BREAKING THE SILENCE ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL CHILD ABUSE IN THE BUDDHIST MONASTERY IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Background: In Sri Lanka where seventy per cent of the population is Buddhist, there are more than twelve thousand Buddhist monasteries accessed by children for educational and religious purposes. Despite scandalous media reports on incidents of child abuse in Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka (BMS), no previous academic or public inquiry has been undertaken on this issue.

Aim: The study set out to explore and describe the silence around child abuse in the monastic context at an interpersonal, institutional, professional and academic level.

Method: Operationally defining the incidents of child abuse in the BMS as the case, an instrumental case study approach was employed (Stake, 1998). Using social constructionism (Burger and Luckman, 1967) and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a theoretical framework, data were gathered from multiple sources including semi-structured interviews with four former monks who had experienced child abuse as novice monks, three senior monks who were familiar with and willing to discuss the issue, and three child protection officers with relevant work experience. Interview data were analysed using thematic networking (Attride-Sterling, 2001) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Other data sources included a reflexive journal, and publicly available data such as policy documents, media reports and interviews.

Results: Data analysis produced three thematic clusters: predisposing silencers, precipitating silencers, and perpetuating silencers. While survivors' accounts converged on other data sources, accounts of monastic leaders and child protection officers contained a mixture of convergent and divergent views.

Conclusions: Overall, the findings indicated that: the survivors silently absorbed the memories of abuse due to various interpersonal, social, and structural limitations, the monastic leadership remained reticent due to ignorance, interest in institutional power and reputation, while the child protection service towards children in monasteries was hampered by structural, cultural and policy limitations. The findings contribute to the existing literature by providing unique insights into the social ecological barriers to recognition, disclosure, and intervention of child abuse in loosely regulated institutions in developing countries.

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Abbreviations and Glossary of terms

BMS	Buddhist Monastery in Sri Lanka
DPCCS	Department of Probation and Child Care Services
FREC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
IICSA	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Pāli	The language of the Buddhist scriptures
Pirivena	Buddhist seminary for novice monks
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's fund (formerly known as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
Upasampadā	The ritual of making a novice monk a permanent member of the monastic community or higher ordination
WHO	World Health Organisation

List of participants that contributed to this research through interviews

- Four former Buddhist monks whom will be presented in this thesis as S1, S2, S3 and S4. All four were ordained as novice monks when they were between ten and twelve years of age and lived as monks till their mid-twenties before leaving the monkhood. All but one disclosed experiencing sexual abuse more than one occasion while all mentioning physical and emotional abuse.
- Three senior Buddhist monastic whom will be presented in this thesis as ML1, ML2 and ML3. They had more than three decades of lived experience as monks and currently hold some form of monastic responsibility as an abbot or a deputy.
- Three child protection officers whom will be presented in this thesis as CPO1(male), CPO2(male) and CPO3(female). They were employed at local branches of the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA).
- More information on participants is available at the beginning of chapter 5.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1. Introduction

One billion children aged 2 to 17 world-wide experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect every year; 300 million children regularly suffer physical and/or psychological abuse at the hands of parents or caregivers; One in five women and one in 13 men report having been sexually abused before they turn 17 years of age (WHO, 2020). While children in low-income settings are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, the harmful cultural practices such as child marriage prevalent in these settings can exacerbate the risks of abuse (UNICEF, n.d).

Incidents of child abuse and neglect that occur in publicly or privately funded care settings constitute a subset of child abuse known as institutional child abuse (ICA) (Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, 2019). Although the forms of institutional child abuse are similar to non-institutional forms, certain institutional features make ICA a uniquely challenging problem. These characteristics include the settings and situations in which perpetrators come into contact with child victims (Blackmore et al., 2017; Barter, 1999), the management style of the institution, being a closed institution, and being an institution that enjoys an unquestioning respect for authority within the community in which it exists (Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). Furthermore, the harsh daily routines, cruel disciplinary methods, and policies common in residential institutions also contribute to the uniqueness of ICA (Daly, 2014).

Equally more troubling is the systematic nature of abuses committed within institutions: violent sexual and physical abuse and negligence of basic needs, psychological abuses inflicting shame, guilt and trauma, and work and educational practices that are arduous and exhausting for the children (Australian Senate, 2001). Compared to intrafamilial abuse, ICA tends to disproportionately affect male victims and perpetrators tend to have more opportunities to target, groom or entrap victims (Gallagher, 2000). Clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CPCSA) can be considered a form of institutional child abuse as the abuse of power is at the core of CPCSA (Farrell, 2004; Fogler et al., 2008). The detection and acceptance of the existence of CPCSA is difficult due to social deference generally afforded to the clergy and the insulated living conditions in religious institutions (Doyle, 2006).

1.1. The Research rationale

Child abuse in general burdens the victims and the society with lasting consequences. Abuse during childhood is linked to manifold psychological and behavioural problems (Lueger-Schuster et al., 2014) such as depression (Poole et al., 2017); affective disorders, anxiety disorders and substance abuse (Carr et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2019); externalising behaviour problems (Lewis et al., 2015); reduced self-efficacy, self-esteem and emotion regulation (Weindl et al., 2017); impaired responses to stress related abusive experience as well as stress in general (Nurius et al., 2015); and a debilitating impact on survivors' educational development, opportunities and achievements (Hardcastle et al., 2018; Bode and Goldman, 2012). Child abuse also has serious socioeconomic consequences on the larger society. In England and Wales alone the cost to society exceeds £10 billion (IICS, 2022). Furthermore, CPCSA also negatively affects the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the victims and the faith communities in which they live (Ponton and Goldstein, 2004).

The issue of child abuse in religious settings has become a topic of academic, legal, and journalistic inquiry in high-income democracies. The continuing revelations of incidents of child abuse in places of worship by respected members of the clergy and individuals associated with religious organisations have not only shaken but also divided the faith communities affected by these revelations (Fogler et al, 2008). Although CPCSA has been a topic of public interest since the 1980s (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007), it was *The Boston Globe* exposé of the systemic child abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States that for the first time indicated the scale of the problem (*The Boston Globe*, 6 January, 2002). Following this exposé, a series of public inquiries into the child abuse in institutions including religious organisations have been conducted in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Spain, and Japan resulting in advancements in safeguarding policies in institutional and religious settings. These public inquiries have expanded the academic and public policy discourse around child safeguarding in the high income, secular democracies in which these inquiries were commissioned. However, in spite of omnipresent religious institutions and abuse scandals associated with them, similar investigative and accountability mechanisms have not been implemented in low-income, semi-secular, traditional settings such as Sri Lanka. This could be due to any number of socio-economic, cultural, and political deficiencies that are yet to be clearly understood. While the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka has been a topic of academic interest among religious scholars, the lack of academic interest in this crucial issue attested by the absence of research is also a concern. To my knowledge,

this is the first research involving survivors of child abuse in Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka.

In 1991, Sri Lanka became a signatory to The United Nation's Convention on The Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and in 1998 through a parliamentary act, established The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) as its foremost child protection institution. The NCPA is tasked with the responsibility of implementing the universal laws of the UNCRC at the country level. The NCPA has been working with other pre-existing agencies such as the Department of Probation and Childcare (DPCC) and the women's and children's division of the police department, and has made significant progress in advancing children's rights in the country. These gains are particularly notable in the areas of child safeguarding in pre-school and school settings, and the reporting, processing, and prosecuting of incidents of child abuse (National Child Protection – Sri Lanka, 2022). Despite these improvements, a large section of vulnerable children that is given to the Buddhist monasteries remain excluded from the national and universal safeguarding frameworks (Parkes, 2022).

Compared to the 379 state-regulated child care institutions with 10,632 children in them (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021), there are 12,694 Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka (Ministry of Buddhasasana Religious and Cultural Affairs, n.d.) with an estimated sixty thousand children living in them (Keerthirathne, 2020). The children from predominantly lower socioeconomic backgrounds are given to monasteries to be trained as monks without the safeguarding oversight that is normally required when children are placed under alternative care. Regardless of the regular media revelations of incidents of child abuse in Buddhist monasteries (*Daily News*, 2022a; 2022b; *Colombo Gazette*, 2022; Pathirana, 2012; 2020), the reasons for this safeguarding omission remain unknown. Although more recently a degree of concern has been shown by the government, as the Minister in Charge of Buddhist Affairs has requested a report on the extent of child maltreatment in Buddhist monasteries (Gamage, 2022), no systematic inquiry has yet been conducted.

1.2. Personal connectedness to the topic

The timing and the selection of the research topic is connected to my lived experience as a Buddhist monk, a victim, and a survivor of childhood abuse in a Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka. Having been ordained as a novice monk at the age of ten, and living in several different monasteries for twenty years, I was aware of the nature of child abuse and the general attitude towards children in monasteries. After leaving monastic life in 2012 and

receiving training in counselling and psychotherapy around the same time, I was able to recognise dimensions of my lived experience of which I was not previously aware. With these new found insights, I initially worked informally with a few survivors known to me and gave several talks to closed-door monastic audiences. These hastily-planned interventions exposed my limited capacity to take on such a monumental task of working with the survivors of monastic child abuse or effecting monastic reforms. This period of personal transformation culminated in a conviction to deepen my understanding of the topic which eventually led to this project. From a postmodern social constructionist perspective in which this qualitative research is undertaken (Etherington, 2007), personal connectedness to the participants, the topic or the context is no longer problematic, and when it is reflexively managed can become a feature of impactful research (Ellis, 2007).

However, as this is a sensitive topic and a subject matter that shares borders with range of other domains including law, I was mindful from the start of the research to construct a robust ethical framework and to re-evaluate its efficacy throughout the project. The wellbeing of both the researcher and the participants was at the heart of the project and the focus of the study was adjusted accordingly. Engagement with researcher reflexivity, regular supervisory meetings, targeted research development session and The Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) approval process, in aggregate, was instrumental in managing research ethics.

1.3. Challenges in defining the study

Empirical research is generally built upon previous research with the purpose of closing a clearly defined gap in a chosen field. This is a careful act of balancing between the old, familiar, ‘universal’ knowledge and the newly emerging ‘particular’ knowledge (Cooper, 2009, p. 442). This scholarly practice has created an epistemological ecosystem that enables the scaffolding of knowledge (Tanesini, 2022), a gradual process of creating knowledge on which beginner researchers tend to build their research. However, this research did not have the advantage of building on a body of closely related research, as there was no previous academic research on this population. This was a challenge in defining the study as there was no reference point to set the theoretical or methodological parameters of the research. Therefore, the selection of inquiry method was a crucial decision in overcoming this challenge and a qualitative case study approach was more compelling as it provides a robust yet flexible framework for researching relatively unknown topics (Stake, 1998). Also challenging was the thematic shift I had to undertake, transitioning from an essentialist,

intrapsychic orientation in counselling and psychotherapy to a social constructionist approach (Berg-Sørensen et al., 2011) that is favoured in social work field (Fook, 2016). This shift in orientation made a foundational difference to my approach in conceptualising the project, by changing the focus from intrapersonal dimensions of child abuse to social-ecological ones.

However, this research benefited from a growing body of international scholarship on child abuse in religious organisations. In particular, the public inquiries and research co-sponsored by them provided specific examples of case studies on child abuse in various religious denominations (for example, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in Ireland (2009), the Australian Royal Commission into the Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse (2012-2017), and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales (2015-2022)). Equally useful in contextualising this research was the UK's policy discourse on safeguarding which is shaped by legislations and professional and service user research.

In addition to these inherent challenges, the first two years of the research (2020-2021) were affected by the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. While it is difficult to estimate the overall negative impact of the pandemic on this research and learning process, the travel restrictions and social distancing measures certainly impacted on the design features of the research.

1.4. Scope of the study

Notwithstanding the difficulties in defining the study, it was important to set some parameters given the restrictions on time and resources for the research including those imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the victims of monastic child abuse may not exclusively be boys (Pathirana, 2020), the ordination of young girls is a relatively new phenomenon and the size of the overall female monastic community is insignificant compared to its male counterpart. Moreover, identifying potential female participants who may have had similar childhood experiences was not practical under the restrictive circumstances of the research. Therefore, for the ease of access, only male survivors of monastic child abuse were selected. For the same reason, only senior male monks were interviewed to gain monastic perspectives on child abuse. Meanwhile, the child protection officers were referred by the research coordinator of the NCPA and selected based on the inclusion criteria stated by the researcher (see Appendix-1). Regarding the setting in which abuse occurred, the terms 'Buddhist monastery or monasteries' are used here as generic terms to denote the institution as a whole without referring to a specific monastery.

This research shares topical boundaries with general child abuse, institutional child abuse, and clergy-perpetrated child abuse. In terms of the experience of survivors who participated in the study, this research involves historical or non-recent child abuse (NSPCC, n.d). The current research is also linked to child safeguarding discourses and, perhaps peripherally, to the topics of religion and culture. However, this research did not align with one particular discipline in a strict sense but was keen to understand broad systemic corruption of care and abuse of power as these dimensions are found to be at the core of the institutional abuse (Wardhaugh and Wilding, 1998). Child abuse in religious institutions has been liked to abuse of clerical power (Doyle, 2003; 2006), particularly in social settings in which the relationship between the religion and state seems to be co-dependent (McLoone-Richards, 2012).

1.5. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore why in Sri Lanka monastic child abuse was excluded from the general discourse around child abuse and safeguarding. The specific objective was to seek answers to this question by consulting three groups of participants. They included survivors of child abuse in a monastic setting, senior members of the Buddhist clergy, and child protection officers. In addition, various publicly available data sources such as media interviews, news articles and policy documents were reviewed.

Inclusion of the abovementioned three groups of participants in the study was crucial to create a well-rounded description of the issue. Some studies have indicated that child victims generally disclose abuse to someone during the same developmental period as the abuse incident/s (Brennan and McElvaney, 2020). However, it was not clear if the same was true for victims in institutional settings due to the absence of a consistent relationship with caregivers, and gaining an understanding of the barriers and facilitators (if any) to disclosure was of paramount importance in responding to child abuse (Alaggia et al., 2019). Furthermore, towards realising the full potential of the Article 12 of the UNCRC that underscores the children's right to participate in decisions that affect them (UNCRC, 2009), recent research has focused on the children's service user experience and barriers to their participation in protection services (Archard and Skivenes, 2009; Jobe and Gorin, 2013; Cossar et al., 2016; Moore, 2017; Cossar et al., 2019; Fouché et al., 2019; Race and Frost, 2022). Although this research did not deal with child participants directly, adult survivors' perspectives were expected to provide insights into children's experience. Previous public inquiries have criticised the leaders of religious institutions for their failure to prevent abuse,

protect victims, and punish offenders (IICSA, 2022; Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). As Buddhist monastic leaders are yet to face such formal and public scrutiny, it was important to provide an opportunity for them to respond to the general issue of child abuse in monasteries. Since professional service providers have been reported to have a unique understanding of the barriers and facilitators to disclosure of child abuse (Sivagurunathan et a.l, 2019), and children's participation or lack thereof in the protection process and outcomes (Vis, et al., 2012; Križ and Skivenes, 2017; Woodman et al., 2018; Kosher and Ben-Arieh, 2020; Woodman et al., 2022), the inclusion of their voices in this study was important. The specific objective therefore was to explore child abuse in the Buddhist monastery by seeking to answer three main questions:

- Why do survivors remain silent?
- Why does the Buddhist monastery maintain silence about abuse within it?
- Why do child protection authorities acquiesce to the silence?

In addition to these three questions that were directly addressed in the interview data, from the paucity of research on this population a fourth question was inferred: is there an implicit silence among the academic community about child abuse in Buddhist monasteries?

1.6. Significance of the study

To my knowledge, this research is the first academic study into child abuse in Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka. This study contains possibly the first formal disclosure of abuse within a monastery and reports on views and opinions of selected Buddhist clergy and child protection officers about this issue. The findings offer significant insights into the social ecological dynamics of child abuse inside monasteries including practices and attitudes towards children, and unique safeguarding challenges. The findings also reveal safeguarding policy gaps that seem to leave a significant section of the child population exposed to the risk of abuse and exploitation. This research in a small but formal way breaks the silence around male survivors of childhood abuse and links Sri Lanka to the global discussion on this topic. Moreover, it situates the BMS within a broader discussion on child abuse in the religious context as this discourse is currently dominated by the Catholic church in developed countries. In terms of its originality and contribution to the literature, this research exemplifies a form of democratic scholarship in which knowledge is of the survivors, by the survivors and for the survivors. Given the role of the researcher's tacit knowledge of the

topic, participants and the context, this study also calls for a greater recognition of informal knowledge that is generally discounted in research.

1.7.Research approach

This research employed a qualitative instrumental case study approach (Stake, 1998) for several important reasons. Qualitative research defies any attempt to confine it to a singular method of inquiry, and provides far more flexibility in making methodological choices as it does not espouse its own theoretical lens (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Given the uncharted nature of the topic in the Sri Lankan context, a certain degree of freedom of inquiry was necessary, as opposed to employing a structured research design that dictates what to do and how to do it (Hammersley, 2000). Moreover, the qualitative inquiry methods are better suited to investigate social realities which are elusive, more complex, and cannot be captured by the investigative techniques used in physical sciences (Hammersley, 2000), and serve well for research seeking subjective data eliciting meanings, memories, and contradictions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In addition, health and wellbeing research can benefit from qualitative studies as the latter produces insights into complex dimensions of service users and providers in ways that are not possible through quantitative approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2014). More specifically in relation to abuse and sexual violence, the incidences should be understood in the context in which they occur because uprooting them from the social and political context and converting them to statistical figures may distort the unique conditions that contribute to violence. In this regard, a qualitative approach to research is not only beneficial but also a necessity (Boesten and Henry, 2018).

These features of qualitative inquiry dovetail with the core tenet of social constructionism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018), which provided the theoretical location for this research. Social constructionism is premised on the notion that there are multiple social realities co-constructed by individuals, while power and language play a central role in this co-construction (Burr, 2015). By extension, this means that there may be multiple realities which are arbitrarily constructed by people regardless of external markers such as their physical appearance or neighbourhoods in which they live (Nightingale and Cromby, 2002). As attested by the dearth of research, in Sri Lanka the discussion around adult survivors of childhood abuse seems to be at its infancy or even non-existent. For these particular circumstances, a qualitative case study underpinned by social constructionism was the most appropriate approach. However, such a flexible and open-ended approach did not mean that

this study was completely unstructured. On the contrary, the instrumental case study design (Stake, 1998) provided a framework to capture the stories, diverse views and relevant contextual details.

Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has been effectively applied in research to understand child abuse in non-Western societies (Dako-Gyeke, 2019; Hong et al., 2011; Liao, 2011). While acknowledging the changes this theory has gone through since its introduction (Rosa and Tudge, 2013) and its application and misapplication to research (Tuge et al, 2009), the current research eclectically utilised Bronfenbrenner's early and late concepts to review the extant literature and understand the data.

1.8. Definitions of key terms

Child abuse

There seems to be no agreement on what constitutes child abuse and the definition of terms around the phenomena of child abuse seem to vary depending on the legal context, and local cultural and prevalence factors (Dubowitz, 2017). Perhaps due to this lack of agreement, the phrase 'child abuse' is often used in important publications without any explanation of what it entails (for example, publications by the United Nations or UNICEF). Furthermore, phrases such as 'child maltreatment' and 'violence against children' are interchangeably used to denote child abuse (WHO, 2020). More recently the phrase 'adverse childhood experience' is used to refer to 'negative experiences that happen during childhood' (Benson, 2020). These experiences may include those that are experienced at personal, relational, and environmental levels (Hardcastle et al., 2018).

Earlier on in the discourse, the term 'battered child syndrome' (Kempe et al., 1962, p. 105) was used by medical professionals to refer to signs of physical harm. In contemporary discourse, the term appears to be used as an umbrella term to denote a range of experiences that are harmful to the wellbeing of children. For example, now the terms child abuse is often mentioned in combination with neglect.

Gleaning from various documents published by international agencies such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, the phrase 'child maltreatment' refers to both abuse and neglect of children under 18 years of age (WHO, 2020). The World Health Organisation defined child maltreatment as 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitations,

resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power' (Krug et al., 2002, p. 59). This definition overlaps with the general definition of abuse put forward in the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children (Working Together)* by The UK government for agencies responsible for the welfare of children (HM Government, 2018). However, for the specific definitions covering the subsets of child abuse such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, and neglect, the UK government's version provides more extensive and accessible definitions. Therefore, the phrases 'child abuse', 'child sexual abuse', 'child sexual exploitation', 'emotional abuse', and 'neglect' that are used in this thesis were adopted from the *Working Together* policy guidance.

Working Together (2018) guidance defines physical abuse as 'a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricate the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child (p. 106).'

It defines emotional abuse as 'the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone' (p. 107).

According to the *Working Together* (2018) guidance, sexual abuse 'involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of

clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children (p. 107).

Child sexual exploitation is defined as 'a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology' (p. 107).

Child neglect is defined as 'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), [to] protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, [to] ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers), [and to] ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs' (p. 108).

Monastic child abuse

In the context of this research, this phrase is used to refer to incidents of child abuse perpetrated on children, novice monks or junior monks living in monasteries or institutions affiliated to monasteries. The purpose for this delineation is to distinguish incidents of clergy-perpetrated child abuse against children or young persons in community. Evidence for previous use of the term was not found in the literature search conducted for this research.

Child safeguarding and child protection

The *Working Together* (2018) guidance defines safeguarding as 'protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or

development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, [and] taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes' (p. 106).

Child protection is defined as 'part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm' (p. 106).

Tacit/Informal knowledge

Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) conceptualised tacit knowledge as a part of personal knowing that is implicit and difficult to explain in a formal manner (Ray, 2009). This hidden dimension of knowledge has varied meanings including technical know-how unique to organisations, and understanding of unwritten organisational and cultural norms (Gerholm, 1990). The term is used in thesis to refer to a knowledge that is uncodified and difficult to articulate, yet manifested through attitudes, interpersonal communication and decision-making.

1.9. Organisation of the thesis

Chapter 2 provides background information on the BMS and the child protection landscape in Sri Lanka. The purpose is to help readers distinguish the BMS on the basis of its unique characteristics from other hierarchical religious organisations such as the Roman Catholic or Anglican Churches that are familiar to Western audiences. Drawing on the literature of organisations that are prone to child abuse, the BMS in its current form is viewed as an unsafe institution for children. Then two recently published policy documents are reviewed, and policy limitations and challenges to implementation are identified. Chapter 3 reviews literature from the ecological systems lens, interrogating barriers to disclosure, recognition, and prevention of child abuse in institutional settings. The focus is on the nature of scholarship on: male survivors' experience, institutional response to abuse, and the perspectives of child protection professionals. Child abuse within the religious institutional context has been reviewed as a unique form of institutional abuse with inherent challenges to disclosure, recognition, and prevention or interventions. Chapter 4 describes in detail the study's methodology, the researcher's positionality, and the research process including data collection and analysis. The data processing component of transcribing and translating is given due attention as it is often an overlooked aspect of bilingual qualitative research. Chapter 5 presents the findings in the form of three global themes. The themes generated

from interview data are presented, where possible, alongside with converging and diverging data points from other sources. Chapter 6 discusses the findings by reorganising the themes to address the three main research questions, and by referring to the literature identified in chapter 3. Lastly, chapter 7 provides conclusions highlighting the implications of the findings for child safeguarding, and the strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter outlines recommendations for future research and policies, and ends with a farewell reflection.

Chapter 2: Introduction to the Sri Lankan context

2.1 Introduction

Extensive consideration of contextual details is a hallmark of the case study approach (Hyett et al., 2014), and this section provides key historical, institutional, cultural, and political factors that are crucial in understanding what may be universal and what may be particular about the case of child abuse in BMS. Its contribution to methodological robustness is not the only reason for a contextual description; although religious and cultural dimensions of the BMS have long been topics of interest among scholars world-wide, the issue of child abuse in BMS has received little or no attention in local and global scholarship. Moreover, the issue of child abuse in BMS can be further hidden from audiences outside of its immediate context as Buddhism is generally seen in the West as a religion concerned with adults seeking inner peace through meditation (Sasson, 2014). Furthermore, as attested by the rise of mindfulness-based (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and compassion-based (Kirby, 2017) clinical interventions, Buddhism has gained popularity as a scientific and non-violent religion in the West, and has not been recognised as an institution posing risks of child abuse in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church has been (Rashid and Barron, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this section is to locate the BMS within the category of organisations in which children are at risk.

2.2 Buddhist monasticism in Sri Lanka

Buddhist monasticism has a history in South and South-East Asia that dates back to the 5th century B.C. and an academic analysis of its complexity and evolution is beyond the scope of this thesis (for an accessible account of this subject see Harvey, 2013). However, at least a brief understanding of the institutional development of Buddhist monasticism is crucial to appreciate the extent to which the BMS has evolved over the centuries.

Buddhism is based on the teachings given in the form of discourses by Sidhartha Gothama, a prince-turned monk. The term ‘Buddha’ is an honorific title assigned to a person believed to have achieved spiritual enlightenment. After declaring himself as enlightened, the Buddha started to preach his teachings to willing listeners who eventually became his followers. The more serious cohort of his followership formed a monastic community known as ‘Bhikkhu Sangha’ meaning male monks. One salient feature of Buddhist monasticism that has been consistent throughout the centuries is the voluntary nature of its membership: the commitment to becoming a long-term member of Buddhist monastic community required

careful considerations due to the moral and ethical demands of the monastic lifestyle that included celibacy and mendicancy (Robinson et al., 2005). These requirements may not be a unique invention of the Buddha himself. Rather, he may have adopted them from contemporary mendicant traditions that were thriving at that time (Harvey, 2013).

Once a person is able to make a deliberate choice, he is required to commit to a lifestyle characterised by ethical behaviour, meditation and wisdom (Piyadassi, 1982; Rahula, 1974; Coleman, 2001). As the goal of Buddhist monasticism is to achieve this existential goal within a supportive community of like-minded people, the monks must abide by 227 major and minor rules while the nuns must follow 311 rules. Although monks live as a community, solitude and celibacy are essential conditions for achieving the monastic goal (Collins, 2011), these rules come into effect when and only when a person self-imposes them with the voluntary objective of becoming a member of the monastic community (Wijayaratna, 1990). One obvious observation of this monastic code of conduct is that it was never intended for children. Rather, it appears to have been meant for adults who are capable of making an informed decision about serious matters that are fundamental to human existence, such as the desire for expression of one's sexuality, for procreation, for owning property, or for pursuing careers.

As the Buddha himself acknowledged, his approach to monastic life was a reformation of contemporary approaches to spiritual liberation (Harvey, 2013); he adopted some practices proven to be effective while denouncing others that were considered extreme. For example, begging for food, shaving heads and celibacy were common features of many of the Buddha's contemporary traditions and he and his inaugural disciples adopted these practices. Such practices, particularly celibacy, became formal rules of monastic conduct twenty years after the inception of the monastic community (Wijayaratna, 1990). Judging by the kinds of sexual acts that were gradually included in the Buddha's list of offences that are punishable by monastic community standards, it is clear that Buddhist monasticism has been struggling with the problem of clergy sexual misconduct since its beginning. Stated in a prosaic manner, these rules cover a wide range of sexual acts that include vaginal intercourse, and anal or oral sex with a human or animal subject, and masturbation (Wijayarathna, 1990). As attested by the number of amendments that the Buddha was impelled to make to the initial rule of banning sexual intercourse with a woman, clergymen seemed to have always attempted to circumvent existing rules and norms to meet their sexual needs.

Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in 3rd century B.C. by a group of Buddhist monks said to have been sent by the emperor Ashoka of India. According to historical chronicles, the message of Buddhism was delivered directly to the ruler of Sri Lanka as a gift from the emperor, creating a trickle-down effect on the agrarian population in the kingdom. Several subsequent delegations from India are reported to have arrived with various cultural messages including the introduction of a new alphabet, royal etiquettes and irrigation and agricultural methods. According to the legends, the Sri Lankan undertook a re-coronation in accordance with newly introduced Aryan rituals which were led by the Buddhist monks. Now as a legitimate Aryan king, he then offered part of his royal garden to the monks and built the first monastery. Regardless of the historical accuracy of these events, this symbiosis between political leadership and Buddhism from the inception of the country seems to have ramification that have lasted until the present. As Gombrich (2006) puts it, the history of Sri Lanka is the history of BMS, at least until 1505 C.E. when the first European colonial power arrived.

One institutionally significant legacy of this historical marriage between the kingship and Buddhism is the sentiment that the ruler of the country must be *Bodhisatva* or someone who aspires to become a Buddha in the future (Swearer, 2010). The rhetorical implication of this sentiment seems to remain alive to this day in the post-independent democratic Sri Lanka, as there is an expectation that the head of state must be a heterosexual Buddhist. Although the official name of Sri Lanka is 'Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka', the state exhibits constitutional characteristics of a theocracy (Gunatilleke, 2018; Schonthal, 2016). Article 9 of the constitution of Sri Lanka declares that 'the Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha *Sasana*…' (The Constitution of The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015: 3., emphasis in original). This provision seems to confirm the relationship between the state and the Buddhist monastery, which dates back to 3rd century B.C. (Rahula, 1966).

Before Buddhism was codified in Sri Lanka's constitution by post-independent governments, it was the British colonial administration that initiated the formalisation of ecclesiastical affairs of the Buddhist monastery through the introduction of the Temporalities Ordinance in 1931 (Schonthal, 2016). Although initially meant to stipulate the governance of three selected sacred Buddhist sites, the subsequent amendments under colonial and post-colonial administrations have expanded the remit of the ordinance to all monasteries and properties

associated with them (The Ministry of Justice, n.d). The provisions of this ordinance are implemented by the Commissioner General of the Department of Buddhist Affairs which is under the purview of the Ministry of Buddhism. This ordinance seems to epitomise the ambiguous relationship between the state and the monastery as both parties keep testing the limits of this legislature for each other's interests (Kemper, 1984). Although the Temporalities Ordinance provides regulatory oversight of some aspects such as monastic funds and proper successive ownership, the constitutional obligation of the state to foster and protect Buddhism seems to overshadow, if not weaken, any efforts to make monastic affairs more transparent and accountable (Herath, 2021).

Before examining the institutional characteristics of the BMS, one important caveat about the nature of the BMS as an institution must be added here. The BMS is not a unitary institution with a command structure like the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, it is a decentralised organisation that provides greater administrative autonomy to individual monasteries (Sasson, 2014). In Sri Lanka, the 12,694 monasteries cited earlier belong to three main sects (known as Nikāya) which are headed by three chief prelates (known as Mahā Nāyaka). These divisions came into existence during the colonial period and are based on caste divisions rather than sectarian differences (Jayasooriya, 2017). Among these monasteries, some functions as boarding schools (*Pirivena*) for novice monks (some allow external lay students) and this category of monasteries are funded and governed by a special branch in the Ministry of Education.

2.2.1 Child ordination

Despite the obvious prerequisite of freewill and deliberation necessary to consent to become a monk, some argue based on scriptural sources that child ordination has been a major component of Buddhist monasticism since its inception (Abhayawansa, 2014; Langenberg, 2013). Proponents of this view often summon the canonical narratives to make their point. The most notable stories of young boys being initiated as monks include that of the son of the Buddha who was ordained at the age of seven, and of two young orphans who were rescued from the streets and initiated as monks to live among the adult monastic community (Sasson, 2014). However, based on the monastic code of conduct which is designed primarily for adults (Wijayaratna, 1990), ordination of children must have been a rare exception during the early centuries of Buddhist monasticism. Moreover, the disciplinary manual for novice monks (Nauyane, 1987) appeared to have been compiled during the colonial period, suggesting that ordination of children is a relatively new and uniquely Sri Lankan practice.

The timing of the introduction of this practice also coincides with the emergence of monastic landlordism (Evers, 1969) that sought the future ownership of monastic properties through pupillary succession, which meant ordination of a boy from the abbot's extended family.

As Sasson (2014) correctly identified, children are given to monasteries for spiritual or socioeconomic reasons or for a combination of both. Regardless of the immediate circumstances around sending a child to a monastery, 'the notion of generating merits' (Sasson, 2014, p. 596) seems to be the main motivation. The idea of accumulating good karma by donating a child to the monastery can be an added consolation for families struggling to provide basic needs. Access to education is another motivation for child ordination, as many monasteries function as boarding schools for novice monks (Sasson, 2014). In addition, perhaps unique to the Sri Lankan culture, there is a belief that boys born with astrological defects are ordained as monks to protect them from any cosmic misfortune and because they may not be successful in any worldly enterprise in the future (Serasinghe, 2014).

These personal and familial reasons for sending children to monasteries sometimes appear to be part of a broader political narrative. As noted earlier, the state has a constitutional duty to foster and protect Buddhism, although it is not clear in what ways this duty must be fulfilled. Therefore, this constitutional provision is sometimes activated according to the personality or the agenda of the politician in power. Tactful politicians in the past have used this provision to achieve their political ambitions. For example, in mid-1980s, the then prime minister in his bid to become the next president initiated a recruitment drive to ordain 2300 children to mark the 2300th anniversary of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka (Abeysekara, 2008). In 2010, the then prime minister, amidst protest from child protection activists, came up with a similar plan, this time for 2600 children to commemorate the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment (Pathirana, 2010). These state-sponsored, highly publicised events often lure low-income families to donate their children to mass ordinations (Serasinghe, 2014). Although the parents do not receive financial compensation for donating a child to a monastery, they possibly get to relive themselves from the burden of raising the child.

It appears that social approval for these mass ordinations is gained through historical narratives that glorify child ordination and the intense emotions evoked in the act of sacrificing a child (Samuels, 2013). These narratives are distributed to the populace through the national school curriculum and tend to occupy a special place in popular culture (songs,

dramas and novels that romanticise child ordination). Parallel to these narratives, there seems to be a cultural narrative about purity that places higher value on a monk who has been ordained as a 'pure' child compared with a monk ordained after being 'tainted' as an adult (Obeyesekere, 2019).

Child ordination in the Buddhist monastery bears similarities to other practices involving minors in South Asia that are religious, historical and controversial. Child marriage through the Devadasi system in India is a notable equivalent, despite its sole focus on girls. It literally means 'female slave to the God' and is an ancient practice of marrying a female, sometimes as young as four years, to a symbolic god figure. Before the Islamic and British invasions of India, this used to be a prestigious position occupied by ladies both from upper and lower castes. The Devadasi lived in a temple dedicating her life to the deity. Mastering a religious form of dancing was an integral part of the life of a Devadasi. However, after the Islamic and British occupations, the system along with the females in it lost its prestige and patronage, and became a form of religious prostitution through which higher caste men exploit women and children from lower castes. Despite local and national legislation banning this practice, the exploitation thrives under the cover of religious pretence, due to lack of clarity and coordination between various law enforcement entities (Shingal, 2015). Child ordination and Devadasi system are also similar in terms of their religious origin, adaptation along the way to sociocultural customs such as caste, and finally economic underpinning (For example, Lee, 2011). The continuation of this archaic practice has been attributed to a combination of economic pressure for the lower caste to participate in it and for the upper caste to maintain dominance (Torri, 2009). However, while there is no evidence to suggest that child ordination is schemed with the same interest of sexually exploiting minors, broadly both practices in their modern-day form are inextricably intertwined with poverty and tradition.

2.2.2 Ordination and living arrangements

For whatever reasons, when a child ends up in a monastery he comes under the direct supervision of the abbot and is supposed to familiarise himself with the monastic daily routine and learn selected verses from the scriptures in preparation for ordination (Nauyane, 1987). This familiarisation period may last for three, six or twelve months within which a small batch of boys are selected for ordination. During this time, the boys may go to a nearby school or be enrolled in a training monastery for formal education. The ordination is a ceremonious event in which the boy goes through a dramatic transformation from being a boy with a lay proper name and appearance, to a novice monk with shaven head and a religious

name with his village name in front of it. The ordination is presided over by a senior monk in the linage and newly ordained novices are registered under the guardianship of the abbot with whom they are to live. Similar to a boarding school setting, the newly ordained cohort closely follows its senior cohort and gradually integrates into the monastic community. The novice monks become part of the monastic socialisation process from day one, as their parents for the first time kneel down and worship them to symbolically mark the end of the worldly relationship.

The novices who are ordained in smaller monasteries are sent to training monasteries for formal education. These follow a specially designed curriculum that offers a combination of religious and secular subjects which are geared towards qualifications equivalent to the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O Level) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A Level). Although the novice monks are legally registered with their newly assigned names and issued with identification cards, in a monastic sense they are still considered probationary members. They become permanent members when they are given full ordination known as *Upasampadā*, after they reach at least twenty years of age and a satisfactory level of monastic education.

Depending on the monastic infrastructure, novice monks live in various accommodation ranging from dangerously inhospitable conditions to acceptable lodgings. Regardless of the quality of accommodation, novice monks live under direct supervision of the abbot or senior monks.

2.2.3 Monastic discipline

Training monasteries have been known for their role in education since the colonial period (Blackburn, 2010). Most have gained a reputation for their strict discipline, implemented through a daily routine that runs from dawn to dusk. Daily life in a monastery involves early rising, long prayer sessions, cleaning, studying and attending religious functions in surrounding villages. Generally, fun or play activities are prohibited and transgressions are met with physical or verbal punishment. Novice monks may also be required to engage in work projects such as growing crops for monastic consumption, and construction or renovation of monastic buildings.

2.2.4 Risks of child abuse in monasteries

While there is a formidable body of literature on the historical, religious and philosophical aspects of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (for example Gombrich, 2006; Blackburn, 2010; Harris,

2009; Mahinda, 2009, 2013), generally more insulated aspects of Buddhist monastic life are not documented in literature. The hidden realities of monastic life involving monastic conduct seemed to have evaded even the generally more critical eyes of notable anthropologists who otherwise observed subtle transgressions in monastic orders (for example, Seneviratne, 1999; Obeyesekere, 2006; Samuels, 2007; Abeysekara, 2008). Sasson (2014) linked this lack of public discussion to the overall Asian Buddhist culture that tends to remain reticent about abuse, in contrast to the generally outspoken Western culture. While this may be true, it was important for the current study to investigate what contributes to public silence particularly among the academic and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), as the latter can be expected to commit resources to the topic.

The Buddhist communities influenced by Asian Buddhist traditions (Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Taiwanese, Burmese, and Sri Lankan) have been growing in the West since the 1970s, and none of them seem to practice child ordination. These communities are founded and run by mostly white, college educated men and women who have received some form of Buddhist training in Asia or from an Asian teacher residing in the West (for example, https://www.amaravati.org/ is a network of monasteries in the UK and the US founded by an American monk who was trained in Thailand). Even these communities of consenting adults were prone to emotional and sexual abuse mainly due to the power imbalance between mostly male teachers and faithful students (Coleman, 2001). For example, the leader and many senior teachers of the Shambhala Buddhist monastery, a well-established branch of Tibetan Buddhism with a global network of temples, were accused of sexual and emotional abuse of followers. These allegations led to the resignation of its leader and incarceration of some senior teachers (Newman, 2018; Winn, 2018). As these vignettes demonstrate, abuse seems to be a common reality even in adult religious communities. With the inherent power imbalance in the adult-child relationship, the risks can only be more serious for novices who are required to live under the supervision of senior monks.

2.2.5 The role of monastic institutional culture in child abuse

In this section, drawing on the analysis of the role of institutional cultures in child sexual abuse in the context of the Australian Royal Commission (Palmer et al., 2016), parallels are drawn between the BMS and the institutional cultures that are prone to perpetrate, conceal and deny child abuse. The institutional characteristics of the BMS described earlier are revisited here from an organisational culture lens.

The life of a novice monk is highly structured with the teacher-disciple relationship playing a central role (Nauyane, 1987). In this generally top-down monastic relationship, the disciple must always be subservient to the abbot or a senior monk. The interaction between senior monks and novices involves monastic etiquettes that demand unquestioning respect and decorum from the novices. The abbot's position as the supreme arbiter of novices' lives may have been consolidated by the ecclesiastical rites of passage through which the novices enter the monastic life. These rituals entail daily prostrations to the abbot, attending to his personal needs such as washing his robes, and cleaning his residence. Daily activities are performed in groups with the abbot or a senior monk always presiding over them. These initiating rituals are implemented alongside with a life altering set of practices such as shaving heads and removing lay proper names and assigning different proper names and constant advice on how different they ought to behave now that they are ordained. In theory, these monastic practices are expected to be implemented through a teacher-disciple relationship, simulating the dynamics of a loving and caring relationship between father and son and for the sole purpose of spiritual development of the novice, (Thera, 1996). However, in reality these institutional features are strikingly similar to the characteristics of Goffman's total institutions (Goffman, 1961). Palmer's analysis makes an important distinction between those organisations conforming to total institution ideal types that strictly follow the definition of Goffman's total institutions and those that do not strictly conform.

Goffman defined total institutions as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (Goffman, 1961, p. 11). Clearly, he was referring to formal institutions such as prisons, psychiatric facilities of the US industrial mid-west at the time. But these institutional characteristics have marked resemblance to a monastery in Sri Lanka, although it is not a formal institution in a statutory sense. For example, a monastery as far as monks are concerned is a place of residence and work. Monastic life is designed to seclude people from secular society, potentially for life. In terms of its operational qualities, the monastery comes even closer to a classic total institution. For example, every aspect of monastic daily life, within and outside the premises is conducted under the sole authority of the abbot. Just as in total institutions, novices' daily life is tightly controlled through a routine which starts with a wake-up bell, followed by a series of bells, marking the end of one period and the beginning of another. The activities in this daily routine are clearly defined, carried out in groups and monitored by senior monks.

They conclude with evening prayers followed by an audience with the abbot. This meeting must be attended by every subordinate member of the monastery and can take the shape of an inspection of inmates or a tribunal, which ends with novices formally seeking forgiveness for any intentional and unintentional wrongdoings of the day and the abbot formally pardoning them. This seeking of forgiveness is performed by both parties reciting Pāli stanzas, emulating the ancient teacher-disciple relationship which is essential for the attainment of the final goal of monastic life (Nauyane, 1987).

Without making a strict distinction between the total institution ideal type and other institutions, the BMS can be linked to Palmer's analysis of organisational cultures in the institutional context that tend to predispose, precipitate and perpetuate child abuse. In relation to his distinction between institutions that fit the total institution ideal type and other organisations, the BMS can be viewed as a hybrid of both. The main justification for this view is the hybrid role that the monastery has developed in recent decades: While asserting to be the repository of traditional monastic values that defined it as an institution, it seems to have diluted these values by embracing secular values and goals.

Palmer et al. (2016) declared an organisation as institutionalised when members begin to view it as an end in itself, regardless of a commitment to and effectiveness in achieving its original mission. A cursory observation on any religious institution is sufficient to conclude that they all have institutionalised, given the degree to which they all seem to have deviated from their original goals. This is particularly obvious regarding the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka as it seems to have unrecognisably drifted away from its initial goals of austere monasticism. The expansion of a monk's role in recent decades includes taking up paid employment, owning businesses and even running for public office. In view of these recent aberrations, the BMS certainly exhibits the signs of an institutionalised organisation.

Institutionalised organisational cultures that fit the total institution ideal type provide an 'alternative moral universe' (Palmer et al., 2016, p. 38) which consists of a code of conduct that is different from ordinary society. Palmer referred to military organisations and the Catholic Church as typical examples of such cultures. Both these organisations purportedly govern members using their own internal judicial system. The Buddhist monastery possesses remarkable similarities to these features: it is governed by the monastic code of conduct that stipulates 227 major and minor offences and corresponding punishments and remedial measures, and there are designated senior monks and quarters for judicial proceedings

(Wijayaratna, 1990). The four major offences include wilfully killing a human being, theft, sexual misconduct and feigning spiritual achievement. Confessing to any one of these offences results in permanent expulsion of the offender from the community.

In Palmer's view, 'Organisations are likely to become institutions in the sociological sense of the word when their survival hinges more on the extent to which stakeholders perceive them to exemplify cherished values, than on the effectiveness with which they achieve their stated goals' (p. 51). This shift can occur due to original goals becoming unattainable, or being modified or replaced by new ones, and applies to the contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhist monastery where spiritual goals are replaced with secular goals related to society, culture and politics. This transition is not without public support. As Palmer et al. (2016) observed, organisations garner support from their members by activating 'sagas' and through 'lionisation' of their leaders (p. 51). For the Buddhist monastery, the justification for its change of course has been building up since the colonial period through civil war and more recently political turmoil; the slogan has always been motherland first, salvation second. This message has been transmitted to the public by various charismatic monastic leaders.

In such a highly institutionalised cultural context, the monastery may view sexual abuse as radioactive topic that needs to be contained. Furthermore, because sexual misconduct is considered an irreparable offence that leads to termination of monastic life, there may be a heightened need to cover up sexual abuse by senior monks.

Another key feature of organisational cultures that fits the total institution ideal type is their use of theories of human transformation and assumptions about human nature (Palmer et al., 2016). Total institutions such as psychiatric hospitals and correctional facilities operate from particular theories about human nature and subscribe to certain assumptions about human behaviour and transformation. Total institutions that prioritise human transformation as their mission openly embrace these theories and assumptions and tend to be committed to their implementation. More broadly, in organisational cultures that do not fit into the total institution ideal type, their cultural views about children and childhood tend to play a part in barriers to detecting and responding to child sexual abuse. Every society holds beliefs, values and assumptions about children and childhood and they generally tend take a paternalistic view towards children, assuming that young people are incapable of self-determination and need protection and guidance from adults (Archard, 2015). Palmer et al. (2016) identified two cultural orientations regarding children and childhood that tend to play a role in child sexual

abuse in organisational settings. First, perpetrators' denial of abuse is more likely to be believed than the disclosure of victims. Second, the organisational norms that subordinates are not to speak negatively about their superiors.

These observations about total institutions and other organisations that do not fit into this ideal type may have implications for the Buddhist monastery whose existence hinges on beliefs about human suffering and transformation that leads to the cessation of suffering. In theory, Buddhism offers both positive and negative views of human nature: while hailing the human mind as a blank slate as pure as morning sunshine, Buddhism also recognises the mind's propensity to be tainted by corrosive experiences. It is possible that child ordination is motivated by these views around the purity of the younger minds and need for their insulation from external stimulus that might taint them. In an unchecked environment, these views may backfire on the safety of children because perpetrators can be motivated to exploit the malleability of childhood to groom and abuse children under their care and coerce them into silence.

According to Palmer et al. (2016), total institutions enforce the erasure of previous identities of their members, generally implemented through a sequence of institutional rituals during induction. For example, prison inmates are given a number by which they are called for the rest of their stay in prison. They are given uniforms and haircuts to make them all look the same. This feature of a total institution has remarkable relevance to the current context. Buddhist monasticism can be viewed as an institution that sets out to erase personal identities. However, the difference between Buddhist monasticism and, for example, a prison is that monasticism is supposed to be voluntary confinement. Other than that, the entire monastic apparatus is geared towards eradicating identity which is diagnosed in Buddhism as the root cause of all human suffering. Consequently, new recruits must start with a complete overhaul of their physical appearance. In practice, this induction is similar to that of prison inmates, albeit without the humiliation. Monks are required to shave their heads, beards and, in some cases, eye brows, wear robes preferably of saffron or burgundy colour, and more importantly are stripped of their birth name and given a religious name by the teacher who acts as their new guardian. These new names are sent to a central registry in the Department of Buddhist affairs which is under the Ministry of Buddhism. Then, novices are issued with a new identity card as proof of this new identity. Palmer et al. (2016) pointed out that total institutions reinforce this erasure with other measures such as punishment and humiliation for re-enacting former identity. Similar methods are employed in monasteries to discourage

novices from continuing relationships with their lay friends, and pursuing interests such as music or dancing that are considered unbecoming for monks. This radical change in appearance and social identity can be problematic for children in monasteries in several ways. First, the practical aspects of this transformation such as shaving and dress rehearsals, as they are all done by other senior monks, provide opportunities for 'incremental boundary violations' (Palmer et al., 2016, p. 42), leading to future abuse as senior monks can undress, touch or shower the novices. Second, this dramatic induction necessitates a re-drawing of the boundary between the novice and his family and friends, possibly creating a previously non-existent distance due to clerical deference that is expected towards the novice's new identity. Finally, this newly imposed boundary and barriers to communicating with parents who are now relegated to outside world, can make detection and reporting of abuse more difficult.

Both total institutions and other organisations that do not fit this ideal type promote secrecy in order to protect their institutional reputation (Palmer et al., 2016). Members in total institutions are by design not privy to the overall flow of information and are not entitled to be a part of the decision-making process. In organisations that do not fit into the total institution ideal type, 'the culture of senior management' (Palmer et al., 2016, p. 63) is in place to ensure that the organisation is insulated from costly lawsuits and bad publicity. Organisations that depend on public largesse for their existence can be particularly cautious about negative publicity as it can impact on their operations. These institutional dynamics may threaten the integrity of a Buddhist monastery as a child-accommodating institution that depends on public support for its survival. Senior monks may choose to supress abuse disclosure and to protect offending monks in favour of preserving the reputation of the institution.

Next, Palmer et al. (2016) analysed the distribution of power in total institutions and in organisation that do not fit into this ideal type. He defined power in the total institutional context as 'the capacity to force others to comply with one's requests, even when they wish to do otherwise. Formal power is power derived from one's position in an organisation's chain of command. Formal power relationships operate through the norm of obedience to authority, which is the felt obligation of subordinates to obey the commands of superiors. This norm has been shown to override other imperatives, such as subordinates' contrary rational assessments and normative proclivities' (p. 46). This power structure is most common in formal organisations such as military and prison system where there are clearly defined reward and punishment processes for obedience and disobedience. In organisations

that do not fit the total institution ideal type, the distribution of power seems less formal, although no less ubiquitous than formal power. The Buddhist monastery does exhibit a formal power structure in which seniority based on ordination takes precedence over seniority in terms of age. For example, a fifty-year-old man who became a monk two years ago must respect (including formal prostrations), sit behind and take advice from a thirty-year-old monk who has been in robes for ten years. This style of power is common in total institutions such as the military. The monastery is also equipped with power tools to summon disciplinary tribunals and deliver rulings, including excommunication of members. In comparison to military organisations, there seems to be a greater degree of autonomy in terms of member's willingness to participate in these proceedings in the monastery, as there are no legal consequences if members do not comply. In fact, monks who have been accused of transgressions by their monastic community have exploited this autonomy by evading or defying internal judicial proceedings, and establishing their own monasteries. By contrast, the strong norms of obedience and conformity to authority in formal institutions can influence the likelihood of detecting and reporting of abuse.

While formal power structures may influence the way a monastery responds to child sexual abuse as an institution, the informal power dynamics of organisations that do not fit into the total institution ideal type can influence informal distribution of power within a monastic community. According to Palmer et al. (2016), 'informal power is rooted in an organisation's distribution of resources, where anything upon which others depend' (p. 68). Buddhist monasteries have accumulated resources that can be allocated for any purpose or individuals that the abbot may deem desirable. In large monastic communities, novice disciples possibly can come under implicit and explicit pressure due to competition to favourably posture themselves towards monastic authority (abbot/senior monks) to ensure access to resources and opportunities to survive. In addition to controlling resources, the person holding informal power may have special status within the organisation (Palmer et al., 2016). Both these features of informal power can influence the detection of and response to child abuse in organisations. For example, victims are less likely to speak out against superiors whose resources may be critical for their material survival; allegations against perpetrators who enjoy special status in organisations are less likely to be believed by others. It is possible that these dynamics are at play in monastic setting as abbots control the resources while enjoying special status due to wealth or popularity, or both.

According to Palmer et al. (2016), informal group dynamics that are common to both total institutions and organisations that do not fit this ideal type can influence perpetration and detection of child abuse. Specifically, the dynamics between superiors and subordinates are characterised by negative stereotypes that view the rival group as a threat. As the group with more power, the superiors may dehumanise subordinates, leading to abuse and disregarding disclosure of abuse as trivial. Furthermore, informal group dynamics may also be exhibited through bullying or abuse by older children of younger ones in organisations. As senior, junior and novice monks live together in monasteries, intergroup tensions and intragroup rivalries are likely to arise. Palmer et al. (2016) found out from the victims of institutional abuse in Australia, that these groups tend to exist within a highly cohesive subculture that demands loyalty and conformity to the ingroup norms. Under these organisational cultural circumstances, even the non-offending members who witness abuse are unlikely to speak out against or report them in order to remain cohesive to the group norms.

Lastly, Palmer et al. (2016) linked the organisation's cultural orientation towards rule following to abuse and silence about it. His analysis focused on organisations that provide services to children and this class of institutions, contrary to their purported mission to safeguarding children, is plagued with issues around poor safeguarding standards. Palmer et al. (2016) pinned this issue to the inconsistent screening of staff due to lack of funding or relevant training which possibly leads to hiring individuals who are predisposed to abusing children. Over time, as the tolerance for internal rule violations increases, poor hiring and gate-keeping practices can become a normal feature of the organisational culture. Even though it is not an organisation that provides services to children and young people, it is not difficult to see how incremental rule violations may have led to low standards of monastic conduct in recent decades. When coupled with the popular and influential status of the Buddhist clergy, the culture of disregard for rules can influence the ways in which a monastery responds to child abuse concerns within it.

