



Online Child Sexual abuse in the Gambia the Luring Strategies: The Perspective of Child Protection Officers (Case Study: Serekunda Tourism Development Areas)

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid expansion of digital technology has increased global connectivity but simultaneously created new avenues for online child sexual abuse and exploitation, particularly in vulnerable tourism-driven settings such as The Gambia. **Objective:** This study aims to examine the luring strategies used by perpetrators, identify contributing factors, and explore existing prevention and support mechanisms from the perspective of child protection officers. **Method:** A qualitative case study approach was employed involving in-depth interviews with 29 child protection officers working with issues related to the Tourism Development Areas. Data were analysed thematically to capture patterns related to recruitment techniques, impacts, and institutional responses. **Result:** Findings reveal that perpetrators employ diverse strategies, including social media befriending, smartphone access, manipulation of families and communities, trafficking networks, peer influence, drug use, gifts, and intermediaries such as pimps. Limited parental supervision, poverty, and widespread digital access significantly increase children's vulnerability. **Conclusion:** Online platforms have intensified both the scale and complexity of child sexual exploitation, requiring coordinated, multi-level interventions. **Originality/Value:** This case study provides novel empirical contributions to the fields of cyber criminology, child protection, and tourism policy by documenting multifaceted online luring mechanisms utilized by perpetrators, ranging from social media manipulation, smartphone provisions, and gift giving to peer pressure, illicit substance use, and trafficking intermediaries regarding online child sexual abuse and exploitation amid socioeconomic vulnerabilities and inadequate parental supervision, an issue that remains insufficiently documented in current literature. This review delivers profound contextual insights while serving as a strategic reference and contributing to policymaking, institutional capacity building for child protection officers, and the design of targeted preventive interventions for handling similar cases within tourism development areas in The Gambia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the world has experienced a rapid transformation driven by the expansion of digital technology, fundamentally reshaping communication, social interaction, and access to information (Hilbert, 2020).

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The widespread availability of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms has connected more than 4.5 billion people globally, including a substantial proportion of children who often engage in online environments with limited supervision (Kyei-Arthur et al., 2024). Ideally, such technological advancement should enhance well-being, expand educational opportunities, and promote safe and inclusive digital ecosystems for all users, particularly vulnerable groups such as children.

However, the rapid digitalization of society has also generated serious unintended consequences across social, economic, and cultural domains (Scholz et al., 2028; Xu et al., 2022). One of the most pressing concerns is the increasing prevalence of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, where perpetrators use digital platforms to initiate contact, build trust, and facilitate abuse (Finkelhor et al., 2022). These online interactions frequently evolve into offline encounters, thereby intensifying the risk and severity of victimization (Tamarit-Sumalla et al., 2022).

Globally, the magnitude of online child sexual exploitation is alarming. Reports indicate a 106 per cent increase in reported cases between 2019 and 2020, alongside a 77 per cent rise in self-generated sexual content involving children (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2021). Regional prevalence data further reveal that a significant proportion of children have experienced at least one form of online sexual abuse, including 52 per cent in Southeast Asia, 50 per cent in South Asia, and 71 per cent in North America (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019; Maestral, 2021; WeProtect Global Alliance, 2021). These figures demonstrate that online child sexual abuse is not only widespread but also escalating, necessitating urgent scholarly and policy attention.

Existing literature has extensively explored the nature, prevalence, and mechanisms of online child sexual exploitation (Fry et al., 2025; Hinds & Giardino, 2020; Finkelhor et al., 2024). Early studies emphasise that the internet creates an environment characterised by anonymity, accessibility, and affordability, which significantly facilitates offender behaviour (Chan et al., 2024; Goldsmith & Wall, 2022; Rimer, 2017). These structural features of digital platforms enable perpetrators to easily identify, approach, and manipulate vulnerable children without immediate detection.

A central concept in understanding online child sexual abuse is sexual grooming, defined as a gradual process through which perpetrators establish emotional connections with children to lower their inhibitions and prepare them for abuse. Research by Esposito & Field (2016) highlights that grooming often involves befriending, trust building, and progressive desensitization, which may include exposure to sexual content or physical contact over time. Similarly, Winters & Jeglic (2017) describe grooming as a staged process involving relationship formation, risk assessment, and eventual exploitation.

