

## Solutions To Reduce Violence and Sexual Abuse to Children in Vietnam

## Soluções para reduzir a violência e o abuso sexual de crianças no Vietnã

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## Abstract

In recent times, the situation of children being subjected to violence and sexual abuse in Vietnam has become complicated, increasing in level and number of cases, leaving serious consequences and causing frustration in society. Assessing, understanding the causes and proposing solutions to minimize violence and child abuse is an urgent requirement in the current situation. To achieve the set goal, the author will clarify the current situation and causes of violence and child sexual abuse in Vietnam and propose some solutions to contribute to overcoming the above situation. Besides, the author also provides his discussions and opinions on this issue.

**Keywords:** Violence; sexual abuse; children.

## Resumo

Nos últimos tempos, a situação das crianças sujeitas à violência e ao abuso sexual no Vietname tornou-se complicada, aumentando o nível e o número de casos, deixando graves consequências e causando frustração na sociedade. Avaliar, compreender as causas e propor soluções para minimizar a violência e o abuso infantil é uma necessidade urgente na situação atual. Para atingir o objetivo traçado, o autor irá esclarecer a situação atual e as causas da violência e do abuso sexual infantil no Vietname e propor algumas soluções que contribuam para a superação da situação acima referida. Além disso, o autor também fornece suas discussões e opiniões sobre o assunto.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência; abuso sexual; crianças.

## 1 Introduction

Violence and sexual abuse against children is a serious and alarming problem not only in Vietnam but also around the world. Children are the most vulnerable and weak group in society. Therefore, they may face forms of violence and abuse from those around them. The consequences of this condition have a psychological impact that can last a lifetime and deeply affect their soul and future. Minimizing violence and child sexual abuse requires attention and drastic action from the community, social organizations, and government.

In Vietnam, although there have been significant efforts from organizations and authorities, this issue still faces many challenges and difficulties. Currently, the group of children who are sexually abused is becoming more and more complicated in both scale and method of implementation. Child sexual abuse is a problem throughout Vietnam, the consequences that children suffer can have physical and mental health losses, reduce their ability to learn, integrate into society and it can even destroy them, affecting their ability to become good people and good parents in the future. Over the past many years, our State has taken many measures to prevent, reduce and repel the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. However, the current work of child protection still faces barriers and difficulties such as: detecting and reporting the number of child abuse cases is not timely, the Law on child protection still has many gaps, lack of specificity, lack of professionalism in the support model. Therefore, the issue of children being sexually abused needs to mobilize the participation of the entire society. At the current stage, the support model of the school counseling room is very necessary, because psychological counselors and social workers working in the school counseling room will be the ones implementing it. The task of preventing, combating and directly intervening in cases of children being sexually abused in the school environment.

## 2 Research Method And Theoretical Basis

### 2.1 Research methods

To achieve the purpose of researching the topic and solutions to reduce violence and child sexual abuse in Vietnam, the author will use the following research methods:

*Methods of analyzing legal documents, policies, and related documents* to better understand the legal basis and measures currently being implemented;

*The interview method* is used to conduct interviews with experts, social activists, medical staff, and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of this condition, to pretend to be the basis for solutions;

*The case study method* is used to study in detail specific cases of child violence and sexual abuse to understand the context, causative factors, and how they were handled;

*Data analysis method* is used for the author to evaluate information collected from different research tools to have a comprehensive view of the relationship and influence of different factors on the violence and sexual abuse.

*The discussion method* is used by the author to create a space for communities, researchers, and stakeholders to come together and come up with opinions, ideas, and appropriate solutions.

## 2.2 Theoretical basis

Children violence (Arai, L. *et al.*, 2021); (Noble-Carr, D. *et al.*, 2020); (Fore, H. H. 2021) is pointed out occurring in many forms including emotional or physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial exploitation or exploitation that results in or threatens to result in harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in a context of responsibility, trust or power. Some other researchers ((Shahen, M. A. 2022); (Ismaidar, I., & Rahmayanti, R. 2023); (Elzamzamy, K., Hazratji, Z., & Khwaja, M. (2022); (Jud , A., Pfeiffer, E., & Jarczok, M. 2020) points out that violence against children is the act of tormenting, mistreating, beating; harming the body and health; insulting and defaming the reputation of children. The author believes that the above statement is correct but not really complete because the act of isolating, banishing, or intentionally causing physical or mental harm to children is also an act of needs to be clarified.