2.3 Local child safeguarding landscape

From a legislative point of view, there are several institutions that are responsible for the safety, education, and welfare of children: The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, with the NCAP and the DPCCS under its portfolio hold the key responsibilities in child welfare. The Ministry of Law and Order with the special police division for women and children assists in response services. In addition, the Ministry of Education also plays a role in child

welfare through its own policies and implementing recommendations from the NCPA or the DPCCS. Regarding children in monasteries, the Ministry of Education regulates the training monasteries through its Pirivena branch, and the Department of Buddhist Affairs under the Ministry of Buddha sāsana. However, only the NCPA and the DPCCS have the mandate to create policies concerned with children. In the following section, two recently published policy documents are summarised and some limitations highlighted.

2.3.1 Current national policies

The policy landscape around child protection is beginning to take shape in response to recent developments. In 2019, The NCPA published the National Policy on Child Protection and the DPCCS formulated the National Alternative Care Policy for Children. In the same year the NCAP also put forward a policy and a guideline on day care centres. However, the discourse is significantly influenced, if not overshadowed, by the precedent legal instruments such as the Children and Young Persons Ordinance of 1939 and Section 363 (rape) and 360B (sexual exploitation) of the Penal Code which appear to be the more pragmatic tools of child protection in developing countries (Russel et al., 2020).

Twenty-two years after its establishment, the NCPA finally unveiled the 'National Policy on Child Protection' (NCPA resource centre, 2019) which has seven sections: preamble, national policy framework for child protection, guiding principles and values, policy goals, policy recommendations for child protection in Sri Lanka, implementation of the policy, and supervision and monitoring. The preamble outlines the scope of the document underscoring the participation of both government and non-government stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the policy at multiple levels. Next, the national policy framework is presented as a four-layer onion diagram capturing both universal and unique dimensions of child protection and interventions. Twelve guiding principles and values are then laid out echoing the values and principles of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) related to the rights of the child and universal best practices in child safeguarding. For example, the principles Equality, diversity, and non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; right to life, freedom, wellbeing, and development; and participation of children in decision-making process (NCPA resource centre, 2019) resonate with Articles 2, 3,6 and 12 respectively of the UNCRC (1989). Next, six policy goals are outlined focusing on child protection, provision of services to victims, inclusion of marginalised groups, workforce development, a multi-level approach and family empowerment. Then four policy recommendations are made repeating the same points that were made in the preamble. The document ends with a brief description

of how the NCPA plans to implement and monitor the progress of the policy by instating a high-level steering committee.

The NCPA's *National Child Protection Policy* document (2019) has seven sections. A summary of selected sections is presented here.

The preamble sets out its remit and aspirations and identifies its main purpose as to:

> *[p]rovide a common and integrated procedure to guide government-led multi-sartorial[sic], multi-stakeholder, multi-agency child safeguarding and child protection activities. This policy provides not only coherent definitions, policy goals, objectives and targets, guiding principles and a conceptual framework, but also a framework to monitor and regulate methods, standards, outcomes and impact of child protection mechanism (p. 01)*

It calls on government, local and foreign non-government organisations and communities to collaborate with child serving organisations to implement the policy. It further emphasises this commitment, stating that:

> *All ministries, departments and institutions of the Central Government, all the non-governmental (local and foreign) organisations, private institutions, organisations and individuals or body of persons are obliged to enforce the conceptual framework provided by this policy within the activities related to children and action plans* (p. 2).

It then outlines the National policy framework for child protection whose purpose is to provide the conceptual structure for '*planning, implementing, monitoring, regulating and coordinating activities of the government and all other stakeholders to respond to child safeguarding…*' (p, 3). It proposes four levels of policy consideration: level one underscores the resources necessary for holistic development of children; level two recognises mitigation of socio-economic risk factors affecting vulnerable children and communities; level three targets families and children who are at higher risk of harm due to marginalisation; and level four highlights the provision of swift and effective responses and services to children and families affected by abuse, including those who are in contact with law enforcement.

In the section on Guiding principles and values, twelve statements underpinned by Sri Lankan laws, international treaties and universal best practices are presented. Principle one states that:

> *Every child has the right to life, freedom and protection as a person as well as a fair and equal opportunities for well-being and development. No child shall be subjected to abuse, neglect or exploitation in any form. Also, no child shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment…. A suitable and secure environment for the natural growth of the child and to reach his or her absolute potential will be created by securing a child's right for his/her freedom and well-being* (p. 5).

Principle two promises equal opportunities and outcomes for all children in Sri Lanka by promoting equality, diversity and non-discrimination. It states that:

> *The Government shall address the inequalities of the system and problems of the overall structure that put children at risk. If the existing law does not respond to outdated and harmful approaches and interventions as well as policy needs, the law shall be reformed especially to be suited to the present…* (p. 5)

Principles three and four consider the best interests of the child and participation of children in the process of decision-making:

> *It is mandatory to assess long term or/and short term or/and risk factors in the life of the particular child and his or her well-being as well as developmental needs. Further, the threats to the child shall be assessed within the context and circumstance specific to him or her…* (p. 5)

> '*Participation of children for child protection is a crucial fact. All children have the right to express his or her opinion and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The developmental age and experience and the evolving capacity of the child shall be taken into account in child participation… Accordingly, listening to the child, respecting his/her opinion, securing confidentiality in every necessary occasion and considering all the important opinions and view of the child in the process of decision-making shall be followed* (p. 6)

Principles five and eight focus on the family as the primary source of care and protection and emphasise a life cycle approach in assessing the impact of child abuse. The focus is on mitigating risks and promotion of functioning families while institutional placement of children is considered the last resort.

Principle seven underscores the multi-agency approach to child protection. It states that:

> *The government is committed to a systemic approach for protecting children, by enforcing all the relevant governmental institutions to achieve their role in prevention of all forms of violence and harm, promotion of safety and resilience against violence and provision of care and support services where necessary…* (p. 8).

Principle nine provides guidelines for reporting news concerning children, including cases of child abuse and use of children in advertisements. Caution and a cost-benefit analysis are advised before publishing materials relating to children and cases of child abuse.

Principles ten, eleven and twelve in aggregate emphasise evidence-based practices, professionalism and accessibility to services. Policies and interventions are expected to be informed by local and global research evidence while being regularly evaluated for their effectiveness. In terms of professional accountability, they propose that:

> *...government institutions relevant to child protection shall ensure their accountability to the children, families, communities and institutions with whom they are mandated to work by establishing internal monitoring and regulatory mechanisms... Further, the government has recognised the need to professionalise all institutional staff working for child protection, including personnel currently in service and those recruited in the future.* (p. 9)

The document then presents six policy goals which overlap with the principles outlined above and translate them into practically achievable objectives. Some of the highlights of these goals include:

- Formulating, evaluating and implementing laws and policies relevant to child protection;
- Engaging the community to change social attitudes and introduce community-based child protection programs at village, district and national levels;
- Enhancing professional standards of the childcare workforce through background checks, training and evaluation to ensure quality provision of services;
- Raising awareness of the rights of children, age-appropriate sex education and improving the quality of parenting and the environment in which children grow up; and

Finally, recommending that a steering committee is established to implement the policies stipulated in the document. With many important key words from the contemporary child

safeguarding discourse included in it, the policy document appears more like a concept paper than a policy framework. The NCAP seems to be confused about principles, policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines while also confusing the target audience about what to do with this document. It has attempted to achieve many tasks and consequently has become an incoherent policy document. Institutions that work with children and youth would have benefited more from this policy document if clearer distinctions were made between policies, procedures, and guidelines as they apply to organisations.

While advocating 'evidence-based policies' (NCPA, 2019, p. 9), the NCPA has produced the policy document 'in accordance with the relevant public opinions' (NCPA, 2019, p. 1). Unless this is an error in the usage of English language, formulating a national level policy document based purely on public opinion is worrying. Moreover, as the NCPA has not published any research data that may have contributed to the formulation of this policy document, perhaps, it was a result of a weak evidence base. Furthermore, as the chairmanship of the NCPA is generally a politically appointed position, the policy direction and priorities may depend on the personal profile of the appointee and his or her affiliation with the appointing minister. Based on the NCAP's prolific publication output in 2019, there might have been bureaucratic pressure to finalise documents, leading to the quality and consistency being overlooked.

Another important document published in 2019 was *the National Alternative Care Policy for Children in Sri Lanka* by the DPCCS (2019). It contains seven sections including principles and values underlying the policy, vision and goals, situation of children requiring alternative care, alternative care options, strategies and policy interventions, and institutional framework, monitoring and review system.

In the introductory section, the document recognises historical and current trends in child care and acknowledges the challenges that changing socioeconomic forces pose to the traditional child care ecosystem. It also briefly explains the process underpinning the formulation of the policy, including research and expert consultations. In section two, the document provides 'underlying principles and values' (p. 4) that are broadly underpinned by the UNCRC, and the necessity and suitability principles. With these values, it seeks to minimise the need for alternative care and to make institutional care the last necessary best option. Section three, perhaps belatedly, outlines the vision and the goals of the document (p. 6), echoing the principles of the UNCRC. Then, section four on the 'situation of children requiring

alternative care' (p. 7) specifies risks and situations, ranging from being an orphan child to a refugee that would require alternative care or institutionalisation. Section five (p. 11) provides a list of alternative care options, including kinship care which is an informal care option common in Sri Lankan culture, and foreign adoptions.

Section six of the document then elaborates on the 'strategies and policy interventions' (p. 13) focusing on prevention, gatekeeping, children in the alternative care system, children in contact with the law, reunification and reintegration, and legal reforms. This section provides a mix of specific and general guidelines on the above aspects of alternative care. For example, it proposes as a preventive measure setting up 'a risk-mapping system to identify vulnerable children who are at risk of separation from their families' (p. 13) which appears to be a task that can be accomplished by local child protection or probationary professionals. However, measures such as strengthening 'the school education system to ensure resources, staff, and education from pre-school to the 13th grade and to provide necessary support services to retain children in schools' (p, 13), although logical, are beyond the scope of the DPCCS. The next subsection on gatekeeping (p. 13) touches on several aspects of transitioning to alternative care. However, although the DPCCS is the main statuary body on the subject, it only provides general guidelines about what should be done to ensure the smooth transition to alternative care without outlining how and who should do it. Furthermore, no mention has been made of background checks or screening of adults responsible for children that would be placed in alternative care, although pre-placement screening of children is highlighted (p. 13). While prevention and gatekeeping are significant dimensions of alternative care, the section veers off to a description of general good practice without providing focused guidelines on prevention and intervention. The DPCCS as the main governing body of the alternative care domain does not seem to fully embrace the role of dictating policies. Instead, it seems to outline a set of general guidelines that may be subject to the discretion of individual alternative care providers. The subsection on 'children in alternative care' (p. 14) contains comparatively more specific procedures to follow before and after placing a child in alternative care. Then the next subsection on 'children in contact or conflict with the law' (p. 16) presents a mix of procedures, guidelines, and recommendations. This may create ambiguity in identifying the intended audience of the provisions. For example, this section underscores the adoption of several legal provisions including 'the children's Judicial Protection and Juvenile Bill' which appears to be a policy recommendation to be considered by the law-makers. The same section also includes simple

guidelines such as providing child-friendly transport facilities when transporting juvenile offenders (p. 17). The next subsection on 'reunification and reintegration' (p. 17) provides several general guidelines on systematically planning the reunification process from the beginning of the placement until the care leaver is satisfactorily reintegrated. The seventh and the final section (p. 21) proposes an institutional framework to monitor and review the alternative care system. Like the National Policy on Child Protection described earlier, this document also recommends creating a high-level steering committee to oversee the implementation, monitoring and review of the alternative care system.

2.3.2 Strengths and limitations of current policies

The formulation of the National Policy on Child Protection and the National Alternative Care Policy is a positive step towards better child protection in Sri Lanka. The NCPA and the DPCCS have finally work together to formulate and launch the policy documents. These documents draw on the ethos promulgated in the UNCRC, possibly indicating the country's policy direction towards international standards. References were also made in both documents to cultural opportunities and challenges for child development and welfare in Sri Lanka, which indicate cognisance of important contextual dynamics in introducing these policies. In particular, The NCPA's document has a wide scope addressing both response to and prevention of child abuse and underscores multi-agency collaboration as a key factor in successful implementation of the provisions stipulated in the document.

However, as briefly noted earlier, both documents attempt to achieve the tasks of several documents in one; although they were formulated as policy documents, both contain a mixture of principles, policy statements, procedures, and guidelines. This overextended nature of the content possibly creates confusion about the applicability of the document. Therefore, it is difficult to refer to these two documents as 'National Policies' although they were meant to be such. The technical issues notwithstanding, these two documents provide an assortment of principles, policies, procedures, and guidelines.

Both documents, despite being replete with terms and concepts around children's wellbeing, make no mention of the term 'safeguarding' or references to the distinction between approaches to child protection and child safeguarding. As these distinctions have not been clearly acknowledged in the documents, it is difficult to ascertain if the NCAP and the DPCCS are aware of the difference. Furthermore, it is clear that their current emphasis is

more on child protection than safeguarding. This was particularly apparent in the NCPA's document that has excluded safeguarding, and defined child protection and child abuse only in terms of various violations of the penal code (p. 19).

Also missing from both documents were children in the monasteries. In particular, the alternative care policy which may be presumed to cover this population of children did not make any reference to the practice of sending children to monasteries or child ordination. Monasteries and training monasteries (Pirivena) are not completely ecclesiastical entities divorced from civil administration. As noted earlier, monasteries and monks are registered with the Department of Buddhist Affairs while the Pirivena are governed and funded by the Ministry of Education in accordance with the Privena Education Act of 1979 (Lawnet, n.d.). However, these registering state bodies only provide administrative support such as conducting examinations and paying staff salaries, and do not cover child protection or safeguarding aspects such as inspecting novices' living conditions in monasteries. Therefore, while the NCAP reiterates that its protection policy covers all children in Sri Lanka, children in monasteries remain in a policy grey area.

2.3.3 Challenges to mapping the child protection landscape

Limited availability of data and empirical research is a major challenge in mapping the safeguarding landscape in Sri Lanka. Although this gap has been recognised by both local and international policy-makers (The DPCCS, 2019; UNICEF, n.d.), the path towards filling this data gap seems slow. Meanwhile, the limited available data have been produced primarily by or in partnership with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) such as the UN, the UNICEF, and the WHO, and tend to provide only the aggregated data on the general state of the child population. Since its establishment in 1998, the NCPA only has published two research studies – one on disciplinary methods and another on the impact of Covid-19 on children – and both were financially and technically assisted by the INGOs. The data gap seems to be even wider on child populations outside of the family or school context. Moreover, data on incidents of child abuse tend to be incoherent as overall numbers contradict the numbers reported by different agencies (Pahalawatte, 2021). Without relevant data and research, the discourse around child safeguarding seems to lack maturity in terms of innovating culturally sensitive and inclusive safeguarding policies and practices.

As summarised earlier, the existing policies and frameworks seem to undergird globally acclaimed principles such as fundamental rights, ecological systems, and a multi-agency

approach while failing to match the social and cultural realities on the ground. Developing countries are reported to rely heavily on school-based awareness programs as preventative intervention, failing to address risk factors that are beyond the control of potential child victims such as screening protocols to identify previous offenders (Russel et al, 2020). Sri Lanka too seems to lack the research and development ecosystem that contributes to knowledge and innovation in child safeguarding, possibly due to a deficit in public funds and political will. Possibly related to the latter, there were no specialised higher education programs including social work and counselling in any Sri Lankan national universities as of 2022 (the only proximal degree programs were psychology and sociology) and the knowledge and skill gap remains unfilled. In addition to scarcity of the financial resources and local expertise to generate policies and interventions, Sri Lanka may also be under pressure to hastily ratify international conventions and prematurely pass legislation to meet the requirements of international trade concessions rather than to thoughtfully consider the policies. For example, ratification of international treaties is mandatory to retain the European Union's Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) concession (European Commission, 2020).

2.3.4 Challenges to implementation of policies

Despite government efforts to introduce local policies guided by international conventions such as the UNCRC, full implementation seems to be the challenge 'due to: strong focus on punishment, not prevention; lack of knowledge among low enforcement officers of some laws; … and slow and inaccessible justice processes (UNICEF, n.d., p. 2). Perhaps as a corollary to this, support and response services are 'inconsistent, fragmented, and subject to the commitment and personality of individual service providers, [and]… fail to meet children's needs, re-victimising them due to poor coordination, disjointed case management and the limited capacity of key providers' (UNICEF, n.d., p. 3).

There are incongruities between international and local legal provisions. Despite Sri Lanka's pledge to end corporal punishment, its penal code on the subject of cruelty to children has major flaws. For example, although Section 308A bans physical punishment, according to the Article 341 of the Penal Code, 'if a schoolmaster, in the reasonable exercise of his discretion as master, flogs one of his scholars, he does not use criminal force, because, although he intends to cause fear and annoyance to the scholar, does not use force illegally' (Penal Code – Sri Lanka, 1995;1998. p. 382). Poorly designed legislation and a prevailing attitude that dismisses the negative impact of physical punishment are implicated as obstacles to

advancing children's rights in Sri Lanka (Karunaratne, 2018). These loopholes seem to reinforce the already widespread use of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure. Recent nation-wide research conducted among school children confirmed that the vast majority of school teachers exercise physical punishment as a disciplinary method and male students from lower socioeconomic areas are on the higher receiving end (De Silva et al., 2017).

A deficit in progressive attitudes has been linked to challenges in advancing children's rights through laws and policies (Karunaratne, 2018). Some have implicated the judicial fraternity as the 'second child abuser in Sri Lanka' for its minimising and dismissive attitude towards issues such as physical punishment of children (Andrews, 2019a, no page number). The same mindset can be observed among top law makers perhaps indicating a society-wide tolerance towards the use of physical punishment as a necessary means of disciplining children. In a recent parliamentary debate, a deputy minister asserted that the corporal punishment should be legalised to allow schoolteachers to exercise physical punishment as a disciplinary measure (Economynext, 2018). During a nationally televised ceremony, a former president justified teachers' beating of their students to discipline them, while ridiculing the parents who took legal actions against teachers for violating fundamental rights (Andrews, 2019b).

More specific to the children living in monasteries, the current regulations governing professionals working with children seem to demonstrate a double-standard, if not a major policy blind spot. According to the NCPA's policy document, professionals working with children must undergo background checks and psychological screening and must demonstrate soft-skills before they come into contact with children (NCPA, 2019, p. 9). Such professionals may include day-care centre employees or children's home staff. However, senior Buddhist monks who ordain children and exercise total control over every aspect of those children on a full-time basis within a residential setting are not subject to such requirements. This cultural immunity presumed by and perhaps tacitly given to religious institutions is a challenge unique to orthodox religious communities (Zalcberg, 2017). If this trend continues, a significant section of the child population in Sri Lanka will be excluded from the country's universal regulatory protection.

Palmer and Feldman (2018) asserted that the problem with existing guidelines on making organisations 'child safe' – 'incentive systems, administrative systems and cultural arrangements', three widely recommended approaches – is that they are insufficient.

Incentive systems are too expensive for generally underfunded childcare organisations; administrative systems are too rigid to respond to fluid situations common in childcare settings; and calls for change of organisational culture can be too vague to be implemented at practical levels.

They further recognised that existing policy prescriptions have not addressed the power and structural imbalances inherent in childcare and youth-serving organisations. Having a unitary chain of command to which subordinates are required to report abuse has been recognised as a barrier, and having multiple leads has been recommended as a solution.

Incentive, administrative and culture prescription, albeit with limitations, can be good start which means that the policy document produced by the NCPA and DCCS is a positive step. As the Royal Commission recognised regarding child abuse in religious settings, personal factors, clerical status, notions unique to monastic cultures such as celibacy and monastic laws, all play a part in child abuse. This mean that the three elements approach must be modified to address unique monastic conditions that facilitate child abuse.

Finally, it was not clear if the policy makers were aware of the social, political and fiscal constrains in implementing these policies. As Palmer and Feldman (2018) pointed out, child protection systems require a sustained supply of human and financial resources without which policies are meaningless.

2.4 Exclusion of children in monasteries from the policy discourse

Despite recent progress on policy initiatives, there appears to be a huge policy blind spot concerning the children in monasteries in Sri Lanka. According to a UNICEF-facilitated report on the current status of childcare institutions and institutionalised children in Sri Lanka in 2010, there were 488 non-government childcare institutions hosting 21,100 children (DPCCS, 2013). This was more than a 100% increase in the number of institutions within a period of 15 years, according to the same report. However, the number of institutions and children living in them has recently decreased to 379 institutions with 10,632 children (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021), although it is not clear what contributed to this decline. According to the Department of Census and Statistics (2021), 70% of children in institutions are voluntary placements due to domestic poverty. Although there is no evidence of a direct corelation, when the main driving factor for institutionalisation (poverty) and a markedly higher number of children (sixty thousand) in monasteries are juxtaposed, there is a possibility that some children may have been diverted to monasteries. While it is difficult to

analyse these trends due to the absence of relevant data on the local context, international research has established a strong link between poverty and child abuse, which included resulting neglect or institutionalisation (Bywaters et al., 2022).

Although the training monasteries (Pirivena) meet the criteria for child care institutions stipulated in the situation report (DPCCS, 2013, p. 18), none of the official documents reviewed here made any reference to numbers, trends, or potential concerns regarding children in monasteries. While there is a database on monasteries and a registry of monks maintained by the Department of Buddhist Affairs, these statistics are inaccessible. The omission of safeguarding from the policy documents is of concern as that might indicate any number of systemic issues, including ignorance of the need for safeguarding and lack of knowledge, priority, or resources. The inclusion of children in monasteries in safeguarding discourse is timelier than ever because it is possible to expect an upward trend in child ordination due to the economic pressure created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent collapse of the Sri Lankan economy (NCPA, 2020). Furthermore, in societies in which the child welfare system can be the only and the best avenue for accessing resources, lack of safeguarding is 'reckless' (Font and Maguire-Jack, 2020, p. 29).

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, some contextual details were provided covering the Buddhist monasticism and child safeguarding landscape in Sri Lanka. It was established that the BMS has evolved and continues to be an influential institution through both constitutional privileges and public deference. The BMS relies on child ordination for its supply of manpower, a practice that appears to be fraught with multiple safeguarding risks to children. Parents and society in general seem to comply with this practice by willingly sending children to monasteries despite high attrition rates and media reports of child abuse. This chapter also situated the BMS within the class of institutionalised organisations that are likely to perpetrate abuse and make detection and response to them difficult. Then, the local child safeguarding policy landscape was explored by reviewing two recently published policy documents. The next chapter reviews global literature on silence around child abuse at interpersonal, institutional, professional and academic levels through an ecological systems lens.

Chapter 3 Review of Literature

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to critically engage with the available theoretical and empirical literature on institutional child abuse. After outlining the search strategy that was used to screen the literature, this chapter is thematically organised as follows: first, the extent to which the current research questions have been directly or indirectly answered in other settings is interrogated. Second, the relevant literature is evaluated using an ecological systems lens. Third, parallels are drawn between institutionalised organisations and the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka (BMS) with the aim. of locating the latter within the broader institutional cultures that make detection of and response to child abuse difficult.

3.2 Literature search strategy

The literature search for this research was a continuous process that lasted for the three years of the project in order to remain updated on empirical research, inquiry reports and policy documents that were published. This recurring search process used Google, Google Scholar and the University library search engines to run searches on key terms including child abuse, institutional child abuse, child abuse in religious institutions/organisations/settings, disclosure, silence, and male survivors of childhood abuse. A basic Google search was useful in identifying latest snippets of academic and non-academic publications. The browsing features of Google Scholar was valuable in running a quick and refined search for updated materials. The library search provided full access to academic publications identified in the Google searches.

Building on these initial previews of publications, more focused search was conducted on the following data bases:

Social Care Online (the search was not restricted by date or type of publication due to relatively smaller number of results and due to the relevance of all publications to the social work discipline).

ScienceDirect (Restrictions on publication dates were applied as searches yielded several thousand results, and therefore only research articles published between 2010-2022 were searched).

The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL) (Like ScienceDirect, this database also churned out several thousand results, and the search was restricted to research articles published between 2010 and 2022. This data base is known generally as a good source of primary research for qualitative evidence, although its primary focus is on nursing research (Wright et al., 2015)).

Childlink database was another notable source that provides information (legislation, research and statistics) on children, young people and families in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Canterbury Christ Church University, n.d).

In addition to the above data bases, all the issues of *The Child Abuse Review* from 2019 to 2022 were screened for relevant literature. Searches were also conducted on other data bases such as The Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Social Policy and Practice, and PubMed/NCBI to cross-check. Appendix-2 contains a table of phrases with Boolean operators and search results.

A range of grey literature (Byrne, 2017) was also regularly searched through Google search, Canterbury Christ Church University Research Space Repository, Sri Lanka-based news site Info Lanka News Room and YouTube.

3.2.1 Preliminary observations

While the general child abuse literature is vast and dates back many decades, primary research on institutional child abuse is limited. Much of the recent publications on institutional child abuse tends to emerge from the public inquiries in the English-speaking world (the UK, Ireland, and Australia), focusing mainly on historical child abuse. Of these publications, many articles were multidisciplinary analyses of public inquiry findings. Moreover, despite the growing size of the survivor population, primary research studies on institutional child abuse focusing on male survivors are scant. This shortage appeared to be even greater outside the English-speaking world.

However, although not exclusively focused on male survivors, there are many studies on the impact of child abuse emerging from the fields of psychology and childhood studies. For example, abuse during childhood is linked to manifold psychological and behavioural problems (Lueger-Schuster et al., 2014) that include: depression (Poole et al., 2017), affective disorders, anxiety disorders and substance abuse (Carr et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2019). The externalising behaviour problems (Lewis et al., 2015) include: reduced self-efficacy, self-esteem and emotional regulation (Weindl et al., 2017); impaired responses to stress related

abusive experience as well as stress in general (Nurius et al., 2015); and a debilitating impact on survivors' educational development, opportunities and achievements (Hardcastle et al., 2018; Bode and Goldman, 2012). Against this backdrop, the few studies that were conducted with the direct participation of adult male survivors of childhood abuse were small-scale qualitative inquiries with a focus on sexual abuse.

Academic research on child abuse in the context of the BMS and beyond is almost non-existent. Only two studies that linked Buddhist monks to child abuse (De Zoysa, 2002; Eisenbruch, 2019) were found, and even these made only cursory references to Buddhist monks or monasteries.

3.3. Interpersonal silence

This section starts with a working definition of disclosure and goes on to discuss the disclosure experience of male survivors of childhood abuse. It concludes with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the reviewed studies.

3.3.1 Definition of disclosure

Silence on the part of survivors is inextricably connected to disclosure, because some level of disclosure can be viewed as breaking the silence. Disclosure refers to telling by a victim to someone about his or her abuse experience, soon after the event or years later, accidentally, deliberately, or when prompted (Alaggia et al., 2017). There are several observations linked to the process of disclosure. It has been reported that a small number of male victims of childhood abuse disclosed the abuse immediately after the event or during childhood (Brennan and McElvaney, 2020). However, most victims only disclosed more than 20 years later. When they finally did disclose, they did so to someone intimate and trustworthy to them, such as spouse or a therapist (Easton, 2013). The disclosure was not a one-off event but a gradual and repetitive process, having many mental milestones with varying levels of emotional impact (Alaggia et al., 2017), and was generally triggered by a significant life event such as the loss of a significant person in life or birth of a child (Lumbasi and Barron, 2016). Collectively, this definition underpins the psycho-social dimensions of the disclosure process. However, others have viewed this process as non-disclosure or under-reporting (Boakye, 2009).

3.3.2 Male survivors' disclosure experience

Over the past two decades there has been a steady stream of studies on the male survivor population (Sorsoli et al., 2008; Easton, 2013; Lumbasi and Barron, 2016; Gagnier and

Collin-Vézina 2016; Zalcberg 2017; Lev-Wiesel and First 2018; Sivagurunathan et al., 2019; McGuire and London, 2020).

Sorsoli et al. (2008) conducted a study focusing on challenges to disclosure among male survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In this qualitative research taking a Social Constructionist approach, they interviewed 16 men who were sexually abused during childhood. Fourteen of them also reported being physically abused. The results indicated that overall, the male experience of disclosure was negative with many life-long challenges at personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural levels. At the personal level, as children they were cognitively unequipped to comprehend, describe or report what was happening to them. This was particularly true in relation to sexual abuse. One of their participants said: 'It got compartmentalised. I had no memories until I was 40' (pp. 339-340). Even when they attempted to communicate with the limited capacity they had as children, it was met with resistance, denial or dismissal by the adults. This was true for both physical and sexual abuse. In some cases, adults who received the disclosure unfortunately reacted with violence and rejection. Partly as a result of these negative reactions and partly due to the lack of ability to fully comprehend the abuse experience, victims felt confused, ashamed, and guilty, and remained silent.

At interpersonal levels, partly conditioned by initial negative reactions by adults, the victims seemed to have retreated to silence for various reasons including particular beliefs about relationships, fear of rejection by others, or fear of conflicts in relationships with loved ones. For example, one participant said: 'I was convinced that everybody knew what was going on, because it was so apparent, and that you know, this was just normal' (p. 340), suggesting that he was confused about what was going on yet believed that abuse must be normal because everyone seemed to know about it. Referring to the conflicts in relationships that disclosure might trigger, another participant decided not to disclose the childhood abuses to his grandmother because 'she'd start to feel guilty' (p. 340). He further added: 'Things were better between us and I just said at this point in her life she's not going to be around for too much longer. It's not necessary that she go through this at this point' (p. 340).

At the sociocultural level, these personal and interpersonal hurdles appeared to be further exacerbated by the sociocultural factors such as unhelpful male gender norms. For example, one respondent, after being ridiculed for attempting to disclose the abuse, decided: 'I am not telling nobody that it happened to me because that makes me weak. That makes me less than

a man' (p. 341). Referring to sociocultural difficulties in disclosure, another participant said that talking openly about abuse was 'like doing something you're not supposed to be doing… Usually what you get from society is that you don't talk about it, under any circumstances…' (p. 341).

In another study, Easton (2013) conducted a cross-sectional survey among a group of 487 adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and examined how long it took for them to make a meaningful disclosure. The average time it took for them to disclose for the first time was 21 years. The average time it took for them to have a meaningful, in-depth discussion was 28 years. A majority of them (27%) had the in-depth discussion with their spouse or romantic partner. With regard to having a meaningful, in-depth and helpful discussion, almost half (47%) reported having it with a mental health professional.

Consistent with the findings of Sorsoli et al. (2008) and Easton (2013), Gagnier and Collin-Vézina (2016) found that men contemplated disclosure for years and held back to protect others from getting hurt by it. When they finally revealed, they chose an intimate-partner or therapist to do so. McPhilips (2018) observed that men took longer than women to disclose, and it took even longer if the abuse occurred in religious institutions. Specific to religious settings, Ponton and Goldstein (2004) reported that men who were abused as children by priests took on average 18 years to disclose while some men maintained silence for up to 46 years. The recently published interim report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in England and Wales also concurred that there were more barriers to reporting and disclosing abuses committed within religious institutions (IICSA Research Team, 2017).

3.3.3 Role of culture in (non)disclosure

The above studies on male disclosure experience did not specifically explore the role of culture as an important dimension. Perhaps, there was no compelling need to pursue this angle, as those studies were exploring the disclosure as an event that was unfolding or as a milestone that had already been achieved. However, those who explored the phenomenon of disclosure in developing countries, although not solely focused on the male population, have examined the absence of disclosure focusing more on cultural factors that may contribute to non-disclosure or under-reporting than on interpersonal dimensions.

While shame can be a barrier to disclosure in developed and developing societies (individualistic versus traditional societies), it has been problematised as a uniquely collective

problem negatively impacting on the disclosure of sexual abuse in traditional societies. Boakye (2009) introduced the concept 'collective shame problem' to encapsulate the broader cultural ramifications of shame in non-disclosure and under-reporting. He defined collective shame problem as:

> *the tendency for individuals belonging to a particular group (family, clan, or lineage) to feel or express a strong sense of embarrassment following an undesirable attitude or behaviour by a member of the group, particularly those that are considered potentially damaging or threatening to the reputation of the group (p. 961)*

This definition characterises shame as an outwardly directed preoccupation concerning the risk of losing pride and dignity of a collective group or community rather than of an individual.

A qualitative case study with 40 Haredi men in Israel (Zalcberg, 2017) provided evidence for this cultural dynamic in traditional societies. While in-depth interview data showed many of the similar trends observed in the previously discussed studies such as lack of awareness of abuse as abuse or delayed disclosure, this data showed unique cultural dimensions that mediated disclosure in orthodox religious societies. The participants in this study who had understood that abuse as abuse did not disclose the experience mainly due reasons that had collective cultural bearing. For example, they were afraid that they would be stigmatised as being gay, would bring shame to their family, and it would be troublesome for others deal with their disclosure. Zalcberg argued that the orthodox religious values such as respect and obedience towards elders in Haredi community inhibited disclosure and fostered a 'culture of silence' (p. 601).

Another related cultural dimension that is overlooked in this research in developed settings is the victim-perpetrator relationship which is argued to be a significant factor in non-disclosure and under-reporting in traditional cultures. Boakye (2009), advancing the general feminist argument of female gender as the target of patriarchal oppression, asserted that the element of vulnerability, rather than the sex *per se*, is at the core of abuse against women and children, with young girls at the highest risk level. He further argued that this risk emanated more strongly from patriarchal communities in which the tolerance for violence against the weak (women and children) is high. These cultural dimensions may have implications for understanding monastic child abuse due to the honour attached to monkhood, and the

hierarchical teacher-disciple relationship which is characterised by obedience and submission.

One important caveat must be mentioned regarding cultural dimensions of disclosure. Under oppressive cultural circumstances, disclosure may not always lead to cessation of abuse or persecution of perpetrators. In fact, it can even lead to further abuse and negative consequences for the victims and their families. The collective shame problem and the victim perpetrator relationship dimension both seem to play a part in rendering disclosure counterproductive for the victim. Moreover, a triadic relationship between victim-perpetrator-community can be identified in developing societies. A report by the Human Rights Watch on the state of institutionalised children in India, *Breaking the silence: Child sexual abuse in India* (Human Rights Watch, 2013), reported extreme violence endured by children who in good faith reported abuses to the authorities. Instead of believing and protecting the victimised children, communities ostracised them along with their families. The report also identified incidents in which law enforcement agents dismissed or, sometimes through violent means, suppressed disclosure to protect perpetrators. In addition, there is also a gender dimension to the silence. as girls are afraid to report for the fear of jeopardising chances of finding a husband in the future while boys fear being stigmatised as gay. In view of these negative consequences, disclosure without an efficient response system can be more counterproductive than non-disclosure.

3.3.4 Implications for the current research

The findings of these three studies carry important messages for the current study. First, the availability of mental health services seemed to have made the difference between remaining silent and disclosing. Mental health professionals and survivor support groups both directly and indirectly created an awareness of abuse and, perhaps as a result of that, the platforms to speak about it safely. While this highlights the positive role of mental health services in detecting and facilitating the disclosure of past abuse, these findings provide a contrasting insight into the plight of silent survivors in developing countries where personal and social awareness of abuse and professional mental health services are limited or absent. Availability of easily accessible mental health services appears to be a structural advantage for the survivors in more developed settings.

Second, while these studies mainly focused on individuals who had experienced abuse in intrafamilial settings, the disclosure experience in institutional settings which may

structurally be different from extrafamilial settings remain unknown. The existing literature provides a contrasting background to explore the disclosure experience (or lack thereof) of both current and former monks who spent a significant part of their childhood in monasteries, under an unpredictable and confusing set of circumstances. Research findings from the social and medical care field have provided insights into the tilted power relationships between the confused, fragile, and dependent patients and their seemingly powerful and manipulative doctors/therapists (Melville-Wiseman, 2016b). These insights can be usefully extrapolated to examine similar dynamics in the strictly hierarchical monastic culture. As the monastic relationship structure dictates that the disciples live as subordinates to a senior authority figure, the under-aged victims who are under the control of a powerful abbot can potentially be subjected to such silence-inducing dynamics. In the light of these observations, it was important for this research to explore the extent to which the personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural barriers were responsible for the silence prevalent among the survivors of monastic child abuse. Given their socially insulated upbringing in monasteries, were they even aware of abuse as abuse? Who and what were their silencers at an interpersonal level? To what extent did the reverence and deportment associated with monkhood play a part in sustaining their silence?

While the motivation to protect other potential victims has been associated with survivors' decision to disclose past abuse (Melville-Wiseman, 2016b; O'Gorman, 2010), other studies have reported that some may choose not to disclose simply to shield others from potential hurt that may result from their disclosure (Gagnier and Collin-Vézina, 2016). Either way, an altruistic motive tends to play a part in disclosure decision-making. When applied to the current population, these findings raise more concerns about the potential survivors who tend to live in close-knit communities in which the monastery is a key element of people's daily life. It was important for this research to explore how silence about abuse is kept or broken in view of collective religious life which would understandably be altered by the disclosure of abuse in monasteries.

The current literature on disclosure tends to narrowly focus on sexual abuse. This trend seems to suggest that sexual abuse is the only discrete form of abuse that requires disclosure and other forms of abuse such as physical abuse or neglect (and how children survived the negative consequences of them) are public enough to be detected by others and thereby leading to preventive measures. However, this may not be the case with children in monasteries because they live in an insulated community with rigidly imposed boundaries

between the clergy and lay community. According to McPhillips (2018), those cases that do get disclosed during childhood are revealed to one of the parents or through parental observation of child's atypical behaviour or physical signs. As children in monasteries are rarely seen by their parents, this research was concerned about the silence that the secluded living conditions may create for the other forms of abuse to continue in monasteries.

Furthermore, it is clear based on available evidence that the successful disclosure process unfolds within an intimate, supportive, sometimes therapeutic, and relational context which is generally available to adults who are in or have access to such a setting. This begs the question of what might be the fate of this particular group of survivors as they do not seem to have the access to such avenues.

3.3.4 Challenges to child participation in research and policy

The general literature on disclosure of child abuse tends to be dominated by studies focusing on adult survivors' accounts. Although this research looked at child abuse from the adults' vantage point, ultimately it is about child safeguarding and protection. Listening to children's views about their safety is therefore crucial in the institutional context in which by design adults have more power and control over children (Moore, 2017). Although inclusion of children in the discussion around child protection has been a challenge due to various attitudinal and technical reasons (Falch-Eriksen et al., 2021), consideration of children's voices in the child protection process has been recognised as an important step towards realising the full potential of the UNCRC (Archard and Skivenes, 2009). Inclusion of children's perspectives is linked to understanding the disclosure process involving contemporaneous incidents of child abuse (Cossar et al., 2019) and in better managing the power imbalance inherent in the adult-child relationship (Everley, 2022; Race and Frost, 2022). More broadly connected to the international child's rights discourse, the challenges to children's participation have been discussed in the context of the Article 12 of the UNCRC that stipulates a child's right to express their views, to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Despite the stated commitment by almost every state in the world to implement the UNCRC, child participation in decision-making processes remains a rhetorical pledge rather than a practical process due to their young age and lack of real opportunity to participate (Collins, 2017).

Although mainly focused on family context, children's experiences of social work services can provide general insights into their challenges in institutions as service users. Recognising

the insufficiency of relying solely on adult survivors' retrospective voices on the disclosure process, Cossar et al. (2019) conducted interviews with a group of thirty young people aged between 13 and 17 to gain their perspectives on identifying abuse and seeking help which are linked to disclosure. Based on interviews, the researchers developed a three-layered framework explicating pathways to 'recognition, telling and [seeking] help' (Cossar et al., 2019, p. 6). Each level indicated a varying degree of clarity and purposefulness. The researchers demonstrated how the framework can be applied to trace pathways that lead to different outcomes. For example, the experience of one participant in identifying, disclosing, and seeking help indicated a clear recognition of abuse as wrong, purposefully telling someone which led to receiving help that led to the cessation of abuse, while another's experience saw clear recognition and telling but did not materialise in successful help seeking as the disclosure was met with dismissal. Overall, partial or clear identification of abuse was crucial in activating the pathways. As this framework has been developed with the broader aim of recognising multiple abuse over multiple occasions, it can usefully be applied to interviewing children in institutions who are generally at risk of exposure to 'polyvictimisation' (Cossar et al., 2019, p. 09). However, the successful application of this framework is predicated on several personal and ecological factors including the child's capacity to understand abuse as abuse, having trustworthy peers or adults to tell, and access to dependable sources of help, all of which seem to be wanting in the lives of children in institutions prone to child abuse (Daly, 2014).

Studies of children's service user experience in the developing countries are rare. The few studies conducted in those settings have indicated the need for more structural change than the empowerment of the individual child as a person which is widely espoused in research in Western settings. For example, a study informed by the views of children living in an unsafe South African town underscored the coordinated approach to safeguarding involving community members, the police, families, childcare professionals, and children (Fouché et al., 2019). Children who took part in this study said that they were worried about their day-to-day safety and pleaded for adults to show genuine interest in their wellbeing. In addition, in developing countries, children's powerlessness in seeking help was exacerbated by other social, cultural, and economic limitations such indifference towards the impact of abuse, stigmatisation, poverty, and fear of the consequences of reporting (Dako-Gyeke, 2019). These challenges call for an understanding of the systemic deficiencies in child protection.

While research on the service user experience of institutionalised children is scant, some studies have been conducted in Australia in conjunction with the Royal Commission proceedings. Moore (2017) interviewed 121 young people to learn how they viewed their safety in institutional settings. The results identified several institutional aspects about which the children felt unsafe and areas that they thought could be improved. These findings indicated that children felt unsafe in relation to various aspects such as being physically smaller, lack of knowledge and life experience, and lack of control over resources and life (Moore, 2017). Moore and McArthur (2017) further explored through focus group interviews how children conceptualised safety in an institutional context. Their findings revealed that children defined safety in relation to the quality of their relationship to the adults around them, and predictability and orderliness of their environment (Moore and McArthur, 2017). Because only about 15% of the participants in this study were residents of an institution and most were provisional members of an institution such as a student of secondary school or a member of a sports club, these views may only provide a partial understanding of the challenges encountered by children living in closed institutions like monasteries.

3.3.5 Implications for the current research

The voice of children represented in the existing literature has a particular agency that seems to reflect the socio-cultural values of Western society in which individual liberties such as freedom of expression and individual rights are highly regarded. While children have shown greater interest to participate in the child protection decision-making process (Race and Frost, 2022), professionals have shown a willingness to include children as serious stake-holders in the process (Woodman et al., 2018). However, the same trend has not been observed in developing countries where children are socialised by parents to be timid (Dako-Gyeke, 2019) and child participation can be considered disrespectful toward adults (Manful et al., 2020). Some researchers from developing countries therefore have argued that the urgency shown by the developed countries to include children's voices and participation may not be the same for developing societies due to significant gaps in social, political, cultural and economic circumstances between these contexts (Twum-Danso Imoh and Okyere, 2020). Minimisation of the child's voice and participation can also possibly be expected in the Sri Lankan setting due to the hierarchical nature of the child-adult relationship. In fact, the terms used for child and young person in Singhalese (*Lamayā, Bālaka*) mean someone who is immature and inferior. These lexical indicators are possibly rooted in the wider cultural mindset about childhood as a period of immaturity and fragility that requires protection and

guidance from adults. This paternalistic attitude towards children in developing countries seems to be reflected in their childcare systems which are heavily focused on protection and prosecution (Reid et al., 2014).

Regarding children in a monastery there seems to be a paradox. On the one hand they are taking part in one of the noblest courses that their culture has bequeathed while on the other hand they are deprived of the flexibility, freedom and space to make it their own. So, maybe voice is not enough?

3.4 Institutional silence

Child abuse in religious organisations has been a central topic of academic and civil discourse for at least three decades. Before the emergence of large-scale public inquiries, there were small-scale investigations mainly into of sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy. Perhaps due to the world-wide presence of the Catholic Church, and growing anticlerical views in the media (Rashid and Barron, 2019), clergy of the RCC have been in the spotlight. Since the revelation and the conviction of Father Gilbert Gauthe of the Diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana in the United States in 1985, hundreds of clergies have been convicted mainly in the Anglo-European countries (BishopAccountability.org, 2021a). The first large scale study was the John Jay College research to document the extent of clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CPCSA) in the US (The John Jay College Research Team, 2004). This project was funded by the Catholic Bishops Conference in the United States and therefore it was not a public inquiry. It was the Republic of Ireland that set up the first public inquiry (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009). In England and Wales, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual abuse (IICSA) recently concluded (IICSA, 2022). So far, perhaps the most extensive and influential public inquiry has been the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) set up by the Australian government. It ran from 2012 to 2017, and received 42,041 calls and 25,964 letters and emails from survivors, held 8013 private hearing sessions and made 2575 referrals including reporting to police (Royal Commission, 2017a). With substantial human and financial resources at their disposal, these inquiries have produced massive amounts of data in the form of survivors' accounts, testimonies from witness, institutional leaders, experts, and policy recommendations. Academics and commentators extensively review these depositories of data and engage in a continuing discussion on corruption of institutional care.

In his testimony to the Australian Royal Commission, Thomas Doyle asserted that policies adopted by the RCC in the 19th century set a dangerous precedent for secrecy and cover-up that became a hallmark of silence. He testified that there was a sharp drop in cases of clergy misconduct in the 19th century and that he suspected this was due to the RCC's change of reporting and recording policy rather than an actual drop in cases. These hunches were not without foundation as, on 20th of July 1890, Pope Leo XIII issued a directive imposing strict secrecy on internal disciplinary proceedings (Tapsell as cited in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017b). This gradually led to the Code of Canon Law of 1917 that abolished the previous canonical provisions requiring clergy accused of crimes to be handed over to civil authorities. Although the current Pope abrogated the pontifical secrets in December 2019, signalling a return to the RCC's 16th century tradition of reporting offending priests to the civil authorities (Tapsell, 2019), the RCC's actual policy and commitment to end secrecy about offending clerics within it is inconsistent. For example, the recently released McCarrick Report (BishopAccountability.org, 2021b) indicates that Pope Francis and at least two of his predecessors were either complacent or negligent about numerous reports of sexual abuse of minors by the former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick who had been an influential figure in Rome and Washington D. C. (O'Loughlin, 2020).

The Royal Commission uncovered evidence of child abuse within a wide range of institutions, prompting analysis from wide range of angles. Viewed from a legal vantage point, some observed the failures of child caring organisations within a continuum of a broader set of institutional factors (Mathews, 2017) ranging from ignorance, unintentionality, systemic corruption, and cover-up to misconduct. Of these factors, ignorance appears to be a common theme associated with religious institutions. This ignorance seems to derive from a lack of awareness or education about abuse, safeguarding practices, human sexuality and risk factors associated with young people in institutional settings. This is of particular concern in ultra-orthodox religious institutions that tend to mishandle issues related to abuse, especially sexual abuse, due to lack of awareness about such topics (Mendes et al., 2019). However, ignorance as an institutional flaw may not exonerate religious institutions because it seems to be a by-product of a much larger, rigid, hierarchical, abusive organisational culture that is deliberately maintained by those institutions (Mathews, 2017).

3.4.1 Clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CPCSA)

Child abuse perpetrated by clergy is a 'perplexing phenomenon' (Keenan, 2012, p. 6) And confusing to many, due the paradox of sacrality attributed to the clerical profession and the

profanity attached to sexual acts. This is an example of the dissonance that arises when our assumptive world collapses. Collin Murray Parkes (1996) first coined the term 'assumptive world' in the field of loss and grief and others (for example, Currier et al., 2009) have modified it. The core concept refers to beliefs, assumptions, understandings and expectations we hold about the world and our place in it based on previous knowledge and experience. Our assumptive world provides us with a sense of predictability and grounding to function effectively (Beder, 2005). From this perspective, abuse committed by clergy, sexual or otherwise, is irreconcilable with our general understanding of the world because the cruelty and profanity of physical and sexual abuse contradicts the compassionate and holy role expected of clergy of any religion. When a fundamental violation of this nature shakes our cognitive, spiritual and socio-cultural foundations, that experience could become that much more difficult to comprehend. Therefore, victims may experience great difficulty in verbalising such an experience.

However, the phenomenon of CPCSA is not a shockingly new problem as evidence suggests the problem is as old as the institution of religion itself. There is historical and canonical evidence to suggest that abuse of boys by clergy (Farrell, 2004) and sexual misconduct in general (Ferro, 2005; Dale and Alpert, 2007) have been problems in the Catholic Church since the 2nd century. Following the imposition of mandatory celibacy on priests in the 12th century, the Church was rife with illicit sexual encounters involving three Popes in the 15th century Church. Ferro (2005, p. 11) attributed the problem of sexual misconduct within the Catholic Church to its own 'institutional denial about sexual behaviours of priests, despite the fact that sexual activity was rampant within the church's clergy, even at the highest level of authority'.

This historical evidence of sexual misconduct within religious traditions emerges against an historical milieu in which sexual relationships between adult men and teenage boys were morally acceptable and culturally encouraged. This phenomenon which was known as pederasty was prevalent in ancient Greek and Roman society and appeared as an important social relationship between adult men and teenage boys (Bullough and Brundage, 2010; Ljiljak, 2015; Lear and Cantarella, 2009). While the secular cultural values and contexts around sexuality have been evolving, the religious approach to it seems to have been static. In other words, religious traditions have always denied human sexuality as an obstacle to achieving religious goals and demanded celibacy or restrain from followers. This insistence by the religious on complete denial of sexuality seems to have led to the sexual offending by

the clergy (Doyle, 2006). In the context of celibacy, both consensual and coercive sexual relationships constitute misconduct. More importantly, through this misconduct priests breach the trust vested in the institution of religion, and created conditions for systematic exploitation of young and vulnerable people. Keenan (2012) asserted that the monastic male identity and the functions of priesthood are constructed on a lifestyle that is 'impossible to live' (Keenan, 2012, p. 06). On this issue, Buddhism is not an exception and I will address that in the next section of this chapter.

Since the 1980's, the phenomenon of CPCSA has been in the public discourse (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007), perhaps peripherally until 2002 when it came into the spotlight with the expose of historical child sexual abuse in the RCC in the United States. (*The Boston Globe*, 6 January, 2002). Along with the successive public inquiries, behavioural and social scientists have since then attempted to understand and explain CPCSA as a unique phenomenon. This is a topic worthy of our attention because abuse perpetrated by clergy of any religious tradition implicates cultural, social and political values and entities within the context of abuse.

3.4.2 Clergy malfeasance

Some have argued that sexual abuse by clergy is a narrow expression of the broader issue of clergy malfeasance. This concept is defined as the misuse and abuse of a religious community by the trusted leaders of that religion (Shupe, 1998). Shupe located clergy malfeasance within the broader concept of deviance to cover a wide range of malpractices including sexual abuse perpetrated within religious organisations. These malpractices may include misuse of institutional funds and properties by leaders for personal gains, and abuse of power and prestige attached to religious leadership to supress victims' voice. For example, recently a Vatican court convicted a former head of the Vatican Bank for embezzlement and money laundering (Povoledo, 2021). Also known as the Institute for the Work of Religion, this financial arm of the RCC is just another troubling feature of institutionalised religions. In theory, ecclesiastic institutions claim to be working for a holy purpose while in practice operating from worldly principles. But, because of this wall of ecclesiasticism, these institutions do not come under the same regulatory and accountability scrutiny as secular financial or care institutions usually do.

3.4.3 Clericalism as a facilitator of abuse and secrecy

Some have argued that clericalism is at the heart of CPCSA and widespread cover-up. Clergy members' perceptions of themselves as a superior class in between men and God can be a powerful contributing factor to abusing vulnerable young people, dismissing victims' claims and acting with impunity (Doyle, 2006). Clericalism refers to an attitude held by the clergy about their position as elite representatives of divine authority. This attitude is expressed through religious attire and claims of celibacy, and is used to maintain power over lay followers and material resources (Doyle, 2003). Clericalism is believed to be contributing to moral and behavioural struggles among clergy (Plante, 2020) while it has been identified as a main facilitator of abuse and a barrier to detection and response to abuse in religious settings (Doyle, 2006). As an extension of the same concept, traditional leadership of religious institutions accused of child sexual abuse tends to have a narrow view of human sexuality as a force that should be resisted with willpower, with failure to do so leading to committing sin (Doyle, 2003). Furthermore, Doyle (2003) highlighted that:

> *Catholicism is a religious force and way of life. It is also a complex socio-cultural reality and a world-wide political entity. It touches the spiritual, moral, emotional, psychic and economic aspect of the lives of its member. It even impacts the lives of non-members. Catholics and non-Catholics identify the Church with the clergy* (Doyle, 2003, p. 209).

The same assertion can be made about Buddhism, Buddhist monks, Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka due to the presence of Buddhist institutions for twenty-five centuries.