In addition to grooming, digital technologies have expanded the modalities through which abuse occurs. The proliferation of social media platforms, messaging applications, and live streaming services has increased opportunities for real-time interaction and exploitation (Davy, 2017). Maestral (2021) further notes that perpetrators often apply structured approaches such as the 5S strategies to systematically access and exploit children online, particularly through widely used platforms like Facebook and search engines.

Socio-economic vulnerability also plays a critical role in facilitating exploitation. Studies indicate that poverty, limited parental supervision, and lack of digital literacy significantly increase children's susceptibility to online abuse (Choudhry et al., 2018). Offenders may exploit these vulnerabilities by offering financial incentives, gifts, or emotional support not only to children but also to their families and communities (Bjornseth & Szabo, 2018; Goldman et al., 2003). In many cases, intermediaries such as traffickers or peers are involved in recruitment processes, further complicating prevention efforts (Kloess et al., 2014).

Moreover, research has shown that online child sexual exploitation is often interconnected with broader forms of abuse, including trafficking, forced labour, and commercial sexual exploitation (Long, 2023; Miller-Perrin & Wurtele, 2017). Davy (2017) highlights that digital platforms have become central to trafficking operations, where victims are recruited, advertised, and exploited. Similarly, Ali et al. (2021) emphasize that online abuse frequently overlaps with offline exploitation, reinforcing the need for integrated intervention strategies.

Despite the growing body of literature, significant gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on global or regional trends, with limited context-specific evidence from developing countries such as The Gambia. Second, while prior research has identified general grooming strategies, there is insufficient empirical understanding of how these strategies are operationalised within tourism-driven environments characterised by high interaction between local communities and foreign visitors. Third, the perspectives of frontline child protection officers who possess direct experiential knowledge of abuse cases remain underexplored in the literature.

Addressing these gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research problem: how do perpetrators strategically lure children into online and offline sexual exploitation within The Gambia's Tourism Development Areas, and what contextual factors facilitate this process?

This study aims to examine the luring strategies employed by perpetrators, assess the scale and underlying causes of online child sexual abuse in The Gambia, particularly within Tourism Development Areas and surrounding communities, and identify the contributing socio-economic and technological factors shaping this phenomenon. Drawing on the perspectives of child protection officers, the study also explores existing institutional responses and intervention efforts. By generating context-specific empirical insights, this research seeks to advance knowledge on online child sexual abuse, inform the development of evidence-based policies, and strengthen child protection frameworks, while contributing to broader efforts to stimulate timely and coordinated responses in addressing this growing concern in a major tourism destination in Africa.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore the dynamics of online child sexual abuse in The Gambia, particularly within Tourism Development Areas and surrounding communities. The qualitative approach was selected to generate in-depth and context-specific insights into the experiences and professional perspectives of child protection officers, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the causes, recruitment techniques, impacts, and response mechanisms associated with online child sexual abuse.

2.2 Research Object

The study involved twenty-nine child protection officers who are directly engaged in handling cases of child abuse and exploitation in The Gambia. Participants were purposively selected based on their professional roles and direct experience in child protection services, thereby ensuring the relevance and richness of the collected data.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted over 6 months. The interviews focused on key themes, including motivating factors of abuse, techniques of recruitment, impacts on victims, existing support services, preventive strategies, institutional collaboration, as well as challenges and opportunities in addressing online child sexual abuse. This method allowed participants to share detailed accounts of their professional experiences and observations.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were systematically coded to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to the luring strategies, contributing factors, and institutional responses to online child sexual abuse. The analysis aimed to generate meaningful interpretations that reflect field realities and provide evidence-based insights for policy and practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Online Child Sexual Abuse Luring Strategies

This study identified various strategies used by perpetrators to lure children into online and offline sexual exploitation within tourism development areas. The findings are based on responses from child protection officers, as summarised in Table 1.

Identified techniques	Frequency	%
face book befriending	27	9.3
Internet – other social media	34	11.7
Smart phones	47	16.2
Befriending families	21	7.2
Supporting institutions in the communities	29	10.0
Trafficking agencies	17	6.0
Befriending friends	25	8.6
Drug abuse	19	7.0
Gifts	31	11.0
Pimps	41	14.1

Total response	291	100.00
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The results indicate that smartphone use (16.2%) was the most frequently reported strategy, followed by involvement with pimps or intermediaries (14.1%) and use of other social media platforms (11.7%). In contrast, trafficking agencies (6.0%) and drug use (7.0%) were reported less frequently.