Child sexual abuse (Russell, D., Higgins, D., & Posso, A. 2020); (Lee, H. E., Ermakova, T. *et al.*, 2020); (Brunton, R., & Dryer, R. 2021); (Simon, J., Luetzow, A., & Conte, J. R. 2020); (Papalia, N., Mann, E., & Ogloff, J. R. 2021) takes place physically and mentally. Others have divided sexual child abuse into four forms: physical abuse (Kurtz, M. *et al.*, 2023); (Donnell, C. *et al.*, 2022); (Vanderminden, J. *et al.*, 2023); (Klebanov, B. *et al.*, 2024) is the act of causing damage or pain directly to the body by beating, forcing participation in physical activities that may be dangerous to health or children's lives; child sexual abuse (Noll, J. G. 2021); (Slavin, M. N. *et al.*, 2020); (Guiney, H. *et al.*, 2024); psychological/emotional abuse (Hayashi, M. 2022); (Cohen, J. R., & Thakur, H. 2021); (Godfrey, D. A. *et al.*, 2021) and neglected children (Nasirin, C., & Lionardo, A. 2021); (Wald, M. S. 2022); (Kawata, N. Y. *et al.*, 2024). The above researchers also believe that in each different country, due to historical, political, cultural and social characteristics, there are more appropriate ways of dividing. The author agrees with the above comments and division method and believes that, in Vietnam, the division of child sexual abuse includes common forms such as: Physical abuse (punishment); Psychological/emotional abuse; Sexual abuse; Witnessing domestic violence; Neglect; Child trafficking; Child labor. The reason that the author proposed the above division is for the following reasons. Firstly, Vietnam has a different history, culture and society compared to other countries; Next, Vietnam is a developing country, in this process, social-awareness education is not really uniform.

Research on child slavery (Odijie, M. 2020); (Lotfi, M., & Pisa, N. 2024); (Gustiani, R., & Widowaty, Y. 2023); (Bell, R. 2022) pointed out that in history children were often sold by their families to pay off debt. Studies also show that economic hardship has caused parents to break moral values. Researchers still cannot agree on whether children are goods and whether those goods create surplus value during use? The author believes that researching whether child slavery creates surplus value or not is only suitable for the period of ancient slavery. As for today, this research is completely inappropriate because children are objects that need protection, not objects that create surplus value. It is against international law for individuals or organizations to intentionally use child labor to create surplus value. Therefore, viewing children as slaves or using child labor must be eliminated.

Raising gender awareness for children to reduce violence and sexual abuse is studied by many authors such as (Schneider, M., & Hirsch, J. S. 2020); (Frentzen, E. *et al.*, 2022); (Josenhans, V. *et al.*, 2020); (Walker-Descartes, I. *et al.*, 2021); (Martinello, E. 2020). Studies all say that the government needs to have institutional regulations to protect children. Promote information and propaganda of laws on child protection, care and education to raise awareness of all walks of life about child sexual abuse and its consequences. The propaganda and dissemination of this law must have specific short-term and long-term plans and programs, which focus on integrating media content into the activities of villages, hamlets and residential groups; In extracurricular activities at all levels and thematic activities of organizations and unions at all levels etc. It is necessary to promote the implementation of the movement to build cultural families and civilized lifestyles in the community, focus on forms of advice, consultation and direct advocacy for families and communities on skills to protect children from abuse. Further strengthen inspection and supervision of child protection and care at the facility, thereby contributing to minimizing the situation of children being subjected to violence and sexual abuse. The author believes that the theoretical basis that research has provided only solves the problem and is not the best remedy. Raising children's awareness is only at the level of crime prevention, not the goal of eliminating the causes of crime. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness of the entire society so that criminals understand the consequences and not taking action is the most optimal solution to discuss.

### 3 Research Questions

To achieve the set goal of researching solutions to reduce violence and child sexual abuse in Vietnam, the author poses the following research questions:

- (1) What is the current situation of violence and child sexual abuse in Vietnam?
- (2) What issues need to be resolved regarding violence and sexual abuse of children in Vietnam?
- (3) How to solve the problem of violence and child sexual abuse in Vietnam?

