



# Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu & Child Safety: A Systematic Framework for Protection.

## Executive Summary

At Islamabad Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (ISBBJJ), safety is foundational to our sport and pedagogy. BJJ is a close-contact discipline that requires **physical proximity, trust, and interaction** between children and adults. Our training environments are structured for safety, with rules designed to minimize physical injury. However, **child safety extends beyond physical risk to emotional, psychological, and institutional protection.**

While Pakistan has general police-administered criminal background checks, there is **no dedicated, continuous, risk-based clearance mechanism** for adults working directly with children. Whether as teachers, daycare staff, sports coaches, or mentors. This gap is not cultural or religious; it is **systemic and procedural**, rooted in fragmented background systems without integration or ongoing monitoring.

International models, particularly the **Australian Working With Children Check (WWCC)** demonstrate how structured child-safety screening, continuous monitoring, and risk assessment can significantly enhance protections for children in sport and other child-facing roles. Implementing a similar system in Pakistan, supported by policy reform and institutional integration, will ensure that children participating in BJJ and other activities are protected comprehensively, i.e. physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

## 1. The Nature of BJJ & the Scope of Child Safety

BJJ's structure demands **close contact, physical engagement, and repeated partner interactions**, requiring athletes, especially children to train in grips, positions, and controlled submissions. These dynamics necessitate **heightened child safety practices** beyond injury prevention:

- **Safe physical technique enforcement** (e.g., age-appropriate rules, tap-early culture)
- **Behavioral safeguarding** (respect, consent, boundaries)
- **Personnel suitability assessments** that address not only criminal history but risk indicators specific to working with minors

Child safety should encompass **protections against physical abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional harm, and neglect** all while fostering positive environments of trust and growth.

## 2. Limitations of Current Systems in Pakistan

### Police Character Certificates

Pakistan's enforcement of background checks is currently **police-centric** and operationally inconsistent:

- Each provincial police force issues **character certificates** under its own rules.
- These certificates typically verify recorded convictions but **do not assess suitability for child-facing roles** or ongoing risk.
- There is **no continuous monitoring or integration** of emerging legal or protective information that could flag risk after the initial clearance.

As a result, an adult with **no recorded conviction** even if under investigation or showing concerning behavior could legally be employed to work with children. This creates a **significant systemic vulnerability** to child safety in sport and other sectors.

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## 3. International Best Practices: Australian Working With Children Checks

**Australia's Working With Children Check (WWCC)** and equivalent systems illustrate a strong, structured safeguarding framework that can serve as a model:

- **WWCC examines criminal charges, convictions, discipline and child protection records** to evaluate an individual's suitability to work with children.
- Screening is conducted by **state/territory agencies** but commonly operates with similar legal purposes: protecting children, preventing harm, and creating safe environments.
- Clearances are **time-limited and continuously monitored**, allowing revocation if new risks arise.
- Sport integrity bodies explicitly require valid WWCCs for coaches, referees, and volunteers working with youth.
- Best-practice safeguarding frameworks emphasize **codes of conduct, risk reporting, and behavioral training** alongside the check itself.

In some jurisdictions, WWCC applies broadly, even to **volunteers and visitors** involved in special events or regular contact with children which demonstrates the **comprehensive reach** of effective child safety protocols.

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## 4. Why Pakistan Needs a Child-Specific Clearance System

### Child Safety Risks in Pakistan

Recent data spotlight the urgency of improved child protection frameworks. For example, a 2024 report by SSDO documented:

- **7,608 cases of child violence/sexual abuse** reported nationwide
- **~2,954 sexual abuse cases**

- ~2,437 kidnappings or abductions
- ~586 instances of child trafficking

Significantly, many cases remained **under investigation or without conviction**, reflecting gaps in enforcement and monitoring. Conviction rates for child abuse categories in the report were **under 1%**, highlighting structural weaknesses in translating reporting into protective action.

This systemic gap allows individuals to enter child-facing roles with **minimal vetting**, placing children at avoidable risk.

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## 5. Blueprint for a Child Safety Screening Framework

To create a **child-safe sport and community environment** in Pakistan which would be applicable to BJJ and other sports, Pakistan should adopt a framework with the following core elements:

### A) Mandatory Pre-Engagement Screening

- **Criminal history checks** (existing police checks)
- **Risk assessment indicators** (pending investigations, restraining orders against child harm)
- **Reference verification** regarding professional conduct with minors

### B) Ongoing Monitoring

- Checks must be refreshed periodically
- Mechanisms must flag **new allegations** or changes in status post-clearance

### C) Behavioral and Training Requirements

- **Codes of conduct** aligned with child safety principles
- **Mandatory child protection training** for all staff and volunteers
- **Clear reporting pathways** for concerns or allegations

### D) Whistleblower and Reporting Protection

- Anonymous and protected reporting systems for children and adults
- Safe mechanisms to escalate concerns to competent authorities

### E) Public Accountability

- Published lists of approved coaches and volunteers
- Transparent process for **revoking and appealing clearances**

These features mirror successful components of global child safety models (e.g., WWCC) but must be tailored to local legislative, administrative, and cultural contexts.

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## 6. Extending Beyond Background Checks: A Child-Safe Culture

Child safety in sport is not only about vetting adults. It also requires organizational cultures that prioritize:

- Respectful interaction policies
- Zero tolerance for misconduct
- Educating children about their rights and reporting avenues
- Parental engagement and communication

Sport bodies globally integrate these strategies as part of comprehensive child-safe frameworks. For instance, Australian child-safe policies link **Working With Children Checks** with **child safety training, codes of conduct, and reporting mechanisms** to create holistic environments.

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## 7. Conclusion: Safety as a System, Not an Afterthought

Pakistan's current background check processes are insufficient for protecting children in close-contact settings like BJJ, sports coaching, education, and child-facing roles. A **child-specific, risk-based screening system complemented by ongoing monitoring, behavioral norms, and cultural safety training** is essential. The example of the **Australian WWCC** and similar frameworks shows how child safety can be structured, enforceable, and continuous and is not just a one-off character certificate.

To protect Pakistan's youth whether on the mats, in classrooms, or in extracurricular spaces, the country needs a modern, **coordinated child safety infrastructure** that prioritizes prevention and accountability.

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