Other dysfunctional dimensions of clericalism have been conceptualised in an effort to understand the indifference shown by clergy towards the grievances of victims abused in religious settings. Thomas Doyle (2006) viewed this moral failure by the religious leadership as a result of clerical narcissism which he referred to as a form of self-centeredness that is inherent in priesthood which causes narcissistic symptoms such as self-importance, belief that one is special, interpersonal exploitation and lack of empathy. Doyle (2006) asserted that these symptomatic features are indoctrinated in the priest and exhibited through corporate and social dimensions of the religious organisation. In his view, this 'institutional narcissism' (p. 199) led to the impulse to protect the institutional reputation rather than empathising with the pain of victims. Moreover, other institutional features such as the recruitment system,

exclusion of women priests, and seclusion from the laity seem to exacerbate the negative dimensions of clericalism (Slater, 2019; McPhillips, 2016).

The role of clericalism may be more strongly played out in postcolonial societies due to ethno-religious complexities formed during and after the colonial period. While this topic is beyond the scope of the current research, a cursory exploration of the issue reveals how religion as a colonising instrument introduced power and otherness to the colonised and how in return the native religions and followers negotiated with the new reality. In the Irish context, the Irish Roman Catholic Church acted as the moral authority in defining the moral landscape of the post-independent Ireland and in the process directly and indirectly victimised thousands of vulnerable children (McLoone-Richards, 2012). While patriarchy and abuse of power appear to be problematic aspects of religion in general in postcolonial contexts (Kochuthara, 2019; Hogan, 2011), in societies in which the coloniser and the colonised professed to rival religious categories such as Christianity versus Hinduism or Buddhism in British colonies in South Asia, clericalism of both versions of religion has led to abuse of power and secrecy around institutional failings (Kochuthara, 2019).

Despite canonical differences between Christianity and Buddhism, the concept of clericalism can usefully be applied to understand the similar institutional and interpersonal attitudes prevalent in the Buddhist monastic community. Although the term ‘bhikkhu’ that is used to refer to Buddhist monks means ‘mendicant’, denoting the qualities of humility and austerity, the contemporary monkhood seemed to have evolved to represent power and prestige. Similar to the Catholic priesthood, the faith community is urged to believe that these special privileges are a given by-product of their membership to an exclusive clerical community, downplaying any intentional efforts to acquire, retain or exploit those privileges.

Lastly, the exceptionalism and sense of immunity emanating from clericalism may not exclusively be a problem of religious organisations. A similar dynamic has been observed in secular organisations and the problem appears to be with ‘the presumed sacredness’ of any organisation that enjoys deference and unquestioning trust from the public (Warner, 2019, p. 17).

3.4.4 State-Religion relationship

Clericalism alone may not have succeeded in perpetrating and covering up abuse in religious institutions. In some orthodox religious settings, institutions seem to enjoy a a sense of immunity as a result of historical collusion between religion and the state. With reference to

the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (2009) findings into the historical abuses in Ireland, McLoone-Richards (2012) directly implicated the collusion between the Irish state and Irish Roman Catholic Church (IRCC) in sustaining institutional abuse of children with impunity. Vulnerable children who should have been protected and nurtured by the state were instead trapped in a co-dependency between the state and the church. The IRCC, through a network of industrial schools and orphanages, institutionalised thousands of vulnerable children, taking the welfare burden away from the state; the state in return allowed the IRCC to impose and maintain an orthodox moral order in society. Consequent to this moral grip over Irish society, the IRCC exerted a version of unquestioned feudal power within Irish society and that is also factored into this social dynamic (Pilgrim, 2012). The risks of collusion between religious and state authorities to protect the religious institutions are not exclusive to traditional societies. As the NSW Special Inquiry into Child Sexual abuse (Cunneen, 2014) has revealed, the New South Wales police force was accused of covering up allegations against the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. These incidents of collusion in modern liberal democratic settings reignite the debate about the state-religion relationship.

Lack of separation between the state and religion, and the presence of a religious monopoly have been linked to corruption in religious institutions (Gutmann, 2015). Moreover, religious organisations in developing countries have been implicated in perpetuating poverty and corruption through malpractices such as money-laundering and faith-infused get-rich-quick schemes (Faleye, 2013). Regrettably, religious corruption in developing countries seems to be sustained in collusion with corrupt political leadership, as both parties exploit faithful masses to accumulate financial and material wealth (Orogun and Pillay; 2021). Furthermore, religious leaders in developing countries have been reported as entering the arena of electoral politics more directly and leveraging their position to subvert the rule of law for their personal gains (Mehmood and Seror, 2023). In post-independent Sri Lanka, perhaps with constitutionally mandated state patronage, the Buddhist clergy continue to influence public policies, and enjoy autonomy in managing their affairs while invoking immunity from external oversights.

The co-dependant and mutually transactional relationship between the state and religion might not be the only dimension that makes child abuse in religious organisations a hidden epidemic. A strong anti-religious political rhetoric or policies may also act as barriers to detection and response to child abuse in such settings. This latter trend has been reported among religious communities that tend to distrust government-led external authorities for

various historical and imagined reasons. These reservations may include a fear of religious prosecution, a concern that external oversight is contrary to religious tenets, or a view that secular authorities are biased and judgemental towards religious communities (IICSA, 2021, IICSA – Research team, 2017).

3.4.5 Implications for the current research

In terms of the relationship between religion and the state, the current Sri Lankan scenario closely resembles the Irish case. The Sri Lankan state by virtue of its constitutional provisions operates like a semi-secular theocracy with influential Buddhist monks at the helm of state affairs. The latest display of this feature is the appointment by the president of a supreme advisory council comprised of senior Buddhist monks to advise him on governance (The President's office, 2020). As a social institution the BMS also plays an influential role in controlling the moral discourse as evidenced by its interference on issues such as sex education in public schools and an appropriate dress code for female school teachers (Vaffoor, 2022). In light of these similarities between the BMS and the Irish Roman Catholic Church, this research was concerned about to what extent the collusion between religion and the state influences the silence and inaction. Simultaneously, the relationship between the state and the BMS has not always been unidimensional. Both parties have fielded narratives that constructed each other as malevolent, depending on the contingencies (Abeysekara, 2008). For example, politicians have regretted the undue influence of the BMS on finding a more equitable solution to the country's minority rights issues, while the BMS has lamented the lack of political will of political leaders to embrace a stronger Buddhist majoritarian rhetoric.

3.4.6 Engaging the monastic leadership

The Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka appeared to be an elusive target when it comes to locating it within the class of institutions in which children are at risk of abuse. There have been some efforts in western academic discourse to theorise clergy maleficence and clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (For example, Shupe, 1998; Fogler et al, 2008). However, these conceptualisations are external observations of internal organisational dynamics while focusing mainly on sexual abuse, and there has not been any sustained effort to conceptualise monastic institutional corruption. Although religious leaders have been criticised for failing to protect children in religious settings, academic research engaging religious institutional leadership is rare. This gap limits the understanding of monastic child abuse and potential future preventative measures.

In contrast to the academic discourse that is generally hostile to religious institutions, Keenan (2012) offered a rather charitable analysis of offending priests and institutions that they joined to serve. She argued that clergy abuse should not be wrongly compared to intentional systematic crimes such as the Holocaust because the Catholic Church as an institution did not set out with the aim of abusing children; nor did the Church leadership demand from its army of priests to abuse children as part of its mission (Keenan, 2012). So, based on her therapeutic work with offending priests, she argued that the problem was in the way religious institutions responded to the transgressions committed by their members. She agreed that it was impossible to dismiss the need for individual accountability for these abuses. Yet, at the same time, it is even harder to ignore the systemic culpability of institutions that failed to recognise and remedy grave transgressions within them in a transparent manner (Keenan, 2012).

Kennan's work is of interest to this research for at least for two reasons: First, just like any rich empirical inquiry, her conclusions were based on evidence gathered through her first-hand experience of working with offending priests. Due to this empirical quality, her observations and conclusions about the nature of clergy abuse appear to be credible and offer balanced perspectives, avoiding the wide-spread, generally anticlerical rhetoric in academic literature that is based largely on public inquiry findings. Second, her emphasis on listening to the voices of offending individuals is crucial in understanding the abuse-enabling systemic dynamics. This is an even more sensible approach in the current setting in which anticlerical rhetoric may easily backfire (or even get hijacked by political actors) as anti-Buddhist conspiracy and thereby narrow the path towards breaking the silence. To this end, understanding the perspectives of the monastic leaders about this issue was critically important for this research. While this work provided rare insights into the minds of offending clergy, it does not provide perspectives on the institutional leadership. Religious leaders have been criticised for their failure to protect children in various religious settings (Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017b; McLoone-Richards, 2012). However, the perspectives of leaders are not adequately represented in academic literature. Religious institutions are inclined to operate within a top-down hierarchical structure in which leaders tend to shape the internal culture. Therefore, it is important to understand the issue of child abuse in monasteries from the vantage point of leaders.

3.4.7 Understanding corruption in religious organisations

As discussed earlier, the role of institutional culture in child abuse in the institutional context has been extensively analysed (Palmer et al., 2016; Palmer and Feldman, 2017, 2018). However, ethical and professional corruption in religious organisations has not been adequately conceptualised, leaving a considerable gap in understanding. Given that clericalism, power and poor moral standards tend to coexist in religious institutions (Doyle, 2003; 2006), how they become corrupt while normalising the unethical and unprofessional behaviour of their members is an important question.

Slater (2019) diagnosed the centralised hierarchical leadership of religious organisations as the main cause of abuse and delayed institutional response to victims' grievances. She further argued that power should be decentralised so that a localised response can be initiated to incidents of abuse without having to wait for a protracted response from the top leadership (Slater, 2019). As Sasson (2014) accurately pointed out, the Buddhist monastery is already organised in a decentralised manner compared to its counterparts, such as the Roman Catholic or the Anglican Church. However, this has not so far made any positive difference to the way the BMS responds to the issue of child abuse. Perhaps, due to its decentralised power structure with the abbots of individual monasteries wielding considerable autonomy and power, a novel approach is needed to understand power in Sri Lankan monasteries. For this purpose, insights may be drawn from research in adjacent disciplines such as management and human relation studies.

Ashforth et al. (2008) proposed a five-view approach to understanding organisational corruption that included a micro view, macro view, wide view, long view and deep view. The micro view examined corruption at individual or small group level in organisations. The lay expression of this view is the notion of the bad apple leading to the belief that by eliminating individuals or small groups who are predisposed to corruption the organisations can become free of corruption. The macro view examined organisational level corruption, referring to the layman's theory of bad barrels. An organisation is considered corrupt when the norms and practices governing it work only to serve the institution, ignoring the welfare of its stakeholders and society at large. The common approach to fix this problem is to introduce more and more regulations. The wide view proposed a system-wide approach to corruption, examining the crisis of trust that has threatened almost every established system in society including the mass media, education, government, and religion. The long view proposed to examine corruption over time, arguing that it is a phenomenon as ancient as human history.

The overall lesson from a long view of corruption in organisations seems to be that they cannot be trusted to govern themselves without external oversight. The last proposed stance is the deep view, advocating a deeper understanding of corruption. The rationale seems to be that the current ways of understanding organisational corruption are fragmented and therefore fail to provide a holistic picture of the issue. They proposed that corruption must be viewed by centralising the existing diverse personal and organisational behaviours that constitute corruption; by examining variables that contribute to corruption at personal, group, organisational and national levels; and by considering corruption as a process rather than as a state which can be clearly recognised as such (Ashforth et al., 2008).

It is possible that these views are already being used to understand organisational corruption, as failings are always blamed on an individual or a group (micro view); or on a certain class of organisations such as prisons or the construction industry rather than educational or religious institutions (macro view). This five-angled approach presents both opportunities and challenges for understanding institutional corruption. When these views are considered as an integrative approach, they can provide a useful framework to understand organisational corruption. However, this approach has, at least in part, already been attempted, as attested by regulatory measures introduced by various governments while failing to predict and prevent future corruption (Palmer and Feldman, 2018).

The elements that incrementally lead to organisational failures have been recognised. Hendy and Tucker (2021) conducted a case study on the downfall of Mid Staffordshire Hospital Trust in the UK. By analysing the documents produced by the public inquiry into the collapse of the hospital, they dissected the origin and proliferation of 'narrative of silence' that eventually led to the implosion of the hospital (p. 694). They recognised 'collective denial' of failings. This gradual decline started with ignoring small failings at minor staff level and incrementally leading to irreversible major ones at the highest level of management that led to the downfall of the organisation (p. 702). According to Hendy and Tucker, this collective denial is sustained within the organisation through institutional features that supress any counter-narratives/narrators and create a false reality for the members of the organisation. This study provided a specific example of the origin, proliferation and collective nature of organisational corruption. While the insights from this study are useful in understanding highly regulated organisations such as hospitals, the genesis and normalisation of corruption in self-governing organisations such as monasteries remains least understood.

Perhaps as a conceptualisation of institutional corruption that can be applicable to a wide range of organisational settings including monasteries, Wardhaugh and Wilding (1998) formulated an explanatory framework for the corruption of care. They presented eight propositions, briefly summarised here, explaining the conditions that generally lead to normalisation of violence in an organisational context.

1. Corruption of care tends to begin with dehumanisation of those who are under care. This tendency is often reflected in the rite of passage involving the admission procedure to institutions. These rituals are initiated to humiliate and degrade newcomers by removing their sense of personhood and to impose a sense of identity that is lower than human. Their function is to remove any moral concern that may contradict inhumane treatment of inmates.

2. Corruption of care is closely linked to power and powerlessness in institutions. There is an inherent power imbalance between residents and the staff in care institutions. Residents are treated as powerless by the staff who generally control every aspect of those under their care. Having absolute power over individuals who are perceived as less than human can lead to arbitrary application of that power. It is also noteworthy that in residential settings members of the staff also may feel powerless in relation to higher management. The power imbalance in institutions can be further complicated by other characteristics of the residents such as gender, age or race.

3. Certain types of work and pressure created by it are linked to the corruption of care. Generally, groups with certain vulnerable characteristics tend to dominate the population in care settings; these may include children, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities who are also likely to be marginalised or disregarded in the general population. Consequently, the institutions that are going to care for them lack human and financial resources to provide quality care. This then leads to a workplace culture that does the bare minimum to keep the system running.

4. Failure of management is at the core of corruption of care. Diffusion of responsibility and lack of accountability underlie management failures. Management at every level is responsible for ensuring that the quality of care is maintained, the employees are supervised, and they respond to grievances of residents and employees.

5. Closed institutions without external oversight are more susceptible to corruption. Strong inside-outside boundaries, group norms of conformity and loyalty, and relative isolation from external society are the general characteristics of these organisations.

6. Lack of mechanisms for accountability leads to corruption of care. When organisations consider themselves to be above any external oversight, or are not required to be accountable for their practices, the quality of care gradually deteriorates.

7. Certain types of organisations are more prone to corruption of care. Those with hierarchical structures may inhibit constructive criticism and a culture of accountability, while facilitating an isolated and fragmented approach to working.

8. Residents with certain vulnerable characteristics encourage corruption of care. Children, and children and adults with a disability or mental illness are more vulnerable to being treated as less than human because they cannot defend themselves against abuse.

These eight propositions adequately capture the dysfunction that contribute to institutional failure to care. They considered the dehumanisation of residents, poor management practices and lack of accountability and oversight as these are crucial elements in understanding corruption of care. However, these premises are solely focused on internal organisational aspects to the exclusion of macro social influencers that help sustain such organisations. Perhaps, these premises can be extended to include such variables as regulatory policies and socio-political climate that are external to the organisation.

3.5 Professional silence: errors and mistakes

Errors in child safeguarding have been defined as ‘a deviation from standards or regulations, where obligations toward children and families have not been fulfilled’, whereas a ‘mistake occurs when a misunderstanding or wrong belief has led to the wrong choice or decision being taken’ (Biesel et a.l, 2020 cited in Doughty, 2021, p. 521). Effective child protection services have shown the ability to transparently learn from their errors and mistakes; improve the service experience of children; and enhance public confidence in the child care system. For example, in the UK, since the first child abuse inquiry was launched as far back as 1945, there has been a steady stream of inquiries and policy reforms broadly aimed at learning from mistakes and improving services. More recent and notable examples include the *Working together to Safeguard Children* guidelines which have been revised several times since first being published in 2010 (HM Government, 2018), The Munro Report in 2011 (Munro, 2011), and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA, 2022). In these reviews, the

effectiveness of the child protection system including the professionals who work in it have been re-evaluated. Albeit with some limitations, continuous development in child protection has been closely tied to the social work profession (Parton, 2014) and perhaps a professional ecosystem proliferated from it that continues to learn and correct itself in order to improve services to children and families.

Before the emergence of public inquiries, few studies attempted to understand the childcare practitioners' experience in dealing with institutional child abuse. Barter (1999) conducted 41 interviews and analysed 36 investigation reports covering all childcare practitioners attached to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in England between 1994 and 1996. In this research, the settings under investigation were social care organisations and therefore the dynamics were different from a potential investigation into a religious institution. Nonetheless, the findings indicated that the participating investigators thought the remit of the investigation should be broadened to include all the systemic aspects of an institution, instead of a narrow focus on the incident. They also reported concerns about the independence and transparency of investigations and potential for conflicts of interest as many reported having links to the institutions under investigation. Their preoccupation was on either the potential consequences of the investigation on their colleagues or their influence on the conduct of an independent investigation.

3.5.1 Professional dilemmas

More recently, there has been an increase in the recognition of childcare professionals' views on children's participation in the decision-making process. These studies focused on practitioners' attitudes, perceptions, and understanding towards child participation (Vis et al, 2012; Križ and Skivenes, 2017; Kosher and Ben-Arieh, 2020; Woodman et al, 2022), and their confidence and skills in engaging children in the process (Woodman et al, 2018). While these studies focused on children's participation in general, McKibbin and Humphreys (2019) reported on the practitioners' perceptions in relation to children in residential care. Residential care practitioners in this study revealed lack of clarity around what constituted a victim in institutional setting and lack of urgency shown by the law enforcement to respond to incidents as challenging to their role as carers.

While child protection systems in the developed countries are not error free (Diaz and Aylward, 2019), all the above studies were generally aimed at closing the professional gaps in an already robust child welfare system within a tightly regulated policy ecosystem.

However, research from loosely regulated settings in the developing countries appeared to be more concerned with social and cultural deficiencies that hampered the implementation of safeguarding laws, policies, and procedures. Dako-Gyeke (2019) found that despite laws, policies and procedures, professionals in Ghana faced myriad of challenges in responding to incidents of child abuse due to personal, social, cultural, and practical barriers. National laws and policies did not mean much as although some professionals were aware of incidents of child abuse in the community, they were unable to intervene due to lack of immediate and long-term support for victims and investigations (Dako-Gyeke, 2019). Professionals in the developing countries also tend to face cultural dilemmas more explicitly. In Kenya, childcare professionals viewed rigidly assigned gender roles, gender segregation and gender taboos as protective factors that deter child abuse. However, the same factors were found as providing the impetus for child abuse in those communities (Plummer and Njuguna, 2009). Regardless of the context (familial or institutional) in which professionals interact with child service users, children in developing countries seem to miss out on proper care due to these systemic and cultural barriers.

3..5.2 Challenges in safeguarding children in religious settings

Response and prevention of child abuse in religious settings face unique challenges even when there are adequate national policies (IICSA research team, 2017) due to the revered position of the religious institution in society and the higher status attributed to alleged perpetrators (IICSA, 2021). The recipients of abuse information were often staff or congregants who were closely affiliated to the religious institution in question and tended to be sceptical about the allegations (Harper and Perkins, 2018). This may be critical in settings such as Sri Lanka where child protection policies and procedures are not clearly laid out or fully implemented. As a Buddhist majority nation, it is likely that many of the child protection officers employed by the NCPA are also Buddhists and affiliated to a monastery in their respective locality. This research was therefore concerned about how child protection officers in Sri Lanka would negotiate these strong cultural variables while executing official duties, and if the intersection of personal and professional roles influenced their ability to objectively investigate alleged abuse in the Buddhist monastery, and how this could contribute to the silence.

3.5.3 Contextual safeguarding

Perhaps, emerging concepts such as contextual safeguarding (Firmin, 2017), transitional safeguarding (Holmes and Smale, 2018), and safeguarding lessons from youth-serving and

faith-based organisations in the developed world can provide useful messages to safeguarding in less formal settings in developing countries. Contextual safeguarding is presented as 'an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families' (Firmin, 2017, p. 3). This approach broadly recognises the risks of abuse or exploitation outside the family, and provides a conceptual framework to assess those risks and design interventions that are suitable to the individuals needs of the young person at risk. Meanwhile, the transitional safeguarding addresses the risks young people who are transitioning to adulthood. It is defined as 'an approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from the both children's and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives' (Holmes and Smale, 2018, p. 3). This can be a useful approach to addressing the emerging needs of the young adulthood which are often complicated specially when presented with histories of abuse in young childhood, and planning targeted interventions (Cocker et al., 2022). Furthermore, recent findings form the Youth Offender Institutions, Secure Training Centres, and Secure Children's Homes in England and Wales (Soares et al, 2019) indicate the existence of safeguarding challenges that may also be found in other closed institutions, including the absence of trusted adult-child relationships, confusions around what constitutes abuse and poor staff skills that were reported from residential care settings (McKibbin and Humphreys, 2019). Considering contextual and developmental volatilities in which young children move to and between monasteries, transition from childhood to adolescence, and, more often, transition back to lay life, these innovative approaches may provide alternatives to bridge the gaps in safeguarding policies and practices in less developed settings such as Sri Lanka.

3.6 Monastic child abuse as a social ecological problem

This section briefly introduces the ecological systems theory, referring to Bronfenbrenner's seminal text *Ecology of Human Development* (1979), and explores how it can be relevant to understanding the social ecological disconnections through which child abuse, lack of response and interventions become perpetuated. Instead of making theoretical claims, Bronfenbrenner's model offers a number of hypotheses that are open to investigation. This feature provides universal applicability of his model and, as the knowledge on monastic child abuse in Sri Lanka still seems to be in its infancy, it provides a context-neutral lens to view ecological enablers of abuse and silence associated with it. The objective is to identify

through this lens the presence and absence of barriers and facilitators to breaking the silence, making references to current literature.

Ecological systems theory did not advance brand new ideas. Rather, it reorganised existing social science concepts to illuminate interconnections between the person and the society through a nested system that includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner viewed these interconnections between already-familiar micro and macro levels as the missing links in comprehensively accounting for human development and deficiencies. He posited that to function as optimal contexts for development these, interconnections should be mutually transparent. It therefore follows that whenever a young person enters a new setting, his or her parents should have sufficient information about it. This model highlights the importance of recognising ecological transitions which occur 'whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in the role, setting, or both' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). These transitions are not childhood specific but occur in the form of perpetual shifting of settings throughout the human lifespan. This is important because the person's role shifts with the transition, as well as the expectations from within and outside the person's ecological environment. When a young person perceives activities by others or engages in activities with others, that experience serves a crucial developmental purpose helping them to acquire a more permanent behaviour that is referred to as 'molar activity' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 6). In addition to direct interactions with his immediate environment, of 'equal importance are connections between other persons present in the setting, the nature of these links, and their indirect influence on the developing person through their effect on those who deal with him at first hand. This complex of interrelations within the immediate setting is referred to as the *microsystem*' (emphasis in original. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7). More specifically, this system is 'a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

These interconnections within the person's immediate setting are called the mesosystem. It interacts in a number of seen and unseen ways with a set of interconnections in other settings which is known as the exosystem. A mesosystem 'comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). In reality, this system plays out, for example, as a child interacts with children or adults from a neighbouring household or as an adult introduces his family to his colleagues. 'An

exosystem refer to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Possible manifestations of this system are, for example, when a member of the developing person's family goes to college, is incarcerated or is promoted. The main reason for recognising these intermediary systems is to appreciate the impact they tend to have on the developing person.

Finally, 'the complex of nested, interconnected system is viewed as manifestation of overarching patterns of ideology and organisation of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture. Such generalised patterns are referred to as *macrosystems*' (emphasis in original. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 8). Within a given social group, there seems to be a consistency between micro, meso and exosystems as if they were made of the same prototype. Similarly, between various settings or groups, components may be different. Perhaps more consequential to the current study is the fact that 'public policy is a part of the macrosystem determining the specific properties of exo-, meso- and microsystems that occur at the level of every life and steer the course of behaviour and development' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9). As indicated in research on developing countries, the disconnection between the macrosystem (safeguarding policies) and microsystem (the child and family) was profound due to the breakdown in systems in between (lack of professional manpower, infrastructure, shame, stigma).

Furthermore, '[T]he macrosystem refers to the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 281). This ecological model is much more than a developmental theory as it focuses not only on the process but also on the content of thinking, feeling or learning. In this way it boldly asks what is perceived, believed, desired or feared rather than asking how cognitive, affective and behavioural processes are acquired, a focal point of the traditional developmental theories. The ecological model's focus on content allows comparative evaluation of different systems and settings, a practice that is critical in public policy leading to resource allocation which has the power to significantly alter developmental outcomes.

A wide range of social ecological facilitators, mainly in developed countries, paved the way for breaking the silence around child abuse and sustained pursuit of truth and justice for victims. These facilitators include public inquiries, mainstream and independent media,

survivor networks and networks of research universities (Faggioli and O'Reilly-Gindhart, 2021). For further comparisons, the Pathways to Harm and Pathways to Protection Report (Sidebothom et al., 2016) is viewed as an example here. It was produced by a panel of safeguarding experts for the Department for Education in England. The panel examined 293 serious case reviews, identified challenges for safeguarding agencies, and provided the government with evidence of the effect of government policies on safeguarding. This report is extensive in its coverage of pathways to harms prevention and protection and can be viewed as a continuous professional development initiative 'where the imperative is to learn from the plight of [victimised children], improve services to children and families and to reduce the incidence of deaths or serious harm' (Sidebotham et al., 2016, p. 20).

The report addressed both 'what' and 'how' aspects typical of an ecological approach; it started with the micro- and mesosystemic levels and gradually expanded into the exo- and macrosystemic levels. For example, it identified serious harm that befell children, and individual, familial and environmental risk factors that enabled such unfortunate outcomes (micro- and mesosystemic level). It also identified how child protection professionals and their managers and agencies responded to serious cases of concern (exosystemic level). Finally, it suggested 'moving from a culture of failure and blame to one of progress and hope' (Sidebothem et al., p. 246), underscoring the need for evidence-informed practice rather than emotionally-charge, rhetorically-driven approaches to safeguarding (macrosystemic level). It was in this spirit that the panel recommend a systemic approach which considers interactions between individual practitioners and wider systems and environments.

From a social ecological perspective, the report conceptualised the pathways to harm, prevention and protection, considering interactions between the context, pre-existing risk factors and failure to care or intentions to harm. The report suggested that this chain of interaction which led to serious abuse should be disrupted at an individual, family, community and professional level.

More recent legislative and policy initiatives in the UK have echoed a similar urgency to take a systemic approach. *The Children and Social Work Act 2017* (2017) made provisions for looked-after children and social work practices concerning safeguarding children. *The Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government, 2018) statutory guidance amplified the need for optimised interconnections between agencies, particularly at local

level. These continuing legislative and policy improvements can be viewed as ways of system optimisation lubricating the interconnections between the individual and systems.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in England and Wales has produced a plethora of research reports that provided more insights into the social ecological dynamics which perpetuate silence around child abuse in religious context. The report on the Catholic and Anglican churches identified three main factors that contributed to child abuse which included 'greater opportunity' – access to children through a wide range of educational and religious programs, 'position of authority, trust and influence', and 'ineffective response' from the church authorities to suspected incidents of abuse (IICSA research team, 2017, p. 60). Its latest report *Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings* (Investigation Report, 2021) identified, among other factors, distrust of external safeguarding agencies, reluctance to report to external authorities to prevent reputational damage, and a desire to handle complaints within the organisation. These mesosystemic and exosystemic dimensions appeared to be linked to the macrosystemic influencers that mediate how institutions response to child abuse.

The interim report to the IICSA, *Deflection, Denial and Disbelief: social and political discourse about child sexual abuse and their influence on the institutional responses* (Lovett et al, 2018) argued that the generally lacklustre response by organisations that frequently care for or work with children was a reflection of dominant macrosystemic discourse that tended to deny, deflect or minimise the impact of child abuse (Lovett et al., 2018). The dominant discourses of deflection, denial and disbelief had a negative top-down effect on communities, families, and victims. These effects were perversive as victims struggled to be heard by their families or offending institutions, while the latter resorted to tactics of deflection, denial, or disbelief to evade accountability for misconduct, and to preserve their institutional reputation (Lovett et al., 2018).

3.7 Michel Foucault and Social construction of silence around monastic child abuse

Some have applied Foucauldian lenses to understand Buddhist monasticism (for example, Voyce ,2017) and shifting monastic power dynamics in the contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic community (for example, Abeysekara, 2008). However, perhaps constrained by religious anthropological interests, they viewed the role of monastic power as it is activated through scriptures or adults seeking a religious life as monastics. Although Voyce (2017) recognised the function of monastic codes of conduct as a method of

disciplining bodies, he failed to identify the deleterious effect of selective application of monastic code of conduct by adult monks to control children within the confinements of monastic institutions.

Foucault can be relevant to the current study in two ways: domestication of children through the instruments of monastic training and discipline and the monastery's power in relation to political and civil affairs. Firstly, the domestication of children using ordination, religious education and disciplinary methods can be viewed through Foucault's concepts of discipline and punishment (Foucault, 1977). Foucault's description of institutional techniques of disciplining the body is eerily similar to the training novice monks must go through during their induction to monastic life.

The contemporary Sri Lankan monastic practices involving children can be viewed through the lenses of Foucault and it can be argued that through ordination the child is 'entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it' (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). The process of domestication of children through ordination along with the dramatic physical and psychological transformation – shaving heads, wearing robes, public veneration – can be seen as a 'political anatomy' of the body (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). The training that the novice monks are put through on the theatrical aspects of being a monk – walking, speaking, eating, conducting performative rituals – is, therefore it can be argued, meant to institutionalise children to a level that is controllable and satisfactory to the abbots. Consequently, 'discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies' (Foucault, 1977, p. 138) that are owned and controlled by the abbot for any purposes that he may deem necessary. Even the monastic architecture – hierarchical buildings where senior monks occupying the upper floors, large gathering halls or dormitories with limited privacy – seems to create conditions for 'perfect disciplinary apparatus' (Foucault, 1977, p. 173).

Research on the survivors of abuse in the context of Irish Industrial schools run by Religious Order provides insights into similar methods that religious institutions are capable of instrumentalising to exert discipline and control on children. Pembroke (2019) interviewed twenty-five survivors and found out that, as Foucault predicted, Industrial Schools employed subtle as well as crude methods of discipline and control including infliction of physical, sexual and emotional violence on the inmates. Pembroke asserted, however, that the impunity and brutality with which industrial schools had acted towards children were anomalous to the gradual civilisation of brutality as Foucault formulated it.

Secondly, Foucault's analysis of knowledge and power (Rouse, 1998) can inform the understanding of broader socio-political discourses deployed to propagate and legitimise the institutional power of the BMS. As Rouse (1998) asserted, the power in Foucauldian sense is not viewed as a tool singlehandedly held by the BMS, but instead it is an omnipresent phenomenon 'distributed through complex social networks. The actions of the peripheral agents in these networks are often what establish or enforce the connections between what a dominant agent does and the fulfilment or frustration of a subordinate agent's desires' (Rouse, 1998, p. 106). Evidently, the BMS embodies the moral and, as of late, the racial guardianship of Singhalese Buddhists whose unequivocal support is required by the same tradition to fulfil this mission. It can be argued that the monastic 'instrument of power' (Rouse, 1998, p. 106) in the forms of Sunday Schools, ornate monastic buildings and elaborate rituals is brought to life by voluntary participation and cooperation of the Buddhist public.

As it was identified earlier in this thesis, by being a semi-secular, constitutional theocracy with a constitutional obligation to protect and foster Buddhism, Sri Lanka has set the scene for a problematic use of religious power by the Buddhist institution. This has been evident in both formal and informal ways in which monastery has pushed its sphere of influence over wide range of secular issues including sex education (Jayawardana, 2019), minority rights (Colombo Telegraph, March 26, 2016), religious freedom, legalisation of gambling or commercial sex work (Perera and Siriwardana, 2022), and range of other cultural issues (Malhotra, 2020; Vaffoor, 2022). Buddhist monastery has effectively deployed tactics akin to blasphemy laws to curb religious freedom (Svanidze, 2020) and freedom of expressions (Colombo Telegraph, June 1, 2023) in Sri Lanka. As Rouse (1998) pointed out earlier, these monastic interference in secular affairs attract mixed reactions from the populace depending on one's position in the fulfilling or frustrating side of the equation. Finally, this research can be interpreted to be concerned with the frustrations directed at the BMS for its failure to protect children and live up to the standards of the purported moral guardianship and, therefore, likely to demonstrate the activation of power relations between the centre and the periphery.

3.8 Silence and silencing in religious institutions

Existing conceptualisations of silence and silencing in organisational context can be relevant to understanding ways in which current monastic leaders and child protection officers negotiate the tensions between breaking or keeping silence about this particular issue. Pinder and Harlos (2001) discussed various functions, meanings and forms of silence in relation to employees' attitudes and behaviours towards unethical and unjust practices within the organisation. They introduced two forms of organisational silence, *quiescence* and *acquiescence* (Pinder and Harlos, 2001, p. 348, emphasis in original), that can illuminate ways in which monastic leaders and child protection professionals may participate in ongoing silence. Quiescence was defined as wilful avoidance of speaking against unethical or unjust behaviour within the organisation. They further stated, however, that quiescence also means a disapproval of the current status of the organisation, 'suffering in silence' (p. 348) while knowing ethical and just alternatives, but a reluctance to pursue them. By contrast, acquiescence was defined as submission to the status quo with a laissez-faire attitude and partial awareness of ethical or just alternatives to the current organisational behaviour. In a similar vein, Cohen (2002) explained silence as endorsement, as objection or as ignorance, which can be applicable in making sense of the stance of monastic leaders and child protection officers in the face of child abuse in monasteries. He argued that while lack of objections can be viewed as an implicit endorsement of unethical or unjust behaviours, it can also mean a show of disapproval of the same. Perhaps more relevant to religious setting than child protection officers, ignorance of life-long damages of abuse can be a cause for silence.

Absence of abuse victims' voices has been recognised to be resulting from the violent impact of abuse as well as from manipulative techniques employed particularly in cases of sexual abuse and exploitations that are not overtly violent (Spraitz and Bowen 2021). In institutional context, direct physical violence, threats of violence, threat of unfavourable consequences such as deprivation of basic needs (Daly), grooming and emotional manipulation (McAlinden, 2012) have been reported as methods of supressing victim's voices. In religions, silence is viewed as a positive quality conducive for spiritual growth but for the victims of clergy abuse this may mean a barrier to voice out their grievances (Crisp, 2010). Unlike intra-familial or extra-familial abuse, clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse leaves the victims with more challenges to negotiate at interpersonal, familial and community levels (Harper and Perkins, 2018), resulting in exacerbated shame and confusion.

More specifically, child abuse victims in Buddhist monasteries can be both actively and passively subjected to discourses of silencing due to ambiguous religious nomenclature of noble silence, taciturnity, humility and mental fortitude that is indoctrinated through monastic socialisation. It can be argued that the physical architecture of monasteries is designed to and for silence, characterised by detached living quarters and walls separating clergy spaces from the laity. Furthermore, the religious socialisation of individuals in Sri Lankan culture through parenting and religious education tend to activate and reinforce silencing narratives in the guise of obedience and respect. These narratives seem to modulate the interactions between monastic superiors and their subordinates. For example, both lay and monastic subordinates are expected to remain silent while in monastic setting or in the presence of senior monastics; to show respect by speaking only when spoken to. Anders (2019), based on her research on adult victims of spiritual abuse in Tibetan Buddhist groups in Germany, revealed how Buddhist terminology and practices have been decontextualised and misused as 'methods of silencing' (p. 22) by influential monastic leaders to rationalise and conceal abuse and evade accountability. She further asserted that the uncritical embracing of archaic practices such as submissive and physically close relationship to teacher (guru) has inevitably led to abuse and exploitation of powerless disciples and consequent confusion about their spirituality. Moreover, the generally top-down hierarchical relationship structures in these groups have devalued victims, particularly females, as spiritually fragile and silenced their grievances. The spiritually justified power of the teacher within a compliant group of followers has been abused to stigmatise, isolate and silence victims' voices (Anders, 2019). Buckner (2020) also has observed the similar trends in sexual violence perpetration in the context of American Buddhism and argued that the Buddhist teachers responded to the allegations of sexual abuse by adopting a language of neutrality which directly or indirectly consolidate the dominance of the institution that the perpetrators represent.

3.7 Academic silence

Except for journalistic reporting on child abuse in monasteries (for example, Daily News, 2022a, 2022b; *Colombo Gazette*, 2022; Pathirana, 2012, 2020; Ekachai, 2019), there has been no previous academic research directly investigating this topic, as evident in the extensive literature search undertaken for this study. Previously, cursory references have been made to monks as perpetrators of sexual abuse (Eisenbruch, 2019) and a monastery as a place of risk for child abuse (De Zoysa, 2002). The problematic phenomenon of child ordination in the

South and South-East Asian context has been momentarily noticed by scholars (for example, Sasson, 2014; Parkes, 2022). However, despite the visible presence of lay and ordained children in monasteries, there has been no sustained academic research exploring child abuse risks in monasteries. This is both troubling and puzzling in relation to BMS, as it has been a source of academic interest for many for many years (For example, Blackburn, 2010; Seneviratne, 1999; Samuels, 2018; Obeyesekere, 2006; Gombrich, 2006; Abeysekara, 2008). These scholars engaged the BMS mainly from a religious studies and anthropology lenses and perhaps did not feel professionally obligated to investigate child abuse or monastic corruption as a social or public health issue.

The extant literature on CPCSA is theoretical and descriptive in nature (for example, Doyle, 2003; 2006; Farrell, 2004; Fogler and Shiperd, 2008). While contributing to a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, these studies do not illuminate fluid interpersonal, institutional and social dimensions of abuse within religious settings. Furthermore, except for Ponton and Goldstein (2004) and Keenan (2012), most findings have emerged as a by-product of public inquiries and focused mainly on victims who were abused by clergy or within religious or faith-based settings by perpetrators including members of the clergy (for example, IICSA, 2022, IICSA Research Team, 2017; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017b).

However, the current research is unique; it focuses on ordained children who were abused by perpetrators including the clergy when they were training to be or were ordained as monks. While the survivors who took part in this research may be a part of the global survivor population, this institutional dimension distinguishes them from it. In addition, public inquiries into child abuse by clergy have been problematised, as they tend to place victims outside the criminal or civil justice framework and consider them as citizens caught up in a politicised state-religion relationship (Death, 2017). Discursive construction of victims through public inquiries or academic research is an important step in recognising abuse as a social problem that needs to be addressed. However, in Sri Lanka where political will and financial resources to investigate child abuse in monasteries at present seem to be low, academia and civil society have so far failed to amplify the voices of victims in a substantive way through research or public discourse.

3.8 Summary

This chapter explored factors that contributed to silence around child abuse in interpersonal, institutional, professional and academic spheres. Previous research has recognised barriers and facilitators to disclosure of child abuse during the same developmental period as the abuse, as well as long after the abuse has ended. Male survivors and survivors who experienced abuse by clergy or in religious settings have been found to experience more challenges in disclosing abuse. While research that directly involved leaders of institutions which perpetrated abuse were almost non-existent, current literature on the institutional response or lack thereof emerged from large scale public inquires commissioned by governments in developed nations. The overall trend indicated that institutional leadership has been ignorant of, complicit in or covering up abuse while reluctant to accept responsibility or empathise with victims. The urge to protect institutional reputation over the suffering of victims has been an unfathomable yet common response from religious institutions that were accused of abusing children. The literature also revealed a number of challenges faced by the child protection authorities in responding to and preventing child abuse in institutions, including religious organisations. Perspectives of survivors, child care professionals and institutional leaders from developing countries were only minimally represented in the literature and consequently an academic silence was identified as an ecological limitation that hampered efforts to break the silence in these settings. The following chapter on methodology describes the method and process that this research used to explore the broader topic of silence.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter begins with the research strategy and introduces the researcher's positionality in relation to the topic, the participants, and the context. It then describes the study's methodological and theoretical orientation, followed by the research design, and the process, including ethics committee approval. The chapter ends with a description of the data analysis.

4.2 Research strategy

Formulating a research strategy means answering three interrelated questions that underpin any research inquiry: What is there to be known? Who knows what? And what are the methods to know what is there to be known? These questions involve ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Cursory references were made to these concepts in this chapter to the extent that they were relevant to this research. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) observed, there is no single way of answering these questions and one can only be transparent about how one tackles them. Formulating answers to these questions in a manner that was useful for this research involved the researcher's relative proximity to the topic, participants and the context in which the research was grounded. The researcher's positionality disclosure has become an important element of qualitative methodology (Merriam et al., 2001), particularly for those who research their own communities (Adu-Ampong and Adams, 2020) in developing countries (Brasher, 2020). This recognition of the researcher's role in the research process was an important epistemological dimension (St. Louis and Calabrese, 2002) that influenced the ontological dimension of methodology employed in this research. It starts with positionality disclosure before progressing to theoretical location and design of the research, followed by a description of the implementation of the method.

The survivors of alleged childhood abuse in the monastic context were given a voice as they provided a pivotal vantage point to explore monastic child abuse. Data from other sources including from the interviews with monastic leaders and child protection officers were utilised to identify convergent and divergent data in survivors' accounts. Although they did not confirm any specific cases of abuse that the survivors recounted, the other sources verified the general existence of child abuse in the monastery.

4.3 Researcher positionality

Positionality is context-dependent and intersects with ontological, epistemological and theoretical dimensions of the research (Holmes, 2020). In a general sense, 'positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study—the community, the organization or the participant group' (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 02). As stance and context may indicate a variety of possibilities, this definition opens up space for manifold representation of the researcher's self in relation to three key areas of the research: the topic, participants and the context in which the research is taking place (Holmes, 2020). Holmes (2020) also asserts that positionality disclosure contributes to increased trustworthiness of the research outcomes by way of transparency about the researchers' involvement with the participants, topics, and context.

4.3.1 Researcher's proximity to the topic

I have a personal and professional connection to this topic. The personal connection was formed through my lived experience as a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka. My lived experience generated curiosity to inquire, compassion for those who suffer, and a desire for positive change. My professional connection to the topic developed through formal education in psychology and professional experience in the field of mental health. The counselling and psychotherapy training I received was particularly instrumental in recognising abuse, understanding its causes and impact, and thinking about restorative and preventive measures.

4.3.2 Researcher's relationship to the participants

I was mindful of the fact that as far as first two participant groups (survivors and monastic leaders) were concerned, I was re-entering the field with reference to my previous life experience as a monk. Regarding the third group, I was applying what DeVault (1997, p. 219) called the 'curious mix of disclosure and discretion', responding to the needs of the situation. Overall, I was conscious of manifold layers of self-presentation in response to contingencies of the moment. I was conscious of the trust and admiration attributed to me by a small circle of monastic and lay friends whose lives were impacted by past abuse and will be influenced by my work in unforeseeable ways. I was also conscious of the hostile attitudes held by some monastic and lay individuals for challenging the status quo (despite the growing literature on researching one's own community, there was a regrettable lack of literature that captured nuances such as this). Moreover, I was mindful of the stigma attached to former monks in Sri Lankan society. Hardly any former monks publicly disclose that they were previously a monk. Many, in fact, take great pains to cover up their history by severing

relationships to anyone or anything that that is connected to their past, by changing locations and even making up alternative narratives to cover the years spent as monks. They seem to do this out of fear of shame attached to leaving sacred life. Not only that, as I have personally encountered, there is fear of being labelled an opportunist who used the sacred life as a ladder for upward social mobility. This latter indictment seems to be reserved for those who have had a successful post-monastic career.

There are at least three discursive positions that qualitative researchers tend to occupy in relation to their participants and the research context: outsider (Brasher, 2020), insider (Berkovic et al., 2020; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) and in-between (McFarlane-Morris, 2019). The outsider stance seems to be the most challenging and the least ambiguous position and has often been occupied by a researcher who is ethnically, linguistically and culturally alien from the participants and their context; outsider researcher seems to desperately attempt to blend in to the insider position (see Brasher, 2020). Insider researchers declare themselves as such on the basis of sharing similar participant characteristics and experience (Berkovic et al., 2020), and being part of the same organisation/community that they are researching (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). However, the last position, the in-betweenness (McFarlane-Morris, 2019) appeared to be the most widely assumed stance by many researchers who are increasingly questioning, on the basis of intracultural dimensions, the insider-outsider binary (Merriam et al., 2001; Adu-Ampong and Adams, 2020; Kwame, 2017). Questioning the assumption of a pure insider positionality, they argue that the insider-outsider dichotomy is less rigid, fleeting, and bilaterally determined through on-going interaction with participants, rather than a self-appointed *a priori* position by the researchers as they enter the field. This trend seems to emerge from the experience of non-western researchers studying their indigenous contexts in partnerships with western research institutions. I can relate to this in-betweeness as I reflect on my own shifting position in relation to the participants and the context.

Notwithstanding this shifting boundary between insider and outsider in the context of indigenous research, insider researchers' prior knowledge and background significantly influence the inquiry. Brannick and Coghlan (2007), dismissing charges that insider research is tainted with subjective biases, advocated for it as a pre-planned rather than an accidental approach to research and argued that:

> as researchers through a process of reflexive awareness, we are able to articulate tacit knowledge that has become deeply segmented because of socialization in an organizational system and reframe it as theoretical knowledge and that because we are close to something or know it well, that we can research it (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007, p. 60).

Held (2019) identified two polarities in this ongoing discussion on the indigenous paradigm – those who call for dialogues and synergies between the established Western paradigms and indigenous paradigms, and those who call for purely distinct indigenous paradigms that cannot be blended with Western paradigms. While I acknowledge my prior knowledge, experience and insider familiarity, I am hesitant to take an extreme position within the indigenous/decolonised research paradigms. As Barnes (2018) cautioned, the rhetoric insisting a purely indigenous paradigm runs the risk of re-imposing the very oppressive system it attempts to resist. Furthermore, I am not certain how indigenous paradigms would be useful in recognising, understanding and responding to flawed institutions that were not part of the indigenous knowledge system in the first place. Obviously, here I am referring to modern democratic political, administrative and welfare systems created by colonial administrations. These systems were left behind and subsequently occupied by post-colonial local rulers who, in many cases, either failed to reinvent new indigenous systems or to effectively maintain systems inherited from colonial administrators. Although relevant to the overall context, clearly this discussion is beyond the remit of the current study.

4.3.3 Researcher's relationship to the context

My position in relation to the context can be illustrated in the terms of Irvin Goffman's seminal articulation of stigma. Goffman (1963) introduced two distinctions between identities – the discredited and the discreditable. The former represents individuals who bear a stigma that is overt and visible, such as skin colour or physical disability, whereas the latter stands for hidden and concealable stigma such as mental illness or a history of incarceration. For people unknown to me, I may appear as someone from a middle-class background, assumed to born in a city, with access to resources. I have experienced this discredited side of my identity through social interactions. Sometimes, the only social indicator to lift my identity to this scale appears to be my ability to speak English. This dynamic appears to be a powerful social mediator in postcolonial Sri Lankan society. However, unbeknown to these social interactors, it is my discreditable identity known only to me and my inner circle that enables the discredited identity.

As I blurred the boundary between these two sides of identity by presenting myself as a former traditional Buddhist monk with some international experience and currently studying at an English university, I was conscious of the tensions that may arise from participants, gatekeeping institutions and people known to me. For example, there was a clear discomfort among regional childcare commissioners about the religious sensitivity of my research. The fact that I was a former Buddhist monk and was not seeking sensitive information about ongoing child abuse investigations was ignored by them, and eventually they refused to cooperate with the research. Perhaps, these tensions can be located within the larger postcolonial sensitivities amplified by historical narratives that are still animated in cultural and political imaginations in post-colonial Sri Lanka (Waduge, 2012; Shanmugathas and Weerawardhana, 2018). Given the recent re-activation of narratives around Judeo-Christian conspiracy to weaken the Buddhist institution (see Bretfeld, 2018), I was mindful of the potential for guilty by association judgments, as I was at an English university bearing a proper name – Canterbury Christ Church – that may add fuel to such conspiracy theories.

Further to my relationship with the context, I must add this important caveat. While I do not take an extreme position on the indigenous/decolonising paradigm, I acknowledge the legitimacy of reservations and hostility among the local population towards external researchers. Indigenous people are generally referred to as communities that were reduced to minorities in their native lands as a result of colonisation (Smith, 2008). In this sense, it is not accurate to portray Sri Lankans as an indigenous community, even if they do share historical traumas suffered by occupied indigenous communities. Bishop's (2008) research with Maori communities in New Zealand recognised the fears that indigenous communities may have towards imperial research, and identified that at the core of indigenous people's concerns about external research are issues of power with regard to initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy and accountability.

Smith (2008, p. 113) viewed these complexities as 'tricky grounds' about which the qualitative researcher must be cognisant. Advocating for social justice in traditional societies can be misconstrued as a threat to traditional values. Moreover, this may lead to weaponizing the historical and current global minority grievance narratives by conservative actors trying to protect their own political interests. As Smith (2008) recognised, pitting the social justice agenda against the largely conservative population can be counterproductive. In these contextual circumstances, I remained open to both established and emerging methods and

perspectives and, for technical reasons, I circumvented getting into an extreme position in the indigenous/decolonising paradigm in this research.

4.4 The study's methodological and theoretical location

A qualitative approach was favoured for several reasons. This research focused on illuminating a phenomenon that has not previously been a subject of academic scrutiny in Sri Lanka. Child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka, unlike general child abuse in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, seems to exist outside of the statistical and theoretical lenses that are often deployed to produce knowledge [For example, the UNICEF country report (UNICEF-Sri Lanka, 2020) which did not include abuse in monasteries, despite condemning an incident of physical abuse of novice monks a year earlier (UNICEF-Sri Lanka, 2019)]. Qualitative methods are apposite in exploring relatively new issues and in developing more nuanced understanding of them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Furthermore, in view of researcher's proximity to the topic, a qualitative approach can be viewed as a personal endeavour in which research is 'the instrument of inquiry (Patton, 2015, p. 3). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) positioned research as a bricoleur at the centre of the research process.

Through the development of the initial proposal, as the phenomenon of silence became the focus, it was crucial for potential intersecting groups to be consulted in order to understand how the silence was created and maintained. To this end, the social constructionist perspective (Burger and Luckman, 1967) provided the theoretical location, which focuses 'on the rhetorical and constructive aspects of knowledge' (Silverman, 2017, p. 138). The key tenet of social constructionism is that the world cannot be adequately understood through observation or the way it appears to exist. Instead, 'taken-for-granted knowledge' must be critically evaluated (Burr, 2003, p. 2). According to Burr (2003) social constructionism discloses the subtle power relations involved in making certain views and opinions dominant while making some others invisible. Given the aim of this research, it was important that it was aligned with a theoretical orientation that facilitated unmuting of silenced voices.

In terms of definitions, social constructionism and constructivism are often used interchangeably (Benton and Craib, 2011; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Some asserted that constructivism should refer to the process of meaning-making within the individual's mind, whereas constructionism referred to the same process and its transmission within and through collective generations (Michael Crotty as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 122). While both terms

have relevance to this study, for consistency 'constructionism' was used to denote both the individual and collective meaning-making process.

Social constructionism has been recognised as a postmodern approach to research and knowledge for its belief in truth and knowledge as situational and socially constructed, shared realities (Galbin, 2015). While social constructionism deals with how everyday meanings are constructed through social linguistic interactions, it may not fully capture the power interests underneath those meaning-construction processes. This is an important limitation social constructionism that Michel Foucault's discourse analysis tends to overcome (Khan and McEachen (2021). Therefore, integrating Foucauldian analysis of reality into the theoretical framework may further consolidate this research approach. As introduced in chapter 3, the concepts of discourse, power and mechanisms of discipline are central to Foucault's discourse analysis (Rouse, 1998) and they may help to understand the role of political, religious and social power in silence and silencing in the current setting.

4.5 Aims of the study

The main aim of this research was to describe the issue of silence around child abuse by exploring the case of child abuse in the Buddhist monastery. Stake (2008) asserted that a case study can focus 'on experiential knowledge of the case and [pay] close attention to the influence of its social, political and other contexts' (p. 119). This feature of the case study approach undergirded the broader exploratory remit of this research. Four subsidiary questions aimed at four potential areas of exploration were then formulated, as follows:

- Why do survivors remain silent?
- Why does the Buddhist monastery maintain silence about child abuse within it?
- Why do childcare and protection authorities acquiesce in the silence?
- Why is there an academic silence on Buddhist monastic child abuse?