3.1.2 Digital-Based Luring Strategies

Participants consistently emphasised the central role of digital technologies in facilitating access to children. Social media platforms, including Facebook and other online networks, are widely used to initiate contact, build trust, and sustain interaction with potential victims. Although digital platforms serve important functions such as information sharing and communication, informants reported that they also expose children to significant risks. One participant explained: *“Sometimes you see a group of girls sitting and watching; most of the time we think they are watching TikTok, but at times they are exposed to inappropriate content. Tourists take advantage of children’s presence on Facebook and other social media platforms.* The widespread ownership and use of smartphones among children, often with limited parental monitoring, further increases vulnerability. As noted by another participant: *“Most mobile phone users are children who do not understand the implications. Many trafficking cases show that recruitment often happens online, where children are easily accessed and lured into exploitation through images and other activities.”*

The informants’ statements indicate that digital technologies, particularly social media and smartphones, have become primary tools used by perpetrators to access and approach children in ways that are both easy and difficult to detect. Activities that appear harmless, such as watching online content, may actually expose children to inappropriate material or risky interactions without adults’ awareness. Moreover, children’s limited understanding of digital risks, combined with minimal parental supervision, creates conditions that allow perpetrators to initiate contact, build trust, and gradually manipulate them into exploitative situations. This suggests that digital spaces function not only as platforms for communication but also as critical entry points in the recruitment and grooming process, ultimately increasing children’s vulnerability to both online and offline sexual exploitation.

3.1.3 Family and Community-Based Approaches

Beyond digital methods, perpetrators also rely on family and community structures to gain access to children. Informants reported that offenders often build relationships with parents or caregivers, sometimes through economic or social interactions, which are later used to facilitate contact with children. A participant described: *“I saw a student visiting a tourist’s house, and she claimed her mother sent her because the mother worked there. In reality, these connections often become a way for perpetrators to access children through their families.”* Additionally, perpetrators may engage with communities by providing support or participating in local activities, thereby gaining trust and legitimacy. This indirect approach allows them to operate with reduced suspicion.

The informants’ statements suggest that perpetrators strategically exploit family and community structures as indirect pathways to access children, using trust-based relationships as a form of social camouflage. By establishing connections with parents or caregivers, often through economic assistance or routine social interactions, offenders can legitimise their presence and reduce suspicion within the community. This creates situations where children’s contact with perpetrators appears normal or even sanctioned by family members, thereby lowering protective barriers. Additionally, involvement in community activities or support initiatives enables perpetrators to build credibility and acceptance at a broader social level, further facilitating access to potential victims. Overall, these findings indicate that exploitation is not only driven by individual targeting but is also embedded within social and relational networks that unintentionally enable perpetrators to operate more effectively.

3.1.4 Community Networks and Institutional Access

The findings also reveal that perpetrators sometimes exploit community-based structures and informal networks. Supporting community projects or collaborating with local actors may serve as an entry point to identify and approach children.

One informant noted: *“Some perpetrators support community activities, but they intend to target children. They gain trust first before engaging in abuse.”* Another participant highlighted the role of local intermediaries: *“Sometimes access to children is facilitated through community-based actors or agencies, making it easier for perpetrators to operate.”*

The informants' statements indicate that perpetrators leverage community networks and institutional structures as strategic entry points to access children by embedding themselves within trusted local systems. By supporting community activities or collaborating with local actors, offenders can build legitimacy and social acceptance, reduce suspicion and increase their proximity to potential victims. This form of engagement allows perpetrators to operate under the guise of contributing to community development while covertly identifying and targeting children. The involvement of local intermediaries or community-based actors further facilitates this process by enabling, whether intentionally or unintentionally, access, highlighting how existing social and institutional networks can be manipulated to support exploitation. Overall, these findings suggest that the abuse process is often mediated through collective structures, making detection more complex and reinforcing the need for stronger oversight within community and institutional settings.

