with siblings/other children
- d. Has friends you don't approve of
- e. Refuses to follow rules as to where not to go
- f. None of these traits

9.How would you rate academic performance at school?

- a. Does not attend school
- b. Excellent
- c. Good (above average)
- d. Averagee. Poor (below average)

10. How would you rate child's behavior at school?

- a. Does not attend school b. Excellent c. Good
- d. Average e. Fair f. Poor

11. What does child do during spare time during the day?

- a. Does not have any spare time
- b. Does homework
- c. Plays with friends
- d. Watches tv at home
- e. None
- f. Other

12. Has the child been involved in any such activities: and frequency in the past year

- a. Skipping school
- b. Stealing money
- c. Begging
- d. Consuming alcohol/drugs
- e. None of these

POLICE RESPONSE

13. How did you initially contact the police?

- a. Called emergency or 100 number
- b. Walked into police station
- c. Approached a police officer on the street

14. The first time you spoke to the police, did they do any of the following?

- a. Told you to call or come back later
- b. Took basic identifying information about the incident
- c. Suggested ways to look for your child
- d. Did not respond

15. When the officer came to take your report or when you went to the station to make your report, did someone do any of the following?

- a. Took basic information along with child's photo
- b. Asked for friends/relatives to contact
- c. Searched house/ neighbourhood
- d. Put out an announcement

16. Did the police give you any of the following instructions?

- a. Suggest where to look for the child
- b. Suggest you call child's friends /relatives
- c. Describe investigative process

d. Tell you where to contact about more information

17. What is your overall satisfaction with the response of the police

- a. Extremely satisfied
- b. Fairly satisfied
- c. Not satisfied

PARENTAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EPISODE

18. Which of the following best describes the incident?

- a. Runaway
- b. Family abduction
- c. Stranger abduction
- d. Lost or otherwise missing
- e. Unknown

19. What first made you think your child was missing?

- a. Did not return home from school
- b. Did not return home by mealtime
- c. Did not return home by bedtime
- d. Was gone overnight

20. Did any of the following occur prior to child going missing?

- a. Argument about money
- b. Scolding by parents over watching television
- c. Scolding by parent over school performance
- d. Disapproval of child's romantic relationship
- e. None of the above

PARENTAL CONCERNS

21. How has the child going missing affected you financially?

- a. Moderate- slight change in finances
- b. Serious- unable to afford some necessities
- c. Extreme- unable to afford many necessities

22. What are the psychological reactions you experience since your child went missing?

- a. Disturbed sleep
- b. Repeated dreams of the missing child
- c. Sudden feelings of anxiety

23. What is the level of your expectation in the return of your child?

- a. Very hopeful
- b. Moderately hopeful
- c. No hope at all

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Childline India Foundation: www.childlineindia.org.in

Child Trafficking Digital Library: www.childtrafficking.com

Don Bosco India www.donboscoindia.com

Global Survival Network-Washington, DC: www.globalsurvival.net

Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org

Human Trafficking: www.humantrafficking.org/

International Labour Organization: www.ilo.org/public/english/

IPEC Information Resource Centre: www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/publ/

Missing People: www.missingpeople.org.uk

National Centre for Missing and Exploited children: www.missingkids.org

National Centre for Missing Children: www.missingindiankids.co

National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights: www.ncpcr.gov.in

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National Institute on Public Cooperation and Child Development: www.nipccd.nic.in

National Human Rights Commission: www.nhrc.nic.in

PACT: www.pactworld.org

Palermo Protocol: www.palermoprotocol.com

Stop Child Trafficking: www.stopchildtrafficking.org

Terre des homes: <http://tdh.ch/cms/Home.391.0.html?andL=1>

UNICEF. www.unicef.org/protection/index_exploitation.html

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