The first three questions attempted to explore the phenomenon of silence through the voices of three different but related stakeholder groups. The fourth question originated from the lack of academic interest in child abuse in the Buddhist monastery as reflected in the paucity of literature on the topic. The aim was to use the case study method, as Yin (2009) signalled, to capture holistic characteristics of real-life events that included survivors' experience, small group interactions, and the presence or absence of certain institutional practices and processes.

4.6 Research Design

The research employed an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1998). A case study is an investigation into individuals, neighbourhoods, events, programs or organisations that provides a framework to explore real-life phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). An instrumental case study design is particularly useful when the researcher wants to define a case as part of a broader phenomenon and to use the case to facilitate an understanding of that broader phenomenon (Stake, 1998). Therefore, researcher's primary interest in using this design is to illuminate the circumstances around the case rather than the case itself (Thomas, 2016). The researcher can use multiple sources of data to inform the exploration (Yin, 2014). These design features were apposite for the purposes of this research as it set out to explore the issue of silence around child abuse using the case of the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka. While the case was not strictly defined by binding it to clearly delineated boundaries, the current research endeavoured to retain crucial elements of the case such as its nature, its historical background, its political, economic, and legal context, and the participants through whom the case is known (Stake 1998). It is not a bounded case in the strict sense of the word.

4.7 Participants sampling strategy

This case study design used a purposive sampling technique that enabled the selection of participants most relevant to the study. 'The logic and the power of purposeful sampling lie in the selecting information-rich cases for study in depth… Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations' (Patton, 2015, p. 264). For the selection of two groups of participants to represent the monastic leadership and child protection agencies, group characteristic sampling technique was used (Patton, 2015, p. 267). This is an alternative purposeful sampling strategy that enables selection of specialty groups capable of illuminating realities unique to them.

A purposive sampling strategy was compatible with the researcher's proximity to the topic, participants and context. This strategy operates on the principle that the best information is gathered through selecting a relatively small number of participants on the basis of their known attributes (Denscombe, 2017). The two main attributes are relevance and knowledge; the participants must be relevant to my inquiry, and have experiential and, in some cases, professional knowledge about the topic under investigation. According to Denscombe (2017), this selection method works well when the researcher is already familiar with the population and their experiences, which was another compelling reason to apply this technique.

By selecting a small but relevant number of cases, '*the aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular*' (Denscombe, 2017, p. 77, emphasis in original). To this end, 'case studies are not meant to produce generalisations in the quantitative sense of the term. Instead, they may produce mini generalisations in the forms of continuing 'refinements of understanding' about a particular phenomenon' (Stake, 1995, p. 7).

4.8 Observations and other sources of data

In addition to interview data, observations, document reviews and audio-visual content were used to form the findings. Observations in the current research did not involve observing people in a restricted or natural setting in the experimental sense but refers to the researcher's observation of his experience of dealing with prospective participants including child protection authorities who acted as the gate-keepers and senior monastic leaders who eventually did not participate in the research. Observations also included a state of being current with developing stories from and in relation to the BMS. In practice, this involved having informal conversations with former and current monks and religious scholars about developing stories, and filtering through various print and digital media sources. While the frequency of this practice varied over the past three years, it led to a sizable collection of newspaper articles, web pages and video clips that were screened for the final data analysis. The main criterion for the selection of data points was their relevance to research questions, although there was a degree of subjectivity that stems from researcher's familiarity with the context and the topic. Sourcing of fine-grained details such as these was time consuming and would not have been possible without immersing in the case and its context.

4.9 Ethical considerations and ethics committee approval

Participants in this research comprised three distinct groups with differing connections to the research topic and the researcher. For example, the survivors were recruited through a closed Facebook group of which the researcher is a member. Two of the three senior monks that were interviewed were personally known to the researcher. Lastly, the child protection officers who participated in the research were formally referred to the researcher by the research coordinator of the National Child Protection Authority, their employer.

Due to travel restrictions imposed by the UK and Sri Lankan governments during the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online. While reducing the stress of travelling, it presented a host of other challenges. The FREC required a great deal of certainty on the number of participants, access to them, gatekeeper details, the specific online platform for

interviews and so forth, but it was challenging to provide definitive answers to those questions due to a breakdown in communication with potential participants and organisations in Sri Lanka. Communication delays are not unusual in Sri Lanka, but this inefficiency appeared to be exacerbated by Covid-related lockdowns, general reluctance to respond to emails from unknown senders and, perhaps, even the sensitivity of the research topic itself.

These characteristics in participant-researcher relationship and practical challenges presented by the research setting called for an eclectic approach to ethical requirements. This meant that deontological, utilitarian and relational approaches be considered (Lonne et al., 2016) to the degree that was appropriate to working with these three groups and the overall nature of the topic. Ethical considerations required by the FREC were generally governed by a deontological/rule based (Lonne et al., 2016) or procedural approach (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). This approach was useful in the application process in preparing for a set of ethical dilemmas involving informed consent (to ensure that participants understood the conditions of participation and were able to make that determination voluntarily and without coercion), privacy and confidentiality (to ensure that participants had control over their private information), and prevention of harm to the participants.

While the back-and-forth correspondence with the FREC and their feedback was useful, it took nearly a year to obtain approval due to challenges imposed by Covid-related delays, lack of clarity around privacy and data protection provisions involving international research, and lack of clarity on social science research governance in Sri Lanka. Once all the amendments were made, the approval was stuck in a deadlock – the FREC and the National Child Protection Authority were waiting for each other's green light. After explaining this dilemma to the FREC, the full approval for data collection was granted on the 9 April 2021 (application reference: ETH1920_0298, see Appendix-3).

While the circumspect FREC approval process was useful as a learning exercise in research good practice, its relevance to the practical realities of the data collection process was minimal. Instead, my experience resonated more with what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) called ethics in practice, referring to situational ethical decision-making. Citing Komersaroff (1995), they used the term 'microethics' to refer to the 'everyday' ethical issues which are not generally covered by FRECs (p. 265). Once the FREC approval enabled the formal start of the data collection, this practical approach was useful in making pragmatic decisions in an ethically responsible manner. For example, none of the participants were concerned about or

interested in matters of privacy or confidentiality. They politely declined the request to sign the consent forms and instead verbally expressed their consent for audio-visual recording of the interviews. To confirm their consent, the statement 'I have started recording the interview as you have no objection' was recorded at the beginning of the interview.

Participants who were known to the researcher seemed to take offense at the request to sign a consent form, perhaps an indication of mutual expectation for trusting word of mouth over signing a formal document. However, regarding child protection officers who were not known to the researcher and were referred by their research coordinator, this may indicate hesitation about being a part of the project in a formal way. Overall, they ridiculed giving credence to signing a paper form over the word of mouth. This may also be about unspoken hesitation in making any formal commitment to the research by signing a paper. Such hesitation is not uncommon among communities coming from informal settings as they do not seem to share the values of formal majority cultures defined by privacy laws and regulations (Mullings, 2004).

4.9.1 Duty of care to participants as survivors and researcher self-care

Care was taken to remove any personally identifiable details from the interview transcripts. Translated copies of interview transcripts were sent to senior monks and child protection officers (but not to survivors who did not read in English) for verification. Two senior monks approved the translated transcripts and the others did not respond. As Ellis (2007) advocated, it was important for me to go beyond the formal FREC's approval and act as I would in my personal and professional life to care for the wellbeing of participants. These 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 265) that arose from the unique relational and contextual dynamics required a flexible mindset with a sense of care and responsibility. This approach was compatible with the overall reflexive posture of the research which 'means a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, participants, and the research context' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 275). In a broader sense, as prescriptive approaches to research, qualitative research in particular, are unlikely to provide a discursive framework to address emerging ethical issues, such reflexive ethics frameworks are useful to overcome this limitation by extending the already available reflexivity remit not just to the epistemological dimension of research but also to the relational dimension of working with participants.

Talking about child abuse within a respected religious institution was viewed as generally distressing to the participants, particularly to the survivors and potential emotional and spiritual distress resulting from it was reflected upon. Also reflected upon was the researcher self-care for the same concerns. These reflections were undergirded by the need for striking a balance between minimizing the harm to participants while maximising the benefits of the resulting knowledge may produce for the local and global community. For the knowledge that was deemed necessary for the safety of children in monastic setting, some degree of disclosure of child abuse by the survivors was viewed as necessary. Discussion on socially valuable knowledge in bio-medical ethics (for example, Wenner, 2013; 2018; Holzer, 2017) in developing world (for example, Nayak and Shah, 2017) provided useful context for these reflections.

Having decided on interview participants, an after-care plan for participants and for the researcher was formulated during the health and safety risks assessment process which was a prerequisite for the FREC approval (see Appendix-4). The FREC agreed that the level of risk associated with interviewing was medium for the survivors and low for the other two groups of participants and the researcher. This assessment was based on the assurances on informed consent, autonomy to enter or exit interviews, and the focus of the interview questions which were designed to address circumstances around perpetration and disclosure rather than impact of abuse which was assumed to be more distressing (see Appendix-5). In the plan, two nationally-recognised charities that provide confidential counselling services were recognise as referral sources. While the risk assessment process helped identify specific support that may be needed following interviews, as the number of participants who were also the survivors of abuse were small, I started the interviews with great deal of confidence in my professional skills as a trained psychotherapist to conduct the interviews and to manage any distressing situation during or after interviews. However, as the interviews were conducted online thousands of miles apart from the participants' immediate circumstances and environments, I did not have the full view into the lives of the participants following the interviews. While recognising this common disadvantage in virtual methods (Pocock et al, 2021), the most sensible action under the circumstances was to follow up with the four participants who disclosed experience of abuse during childhood. During my follow up calls, none of them reported any distress or need to access professional counselling. They assured me that they were not in any discomfort following the interview but were glad to be part of the research. However, if future research were to specifically focus on the impact of abuse on

survivors, the interviews are likely to be more distressing to the participants and, therefore, the accessibility to support services must be ensured.

I have been in touch with the four survivors and two of the three senior monks at various stages of this research and other than briefly mentioning the progress of the research degree, I did not feel the need to discuss any matters pertaining to the topic of child abuse. As the survivors were contacted through a closed Facebook group of former and current monks including myself, and two out of the three senior monks interviewed were also personally known to me, my continuing relationship with them has now entered a new phase with new meanings. As I am planning to continue to research this topic, I will continue to reflect on my ethical responsibilities to this community and on challenges that may arise from my position as a nexus between them and the wider academic and non-academic world. I am aware that while this relationship is currently based on my 'credibility and approachability' (Mayorga-Gallo and Hordge-Freeman (2017, p. 337) as a survivor and a researcher, it will evolve in ways that are difficult to predict.

While FREC's risk assessment form insisted on plans for researcher's safety and wellbeing, self-care has always been an integral part of my personal and professional life as therapist for the past ten years. The values, attitudes, skills and practices that constitute therapist's wellbeing were easily transferred to manage my wellbeing during past three years as this was a challenging period of time due to the topic as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. Understanding of my personal limitations and vulnerabilities along with daily practice of meditation, regular supervision meetings was crucial for the successful completion of the research. Prospective researchers interested in exploring similar topics may benefit from having a robust self-care plan before undertaking the research as this subject may cause emotional fatigue and consequent burn-out.

4.10 Types and sources of data

The study's data were gathered from the following sources:

- Three former monks who suffered various forms of abuse when they were novice monks
- Three current senior monks from the Buddhist monastery

- Three child protection officers attached to the National Child Protection Authority in Sri Lanka
- A reflexive journal and online fieldwork records maintained during the data collection period and overall study
- Other sources were:
    - The Monastic Codes of Conduct
    - Public statements made by monastic leaders
    - Child safeguarding policies and frameworks published by the National Child Protection Authority in Sri Lanka

4.11 Data collection methods

Data were gathered from the above sources using the following method:

4.11.1 Individual interviews

Nine virtual face-to-face interviews (Hanna and Mwale, 2017) were conducted. Although many of the participants did not have laptops or internet connections, they all had access to mobile devices and affordable data packages. Under the circumstances, these resources were sufficient to conduct the interviews. The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and the longer interviews were interrupted when the device ran out of data credit. Interviews resumed after recharging the device with data credit. Offers to cover the data cost incurred by the interviewees were declined by the participants.

The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams platform that was available to Christ Church students. After briefing the participants again about the purpose and confidentiality of the interview, the interview was recorded using the built-in recording function. These recordings were automatically sent as an audio-visual file to the recording folder in Microsoft OneDrive which is password protected.

There are three interviewing formats: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Brinkmann, 2018). A semi-structured style was chosen for two main reasons: the interview was not to be rigidly structured to allow participants to volunteer any unanticipated information they wished to disclose. Unstructured interviews were ruled out to prevent a free-flow of sensitive information that may be challenging to manage within the restrictions of this research.

The approach to interviewing was one that considered the researcher as an active co-creator rather than a passive collector of data (McGrath et al., 2019). Interview questions, for the most part, were informed by the researcher's insider knowledge and this was made explicit to the participants from the outset. Finlay's reflexive lenses were used to enhance '*methodological self-consciousness*' (Finlay, 2012, p. 321, emphasis in original) by ensuring that the participants' voices were prioritised and vulnerable participants were cared for during and after interviews.

'Relational reflexivity' (Finlay, 2012, p. 328) was another useful tool in managing relational dynamics of an interview, shaped by the rules of engagement in its sociocultural context. This was particularly evident in interviewing senior monks, as the researcher was navigating the relational expectations between clergy and laity in Sri Lankan society while trying to pose uncomfortable questions about an uncomfortable topic. Approaching the interview as a mutually beneficial 'relational work' (Lillrank, 2012, p. 282) was found to be useful in balancing this social power dynamic.

However, the relational dynamics were more equal in interviews with survivors. Approaching the interview as a companion rather than an expert outsider was useful to enable the participants to comfortably share a detailed description of their 'lifeworld' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 6) and for the researcher to purposefully explore areas relevant to the research aims. This was evident in their open and candid descriptions of abuse experiences. Active listening skills were useful in going back and forth between 'closeness and distance' (Lillrank, 2012, p. 283). This meant that the researcher did not take any answers for granted or interpreted them using personal frames of reference to similar experiences. Instead, it meant that the researcher curiously explored the rationalisation behind participants' perceptions, perspectives and understanding of events. The application of a 'helping voice' (Hyden as cited in Lillrank, 2012, p. 283) was useful to enable participants who were unable to articulate complex experiences. This involved paraphrasing participants' statements and adding words and metaphors that may best reflect their experience. The researcher then checked in with participants to see if they agreed with the wording of their experience. For all three participants, this was the first time they had disclosed in detail the childhood abuse they endured as novice monks. Although they did not show any distress during the interview, the researcher checked in with them immediately after the interview and few weeks later to ensure that they did not leave the interview feeling overwhelmed or experiencing any delayed distress.

4.11.2 Reflective Journaling (RJ)

During the initial meetings with the supervisor and the Chair of Studies, the importance of documenting the research experience in a reflexive manner was underscored. Following this advice, I began journaling from the initial months of the project. At first my entries appeared more like reflective than reflexive journaling, 'reliving and rerendering: who said and did what how, when, where and why' (Bolton, 2010, p. 13). Nonetheless, it was useful to process my transition to the UK and the chaos resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as the research progressed, mere reflections were insufficient and a more reflexive style of journaling was required 'to question our own attitudes, thoughts processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others' (Bolton, 2010, p. 13). Reflexive journaling helps researchers track their methodological decisions and data analysis, along with the cognitive and emotional turning points involved in the research (Orange, 2016). Engaging in this critical practice can enhance the methodological and ethical robustness of the overall study (Smith, 1999). The reflexive turn to journaling was particularly useful to maintain a healthy emotional boundary with the topic, given its close proximity to the researcher's lived experience. This practice added descriptive value to the collected data as emerging thoughts, emotions and events were concurrently documented. For example, the lack of responsiveness from the gatekeeping organisations, although partly due to Covid-19-related disruptions, brought up all kinds of disaffections, frustrations and cynicism with the system. Writing these feelings down helped to contextualise the delays, barriers, and lack of cooperation as useful ingredients that contribute to the overall research process. This led to the crucial insight that every obstacle emerging from the Sri Lankan socio-cultural and institutional setting was contributing to the phenomenon of silence in one way or the other (RJ, 16.06.2021).

4.11.3 Other sources of data

Other sources that contributed to multiple sources of data included: the Monastic Code of Conduct, public statements and interviews provided by the monastic leaders, legal and policy documents pertaining to child safeguarding and monastic administration populated by government departments and agencies.

The Monastic Code of Conduct, known as Pātimokkha in Pāli, is an ancient text containing 227 rules for the male monastic community and 311 for female monastic community. It stipulates personal and communal guidelines regarding transgressions, reparative measures, punishments and conflict resolution (Wiyaratna, 1990). This monastic manual is available in

print and digital format and in Pāli, English and Singhalese languages. The researcher was familiar with this text owing to his background in Buddhism and monastic training.

As public figures, it is common for prominent monastic leaders to offer sermons, public lectures, media conferences and interviews to journalists on various topics. This tradition has produced a large corpus of data that is available in the public domain, both in digital and print format. Media comments were archived by the researcher throughout the study. Sri Lanka-based online newspapers and news sites were searched at least three times a week and relevant newspaper articles were saved as bookmarks in a specially labelled folder. Interviews or speeches available on YouTube were saved in the researcher's profile for later access. The content was scrutinised, and relevant excerpts were transcribed and translated before inserting them into the findings or discussion section.

Circulars, bills and policy documents populated by government bodies such as the NCPA, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Buddhism, and the Department of Buddhist Affairs were scrutinised. With some exceptions, these documents are published in all three official languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English) and are available in digital formats. They were downloaded from the respective department websites.

4.11.4 Reflections on transitioning to online data collection

Long before the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the normal ways of doing research, qualitative online interviewing has been an emerging interest (for example, Janghorban et al., 2014; Salmons, 2015), and its potential advantages, disadvantages and ethical issues have been discussed (Rodham and Gavin, 2006). However, Covid-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge for both experienced as well as novice researchers in data collection. Researchers were forced to switch to using information communication tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Facebook or Google Meet, and both challenges and opportunities have emerged from this crisis (Sah et al., 2020; Pocock et al, 2021; Żadkowska et al., 2022; Engward et al., 2022). Similar to the case in Żadkowska et al. (2022), conducting online interviews was not part of my original plan but became the only viable option due to national lockdowns, and increased cost and time associated with travelling. This sudden change of plans inevitably influenced the nature and the quality of the interview process.

As other researchers had identified before (for example, Shah et al, 2020; Pocock et al, 2021; Żadkowska et al., 2022), transitioning to online data collection provided several immediate benefits: prospective participants were sourced/contacted using publicly available online

contact points (email addresses of government agencies and Buddhist monasteries, and Facebook group members). However, the results were not as instant as others have experienced (for example Engward et al., 2022) from online communications. For example, I did not receive any response to my emails that were sent to publicly available email addresses of the NCPA or DPCCS. After several months of waiting and feeling anxious about the time lost in the process, I found out through a personal contact that the officers that I was trying to reach out were using Gmail accounts for work. Although the information technology apparatus was available in these gatekeeping organisations, the accessibility and utility of it were influenced by relational factors such as pre-existing relationships, acquittances or in-group status. In developing countries, securing informal connections seems to be vital in accessing prospective research participants (Afolabi (2021), and the response from a potential gatekeeper organisation or participants tends to depend on their perceptions and expectations of cost and benefits in collaborating with a researcher. Based on my experience, switching to online fieldwork without the necessary offline groundwork for it proved to be doubly challenging.

I agree with Pocock et al. (2021) in using recruitment methods and technology that are appropriate for the population and the topic. In relation to recruiting participants who were survivors, the availability of social media (Facebook in this case) and its unique functions (ability to have closed-groups) were convenient alternatives to offline sourcing of participants. The advantage of having access to an exclusive online group with the relevant participant characteristics (monks or former monks) quickly became clear as I was able to instantly disseminate the invitation to participate in the research to a sizable group. However, only a generic notice inviting former and current monks to share their early monastic experience was published without mentioning the child abuse angle of the research (see Appendix-6). Prospective participants were invited to direct-message the researcher and six members of the Facebook group including a monk sent direct messages indicating their interest to participate. However, after disclosing the child abuse as the focus of the interview, only four participants showed further interest to to be interviewed while others did not respond to follow up messages. Both in this case and in the case of member checking with child protection officers following interviews, the online mode of communication created an opportunity for them to avoid responding to my messages. Based on my cultural awareness, in an in-person interaction with prospective participants, the cultural norms around politeness and cooperation would have compelled them to agree to participate. In view of this, the

transitioning to online methods seems to have inadvertently provided some degree of autonomy for the participants to decide on their participation in the research.

Further advantages of online interviews include less intrusiveness due to the distance between the interviewer and interviewee. This is viewed useful in discussing sensitive topics. Online interviews are also easier to organise and manage using built-in functions of the chosen platforms. Potential disadvantages may include difficulty to understand body language, online privacy and security concerns, and loss of contextual details (Pocock et al, 2021), and limited opportunities to build rapport prior to interview (Żadkowska et al., 2022). While my experience was not vastly different from these of pros and cons, perhaps due to pre-existing contextual awareness, I did not feel as if contextual details were missing from my interviews, or there was a need for rapport building. In this vein, for researchers who are familiar with the setting and participants, the use of online methods can be more efficient and cost-effective way of interviewing.

In my experience, online interviews provided more flexibility and autonomy to overcome logistical challenges that are normally associated with conducting face to face interviews exploring sensitive topics. For example, at the time of the interviews, having online interactions for personal and professional needs had become the norm due to Covid restrictions. This would have made it easier for the participants to have an online interaction through a device without attracting too much attention or curiosity from their surroundings. Due to lose sense of personal boundaries, it is common and, even deemed acceptable, for people to interrupt and pry into others' conversations. Switching to online interviews also eliminated the burden of securing, and travelling to and from discreet location for the interviews. Without this option, it would have been distressing for the participants who are survivors as they would have been forced to explain or hide the reasons for their absence from their immediate environment while participating in the interviews.

Overall, the online methods were instrumental in adapting to the situation and completing the project in a timely manner. However, future research planning to employ online methods in developing settings like Sri Lanka will benefit from considering the the values, attitudes and accessibility relating to online resources and offline relational dynamics that mediate these factors.

4.12 Data Analysis

The data analysis involved making several analytical and practical decisions around processing and presentation of data.

4.12.1 Approach to transcribing and translating interviews

Transcribing began soon after an interview was completed. This helped to manage transcribing fatigue common among solo researchers (Poland, 1995). Next, questions about non-English transcripts had to be considered. Two senior doctoral students who were doing bilingual research were consulted and the consensus appeared to be that only relevant excerpts of the interviews should be transcribed and translated into the target language. This seemed to be driven by a pragmatic logic that suited the limited time and resources available to a solo doctoral researcher. However, transcribing and translating entire interviews were useful for this research because the content was already lean and relevant; and having a full transcript/translation was also useful for cross-checking with participants, where possible.

It became clear at this point that published qualitative research often seemed to ignore or overlook the complexities of transcribing and translating interviews. This trend underpins the taken-for-granted belief that a verbatim transcript of an interview is an exact representation of a verbal conversation (Poland, 2001; Temple and Young, 2004). With this 'problematisation of the verbatim' (Poland, 2001, p. 636), audio/video recordings, transcripts and translations were considered as gradual and inevitable departure-points from the original interview event. While the full extent of the implications of transcribing and translating of interviews is beyond the remit of this research, I tried to appreciate them to the best of my abilities and resources.

For the purpose of this case study, the aim was to produce a cleaned-up final version without the false starts or pauses. To this end, the approach to translation was eclectic, appreciating methodological, epistemological and axiological aspects of the 'necessary and impossible' act of translation (Spivak, 2018, 50:46). I was conscious of the epistemological and ethical questions that this approach to translation may raise: How do I guarantee that the translation was faithful to the original interview? What authority do I have in transforming what was said in informal Singhalese into formal English? Answers to these complex questions seem to be relative to the time and resources available to the researcher (Temple and Yong, 2004), and justification for my approach can be found in my close proximity to the topic, context and the participants (as outlined in the researcher positionality section), and the need to be

practical due to limited resources. Although an insider positionality does not guarantee a free pass for the researcher as translator (Temple and Young, 2004), having shared cultural and linguistic experience with participants and understanding of the target audience certainly enhances credibility (Oxley et al., 2017). This self-assumed authority to translate was exercised with care. The interview recordings, transcripts and translated transcripts were regularly crosschecked to ensure relative reliability and consistency between them. I checked in with my understanding of context to verify meanings, and footnotes were used to explain ambiguities in certain phrases and statements. Overall, there were linguistically universal as well as particular phrases and statements. For example, the English phrase 'spare the rod and spoil the child' was used to translate the same cultural attitude and practice in Sri Lanka, while introducing particular ceremonial practices such as formal lunch offering or all-night chanting with more details.

4.12.2 Construction of Thematic Networks

Thematic Network Analysis (TNA) was used as it provided the benefits of two closely related qualitative data analysis methods – Thematic Analysis (TA) developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Thematic Network (TN) presented by Attride-Stirling (2001).

Braun and Clarke's approach was chosen for several compelling reasons. Unlike other approaches that espoused structured and positivistic methods (for example, Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe, 2011), this advocated a flexible approach which considered the inductive and interpretative capabilities of qualitative research and was important for analysis as data were examined from a social constructionist framework. Furthermore, this flexibility has been enhanced by recent developments in TA. Building on their widely cited 2006 paper 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', Braun and Clarke (2014, 2019, 2021) have integrated reflexive practice into traditional thematic analysis. This revised approach is increasingly referred to as Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), which dovetails with Attride-Stirling's TN technique as both approaches espouse a flexible and iterative coding process, followed by deliberate generation of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Attride-Stirling, 2001). However, the main incentive to incorporate the TN technique was its ability to increase the robustness of the themes using Toulmin's argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1958) which is embedded within it.

Toulmin's argumentation model provides a logical path from raw data to claims using several technical terms with argumentative value. As adopted by Attride-Stirling (2001), *claims* refer

to conclusions reached at the end of arguments. These claims are granted on the evidentiary ground provided by *warrants* and *backings*, and are mediated by *qualifiers* and *rebuttals* indicating their strength and the potential for alternative claims (see figure 4.1 in Appendix-7)

Braun and Clarke, discouraging the tendency among users of TA to adopt a taken-for-granted approach to themes, defined themes as 'patterns of *shared meaning* underpinned or united by a core concept' (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 593, emphasis in original). In this new refinement, they encourage researchers to actively generate themes – often influenced by the researcher's theoretical leanings – rather than assume that there are pre-existing themes in the data waiting to be found (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This new development sat well with the logical organising principles behind TN.

Table 4.1 below shows an NVivo-generated audit trail of codes contributing to the basic theme through the organising theme to global theme. This is an expanded sample view of codes (raw 185-187) embedded in BT1 (raw 184); basic themes (raw 180, 184) embedded in OT1 (raw 179); and organising themes (raw 168, 179) embedded in **GT1** (raw 167).

Table 4.1

	A	B	C	D
1	Name		Files	References
2	GT3 - PERPETUATING SILENCERS			
139	GT2 - PRECIPITATING SILENCERS			
167	GT1 - PREDISPOSING SILENCERS			
168	OT2 - Other Determinants			
179	OT1- Socioeconomic Determinants			
180	BT2 - Helplessness			
184	BT1 - Ordination as a solution to poverty			
185	ordination for a better life		4	7
186	ordination as a solution to poverty		2	8
187	for better education		2	3
188				
189				

The figures in the file column indicate the number of participants that contributed to each code. The figures in references column show the number of times that participants made relevant statements. Each global theme was constructed with the backing of at least two organising themes that were based on at least two basic themes.

4.12.3 Incorporation of data from other sources

While interviews from the three stakeholder groups were the only content used for the construction of themes, data points from other sources including policy documents were used in the presentation of findings to make convergent or divergent points about these themes. This meant that extracts from policy documents or media sources were used where deemed logical and relevant, and directly addressed the research question.

4.13 Summary

A qualitative instrumental case study design allowed the integration of the researcher's personal connectedness, subjective data from multiple stakeholders and a range of publicly available sources of data. This integrative approach was key to developing the description of the case. Social constructionist and social ecological systems perspectives were used to explore how silence around child abuse and safeguarding risks were created at interpersonal, institutional and professional levels. The interview data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Thematic Networking. In the next chapter, the themes resulting from the interview data analysis are presented, along with relevant contextual data from other sources.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings of the study. As discussed in the previous chapter, the technical process of creating basic and organising themes leading to global themes was guided by Thematic Networks (Attride-Sterling, 2001) and Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2014, 2019, 2021). Both techniques were instrumental in processing the interview data in an iterative and logical manner, gradually increasing the level of abstraction from initial verbal data to the global themes.

5.1.1 Basic themes

Basic themes refer to 'lowest-order premises evident in the text' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 338), in the form of a statement/s made by the participant in the interview. These basic units had limited individual meanings yet when considered together contributed towards certain overall meanings that were captured by Organising themes. These units can be described as basic 'building blocks of analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 207). In Toulmin's taxonomy, Basic Theme may represent a backing, meaning supporting evidence as it is a statement of belief with an underlying concept (in Toulmin's case, the warrant) that contributes toward a broader meaning. These broader meanings were then captured in Organising Themes.

5.1.2 Organising themes

These mid-range themes were created by clustering Basic Themes with unifying meanings. Organising Themes were purposefully created with pithy titles to represent the shared meanings of Basic Themes. In Toulmin's taxonomy, Organising Themes may represent warrants that authorise meaningful claims. At this level, not only the underlying organising principles but also the overall meanings of Basic Themes were considered. To this end, where possible, Organising Themes indicated 'analytic sensibilities' informed by the theoretical framework of the study (Braun and Clarke, 2014, p. 203). With this added quality of enhanced meaning, Organising Themes collectively led to more abstract and broader domains of meaning that were captured in Global Themes.

5.1.3 Global themes

Global Themes were created as the headline themes that represented the dominant metaphors in the overall data. In Toulmin's taxonomy, this may represent a claim in the form of a final conclusion. Hence, a Global theme was constituted by a set of Organising Themes that collectively represented a particular theme or issue appearing in the data. Like a book title or newspaper headline, the Global Theme encapsulated a vast, expansive thread of meaning in a singular theme. In a given analysis, there could be as many Global Themes as threads of meaning discovered in data (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Step 1: Transcribing the data

As mentioned earlier, first the interviews were manually transcribed. A4-sized notebooks were used, leaving a two-inch margin on the right-side of the page for notes. While I was aware of variations and analytic preferences of transcript production (Bucholtz, 2007), I produced a standard verbatim transcript with less orthographical features, as I was interested not in the discursive qualities of the interviews but in the content of discourse. This meant that in addition to what was explicitly said, only a selected number of discursive characteristics such as long pauses, repetition or laughter were captured.

Step 2: Translating into English

There were at least three translation choices available for consideration – to translate at the beginning, middle or end of the analysis (Esfehani and Walters, 2018). The first option was taken mainly because the transcripts needed to be available in English for the ease of sharing with the supervisor in consultations. Later, this decision turned out to be even more advantageous as it was decided to transfer data into the NVivo qualitative analysis software which can only accommodate English transcripts. This decision was taken mainly to take advantage of the organising features available in NVivo.

Step 3: Familiarisation

The transcripts were re-read and compared to the audio-visual recordings. This exercise was useful in adjusting certain words that emphasised certain meanings. The translation exercise is considered the most intimate form of reading (Spivak, 2018) and it helps the researcher to become intimately aware of the content of the data. This was true in my experience, as the exercise of transcribing and translating offered an excellent opportunity to familiarise with

the data and assess its overall direction and was a clear advantage for the thematic analysis that followed.

Step 4: Interval from data

After all the interviews were transcribed and translated, I put them aside for a couple of weeks to enable me to reflect and refresh my knowledge of thematic analysis and thematic networks techniques. Taking a break from the data was useful because it helped mitigate the familiarity fatigue I was experiencing after transcribing, translating and re-listening to information that was already familiar to me. After distancing myself from the data, I was eager to immerse myself back into it.

Step 5: Initial coding

Using the 'complete coding' approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 206), both NVivo and semantic codes were created. In this round, coding was carried out manually using a table in Microsoft Word. I created a table with three columns and put the interview transcript in the left column. Using tables, these codes were collated with relevant data extracts from the interviews (see Box 5.1 in Appendix-8). However, the manual coding process using highlighted colours and tables became increasingly inconvenient and less efficient.

After taking a brief course in the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, all manually coded data were transferred to NVivo to take advantage of the attractive features available in it to organise already familiar data. Although this was not a part of the original plan, it was a useful discovery. As most of the coding had been done manually before transferring it to this platform, I was still able to remain familiar with the data. NVivo tools provided more efficient ease of navigation between participants and codes. At this point, 210 codes along with references in the form of direct quotes had been created.

Step 6: Creating thematic networks

Then, through codes patterns that would constitute basic themes were identified. The inquiry's focus on silence provided a binding thread to cluster the codes around Basic themes that began to appear as basic units of explanation. Using research questions as guidelines, the codes and Basic themes were revisited, reflecting on the contents of codes. This iteration also resulted in re-coding and re-naming of previously named materials. Using the 210 initial codes as building blocks, thematic networks were piloted by assigning codes into Basic themes. The organising features available in NVivo provided the flexibility to create any

number of thematic frameworks using the initial codes and save them as separate files. First, this was experimented for each participating group and it was helpful in recognising commonly occurring or similar codes. Then, in a separate NVivo file, Basic themes from all three participating groups were combined and the researcher started experimenting with tentative Organising themes. Toulmin's argumentation model was instrumental in assigning the code-led Basic themes to Organising Themes. For example, the Basic themes 'Power differential (BT23), 'Climate of fear' (BT22), 'Entrapment' (BT25), 'No safeguarding' (BT24), 'Normalisation of abuse' (BT26), and 'Double acting' (BT27) were organised into 'Initial Shock and Awe Silence Victims' (OT6). At this point, it became clear that the larger portion of the data was concentrated on participants' description of ongoing silence about abuse. This naturally occurring lead was followed to cluster Organising themes into a Global theme titled 'PERPETUATING SILENCERS'.

To capture the temporal aspect of the data deriving partly from its biographical content, it was meaningful to categorise the rest of the Organising themes into two more Global themes, predisposing silencers and precipitating silencers.

5.1.4 Guide to abbreviations

The data extracts are presented with the following abbreviations:

S1 = Survivor 1 (S1-S4)

ML1 = Monastic Leader 1 (ML1- ML3)

CPO1 = Child Protection Officer 1 (CPO1- CPO3)

BT = Basic themes

RJ = Reflexive Journal

5.1.5 Participants' profile

- Ten participants took part in the study: four former monks, three senior monks and three child protection officers.
- The four former monks were ordained and brought up in four unrelated monasteries. Two were ordained at the age of ten and the other two at twelve. All of them went on to live as Buddhist monks until their mid-twenties before leaving their respective monasteries under difficult socio-emotional circumstances. All but one mentioned

experiencing sexual abuse on more than one occasion and all reported experiencing physical and psychological abuse. For all of them, this interview was the first formal disclosure of their abuse experience.

- Of these four, one was in his mid-thirties and the other three had just turned forty. Two of them were married with at least one child. They all had earned university degrees and had started careers in the civil service or education.
- The three senior Buddhist monks who were interviewed currently live in Sri Lanka. Two of them have established their own monasteries and act as abbots while the other monk, although not an abbot of a particular monastery, holds monastic responsibilities in several monasteries connected to his lineage.
- They were all ordained when they were children and are now aged between 45 and 55. All t of them have progressed beyond basic monastic education to formal higher education in universities and have an active scholarly interest in Buddhism or humanities.
- Generally, when a novice monk who is ordained as a child turns twenty, he receives the higher ordination (*upasamapadā*) which is permanent membership of the monastic community. Ten years after this, a monk is considered a senior member and is permitted to ordain his own disciples.
- The senior monks' decision to participate in this research, albeit on the basis of anonymity, can be viewed as an indication that they see a need to research the topic and for positive changes to occur within the institution. Therefore, their views tend to be generally favourable towards children's rights.
- Lastly, the three child protection officers (one female and two male) work for the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) in Sri Lanka. They had respectively seven, eleven and fourteen years of experience on the job and varying levels of direct experience in dealing with incidents of child abuse related to monasteries. All of them were employed in regional branches of the NCPA.
- Two of them identified themselves as Buddhist and were regular patrons of their local monasteries.

5.2 Presentation of findings

The main findings will be presented in three global themes that are labelled as Predisposing Silencers, Precipitating Silencers and Perpetuating Silencers. Although they did not emerge in that order, it became clear that the construction of the silence had a temporal dimension to

it. In other words, as the participants spoke about the silence, they were moving between historical, recent, and current circumstances and barriers around disclosure with references to events of abuse which had occurred at a chronological point in time. This naturally led to the illumination of circumstances that preceded as well as followed the events, indicating a timeline of silence that is parallel to the timeline of abuse. This feature was meaningfully captured by organising the themes as predisposing, precipitating and perpetuating silencers.

5.3. GLOBAL THEME 1: Predisposing Silencers

This GLOBAL THEME comprised three Organising Themes and six Basic themes (see Figure 5.1 in Appendix-9). This network of themes makes the case for pre-existing familial, institutional, and social dynamics that seemed to set the stage for ensuing silence. Of the three Organising Themes, one cluster demonstrated how socioeconomic determinants acted as a primary motivation for child ordination. The second constellation pointed to the sociocultural determinants that appeared to be conflated with the socioeconomic factors and thereby further confounded decisions around ordaining a child. The third cluster revealed a set of institutional characteristics that made the monastery an inhospitable place for children. The three Organising Themes are presented below.

5.3.2 Socioeconomic Determinants

All four survivors of child abuse were ordained in the early 1990's. This was during the aftermath of the 1987-1989 youth uprising which was violently crushed by government forces and state-sponsored paramilitary groups, resulting in the destruction of thousands of lives and economic resources. The following participant set the scene for his troubled journey as a novice monk with this grim description of his immediate family circumstances:

> *That was the time after the 88-89 riots, so the economic situation at home was not that good. Many mothers went overseas as domestic helpers. Young children were sent away to work or they were sent to a monastery. The arrangement to send me to a monastery happened at a time when people were searching for a way out of their economic hardships (S1, BT2).*

His family was about to be torn apart by the economic difficulties and hopelessness that possibly gripped the society at that time. His mother was forced to go to the Middle East to work as a domestic servant. Many unskilled Sri Lankan women who went there returned a few months later, physically and mentally bruised by the cruel and inhumane treatment they received at the hand of their employers.

Namal: So, your mother's plan to go overseas and yours to become a monk were plans to reduce the economic hardships, right?

S1: Yes, that's right because my father was a farmer, and his livelihood was badly affected by the riots. So, with those economic hardships, they turned to plans like that (S1, BT2).

Under these abject circumstances, it was likely that becoming a monk was an appealing proposition for him. The decision to enter a monastery for this participant was driven by aspirations for upward social mobility:

One was the opportunity to receive a decent education. Another thing was that by becoming a monk one could lead a comfortable life. And also, I felt like this was a solution to the poverty at home (S1, BT1).

For this participant, the situation at home was so dire that his parents were struggling to meet even the most basic needs in their crowded home:

We were very poor. There was not even enough food for all of us at home. Sometimes, it was just one loaf of bread for five people. I came from such an impoverished background (S3, BT1).

Perhaps, due the monastery's historical reputation as an education provider, the key incentive for this participant was the probable path to a better education in a better-resourced monastery in the city, away from the impoverished village:

The idea was to send me to a monastery in the city because that was considered ideal for a better education. There was a man in the village who went around looking for young boys to be sent to that monastery in the city. He propagated the idea that one can receive a good education there. It appeared that they viewed going to the city as an achievement (S4, BT1).

As he recalled, the contrast between his impoverished household and the prosperous monastery was so stark that the decision to enter monkhood became compelling:

At that time, I too began to contemplate, especially with the situation at home, if I could go to a better place like a monastery, things would be better. This was because the kind of image that was created in us was that one could get a good education and lead a comfortable life (S1, BT1).

Ordination as an exit from domestic poverty appears to be the norm rather than the exception. Appearing in a media interview, the famous senior monk Uduwe Dhammaloka said: *'One of the reasons for my ordination was poverty. Although my village was in the vicinity of capital city, it was a village full of poor households and we were the poorest among them* (Jayalal, 2020, 3:14 – 4:51).

The tendency to give away children due to economic hardships was also confirmed in the data converging from the interviews with the child protection officers. While partially acknowledging the risks involved, overall, they held a favourable view of child ordination. One officer, making a general observation about this trend, said:

> *When they have no alternatives, they are often ordained as monks. Often this is done in the best interest of the child. Generally, the idea is "he would move up through education", "he would move up through religion". When the father abandons the family, the best option available for a single mother is to ordain the child. I tend to think that ordination is a good thing for the child as it is better than sending the child to a care home because as a monk, he stands a chance to move forward with the religion (CPO2, BT1).*

Another officer was of the similar opinion about the practice of child ordination, despite her own reservations about the safety of children in institutions. However, she was cautious to qualify her statement by adding age-appropriateness as a key entry criterion for ordination:

> *Sometimes, there are children without parents or no one to be entrusted as guardians. In those occasions, it is better to ordain the child than sending him to a children's home. However, we are unable to guarantee the complete safety of a child at any place. So, I think it's better for the child to be in an age group where he can say no to things he doesn't like. (CPO3, BT1).*

Much like the parents of the novice monks, these officers seemed to view ordination as a potential path for upward social mobility for disadvantaged children rather than as a failure of the state to help them thrive.

These socioeconomic drivers often seemed to be conflated with or camouflaged by sociocultural factors. Religious narratives around sacrificing a child to the robes seemed to have acted as a spiritual incentive in this participant's story:

…in the village becoming a monk was a big deal. The idea was that ordaining a son would open up a path to liberation for the family. That was the belief villagers held including my mother…They did not have a deep understanding of Buddhism. Their belief was that by sending their child several generations would accumulate merit. (S4, BT3).

Again, perhaps indicating a general trend, some child protection officers viewed child ordination through a positive lens. One officer went as far as to reveal that she herself contemplated ordination when she was younger and now as a mother would consider ordaining her only son. The only thing holding her back was her reservation about the safety of children in the monastery:

Generally, what we as lay people tend to do is to enjoy a worldly life. So, I think ordination is a noble thing because it focusses on a spiritual side of life. Because of that I would even ordain my only son. But I have a problem as to whether that place would be safe for him to become a monk. Because I cannot ensure the complete safety of my son there, I am afraid to ordain him (CPO3, BT3)

As child protection officers were generally in favour of child ordination, their views were further probed by triangulating contrasting evidence from the survivors of monastic child abuse:

Namal: Another problem for young monks in a monastery is the harsh daily routines. Some even describe it like being in the military. Do you think this is appropriate for children?

CPO2: Well, that's something which is intertwined with Buddhist tradition. So, we cannot form an opinion or oppose it. We cannot say the monks should be allowed to be like ordinary children because monkhood is different from being a child. One becomes a monk by renouncing the lay life. So, when we align with the Buddhist ideals, we cannot say that young monks should be given such a freedom.

Namal: But the child didn't renounce the world like an adult to become a monk. It was basically the parents' decision to make him a monk. So, do you think it's fair to subject a child to such a regime?

CPO2: Here is the thing. If the daily routine is not harmful for the child, it's fine. The daily routine entails sweeping, cleaning and praying. So, I think there should be

discipline and order, wherever it is. We know that this is not the case in lay households but if one wants to progress well in education, one must condition oneself from young childhood (CPO2, BT3).

This officer's views clearly lacked any professional scepticism and indicated a taken-for-granted view that child ordination is an inherently beneficial practice for children. These views may also indicate a naïve attitude that both the professional and general community tend to maintain towards the monastery and its practices. Perhaps inadvertently these officers expected ordinary children to be transformed into extraordinary monks simply by wearing robes.

5.3.3 Sociocultural Determinants

As stakeholders external to the monastery, parents and child protection officers appeared to hold narrow and uninformed views of child ordination that may have been passed down from the culture. Perhaps, historically the monastic institution seemed to have favoured ordaining children over adults for at least two reasons that emerged from the data. One was revealed when a senior monk was asked why the focus was on children, instead of adults.

Namal: This is also something that I am very curious about. What I mean is that what is this obsession about child ordination both from the monastic institution and the general culture. I have seen how the general public tend to evaluate someone who became a monk as a child versus someone who became a monk as an adult. What is the reason for this?

ML2: I tend to think that this is something that was constructed by the monastic institution itself. They have created it and propagated it and it is very strong now. They use the term 'Buddapabbajitha' as it appears in commentaries. They ordain older people and exploit them while degrading them at the same time. There are many derogatory references in the literature towards those who were ordained as adults (ML2, BT3).

This view may have been influenced by the cultural attitude that the child is pure and that by ordaining a child that purity may be preserved. The other reason seems rather obvious: The children are easier to mould and control. One senior monk put it bluntly:

It is obvious that when younger persons are ordained it is easier to discipline them. When older persons are ordained, they don't seem to be obedient to the seniors (ML3, BT3).

In addition to these pre-existing socioeconomic and cultural determinants, several cultural blind spots that may have blurred the vision of parents came to light. One was societal ignorance of monastic child abuse, possibly originating from social deference towards the monastery. This clearly emerged from the following child protection officer's hunch:

Namal: I am curious as to why when even a minor job in a day care centre is not offered without a background check, the monasteries are let off the hook.

CPO3: I think because of the bond that people have with religion they don't question anything any further. The other thing is people don't know such things happen in such places. Therefore, people including parents and guardians don't think about such risks. Only someone who has a pinch of scepticism tends to be careful. Due to their heart-felt bond with religion, it may be that people never think that a monk would be capable of such abuse. I am not sure how exactly this works, but they don't usually investigate those things. They just look at the reputation, glamour and the personalities in monasteries (CPO3, BT4).

As potential reasons for the lack of openness from the monastery were further explored, the following remark of a senior monk betrayed how mutual relationship dynamics between monks and the laity possibly contributed to silence. It appeared as if the proverbial noble silence of the monastery was deployed as a shield to deter any confrontation:

Namal: What do you think is the reason for this mutual silence?

ML3: There could be many reasons for that. One possible reason why monks prefer silence could be to protect the deference and reverence afforded to them (ML3, BT4).

However, alongside with this uncomfortable silence exists common knowledge about monastic practices towards children. Making an anecdotal point, this child protection officer said:

However, despite that view [abuse never happens in monasteries], *there is also a general view that things happen in monasteries. I think 90% of people know that*

things happen in temples, but nobody wants to speak about them publicly (CPO1, BT4)

Another officer remarked that parents are too desperate to be checking up on the background of monasteries or abbots:

Often times these parents are not those with in depth knowledge or mind for such deliberations. There could be people who make more informed choices, but I have no knowledge of such parents… As I said earlier, a single mother couldn't care less about the background of the temple or the monks because she is desperate for a better future for her son. She generally thinks sending the child to a monastery is better than sending to a children's home (CPO2, BT4).

5.3.4 A monastery isn't for children

When economic desperation, spiritual incentives and cultural blind spots coexist with the corrosive dynamics of the monastic institution, it becomes clear that children entered an institution that was mainly interested in protecting its own interests while being ignorant or negligent about protecting the rights of children. This negative description of the monastery emerged from the interviews with the three senior monks.

This senior monk viewed the monastery as an institution which has so far failed to reform itself out of the 'feudal model' (BT6) in which it was alleged to be stuck:

There are problems that can be observed from outside. One of them is that the failure to move out from a feudal model. The original message of Buddhism is a very noble one that transcends race, caste, ethnicity, property ownership, consumerism, entanglement with the state. But in Sri Lanka, perhaps due to the challenges encountered during its formation, it took up a different form. This form became entangled with caste system and property. Because this form was not reformed, even though the society in general has progressed to a certain extent, the Buddhist institution has so far failed to catch up with that progress. This lack of ability to update itself, in my view, is a significant issue' (ML1, BT6).

This characterisation of the monastery revealed how far the institution had deviated from its initial spiritual path and become toxic and prone to oppression, discrimination and domination for the preservation of its material interests. It was of particular interest to this study to explore if there were any efforts within the senior monastic community to reform

these feudal aspects of the monastery and to make it the progressive spiritual sanctuary that it once was, according to legend.

> *Namal: So, I wondered now in the wake of children's rights discourse, is there any internal dialogue among monastic leadership about child ordination?*
>
> *ML2: …no Mr. Namal. It's difficult to reach that point. What I mean by that is even the ones who are capable of some serious thinking seem to automatically drift towards the traditional stance (ML2, BT6).*

Further probing shed light on the internal institutional culture which appeared to be unconducive to progressive dialogue. The monastery seems to be plagued by toxic organisational characteristics such as mutual suspicion, narrow personal interest to protect one's privileges, and other divisions:

> *Monks in the monastic institution tend to be extremely suspicious of each other so they are reluctant to come together to achieve any common goal. They tend to view any new initiative with a suspicious eye (ML2, BT6).*

This may indicate the existence of a spiritual market place dynamic in which individual monasteries have to fight for their share of public support in order to survive. In a media interview, a well-known senior monk Dodampahala Rahula expressed his strong opposition to emerging networks of monasteries in Sri Lanka. He regretted that people were deserting the traditional monastery that he represented and falling prey to 'deceitful tactics employed by the charismatic monks' of these emerging monasteries. He further accused these new monasteries of receiving funds from Western governments and non-government organisations to weaken the traditional value-based Singhala society (Samarawickrama, 2021a). However, Polpetimukalane Pannasiri, another well-known senior monk, speaking to the same journalist, provided a rebuttal and defended emerging new monastic networks. He asserted that people were disaffected with poor moral standards, jealousy and rivalries in traditional monasteries, and were naturally attracted to virtuous practices of monks living in new monastic networks (Samarawickrama, 2021b).

Further evidence suggested that these organisational characteristics may have resulted from unsuccessful historical alliances within various sections of the monastery, and between the monastery and external parties. This senior monk added:

I don't know what exactly it is. Sometimes, I wondered if they are fearful of any collaborations out of fear of being misled or misunderstood by others. Some may be fear of being misused by others for nefarious gains. Lots of monks have been misused by politicians and parties with vested interests in the past. So, they tend to be apprehensive about having dialogues. There is no trust among and between monks (ML2, BT6).

It also appeared that the monastery had alienated itself from spiritual goals and drifted towards alternative goals, as this senior monk explained:

I guess it depends on what people wanted from being a monk. Early days, people deliberately renounced lay life to pursue a celibate, spiritual life as a monk. But now that is not the main focus. Now in Sri Lanka, the main objective of ordination is the maintenance of the Buddhist order (ML3, BT6).

The tendency to protect individual monasteries, regional lineages, and overall tradition emerged as the main goal of the monastery, and ordaining children was the preferred method of recruitment to achieve this:

As far as I can see, the ordination of young children in training monasteries – as we all know – is done for the purpose of maintaining the numbers in those institutions. That's one side of the story. At the same time, this helps to fulfil religious functions in monasteries in the vicinity of that training monastery (ML2, BT5).

In the past, monks were reported to urge Buddhist parents to procreate and donate more children to the Buddhist monastery (Sinhale News, 2006; VoiceTV, 2019).

Furthermore, there was an element of financial interest to ordain children in large batches so that they could be sent out to religious functions that would help monasteries; the abbots, to be precise, to accumulate more material wealth through public donations:

Children are being ordained just to maintain numbers in training monasteries… In those settings, the main thing is to conduct religious functions and receive offerings from them (ML3, BT5).

These material reasons also appeared to be conflated with other reputational insecurities that the senior monks were keen to overcome. Contrary to popular belief about holy life, these interests were tied to the pride and self-image of monastic leaders:

This is associated with pride. They tend to consider maintaining a training monastery as part of their duty to their forefathers. And then, in order to fulfil this obligation, they are going to need to ordain young children (ML2, BT5).

This desperate push to keep lineages afloat seemed to further erode the moral and the ethical standards generally expected of monastic life. In the interests of continuing the monastic lineage, senior leaders seemed to choose quantity over quality:

From the institution side, for example, there are pious monks, but they are afraid of insisting strict monastic codes on their disciples out of fear that they might leave the monastery… That is the argument that there are very few monks in the country and if the standards were to be higher, the remaining numbers would dwindle fast. There is such fear (ML2, BT5).

In recent years, there has been an increase in reported incidents of disputes between monks over the ownership/abbotship of prestigious monasteries. Some of these issues have led to protracted legal proceedings (Samaraweera, 2021), while others have led to intimidation (*Daily Mirror*, 2018), and even murder (Weerasinghe, 2022). The contemporary situation of the monastery appears to be antithetical to the monastic code of conduct and the standards set out by the founding elders. Following the scriptures, it is often reminded in monasteries that *sukhā sanghassa sāmaggi* which means unity is the true happiness (Dhammapada, 1985, p. 53). The gold standard for monastic good practice is to congregate once a week and confess to each other, and impose appropriate correctional measures for any transgressions (Wijayaratna, 1990). However, this practice seems to have long been ignored or it has become perfunctory:

… there is no adherence to the monastic code of conduct which includes regular confessions and corrective measures for offences. We just gather at the assembly hall for ceremonial sake, that's it. We have no dedicated time for holy life or monastic conduct (ML3, BT5).