## 4 Research Content And Discussion

### 4.1 Research content

#### *Concepts about children*

Children's Studies (Black, R. E., Morris, S. S., & Bryce, J. 2003); (Alabdulkareem, A., Alhakbani, N., & Al-Nafjan, A. 2022); (Papadopoulos, D. 2021) started from a biological perspective. From this perspective, the authors believe that children are human beings between birth and puberty. Thus, children can also be understood in terms of family relationships with parents (as sons and daughters of any age) or, metaphorically, as group members within a clan or tribe, religious, or religious. It can also be strongly influenced by a particular time, place, or circumstance, as in "*a carefree child*" or "*a child of the sixties*". The United Nations Treaty on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "*every human being under the age of 18 unless by law applicable to the child the age of majority is established earlier.*" This treaty has been ratified by 192 of the 194 member countries. Some other studies suggest that children include fetuses. Biologically, a child is anyone in the developmental stage of childhood, between infancy and adulthood. Children generally have fewer rights than adults and are excluded from making important decisions, and legally must always have a guardian.

In Vietnam, the law stipulates that children are people under 16 years old, but some decrees do not agree and say that children are people under 18 years old. In this study, the author agreed that the age of children is 18 years old according to the United Nations Treaty on the Rights of the Child to be the research object.

#### *The current situation of children suffering from violence and abuse in Vietnam*

According to the preliminary report of the Vietnamese government dated January 3, 2024 on the three-year summary of implementing the national action plan to prevent and combat violence and abuse of children for the period 2020-2025. From 2020 to September 2023, the whole country had 7,483 cases, 8,788 subjects, abusing 7,883 children, of which child sexual abuse accounted for over 80% of child abuse cases; There were also children under 6 years old who were abused. Notably, a number of cases of child abuse have caused serious consequences (female children become pregnant, die, commit suicide) because the person responsible for caring for and raising the child is the perpetrator (biological father and mother). , stepfather, stepmother, teachers, nannies in child care facilities). In particular, recently there have been a number of child kidnapping cases of a violent nature, for the purpose of extortion, with some cases causing serious consequences (killing children), causing loss of security, safety and anger. social commentary; A number of school violence incidents have

continuously occurred, causing serious consequences. Thus, on average, there are 170 children per month, and nearly 6 children per day are subjected to violence and abuse; Girls account for 86%, boys 14%. This situation affects children's psychology, health, and lives. Currently, the situation of violence and child abuse is still complicated and shows no decreasing trend.

Also according to Government statistics, the number of children nationwide is 24,776,773 (of which males are 12,915,365; females are 11,861,368) and the number of children with special circumstances is 1,773,112 (accounting for 7.16 %). Nationwide, about 91.7% of children of general school age are attending school (preschool: 4,922,383 children; primary school: 8,482,556 children; middle school: 5,440,976 children; high school : 2,548,878 children) and 8.3% of children are of high school age but are not currently attending school (7.7% have dropped out of school; 6% have never attended school; this rate for girls is higher than for boys). Of these, 1.75 million children (9.6%) between the ages of 5 and 17 are identified as child laborers, 175,000 children do not go to school, and 8,200 children have never gone to school. In addition, according to statistics from the Supreme People's Court, the number of children with divorced parents is still very high, accounting for about 1.8% of the total population. From October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018 alone, there were 78,453 people under 18 years old whose parents divorced, with an estimated 71,800 children; From October 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, there were 53,980 people under 18 years old whose parents divorced, with an estimated number of children being 49,400).

In recent years, cases of violence and sexual abuse of children causing physical and mental damage have occurred more and more, causing outrage in public opinion and receiving special attention from society. According to reports from the authorities, from 2015 to 2021, there have occurred: 6,364 cases of sexual abuse, 6,432 victims; 170 child murders, 191 victims; 536 cases of intentional injury to children, 666 victims; 126 cases of child trafficking, kidnapping, and appropriation, 106 victims; 1,246 other abuse cases, 1,314 victims. Acts of child abuse occur in the community, school and within the family with the nature of the cases becoming increasingly serious and complex.

The situation of child abuse is complicated and a number of particularly serious cases have occurred, causing anger in public opinion; child protection work, especially the prevention and control of violence against children in the family, has not been given due attention, leading to a number of particularly serious incidents causing frustration in society. In addition, the coordination of providing and connecting child protection services is still confusing and not timely; the network providing child protection services in some places and at some times is interrupted, affecting the provision and connection of support services for children and their families; many activities with children's participation have not been organized or many provinces and cities cannot organize them



Research shows that perpetrators of child abuse are often acquaintances of children, taking advantage of their closeness to families and children; strangers take advantage of circumstances such as empty streets, children alone at home, use of stimulants, access to movies with pornographic and depraved content etc. to commit acts of child abuse.

