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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN COMBATING
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN SRI LANKA**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL COMPLETION
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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to analyse to what extent law enforcement against child sexual abuse has been able to achieve its purposes in Sri Lanka.

When examining the main laws, the applicable institutional frame work and the case studies, it was evident that the main problem did not lie with an inadequacy of laws, but within the enforcement mechanism.

The analysis of sample data was done by dividing the case studies into two main categories in line with the two research questions: those that entered the law enforcement process and those that did not. Thereafter, each category was analysed to identify common patterns that illustrate the factors that contribute to each scenario.

There were several factors that were identified as limiting the effectiveness of law enforcement against child sexual abuse incidents that enter the system. Most of these bottlenecks are found within the law enforcement mechanism involving the Police, lawyers, judges, JMOs and courts. These are all elements of a system that could be remedied, if the necessary will and dedication is present.

Analysis of narratives also identified factors that prevented child sexual abuse incidents from entering the law enforcement process. These were mainly the known defects of the law enforcement system that discourage people to access the system and the social, cultural, economic and political factors that exert pressure on victim families to hide these incidents from public knowledge.

The recommendations are aimed towards addressing the shortcomings of the implementation of the laws, that would greatly enhance the confidence in the court system; provide timely relief to the victims, thereby encouraging higher reporting and discouraging future perpetrators. There are also recommendations focusing on addressing the multi disciplinary factors that prevent incidents from entering the legal system and these mainly deal with working towards a change of mindset within communities and making legal remedies more accessible and effective.