3.1.5 Peer Influence and Trafficking Networks

Peer networks and trafficking channels were also identified as important mechanisms. Children are sometimes introduced to perpetrators through friends or acquaintances, increasing exposure and reducing suspicion. An informant explained: *"Children are often introduced to social media and new contacts by friends, and through these networks they meet individuals who later exploit them."* In addition, trafficking processes frequently involve the use of online platforms: *"When children are trafficked, they are often placed online, exposing them to different types of abusers, including tourists."*

The informants' statements indicate that peer networks and trafficking systems play a significant role in facilitating children's exposure to perpetrators by normalising and mediating initial contact. Through friends or acquaintances, children are introduced to social media environments and new individuals in ways that appear familiar and trustworthy, thereby reducing suspicion and increasing offenders' accessibility. This peer-mediated interaction blurs the boundary between safe and risky relationships, making it easier for perpetrators to establish connections without immediate detection. At the same time, trafficking processes increasingly integrate digital platforms as tools for recruitment and exploitation, where children are deliberately exposed online to a wider network of potential abusers. Overall, these findings suggest that exploitation is not solely initiated by perpetrators directly, but is often embedded within social and trafficking networks that expand access, accelerate recruitment, and amplify children's vulnerability.

3.1.6 Economic Exploitation and Coercive Strategies

Economic vulnerability emerged as a critical factor facilitating exploitation. Perpetrators frequently use gifts, financial support, and material incentives to attract and maintain relationships with children, particularly in economically disadvantaged communities.

A participant stated, *"Money, food, and other items are used because many children cannot afford these things. Even drugs are sometimes introduced, and children are later exploited through online activities."* Similarly, another informant emphasised: *"Small gifts and sponsorship create dependency. Families may continue accepting support, which reduces reporting and increases normalisation of exploitation in the community."* The use of intermediaries, including pimps, and the introduction of substance use were also reported as mechanisms to control and sustain exploitation.

The informants' statements indicate that economic vulnerability functions as a key driver that perpetrators deliberately exploit to initiate and sustain abusive relationships with children. By offering Money, food, gifts, or other forms of material support, offenders create dependency and position themselves as sources of assistance within economically disadvantaged contexts. This dynamic not only attracts children but can also influence family attitudes, where continued acceptance of support may reduce suspicion, discourage reporting, and gradually normalise exploitative relationships. The introduction of substances further reinforces control by increasing dependency and limiting children's ability to resist or withdraw. Additionally, the involvement of intermediaries such as pimps facilitates coordination and continuity of exploitation, suggesting that these practices are not isolated acts but part of organised and sustained strategies rooted in economic coercion.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that perpetrators employ a wide range of strategies to lure children into online and offline sexual exploitation, combining digital, social, and economic mechanisms. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes that structured grooming processes often precede child sexual abuse. As noted by [Esposito & Field \(2016\)](#), perpetrators typically establish relationships with children through befriending and

trust-building, gradually desensitizing them before initiating sexual exploitation. This pattern is clearly reflected in the present study, particularly in the use of social media and interpersonal networks to initiate and sustain contact.

The prominence of digital-based strategies in this study further supports the findings of [Maestral \(2021\)](#), who highlights that perpetrators use structured approaches, such as the “5S strategies,” to access children online through platforms like Facebook and search engines. The widespread use of smartphones, social media, and internet-enabled devices, as identified in this study, reinforces the argument that digital technologies have significantly lowered barriers to access, making exploitation more scalable and efficient. Similarly, [Davy \(2017\)](#) explains that advancements in digital technologies, including chatrooms, messaging platforms, live streaming, and mobile communication, have expanded opportunities for offenders to engage with children in real time, thereby intensifying both the reach and complexity of online sexual abuse.

However, while prior studies have largely conceptualized digital grooming as a linear, individually driven process, this study's findings reveal a more complex, contextually embedded dynamic. Specifically, digital platforms in tourism-driven environments function not only as tools for initial contact but also as integrated spaces where online and offline interactions continuously intersect ([Chen et al., 2026](#)). This suggests that exploitation processes are not confined to virtual environments but are actively reinforced through physical proximity and social interactions within tourism settings. This contextual dimension remains underexplored in existing literature and represents a key contribution of the present study.