5.3.5 Reflections

After the first three interviews which were conducted with survivors of abuse, it appeared as if the abuse and neglect following their ordination were scripted to happen as a part of a greater socio-economic tragedy. Not only abuses were slated to occur due to a combination of ignorance, poor diligence, desperation and sheer lack of safeguarding but there was a broken ecosystem that disabled awareness, due diligence and safeguarding, all of which would have

in some way counteracted abuse and prolonged silence. Instead, decisions that significantly altered the direction of children's lives were taken based on uninformed calculations triggered by the daily struggles of life. Perhaps, the greatest tragedy (as well as the blessing) is the blamelessness with which survivors seem to have moved on from their terrible childhood experience. They showed no regrets and it was as if they would walk through that treacherous path all over again, if necessary, in order to get to where they were at present. Such was the power of poverty.

5.4 GLOBAL THEME 2: Precipitating Silencers

Silencing factors in this GLOBAL THEME are somewhat similar to the predisposing ones, as they seem to stem from larger predisposing, socioeconomic, and institutional conditions. But they are different in terms of their proximity to the decision-making process involving child ordination. In this network, there are two Organising Themes and five Basic themes (see Figure 5.2 in Appendix-10). One cluster is concerned with disconnection in the immediate environment of children and their families (microsystemic), while the other cluster reveals issues outside of this microsystem (mesosystemic). The two Organising Themes are presented below.

5.4.1 Microsystemic Triggers

In combination with predisposing silencers, there appeared to be several determinants within the participants' immediate environment that precipitated their moving from home to a completely different environment. This appeared to be an uninformed decision, and one without a clear decision-maker. The following participant's reluctant parents were persuaded by neighbours and relatives who had their own views about the prospect of being a monk, and the benefits that may come with it:

> *Both my parents seemed to have some reluctance to send me away. However, a few people in the village were of the view that it would be a good thing for me to go (S1, BT13).*

This participant decided to join the monastery for reasons that seemed justifiable only from a child's perspective: He said the key incentives at that time were the proximity to the temple and perceived ability to have fun with novice monks of the same age:

> *The temple was closer to our house. Because it was so near to our house, I am talking about when I was in the seventh grade which means I was about twelve, I used to go*

to temple with a bunch of friends to play cricket with the monks… All what I wanted was to have fun with them (S2, BT12).

But this impression of the monastery as a place for fun and play did not last for long:

Namal: During the probationary three months, were you able to get a realistic picture of what temple life was about?

S2: Well. That was the first motive for me join the temple, right? Even after living there for three months, I didn't have a chance to see the realistic picture of temple life. I feel like I was prevented from seeing the real picture (BT12).

Namal: Who do you think prevented you from seeing the real picture?

S2: Not particularly anyone but it may be because I was too young compared to others (S2, BT12).

Similar to the content of the previous GLOBAL THEME, these precipitating microsystemic factors pointed to a lack of diligence on the part of caregivers, in this case parents, to adequately assess the new environment to which they were about to send their child. These lapses in parental decision-making also indicated a misaligned relationship between microsystemic units such as village families and mesosystemic units such as a monastery. As the following participant recounted, the lack of interconnection between these two systems was alarming:

Namal: Had they [parents] *been to that temple before you were sent there?*

S3: No, they had never been there before. The first time they were there was for our ordination ceremony.

Namal: So, they put their complete trust on the monk who was related you.

S3: Yes.

Namal: Before you were sent to the temple, was that consulted with your school or village legal officer?

S3: No, there wasn't anything like that (S3, BT12).

This randomness was also evident in this senior monk's transition when he was a boy. It was an accident that in the end turned out to be beneficial for him:

There were few classmates in my school who went on to become monks in several different monasteries. They pestered me to do the same, but I didn't. In the meantime, it was customary for us to go to our nearby temple in the afternoon and evenings to play with the little monks in there and sometimes to join the evening prayers. I also used to go to temple to observe precepts during full moon days because I liked to join the boys in the afternoon and to go around the village collecting coconut oil from houses to light oil lamps in the temple. In one of those full moon days, a monk from another town came in and our abbot said "he is here to take you to his temple to ordain you as monks'. There were a few of us from the same school and we went along' (ML2, BT13).

As evidence from other sources indicated, selection of children for ordination seemed to be skewed towards the abbot's discretion. During a media interview a prominent monastic leader Padanangala Dhammadeva described the circumstances of his ordination when he was ten years old. He said:

My dad used to have a store by the road and one day a monk stopped by to chat with my dad and to chew betelnuts. The monk was known to my father. As he was chewing the betelnuts, he saw me and asked my dad: Who is that boy? My dad said: That's the youngest of our boys. The monk said; 'The little one is cute, let's ordain him'. From then on, that monk visited our house once or twice a week to persuade my parents and he eventually succeeded (Jayalal, 2022)

This participant was chosen for ordination in a random moment when he was not even expecting it:

I was about ten years old at the time. We had lunch offering for the monks in our house and a monk who came for it made the remark that I was suitable for ordination. I also liked the idea (S4, BT13).

From a safeguarding perspective, these decisions appeared to lack the clarity, deliberation and the caution expected when separating a child from their primary caregivers and sending them to permanently live in an institution:

Namal: So, the monk was not your village temple monk, was he?

S1: No, he was a monk who visited our village from another area to collect donations to put up a building in his temple.

Namal: How did your parents choose that temple that you first went into?

S1: There was no basis for it. The only reason was that the monk made frequent visits to our house. I remember going around with him in the village to help him collect donations. Later on, he visited our home with goodies for us. Sometimes, a gesture like that is good enough to earn the villagers' trust (S1, BT13).

In every survivor's case, it was either the child or a person working for the monastery who made the key decision, despite their apparent lack of capacity to make such a decision. Parents as the primary caregivers and guardians played only a partial or passive role:

...he [the monk] *began to frequently visit our house and appeared to target me and insisted that I was suitable to become a monk. He checked my horoscope and kept persuading my parents that I was suitable to be a monk (S1, BT13).*

This participant's parents were also alienated from the decision-making, perhaps due to self-imposed ignorance or lack of agency to make such a monumental decision for the child:

Namal: As far as you can remember, did your parents have a clear knowledge about the temple you were sent to?

S3: I don't think they had any idea. They are not the kind of people who had the mindset to inquire about anything, really. ...There was a monk who happened to be a relative of ours. He was the one who brokered this (S3, BT13).

This parental reluctance to be decisionmakers was vividly described by Padanangala Dhammadeva in the interview cited earlier:

When I asked my mother if I can actually go to the monastery to become a monk, she said: 'go and ask your dad'. When I asked my father, he said: 'Don't ask such things from me. Go and ask your mom'. They were passing the ball to each other like that for about a year (Jayalal, 2022).

Another survivor recalled how he, not knowing the seriousness of it, insisted on becoming a novice monk and how his parents, purely based on his insistence, gave in:

Namal: Did any senior monks encourage you to join the monastery?

S2: Yes. Those who were a couple of years older to me said 'come and become a monk so that you can play with us every day'. After that I told my parents about my

desire to be a monk. At first, they didn't approve it because I was the only boy in the family but because I insisted, they gave in (S2, BT13).

Evidently, parents seemed to be absent from the conversation, failing to ask any critical questions related to safeguarding the child. A few tentative explanations emerged from child protection officers' remarks:

First thing I think the social recognition. Because these institutions [monasteries] *are connected to religion so there is a general view that such things* [child abuse] *don't happen in monasteries (CPO1, BT12).*

Often times these parents are not those with in-depth knowledge or mind for such deliberations. There could be people who make more informed choices, but I have no knowledge of such parents (CPO2, BT12)

I think because of the bond that people have with religion they don't question anything any further. The other thing is people don't know such things [child abuse] *happen in such places* [monasteries]. *Therefore, people including parents and guardians don't think about such risks (CPO3, BT12).*

5.4.2 Mesosystemic Triggers

This lack of agency by parents appeared to have led to the abuse and safety risks that their children had to endure once they were transitioned to monasteries. From a safeguarding perspective, the sheer lack of caution was extraordinary as the novices experienced the monastery as a place of sexual abuse rather than a place of worship. One participant was exposed to an incident of sexual abuse even before he was ordained as a monk. As he recalled, this happened within a few days of his arrival at the monastery:

'I was held up in the village temple for about a month and another nine months in the city temple. When I was in the village temple, I remember experiencing child abuse.

Namal: At the hand of who?

S4: It was not by the monks in the temple but by a middle-aged man living in the temple. At that stage I had no clue about what happened. When everyone in the temple were focused on a ceremony in the temple, this man put his genitals in my hand, as far as I can remember now. That was the first time I was exposed to an abuse (S4, BT11).

Two participants were ordained by senior monks who were rumoured to be sexual abusers. Obviously, these allegations were not made against them in a court of law, but rather were known in the community. However, the parents of these two children seemed to be unaware of this:

> *Namal: In addition to living in an unsafe and fearful environment, did you experience any physical or sexual abuse in that temple?*
>
> *S1: The abbot who ordained me was said to be accused of such things. I overheard villagers talking about such things.*
>
> *Namal: Did you come to know about this when you were still a young novice monk there?*
>
> *S1: Yes. Sometime after my arrival in the temple, people started saying things like that.*
>
> *Namal: How did you come to know that?*
>
> *S1: People who frequently visited temple said such things. That means, because the abbot is someone who used boys, I may be the latest partner. At least that was the impression I got at that time (S1, BT11).*

The second participant was ordained by an abbot who had gained notoriety for alleged sexual abuse and misconduct. It appeared that he was exposed to uncensored sexual behaviour:

> *'As we were aware, the abbot had homosexual relationships with those boys. Of course, I only understand that in that way now. But those days we saw at night they had sexual activities and cleaned themselves after that in the open. There were boys and men of all ages (S4, BT11).*

The children were inducted into the abuse-infected monastic environment through a period of familiarisation that can be termed 'domestication'. One of the monastic leaders I interviewed used this term to describe the motives behind such practices as child ordination and child marriages in the larger Indian culture:

> *I think, in general society and specially in Indian society, practices such as child marriage is prevalent. The motive seems to be that removing a child from her family of origin and bringing her up in a new household makes it easier to make her more compliant. The word used here is domestication (ML1, BT10).*

This period was not used to allow the children to freely explore the life of being a monk. Instead, it appeared to be used to subject children to range of problematic activities in the guise of training and discipline:

> *…I spent about a year in the temple as a candidate training to be a monk. When I say training, most of the time it was learning practical tasks rather than learning scriptures or anything like that. They included learning to sweep, cleaning dishes, going out to collect food for monks and attending to the needs of the abbot. (S1, BT10).*

These acts may have been prescribed for children, and mixed with or under the guise of educational, spiritual or disciplinary practices. Consequently, this may have led to confusion and blurring of the boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable.

For one participant, the transition was doubly challenging as he had to adjust not only to the monastic environment but also to the climate where the monastery was located:

> *We spent about five to six months getting familiarised with the temple life.*
>
> *Namal: How did you manage that as a child?*
>
> *S3: The environment and climate where the temple was located was very different from our village. With that it was tough for us to get used to. We had so much freedom when we were in the village. I felt like suddenly I was restricted. In that training monastery, the disciplinary regiment was very tough (identifiable details were removed). It was like a military style system. With those rules, it was tough to get used to it (S3, BT10).*

The survivors' accounts of abuse during the domestication period were consistent with the duty experience of this child protection officer:

> *Namal: Can you elaborate on your experience of working on those cases when they were reported to you?*
>
> *CPO3: There were cases related to children who had come from distant provinces to stay in monasteries in my division. Some of them were undergoing the familiarisation period before they were ordained as monks. There were reports of abuse during that period too'(CPO3, BT10).*

Again, survivors' domestication experience reflected the lived experience of this senior monk:

> *'There were few of us from the same school and we went along. After we arrived there, we regretted it. It was larger training monastery. It wasn't as fun as the village temple. There were lot of disciplining going on. I remember crying until I got fewer (ML2, BT10).*

Furthermore, several rigid socio-cultural norms attached to ordination and monastic life seemed to have set the ground for novices enduring abuse in silence. For example, this participant did not know that disrobing and returning home was an option:

> *The mindset in our village was that if you become a monk, you must stay a monk forever. Don't even think about disrobing. There is no return. So, if you were to stay you must abide by the way things are. That was the message I got (S2, BT9).*

As a novice, this rigid attitude was instilled by adults around him during induction into monastic life:

> *There was an elderly man in the village who was the head of the patron community. I remember him saying during my ordination ceremony such things. Even my parents seemed to embrace that view without questions. 'You must not return home and if you did, that would be a great sin' and things like that (S2, BT9).*

This participant and his friends were considering not being ordained because, during their initial days at the monastery, they found the daily routine too tough to endure. They could have chosen to remain home when they came back for breaks. But hearing villagers' disparaging remarks about deserters and fearing social disapproval, they made the fateful decision to return and remain in the monastery:

> *We came home for a break before we were ordained. At that time all four of us were thinking not to return and stay home. But folks in the village started saying derogatory things such as we are freeloaders and things like that. So, in the end we decided to return to the temple (S3, BT9).*

This pressure to endure the pain and remain in the monastery was similarly evident in the accounts of this senior monk:

When my father came to see me, I told him that I want to return home, but he said "now that you are already here you might as well stay on. Moreover, the villagers would badmouth about it, wouldn't they? Stay on, get an education and if you still want to return, then you can return (ML2, BT9).

Obviously, these social influences were amplified by the economic vulnerabilities of the parents:

Namal: Did you hear such things [derogatory remarks] *explicitly or you were told by your parents?*

S3: We directly heard such things and our parents also encouraged us to go back to the monastery because the prospect at home was bleak anyways (S3, BT9).

5.4.3 Reflections

The transition from household to monastery appeared as an ultimate act of risk taking; on the one hand, decisions were made by individuals who had no direct duty of care to the child. The influence neighbours and relatives had over life changing decisions could be a cultural phenomenon. This had a significant impact on parents who imagined a bright future for their child while being oblivious of or ignoring grave risks that awaited in religious settings. On the other hand, when decisions were made by the child, they were uninformed and often made impulsively to gratify their immediate needs. But as this decision involved monkhood and cultural narratives that reinforced such decisions, perhaps any parental objections eventually frizzled out.

5.5 GLOBAL THEME 3: Perpetuating Silencers

This final theme captured the largest section of the findings, comprising four Organising Themes and 16 Basic themes (see Figure 5.3 in Appendix-11). Findings presented in this theme covered a broad range of silencers operating at individual, institutional and social levels. Although they were presented as separate categories for the purpose of clarity, they should be seen as intersecting dynamics determined by the absence of particular ecological interconnections. For example, when a survivor mentioned that there was no one to talk to when the abuse occurred (BT26), this seemingly isolated experience was (dis)connected to the barriers to reporting (BT21) and lack of specific safeguarding policies (BT23), as identified by child protection officers. And in turn, both these dynamics were enabled by

monastic power interests (BT16) maintained in collusion with the state. In the following pages, this fundamental nexus will be expanded.

5.5.1 Initial Shock and Awe Silences Victims

Perhaps conflated with the traditional narratives around the teacher-disciple relationship, abbots and senior monks seemed to have total control over every aspect of children's life in monasteries. The main actor in this imbalanced power relationship appeared to be the abbot who was expected to be the new guardian and spiritual father figure for the child, but acted instead as an unpredictable, violent, and, in most cases, abusive, authoritarian leader with absolute power. All four survivors described their respective abbots as hot-tempered monks:

> *He was angry all the time and we were the punching bags. …He would shout so loud sometime the neighbouring villagers would gather in the temple to see what was going on. Some days, he would turn on the lights in the middle of night and shout and scold us for something. It was like he released his frustrations through us (S1, BT25).*

Although this abbot was not sexually abusive, his anger made him unapproachable. This participant was a victim of peer abuse – physically and sexually abused by older novices – , , but not report it to the abbot about because he was terrified of him:

> *Another thing was that the abbot was very strict and hot-tempered. …That was the scariest thing about him. If anything was out of line, he would lose it. He threw whatever he could lay his hand on when he was angry. … One time… He caned me until my palm turned red. … Another time, he beat up another monk until he defecated in his robes. He was very strict and hot-tempered (S2, BT25).*

As indicated by other sources of data, the angry abbot seemed to be a normalised phenomenon in Sri Lankan culture. During the interview mentioned earlier featuring the famous monk Uduwe Dhammaloka, an interesting exchange occurred between the journalist and the monk:

> *The journalist: How did you adjust to live in the monastery as a nine-year-old boy? Didn't you feel homesick?*
>
> *Uduwe Dhammaloka: …another thing was that… I was only nine years of age, wasn't I? I used to bed wet at home. It continued even after I went to live in the monastery. The abbot knew that, but to ensure that nobody else knew it, the abbot cleaned my mat*

early in the morning. Perhaps, thanks to the care I received from the abbot, I did not feel homesick or lonely.

The journalist: Normally, our impression is that the abbot is a fiery person. So, does this mean that yours wasn't a fierce one?

Uduwe Dhammaloka: No, he is very strict and fierce. He struck me several times (Jayalal, 2020).

The abbots were reported as strict disciplinarians with idiosyncratic styles of execution:

'The abbot kept a load wire [thick cable used for electronic appliances] *and that was the instrument of punishment. He ordered to remove the robes first and then beat us up with the wire. These punishments were never executed in public. They were executed within the closed parameters of the temple (S3, BT25).*

Further widening the power differential between the novice and the adult, the abbots not only appeared as violent but also as powerful figures within and beyond the monastery. This participant who was abandoned by his first teacher was forced by his circumstances to move to a larger training monastery headed by an abbot who was a regional head monk in charge of a network of monasteries. In addition to be known as a terrorising figure in and around the monastery, as a regional head of monasteries his power and influence seemed palpable to this participant as a child:

... the abbot in the training monastery was a powerful one. He had many titles, and I was afraid of him. I was scared to tell anyone.

Namal: How did you know that he was a powerful person?

S1: That was the impression that was created in our heads. He was a senior monk in the area, and he was the head of monasteries in that area (S1 BT25).

Further exploration revealed that the abbot's power and influence had been clear to the participant as a child at that time:

'Namal: How did you see that in your experience that he had such power?

S1: Sometime I saw VIPs coming to visit him.

Namal: Was he connected with the political leaders?

S1: Yes, he was. He was also connected with other senior monks in the city. I have seen famous senior monks from the city visiting him. He entertained them very well when they come over. With those visits, I felt like he had so much influence and power (S1 BT25).

One senior monk decried this power differential endemic to monasteries, condemning the practice of child ordination:

Children are being ordained just to maintain numbers in training monasteries. And then, they are abused, beaten up, taken advantage of. Because of those reasons, I don't approve it. … A teacher, a senior monk or the abbot who is supposed to look after the novice monk is often the perpetrator. The children must be saved from those who are in charge of their welfare (ML3, BT25).

A child protection officer echoed similar concerns that may stem from such power gaps between a feared monastic figure and a young child:

One thing I have observed in my job is that when you ordain younger children, out of fear of their survival, they tend to conform to anything that they are asked of (CPO3, BT27).

With this obvious power gap between child and their new guardians, children were inducted into a climate of fear in the monastery. This terrifying atmosphere seemed to have been deliberately created to control them in a particular way. One participant attributed his acquired sense of fear to verbal and physical violence to what he witnessed at the hands of the abbot:

There was a strong sense of fear mixed with apprehension. I don't know how this was created in us. Perhaps, due to his violent punishments and scolding and all of that was scary (S4, BT24).

His induction evoked images generally associated with prisoners and captives:

After we were ordained, we were required to wake up very early. As the climate [cold] *there was very different from what we used to live in, it was very difficult. After getting up, we had to do physical exercises and then learn stuff by heart. If we fell asleep, we were thrown water at (S3, BT24).*

The fear and the apprehension in novices were inculcated through carefully executed routines and rituals common to controlling institutions:

> *… It was very difficult to keep up with that timetable. A bell was rung for each item in the timetable, and we must follow along. After evening prayers, we were required to sit in a circle and relate a story or any experience we had on the day. It was more like a tribunal where we had to confess to something that we did or something that we saw someone else doing. If that was deemed to be wrong by the abbot, either advice or punishment was given…we did not walk fast. We must always bow to seniors. We were so afraid of the abbot we didn't even go near him (S3, BT24).*

Evidently, this incessant daily routine which was implemented by brute force seemed to break the novices:

> *Namal: Generally, an environment like that can be fear-inducing. What was your experience?*
>
> *S3: Actually, there was something like that. There was a sense of fear all the time, always living under rules and commandments, no freedom, and living an enclosed life (S3, BT24).*

There appeared to be a lack of care and sensitivity in easing children into such a dramatic transition. Instead, they seemed to have been thrown into an atmosphere of fear replete with physical punishment and unfamiliar chores:

> *…having to perform duties that I never had to do back home and the fact that I got punished if I did not fulfil those tasks created sadness mixed with fear (S1, BT24).*

He was so terrified of abbot's violent reactions that he did not even reach out for help when he was injured in an accident while carrying out daily chores.

> *I did not tell this to the abbot because I was afraid that I would be punished for involving in an accident.*
>
> *Namal: How did you develop the sense of fear and the need to hide such experiences?*
>
> *S1: Based on previous experience and the reaction I got when I reported such things. The reaction was a punishment rather than sympathy or kindness. So, oftentimes, I used to hide such things (S1, BT24).*

The power imbalance and the climate of fear in the monastery appeared to have entrapped the novices within the closed walls of the monastery. This violent and terrifying induction to monastic life muted their ability to protest or leave. A child protection officer familiar with monastic child abuse incidents shared her professional instincts about silence that may have been forced on children:

> *Sexual abuse has been reported. Most of them were from very young children. I don't know if this is the same for older children too. It may very well be that such things from older children are not reported (CPO3, BT26).*

Further commenting on the lack of reporting from within the monasteries, she shared an observation which seemed to resonate with the life experiences of the survivors interviewed here:

> *They tend to endure difficult experiences as long as they can or until they find a better alternative. When they reach an age where they understand better and more independent, they disrobe (CPO3, BT21).*

Another child protection officer who was familiar with cases of monastic child abuse voiced his concerns about children getting stuck in an abusive dead-end:

> *And there is the problem of lack of accessibility, who do they report to, how do they report to, what do they report to? If a young monk experiences some sort of abuse, who is he supposed to report to? The only person they could go to is the abbot. There is no other opportunity for them to report (CPO1, BT21).*

Clearly, this initial shock made some novices re-think their decision:

> *There were numerous times that we contemplated on that (S3, BT24).*

However, orchestrating an escape from this terrifying reality was impossible for them under the tight control in which they were trapped:

> *Whatever the monies that our parents gave us were taken when we return to the monastery. They were all recorded in a book and were kept with the abbot. If we needed money for stationary or something like that, we had to ask him, and he would release some money and update the book. So, even if we wanted to go, we did not have the money for the bus. We were given ten days off to go home during school*

holidays and we must return not before or after but exactly on the day ten. If not, we received punishments (S3, BT24).

It was clear that the novices at times had opportunities to escape the monastery by not returning after occasional visits to their respective homes. However, the circumstances at home (as described in the Predisposing Silencers) and social pressure (as described in the Precipitation Silencers) were so strong that they returned to the monastery on time.

This toxic dynamic of entrapment was more pronounced in the experience of sexual abuse perpetrated by using grooming, deception and coercion. One participant was entrapped in the reign of the powerful regional head of monasteries mentioned earlier. As the head of the regional monasteries, the abbot seemed to know the desperate circumstances of this participant who was an orphaned novice. The abbot appeared to have exploited that circumstance to satisfy his needs. The following account illuminates how this participant's three-year long ordeal unfolded after he was forced to relocate himself to the training monastery:

Namal: How was the new life in the training monastery?

S1: Well, I was given a room that was shared with another two monks. After that, I received frequent messages to appear in the abbot's room. That was the most unpleasant message in my life. I have no words to explain how much of mental pressure I was under at that time (S1, BT25).

The abbot seemed to have used his absolute power to assign a room for the novice with easy access to him. It appeared that the novice moved from a physically and verbally abusive monastery to an emotionally and sexually abusive one. This time, the abuse was perpetrated in subtle and manipulative ways by exploiting the helpless circumstances of the novice.

Namal: How was the abuse initiated?

S1: That was one thing that I was up against the wall. I knew I had no other options. I had lost my first temple. But I had a strong determination to study well. That was because with the family background I knew there were no hopes in going home. That is something that I believe even to this day. So, I was always in the pursuit of an answer from the outside of the family. Because of this, no matter how many obstacles I faced, I didn't have any other place to go. With this helplessness, the boundary was blurred.

Namal: That sounds like you gave into that pressure.

S1: Yes, I was compelled to give in to the abuses (S1, BT27).

Reflecting on his current working experience as a teacher, the participant recalled the use of deception by way of false promises that lured him to comply. He thought at that time that complying with abbot's wishes would lead to a materially good life:

Namal: Were there any verbal threats, persuasions or deception?

S1: There were deception. Now I teach young kids of that age and I know it is easy to deceive kids of that age. So, now looking back I realise that the extent to which I was abused was the extent to which I was deceived (S1, BT27).

Namal: So, there were verbal persuasions to gain your trust and to make you comply.

S1: Yes. But I received nothing in return. I remember he promised to open a bank account for me. That was one of his promises (S1, BT27).

As he further described, it became apparent that the abbot had deceptively groomed him for sexual acts, making false promises targeted at his desperate family circumstances:

Namal: Was this promised before the abuse began?

S1: Yes. In the early days, when he called me up, I was asked to massage his feet. And then legs and from there it progressed. During those initial days, he made those promises. He made it impossible for me to not like his next move. Another thing he promised was to adopt me as one of his own disciples which would make me the heir-apparent to the monastery. He would say things like that (S1, BT27).

Namal: Sounds like mental and emotional bribing?

S1: Yes, that's right. He knew I had no place or teacher to go to (S1, BT27).

Namal: How did you know he knew your situation?

S1: He was well-informed about the monasteries in the area because he was the head of monasteries in the area.

Namal: So, in his persuasive talks, did he highlight the fact that you were an orphan?

S1: Yes, he exploited that. Giving me a place to sleep, enrolling me in the training monastery, all these were done with an agenda. It was highlighted at every turn that I did not have a place to go (S1, BT27).

It appeared that the novices had to comply with the sexual abuse in order to survive in the monastic environment. There were indications that the novices learned not to antagonise the abbot or senior monks. For example, attending religious functions meant receiving requisites for maintenance. To attend these functions, a novice must be selected by the abbot or a senior monk. This selection, it appeared, was made based on the novice's compliance towards sexual abuse, leading to further silencing of the victim:

Namal: Was the monastery well-resourced place?

S1: There were some patrons who donated food. Sometimes we went out for invited lunches.

Namal: Who organised those things?

S1: There were couple of senior monks who were in charge of organising these things. They decided who went to which house. Those decisions also were made on favouritism. I also had the advantage of being selected because of the abbot (S1, BT27).

Namal: Did you receive requisites when you went out for these events?

S1: Yes. We exchanged these goodies for cash through back doors. There were merchants who came to collect these items, (S1, BT27).

It also became apparent that the routine-led monastic life was so relentless for the novices that they did not have time or space to reflect on their circumstances. This participant's experience resembled a description of a child labour camp:

We were pretty occupied. We were busy going to our classes and then attending religious functions. We often went to receive food and requisites in peoples' houses. We collectively received lot of requisites and the abbot made sure to collect everything (S4, BT27).

This graphic description of immoral and unlawful acts committed against young monks during religious rituals revealed a dark side of religious culture.

We also had to go for all night chanting events and that was a place where we often get sexually abused by senior monks. We take turn to sleep in make-shift beds and sometimes we don't even know who our abuser was. Those days we were like child labourers or male prostitutes. We were just used to accrue resources (S4, BT28).

In this rigidly hierarchical environment, as every aspect of novices' lives was tightly controlled while their survival dependent on feared adults, physical and sexual abuse appeared to have become normalised. This was likely to further diminish their ability to speak out, and thereby to deepen the silence. All four former monks had knowledge and experience of sexual abuse in the monastery – directly, vicariously or in both ways. As indicated earlier in the Precipitating Silencers, they were exposed to sexual abuse soon after their arrival in the monastery. The perpetrators included lay acquaintances, abbots, senior monks, and other fellow junior monks who were few years older than the novices.

This participant was exposed to a random act of sexual abuse shortly after arriving in the monastery:

I was held up in the village temple for about a month and another nine months in the city temple before I was ordained. When I was in the village temple, I remember experiencing child abuse.

Namal: At the hand of who?

S4: It was not by the monks in the temple but by a middle-aged man living in the temple. At that stage I had no clue about what happened. When everyone in the temple were focused on a ceremony in the temple, this man put his genitals in my hand, as far as I can remember now. That was the first time I was exposed to an abuse' (S4, BT28).

It went from this random incident to a wide-spread exposure to sexual abuse.

Whenever we went outside of the temple, we were victimised by other senior monks in other monasteries… Most of the senior monks were in the business of abusing younger monks (S4, BT28).

In addition to experiencing sexual abuse first-hand, some also witnessed sexual abuse and misconduct taking place in the monastic environment. This may have contributed to their viewing sexual abuse as an integral part of monastic life.

As we were aware, the abbot had homosexual relationships with those boys. Of course, I only understand that in that way now. But those days we saw at night they had sexual activities and cleaned themselves after that in the open. There were boys and men of all ages (S4, BT28).

Further probing revealed that the incidents of physical and sexual abuse at some point became so ordinary that there was no urgency to speak about it:

I think it was partly because the abusive physical and sexual acts were seen as something normal in the community (S1, BT28).

As I look back now at that environment, I tend to view abuse as part of the monkhood and monastic life. Any child who has been in that environment tends to be exposed to abuse (S1 BT28).

As this participant admitted, exposure to sexual acts led to experimenting this behaviour on other peers:

…one thing was that it was the only training I received in the temple. I feel like I didn't learn anything other than that. One does that to the other and the other does it to the next one. That means I experimented it myself. I wanted to do that to someone else because I wanted to find out what was in it for the other person who was doing it to me. Later on, I grew to detest it and never tried it again. But this act was common among everyone (S1, BT28).

And eventually abuse became normalised:

… these things were quite normal in temple life. It was not considered a big deal (S4, BT28).

'We continued to be used and overtime we learned to live with as a part of our life in temple (S1, BT28).

After a while I got used to it. We conformed with the system and lived accordingly (S3, BT28).

The following vignette from the researcher's reflexive journal provided converging evidence that may reflect a greater tolerance towards sexual behaviours towards young boys in monasteries. When a prominent monastic leader was contacted with the purpose of interviewing him for this research, he made the following comment and giggled: 'Even the

great sage Mahinda who introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka landed on a slab of rock' (*Mihindu hāmudurovo dharmaya aragena āveth gal thalāwakatane- RJ, 17.07.2021*). (Eventually, this interview did not take place as he did not respond to follow up calls/emails). The obscene terminology for non-penetrative sex in Singhalese is '*gal kapanava*' (the literal meaning of these words is 'rock cutting' while they refer to frottage/frothing).

It appeared that novices at this point had to learn to maintain a strict inside-outside boundary so that the obscene and violent aspects of monastic life were concealed even from their parents. This meant hiding the pain and enduring the abuse. While enduring the physical and sexual abuse in the monastery, this participant protected the impression his parents had about monastic life:

> *There was no way for my parents to know these things. There were times that I wanted to inform my parents, but my parents were under the impression that I was alright in the temple. I didn't want to change their impression also (S1, BT29).*

Reflecting on monastic childhood, he described how the gradual conditioning led to a life of double acting, one in front of the public and another behind closed doors:

> *From very young age, you get trained to live a double life. We didn't even learn the basic moral lessons that the lay students would learn (S1, BT29)*

This boundary seemed to have been so strongly internalised that another participant insisted on keeping obscene aspects as a secret even to this day. This insistence was also motivated by the desire to shield his loved ones from the potential negative impact of disclosure:

> *...I did not want to create a bad image in my parents' mind about the monkhood. So, other than some hard times I had, I never told them anything about sexual abuse. I thought it was pointless to create such negative image in their head (S2, BT29).*

As novices, these participants had learned that sexual abuse was unbecoming of monks and, therefore self-censored the details even from their own families:

> *There was also a fear that disclosing inside information would lead to disrobing. There were times I informed my family of certain requisites such as robes, but I never disclosed physical or sexual abuse to the' (S4, BT29).*

> *I was never able to disclose such things to my parents. I was afraid that there would be blood shed if I were to disclose such things to my parents (S2, BT29).*

Sometimes, the boundary between lay people and monastics was explicitly indoctrinated in the novices by the senior monks:

> *The abbot often emphasised the need to keep the boundary between us and the lay people. …Some senior teachers used to say, 'do whatever you want to do but make sure to do it behind the public eye (S2, BT29).*

In an interesting turn, some observations of child protection officers provided a perspective on how this internally enforced boundary might appear to the external world:

> *When we interview the novice monks, they are reluctant to speak, or they say such things never happened. I am not sure if they are coerced to lie or there is a subculture within monasteries where you are not supposed to disclose internal secrets (CPO3, BT19).*

The likely outcome of this boundary, as indicated by another child protection officer, was reluctance to report, speak out or cooperate with investigations:

> *Sometimes, the novice monks don't say anything. When we interview them, they say "nobody did anything to me" (CPO1, BT19).*

5.5.2 Barriers to Professional Investigation

In addition to these disabling institutional structures and dynamics, an array of barriers to professional investigation into incidents of monastic child abuse emerged from the data. These barriers stemmed mainly from the lack of childcare policies and regulations regarding children in the Buddhist monastery. These gaps were exacerbated by other barriers arising from lack of awareness and reporting practices at community level. Doubling down on these hindrances were the broader socio-political barriers linked to clerical immunity and fear of politically motivated intimidation.

Regarding policies and standard operating procedures, the officers were unaware or uncertain of any specific policy guidelines applicable to monasteries.

> *Namal: According to some estimates, there are more training monasteries than there are children's homes in Sri Lanka. Is there an initiative to regulate or inspect these institutions by your agency?*
>
> *CPO1: I haven't read any specific policy. I've been on the job for eleven years, but I have never come across such policy. We have our own policy, and we have a criminal*

code and I have read them but I never came across anything specific to this (CPO1, BT23).

Another officer was uncertain about why monasteries were not covered in the existing policy framework. In her experience, the authority's approach to incidents of child abuse in monasteries was reactive rather than regulatory:

According to the Child Protection Authority Act, we have the power to inspect children's homes and other institutions that provide care for children including day care centres. However, for some reason – I don't know what that is – we don't oversee training monasteries or monasteries. The only time those institutions come to our attention is when there is a reported incident of child abuse through the police or court (CPO3, BT23).

A third officer, while attributing this policy gap to an administrative divide at ministerial level, downplayed the need for policies dedicated to monasteries. For him the training monasteries in which most novice monks live were under the purview of the Ministry of Education while the other monasteries came under the Department of Buddhist Affairs. He added:

As I view it, monasteries are under the purview of the Department of Buddhist affairs. They carry out their inspections on monasteries. In addition to that, the Ministry of Education regulates training monasteries…. When it comes to children's homes, they come under the probation department and us. So, they are constantly being inspected. However, the training monasteries are not categorised as places where children are at risk (CPO2, BT23).

It appeared that the only time that child protection officers could intervene was when an abuse incident was leaked to the community through the hospitalisation of a child or anonymous community reporting. Even those few detected cases were successfully investigated only when there was clear evidence (visible physical injury or audio-visual evidence). Admittedly, producing evidence for child abuse was not always straightforward and lack of investigative remit greatly diminished the child protection officers' ability to carry out thorough investigations. Reflecting on his 11-year career, this officer said:

As far as I have seen, nothing has worked out successfully. Only one was successful – the one involving sexual abuse. We were able to arrest the monk involved because we

entered the case with all the evidence in hand, including video evidence and text messages. For physical violence, it is very difficult to establish evidence (CPO1, BT23).

The following vignette confirmed the legal challenges in prosecuting perpetrators accused of abusing males. Article 363 of the Penal Code defines rape primarily as sexual intercourse forced upon a woman by a man under five circumstances that are unfavourable to the woman (Penal Code – Sri Lanka, 1995,1998). The limiting legal definitions focusing only on penetrative sex to the exclusion of various other forms of sexual abuse may dilute the seriousness of sexual abuse of boys. This is likely to be an added challenge for children in monasteries in which abuse of any kind seems undetectable:

Unless they are able to produce medical evidence for those accusations, I am not sure how they can proceed with any allegations. The biggest issue is lack of reporting to the external authorities (CPO3, BT23).

However, when a victim is identified through various informal means, child protection officers do respond. These limited opportunities provided them with a glimpse of institutional complexities around monastic child abuse, and professional challenges that confront them. The first hurdle was confronting the powerful monastery itself:

Namal: When you conduct investigations or carry out your duties related to those cases, did you encounter any difficulties or resistance?

CPO1: Generally, yes. When we go to the temple to initiate an investigation and meet with the abbot, it's very difficult.

Namal: Why is that?

CPO1: They never cooperate with us. Because the abbot and the monks are of higher status, it's very difficult for us to gather information (CPO1, BT20).

This officer seemed to be struggling with a dilemma which may be unique to investigating religious organisations; executing his duty in a policy grey zone while withstanding the weight of a culturally powerful institution:

For example, when we went to the temple and met the abbot and said 'Reverend, we have received a complaint regarding physical violence in temple', he began to

reprimand us and scold us saying 'there are no such things here, there are no such things in monasteries' (CPO1, BT20).

These denials may indicate an underlying traditional belief around child disciplining and invocation of clerical privileges to preserve it. In this officer's experience, the abbot had no hesitation justifying his approach to disciplining novices:

When we push back saying "Reverend, we are simply trying to carry out our duties here", they say "punishment is normal in our" – I can't remember exactly – "something that was practiced since ancient times. If we want to educate the young properly, we have to beat them up", so they justify (CPO1, BT20).

Monasteries also used intimidation and efforts to stall ongoing investigations. As this officer was investigating a case flagged by a school adjacent to the monastery, the monastery severed its usually collaborative relationship with the school, and boycotted religious activities in it:

The temple made school's life harder by boycotting it and preventing other monasteries from helping the school with its scheduled religious activities. After this situation, even the school became reluctant to report any suspected abuse to our agency and kept a distance from us (CPO3, BT20).

These denials and intimidations appeared to exert undue pressure on child protection officers as they were conscious of the rhetorical interdependence between the Buddhist monastery and the political establishment. These misgivings came to light on several occasions. This officer believed that monasteries are connected to politics one way or the other. He wished that he never heard any abuse cases from a monastery so that he did not have to investigate them:

To be honest with you, we would rather not receive any information about abuse in monasteries. We prefer not to intervene in monastic abuse cases… The reason to be afraid of investigating is the fear of opposition from society. And also, the fear that there would be pressure from the politicians. Generally, every temple seems to have some sort of political connection (CPO1, BT22).

While this officer was making an anecdotal point without any direct personal experience, he may not be completely misrepresenting the reality. For example, in a case that clearly contrast the difference between two judicial systems (The UK and Sri Lanka), a British court

sentenced the chief incumbent of the Themes Buddhist Vihara to seven years goal and added his name to sex offender list (BBC, 2012). He has been a resident in the UK for several decades and ran an orphanage for children in the village where he was born in Sri Lanka. After his sentencing in Sri Lanka, the minister in charge of children's affairs and the NCPA chairman both declined to comment on the sentence or the fate of the orphanage headed by this monk who was linked to the ruling party of Sri Lanka (*Sunday Times*, 2012).

This difficult atmosphere around investigating monastic child abuse cases seemed to further diminish the chances of disclosure, while leaving the child protection officers fearing for their jobs:

> *We must be mindful of the security of our own job and we must live and work in this division. We live with that fear. Because of that we try not to intervene too much with those cases. If the head -office doesn't back us up in these cases, it is extremely difficult for us to carry out duties (CPO1, BT22).*

This difficult situation for the child protection officers was exacerbated by several structural and communal barriers. The officers recognised these hurdles while handling monastic child abuse cases reported to them. Lack of awareness of abuse as abuse, and lack of access to reporting channels were key concerns:

> *I think the reason for lack of reporting is lack of awareness of reporting systems. Children in monasteries don't have the kind of knowledge, like other children, that enable them to identify abusive behaviours (CPO1, BT21).*

Perhaps due to this absence of an initial circuit breaker, children who were abused in a monastic setting seemed to be detected only when they ran away from the monastery, taking further risks with their safety. In the officers' experience, there was no reporting of abuse from within monasteries:

> *We never had an opportunity to go into a monastery to conduct an investigation. We learn about abuse only if the child disrobed and returned to the village… The initial concern was reported to us was that there was a child that was not going to school. As it turned out, the child had been a monk for a few years and had run away from the monastery. Now he was neither here nor there (CPO3, BT21).*

The child protection officers were also challenged by the general hesitancy among victims to speak out. This made their already difficult investigative work even harder:

> *Sometimes, the novice monks don't say anything. When we interview them, they say 'nobody did anything to me' (CPO1, BT19).*

Caught between policy loopholes, clerical and political power, and justified fear of losing their jobs, perhaps these officers were left with more questions than answers about monastic child abuse:

> *when we interview the child, he didn't spill anything out. We didn't know why; he never disclosed the reason for leaving the monastery. I'm not sure if they are afraid that they might also be implicated in whatever that happened or that they might be sent back to the monastery (CPO3, BT19).*

When considered alongside with the survivors' accounts and views of senior monks, this officer had a fairly accurate idea about what might be happening behind closed doors. However, due to lack of specific policies, there was no way to verify what was going on:

> *When we interview the novice monks, they are reluctant to speak, or they say such things never happened. I am not sure if they are coerced to lie or there is a subculture within monasteries where you are not supposed to disclose internal secrets (CPO3, BT19).*

The following extracts from the national child protection policy encapsulated the ideals to which the NCPA aspired:

> *The National Child Protection Policy is applied to all persons under the age of eighteen (18) (unless majority is attained earlier) living in Sri Lanka. This provides a conceptual framework covering at maximum of* ***guidelines, procedures and interventions*** *at maximum of in* [*sic*] *preventing violence, exploitation, neglect, delinquency and all forms of abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) against children, protecting them in times of disaster, in the events [sic] of child rights violation and in other forms[sic]harm and ensuring responses of child victims… The main purpose of this policy is to provide a* ***common and integrated procedure*** *to guide government-led multi-sectorial, multi-stakeholder, multi-agency child safeguarding and child protection activities. This policy provides not only* ***coherent definitions, policy goals, objectives and targets, guiding principles and a conceptual framework*** *but also a framework to monitor and regulate methods, standards, outcomes and impact of child protection mechanisms* (NCPA Resource Centre, 2019, p. 1, my emphasis)

Despite assurances of these policies, child protection officers on the ground confronted an entirely different reality in relation to safeguarding children in monasteries.

5.5.3 Monastic Self-Interests Impose Silence

As a senior monk conceded earlier (BT6), there appeared to be a significant discrepancy between the ideal monastery and the one into which children were ordained. Contrary to popular images of austere monasticism, the Buddhist monastery appeared to be primarily interested in protecting its clerical power, along with the social and material benefits that it generates. To maintain this power, monasteries favour a mutually beneficial relationship with the state. This state-religion dependency was a salient theme in the accounts of senior monks:

> *In terms of government interventions, regardless of state policies, there seems to be a notion that the power historically endowed to the monastic tradition should not be meddled with. I tend to agree with the practical value of this notion with regard to the preservation of Buddhism in the country. The relationship between Buddhism and the state has historically been instrumental in keeping Buddhism as an organised religion. This is important for the continuation of Buddhist traditions because Buddhism on its own is not organised as such. The Buddhist community is not organised, not united like other religious communities. Other religious communities stand for their ideology as one team. But the Buddhist community is not like that. So, personally I think, this relationship between Buddhism and state ought to continue (ML2, BT16).*

Prominent monastic leaders have publicly defended the need for a continuing relationship between the monastic order and the state. For example, addressing a gathering of national organisations, Professor Indurāgāre Dhammarathana, a Buddhist monk and academic at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, observed that:

> *In the new proposed constitutional amendment, there is a subtle but sinister move to decouple Buddhism from the State. Instead of keeping the existing clause which stipulates that Buddhism is the main religion of the State, and therefore it is the duty of the State to foster and protect Buddhism, the new amendment proposes that Buddhism is the main religion in Sri Lanka. Many say: 'It is the same thing'. But, if you look carefully, you can see in the new amendment, that the State is not*

> *responsible for fostering and protecting Buddhism. The minute the State patronage is withdrawn, Buddhism in Sri Lanka is in trouble* (Sambudu Vihara Genova, 2019)

Data from other sources confirmed this ambiguous relationship between the Buddhist monastery and the State. Influential monks have been demanding for a long time that the controversial anti-conversion bill be passed (Zeenew, 2003). Recently, the then prime minister promised to table the bill in parliament (Svanidze, 2020). If passed, it will criminalise conversion of a Buddhist in Sri Lanka to another religion. While insisting that the state implement legislation that benefits its self-interests, the monastery fiercely opposes bills that may propose to regulate it. For example, the Theravādi Bhikku Katikāwath Bill of 2016 was proposed by then government to introduce reforms to the management of monastic properties. The justice minister personally visited the head of the Siam chapter, perhaps the most influential monastery in the country. During the meeting, the head monk and his deputies said:

> '*Wouldn't it be just fine if we keep the original act of 1931 as it is? Consulting everyone is troublesome and it is impossible to achieve something by appeasing everyone'*. Another senior monk who was present in the meeting spoke on behalf of the chief and said: '*the Temporalities Act of 1931 was indispensable for the continuation of the Buddhist order and any attempts to change it must be consulted with the chief prelates* (*Hiru News*, 2016).

Eventually the proposed reform bill was withdrawn by the government due to fierce opposition from monks and the Buddhist community in general (Seneviratne, 2016). Whenever there is a public discourse around monastic reform, monks and supporters of monastic institutions do their utmost to crush those efforts (*Lankadeep.lk*, 2016; Kirinde, 24.01.2016).

A senior monk interviewed for this research explained this general resistance towards reform:

> *Now, there are so many policies and regulations including child protection ones. These are entirely enforced by secular authorities. So, "if we were to allow these lay authorities to enforce those regulations on us, we betray the historical power vested with us". This seems to be the prevalent view (ML2, BT16).*

Dodampaha Rāhula Thero, a well-known senior monastic leader, in a recent media interview passionately defending the monastery's rights to remain autonomous:

If clerical affairs begin to be regulated by lay authorities, I will not stay in robes for a minute. Lay people have no authority to oversee monastic matters. We cannot let lay people control us according to their whims and fancies. They can make donations to the monastery but they must not ask how much we received. Monastics must always be in charge of monastic properties (Samarawickrama, 2021).

This insistence on unchecked autonomy of monastic affairs may stymie any efforts to safeguard children in monasteries. As emerged from the data, there are concerted efforts by monastic leaders to cover up failings to protect institutional reputation:

I have seen few incidents of how seniors handle scandalous incidents, and it is outrageous. The term used is thinavattāraka, meaning cover it with grass so that it stinks less. So, what they seem to preach here is "we shouldn't examine rubbish in public". They tend to believe that if the issue is scandalous, it should be contained within the individual and should not be discussed collectively. The majority of monks doesn't like to have a conversation even between two (ML2, BT14)

Namal: Earlier you mentioned that the senior leadership should be consulted for serious policy matters. I in fact invited dozens of well-known senior monks for an interview but it wasn't successful. Some turned it down and some ignored it. If they aren't willing to talk in a confidential format, do you think they would talk in a public forum about these issues?

ML3: I don't think they would in a public forum. Generally, monks like to keep internal issues hidden. Whenever an issue arises, the approach is to somehow cover it up (ML3, BT14).

The first response from within the monastery appeared to be concealment, followed by denial. When the existence of abuse and misconduct became undeniable, it was dismissed as an isolated incident, failing to recognise any systemic issues:

Namal: Does this indicate that they are not willing to acknowledge that this is a systemic problem?

ML2: Yes, I think so. That means that they hold "it is wrong to perceive this as a general problem in the monastic institution".

There seemed to be several institutional power layers in which those with resources and connections could evade legal consequences, while those without such resources had to face the consequences. Perhaps, the few cases referred to here by the child protection officers may belong to this latter category of monks:

> *Namal: So, this is like the few bad apple view. "So long as we remove the few bad apples, there is nothing wrong with the system" (ML2, BT15).*
>
> *ML2: Yes, that's one thing. And on the other hand, we don't remove bad apples either, do we? I mean bad apples are protected by the highest leadership except those few thrown under the bus (ML2, BT14).*

This impulse to coverup and protect the offenders perhaps indicates a widespread culture of collusion between institutions with similar material and reputational stakes. Evidently, both political and monastic establishments have mutual interests in maintaining a favourable image among the public as both entities depend on public support for survival:

> *Namal: Is there a system to protect those who are accused of abuse?*
>
> *ML2: There is, and it is a covert one. That means they speak directly to the president, prime minister, justice minister or the commissioner. I'm not sure about now but in the past several serious abuse cases were suppressed that way.*
>
> *Namal: So, the politicians tend to respond favourably to those calls. Don't they?*
>
> *ML2: They do. They do and then they use that for their political leverage or shut them down if they speak against the politicians. They have many ways of solving these issues depending on the resources they have at their disposal.*
>
> *Namal: Depending on the connections they have?*
>
> *ML2: Depending on the connections, some resort to very swift means. They maintain a cordial relationship with the bureaucrats in the area, may it be police, military or child protection (ML2, BT16).*
>
> *Namal: Other than taking no action, are there efforts to protect offenders?*
>
> *ML3: Absolutely. I have heard such unscrupulous things. Those who have connections, the money and the crowds on their side tend to get away with offences (ML3, BT16).*

Recent media reports provided evidence that corroborates this account. The national media reported on speculation that the police were stalling an investigation into an incident of serial rape of an underaged girl because the list of suspects included an influential monk who was an adviser to the then president (Rathnayake, 2021).

5.5.4 Broader Socio-political Determinants of Silence

The survivors disclosed a number of barriers to disclosure that appeared to be linked to the restrictions imposed by poverty and culture. This participant endured the physical and sexual abuse as if they were obstacles that he must overcome in order to rise above the poverty he had experienced at home:

> *I had a strong determination to study well. That was because with the family background I knew there were no hopes in going home. That is something that I believe even to this day. So, I was always in the pursuit of an answer from the outside of the family… I never said I wanted to go home because I knew returning home was also not any better. I felt like there was no future at home either (S1, BT18).*

This dilemma was further complicated by a lack of openness in the family to discuss matters relating to sexuality or sexual abuse:

> *Namal: Did you report that to your parents?*
>
> *S1: No. The thing was that there was no such openness with parents to divulge such a matter (BT18).*
>
> *'Often times, there were no space or opportunity to talk about that chapter of my life (S2, BT18).*

The data also indicated that this barrier may have been further reinforced by the fear and shame generally associated with the obscenity of sexual matters.

> *I was never able to disclose such things to my parents. I was afraid that there would be blood shed if I were to disclose such things to my parents' (S2, BT18).*
>
> *'There was also a fear that disclosing inside information would lead to disrobing. There were times I informed my family of certain requisites such as robes, but I never disclosed physical or sexual abuse to them…How can I tell them something like that? We usually don't talk about things like that' (S4, BT18).*

The data also pointed to macro social dynamics that may play a part in the silence at personal and institutional levels. Setting the scene for this observation, the following senior monk aptly contextualised the issue of child abuse:

> *I don't think child abuse is exclusive to religious institutions. This is a social problem. Monastery is one platform that it reflects on. Physical abuse could take place similarly in schools…I don't tend to see this as a problem about child ordination; rather, a problem about children in general. This should be the general protocol with regard to children… In any institutions in which these matters are not resolved, any vulnerable person could become a victim. It could be women, a girl, boy or a young monk. There is an unresolved problem; there is a problem that is not spoken about. While these underlying issues are unresolved, vulnerable individuals are used to fulfil needs whenever there is an opportunity to do so (ML1, BT17)*

Offering a rather disaffected view on this trend, the senior monk attributed the lack of accountability in monastic practices to the general lawlessness in the country:

> *If there is lawlessness at the macro level, we can't expect to have clean institutions, whether it's monastic or secular. Just like other institutions in the country, the monastic institution is already corrupted…those who make rules are the first to break the rules. That much should be obvious to us. Just like other state and social institutions, we cannot expect the monastic institution to be pure and clean (ML3, BT17).*

The ongoing silence was also attributed to the post-colonial ethnopolitical tensions in Sri Lanka. This dynamic was believed to be playing out when individual institutions and communities strove to protect their pride, and to avoid shame:

> *Namal: But there seems to be a thick wall against such an open discussion. How can we break down this wall?*
>
> *ML1: I think this is something that exists since colonial period. There is a tendency to protect one's own people. If it is one of your own who has done something wrong, we tend to protect that person. You might not agree with what he has done, you might be against the wrongdoing at a personal level, but you tend to cover it up if the culprit happened to be someone related to you. If the issue in question is related to one's own religion or place of worship, they might not oppose the wrongdoing out of fear of*

collapse of their world. Because of this reason, they abstain from disclosing even if they know who the culprit is.

