

Abstract

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious scourge that affects all countries globally. While there are myriad factors contributing the prevalence of CSA in Zimbabwe, poverty is arguably one of the major underlying issues and root causes of most of these factors. Over the past two decades, Zimbabwe has gone through an unprecedented economic meltdown; fewer resources are being channelled towards child protection leading to the decline in standards of living for children. Consequently, children are left vulnerable to poverty which exposes them to the risk of CSA. This paper discusses a number of poverty-related factors that are contributing to CSA in Zimbabwe. A qualitative study approach was adopted, and data were collected from 38 participants and four key informants who were selected using theoretical and purposive sampling, respectively. In addition, 300 court files of CSA cases were also reviewed. Notwithstanding other circumstances leading to CSA, findings showed that poverty-related vulnerabilities, such as adverse living conditions, rurality, child labour and migration, exposed children to CSA. The paper ends by discussing the policy and social work practice implications and recommendations in view of the findings.