The findings also reveal that perpetrators frequently exploit family and community structures as indirect pathways to access children. This is consistent with [Bjornseth & Szabo \(2018\)](#), who found that offenders often build relationships with parents or caregivers by offering assistance or support, thereby gaining trust and facilitating access to children. In the present study, such strategies were evident in cases in which perpetrators engaged with families or participated in community activities to legitimize their presence. This indicates that grooming processes extend beyond individual victims and may involve broader social environments, including families and communities.

Importantly, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that these family- and community-based strategies are not merely supportive mechanisms but also structural enablers of access, particularly in economically vulnerable and tourism-dependent communities. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on interpersonal grooming, the present findings highlight how social legitimacy and community integration can systematically reduce barriers to exploitation ([Susilowati & Frans, 2025](#); [Winters et al., 2022](#); [Kloess & van der Bruggen, 2023](#)). This underscores the need to reconceptualise grooming as a multi-layered social process, rather than a purely individual interaction.

In addition, the role of intermediaries, including pimps and community-based actors, aligns with the findings of ([Choudhry et al., 2018](#)) and ([Kloess et al., 2014](#)), which highlight that recruitment into exploitation often involves multiple actors who provide material support, emotional manipulation, or logistical facilitation. The use of gifts, financial incentives, and other forms of assistance identified in this study reflects broader recruitment dynamics in which perpetrators create dependency and exploit socio-economic vulnerabilities to gain control over victims ([Islam & Khan, 2025](#)).

Nevertheless, the present study further contributes by illustrating how these intermediaries operate within locally embedded networks, where the boundaries between community members, facilitators, and perpetrators become blurred. This finding challenges the conventional distinction between offenders and enablers, suggesting that exploitation may be sustained through diffuse and informal networks rather than clearly defined criminal structures.

Furthermore, the findings regarding trafficking and online exposure are consistent with ([Maestral, 2021](#)), which reports that increased internet access has contributed to the rise of child trafficking and online sexual exploitation. Trafficked children are often exposed online and forced into exploitative activities, including the production and distribution of sexual content. Similarly, ([Davy, 2017](#)) emphasises that trafficking for sexual exploitation remains a dominant form of child trafficking globally, often intersecting with other forms of exploitation such as forced labour and domestic servitude. This interconnected nature of online and offline exploitation is also evident in the present study.

However, this study highlights a critical nuance by demonstrating that online exposure is not merely a consequence of trafficking but also a mechanism that sustains and amplifies exploitation, enabling repeated victimisation across multiple perpetrators and locations. This recursive relationship between trafficking and digital platforms adds a new dimension to existing understandings of exploitation dynamics.

The role of peer influence identified in this study further supports the findings of [Winters & Jeglic \(2017\)](#), who describe how perpetrators may use peers, including friends or intimate partners, as intermediaries to recruit and

manipulate victims. Such strategies reduce suspicion and increase compliance, as victims are more likely to trust individuals within their social networks. This highlights the importance of understanding exploitation as a socially embedded process rather than solely an individual interaction between perpetrator and victim.

Building on this, the present study reveals that peer networks function not only as passive channels but also as active facilitators of normalisation, in which risky interactions are perceived as ordinary social behaviour. This normalisation effect further complicates detection and prevention efforts, as exploitative dynamics become embedded within everyday peer interactions.

The use of economic incentives, substance abuse, and coercive strategies is consistent with (Goldman et al., 2003), which identifies gifts, financial support, and drug dependency as long-standing tools used by perpetrators to control and exploit children. The present findings demonstrate that these strategies remain highly relevant, particularly in economically disadvantaged contexts where children and families may be more susceptible to material inducements. Such dynamics not only facilitate initial recruitment but also contribute to the normalisation and persistence of exploitation within communities (Fletcher & Trautrim, 2024).

This study advances the literature by showing that economic coercion operates not only at the individual level but also at the household and community level, where financial dependency can shape collective tolerance and reduce resistance to exploitation. This highlights the structural nature of vulnerability and the need to address underlying socio-economic conditions as part of prevention strategies.