Nama: Did you mean here the othering of other ethno-religious groups in colonial and post-colonial Sri Lanka?

ML1: Yes, that's what I meant (ML, BT17).

Namal: One final question before we finish. With regard to the reluctance to have an open dialogue about abuse in monasteries s, do you think the ethnopolitical environment in Sri Lanka plays a part? For example, out of fear of how other religious and ethnic communities perceive the Buddhist monastery?

ML2: Yes, that is also a factor. That means "we should not examine our own rubbish out in public", "the world would laugh at us", things like that (ML2, BT17).

This compulsion to protect one's own institutions/traditions by othering the rival religious or ethnic groups was evident even before the data were collected. A childcare officer whom I was liaising with in the early stage of my research explicitly requested that I '*be gentle on the monastery and frame the issue of child abuse as isolated incidents, rather than a systemic problem' (RJ, 20.04.2021)* when the final thesis is written. She dreaded that the revelation of child abuse through this research would be damaging to the racial pride of Singhalese Buddhists in the eyes of other ethno-religious groups. In another instance, a regional childcare commissioner, who was contacted to recruit child protection officers he managed, said: *'I have to be careful because this is about our religion' (RJ, 05.07.2021).* A further regional commissioner, contrary to the administrative directive from his head office urging him to assist this project (see Appendix-12), refused to cooperate. As he was clearly ignoring the official directive, when confronted he admitted that he was refusing to assist the researcher in data collection purely based on his personal conviction of protecting Buddhism from getting a bad reputation through research.

Micro level interactions such as these seem to transpire on a macro political stage which is highly charged with an ethnoreligious rhetoric, a tone that was possibly set by the country's constitution that states: 'the Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha *Sasana*…' (The Constitution of The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015: 3, emphasis in original). Public approval of the political leadership tends to depend on its promised

commitment to this obligation. For example, a career politician was forced to resign from politics for refusing to state that Sri Lanka was a Buddhist country (De Alwis, 2019). Equally noteworthy are the savvy leaders who seem to have ingratiated themselves with the monastic leadership for electoral gain. For example, the then prime minister banned cattle slaughter in Sri Lanka, attracting adulations from the Buddhist monastic community (Srinivasan, 2020). Around the same time, the president appointed a senior Buddhist monk who was a vocal supporter of his election campaign to the chancellorship of the University of Colombo (*Newswire*, 2021). This appointment attracted criticism from the academic community as it was considered a move by the president to appease the unqualified yet influential monk who had recently become a vocal critic of the government (Waravita, 2021).

Overall, regarding continuing silence (which included lack of safeguarding policies and monastic reform), participants were pessimistic about the prospects of ending it. They assigned the responsibility to individuals and forces that were beyond them, while suggesting that they did not have any agency to make positive change. In other words, they spoke as if they were helpless bystanders, witnessing the child ordination as a necessary cultural sacrifice that must be performed to maintain the monastery, the behemoth that carries the tradition forward. This helplessness was captured in the following remarks:

> *Everyone seems to be stuck in it, I think. On the one hand, parents are stuck and on the other, the society is stuck. In another side, the abbot is stuck. Eventually, everyone is in this push and pull, going through the pressure. I feel like it is automatically pushing forward (ML2, BT17).*

5.6 Suggestions for Change

From the interviews that were conducted with the senior monks and child protection officers, a set of contrasting ideas emerged that can be seen as suggestions for positive change. The constructive views expressed by senior monks may represent a small but emerging group of progressive monastic leaders who aspire to make the monastery a safe place for children. These views were grouped into two categories – one that aimed for changes within the monastic institution and another that supported broad societal changes.

Reforming internal monastic practices that would directly address the problem of child abuse in the monastery was a key suggestion. There was a consensus that ordination was not for children and there should be alternative ways to provide religious education for them. Imposing a minimum age requirement was also proposed:

Namal: With few exceptions such as orphans, do you think there should be minimum age for ordination?

ML1: Yes, for long-term ordination, one must reach at least the age of 16. In the meantime, there could be short-term religious programs for children meant to cultivate spiritual values among them. They might even wear robes in these programs. But they must take part in these programs with their parents. But I don't term it as ordination. Ordination is a thoughtful decision and for that one must at least be 18 years of age and have some life experience and understanding about life. I don't encourage ordination as a solution to poverty or any other problem in life (ML1, BT28).

A greater degree of flexibility around entering and exiting monkhood was also preferred:

Ordination is a serious decision. Even after making such a decision, there should be a flexibility to change any decision at any time (ML1, BT28).

Another monk suggested the introduction of temporary ordination practiced in other major Buddhist nations such as Myanmar and Thailand as a safer and flexible simulation of monastic life:

I think the solution to that is as I said earlier to go for temporary ordination with more flexibility around leaving if there are issues living in monasteries (ML3, BT28).

More pertinent to the current situation of novice monks in monasteries, there was agreement that child safeguarding practices should be introduced in monasteries:

If a child is to be given away under any circumstances, the child protection authority must carry out background checks about the place the child is taken to, the person taking the child, their character. This should be done under the guidance of the child protection authority. Even after that, at least in every three months, until the child turns 18, the child protection authority must follow up (ML1, BT28).

Another progressive view on tackling the issue was to educate the monastic community about human sexuality:

I tend to view that as educating monks on the matters of reproductive health, physiological development of both male and female. And also, educating them on

cognitive and emotional development of their own bodies. I think that such education is necessary to understand these changes (ML1, BT28).

These suggestions underscored the need for reform in order for the monastery to remain relevant:

We are talking about an institution which was established some 2500 years ago. Certain ancient norms and customs were not constructed using modern concepts. In ancient societies, there were views about marriage, childbearing that may not be acceptable now. I don't think those ancient views should be relevant in working with children today. Now we must make decisions informed by the modern concepts about children and childhood (ML1, BT28).

Other suggestions included decoupling the monastery from politics, and reinstating high monastic standards:

Monks have become political henchmen. Monks tend to act the way the politicians want them to. Most of the monks no longer preach the teachings. They preach politics instead. As a responsible institution, we must come together and prioritise our spiritual role, not anything else… there must be a standard. We must set a standard to ourselves and be an example to others. Our standard right now is very low (ML3, BT28).

Their views located monastic child abuse within a broader social institutional context, and emphasised that the issue should be considered as a failure of the overall system:

I don't think child abuse is exclusive to religious institutions. This is a social problem. Temple is one platform that it reflects on. Physical abuse could take place similarly in schools. I see this as a discussion at a different level. Religious institutions are not the only culprit that deem physical punishment as appropriate. School teachers as well as parents tend to think that physical punishments are needed as the saying goes beat him up to bring him up. Therefore, I don't think this is exclusive to religious institutions… Finally, the safety of children is the responsibility of the state. This should not be a responsibility of the monastery alone. This must be a common responsibility of all institutions (ML1, BT29).

The emphasis here was that it would be impossible and pointless to reform the monastery without reforming the broader social, political and legal systems in the country.

There ought to be a fundamental shift, the rule of law must be firmly established (ML3, BT29).

I think everything is subjected to common law. While legal proceedings continue, I think it is important to change the way we think. It is pointless to leave the job to a single institution like the child protection authority (ML1, BT29).

In addition, child protection officers also offered constructive ideas to close the safeguarding loopholes in the monastic context. Their suggestions were mainly focused on creating awareness and improving access to services.

Responding to a question on sex education for novice monks, this officer was of the view that '*imparting knowledge shouldn't be an issue whether you are clergy or lay. As you said earlier, the senior monks' opposition to sexual education* [he was referring to the opposition shown by prominent monastic leaders to a sex education text book that was to be distributed to 7th grade school children]*, that's not what ought to happen. Knowledge should be shared with everyone. Lack of knowledge in sexuality is the biggest problem here (CPO2, BT30).* Raising awareness about child protection services and improving access to them among the novice monks were also highlighted:

I think what needs to happen is to increase the awareness. We usually educate schools and school children. When we educate them, we inform them "if something like this happened to you, you must contact these numbers" "if you have any issues, use our 1929 hotline and let us know". We promote our agency's hotline. In addition to this, we also promote 119 national hotline. This takes place to a certain extent in training monasteries too but it would be better to improve on this (CPO2, BT30).

The need for better coordination between relevant administrative departments was also underscored: *'I think the child protection agency and the department of Buddhist affairs must collaborate to oversee temples parallel to the children's homes. These inspections and reviews should be conducted at least every three months'* (CPO3, BT30). As well as this inter-agency approach, another participant stressed the need to formulate bespoke procedures targeting monastic practices involving children:

Generally, the children's homes and charitable organisations come under our review and the idea was to regulate training monasteries and temples using a format that is different from the existing format. That means the questions that we usually ask from

these institutions are not suitable for the temples. For example, we ask about the fees they have to pay and how long do they plan to stay and things like that. So, these questions are not relevant to temples. But I don't know what the relevant questions should be. Perhaps, we have to consult some experts in this area but I know they have to be different (CPO3, BT30).

5.7 Reflections

The immediate institutional climate and the broader institutional culture in the monastery seemed to have had lasting implications on what the survivors did with the abuse they silently endured as children. During the interviews, the accounts of abuses and circumstances that perpetuated them were told without any emotion; there was no outrage or resentment. It was as if there were no meaning-making avenues to pursue. Paradoxically, they made sense of what happened to them by not making any sense of it. It was a shallowly buried experience that was not worth talking about. It was as if there were no language to express the profundity of the experience. This may be partly because abuse was omnipresent, perhaps in and outside of the monastery; and partly because they were caught in the divide that existed between the monastics and the laity. A contradictory tale of a violated, dehumanised child who is also highly respected robe-bearer would not fit in this divide. Therefore, perhaps the story had to be one-sided: a chosen child who went forth to become a monk, who reaped the benefits of monastic life, and left behind the robes in order to pursue the pleasures of worldly life. The self-interested monastery and stymied child protection authorities directly or indirectly created and perpetuated this one-sided story.

5.8 Summary

Three global themes along with constellations of subthemes and supporting data points were presented. The findings were organised in a sequential manner to indicate the timeline of silence. In global theme one, three clusters of predisposing factors were identified as contributors to silence. They included pre-existing socioeconomic challenges that forced families to give away their child to a monastery; sociocultural narratives that provided incentives for child ordination while glorifying the sacrifice of a child to a religious cause. Another set of pre-existing conditions indicated that, perhaps unbeknown to parents, the monastery and senior leadership were unprepared and unqualified to welcome and care for children. Global theme two distinguished two clusters as precipitating factors that triggered the decision to send children to a monastery. These triggers were identified in the microsystem that included child's parents and relatives, and in the mesosystem that included

the monastery and local cultural narratives that seemed to dictate the terms around entering and exiting monkhood. The third and the most expansive theme encapsulated interpersonal and institutional determinants that led to prolonged silence. At an interpersonal level, the ground for silence was laid through the student-teacher relationship in which the abbot was the ultimate arbiter of monastic affairs and children had no voice. Abuse then thrived in this environment which was directly and indirectly insulated from the outside world through social deference, deliberate coverup and lack of formal oversight. The following final chapter discusses these findings in the context of the global literature identified earlier in the thesis.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

6.1 Introduction

In Sri Lanka there are more than twelve thousand monasteries (Ministry of Buddhasasana religious and cultural affairs, n.d.) which are estimated to accommodate approximately sixty thousand children (Keerthirathne, 2020). Although incidents of child abuse in Buddhist monasteries have regularly been reported (Pathirana, 2011;2012; UNICEF-Sri Lanka, 2019) and concerns around the risks of child abuse in monasteries have been raised (Serasinghe, 2014; Parkes, 2022), no previous research has directly explored the issue of child abuse in the monastic setting in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of silence around child abuse in this setting. To achieve this, three clusters of significant data were assembled using multiple sources. In this analysis, these clusters are dissembled, and synthesised with reference to the themes identified in the literature review and the research questions. The principal questions of the research were concerned with:

- The survivors who remained silent about their childhood abuse experience;
- The Buddhist monastery's reluctance to address the child abuse within it;
- And the child protection authority's failure thus far to bring children in the monastery into their child protection remit.

6.2 What do the findings reveal about silence among survivors?

As survivors were in the epicentre of the issue, they provided an important vantage point into the interpersonal, institutional and social dimension of child abuse in the monastic context. The following four sections discuss those views.

6.2.1 Poverty as a precondition for silence

The link between poverty and child abuse has been established while the correlation between poverty and individual, family and environmental factors is continuously being evaluated (Bywaters et al, 2022). In the current study, it became clear that the domestic circumstances under which the survivors were ordained set the stage for abuse and prolonged silence around it. These circumstances played out through various interpersonal, familial, and social-institutional dimensions. All four survivors recognised the role played by their family's low socioeconomic standing in their ordination as children. This aspect was more pronounced in some cases than in others, but overall entering monkhood was perceived by parents and, to a limited degree, by the children as a pathway for a better life. For example, two participants

mentioned that their parents were struggling at the time to even feed their children at home. One of them recalled the immediate family situation which he believed to have played a role in his parents' decision to send him away to a monastery. He said: '*There was not even enough food for all of us at home. Sometimes, it was just one loaf of bread for five people. I came from such an impoverished background' (S3, BT1)*. For another participant, the main motivation for his parents to ordain him was an aspiration for upward social mobility through education, an avenue that may not have been available for him in his rural village. He said: '*The idea was to send me to a monastery in the city because that was considered ideal for a better education' (S4, BT1).* Entering monkhood was also seen as a solution to poverty by the child protection officers. Their views closely reflected the desire for upward social mobility that the parents of the ordaining children expressed. One officer said: *'I tend to think that ordination is a good thing for the child as it is better than sending the child to a care home because as a monk, he stands a chance to move forward with the religion' (CPO2, BT1).* Although the exact correlation between ordination and poverty reduction is unknown, ordination has certainly been a risk that many are willing to take as a solution to poverty.

Poverty not only seems to act as a precursor to ordination of children, but also as contributing to the novices' silent endurance of abuse for many years. This participant said: '*I was just happy to be a monk perhaps given the desperate environment I was living in* [back home]*' (S3 BT2)*, even if he or his parents had no background information about the monastery or the monks to which he was going. This participant endured physical and sexual abuse by multiple senior monks at several monasteries, but he never considered that returning home was an option: '*That was because with the family background I knew there were no hope in going home. That is something that I believe even to this day. So, I was always in the pursuit of an answer from the outside of the family' (S1, BT25).* Like O'Gorman (2010) who struggled to survive in the aftermath of repeated sexual abuse in religious settings, this participant at times even thought that having transactional sexual relationships with other men would be a way out of poverty: *'Whenever someone made such offer, I tended to go for it. That means I tended to think that that was my solution (S1, BT2).* He nearly accepted an invitation extended by a wealthy man who appeared to be interested in teenage boys. The man was said to have discretely contacted novice monks, making various material offerings to attract them. Children who are sexually abused in institutional care settings have been reported to be at higher risk of prolonged sexual exploitation by perpetrators who manipulate their unmet material and emotional needs. It has also been reported that following prolonged

exposure to sexual abuse, older children may resort to tactfully exploiting the perpetrators by demanding money or gifts in return for sexual acts (McKibbin and Humphreys, 2019).

Regardless of the impoverished immediate family circumstances, they were legitimate children of intact families, and were solemnly ordained to be members of an elite spiritual community. Unlike victims of institutional child abuse that were stigmatised as 'moral dirt' in other settings (Ferguson, 2007: p. 133), there was no evidence to suggest that these novices were dehumanised in any direct way by society. However, within the closed doors of the monasteries, the novices' experience was not different from those children who suffered abuse in Irish reformatory schools run by the Catholic brothers.

6.2.2 Interaction between poverty and contextual factors

The ordination of children under these circumstances tends to indicate a pattern in which parents negotiated the restrictions imposed by domestic poverty. Poverty alone may not have been the precursor for sending the child away; the interaction between poverty and other socioeconomic factors seemed to precipitate the decision. For example, a participant's mother went abroad as a domestic servant at around the same time that he was ordained as a monk. Their departures from the family to two contrasting destinations were triggered by economic hardship, and were viewed by them as viable solutions for the family. However, both decisions turned out to be detrimental to the wellbeing of the individual and the family, as the mother returned home shortly afterwards with physical and mental bruises while the child was subjected to prolonged abuse in the monastery. As indicated by the findings of the Ryan Report (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009) and Maguire (2013), families in other settings also have resorted to comparable means that resulted in similarly unfavourable outcomes. More closely related to the home context, unique cultural practices such as child marriage or the Devadasi system were identified earlier in the thesis. These practices seem to provide lower socio-economic groups with informal pathways out of poverty (Torri, 2009; Shingal, 2015). Like these practices, child ordination appeared to align with socio-cultural and economic dysfunction of the context. Just like the Devadasi system, it possibly provided a religious pretext and social approval for separating a child from the family in the hope of lessening the immediate economic burden and securing future economic success. As in rural African contexts (Faleye, 2013), religious institutions in developing settings have embraced a prosperity-driven doctrine promoting religious life as a pathway for upward social mobility. This glamourous portrayal of monastic life may be responsible for attracting children from lower socio-economic groups.

At the time of their ordination, all four participants were from rural farming families, but moved to urban or suburban monasteries during their monastic life for educational and religious purposes. Although, in impoverished social settings, removing children from their family of origin may not always be detrimental to their welfare and can even be more beneficial than staying in those circumstances (Rohta, 2021; Green, 1998), based on the experience of these participants ordination of children as a solution to domestic poverty proved to be a dangerous endeavour. From a safeguarding perspective, the informality of the ecological transition was troubling as the child novices were moved through institutions with little or no oversight. The parents seemed to put all their trust in monks for the welfare of the child. In some cases, they did not even visit the monastery prior to sending their child there. However, it was not clear from the data if this was an act of negligence on the part of parents. Even if it was indeed tantamount to child neglect, it is difficult to indict them for such a failure given their disadvantaged position in navigating the complex decision-making process. The interview data indicated that the parents '*are not the kind of people who had the mindset to inquire about anything really… (S3, BT13)*. While it is not uncommon for people from lower socioeconomic settings to suffer from the deprivation of choices (Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea, 2017), it appeared from the data that the parents in these cases acted with deference towards the monks, perhaps as expected in the culture. This respectful posture might have provided the parents with some form of reassurance about the safety and welfare of their child and prevented them from asking relevant safeguarding questions. The participants' current reflections on the lack of safeguarding precautions prior to their ordination was characterised by a sense of ironic amusement, disbelief and sarcasm that encapsulated a lost sense of entitlement to demand a certain standard of care in these transitions.

The randomness, deference and trust in monks and influential abbots emerged as important elements in the ecosystem. The social power attributed to and exercised by the abbots was particularly noteworthy. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 92) predicted in his hypothesis 11: '*The greater the degree of power socially sanctioned for a given role, the greater the tendency for the role occupant to exercise and exploit the power and for those in a subordinate position to respond by increased submission, dependency, and lack of initiative*'. Throughout this study, the misuse of socially ascribed power by the abbots was evident, and so was the submission of others – including authorities – to it. The subtle application of this power was evident in way abbots persuaded the family to give away a child. From the outset, the relationship

between the monastery and the family appeared tilted in favour of the abbot, as he seemed to have an intimate understanding of the circumstances of the child while the family had little or no knowledge of the abbot or his monastery. The family was acting on a general impression of monks and monastic life. Apart from the abbots, other interested parties such as village elders who can be influential in matters related to child ordination seemed to take the liberty to persuade and, in some cases, make decisions on behalf of the parents and children. These informal decision-making processes seem to occur in a vacuum created by the lack of specific legal or safeguarding protocols around sending a child to a monastery.

Furthermore, the hapless decision to ordain children appeared to be influenced by and conflated with spiritual incentives promoted in cultural narratives around child ordination. For example, according to this participant, '*in the village becoming a monk was a big deal. The idea was that ordaining a son would open up a path to liberation for the family. That was the belief villagers held including my mother' (S4, BT3).* These myths are located in the cultural discourse which is propagated through formal religious education in schools and monasteries. These narratives perhaps ease the dissonance that may arise in parents from giving away of a child at a young age, under difficult economic circumstances. The parents may even be elevated to heroic status for making the unthinkable sacrifice of a child to the monastery (Arambepola, 2020, 27:09). These narratives may inadvertently contribute to the silence by amplifying the socially desirable features of child ordination while supressing the underlying socio-economic issues that seem to drive disadvantaged families towards these desperate means (Jayakody et al. 2021; Serasinghe, 2014). Cultural narratives that obfuscate the detrimental effects of domestic poverty are not unique to Sri Lanka. For example, referring to the socio-economic circumstances under which Irish children were institutionalised, Maguire (2013) argued that the macrosocial values such as moderation and simplicity promoted in post-independent Ireland backfired on children as their welfare was overlooked by society and the state.

Alongside with these religious and cultural narratives, rigid cultural norms seemed to dictate the terms around entering or exiting monastic life. All four former monks were explicitly or implicitly indoctrinated with the belief that ordination was a life-long commitment that should be honoured. *The mindset in our village was that if you become a monk, you must stay a monk forever. Don't even think about disrobing. There is no return.' (S2, BT07).* Clearly, this led to their silent endurance of abuse for many years. Cultural barriers to disclosure are not unique to Sri Lanka. In fact, they seem to be universal, and, as reported by Fontes and

Plummer (2010), ethnic and religious dimensions of the culture such as honour and respect tend to have a negative impact on disclosure and reporting.

6.2.3 The monastery as a place of sexual abuse

Contrary to its public image as a place of worship, the monastery was in reality a place of sexual abuse and misconduct. The findings in this research confirmed the occasional media coverage (Pathirana, 2012) and the concerns raised by other observers regarding widespread sexual abuse in Sri Lankan monasteries in which children were feared to be exploited (for example: Jayakody et al. 2021; Obeysekere, 2019; Serasinghe, 2014). But these observers had no direct way of knowing the scale of the problem. Interview data indicated that sexual abuse was prevalent as random acts of sexual abuse by visiting monks or lay people that were living in or associated with the monastery, premeditated sexual abuse by resident monks and lay staff on a regular basis, and widespread sexual acts between residents of the monasteries.

Without generalising this trend but evaluating it in the immediate context of the monasteries in which survivors used to live, one puzzling aspect of the findings was the informal knowledge among village communities surrounding monasteries of the existence of sexual practices in them, including abbots as the main perpetrators. This raises further questions: Why does the community not stand up against these practices? How did the parents of ordained children negotiate this informal knowledge as they too can be a part of these communities? Do they apply some sort of selective ignorance to manage the cognitive dissonance that may result from this knowledge?

The views shared by the child protection officers partially illuminated these baffling aspects of the findings. As professionals – but lay outsiders – they too concurred that there was a tacit knowledge among people that sexual practices were common among monastic communities: '*there is also a general view that things happen in temples. … 90% of people know that things happen in monasteries, but nobody wants to speak about them publicly' (CPO1, BT17).* Yet, they were concerned that this knowledge does not seem to have a significant impact on what is generally recognised in relation to children in monasteries. Instead, this knowledge seemed to translate into a pragmatic approach that allows people to protect their personal interests while avoiding conflict or cumbersome legal proceedings in favour of the status quo. This informal knowledge of sexual abuse of children by priests, and the collective silence about it is not unique to Sri Lanka. As O'Gorman (2010, p. 22) wrote about clerical child abuse in the Irish Catholic setting, 'it seems there are no secrets, only words unspoken,

truth disowned', making child abuse by the religious a tacit but universal phenomenon. In this sense, society's reluctance to own the truth of clerical child abuse seems to remain a universal conundrum.

This tacit knowledge that the general public allegedly possesses tends to create a predicament for the parents of ordained children – how do they respond to this common knowledge when they too are a part of the whole public? The partial explanation deriving from the current research data was that parents were too ignorant to be aware of such malpractices or too desperate to relinquish their child due to poverty that they did not do their due diligence. It is also possible that the parents were aware of the risks in general, but perhaps thought optimistically – the same fate may not befall my child – and proceeded with the decision.

The 'power socially sanctioned for' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 92) the role of the abbot appeared to be further extended by the privileged status generally afforded to a monk in Sri Lankan society. In institutional settings, power combined with status can be an invisible force of abuse. Palmer et al. (2016, p. 71) asserted that 'status elicits trust' and makes detection and disclosure of abuse harder. They also claimed that the more informal power the alleged perpetrators possess, the less likely it is for the victims to disclose abuse. Informal power here referred to the access and control of resources that the victims believed were critical for their future survival (Palmer et al., 2016). Considering economic hardships that forced the parents to send their child away, it is likely that they, as indicated in this research, as well as novices viewed the abbots as having the key to their future survival.

6.2.4 Monastic institutional determinants of perpetual silence

Pertinent to the perpetual nature of the silence among survivors, more compelling evidence emerged from their accounts of prolonged exposure to a host of negative institutional dynamics during and after the abuse. As shown earlier, the novices entered an abusive ecosystem that they and their parents believed to be a place of worship with a promise of a better future for children. Once the participants were ceremoniously committed to monastic life which they perceived at the time to be an irreversible lifelong decision, they were thrust into a climate of fear that was induced by terrifying abbots and generally tough monastic daily routines.

Although every abbot was not a sexual predator, all of them were angry, unpredictable, and unapproachable men, contrary to the spiritual father figure that was expected of them. The novices quickly learned this through verbal and physical violence that was unleashed upon

them and other fellow novices by the abbots. One participant recalled: *'The fear was created… I remember the abbot used to reprimand us and give harsh verbal warnings on how to behave. Those words were powerful enough to keep us in line without thinking of going home' (S4, BT22).* In this fearful atmosphere, the novices were always kept on their toes by the abbots. This micromanagement of behaviour seemed to always sustain the pressure, as this participant testified: *'There was a sense of fear all the time, always living under rules and commandments, no freedom, and living an enclosed life' (S3, BT22).* Similar to the management of inmates in total institutions (Goffman, 1961), children were enrolled (ordained) and trained (monitored) in batches. By deploying arbitrary methods of discipline and control sanctioned by the monastic discourses around confession, penance and submission, the abbots seemed to have enacted the 'perfect disciplinary apparatus' that transformed the children into obedient subjects (Foucault, 1977, p. 173). One participant described how the daily evening congregation was conducted like a tribunal in which each novice was required to confess to a personal wrongdoing or report wrongdoings of someone else. Following the revelations, the abbot delivered verbal reprimands or physical punishments in the presence of everyone. The punishments were used to send a strong and direct message about the consequences of non-conformity. A participant said that he witnessed two novices being forced to eat an entire box of biscuits as a punishment for stealing a packet of biscuits. When they threw up as they were struggling to finish the biscuits, they were ordered to eat their own vomit. Beatings were executed using canes and cables, inducing fear in by-standing novices. The fact that this was a collective experience seemed to make it even more difficult for the novices to disclose, perhaps due to the conformity that is common among submissive groups and the vicarious learning of consequences of non-conformity. Similar to institutional abuse in Australia (Palmer, 2016), in monasteries the norms of obedience and conformity were strong while any deviations from them were swiftly punished.

This climate of fear seemed to have been further sustained by the power differential between abbots and novices. This is a common characteristic of formal institutions (Palmer et al., 2016), and in monasteries it was formally instated through the hierarchical relationship structure that is common to monastic culture. As the data in this research suggested, the abbots' position as the supreme arbiter of monastic affairs was on full display due to the status and privilege attached to the abbotship. The power differential between the following participant and his alleged abuser – the abbot of a network of monasteries –was a vivid

example of this dynamic. Among other reasons, the impression of the abbot as a powerfully connected person was a key silencing factor:

> *'The abbot in the training monastery was a powerful one. He had many titles and I was afraid of him. I was scared to tell anyone…He was also connected with other senior monks in the city. I have seen famous senior monks from the city visiting him. He entertained them very well when they come over. With those visits, I felt like he had so much influence and power (S1, BT25).*

In addition to exhibiting formal power attached to the abbotship, informal power appeared to have played a role in the perpetration and perpetuation of abuse. As identified by Palmer et al. (2016), in institutionalised organisations prone to abusing children, informal power was applied by the abbots through control of monastic resources and access to opportunities. For example, the same participant was sexually abused and kept silent by the abbot by using informal power:

> *He kept promising to deposit money in a bank account and to adopt me as one of his disciples. And also promised that I will be given a nicer room to stay. But they never became a reality. After that it was like I took the bait. After that it was just a call to come and get abused (S1, BT27).*

The abuse of informal power was clearly linked to the perpetuation of silence as there was unambiguous pressure on novice monks to conform to the status quo in order to survive. For example, novices must attend offering ceremonies in which they receive requisites from lay patrons. These items received from lay donors are then sold through backdoor channels for cash with which novices buy other necessities that are generally not offered. These may include undergarments or food for dinner. Evidently, getting regularly selected for these events must have been critical for the novices. Abbots and senior monks exploited this unique power dynamic to control the novices:

> *There were a couple of senior monks who were in charge of organising these things. They decided who went to which house. Those decisions also were made on favouritism. I also had the advantage of being selected because of abbot…We exchanged those goodies for cash through backdoors. There were merchants who came to collect these items (S1, BT27).*

In this participant's case, informal power was exploited by his abbot to accumulate resources for personal gain: *We received requisites from patrons for our use but the abbot confiscated all of that and distributed among these men and boys. We were not allowed to take anything that was offered to us (S4, BT27).*

Furthermore, the tendency among staff members to engage in incremental boundary violations that eventually lead to sexual abuse is common in institutions (Palmer et al., 2016). This is a particularly troubling issue in institutions in which there is a significant power imbalance between the staff and subordinates, as in the Buddhist monastery. The teacher-disciple relationship is at the core of the hierarchical monastic power structure. This dynamic may have provided opportunities for abbots and senior monks to gradually engage in physical and emotional abuse leading to sexual abuse.

In situations where no direct violence was applied, particularly in the case of prolonged sexual exploitation of a novice by his abbot, it appeared that manipulative grooming tactics were used to gradually prepare the novice to comply with the sexual acts. As this participant recalled: *'In the early days, when he called me up, I was asked to massage his feet. And then legs and from there it progressed. During those initial days, he made those promises. He made it impossible for me to not like his next move' (S1, BT25).* In the monastic context, attending to the master's personal needs such as washing or massaging his feet is part of the disciple's duty. However, as Palmer et al. (2016) rightly identified, some organisational cultures by design support child sexual abuse by facilitating and normalising intimate interactions between children and adults resulting in grooming of children for prolonged sexual abuse. It is conceivable, based on survivors' accounts in this current research, that these tactics were deployed by exploiting the novice's disadvantaged background. The novices were told what they wanted to hear, and given what they needed to barely survive. As this participant believed, referring to the powerful abbot who abused him: *'He knew I had no place or teacher to go… He exploited that. Giving me a place to sleep, enrolling me in the training monastery, all these [were] done with an agenda. It was highlighted at every turn that I did not have a place to go' (S1, BT25)*. At this point in the timeline of abuse, the novices seemed to be at a point of no return as they became part of the mini social economy within the abusive monastic culture.

Another related dimension is the victim-offender relationship which is linked to the victim's varied ways of responding to abuse (Boakye, 2009). Victims of intrafamilial abuse have

revealed a sense of entrapment and powerlessness when abuse was taking place, realising that resistance, escape or disclosure were not feasible options for them (Katz et al, 2020). In terms of living arrangements and the relational structure in monasteries, abuse experienced by novices appeared to be similar to intrafamilial abuse, as the novices were completely dependent on abbots for their survival while living in closed monastic quarters under the total control of senior monks. It is highly likely that these institutional circumstances along with relational dynamics contributed to the prolonged silence around abuse.

As well as this imbalanced application of power over novices, the rigid cultural norms around entering and remaining in monkhood may have set the stage for entrapment, a uniquely institutional phenomenon that limits the victim's ability to protest or disclose abuse (Gallagher, 2000). It is also unlikely that the novices who were pinned down by the relentless daily routine had a mental space to comprehend what was happening to them. As one participant said, they *'were pretty occupied' (S1, BT25),* and had no time to think about returning home. Instead, they were busy surviving one day at a time, walking a fine line to meet their basic needs while avoiding pain. For novices, dealing with physical and sexual abuse seemed to be just one aspect, perhaps a secondary one at this point, of the stressful monastic life as they had to negotiate other more primary aspects such as having access to food and learning resources. As it surfaced during interviews, immersion in the educational activities seemed to be participants' coping mechanism. Moreover, judging by participants' educational achievements despite exposure to abuse, focusing on studies to the exclusion of unbearable daily suffering may have provided them with a sense of purpose to endure the abuse.

While this may be viewed as an exemplary display of human resilience, the reality was that the abuse became normalised. Direct and vicarious experience of abuse became a part of daily life. Sexual abuse of young novices by senior monks and experimental sexual behaviour between novice monks became an integral part of monastic daily life. Speaking of physical punishment, this participant said: *'After a while, I got used to it. We conformed with the system and lived accordingly' (S3, BT26).* Another participant, commenting on both physical and sexual abuse, added: *'I think it was partly because the abusive physical and sexual acts were seen as something normal in the community. We continued to be used and overtime we learned to live with it as part of our life in the monastery' (S1, BT26).* A further participant said that sexual behaviour between monks *'was not a considered big deal' (S4, BT26)* within the monastic community. Although the current findings may not be statistically significant, it

certainly appeared that no novice was spared by systematic sexual abuse in the monastery. As one participant put it, abuse was a *part of the monkhood and monastic life. Anyone who has been in that environment as a child could have been exposed to sexual abuse' (S1, BT26).*

The novices seemed to enter a saturated state of silence as they went from being child monks to adolescent monks. The physical punishment seemed to have lessened, and as they physically developed, they were able to protest or fend off any unwanted sexual advances by senior monks. However, the dilemma for the survivors seemed to be about negotiating their abusive past and emerging self-consciousness as young adults. The negative impact of sexual abuse on emerging adolescent identity reflected in this participant's experience as he was reeling from two years of sexual abuse: *'One thing was that it was the only training I received in the temple. I feel like I didn't learn anything other than that. One does that to the other and the other does it to the next one. That means I experimented it myself. I wanted to do that to someone else because I wanted to find out what was in it for the other person who was doing it to me. Later on, I grew to detest it and never tried it again' (S1, BT26).* In the timeline of silence, this may have been an important juncture as the cessation of abuse may have given them some space for the first time to ponder their recent past. However, this space did not seem to have any positive impact in facilitating disclosure. Instead, the silence was further deepened by expanding the initial split in the monastic identity – one for the internal world of the monastery and another for the external community. As this participant explained: *'I did not want to create a bad image in my parents' mind about the monkhood. So, other than some hard times I had, I never told them anything about sexual abuse. I thought it was pointless to create such a negative image in their head' (S2, BT16)*. The participants at this point seemed to understand the seriousness of their experience and, perhaps due to the shame associated with it, they seemed to quarantine that chapter of their lives from the outside world.

The previous literature on male disclosure experience recognised barriers to disclosure at a personal, relational and social level (Sorsoli et al., 2008); that men contemplated for up to three decades before disclosure (Easton, 2013); that men delayed disclosure to protect others from distress that may result from their disclosure (Gagnier and Collin-Vézina 2016); and that in traditional societies they faced more barriers emanating from communal values such as honour (Zalcberg 2017). However, the current participants' experience can be characterised more in terms of non-disclosure than disclosure. This situation more accurately reflects an absence of facilitators than a presence of barriers. The two trajectories of

facilitators to disclosure (based mainly on childhood data) involve the urge to tell because the abuse is unbearable or the opportunity to tell (Brennan and McElvaney, 2020). The survivors of the current study did not have these facilitators when the abuse was taking place:

> *No one was aware of it. I was afraid to report it to the abbot. I can't tell my parents all the details either. And I didn't have the strength to do so either (S2, BT24); To be honest, I never had anyone that I could trust and tell what was happening to me in the temple (S1, BT24)*

And now, as adults, they downplayed the potential for these facilitators to make a difference in their choice to remain silent.

It is true that to some extent the current participants too faced the barriers identified in previous studies elsewhere. However, it is difficult to ascertain if the same factors stymied the disclosure of current participants because they did not actively try to disclose. For them, the incidents of abuse were personal memories that were excluded from their current social identity. They were ambivalent about whether they would have disclosed or reported the incidents if the right conditions were available. As reported elsewhere, in traditional societies disclosure may not lead to the cessation of abuse and even lead to more risks of abuse and retribution (Boakye, 2009; Zalcberg, 2017). Although some form of disclosure during the time of abuse may have led to retributions due to the sheer power imbalance between children and senior monks in the monastery, there were no evidence to suggest that delayed disclosure would have posed a risk to participants' lives. However, they continued to remain silent about past abuse mainly because it was not a priority in their life; because of uncertainty about the cost and benefit of disclosure for them and people around them; and because of the need to protect family members' wellbeing and religious devotion.

Moreover, this suppression seemed to have been necessitated by monastic socialisation that emphasised the maintenance of the inside-outside boundary. Senior monastics unequivocally demanded that participants maintain a respectful façade in front of the public. As one participant recalled: *'The abbot often emphasised the need to keep the boundary between us and the lay people. Some senior monks explicitly mentioned that. Some senior teachers used to say, 'do whatever you want to do but make sure to do it behind the public eye'. From a very young age, you get trained to live a double life.' (S2, BT27).*

In addition to the personal and the institutional barriers, participants encountered sociocultural influencers that discouraged disclosure. These influencers are extensions of the

predisposing silencers discussed earlier. The only difference seemed to be the survivors' greater awareness of potential tensions between their experience and the cultural discourses around what is and is not acceptable.

Initially, even after realising that their experience was unacceptable, some were reluctant to break the silence because the path forward was more unclear than the predictable yet painful present. Therefore, when forced to make a choice between returning to poverty or continued abuse, some chose the latter. This was how one participant explained the choice:

> *That was because with the family background I knew there were no hopes in going home. That is something that I believe even to this day. So, I was always in the pursuit of an answer from the outside of the family. Because of this, no matter how many obstacles I faced, I didn't have any other place to go. With this helplessness, the boundary was blurred (S1, BT18).*

When later in the timeline they had more freedom to visit their families, and speak freely with them, they still did not bring up the topic because now they were up against cultural taboos around sexual topics wrapped in shame. Explaining why he chose not to disclose sexual abuse to his family, this participant said: *'these things* [sexual abuse] *were embarrassing and shameful things to tell anyone… How can I tell them something like that. We usually don't talk about things like that' (S4, BT18).* With their carefully assembled monkhood identity and the respectability that came with it, it would have been particularly difficult for monks to disclose abuse to family members. Moreover, the very existence of their identity might have depended on the successful concealment of this shameful part of life from those closest to them. As Rodgers et al. (2020, p. 103) reported, abuse victims in value-based societies that place a higher premium on honour and pride tend to strike a 'code of silence' out of fear of exclusion from their generally close-knit family and social world. Survivors often carefully weigh up the consequences of their disclosure (Alaggia et al. 2019). In the present context, the survivors seemed to withhold disclosure to protect their generally pious parents from this abominable side of the monastic life. For example, there was an element of altruism in this participant's choice to remain silent:

> *I did not want to create a bad image in my parents' mind about the monkhood. So, other than some hard times I had, I never told them anything about sexual abuse. I thought it was pointless to create such a negative image in their head (S2, BT18).*

Perhaps indicating the scale of the disconnect between children in the monastery and safeguarding authorities in Sri Lanka, not once did the participants come into contact with child protection or law enforcement agencies. The survivors disclosed physical abuse perpetrated by abbots and senior monks. Some also disclosed bullying by fellow monks. Emotional abuse and negligence of basic needs were also rife. In addition, there was prolonged exposure to sexual abuse which in some cases led to sexual misconduct among underaged monks. The exposure to abuse of this scale for two to three years without detection is a catastrophic failure of every institution that is responsible for children's welfare. How is this possible? Why are monastic child abuse incidents harder to detect? The next section provides tentative answers to these questions.

6.3 What do the findings reveal about silence within the Buddhist monastery?

Each senior monk who was interviewed spoke with a reasonable degree of objectivity, considering that in this research the monastery was under scrutiny. They all were self-critical about the lack of a progressive mindset in the top monastic leadership. The fact that these three senior monks, out of dozens contacted, volunteered to participate was possibly an indication of their progressive values as well as frustrations with the current situation in the monastery. But, at the same time, there were subtle variations in their self-criticisms, frustrations, and aspirations for the future of the Buddhist monastery. These variations may be attributed to the unique monastic circumstances of each senior monk. These circumstances might include the respective monastic chapters they represented within the Buddhist monastery; how connected or disconnected they were to their immediate monastic community; and the nature of their monastic responsibilities. For example, one was operating independently from all three mainstream monastic chapters, adopting a radically progressive stance towards issues such as child ordination, women's rights in Buddhism, openness to discussion, and overall reforms of the Buddhist monastery. He spoke with a greater sense of clarity and autonomy which may be attributed to being the most senior, most educated, and most experienced among the three. For example, this was his diagnosis of the current state of the monastery:

There are problems that can be observed from outside. One of them is that the failure to move out from feudal model. The original message of Buddhism is a very noble one that transcends race, caste, ethnicity, property ownership, consumerism, entanglement with the state. But in

Sri Lanka, perhaps due to the challenges encountered during its formation, it took up a different form. This form became entangled with the caste system and property. Because this form was not reformed, even though the society in general has progressed to a certain extent, the Buddhist institution has so far failed to catch up with that progress. This lack of ability to update itself, in my view, is a significant issue (ML1, BT28).

While his views may be considered to be closely aligned with modern human and child rights discourse, in the context of the orthodox Buddhist monastery, they would be considered radical or heretical.

Another senior monk had established his own monastery that conducts monastic affairs consistent with beliefs he shared in the interview. For example, he opposed the practice of child ordination and believed in restoring monastic discipline. Although he did not conform to the orthodox monastic tradition, he still maintained official ties with senior monks and affiliated temples in his lineage. The third one lived in a monastery which was the most orthodox tradition among the three. Although he did not act as an abbot of a particular monastery, he did hold a senior position in his respective monastic chapter.

Despite these variations, their views converged on key issues such as child ordination, the need for safeguarding, and openness to dialogue. They all conceded that the current Buddhist monastery was a feudal institution with materialistic interests, that was prepared to do anything to protect its power. It also became clear from their views that the perpetual recruitment of children as novices was crucial for maintaining the institution, as it tended to focus more on quantity for all practical purposes than striving for quality. These deviated priorities of the Buddhist monastery may have led to a toxic institutional culture of secrecy, corruption, and deviance, within which children are entrapped, groomed and abused. A few key converging points are discussed below.

6.3.1 Impulse to protect the tradition

The moral and ethical failure of religious leaders to protect children and expel offending clergy from religious organisations has been both incomprehensible and frustrating for civil society. Evidence from public inquiries and research on survivors has revealed that religious leaders have always prioritised protecting the institutional reputation instead of responding to the grievances of victims in a compassionate and swift manner (Royal Commission, 2017b; IICSA Research Team, 2017; BishopAccountability.org, 2021b; IICSA, 2021). As the BMS has so far been spared from having to provide a formal response to allegations of child abuse

within it, there is no formal evidence to be evaluated. Therefore, the insider information provided by the three senior monks and impromptu responses of senior monks in public forums are considered here to adjudge the monastic attitudes towards the issue of child abuse within it. One salient impression emerging from the data was the impulse among senior monastic leadership to protect institutional reputation and preserve tradition at all costs.

It became clear from the data that the practice of child ordination at present was mainly a recruitment scheme that provided manpower to run the monastic institution. Running the institution may include fielding an auspicious number (for example, seven monks for a seventh day memorial service) of monks for religious functions as requested by lay patrons, or maintaining a minimum number of recruits in training monasteries to remain eligible for government grants.

To some extent, a consensus which emerged from their views was that child ordination was detrimental to both children and to the institution. There was agreement that the long-term commitment to a monastic career should be a choice for adults only. It was also agreed that ordination should never be chosen as a solution to poverty:

> *Ordination is a thoughtful decision and for that one must at least be 18 years of age and have some life experience and understanding about life. I don't encourage ordination as a solution to poverty or any other problem in life (ML1, BT28).*

This senior monk's views appeared to be grounded in modern life-span development and safeguarding values; he asserted that '*a child ought to grow up with parents under parental care. If a child is to be given away under any circumstances, the child protection authority must carry out background checks about the place the child is taken to, the person taking the child, their character' (ML1, BT28).* He further added that *'children's brain development, emotional development, emotional needs, for a healthy child, these factors must be taken into consideration' (ML1, BT28).* Given the overall impression about the monastery as a traditional institution, his views were modern and progressive. However, he appeared as a frustrated lone actor who positioned himself as an outlier from the mainstream monastic tradition, and therefore his views may not have a direct impact on the practice of child ordination prevalent in mainstream Buddhism.

Another senior monk denounced the practice of child ordination as it directly put children at risk of various types of abuse:

> *I don't approve of ordaining young children. The reason for that is that's why they get abused, neglected and exploited. Children are being ordained just to maintain numbers in training monasteries. And then, they are abused, beaten up, taken advantage of. Because of those reasons, I don't approve it' (ML3, BT08).*

The third one took a diplomatic position by recognising the practical incentives of child ordination for the monastery:

> *As far as I can see, the ordination of young children in training monasteries – as we all know – is done for the purpose of maintaining the numbers in those institutions. That's one side of the story. At the same time, this helps to fulfil religious functions in temples in the vicinity of that training monastery (ML2, BT5).*

Although he agreed that the children were ordained for pragmatic purposes, he argued that it was unfair that only ordination was made a choice for children while all decisions were made for them by adults. He asked: *'when children have no choices in our culture, how can only this be isolated as a choice?' (ML2, BT5).* However, he too conceded that ordination at present was devoid of any spiritual meaning.

It emerged from the data that there was a strong conservative attitude on the part of senior leadership of the monastery, perhaps driven by a tacit knowledge that there will always be parents who are desperate enough to give away their children to monasteries. This appeared to be an excuse for senior monastic leaders not to take on complex monastic reforms targeting this issue. As one senior monk observed, senior leadership seemed to hold the view that *'those who want to reform, let them reform'. 'It's ok if some parents don't want to donate their children but let the others those who do' (ML2, BT5).* The high attrition rate and its probable causes, possibly including abuse, were viewed as collateral damage by senior leadership. Following Pinder and Harlos (2001), current higher monastic leadership can be implicated for wilfully avoiding to address unethical and unjust behaviours of monks within the organisation they purported to lead while the middle leadership that is responsible for day-to-day functions of the monasteries seem to either disapprove the status quo in silence or willingly participate in maintaining the status quo.

According to tradition, the Buddhist monastic community is comprised of adults who make a gradual commitment to a celibate lifestyle. Given the seriousness of this commitment, a key interest of this study was to explore how and why child ordination has become the rule, not the exception. However, none of the senior monks interviewed here knew definitively how

ordaining children became mainstream. But they offered tentative theories about why it had become the chief mode of recruitment. One such theory was that child ordination exploits the malleability of childhood:

> *… I ordain a disciple to look after my temple and continue my lineage. To achieve this, there is a belief in our society that one must start young. I think there is a positive side to that. That means it is easier to learn and form good habits when you are younger (ML3, BT5).*

Another senior monk drew parallels between child ordination and child marriages that are prevalent in Indian culture. He suggested that the underlying motive for both practices could be the same:

> *The motive seems to be that removing a child from her family of origin and bringing her up in a new household makes it easier to make her more compliant. The word used here is domestication. But I don't know if this is the same motive behind child ordinatio' (ML1, BT08).*

Similar to the practice of child marriage or the Devadasi system in the Indian subcontinent (Shingal, 1025; Lee, 2011; Torri, 2009), the incentive for early training seems to be to groom a complaint future candidate for the role. For a certain network of Buddhist monasteries child ordination can be vital due to monastic landlordism (Evers, 1969). For these monasteries with real estate and profitable ventures, grooming a child who is related by kinship to the current incumbent may be necessary to ensure that the fortune remains within the bloodline. This is a situation unique to a relatively powerful but smaller number of monasteries. While it is difficult based on current data to ascertain if child ordination is a sinister scheme to victimise children on a grand scale, the views of senior monks certainly pointed to underlying motives of taking advantage of the flexibility of childhood in order to maintain the institution of the Buddhist monastery.

Although every temple has some level of income, for the ordinary monasteries the impulse seems to be to ensure a sufficient supply of monks for religious functions. This means smooth functioning of day-to-day religious affairs while providing the visual impression to the senior leadership that the institution is duly maintained, as evident in the following description:

> *They tend to consider maintaining a training monastery as part of their duty to their forefathers. … This is associated with pride. …in order to fulfil this obligation, they*

are going to need to ordain young children. That is one thing. Another thing that they raise was that the need for carrying out religious functions in the area and the dependency on the young monk population to fulfil this. It seems impossible to carry out religious functions without young monks (ML2, BT05).

Evidently, there was a clear impulse to protect the traditional institutions and lineages. To achieve this goal, ordaining and grooming children seemed to be the most convenient avenue for monastic leadership in the Sri Lankan cultural context.

Elderly senior monks who are concerned about the future of their monastic lineage may choose to settle for the lowest possible monastic standards by ignoring misconducts of their disciples. External factors such as the pressure to placate the lay patrons and compete with rival monasteries may also contribute to poor moral standards internally. In recent decades, probably facilitated by the mushrooming media channels, the performative aspects of religious rituals such as chanting, prayers and sermons have increased in popularity. The monks who can provide this religious sensation are highly sought after both by the public and abbots. Under these circumstances, those monks who are considered essential for the operation of the monastery can be shielded from any scrutiny, as described by one senior monk:

In general, … there are pious monks but they are afraid of insisting strict monastic codes on their disciples out of fear that they might leave the monastery. …there are very few monks in the country and if the standards were to be higher, the remaining numbers would dwindle fast. …serious shortage of man power. So, if there are monks who are addicted to sexual abuse, they get a free pass because they contribute to the numbers (ML2, BT05).

This moral compromise in the teacher-disciple relationship in turn seems to reflect on the overall governance of the monastic system:

Although there are chiefs, deputy and judicial heads of a monastic order, there is no system in place to carry out these protocols. No one bothers to take corrective actions when an offence is committed. … We just gather at the assembly hall for ceremonial sake, that's it. We have no dedicated time for holy life or monastic conduct (ML3, BT05).

As identified earlier, the impulse to prioritise the protection of institutional reputation over the welfare of victims has led to a continuum of ignorance and systematic corruption (Mathew, 2017). It is possible that the apathy shown by the monastic leadership towards child ordination falls between ignorance and systemic inertia. In particular, the failure of religious institutions to emphasise with and care for victims of abuse has been linked to clericalism, a sense of self-centredness deeply held by the clergy that is similar to clinical narcissism (Doyle, 2006). At the institutional level, this attitude may manifest as 'institutional narcissism' demonstrated by the lack of empathy, an attitude that clergy are an elite group, and a tendency for interpersonal exploitation (Doyle, 2006, p. 199). Given the social and cultural deference bestowed upon Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka, it is possible that senior members of the Buddhist clergy also embody narcissistic characteristics such as a heightened sense of self-importance, interpersonal exploitation, and lack of empathy. Leaders of orthodox religious institutions in particular have been reported to show apathy towards victims while shielding the perpetrators (Mendes et al., 2019). Based on the data from the monastic participants, the higher leadership of the Buddhist monastery may have become desensitised to the adversities endured by the children in the monastery partly because they themselves may have endured such experiences when they were novices, and partly due to the clericalism deeply held both by the monastery and society at large. As Doyle (2006) asserted, these institutional characteristics make disclosure and recognition of child abuse in religious settings more difficult.

This impulse to protect the tradition appears to be an extension of the BMS's purported historical mission as the cultural guardians (*kuladevatā*) of the Sri Lankan society. With this self-ascribed role as moral arbiters, Buddhist monks seem to negatively influence a range of important secular issues. These issues include public policy and discussion around sex education (Jayawardana, 2019), consumption of beef (Malhotra, 2020), providing legal protection for sex workers (Perera and Siriwardana, 2022), school uniform for female teachers and students (Vaffoor, 2022). Buddhist monks' interference in secular life seems to go beyond clerical narcissism and tends to be symptomatic of the institutional impulse to maintain the cultural status quo it seems to benefit from. A similar trend has been observed in relation to the IRCC's moral grip on post-independent Irish society in which large section of child population was institutionalised in collusion with the Irish state as a form of moral sanitisation (McLoone-Richards, 2012). While there was no evidence to suggest that child ordination was an insidious form of purifying the 'moral dirt' (Ferguson, 2007, p. 133),

children were directly or indirectly coerced into a religious form of conscription for the sake of preservation of cultural orthodoxy.

6.3.2 Resistance to change

Public inquiry and research evidence on child abuse in religious settings have highlighted the rigidity and resistance with which the religious leadership had responded to allegations of child abuse by their clergy. These attitudes are viewed as being embedded in the organisational governance and culture (Royal Commission, 2017b; IICSA, 2021; IICSA Research Team 2017; BishopAccountability.org, 2021b).