### *Causes of child abuse*

Communication, education, and social mobilization on child protection and care are sometimes ineffective. The awareness and skills of parents, family members, teachers, people in the community and children themselves on child protection issues are insufficient. Many children are not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to prevent abuse; when abused, most children are afraid and do not report the perpetrator, and their parents have not given them basic knowledge to proactively prevent it.

Ignorance of the law and irresponsible lifestyle of some families also create insecurity for children within their own families. Some families focus too much on economic activities, leading to neglect and abandonment of children, which is the seed of child abuse. The family has difficult economic circumstances; parents divorce or separation; parents suffering from social evils, breaking the law etc. are also the reasons that lead to children dropping out of school, wandering around to make a living, experiencing violence, and being abused.

The roles and responsibilities of protecting and caring for children of families, schools and communities have not been given due attention, so there is a lack of coordination and effective support in managing, educating and helping children. The decline in job opportunities for manual, unskilled workers directly impacts household economic life; the negative influence of social networks, the risk of abuse and violence in the online environment have seriously affected the comprehensive development and safety of children in the family.

Besides, creating a friendly environment for children, with healthy playing and entertainment conditions, and developing their talents has not received proper attention and investment. The legal system related to child protection still has gaps such as no specific regulations on responsibilities for providing and processing information, notification and denunciation of child abuse, and lack of specific regulations on the focal point for receiving and processing information, reporting, denouncing and coordinating to verify, evaluate and investigate harmful acts, unsafe or harmful situations, and the level of risk of harm. For children, there are no regulations on the authority and procedures for separating children from their parents or caregivers in cases where the parents or caregivers commit acts of abuse; there is a lack of a monitoring system to ensure these children do not continue to experience violence.



### *Some solutions have been proposed to prevent and combat child abuse in Vietnam*

The author proposes some solutions to prevent and combat child abuse in Vietnam. They are raising awareness and responsibility of authorities at all levels in leading and directing child protection work, especially preventing and promptly and effectively handling cases of violence and child sexual abuse; clarifying the responsibilities of local authorities in allocating budgets, properly arranging commune-level child protection workers and the network of child protection collaborators, and the government's responsibilities in handling promptly report violence and child abuse according to the provisions of the Children's Law, promoting support and intervention for children who are victims of violence and sexual abuse.

Reviewing and suggesting amendments, supplements, and new promulgations according to authority or submit to competent agencies to promulgate policies and laws on: child protection, prevention of violence, child sexual abuse, protecting children in healthy and creative interactions in the online environment. Researching, reviewing, amending and supplementing documents related to support for children suffering from violence and abuse.

Promoting the roles and responsibilities of agencies, organizations and individuals in propagating and raising awareness, educating about the law, knowledge and skills to create a safe living environment, prevent and combat violence, child abuse; promptly inform, notify, and denounce acts that violate children's rights, including violence and child abuse.

Developing child protection services in the fields of social welfare, health, education and justice; Focusing on providing child protection services at families, educational institutions and medical facilities. Enhancing capacity building for staff providing child protection services at all levels, sectors, state agencies, socio-political organizations, and social organizations.

Promulgate standards and regulations for providing child protection services, economic and technical norms for child protection services; Encourage the private sector to participate in providing child protection services. Promoting the development of child protection service providers - social work centers at district or district cluster level: Piloting the model of social work centers or consulting offices to support child psychology children at district and cluster levels to support the team of commune-level children's workers to promptly carry out the intervention process and support for children experiencing violence and abuse (including: documenting and assessing, planning support interventions, evaluation, referral, access to support policies...).

Improving the quality of activities of inter-sectoral coordination organizations on child protection at all levels, especially inter-sectoral coordination in the process of intervention and support for children suffering from violence and abuse, and removing

bottlenecks on the coordination and information sharing mechanism during the investigation process between the police sector and the Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs sector in assessing and providing intervention and support services. Closely coordinate with the People's Procuracy and People's Courts at all levels to prosecute and adjudicate cases of violence and child abuse to handle cases strictly, promptly, and in accordance with the law, to the acts and incidents of violence and child abuse, improving deterrence and preventing crime.

Strengthening inspection and examination of the implementation of policies and laws on children; Completing the connection and integration of the children database with the National Population Database and specialized databases to manage and control the migration situation and groups of disadvantaged children. special; Strengthening digitalization and information exchange between agencies in child protection and child abuse prevention and control. Strengthening international cooperation and integration in the field of child protection; exchanging experiences and applying advanced techniques and technologies in child protection measures.