In view of these findings, it is evident that perpetrators apply multifaceted and adaptive strategies that combine digital access, social relationships, and economic coercion to exploit children. This is in line with (Ali et al., 2021), which emphasises that online and offline sexual exploitation are interconnected processes requiring comprehensive and coordinated prevention strategies. Therefore, addressing this issue requires integrated interventions that target not only individual behaviour but also the broader social, technological, and economic contexts that enable exploitation.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study highlight the need for comprehensive and multi-level intervention strategies that address not only individual behaviours but also the broader structural conditions enabling child sexual exploitation. Prevention efforts should prioritise strengthening digital literacy among children and parents, enhancing parental supervision, and promoting safe online practices. In addition, policies must address the socio-economic vulnerabilities that increase children's susceptibility to exploitation, particularly in tourism-dependent communities. Community-based monitoring systems and institutional accountability mechanisms should also be strengthened to prevent perpetrators from misusing social networks and local structures. Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration between child protection agencies, law enforcement, educational institutions, and digital platform providers is essential to develop integrated responses that can effectively disrupt both online and offline exploitation pathways.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing context-specific empirical evidence on the luring strategies used by perpetrators within tourism-driven environments, particularly from the perspective of child protection officers. Unlike prior research that primarily focuses on individual-level grooming processes, this study demonstrates that child sexual exploitation operates through interconnected digital, social, and economic systems embedded within community and institutional structures. It advances theoretical understanding by conceptualising exploitation as a multi-layered process involving not only perpetrators and victims but also informal networks, intermediaries, and socio-economic conditions that facilitate access and control. By highlighting the intersection between online and offline exploitation dynamics, this study offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing child sexual abuse in complex and vulnerable settings.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study relies solely on the perspectives of child protection officers, which, while valuable, may not fully capture the experiences of victims, families, or other stakeholders involved in child protection. Second, the use of a qualitative case study approach within a specific tourism development area limits the generalizability of the findings to other

geographical or socio-cultural contexts. Third, the data are based on self-reported professional experiences, which may be influenced by recall bias or subjective interpretation. Additionally, the study does not incorporate direct observation or digital trace data, which could provide deeper insights into actual online interactions and exploitation processes.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should expand on these findings by incorporating multiple perspectives, including those of survivors, families, community members, and law enforcement actors, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of exploitation dynamics. Comparative studies across different regions or countries are also needed to examine how cultural, economic, and technological contexts shape luring strategies. In addition, future studies should consider mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative or digital data analysis, with particular focus on online behaviour patterns and platform-specific risks. Longitudinal research is also recommended to better understand how grooming and exploitation processes evolve. Finally, there is a need for intervention-based studies that assess the effectiveness of prevention strategies, including digital literacy programs, community awareness initiatives, and policy-driven responses in reducing child vulnerability to exploitation.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that perpetrators employ highly adaptive and interconnected strategies to lure children into sexual exploitation, particularly within tourism-driven contexts. Digital technologies, especially social media and smartphones, serve as primary gateways, enabling rapid, low-risk access to children and allowing perpetrators to initiate contact, build trust, and sustain engagement. Importantly, these online interactions do not operate in isolation but are closely linked to offline environments, where physical proximity and social familiarity further facilitate exploitation.

The findings also demonstrate that exploitation is deeply embedded within social and relational systems. Family ties, peer networks, community structures, and local intermediaries are not merely contextual factors but actively shape access, trust, and normalisation of abuse. In economically vulnerable settings, perpetrators strategically use financial incentives, gifts, and material support to create dependency and reduce resistance, often extending influence beyond individual victims to families and communities. This highlights that child sexual exploitation is not only an individual crime but a socially mediated process reinforced by structural inequalities.

Taken together, these findings challenge conventional views that frame exploitation as a linear or isolated act, instead positioning it as a multi-layered system operating across digital, social, and economic domains. This study provides critical empirical insight into how these dimensions intersect in real-world settings, particularly within tourism environments where external actors and local vulnerabilities converge. Addressing this issue, therefore, requires coordinated, multi-sectoral interventions that disrupt not only perpetrator behaviour but also the enabling conditions that sustain exploitation. Without such integrated responses, efforts to combat child sexual abuse risk remaining fragmented and insufficient in the face of increasingly complex and evolving threats.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Yahya Muhammed Bah: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Methodology, Validation, Data Curation, Formal analysis. Myrtati Dyah Artaria: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that no Generative Artificial Intelligence ([Quillbot](#)) tools were used in the writing, editing, data analysis, or graphic design processes of this manuscript. All content was independently developed by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JGMDS GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

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