The views of senior monks illuminated how monastic power is maintained in collusion with state institutions, and how this fused relationship between the two institutions may deter efforts to effect changes in monastic governance. Although these views were their personal observations without reference to any specific cases of collusion, they provided an important glimpse into the inner workings of the monastic institution. All three monks unequivocally disclosed their knowledge of the existence of a *quid pro quo* relationship between the monastery and the state, implicating the higher echelons of both institutions. They regretted that both institutions abuse each other's power to protect material and reputational interests.

These views tend to corroborate the tacit theories as to why senior leadership of the monastery publicly defend notoriously corrupt politicians (Perera, 2014) and why the political establishment in general tends to abstain from interfering with monastic affairs. Despite their differences on other issues, there seems to be a consensus among monastic leaders that their autonomy must not be meddled with by anyone outside the institution. By attempting to introduce a legal framework for governing monks and monasteries, the government fell out of favour with the monks and most of the Buddhist populace, leading to its eventual downfall. Political intentions aside, these failed attempts to regulate the monks' public behaviour and the significant political consequences point to the ambivalent relationship between the state and the monastery (Herath, 2021). Although this resistance to external scrutiny may not be a direct attempt to conceal child abuse in the monastery, it certainly has led to that.

One senior monk rationalised the relationship between the Buddhist institution and the state as vital for the longevity of Buddhism in Sri Lanka:

The relationship between Buddhism and the state has historically been instrumental in keeping Buddhism as an organised religion. This is important for the continuation of

Buddhist tradition because Buddhism on its own is not organised as such. The Buddhist community is not organised, not united like other religious communities. Other religious communities stand for their ideology as one team. But the Buddhist community is not like that. So, personally I think, this relationship between Buddhism and state ought to continue (ML2, BT14).

This longing for state patronage seems to derive from a sense of insecurity that if Buddhism was to decouple from the State, it would– disintegrate because it is not structured like a theistic religion around a central leadership figure with an administrative structure similar to the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, historically, the Buddhist monastery has always sought state patronage for its legitimacy which was enshrined in the country's post-colonial constitution. Article 9 of the constitution dictates that the State 'shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sāsana' (The Constitution of The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015). However, as all three senior monks indicated, there is a general expectation among monks that this constitutional obligation must be carried out by the State on the terms of the Buddhist monastery, and there is strong resistance to any attempts to reform it:

> *In terms of government interventions, regardless of state policies, there seems to be a notion that the power historically endowed to the monastic tradition should not be meddled with. I tend to agree with the practical value of this notion with regard to the preservation of Buddhism in the country (ML2, BT14).*

The monastery seems to assume a privileged position that is often leveraged to resist change. This sustained resistance to change is key to the maintenance of the status quo and the silence that prevails within it. Conversely, openness to reforms and acceptance of systemic issues would disturb the status quo by challenging institutional power interests.

Perhaps, this explains the strong resistance within the monastery to having open conversations about issues related to the wellbeing of the institution. There was a clear lack of optimism among participating senior monks about the prospects of positive changes within the Buddhist monastery. They all believed that there was no space for dialogue within their institution due to lack of openness and trust, and outright indolence within its ranks. Under the circumstances described so far, this attitude should not come as a surprise.

The lack of room for critical discussion could also be due to the structure of the monastic organisational hierarchy that by default inhibits the potential for dialogue. It may only

facilitate top-down communication that is expected to be received with respect. To some extent, the voices of the three senior monks in this research can be interpreted as symptomatic of a wider problem of the monastery's failure to accommodate criticism in any effective way. Despite their relative seniority, these monks in their efforts to bring about positive change failed to reason with their fellow senior monks and the rigid leadership. Eventually, some took matters into their own hands and started experimenting with more progressive models of monasticism while others retreated to cynicism and hopelessness. While these individual efforts are laudable, it is not clear how they would effect change in the system. To add to the problem, they all refused to engage with the orthodox core of the institution which is arguably the most consequential element in sustaining the status quo. Hierarchical organisational culture, top-down communication, fragmented authoritarian governing style, and a distorted view of sexuality have been identified as contributing to institutional abuse in other institutional contexts (IICSA Research Team, 2017; Mathew, 2017).

Despite these dysfunctional characteristics, the Buddhist monastery seems to have sustained itself as an institution while resisting occasional external pressure to reform. Critics have asserted that like living organisms, organisations evolve according to the environment in which they operate, and consequently tend to show stiff resistance to change (Palmer and Feldman, 2018). Secrecy that was maintained alongside with the social deference afforded to the monastery seemed to consolidate this resistance to change.

6.3.3 Clerical secrecy

Evidence from public inquiries and research on survivors has revealed that religious leaders not only failed to prevent child abuse in their organisations but also actively shielded offending clergy from prosecution by external authorities (Royal Commission, 2017b; IICSA Research Team, 2017; BishopAccountability.org, 2021b; IICSA, 2021; Doyle, 2006). The urge to protect offenders and bury them in secrecy is more intense when the alleged abuser is a high-ranking priest (Winfield, 2022). The respectable position of the institution in society and its physical separateness are key facilitators of abuse in religious settings (McLoone-Richards, 2012; IICSA, 2021).

The data in the current research revealed a culture of secrecy that is sustained by a range of internal practices and external factors. It appeared as if secrecy was a necessary condition for the legitimate existence of the monastery. As discussed earlier, an important element of monastic socialisation for novices was indoctrination about the boundary between the lay

outside and monastic inside. This distinction seems to be essential for the maintenance of secrecy. The boundary is maintained by using both symbolic and physical distancing measures. At a symbolic level, unlike other clergy, Buddhist monks distinguish themselves in a quite visual way by shaving heads, beards, and eyebrows, always wearing robes, and emphasising that this embodied priesthood is the key demarcation between worldly and holy life.

At a practical level, lay people from young childhood are socialised through parenting and cultural narratives around appropriate etiquettes to show respect to Buddhist monks. These include standing up and removing caps or hats in the presence of monks, paying respect by prostration, and using honorific language to address them. The public spaces in which lay people may meet monks are also regulated in a specific way that invokes a sense of entitlement for the monks while requiring respect from the laity. For example, there are spaces in public transport systems, government offices, and airports that are reserved for monks. They are not expected to wait in queues for services, and are expected to be served on arrival. However, these spaces seem to be semi-permeable in the sense that, while the laity is expected to respect these physical boundaries, the monks can cross over to lay territory. Historically, monks have always been testing this boundary by widening their share of public space while demanding the same level of respect from the public. For example, since independence, monks have gradually been occupying secular spaces in educational, employment, and political domains. But this freedom has not been reciprocated to lay men, women, or children in terms of accessing spiritual or physical spaces in the monastery. For example, women are still not fully accepted into higher ordination, and are still not allowed to visit the inner chamber of the temple of Sacred Tooth Relic.

Religious institutions seem to naturally incline towards secrecy in matters related to wrongdoing and this tendency may partly be encouraged by interpretations of religious teachings. Critics have argued that Canon law was partly responsible for promoting secrecy in the way the Catholic Church handled allegations of child abuse (Doyle, 2006; IICSA Research team, 2017). To elaborate on a similar tendency within the monastery, the Pāli term '*thinavattāraka*' is useful here. This term has profound meaning in the context of this research and was used by a participant who was a senior monk. It means 'covering malodorous faeces with grass.' He used it to denote the monastic impulse to cover up any incidents that may cause reputational damage to the institution. According to him, the first reaction to any scandal was the archetypical denial, and then coverup. This seemed to be

achieved by the monastic leadership by any means necessary, including mobilisation of political, financial and bureaucratic resources tactfully accumulated over the years. Any public discussion of scandalous events at local or national community level was deemed by the leadership as a humiliating display of monastic waste material that must be buried to minimise the foul smell – in their own words, *thinavattāraka*.

The use of Pāli terms is common among monks, sometimes for ease of communication, and sometimes to speak in a coded language in the presence of lay people. This linguistic trick may also indicate the existence of a double-sided subculture that is plainly obvious yet simultaneously impenetrable. Anders (2019) and Buckner (2020) have observed the similar trends in Western Buddhist circles where sacred Buddhist terminologies have been decontextualised and misused by respected leaders to silence and deflect grievances related to unethical and unlawful practices carried out by influential Buddhist teachers. As O'Gorman (2010) revealed, the misuse of clerical trust to secretly abuse children in all sort of spaces is not unique to the Buddhist monastery. For example, accordingly to survivors, all night chanting ceremonies tend to be a common hunting ground for senior monks to sexually abuse junior monks. These ceremonies are held in a chamber specifically built and decorated for this purpose. Although not fully concealed from outside view, it provides enough cover to molest someone while pretending to be chanting. Furthermore, temporary sleeping arrangements within the same household or nearby monastery also provide open access to younger monks. While these religious events are conducted in the intimate quarters of the public, the shield of deference is used as a cover to perpetrate child sexual abuse. However, due to parental and social deference towards clergy, prevention and detection of child abuse in monastic context seem doubly challenging.

6.3.4 Interplay between macrosystemic and institutional factors

The general state of children in Sri Lanka was highlighted in the data as a compelling explanation for the lack of outrage about the circumstances of children in monastic settings. Without dismissing the seriousness of monastic child abuse, the senior monks argued that child abuse was not exclusive to the monastery, but a wider social problem. As one put it: *'religious institutions are not the only culprit that deem physical punishment as appropriate. School teachers as well as parents tend to think that physical punishments are needed as the saying goes beat him up to bring him up' (ML1, BT15)*. The widespread attitude of 'spare the rod, spoil the child' highlighted as corporal punishment seems to be openly sanctioned by the country's highest political leadership (*Colombo Telegraph*, 2016; Mudalige and

Mallawaarachi, 2018). In defence of these archaic methods of disciplining, politicians lament the emerging discourses in human and child rights, a development that they seem to perceive as weakening the prevalent toughening-up approach to parenting. These views of political leaders may reflect the findings of the De Silva et al.'s study (2017) that revealed that most male school children are subjected to physical punishment by their teachers. Based on anecdotal observations, uneducated parents, perhaps due to the devotional belief that teachers know what is best for children, expect teachers and monks to discipline their children, using whatever means necessary. This total transfer of power of disciplining may also result from the parents' insecurity about lack of control over the future of their children and paranoia that their children may inherit the same socioeconomic suffering they endure.

Another compelling explanation that emerged from data for monastic silence was the general lawlessness prevalent in every institution and society in general. As one senior monk cynically remarked: *'just like other state and social institutions, we cannot expect the monastic institution to be pure and clean (ML3, BT15).* Such a pessimistic perception was not unfounded. As of 2021, Sri Lanka was ranked 102 out of 180 countries on the global corruption perception index, scoring a meagre 37 out of 100 (Transparency International, n.d). At the time of finalising this research in late 2022, Sri Lanka had been declared bankrupt and was expecting an international bailout (Cassim, 2022). The corruption markers considered in this index tend to be the same key factors that plague institutions in Sri Lanka: nepotism, diversion of public funds for personal gain without facing consequences; and lack of legal provisions to prosecute those who are corrupt. With similar corrosive characteristics, it can be argued that the monastery is a microcosm of this broadly corrupt system.

The general silence around uncomfortable topics was also provided as an explanation for the ongoing silence in monasteries: *'We tend to live while hiding our institutional flaws, just like other institutions' (ML3, BT15).* The broader assertion was that monastic leaders, parents of the ordaining children and the authorities are forced by some unidentified force to unquestionably maintain the status quo. As one senior monk summed it up: *'everyone seems to be stuck … everyone is in this push and pull, going through the pressure… like it is automatically pushing forward' (ML2, BT15).* As data from these three interviews suggested that social and institutional circumstances appear to be perfectly aligned for this dysfunctional triangular relationship between the Buddhist community, the monastery, and the society. The parents are under pressure to feed their children and therefore potential issues around safeguarding standards in monasteries become the least of their priorities.

Fixated on their personal and reputational survival, the monastic leaders seem to focus solely on maintaining the numbers by uncritically ordaining children. Lastly, the safeguarding authorities along with the political establishment seem to be, at best, reactive to a few leaked cases of monastic child abuse. Both monastic leadership and the safeguarding authority seem to act as bystanders whereas they ought to play the most consequential role.

Lastly, the data indicated that monastic silence may be located within the greater landscape of silence which is shaped by the ethnopolitical tensions inherited from the country's colonial and postcolonial past. When evaluated in the context of ethnoreligious otherness, the monastery's self-interested behaviour becomes less puzzling. Particularly in recent decades, the majority Buddhist populace has been led by various actors to believe that they are losing political, economic, and religious grounds to other minorities (DeVotta, 2007). In a background marred by three decades of civil war between the Singhalese government and Tamil separatists and waves of anti-Muslim riots, all three groups, not just the Buddhists, seem to be secretive about their own failings. This silence at community level may lead to a collective silence which has implications for the wellbeing of women and children. In South Asian communities, violence against women and children remains largely a domestic, and therefore a private, issue failing to be recognised by authorities as a systemic issue needing systemic solutions (UNICEF, 2020; Kochuthara, 2019).

6.4 What do the findings reveal about the role of child protection authorities in the silence?

The findings have several implications for the safeguarding of children in the monastery. Firstly, the lack of clear policy guidelines on how to respond to incidents of monastic child abuse was salient. This policy gap seemed to create barriers to investigate incidents of child abuse in monasteries. Secondly, there appeared to be barriers to reporting incidents of monastic child abuse from within monasteries and the community. Thirdly, the child protection officers' duty experience has implications for child safeguarding in religious institutions in traditional settings. The person in the professional role emerged as an important dimension, as child protection officers must negotiate their cultural and community affiliations when they encounter incidents of monastic child abuse. In aggregate, this policy disjunction seems to indicate a failure to recognise the issue of child abuse in the Buddhist monastery.

6.4.1 Safeguarding policy gaps

Addressing safeguarding challenges in settings that are not regulated by childcare laws is not exclusive to current monastic context in Sri Lanka. A pilot study on out-of-school settings conducted for The Department for Education in England (HM Government, 2022) also identified a vast sector including faith-based organisations that remains outside of any direct external oversight. That study discovered a variety of serious safeguarding risks including sex offenders being employed in those settings and local authority officers being uncertain about how to intervene. The child protection officers in Sri Lanka face a similar challenge in dealing with the risks and allegations concerning the MBS.

Due to the lack of clarity around policies and standard operating procedures, child protection officers appeared to be operating in a safeguarding no man's land in which the responsibility to safeguard children in monasteries seemed to have been diffused. The child protection authorities not only failed to formulate culture-sensitive policies to oversee the monasteries but also to apply existing policies to safeguard the children in religious settings. These failings seemed to impact on the officers on the ground who were saddled with the complex task of responding to incidents of monastic child abuse. As indicated in the data, safeguarding policy issues were further complicated by the confusion around current administrative structures governing monasteries and training monasteries. As noted in the introductory chapters, the monasteries are governed by the Temporalities Act, while training monasteries are under the purview of the Ministry of Education. However, it is unclear why this administrative divide is a hurdle to formulating and implementing child safeguarding as both monasteries and training monasteries function in the same way, except the latter category provides formal education.

Based on the accounts of child protection officers, the current approach to safeguarding children in the monastery seemed to be reactive rather than proactive: '*The only time those institutions* [monasteries and training monasteries] *come to* [their] *attention is when there is a reported incident of child abuse through the police or the court' (CPO3, BT19)*. Therefore, when an incident of child abuse in a monastery was brought to the authority's attention, they tended to respond to it. However, the responding officer seemed to be working against a firewall of resistance from within the monastery and, in some instances, from the community affiliated to it.

In addition to stalling investigations, the lack of clearly defined policies may have implications for other proactive measures that should be in place to safeguard children. For example, reporting practices around suspected child abuse has been a key area of concern when improving the safety of the children in religious settings (Harper and Perkins, 2018). Again, this takes the issue back to the overarching problem of specific policy creating a vicious cycle of insufficient policies, training, and practice. Organisations and settings that are not bound by childcare laws may choose not to report incidents of abuse or safeguarding concerns to authorities (HM Government, 2022) and this seemed to be the case with the BMS.

Given the sheer size of the child population associated with monasteries in Sri Lanka (an estimated sixty thousand children in more than twelve thousand monasteries), the child protection authorities' omission of this sector in their policies was both puzzling and disturbing. The child protection officers' views about this loophole were indicative of the overarching problem of insufficient policies. One officer explained that: '*Yes, we can* [inspect monasteries]. *We can according to the Act. But for the past eleven years on the job, I have never done that' (CPO1, BT21).* But the same officer contradicted himself later saying: *'I haven't read any specific policy. I have been on the job for eleven years but I have never come across such a policy' (CPO1, BT21).* Another officer, while contradicting both previous views, said the existing policies were adequate to safeguard children irrespective of the setting, and the reason for not inspecting monasteries was that '[they] *are not categorised as places where children are at risk' (CPO2, BT21).* The third and most experienced officer was equally puzzled by the exclusion of the monasteries from the agency's oversight: *'For some reason – I don't know what that is – we don't oversea monasteries or training monasteries' (CPO3, BT21).*

6.4.2 Communal dimension

Minto et al. (2016) found that congregants' affiliation to religious institutions influenced their evaluation of allegations of child abuse against priests. The study showed that congregants who were strongly affiliated to their religion were less likely to believe the victims and more likely to believe the inculpability of the alleged priest. More importantly, these congregants were the likely witnesses or recipients of disclosure of abuse. This makes them key responders who can circuit-break potentially prolonged child abuse. However, Minto et al. (2016) observed that congregants tend to be wary of reporting to external authorities and when evidence of abuse is undeniable, they tend to defend the institution by excluding the

accused priest from the equation. They argued that this was due to congregants' social identity being dependant on the religious institution. A similar trend was observed in the current context as there was a communal dimension to how allegations of monastic child abuse were negotiated. There were indications that authorities were not completely unaware of the safeguarding issues in monasteries. As officers recalled: they *'have recognised that there is a gap in* [their] *policies when it comes to overseeing training monasteries and temples.' (CPO3, BT21);* They *have spoken about it at* [their] meetings. [They] *have reported to* [their] *top management that there are abuse incidents and that something should be done about them. But it seems difficult also for the national level leaders to implement such policies' (CPO1, BT21)*.

As one officer attested, he would rather have nothing to do with the monastery in any official capacity. His fear was multifaceted cutting across personal, professional and communal layers. Personally, he struggled with the awfully uncomfortable initiation of an inquiry into a monastic child abuse case, as this would require complete rewiring of his mind; he now had to look at the monastery, its abbot and resident monks in a completely new light. This appeared to be challenging due to the negotiation he had to undertake between the allegations, the high status of the monks, and his own position as a member of the same community. As expected, the monastery seemed to view an investigation as challenging to its moral legitimacy and, therefore resisted it from the outset. In its defence, the monastery seemed to invoke clerical immunity which is generally wielded as a form of Sri Lankan exceptionalism that legitimises any actions by Buddhist monks because, no matter how morally or legally deviant those actions can be, they are expected to believe they were taken in the best interests of the Buddhist nation, of which monks are considered the cultural guardians (*kuladevatā*).

Even if the officers were able to break through this first firewall, sometimes by calling for assistance from the police, they must still conduct their investigation under the supervision of the abbot of the monastery who is the gatekeeper to monastic affairs and often the alleged perpetrator. As data in this current study indicated, such an arrangement proved counterproductive to the progress of any investigative work because other monastic subordinates including the victim/s were reluctant to disclose information to investigators that would incriminate the powerful abbot. According to the officers, the only clear path for prosecution of alleged monastic perpetrators was the availability of direct medical or audio-visual evidence which was generally the biggest hurdle in prosecuting abuse cases. Monastic

child abuse tends to occur within the closed quarters of the monastery and victims tend to remain unexposed to any external detection by parents or concerned adults.

In the event of direct incriminating evidence and the arrest of an alleged monk, the officers then had to contend with the community that supports the monastery. The community tended to be divided into at least two camps in the wake of an investigation, one supporting and another opposing the alleged monk. The social relationship between monks and the community can be multidimensional and judging the character of a Buddhist monk can be difficult for people who have had limited, scripted interactions with a monk. For those who knew the alleged monk well, judging his culpability may not be straightforward due to conflicting layers of their complex relationship with him. For example, it is likely that the accused monk was there for their mother's funeral, lent them some money, made an inappropriate comment about their sister, and led a demonstration against the closure of the village primary school and so on. In light of this complex communal reality, a divided community in the context of a child abuse scandal seems to be the norm than the exception.

Regardless of the veracity of allegations or claims of innocence, the community must now grapple with the tainted sacrality of their monastery and brace for the embarrassment, in the eyes of neighbouring villages, of worshiping a corrupt monk. Worse still, if the community is blended with other ethnoreligious groups, the stakes can be even higher as its pride is at risk on multiple fronts. Depending on the proximity to other ethnoreligious groups, there could be an impulse within the community to defend the reputation of their village monk, despite tacit knowledge and evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, allegations of this nature tend to shatter people's assumptive worlds, forcing the community, sometimes irrationally, to defend the offender who was formerly in the centre of their sacred world. In these high-stake situations, there could be pressure on child protection officers from various parties to withdraw cases or downplay their severity. As indicated by the interview data, child protection officers may succumb to pressure for fear of castigation as a traitor to the community. In addition to external pressure, the officers themselves may be tempted to coverup because they are also members of the same community. Similar communal dynamics have been identified within familial and institutional settings in the multi-religious and multi-ethnic South Asian context (Kochuthara, 2019; The Human Rights Watch, 2013). These fluid scenarios tend to collide with efforts to draw professional boundaries and implement policies around practices involving children.

Doubling down on the external pressure on child protection officers was the perceived fear of political interference. The officers formed this perception based on the overt alliance between political and monastic institutions, even if they were yet to encounter direct inference from a politician. Their main concerns were about the security of their jobs and their ability to lead a peaceful life in the community. In a culture in which politically motivated, vengeful sacking and transfer of public servants are common, the officers' reservations were not unfounded. Unfortunately for the children in the monastery, this could mean a complete lack of protection and continued exposure to risks of abuse. While political interference can be a universal problem, this scenario provides a unique glimpse into its role in safeguarding challenges in developing countries.

6.4.3 Barriers to reporting

Challenges to reporting child abuse in religious settings have been identified before. Broadly, the barriers to reporting are associated with the offending religious organisation or community within which the organisation exists (IICSA, 2021). In religious settings, fellow clergy, congregants or staff are the likely witnesses of abuse or recipients of abuse disclosure. However, the recipients seem to be sceptical about the allegations and to weigh the cost and benefits before reporting to external authorities. Their decision to report seems to depend on the status of the alleged perpetrator (Harper and Perkins, 2018). The data in the current study pointed to a range of barriers believed to exist in monasteries that prevent reporting of abuse to the authorities. Evidently, they were related to policy loopholes mentioned earlier regarding the lack of child safeguarding practices in monasteries. As per the national policy on child protection, there appears to be a reasonably functioning safeguarding mechanism in place for children's care homes, schools and day care centres. The NCPA monitors these institutions and publicises their safety ratings (NCPA Resource Centre, 2021). According to the officers in this study, they had the power to conduct spot checks on these institutions and interview children in them without having to seek permission from wardens or managers. There were also reporting channels available to the children in those institutions. For example, it was reported that printed posters of the NCPA hotline 1929 were displayed in every children's home with access to a free public telephone. However, they were concerned that without access to such systems, children in monasteries were at greater risk of prolonged abuse. There were divergent views on the accessibility and efficacy of reporting as some thought that even if the abuse was reported to authorities, without clear protocols and cultural reasons cited earlier, mere reporting might not make a difference. Their concerns were linked

to the complexities around managing practical issues with cultural implications such as not having clear probationary care options for a child who was also a monk; removing the robes and returning the child to his parents was not seen as a straightforward solution. In fact, it was viewed as difficult and even counterproductive for the welfare of the child monk, due to rigid cultural norms around disrobing. There were also doubts about whether or not monks who were already conditioned to relate differently to the outside world would actually be comfortable about reporting abuse to lay authorities.

Some of these reservations were grounded in the officers' limited work experience in relation to monastic child abuse. As illustrated earlier, in investigating monastic abuse, they were already in a hostile environment and working without specific guidelines or direct evidence. These barriers were further strengthened by the reluctance of alleged victims and potential witnesses to speak. They thought that not speaking against a fellow monk could be a sign of an internal subculture that enforced a strict code of silence. Their theory was that monks initially conformed to abuse out of fear of their survival and then endured it until they were ready to free themselves from monastic life by gaining entry to a university or securing a job before disrobing. Interestingly, these hunches accurately reflected the lived experience of the survivor participants in this study and, more broadly, tended to shed light on the large number of monks that leave monkhood during their time at university.

6.4.4 The child protection officers' dilemma

As the child protection officers were part of the ethnoreligious macrocosm in which the monastery operated, the boundary between the person and the professional in relation to religion appeared to be distorted. This blurry vision might prevent them from proactively recognising the risks of child abuse in monasteries. It was also clear from the data that in relation to the monastery, they were operating in murky territory in which, considering the evidence from the survivors, perpetrators hide behind the veneer of clerical deference. This lack of clarity was exacerbated by, if not a direct result of, the absence of specific safeguarding policies to enable protection officers to reign in monastic practices involving children.

It was salient in the data that the officers remained cautious about taking a professional position on issues at the centre of child ordination, such as the question of a minimum age for ordination or subjecting children to harsh disciplinary regimes in monastic training. Although it was not expressed explicitly, they appeared to take the view that child ordination must

continue even if it seemed to contradict the safeguarding values that they purportedly upheld. Regarding the issue of determining a minimum age for ordination, this officer quoted the Buddha:

> *I don't think we can determine such a limit. The Buddha has said that a child who is old enough to chase away a crow is old enough to be a monk. So, we can't determine an age limit (CPO2, BT8).*

The officers held deeply entrenched positive views about the practice of child ordination. They not only viewed it as a rare noble opportunity that elevated an ordinary person to an extraordinary level; they also saw it as a better path for children to receive a decent education and rise above poverty. According to the officers, a key profile indicator of their job was to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children who were put into state care due to various domestic issues. Therefore, favouring child ordination as a better welfare option perhaps indicated a lack of trust in their own care system. Alternatively, this preference was a likely extension of their own personal religious values that view monastic life was higher than household life. While child protection officers are entitled to their religious beliefs, it is troubling that their view of child ordination was no more informative than the parents who ordained their children out of financial desperation.

Interestingly, there were no references in the research data to the apparent failures of the State or the childcare system to provide opportunities for children to thrive, without resorting to difficult monastic life. This can be seen as a professional dilemma unique to childcare professionals operating in disorganised ecosystems like Sri Lanka. The omnipresent monastic establishment and religious narratives seemed to conveniently compensate for the lack of dedicated resources for child welfare in the secular domain.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter, the findings were discussed in the context of the three main research questions. The focus was on how silence around child abuse in monasteries was socially constructed through interpersonal and institutional influencers while being inadvertently sustained by a lack of safeguarding oversight from authorities. At the interpersonal level, survivors' reticent endurance of abuse for many years was viewed essentially as a trade-off for having access to basic needs and education. Decisions were made to donate children to monasteries purely on good faith without any informal or formal safeguarding considerations. When children entered the monastery they entered a male-dominated ecosystem in which

physical and sexual abuse had become normal. Insulated from the secular world, the monastery seemed to have created its own moral subculture in which the untrained older men exercised total control over every aspect of pre-pubescent children under the pretext of an ancient teacher-disciple spiritual relationship. However, while there was some evidence that the monastic leadership was complicit in perpetuating the problem, the child protection authorities appeared ambivalent, possibly due to a lack of clear policies and practice guidelines. The overlapping religious and professional beliefs of the duty officers at ground level also mediated their perception and willingness to be proactive about the issue.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the findings of the current research are recapitulated while underscoring their implications for the child safeguarding and institutional care. Strengths and limitations of the current research are then reflected. After recommending future research and policy directions, the thesis ends with a concluding reflection.

7.2 Implications of the findings

This study set out to explore the phenomenon of child abuse in the Buddhist monastic setting in Sri Lanka. The objective was to consult multiple sources including survivors, monastic leadership and child protection authorities in order to answer a fundamental question; that is, why is there a prevailing silence about this topic in Sri Lanka. Data from semi-structured interviews and other sources were thematically analysed to identify factors that predisposed, precipitated and perpetuated the silence around this topic. These factors were understood as operating at interpersonal, institutional and professional (policy) levels.

The predisposing silencers revolved around domestic poverty, monasteries that were generally unhospitable for children and cultural narratives that incentivised child ordination. The precipitating silencers included trigger points that led to sudden and random decisions to send the children to a monastery. These decisions were taken abruptly as informal cultural transactions based purely on personal references or idiosyncratic understanding of religious values. The perpetuating silencers revealed a multitude of interpersonal, institutional and policy factors that were viewed as contributing to prolonged abuse, institutional secrecy and a lack of intervention or prevention. Data from other sources provided converging and diverging evidence that contextualised the interview data.

The claims by the survivors about the incidents of child abuse including sexual abuse were not contested as there was contextual evidence supporting such claims. This evidence included media reports on consistent patterns of abuse of boys by the clergy and a clear lack of safeguarding policies and procedures to prevent such abuses. Although the senior monks in this research did not deny the existence of child abuse within the monastery, at times they tried to downplay the contemporary prevalence and seriousness of the issue. There is no direct evidence to confirm or deny this position at this stage, other than to compare it to

contemporary incidents of child abuse reported in the media (For example: *Daily News*, 2022a, 2022b; *Colombo Gazette*, 2022). These reports clearly indicate a pattern of child abuse and nothing seems to have changed from the time when the survivors who participated in this research were novices. The views held by the child protection officers seem to fall on a continuum between the personal and the professional. On the personal end of the spectrum was a mixture of seemingly idiosyncratically formed religious and political views about child abuse in the monastery, while on other end there was a vague picture about their professional obligations towards children. And in the middle was direct evidence for a reactive approach to child protection and complete exclusion of monastic children from the safeguarding framework.

In aggregate, the challenges and inconsistencies in child safeguarding that emerged from child protection officers' field experience exposed a serious policy gulf between the general child protection policy and children in monasteries. This reality clearly contradicted all the guiding principles and values outlined in the national policy on child protection formulated by the NCPA in 2019. As children in monasteries were institutionalised under a religious and cultural pretext, they were deprived of the rights to self-determination, protection from harm and accessibility to services as outlined in the UNCRC.

The findings of this study have implications for child safeguarding and child protection in developing countries where there is a large section of the child population informally associated with religious organisations and settings. They problematise the role of religion and religious organisations regarding the state's commitment towards realising the goals of the UNCRC. As the global evidence base demonstrated, safeguarding children in religious settings is not an issue only confined to developing countries or an issue of the past. While traditional societies like Sri Lanka can be more exposed to this challenge, with the increasing size of diasporic communities, developed societies too may have to re-assess the role of religious institutions in the life of children from minority communities. In fact, unregulated religious schools within minority communities in the UK have already been recognised as a growing threat to child safeguarding (HM Government, 2022).

There are significant similarities between the overall findings of the current study and global evidence on child abuse in religious settings. These similarities can be found in victim characteristics such as age and gender; victim-offender relationship dynamics such as abuse of power, intimidation, and grooming; institutional characteristics such as secrecy, denial and

resistance to change; and safeguarding policy limitations such as omission of religious or out-of-school settings from safeguarding policies. Despite the similarities, however, the interpersonal, institutional and professional dimensions of child abuse inside monasteries should be interpreted more cautiously due to the contextual gap that seems to exist between Sri Lanka and high-income democracies. The main difference was the contrasting social ecological systems within which these interpersonal, institutional and professional dimensions were detected. In developed countries, the discovery of child abuse in religious settings was facilitated by multiple agents from the media, social care and law enforcement and this discourse seemed to construct the survivor as a unique victim. But, in Sri Lanka monastic child abuse and victims are yet to be formally discovered.

In terms of marked differences between the global and local findings, there was an absence of facilitators for disclosure coupled with barriers to knowledge and understanding of what constituted child abuse. In view of the social ecological limitations of the current setting, monastic child abuse and child abuse in general are not effectively recognised possibly due to a lack of robust system of detection and intervention that would have facilitated meaningful disclosure. More specifically, the lack of inclusion of monastic children in safeguarding policies was a unique policy failure that can possibly be attributed to cultural exceptionalism to which the BMS has been entitled.

While there is lot more to be researched about children who were and are currently associated with Buddhist monasteries, this study is possibly the first step in connecting Sri Lanka to the growing body of global research on child abuse in religious settings. Taken together, these findings raise questions about global importance regarding the safety and wellbeing of children who are at risk of institutionalisation due to armed conflicts and economic hardships. There is a high likelihood of a significant number of these children being sent to institutions run by religious organisations. This was already happening in the local context as in 2022 Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt payments essentially declaring bankruptcy, triggering the worst humanitarian crisis since independence in 1948; While there is no current data available, there are anecdotal reports of mass child ordinations.

As in the Irish or Australian context, the testimonies of adult survivors in this research undeniably unmasked the universal problem of adult-child power imbalance in institutions (Palmer et al., 2016; Palmer and Feldman, 2017; 2018), and how the absolute power held by adults can lead to systematic corruption of care (Wardhaugh and Wilding, 1998). As Palmer

and Feldman (2018) asserted, without proactively and innovatively addressing this core issue, legal and administrative reforms tend to be meaningless. In fact, three and half decades after the formation of UNCRC, the children in signatory states in the developed and developing parts of the world do not seem to have reaped the intended benefits. Despite Sri Lanka's expressed interest in realising the full potential of the UNCRC, child protection authorities seem to lack the seriousness, professionalism and innovation needed to meet the challenges of child safeguarding in a postcolonial orthodox society.

As evidence from the public inquiries from the developed nations indicates, boys disproportionately constitute the victims of institutional child abuse. The same is likely to be the case in the Buddhist monastic setting as child ordination is predominantly focused on boys. The dedication of boys for the preservation of cultural institutions reveals a paradoxical gender dimension, particularly in a seemingly patriarchal context. It appears as if the boys are treated as disposable in this institutional pursuit that disregards the risks of abuse and long-term developmental consequences.

7.3 Critical Reflections on the Research Process

The restrictions due to the Covid-19 global pandemic influenced the first two years of this three-year project. Many research and development activities were cancelled or moved to virtual platforms. The library and graduate college were provisionally opened. Due to travel restrictions, I was forced to cancel fieldwork and switch to virtual interviews. The disruptions that the pandemic caused to normal and working life meant delayed or complete lack of communication with potential participants, gatekeepers and coordinators in Sri Lanka. As these challenges emerged during the formative months of the project, they negatively impacted on the overall outcome of the project in ways that I could not anticipate. It is in this context that the following reflection on strengths and limitations should be considered.

7.3.1 Strengths

The flexibility of a case study approach became a strength in terms of accommodating the changes due to the global pandemic. Moreover, case study research focuses more on the process of researching than the research outcome (Denscombe, 2017). Accordingly, adjustments were made to data collection methods, the number of participants and data analysis techniques as the research progressed through the various stages. Instrumental case

study design allowed me to implement these changes without having to alter the overall design of the study.

I was positioned between the hitherto-unlocated survivors of child abuse in the Buddhist monastery and the academic community with which I have been collaborating. This proximity to the participants and the context of the research enabled familiarity with the topic and context, and access to participants. In view of the sensitivities around child abuse in the Buddhist monastic context, this position was instrumental in planning and conducting interviews in a tactful manner. More broadly, my positionality also meant research by survivors for survivors who are largely invisible in informal settings such as Sri Lanka.

7.3.2 Limitations

In terms of the case study design, there were at least two main limitations. Firstly, the case was loosely defined as child abuse in the BMS. While this did not present itself as an obstacle to conducting the research, for some it might be rather confusing to recognise the case, as it is a decentralised and scattered entity. Secondly and relatedly, the case was not bounded in the sense of strictly defining its boundaries. This was partly due to the uncharted nature of the topic and the exploratory nature of the research – therefore defining boundaries was not deemed useful – and also partly because it was also not possible to mark out a particular monastery with specific geographical boundaries due to travel restrictions and social-distancing measures imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Overcoming these limitations would have increased the methodological quality of the research as a case study.

Initially, I set out to conduct focus group interviews with monastic leaders and child protection officers. However, although others had reported that online focus group interviews were a more convenient strategy than face to face focus group interviews (Stewart and Shamdasini, 2017), I found it difficult to implement. Prospective participants from both groups declined to participate in focus group interviews and instead chose individual interviews. The monastic leaders were not willing to speak in a group setting, while child protection officers cited clashes in schedules. This was a drawback for the research because focus groups could have influenced the quality of the data as they enable synchronous cross-checking of divergent views of group members. Perhaps, this failed attempt at focus group interviewing calls for cautious application of this interview method for sensitive topics in traditional cultures.

As an instrumental case study, this research was not limited by its sample size. In fact, the multiple voices from survivors, senior monks and child protection officers provided a representative description of the issue. However, more voices and follow up interviews could have enhanced the quality of the data. But this was not possible due to a variety of challenges such as unavailability of participants for follow-ups due to time differences or their busy schedules. These challenges were further exacerbated by breakdowns and delays in communications caused by lockdowns.

Furthermore, as the research was tethered to funding and visa restrictions there was pressure to complete it within a specific timeline. Consequently, there was no room for trial and error regarding improving the overall quality of the research. As the final submission deadline loomed, what may be termed as 'researcher's remorse' arose about several aspects of the research process that may have improved the final outcome. For example, it was not possible due to time pressure to get participants more involved in the translation and back-translation process. In addition, due to limited resources, it was not possible to engage a professional translation service.

As a former monk, my positionality in relation to the topic, participants and monastic setting undoubtedly was key to successful completion of the project. Insider knowledge and familiarity with the setting gave me an advantage in capitalising on the opportunities and anticipating obstacles. However, in retrospect, this position may have been counterproductive in contributing to a familiarity bias towards the topic. Consequently, this may have made me oblivious to dimensions of the topic that could have been more deeply probed during the interviews. For example, as the lack of safeguarding in monasteries was the norm with which I was familiar, probing the exception through the interviews with child protection officers and senior monks was not as sharp it could have been.

7.4 Future directions

While this research explored child abuse based on retrospective accounts of survivors, future research could examine the current state of children in monasteries. This would help to understand cotemporary barriers and facilitators in recognising abuse as such and reporting or disclosing it in a consequential way. In future studies, parents of novice monks or parents who are contemplating donating their child to a monastery could be useful voices in deepening an understanding of disconnections in the decision-making process. Future engagement with monastic leadership and the surrounding patron community would also be

useful in designing appropriate safeguarding policies. Alienating them from the discussion may be counterproductive in holding institutions responsible for the safeguarding of children in loosely regulated monastic setting which exists in a tightly connected community. Moreover, as an integral part of increasingly diverse global communities, religious institutions can be usefully recruited as responsible resource providers in combating child abuse and improving child welfare both within and outside of religious setting (McLeigh and Taylor, 2020). Lastly, while this study recognised that the safeguarding system had failed children in monasteries, it would be useful for future studies to investigate the trajectories of those failures. Such dedicated understanding could be useful in formulating policies specific to religious settings. Overall, in social settings in which shame is a collective problem (Boakye, 2009), men as victims of abuse can be a doubly challenging subgroup to explore and there is a clear need for contextually grounded conceptual frameworks and approaches to meaningfully explore this area (Touquet, 2021; Boesten and Mentry, 2018). Accordingly, future research should look beyond boys and men in robes and explore how silent victimhood and masculinity are constructed among a generation of men who have lived through violent insurgencies and a decades-long civil war.

7.5 Safeguarding policy and practice recommendations

Overall, it is unlikely that the BMS will reform itself to become a child-safe organisation in the near future. It is also unlikely that the BMS will become socially irrelevant and will cease to be associated with children. Under current volatile socio-economic circumstances in Sri Lanka, the trend may be quite the opposite as more desperate families look to monasteries for financial relief. Therefore, realistically change may have to come from the outside.

While it is unlikely that the BMS will jettison cultural practices such as child ordination in the near future, by expanding the regulatory remit of existing safeguarding policies, the authorities could formalise the interactions between the BMS and children so that the BMS has a statutory duty to protect children. Further to this, government grants and public resource allocations to training monasteries (Pirivena) could be made on condition that they satisfy adequate and appropriate safeguarding requirements.

Palmer and Feldman (2018) cautioned that more reward-punishment or administrative systems may not guarantee an end to child abuse in the organisational context and recommended addressing the core issue of power imbalance in organisations. While monastic socialisation is rooted in a hierarchical system, there can be ways to exercise power without

abusing it against subordinates. As participating senior monks have indicated, there can be ways to engage the progressive sections of the monastic fraternity to promote conscientious monastic leadership that is sensitive to the risks and vulnerabilities of childhood. The very decentralised structure of the monastery could provide a realistic opportunity to pilot more democratic and transparent practices, as they could be trialled at grassroot levels and obtaining consent of a supreme leadership council would not be necessary. Kindness has been highlighted as a person specification of people who work with children (McLoone-Richards, 2012). Correspondingly, the recognition and promotion of senior monks who are kind and compassionate towards their disciples can be a culturally acceptable first step. In fact, the values of loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karunā*) are central to Buddhism (Piyadassi, 1982) and an interest to implement them should not be controversial. However, for such creative and culturally sensitive approaches to be successful, senior monastic leaders and child protection authorities would need to collaborate in good faith.

Moreover, as senior monastic leadership is formed by senior monks who grew up as novices, it is likely that they are oblivious to child abuse which appeared, based on current findings, to be a normal part of monastic socialisation. By extension, the monastery is possibly caught up in an abuse-normalising vicious cycle sustained by ignorance, tradition and secrecy. As the participating senior monks suggested, the Ministry of Education can effectively inject vital knowledge through changes to the monastic education curricula by including topics such as human development and sexuality.

While monastic reforms should not be a burden to the public, as long as monastic practices continue to negatively impact on public health there is a legitimate need for forceful change. But how this should be achieved is not clear at this point. As Kochuthara (2019) asserted, the ethno-religious sensitivities bequeathed by colonial administrations must be considered when instigating changes to traditional institutions such as the family or religion in order for these reforms to be accepted by the communities affected by and affiliated with these institutions. Any good faith civic policies aimed at reigning in monastic practices can quickly be vilified by various parties – including generally defiant monastic leaders – to construct counternarratives. Perhaps, sustained pressure through a rigorous public debate by civil society stakeholders including journalists and academics can lay the groundwork for this change to come.

7.6 Farewell reflections

Writing these words as I exit the thesis brought up mixed emotions. On one hand, as a doctoral candidate bound by the restrictions of finances, immigration requirements, and an increasingly impatient eight-year-old at home, I was relieved to reach this stage of the project; I now have more respect for mature international students. On the other hand, as a survivor-thriver-insider-researcher, this was a poignant moment as 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of my ordination as a novice monk and the beginning of a period of trauma followed by an internal disintegration and reconciliation. While I may appear to the outside world as another success story hailing from a rural village in the third world, since my first night in the monastery which was spent lying on a straw mat, looking at the faint light that was seeping through the blue glass windows of the eerily large living room, life has always been a battle for survival, a battle I nearly lost at the beginning. The only difference seems to be that I am now engaged in it more consciously and purposefully.

Thirty years ago, my parents and the parents of the survivors of this research had a dream – spiritual or otherwise – for their child. Unfortunately, this parental dream became a prolonged nightmare for us and it somehow dissolved into the larger socio-economic and political maelstrom that many Sri Lankans seem to have learned to live with. But, in retrospect, as many other survivors, I have always been searching for an explanation as to what happened. This quest took me down various paths, even ones that were unbecoming of a Buddhist monk at times, finally leading to a pasture of healing, learning and meaning-making.

This project was conceived on the day that I buried my father in late 2017. He had always been a protective and righteous person and was the main reason why I endured to live as a monk for twenty years; I did not want to disappoint him as a failed son. When I later discovered that he was in fact against my mother's spiritually motivated decision to send me to a monastery, I was relieved and prepared myself to leave the monkhood.

My father's passing created a void in me and in my family that I was expected to fill. While grieving in this new fatherless space, witnessing my father's last rites being presided over by elderly monks who were allegedly linked to child abuse in the village was a pivotal moment: I realised that I have a responsibility now to find ways to help survivors, to prevent the misuse of religion to abuse children and to stand up for what is right.

My first instinct after this realisation, just like the Buddha's after his enlightenment, was to return to my friends from the past (former and current monks) who I knew bear the same

emotional scars. These informal meetings with friends gradually developed into formal speeches that I delivered in halls filled with monks who were at the same cross-roads that I was ten years ago. These speeches also led to informal yet mutually-therapeutic conversations with monks that, at time, lasted until early hours. As the old Sinhalese proverb says 'one must crawl out through the same hole that one fell into the pit,' transforming the collective trauma into a collective knowledge that may create change was the big idea that was conceived through these initial interactions.

These events unfolded while I was going through a personal transformation, starting a lay life after spending two decades of institutionalised life as a monk, trying for the first time in my adult life to self-sustain, to openly give and receive love, and to feel normal. As I had burned most of the bridges down by this point, it was time to build new ones that would connect me and people I tacitly represented to the outside world; to the opportunities that must be granted not because I was culturally entitled to them like a monk but because I earn them. This doctoral scholarship grant was the first such opportunity and I was determined use this project to bring meaning to a concealed but collective experience of adversity and resilience.

For survivors of adverse childhood experience, both success and failure seem to be tainted by the experience of abuse; Every successful step I take seems to be filled with ambivalence and disbelief, often trying to ascertain where the negative impact ends and positive one begins. My admission to this research program validated my belief that our collective experiences can be transformed into lessons for the future, without relegating them to the culturally induced amnesia about injustices that is familiar in postcolonial Sri Lanka. However, undertaking this academic project also exposed my vulnerabilities and insecurities: writing a doctoral thesis in a self-taught second language exposed gaps in my knowledge, spawning self-doubts about my capacity and competency to complete it. As I quit my job four days before flying off to England, I had decided not to surrender. The financial, academic and technical support provided by the Canterbury Christ Church University made that conviction achievable.

From the conception to this stage, this project has been through several stages of development. Influenced by my psychology and counselling education and the proximity to the subject matter, I was initially focusing solely on the lived experience of survivors, wanting to understand the impact of the abuse. However, as academic and technical expertise began to be added to the equation, it became clear that a holistic exploration of the issue was

more practical and valuable due to several reasons. First, it was clear that as monastic child abuse had not been recognised before as such, an exploratory approach would be more appropriate to start charting the terrain. Second, my supervisors wisely encouraged me to remove myself from the topic and approach it with a degree of objectivity to the extent that was possible. This way, other voices including that of survivors in this research were not overshadowed by my own. More importantly, it allowed me to focus on learning research skills that are tactically valuable for the long-term mission.

This thesis is among a class of theses that was written during the Global Pandemic. It is hard to estimate the loss in quality due to this and one can only speculate; At least, I would have done the field work on the ground and had more fruitful international postgraduate experience. Nonetheless, I am contented with what I was able to produce under the circumstance and determined more than ever before to expand this research from breaking the silence to breaking the cycle of abuse. I, therefore, exit this thesis with nothing but a deep sense of gratitude and hope.

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Appendices

Appendix-1

Participant information sheets in Sinhala and English

Child protection officers

Canterbury Christ Church University

<u>ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ බෞද්ධ ආරාමික ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳ නිහඬතාව බිඳීම</u>

<u>පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු</u>

චන්දන නාමල් රත්නායක වන මා විසින් එක්සත් රාජධානියේ කැන්ටබරි ක්‍රයිසිට් චර්ච් විශ්වවිද්‍යාලට අනුබද්ධව පර්යේෂණයක් සිදුකරනු ලබයි.

<u>පසුබිම</u>

මම මෙම පර්යේෂණය මාගේ ආචාර්ය උපාධිය සඳහා සිදුකරන අතර මේ සඳහා කිසිඳු තෙවන පාර්ශවයක් ප්‍රතිපාදන නොසපයන බව සඳහන් කරමි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය පිළිබඳ කෙටි හැඳින්වීමක් පහත දැක්වේ.

වාර්ෂිකව ලොව පුරා මිලියන ගණනක් ළමයින් කායික, මානසික සහ ලිංගික අපයෝජනයන්ට ලක්වේ. මේ නිසා දරුවෝ ජීවිත කාලයටම බලපාන ශාරීරික, මානසික සහ සමාජීය ගැටලුවලට ලක්වෙති. නොයෙක් හේතූන් මත තම පවුල්වලින් පිටත ජීවත්වන ළමයි මෙවැනි අපයෝජනවලට ලක්වීමේ ඉඩකඩ ඉතා වැඩිය. එයට නොයෙක් ආයතනික හේතූන් බලපානබව සොයාගෙන තිබේ. වයස අවුරුදු දහයේ දී පැවිදිව වසර විස්සක ආරාමික ජීවින අත්දැකීම් ඇති අයෙකු ලෙස එම අත්දැකීම් පදනම් කරගෙන විහාරස්ථාන තුළ ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව විධිමත්ව හැදෑරීම මාගේ අරමුණයි. මෙහිදී මෙම ගැටලුවට සෘජුවම සම්බන්ධ පාර්ශවයන්ගෙන් තොරතුරු විමසීම සුදුසුයැයි සිතමි.ඒ ඔස්සේ මෙම ගැටලුවට ඵලදායක විසඳුම් සෙවීම මාගේ අරමුණයි.

<u>මා ඔබෙන් බලාපොරොත්තුවන්නේ</u>:

- අන්තර්ජාලය හරහා කේවල හෝ සමූහ සාකච්ඡාවකට සහභාගිවීම. මෙම සාකච්ඡාව සඳහා පැය දෙකක් පමණ ගතවනු ඇත.

- ආරාමික ළමා අපයෝනවලට අදාළ සිදුවීම්වලට රාජකාරි මට්ටමින් ක්‍රියාකිරීමේදී ඔබ ලද අත්දැකීම් ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම.
- එම තොරතුරු ලිඛිත හෝ ශ්‍රව්‍ය මාධ්‍යක් ඔස්සේ රැස්කරගැනීමට මට අවසර ලබාදීම.
- එම තොරතුරු නිර්නාමිකව ප්‍රකාශයට පත්කිරීමට මට අවසර ලබාදීම.

මෙහිදී:

- මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම සඳහා ඔබ ජාතික ළමාරක්ෂණ අධිකාරියට හෝ පරිවාස හා ළමාරක්ෂක දෙපාර්තමේන්තුවට අනුබද්ධ නිළධාරියෙක් හෝ නිළධාරිනියක් යැයි අපේක්ෂාකරම්.
- මෙම පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ දී සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාවේ හෝ නිබන්ධනයේ පිටපතක් අවශ්‍ය නම් ඔබට ලබාගත හැක.
- පර්යේෂණයේ ඇගයීම්වලදී පරිවර්තනය කරණ ලද සක්ෂිප්ත තොරතුරු පමණක් විගණනය කෙරෙණ අතර ඔබ සපයන තොරතුරු ඉතා රහසිගතව සහ නිර්නාමිකව ගබඩාකර තැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ ඒවා ආරක්ෂිතව විනාශකරනු ලැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ සැකසෙන නිබන්ධනය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයේ ගබඩාකරනු ලැබේ.

ඔබගේ සහභාගිත්වය ඉල්ලා අස්කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය වුවහොත්:

- මෙමෙ සමූහ සාකච්ඡාව සඳහා සහභාගි වීමට කැමැත්ත ප්‍රකාශකොට පසුව එම අදහස වෙනස් කිරීමට ඔබට අයිතියක් ඇත ඒ බව විද්‍යුත් තැපෑලෙන් හෝ දුරකතනය මගින් +94775198016 or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk මට දැනුම් දෙන්න කෙසේවෙතත් සමූහ සාකච්ඡාවට සහභාගිවීමෙන් පසුව දත්ත හෝ සහභාගිත්වය වෙනස් කිරීම ප්‍රායෝගිකව සිදුකළ නොහැකිය එම නිසා මෙයට සහභාගි වීමට පෙර ඒ පිළිබඳව ගැඹුරින් සිතා බලන්න ඒ පිළිබඳ ගැටලු ඇත්නම් කාරුණිකව මගෙන් විමසන්න

Breaking the silence about institutional child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A PhD research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Chandana Namal Rathanayake.

Background

I conduct this research towards the fulfilment of the requirements of a doctoral degree. This research is not funded by a third party. I will provide a brief description about the project below.

Millions of children worldwide experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse and these abuses cause lasting negative impacts on their lives. Children living in out-of-home settings are even more vulnerable to such abuses due to variety of systemic and institutional reasons. Partly based on two decades of my life experience as a former Buddhist monk, I observed that child abuse and neglect in monastic settings are largely ignored or undetected for unknown and largely unresearched reasons. I aim to explore those reasons by asking from the people directly involved in this issue. I hope that the voices of survivors and other stakeholders will inform future policies and practices towards the improvement of safety standards in institutions and therefore the well-being of children.