Building a social network to protect children, secure and safe residential areas, schools, cultural family institutions, self-defense, self-management, and self-protection models at the grassroots, etc. to prevent and promptly detect violations of children's rights in general and violence and child abuse in particular in residential areas and families, to prevent complicated incidents and cases from arising. Propagating so that all people know the phone number of the child protection hotline (number 111) and child protection services to maintain and effectively connect on child protection, violence prevention and control violence and child abuse.

## 4.2 Discussion

There are many opinions that it is necessary to improve the penalty framework for acts of violence and sexual abuse in children (Fix, R. L. *et al.*, 2021); (Schilling, S. *et al.*, 2024); (Long, J. S. 2022). In this study, the author believes that improving the penalty framework is necessary but that is not the optimal solution to reduce violence and sexual abuse in children. Punishment is only a form of solution when it has happened, while education is a form of prevention from the root. The author believes that it is necessary to make all people understand the issue of protecting, caring for and educating children. In order for all people to understand the law on children, there needs to be a specific dissemination plan, which focuses on integrating media content into thematic activities for authorities at all levels. Besides, it is necessary to promote the implementation of the movement to build cultural families (Vo Van Dung, 2022) and a civilized lifestyle in the community.

Some other opinions say that to end violence and sexual abuse in children, it is necessary to strengthen education from the school side (Apaydın Cırık, V. *et al.*, 2020);

(Elboj-Saso, C. *et al.*, 2022). Through research, the author believes that any issue related to children cannot be entrusted to the school but must be closely coordinated between family, school and the social environment. These are three important environments to form a child's personality and are also the environment to protect children. Therefore, parents must work with the school to regularly care and share with children to realize the necessary psychological and physiological changes. Because children's cognitive and self-protection abilities are still limited, they are at risk of being abused. Therefore, families (Van Dung, V. 2022), schools and society must equip children to know how to protect themselves and share with them about gender and sexuality in adolescence. Schools need to regularly organize specialized talks on school violence; reproductive health for students. Instruct children on how to react to acts of violence and abuse. Provide phone numbers of authorities so that children and their relatives can contact them when they are attacked with violence or sexually abused. Teachers need to pay attention to students who show signs of insecurity or inattention, listen and share with students.

Some other opinions say that children are often abused by people who are not related by blood (McGuire, K., & London, K. 2020); (Legano, L. A. *et al.*, 2021). Through research practice and through discussions with management experts, the author does not completely agree with the above statement. Through discussions with experts in Vietnam, the author found that children are abused and sexually abused right in their own homes and by their relatives. This situation is increasing day by day and becoming more serious. Therefore, it is necessary to build a system of legal documents to create a solid legal corridor for the protection, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of subjects who commit acts of abuse and violence against children. In particular, it is necessary to focus on researching the model of separating children from the abuser (when the abuser is a father, mother, or caregiver) and handing them over to other relatives to best protect children. against acts of abuse. In addition, in the work of receiving and resolving reports of child abuse, the authorities need to quickly access the scene, take children for treatment and perform assessments to better serve the work of solving problems. Decide the criminal case with the right person, the right crime, and the law.

## 5 Conclusion

In recent years, the number of cases and the number of children suffering from violence and sexual abuse has tended to increase, becoming complex and serious. Subjects of sexual abuse and violence against children are mostly relatives, acquaintances, and people responsible for protecting and taking care of children, including fathers, teachers, etc. Children are victims: victims of violence and sexual abuse are seriously harmed physically, emotionally, psychologically, honor, dignity,

and even their lives. Physically, children who are abused or sexually abused can suffer lasting physical damage due to diseases such as HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases, and ectopic pregnancy, etc. In addition, children can also suffer physical injuries due to resistance to sexual abuse. Psychologically, children who are abused or sexually abused often feel fear, confusion, depression, personality disorders, etc. The worrying thing is that children are not always abused or abused. Sexuality also shows outward psychological trauma, which children sometimes hide when they are abused by others. Therefore, it is often difficult for parents to detect abnormalities in their children. The consequences of child sexual abuse are extremely serious for victims, families and society. Therefore, in order to effectively prevent this type of crime and minimize possible consequences for yourself, your family and society, it is necessary to

Therefore, in order to effectively prevent this type of crime and minimize the possible consequences for oneself, one's family and society, it is necessary to build in close coordination between the government, families and the community, family, living environment and school.

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