To participate in this research, you must meet the criterion below:

Child protection officer who is currently employed by the National Child Protection Authority or the Department of Probation and Child Care services, and preferably has professional experience in dealing with monastic child abuse cases.

What will you be required to do during the focus groups?

If you agree to participate but then decided to withdraw, that is not a problem. Please inform your decision to withdraw via email or telephone (nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 Roaming active, free to participants) and I will remove your name from my records. If you decided to withdraw during the interview, we will pause the discussion and let you leave. However, it is not possible for you to withdraw your data due to the nature of interview data: it is impossible for me or other participants to erase what we heard during the interview. For this reason, it is very important that you reflect upon your decision to participate and ask any questions you may have about the project before signing up.

Procedures

I will video-audio record the group discussion and I will transcribe the interview verbatim. After repeatedly reading the interview transcripts, I will create themes and categories including direct quotes from your sharing in the discussion. These themes and quotes will be presented in the thesis and subsequent publications.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The United Kingdom has stringent privacy laws enacted by the Data Protection Act 1998. I will treat any data you provide in accordance with the Act. Some categories of personal data

such as race, religion and gender may be recognised, although I will not process them specifically. For example, the fact that you are child protection officer of a specific gender and ethnicity will be revealed, although personal name or duty station or area may not be recognised.

I will assign each group member a number at the beginning of the discussion and will use it during the discussion. I will also not use your name in publications. Your participation in focus group discussion will remain confidential, although there is a possibility that another group member might recognise you. You are expected to respect fellow group members' confidentiality.

In addition to myself, my supervisor, the chair of the program and in some cases the examiner will have access to the transcript that I will produce based on the recordings of our discussion. These transcripts can be stored up to five years for audit and learning purposes. But these transcripts will not contain any personally identifiable data. Any data you provide will be stored securely in password-protected devices both in my possession and within university facility.

If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants).

You can read further information regarding how the University processes your personal data for research purposes at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Process for withdrawing consent to participate

If you agree to participate but then decided to withdraw, that is not a problem. Please inform your decision to withdraw via email or telephone (nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 Roaming active, free to participants) and I will remove your name from my records. However, during and after the focus group interview, it is impossible for you to withdraw your data due to the nature of interview data: it is impossible for me or other participants to erase what we heard during the interview. For this reason, it is very important that you reflect upon your decision to participate and ask any questions you may have about the project before signing up.

Criminal Disclosure

In the event of disclosure of current child abuse either known to you or by you, I as the researcher will notify the relevant authorities as required by the law.

Feedback

Because you are not taking a test or an assessment task as part of your participation in the research, there will be no feedback immediately after participation. However, you may request a copy of the interview transcript should you be interested to review it or keep a copy. Please let me know via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants).

Dissemination of results

The results of this research will be published in the final thesis and a copy of the thesis will be stored in the University's research depository. In addition to that, the results will be published, in part or full, in journal articles or conference presentations. Please note that the anonymity of your data will be maintained all throughout these different stages of publications.

Any questions?

- Please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake on +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants) or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk OR
- PhD supervisor Dr Bob Cecil, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, Nottingham Trent University, bob.cecil@ntu.ac.uk
- Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.
- You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Senior monks

Canterbury Christ Church University

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ බෞද්ධ ආරාමික ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳ නිහඬතාව බිඳීම

පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු

චන්දන නාමල් රත්නායක වන මා විසින් එක්සත් රාජධානියේ කැන්ටබරි ක්‍රයිසිට් චර්ච් විශ්වවිද්‍යාලට අනුබද්ධව පර්යේෂණයක් සිදුකරනු ලබයි.

පසුබිම

මම මෙම පර්යේෂණය මාගේ ආචාර්ය උපාධිය සඳහා සිදුකරන අතර මේ සඳහා කිසිදු තෙවන පාර්ශවයක් ප්‍රතිපාදන නොසපයන බව සඳහන් කරමි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය පිළිබඳ කෙටි හැඳින්වීමක් පහත දැක්වේ.

වාර්ෂිකව ලොව පුරා මිලියන ගණනක් ළමයින් කායික, මානසික සහ ලිංගික අපයෝජනයන්ට ලක්වේ. මේ නිසා දරුවෝ ජීවිත කාලයටම බලපාන ශාරීරික, මානසික සහ සමාජීය ගැටලුවලට ලක්වෙති. නොයෙක් හේතූන් මත තම පවුල්වලින් පිටත ජීවත්වන ළමයි මෙවැනි අපයෝජනවලට ලක්වීමේ ඉඩකඩ ඉතා වැඩිය. එයට නොයෙක් ආයතනික හේතූන් බලපානබව සොයාගෙන තිබේ. වයස අවුරුදු දහයේ දී පැවිදිව වසර විස්සක ආරාමික ජීවින අත්දැකීම් ඇති අයෙකු ලෙස එම අත්දැකීම් පදනම් කරගෙන විහාරස්ථාන තුළ ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව විධිමත්ව හැදෑරීම මාගේ අරමුණයි. මෙහිදී මෙම ගැටලුවට සෘජුවම සම්බන්ධ පාර්ශවයන්ගෙන් තොරතුරු විමසීම සුදුසුයැයි සිතමි.ඒ ඔස්සේ මෙම ගැටලුවට ඵලදායක විසඳුම් සෙවීම මාගේ අරමුණයි.

මා ඔබෙන් බලාපොරොත්තුවන්නේ:

- අන්තර්ජාලය හරහා සමූහ සාකච්ඡාවකට සහභාගිවීම. මෙම සාකච්ඡාව සඳහා පැය දෙකක් පමණ ගතවනු ඇත.
- සාමනේර භික්ෂූන්වහන්සේලා අත්විඳින ශාරීරික මානසික හෝ ලිංගික අපයෝනවලට අදාළ ආරාමික පසුබිම පිළිබඳ ඔබගේ මත හා අදහස් ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම.
- එම තොරතුරු ලිඛිත හෝ ශ්‍රව්‍ය මාධ්‍යක් ඔස්සේ රැස්කරගැනීමට මා වෙත අවසර ලබාදීම.
- එම තොරතුරු නිර්නාමිකව ප්‍රකාශයට පත්කිරීමට මා වෙත අවසර ලබාදීම.

සහභාගිවීමේ නිර්ණායකය:

මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම සඳහා ඔබ උපසම්පදාවෙන් අවම දස වසරක් ඉක්මවූ විහාරස්ථ වගකීම් දරන තෙරණමක් විය යුතුය.

සහභාගිත්වය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රතිචාර:

මෙම පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ දී සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාවේ හෝ නිබන්ධනයේ පිටපතක් අවශ්‍ය නම් ඔබට ලබාගත හැක.

දත්ත පිළිබඳ රහස්‍යභාවය සහ ආරක්ෂාව:

- පර්යේෂණයේ ඇගයීම්වලදී පරිවර්තනය කරණ ලද සක්ෂිප්ත තොරතුරු පමණක් විගණනය කෙරෙණ අතර ඔබ සපයන තොරතුරු ඉතා රහසිගතව සහ නිර්නාමිකව ගබඩාකර තැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ ඒවා ආරක්ෂිතව විනාශකරනු ලැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ සැකසෙන නිබන්ධනය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයේ ගබඩාකරනු ලැබේ.

රහස්‍යභාවය උල්ලංඝනය වියහැකි අවස්ථා:

සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාව අතරතුර ඔබ විසින් හෝ ඔබ දන්නා කෙනෙකු විසින් හෝ වර්තමානයේ සිදු කරන ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව හෙළිවුවහොත් හෝ හෙළිකලහොත් ඒ පිළිබඳව අදාළ බලධාරීන් දැනුවත් කිරීමට මම නීතියෙන් බැඳී සිටින බව සිහිපත් කරමි

ඔබගේ සහභාගිත්වය ඉල්ලා අස්කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය වුවහොත්:

මෙමෙ සමූහ සාකච්ඡාව සඳහා සහභාගි වීමට කැමැත්ත ප්‍රකාශකොට පසුව එම අදහස වෙනස් කිරීමට ඔබට අයිතියක් ඇත ඒ බව විද්‍යුත් තැපෑලෙන් හෝ දුරකතනය මගින් +94775198016 or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk මට දැනුම් දෙන්න කෙසේවෙතත් සමූහ සාකච්ඡාවට සහභාගිවීමෙන් පසුව දත්ත හෝ සහභාගිත්වය වෙනස් කිරීම ප්‍රායෝගිකව සිදුකළ නොහැකිය එම නිසා මෙයට සහභාගි වීමට පෙර ඒ පිළිබඳව ගැඹුරින් සිතා බලන්න ඒ පිළිබඳ ගැටලු ඇත්නම් කාරුණිකව මගෙන් විමසන්න

Breaking the silence about institutional child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Chandana Namal Rathnayake.

Background

I conduct this research towards the fulfilment of the requirements of a doctoral degree. This research is not funded by a third party. I will provide a brief description about the project below.

Millions of children worldwide experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse and these abuses cause lasting negative impacts on their lives. Children living in out-of-home settings are even more vulnerable to such abuses due to variety of systemic and institutional reasons. Partly based on two decades of my life experience as a former Buddhist monk, I observe that child abuse and neglect in monastic settings are largely ignored or undetected for unknown reasons. I aim to explore those reasons by asking directly from the people involved in this issue. I hope that the voices of survivors and other stakeholders will inform future policies and practices towards the improvement of safety standards in institutions and therefore the wellbeing of children.

To participate in this research, you must meet the criterion below:

A senior monk with ten or more years of experience as a fully-ordained Buddhist monk representing one of the three main sects in Sri Lanka, preferably having experience as a preceptor.

What will you be required to do during the focus groups?

The focus group will consist of 4-6 monastic leaders who will be asked to discuss various issues related to children in the monastery such as child ordination, potential risk of child abuse and challenges to detecting, reporting and responding to abuse. I will moderate the discussion and will guide you through these topics. There are no right or wrong answers and I am simply interested in your views and opinions. This discussion will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. The discussion will be conducted using Microsoft Teams and you must have access to a computer with webcam and stable internet connection. Once all group members have indicated their desire to participate, I will arrange a time convenient to all participants.

Procedures

I will video-audio record the group discussion and I will transcribe the interview verbatim. Once I produce a transcript, I will destroy the recordings. I will then categorise the transcript

content into meaningful themes and subcategories and will present them as findings. These themes will include direct quotations from the interview. I will publish these themes and quotes in the thesis and subsequent publications.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The United Kingdom has stringent privacy laws enacted by the Data Protection Act 1998. I will treat any data you provide in accordance with the Act. Some categories of personal data such as race, religion and gender will be recognised, although I will not process them specifically. For example, a monastic leader will be recognised as a male, Sinhalese, Buddhist even without the personal particulars such as personal name or name of the monastery.

I will assign each group member a pseudonym at the beginning of the discussion and will use it during the discussion. I will also not use your name in publications. Your participation in focus group discussion will remain confidential, although there is a possibility that another group member might recognise you. You are expected to respect fellow group members' confidentiality.

In addition to myself, my supervisor, the chair of the program and in some cases the examiner will have access to the transcript that I will produce based on the recordings of our discussion. These transcripts can be stored up to five years for audit and learning purposes. But these transcripts will not contain any personally identifiable data. Any data you provide will be stored securely in password-protected devices both in my possession and within university facility.

If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants).

You can read further information regarding how the University processes your personal data for research purposes at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Process for withdrawing consent to participate

If you agree to participate but then decided to withdraw, that is not a problem. Please inform your decision to withdraw via email or telephone (nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 Roaming active, free to participants) and I will remove your name from my records. If you

decided to withdraw during the interview, we will pause the discussion and let you leave. However, it is not possible for you to withdraw your data due to the nature of interview data: it is impossible for me or other participants to erase what we heard during the interview. For this reason, it is very important that you reflect upon your decision to participate and ask any questions you may have about the project before signing up.

Criminal Disclosure

In the event of disclosure of current child abuse either known to you or by you, I as the researcher will notify the relevant authorities as required by the law.

Feedback

Because you are not taking a test or an assessment task as part of your participation in the research, there is no need for feedback immediately after participation. However, I am happy to provide you with a copy of the interview transcript for you to review or keep a copy. Please let me know via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants)

Dissemination of results

The results of this research will be published in the final thesis and a copy of the thesis will be stored in the University's research depository. In addition to that, the results will be published, in part or full, in journal articles or conference presentations. Please note that the anonymity of your data will be maintained all throughout these different stages of publications.

Any questions?

- Please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake on +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants) or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk OR
- PhD supervisor Dr Bob Cecil, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, Nottingham Trent University, bob.cecil@ntu.ac.uk
- Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.
- You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Canterbury Christ Church University

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ බෞද්ධ ආරාමික ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳ නිහඬතාව බිඳීම

පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු

චන්දන නාමල් රත්නායක වන මා විසින් එක්සත් රාජධානියේ කැන්ටබරි ක්‍රයිසිට් චර්ච් විශ්වවිද්‍යාලට අනුබද්ධව පර්යේෂණයක් සිදුකරනු ලබයි.

පසුබිම

මම මෙම පර්යේෂණය මාගේ ආචාර්ය උපාධිය සඳහා සිදුකරන අතර මේ සඳහා කිසිඳු තෙවන පාර්ශවයක් ප්‍රතිපාදන නොසපයන බව සඳහන් කරමි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය පිළිබඳ කෙටි හැඳින්වීමක් පහත දැක්වේ.

වාර්ෂිකව ලොව පුරා මිලියන ගණනක් ළමයින් කායික, මානසික සහ ලිංගික අපයෝජනයන්ට ලක්වේ. මේ නිසා දරුවෝ ජීවිත කාලයටම බලපාන ශාරීරික, මානසික සහ සමාජීය ගැටලුවලට ලක්වෙති. නොයෙක් හේතූන් මත තම පවුල්වලින් පිටත ජීවත්වන ළමයි මෙවැනි අපයෝජනවලට ලක්වීමේ ඉඩකඩ ඉතා වැඩිය. එයට නොයෙක් ආයතනික හේතූන් බලපානබව සොයාගෙන තිබේ. වයස අවුරුදු දහයේ දී පැවිදිව වසර විස්සක ආරාමික ජීවින අත්දැකීම් ඇති අයෙකු ලෙස එම අත්දැකීම් පදනම් කරගෙන විහාරස්ථාන තුළ ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව විධිමත්ව හැදෑරීම මාගේ අරමුණයි. මෙහිදී මෙම ගැටලුවට සෘජුවම සම්බන්ධ පාර්ශවයන්ගෙන් තොරතුරු විමසීම සුදුසුයැයි සිතමි.ඒ ඔස්සේ මෙම ගැටලුවට ඵලදායක විසඳුම් සෙවීම මාගේ අරමුණයි.

මා ඔබෙන් බලාපොරොත්තුවන්නේ:

- අන්තර්ජාලය හරහා හෝ සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාවකට සහභාගිවීම
- සාමනේර අවධියේ ඔබ අත්විඳි ශාරීරික මානසික හෝ ලිංගික අපයෝනවලට අදාළ ආරාමික පසුබිම පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු සැපයීම
- එම තොරතුරු ලිඛිත හෝ ශ්‍රව්‍ය මාධ්‍යක් ඔස්සේ රැස්කරගැනීමට මට අවසර ලබාදීම
- එම තොරතුරු නිර්නාමිකව ප්‍රකාශයට පත්කිරීමට මට අවසර ලබාදීම

සහභාගිවීමේ නිර්ණායකය:

මෙම පර්යේෂණයට සහභාගිවීම සඳහා ඔබ වයස අවුරුදු 18 හෝ ඊට වැඩි විය යුතුය.

සහභාගිත්වය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රතිචාර:

මෙම පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ දී සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාවේ හෝ නිබන්ධනයේ පිටපතක් අවශ්‍ය නම් ඔබට ලබාගත හැක.

දත්ත පිළිබඳ රහස්‍යභාවය සහ ආරක්ෂාව:

- පර්යේෂණයේ ඇගයීම්වලදී පරිවර්තනය කරණ ලද සක්ෂිප්ත තොරතුරු පමණක් විගණනය කෙරෙණ අතර ඔබ සපයන තොරතුරු ඉතා රහසිගතව සහ නිර්නාමිකව ගබඩාකර තැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ ඒවා ආරක්ෂිතව විනාශකරනු ලැබේ.
- පර්යේෂණය අවසානයේ සැකසෙන නිබන්ධනය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයේ ගබඩාකරනු ලැබේ.

රහස්‍යභාවය උල්ලංඝනය වියහැකි අවස්ථා:

සම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාව අතරතුර ඔබ විසින් හෝ ඔබ දන්නා කෙනෙකු විසින් හෝ වර්තමානයේ සිදු කරන ළමා අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව හෙළිවුවහොත් හෝ හෙළිකලහොත් ඒ පිළිබඳව අදාළ බලධාරීන් දැනුවත් කිරීමට මම නීතියෙන් බැඳී සිටින බව සිහිපත් කරමි

ඔබගේ සහභාගිත්වය ඉල්ලා අස්කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය වුවහොත්:

- සංවේදී කාරණා සාකච්ඡා කිරීමේදී සිත් වේදනා හෝ මානසික අපහසුතා ඇතිවිය හැකි අතර සාකච්ඡාව අතරතුර ඔබට අවශ්‍ය ඕනම අවස්ථාවක කිසිදු හේතු දැක්වීමකින් තොරව මෙම පර්යේෂණයෙන් ඉවත්විය හැක නමුත් සාකච්ඡාවෙන් පසුව ඔබේ දත්ත ඉවත්කරගැනීමට තීරණයකලේ නම් සාකච්ඡාවෙන් සති දෙකක් ඇතුළත මා වෙත දැනිවිය යුතුය සති දෙකක සීමාවෙන් පසු එම දත්ත ඉවත්කිරීම මෙවැනි කෙටිකාලීන පර්යේෂණවල දී ප්‍රායෝගික නොවේ පහත සඳහන් මාගේ දුරකතන හෝ විද්‍යුත් තැපෑල මගින් ඒ බව මා වෙත දැන්විය හැක +94775198016 or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk

Breaking the silence about institutional child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A PhD research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Chandana Namal Rathnayake.

Background

I conduct this research towards the fulfilment of the requirements of a doctoral degree. This research is not funded by a third party. I will provide a brief description about the project below.

Millions of children worldwide experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse and these abuses cause lasting negative impacts on their lives. Children living in out-of-home settings are even more vulnerable to such abuses due to variety of systemic and institutional reasons. Partly based on two decades of my life experience as a former Buddhist monk, I observed that child abuse and neglect in monastic settings are largely ignored or undetected for unknown or largely unresearched reasons. I aim to explore those reasons by asking from the people directly involved in this issue. I hope that the voices of survivors and other stakeholders will inform future policies and practices towards the improvement of safety standards in institutions and therefore the well-being of children.

To participate in this research, you must meet the criterion below:

An adult over the age of 18 who has experienced abuse as a child/novice monk in a monastic setting.

What will you be required to do?

If you agree to take part in this study, you and I will have an in-depth conversation about your childhood experience as a novice monk. You are not expected to have any special knowledge about child abuse or any subject. I am simply interested in your experience of abuse as a novice monk. I will not probe you on the specific details of abuse acts you may have experienced. I am more interested to understand the institutional, situational, social and relational dynamics surrounding your experience. I will ask relevant questions to facilitate your story and you do not have to talk about anything that you do not feel comfortable talking about. I understand that talking about childhood abuse may bring up distressing memories and emotions and if that happened, we can pause, postpone or terminate the interview. The interview will be conducted via Microsoft Teams and you must have access to a computer with a webcam and stable internet connection to take part in this interview.

Procedures

I will video-audio record the interview and transcribe the entire interview verbatim. Once I produce the transcript, I will destroy the recordings. I will categorise the transcript content into meaningful themes and subcategories and I will present them as findings. These themes will include direct quotation from the interview. I will publish these themes and quotes in the thesis and in subsequent publications.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The United Kingdom has stringent privacy laws enacted by the Data Protection Act 1998. I will treat any data you provide in accordance with the Act. Some categories of personal data such as race, religion and gender will be indirectly recognised, although I do not intend to record or process them for the purpose of this research. For example, based on the context of the research, your being as a male, Sinhalese, Buddhist may be recognised, even without the personal particulars such as your personal name or name of the monastery you grew up.

I will not ask you to disclose any personally identifiable data such as names or places. I will assign you a participant number and will use it in the transcript. If your name, name of someone you know, or a name of place was mentioned, I will anonymise it in the transcript. I will also not use your name in publications. Your participation in this interview will remain confidential.

In addition to myself, my supervisor, the chair of the program and in some cases the examiner will have access to the transcript that I will produce based on the recordings of our discussion. These transcripts can be stored up to five years for audit and learning purposes. But these transcripts will not contain any personally identifiable data. Any data you provide will be stored securely in password-protected devices both in my possession and within university facility.

If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants).

Process for withdrawing consent to participate

If you wish to withdraw from the study after you agreed to take part, it is not a problem. You are free to withdraw your consent before, during or after the interview without having to give a reason. Below are the withdrawal options available for you:

If before the interview, you may:

- opt out at any point before the start of interview by simply calling me or emailing me at: +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants) nr253@canterbury.ac.uk

If during the interview, you may:

- ask to pause the interview and resume at a later time,

- end the interview at any point during the interview and request that your contribution be erased,
- end the interview at any point but permit me to keep the data already captured,

If after the interview, you may:

- request that your contribution be erased within two weeks after the completion of the interview. Withdrawal of data two weeks after the interview is impractical and will have significant impact on the timely completion of the project. For this reason, it is very important that you think through this decision and ask any questions you may have well before you decide to participate.

Criminal Disclosure

In the event of disclosure of current child abuse either known to you or by you, I as the researcher will notify the relevant authorities as required by the law.

Feedback

Because you are not taking a test or an assessment task as part of your participation in the research, there will be no feedback immediately after participation. However, I am happy to share a copy of your interview transcript if you wish to review it or keep a copy. Please let me know via nr253@canterbury.ac.uk or +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants).

Dissemination of results

The results of this research will be published in the final thesis and a copy of the thesis will be stored in the University's research depository. In addition to that, the results will be published, in part or full, in journal articles or conference presentations. Please note that the anonymity of your data will be maintained all throughout these different stages of publications.

Any questions?

- Please contact Chandana Namal Rathnayake on +94775198016 (Roaming active, free to participants) or nr253@canterbury.ac.uk OR
- PhD supervisor Dr Bob Cecil, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, Nottingham Trent University, bob.cecil@ntu.ac.uk
- Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.

- You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Appendix-2

Literature search strategy

Complete search

		CINAHL	ScienceDirect (Research articles only)	Social care online
	Search term and Boolean operators	Results (2000-2022)		
	Child abuse AND neglect	11,196		
	Child abuse and neglect OR maltreatment	7359		
	Child abuse and neglect OR maltreatment AND institutional	3189		
	Child abuse and neglect OR maltreatment AND institutions OR organisations	3327		
		Results 2010-2022		
	Child abuse and neglect AND maltreatment AND institutions OR organisations	2616		
	Child abuse AND neglect AND institutions OR organisations	107		
	Institutional child abuse	43	23213	320
	Institutional child abuse in religious settings or organisations			242
	Institutional child abuse in religious settings			100
	Institutional child abuse; religious institutions		3711	

	Institutional child abuse; religious institutions; male victims or male survivors		329	
	Institutional child abuse; religious institutions; male victims or male survivors; Buddhist		7	
	Child abuse; religious institutions; religious organisations		1532	
	Child abuse AND institutions OR organisations	775		
	Child abuse AND religious institutions OR organisations	590		
	Child abuse AND religious AND institutions or organisations	15		
	Child abuse AND silence	46		
	Child abuse AND clergy	58		
	Child abuse AND clergy AND silence	1		
	Child abuse AND Buddhist monastery	0		
	Child abuse AND Sri Lanka	15		
	Child abuse AND disclosure	518 (only 114 results between 2000-10)		
	Child abuse AND disclosure AND male or men or man or males	219 (only 95 results between 2000-10)		
	Child abuse AND disclosure AND silence	6		
	Child abuse AND silence AND male or men or man or males	13		

	Childhood abuse AND disclosure AND male or men or man or males	76	800	
	Childhood abuse AND silence AND male or men or man or males	4	278	108
	Disclosure AND male survivors or male victims	45	946	44
	Disclosure AND male survivors or male victims AND institutions or organisations	4	190	8
	Disclosure AND male survivors or male victims AND religion or religious or faith or spiritual	5	56	0

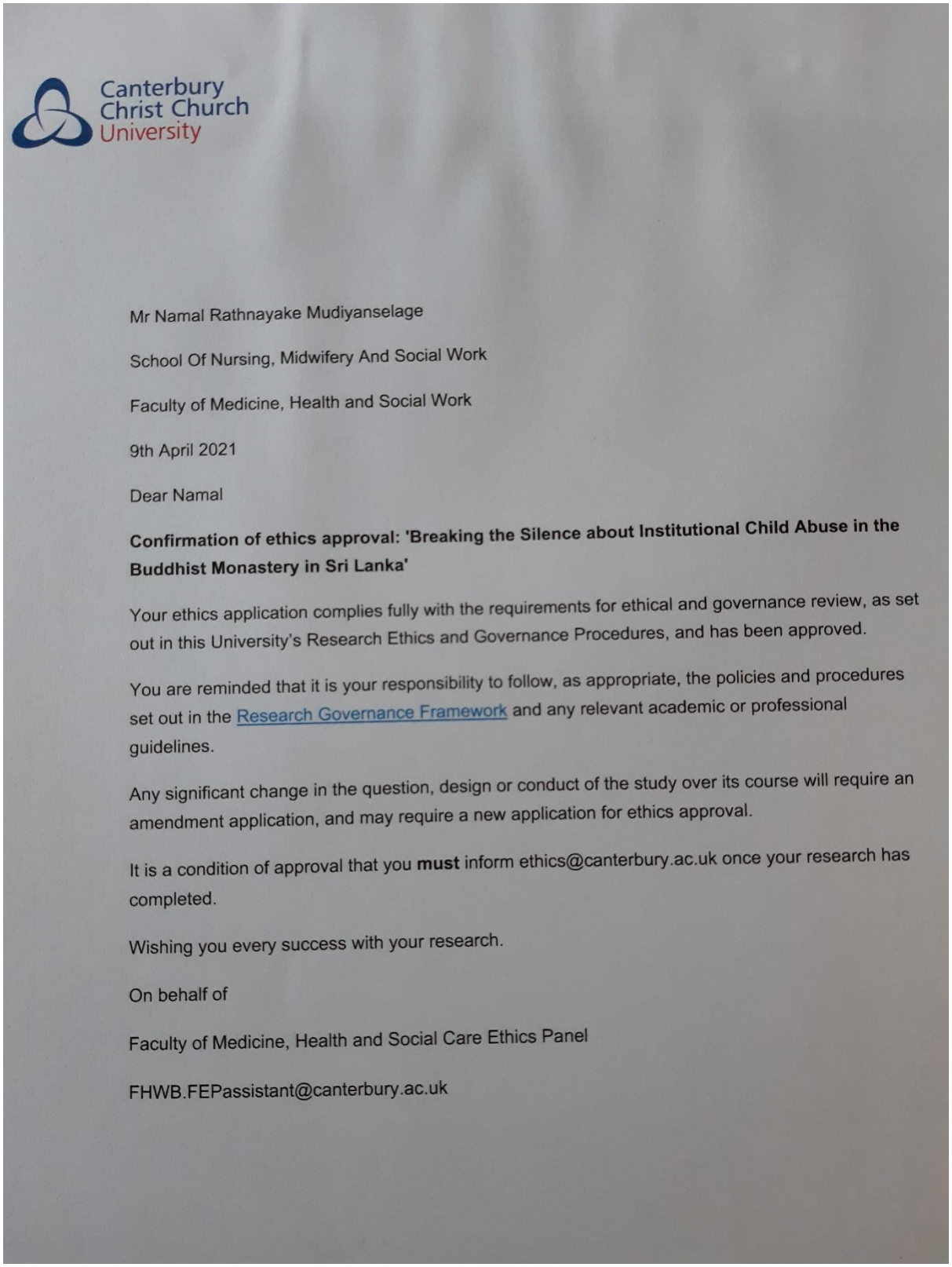
Academic research article

		CINAHL (2010-2022)	Child Link	ScienceDirect	SocialCare Online (no date range)
	Institutional child abuse	39	37 (BSJ 2015 on)	1586 (Child abuse & Neglect, World Development)	116
	Child abuse in Institutional/organisational settings	14	68 (BSJ 2014 on)	1146	79
	Child abuse; religious institutions	15	39 (BSJ 2014 on)	47	62
	Child abuse AND religious				
	Child abuse in religious	118	39	47	28
	Child abuse AND religious AND institutions OR settings	97 (2010-2022	40 (BJS 2014 on)	93 (2010-2022 – Social	4

	AND male survivors or male victims	academic journals)		science journals)	
	Male survivors or victims; religious institutions or settings			143 (2010-2022)	19

Appendix-3

ETH1920_0298 – Faculty Research Ethics Committee approval



Canterbury Christ Church University

Mr Namal Rathnayake Mudiyanselage

School Of Nursing, Midwifery And Social Work

Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Work

9th April 2021

Dear Namal

Confirmation of ethics approval: 'Breaking the Silence about Institutional Child Abuse in the Buddhist Monastery in Sri Lanka'

Your ethics application complies fully with the requirements for ethical and governance review, as set out in this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures, and has been approved.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the Research Governance Framework and any relevant academic or professional guidelines.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course will require an amendment application, and may require a new application for ethics approval.

It is a condition of approval that you **must** inform ethics@canterbury.ac.uk once your research has completed.

Wishing you every success with your research.

On behalf of

Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care Ethics Panel

FHWB.FEPassistant@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix-4

DATE of Assessment:	29/ 10 /2020	**RD ETHICS APPLICATION REFERENCE No:**	ETH1920-0298
Assessed by :	Chandana Namal Rathnayake	**SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT:**	School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
NATURE OF ACTIVITY:	This risk assessment covers conducting online interviews/ focus group discussions with participants from Sri Lanka.		**DATE OF ACTIVITY:** 01/02/2021 – 31/04/2021
LOCATION:	The United Kingdom and Sri Lanka	**NEXT H&S RISK REVIEW DATE:**	[maximum 3 years after date of assessment]
REVIEWED BY*: **(for students only)**	Dr. Bob Cecil 	**REVIEW DATE*:** **(for students only)**	24/11/2020
APPROVED BY:**	Dr. Claire Thurgate 	**APPROVAL DATE:**	27.11.2020

Canterbury Christ Church University

RESEARCH

HEALTH AND SAFETY - RISK ASSESSMENT

*For students: Your Academic Supervisor should review this form with you before it is sent for approval

**Heads of School/Departments are ultimately responsible for Health and Safety Risk Assessments within their area, however, they may nominate senior members of staff (such as a manager or senior lecturer) who have undertaken the University Health & Safety Risk Assessment training to support them by approving risk assessments under their control.

Risk rating	Likelihood of Harm				
Severity	1 Very unlikely	2 Unlikely	3 - 50 / 50 likelihood	4 - Likely	5 - Very likely / certainty
1 - Minor injury or illness	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
2- Moderate injury or illness	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
3- "3 day injury" or illness	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High

Risk rating	Action to follow
Low	No additional actions. Ensure controls in place are maintained.
Medium	Improve risk reduction measures within specified timescale.
High	Stop or restrict activity and make appropriate improvements immediately

Appendix-5

Proposed interview questions

1. Following questions are for the survivors of abuse:
   1.1. Could you kindly start by sharing how did you become a monk?
   1.2. Could you tell me about what was it like for you as a young monk?
   1.3. Could you describe what was the monastic community like? (with follow-up questions to understand if the community was large or small, affluent or poor, strict or permissive).
   1.4. Please describe to the extent you are comfortable what happened to you as a young monk.
   1.5. Could you describe the circumstances around the incident/s (the relationship between perpetrator and victim, residency status etc.)?
   1.6. How did perpetrators come into contact with you?
   1.7. How did you understand what was happening to you?
   1.8. What happened after the initial abuse? (immediate and long-term)
   1.9. Did you tell someone about it? If yes, who was it and why? If no, why not?
   1.10. Did you tell a fellow monk/senior monk about it? Why/ why not and what happened if you did?
   1.11. Did you tell your parents? If yes, what happened after that? If no, why?
   1.12. If the abused repeatedly, could you tell me why you think the abuse continued?
   1.13. If one-off event, why do you think it stopped?
   1.14. Could you describe when did you realise what happened to you was abuse and wrong?
   1.15. Did you attempt to voice out your experience in anyway and if you did, how did you try and what happened next? If not, what stopped you from doing so?
   1.16. In retrospect, what do you wish were available for you in your monastery or family when you were experiencing abuse?

2. Following questions are for monastic leaders:
   2.1. Please can you briefly describe your entry into the monastic life. Please avoid making references to people or places as much as you can.

2.2. Please can you describe your views about practice of child ordination?

2.3. Normally 16 or 18 is the age limit when it comes to consenting to important life decisions such as marriage or voting. In light of these norms, what are your thoughts on ordaining a child for a life-long, celibate, religious commitment?

2.4. In your view, what are some of the most pressing issues within the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka at the moment?

2.5. Could you share your understanding monastic guidelines, if any, about dealing with the allegations of child abuse?

2.6. Given the evidence of abuse, what is your view of these incidents of abuse?

2.7. Who/what, in your view, is responsible for these malpractices? (social-learning, poor spiritual training, poor emotion-regulation, lack of awareness of human development, celibacy…)

2.8. Do you discuss this issue in your monastery? If yes, what is the nature or direction of these discussions? If no, why do you think is the reason for silence?

2.9. What are your thoughts about detecting and responding to child abuse cases in temples?

2.10. Given that the monastery is mainly supported by faithful public, what are your thoughts on having a public discussion about this issue? If you think we should, who do you think should take part in it? If you think we shouldn't, please help me understand why?

2.11. According to National Child Protection Authority, people working in day-care centres must go through background checks before they can work with children. What are your thoughts on applying the same regulation to monasteries?

2.12. Should there be an external oversight on children's safety and wellbeing in monasteries and who do you think should be the overseer? If not, why?

3. <u>Following questions are for child protection officials:</u>

3.1. Could you kindly start by sharing what is it like to be working as a child protection officer?

3.2. How would you describe your working philosophy? What are you guided by as child protection professionals?

3.3. Could you share your views about ordaining young children?

3.4. Could you share your experiences in relation to cases of child abuse in monasteries?

3.5. How would you describe the differences or similarities in dealing with child abuse in temples compared to cases in families or secular organisations?

3.6. In your experience, what are some of the challenges faced by victimised children in temples in receiving help/protection?

3.7. In your view/experience, what the challenges to detecting, reporting and responding to child abuse in temples?

3.8. Given the evidence for the existence of risk factors in temples, could you speak about the lack of safeguarding requirements for temples/monks?

3.9. Could you help me understand why the safeguarding regulations (background checks, site inspections) are not applied to monasteries?

Appendix-6

This notice will be posted in the Facebook page.

දැන්වීමකි

දයාබර හිමිවරුනි, සෙයුරනි, මගේ ආචාර්ය උපාධි පර්යේෂණය සඳහාසම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡාකිහිපයක් කිරීමට බලාපොරොත්තුවෙනවා ඔබේ ආරම්භක ළමාකලාය සහ ආරම්භක පසුබිම පිළිබඳ හඬ අවධිකිරීමට කැමතිනම් මට ඉන්බොක්ස් පනිවිඩයක් හෝ nr253@canterbury.ac.uk තියන්න. සියලු තොරතුරු පුද්ගලිකව නිර්නාමිකව සහ රහසිගතව තබනබව සහතික කරනවාසම්මුඛ සාකච්ඡා සඳහා තිදෙනකු පමණක් සහභාගි කරගැනීමට අපේක්ෂා කරන අතර තෝරාගැනීම පැමිණීමේ අනුපිළිවෙළ අනුව බව කරුණාවෙන් සලකන්න.

Below is a translation of the notice.

General Notice

Dear venerable and dear brothers, as part of my PhD, I am conducting a research exploring the experience of growing up in monasteries. If you would like to talk about your life experience as a novice monk, please get in touch with me via personal message or email at nr253@canterbury.ac.uk . I am happy to provide more details about the project when you contact me. I will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the information you provide. Please note that I am looking to select three participants only and the selection will be on first come, first serve basis as long as you meet the criteria and are willing to participate.

Appendix-7

Figure 4.1

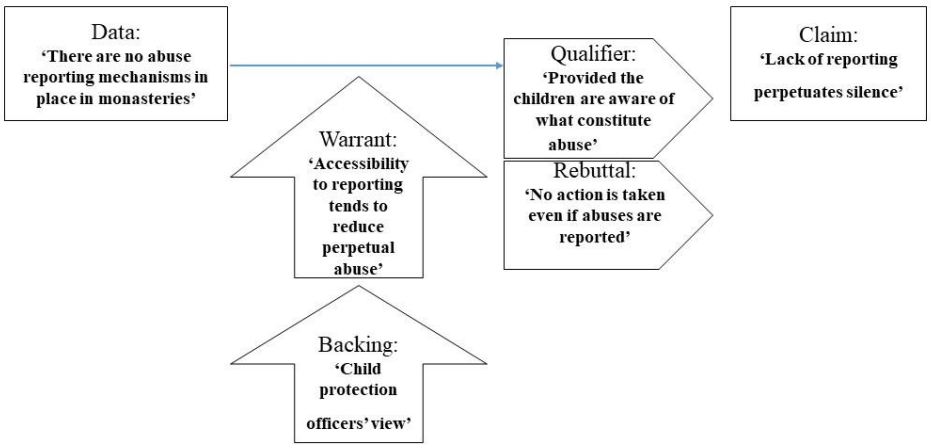


Figure 4.1. Toulmin's argumentation model showing the relationships between six key elements. This was adapted from Wang et al., (2020).

Appendix-8

Box 5.1

Sample of a code with collated data extracts

NVivo-generated audit trail of a code contributing to Basic theme through Organising theme to Global theme

GT1 - PREDISPOSING SILENCERS\OT1- Socioeconomic Determinants\BT1 - Ordination as a solution to poverty\ordination for a better life

<Files\\Child Protection Officers\\CPO2> - § 2 references coded [2.76% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.42% Coverage

I tend to think that ordination is a good thing for the child as it is better than sending the child to a care home because as a monk, he stands a chance to move forward with the religion. I have met such children in my career.

Reference 2 - 1.34% Coverage

They have plenty of opportunities to shape their life according to religious values and receive a decent education. I don't think they are particularly vulnerable. There are equal opportunities for everyone there.

<Files\\Child Protection Officers\\CPO3> - § 1 reference coded [0.57% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.57% Coverage

I think child ordination is a good thing for a child as that would provide him with a religious upbringing.

<Files\\Monastic leader group\\ML2> - § 1 reference coded [0.94% Coverage]

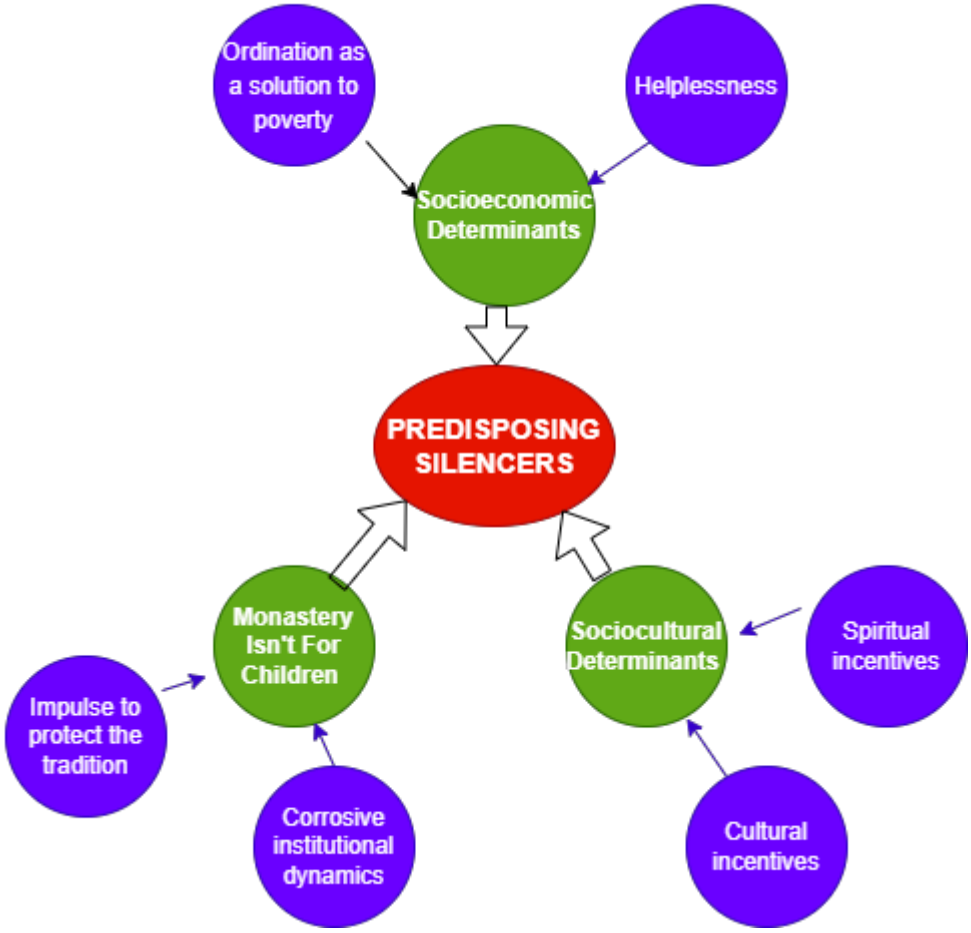
Reference 1 - 0.94% Coverage

When my father came to see me, I told him that I want to return home but he said "now that you are already here you might as well stay on. Moreover, the villagers would badmouth about it, wouldn't they? Stay on, get an education and if you still want to return, then you can return".

<Files\\survivor group\\S1> - § 2 references coded [1.12% Coverage]

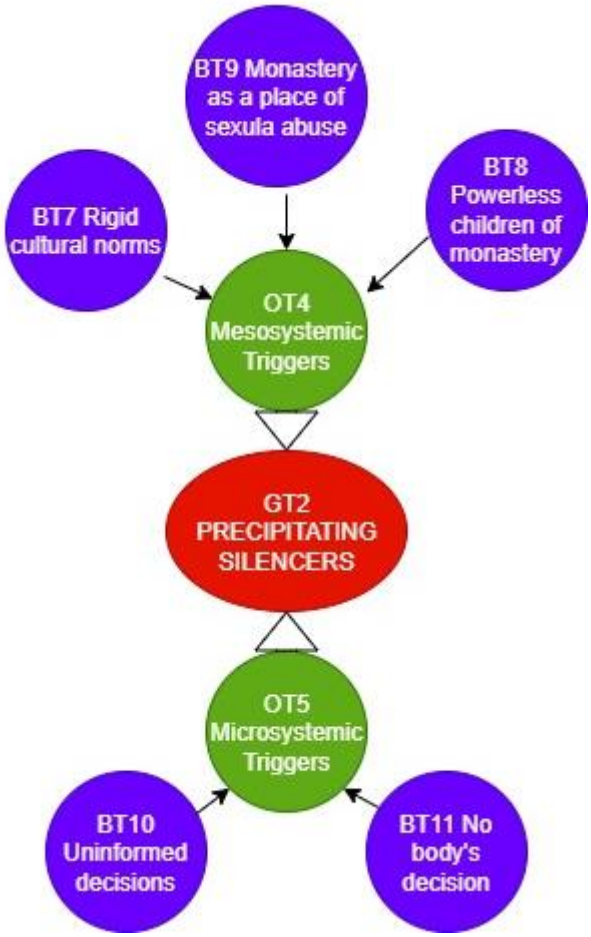
Appendix-9

Figure 5.1



Appendix-10

Figure 5.2



Appendix-11

Figure 5.3

Appendix-12

Correspondence with Child protection authorities in Sri Lanka

Letter to NCPA director

Mrs. Anoma Siriwardana,

Director-General,

National Child Protection Authority,

No. 330, Thalawathugoda Road, Madiwela,

Sri Jayawardenapura,

Sri Lanka.

10/10/2020

Dear Mrs. Siriwardana,

A request to interview child protection officers for a research project

I am a Principal Lecturer in Social Work at the Canterbury Christ Church University in England and currently supervising Mr. Namal Rathnayake who is studying for a PhD (Title: 'Breaking the silence about institutional child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka') within our faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care. He plans to explore the phenomenon of silence about abuse by interviewing three groups of stakeholders: survivors, monastic leaders and child protection officers. I am writing to seek your permission for Namal to interview a small group of child protection officers employed in your agency.

Namal is fully aware that this interview is concerned with sensitive information by virtue of its subject matter so I would stress that he **IS NOT** intending to elicit any information in relation to current or historic child abuse cases /investigations. He is primarily interested in exploring child protection officers' general experience of investigating alleged abuse by Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka.

I am fully aware of the scope of his project and I have been providing regular supervision to him. This research project has been reviewed by the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social

Care Research Ethics Panel (Ref. No. ETH1920-0298). Namal has taken all the reasonable steps to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants and data to be collected. I believe this research will make an important contribution to understanding the safeguarding of children and young people & advancing their protection & safety.

I have enclosed a participant information sheet & guidance for your information.

It you have any further questions either for myself or Namal please do not hesitate to contact us via rc119@canterbury.ac.uk (PhD supervisor Dr Bob Cecil, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, Canterbury Christ Church University) OR 0775198016 (SL)/ +441227 767700/ nr253@canterbury.ac.uk (Chandana Namal Rathnayake).

Yours sincerely

R G Cecil

Letter to the probation commissioner

The Commissioner,

Department of Probation & Child Care Services

204 Denzil Kobbekaduwa Mawatha,

Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte,

Sri Lanka.

21/01/2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

A request to interview probation officers for a research project

I am a Principal Lecturer in Social Work at the Canterbury Christ Church University in England and currently supervising Mr. Namal Rathnayake who is studying for a PhD (Title: 'Breaking the silence about institutional child abuse in the Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka') within our faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care. He plans to explore the phenomenon of silence about abuse by interviewing three groups of stakeholders: survivors, monastic leaders and child care officers. I am writing to seek your permission for Namal to interview a small group of probation officers employed in your department.

Namal is fully aware that this interview is concerned with sensitive information by virtue of its subject matter so I would stress that he **IS NOT** intending to elicit any information in relation to current or historic child abuse cases /investigations. He is primarily interested in exploring probation officers' general experience of investigating alleged abuse by Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka.

I am fully aware of the scope of his project and I have been providing regular supervision to him. This research project has been reviewed by the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care Research Ethics Panel (Ref. No. ETH1920-0298). Namal has taken all the reasonable

steps to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants and data to be collected. I believe this research will make an important contribution to understanding the safeguarding of children and young people & advancing their protection & safety.

I have enclosed a participant information sheet & guidance for your information.

It you have any further questions either for myself or Namal please do not hesitate to contact us via rc119@canterbury.ac.uk (PhD supervisor Dr Bob Cecil, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, Canterbury Christ Church University) OR 0775198016 (SL)/ +441227 767700/ nr253@canterbury.ac.uk (Chandana Namal Rathnayake).

Yours sincerely

R G Cecil

Letter to the probation commissioner (Sinhala version)

චන්දිමා සිගේරා මෙනවිය

පරිවාස හා ළමාරක්ෂක දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව

204 ඩෙන්සිල් කොබ්බෑකඩුව මාවත

ශ්‍රී ජයවර්ධනපුර කෝට්ටේ

ශ්‍රීලංකාව

25/11/2020

ගරු කොමසාරිස්තුමියනි,

ආචාර්ය උපාධි පර්යේෂණයක් සඳහා පරිවාස නිලධාරීන් හමුවීම පිණිස අවසර පැතීම

මම 1992 සිට 2012 දක්වා වසර විස්සක් පමණ පැවිදිව සිට මේ වනවිට උපැවිදිව, ආචාර්ය උපාධිය සඳහා පර්යේෂණයක නිරතව සිටිමි. මාගේ උසස් අධ්‍යාපනය මනෝවිද්‍යාව සහ මනෝසෞඛ්‍ය උපදේශනය පිළිබඳව වන අතර 2013 වසරේ සිට මනෝසෞඛ්‍ය උපදේශකයකු ලෙස ද කටයුතු කරමි.

වයස අවුරුදු 10 දී දුෂ්කර ප්‍රදේශයක විහාරස්ථානයක පැවිදි වූ මම පළමු වසර පහ තුළ මාගේ ගුරුන්වහන්සේ ඇතුළු විශාල පිරිසක් අතින් අපයෝජනයට ලක් වූ අතර වරක් සියදිවි හානිකරගැනීමට උත්සාහ කිරීම නිසා රෝහල්ගතවීමට ද සිදුවිය. අතිශය සැදැහැවත් මාගේ ග්‍රාමීය දෙමාපියන් කළයුත්තේ කුමක්දැයි නොදැන අසරණ වූවා වන්නට ඇත, මේ කිසිවක් වගකිවයුතු ආයතනයකට වාර්තා නොකෙරුනි.

කෙසේවෙතත්, මගේ මනෝවිද්‍යා අධ්‍යයන කාලය තුළ අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව න්‍යායාත්මකව හැදෑරීමේදී මට කුඩාකල සිදු වූ අපයෝජනවල බරපතළකම වටහාගත්තෙමි. එතැන් සිට මෙම ගැටලුව පුලුල්ව සහ සංවේදීව අධ්‍යනය කිරීමටත් මෙවැනි අත්දැකීම් ඇති මා මෙන් සිය ගනනක් වූ පැවිදි, උපැවිදි අතීත වින්දිතයන් සමඟ මට හැකි පමණින් මනොසමාජීය මැදිහත්වීම් සිදුකිරීමටත් පටන්ගත්තෙමි. මෙම ආචාර්ය උපාධිය හා බැඳි පර්යේෂණය එහි පළමු විධිමත් පියවරයි. (වැඩි විස්තර සඳහා මේ සමඟ ඇති ඇමුණුම් වෙත ඔබේ කාරුණික අවධානය යොමුකරන්න)

මෙහි දී මා ඔබතුමියගෙන් බලාපොරොත්තුවන්නේ මෙවැනි අපයෝජන පිළිබඳව රාජකාරී මට්ටමේ අත්දැකීම් ඇති පරිවාස නිළධාරීන් පිරිසක් (4-6 පමණ) හඳුනාගැනීමට සහ සම්බන්ධ කරගැනීමට අවසරය සහ සම්බන්ධීකරණය සැපයීමයි. මෙම නිළධාරීන් පිරිස මා උපන් උඟව පළාතේ බදුල්ල දිස්ත්‍රික්කයෙන් තෝරාගැනීමට හැකිනම් වඩාත් සතුටුවනමුත් එය අනිවාර්යක් නොවේ. මෙම සාකච්ඡාව කේවල හෝ කණ්ඩායමක් වශයෙන් පැවැත්විය හැකි අතර පවතින තත්ත්වය හමුවේ එය ජාලගත ක්‍රමයට සිදුකළ යුතුව. ඇත මෙම සාකච්ඡාවේදී **අපයෝජනයට අදාළ වින්දිතයන්ගේ හෝ චූදිතයන්ගේ පුද්ගලික තොරතුරු කිසිවක් මම අපේක්ෂා නොකරන** අතර හුදෙක් මගේ අවධානය ඇත්තේ ආරාමික අපයෝජන සිදුවීම්වලට මැදිහත්වීමේදී ඔබ නිළධාරීන් මුහුණදෙන සුවිශේෂී අත්දැකීම් පිළිබඳවයි. මෙහිදී එම නිළධාරීන්ගේ පුද්ගලිකත්වය ආරක්ෂාකරන අතර ඔවුන් ලබාදෙන තොරතුරු නිර්නාමිකව පළකරන බවට මම සහතික කරමි.

ඔබත් මමත් දන්නා පරිදි මෙය ලංකා සමාජ දේශපාලනය තුළ අතිශය සංවේදී මාතෘකාවක් වන බැවින් මා වැනි සිය ගණනක් වූ විද්‍යාර්ථීන් තවදුරටත් අගතියට පත්නොවන අයුරින් මනා සංයමයකින් මෙය අධ්‍යයනය කිරීම සහ එතුළින් සංඝ නායකත්වය අභ්‍යන්තර ස්වයං විවේචනයකට යොමුකිරීම මගේ දිගුකාලීන අරමුණයි. එහි ආරම්භය සඳහා ඔබතුමියගේ සහාය සහ ආශීර්වාදය ගෞරවයෙන් අපේක්ෂාකරමි.

මෙයට විශ්වාසී

චන්දන නාමල් රත්නායක

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ඇමුණුම්: ආචාර්ය උපාධි උපදේශකවරයාගේ අවසර ඉල්ලිමේ ලිපිය, පරිවාස නිළධාරීන් සඳහා වූ තොරතුරු ලිපිය