

Implications of Child Abuse on Education of Primary School Students in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Child abuse is a social phenomenon which erodes the fundamental human rights of the child. Within the context of this study, child abuse is perceived as any act of omission or commission by individuals, institution or society as a whole and any conditions resulting from such acts or inactions, which deprive children of equal rights and liberties and or interrupt with their optimal development. Following the definition, it could be deciphered that child abuse takes various forms and it is committed by parents, guardians, care-takers and so on. However, child abuse affects the child's physiological and psychological well being as well as his adjustments to his cultural and social environment. Meanwhile, following the demise of Soviet Union, the World has assumed increasingly the character of a global village and the issue of child abuse has gained universal attention. Nevertheless, this study set out to study, understand and explain the implications of child abuse on the education of the primary school child in Nigeria. The target population of this study comprises all the victims and perpetrators of child abuse in Enugu North Local Government Area. Specifically spirited efforts will be made to examine all the cases of child abuse among primary school pupils in Enugu North. This includes parents and teachers of the children. This study shall dwell essentially on the incidence and effects of child abuse on pupils in primary schools located within the study area. Enugu North Local Government has over fifteen (15) primary schools with a population of well over twenty thousand pupils (20,000). The researcher shall examine those cases of child abuse that are recorded in Magistrate Court, Local Government offices with particular reference to Social welfare services, African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), and hospitals situated within the study area. Conscientious efforts were made to x-ray how child abuse affects the educational development of pupils in the selected schools. The researcher examined cases of child abuse that are recorded in Magistrate Court, Local Government offices with particular reference to Social welfare services, African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), and hospitals situated within the study area. Conscientious efforts were made to x-ray how child abuse affects the educational development of pupils in the selected schools.*

Keywords: *Child Abuse, Education, Primary Schools, Pupils, Educational Development*

I. Introduction

Child abuse is a phenomenon that has gained universal attention particularly in the last decade of the 20th Century. Following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world of man increasingly assumed the character of a global village. With the globalization of certain core capitalist values, like the Western market incentives, the world of man is increasingly becoming interdependent. Hitherto, child abuse was as well a known concept in the western world but in the contemporary world, Child abuse has become a world-wide phenomenon. Generally, child abuse implies physical or mental injury, negligent treatment or maltreatment.

Child abuse is committed only by those who are entrusted with the care of the child. Moreover one other discernable thing here is that abuse becomes tenable only when it is intentionally done. Of course this insinuation is not totally correct. Certain abuses and heinous acts are committed unintentionally or rather out of ignorance. It is pertinent to highlight here that child abuse is committed by any one, whether the parents or others who committed acts of abuse against the child. However, within the context of this study, Child abuse shall be perceived thus:

It is any act of omission or commission by individual, institutions or society as a whole and any conditions resulting from such acts or inaction, which deprive children of equal rights and liberties and or interfere with their optimal development (Cook and Bowles; 1980).

Thus child abuse touches on fundamental human rights of the child; it is hence antithetical to the laws of nature. The fundamental human rights are derived from natural laws these include the right to life, right to exist, freedom of thought and expression. These laws, inter alia are unalienable to man and centres on the existential conditions of man. Like other human beings the child has unalienable fundamental human rights, an erosion of any of these rights constitutes child abuse. Of course, child abuse takes various form; traces and incidences of child abuse abound. Newspapers, Magazines, Journals and other media houses are replete with causes of child abuse. The situation has escalated to such an extent that the United Nations Organization has encouraged member nations to restore and respect the dignity of man.

Meanwhile, child abuse can occur in the form of physical assault, neglect and sexual abuse child abandonment, child battery, child neglect. By physical assault we mean a situation, whereby the child is subjected to brutal physical torture resulting from violence perpetuated against the child. This results to battered skins. Skills and fractured bones hands and legs. Child neglect occurs when there is a disorder in the parent child relationship characterized by failure of parents to endow the child with parental value.

Nevertheless, the original African Culture and in particular the Nigeria Society, places much premium on the child who is often regarded as a precious gift from the divine creator. Hence any act of child abuse is condemned and perceived as unethical and immoral. Child abuse in the pre-colonial Society of Nigeria was a very condemnable act. Child was perceived as the "Child of all", hence the Igbo name "Nwaorah". However, following the infiltration and incursion of civilization and Whiteman's culture the culture the Africans and indeed Nigerian was altered and tainted with western culture and civilization.

Statement of Problem

This problem of child abuse has generated a lot of concern in the society. This is because; it has an adverse effect on the development and upbringing of the child particularly within primary school age. It affects the child's physiological well being as well as his adjustments to his cultural and social environment. Many reports suggest that child abuse is in the form of neglect, abandonment, maltreatment, deprivation, starvation which was meted out on the child by parents or guardian as a corrective measure or disciplinary procedure to bring sanity has done more harm than good. Reports have also shown that abused children exhibit more aggressive behaviours; have a poor self concept and have difficulty in developing meaningful relationships in the school environment.

Child upbringing takes place within the society. The home and its make-up is an ideal setting for child up-bringing. The nature of the home environment where the child grows influences the child's general up-bringing. The child's earliest experiences are acquired in the home environment where his or her behavioural patterns are formed. Family relationship therefore plays an important role in the child's educational pursuit. Child abuse or child maltreatment is therefore a socio-cultural problem rather than a personal one. Studies have proved that if the abuse is severe a child or an adolescent may run away repeatedly from his or her home, without seeking appropriate help from the authority. Unfortunately, many begin to express the anger they have felt for so long, not at home, but in delinquent behaviour in school. Displaying negative traits who give such a child a feeling of belonging this is also means of discharging pent-up aggression.

Other studies that centre on delinquent children and violent youthful criminals confirm the strong link between the experience of being abused as a child and subsequent anti-social behaviour. This of course does not mean that most abused children later break the law, but it does suggest that those who do break the law have a history of abuse (Kemp-kempe (1978). In our social setting, there is need for data on child abuse and such data will help to educate the society on proper and correct ways of bringing up children. What then are the implications of child abuse on the education of the primary school children?

Purpose of the Study

This is purely a fundamental research for data accumulation. The aim is to find out the effect of child abuse on primary school pupils academic performance in Enugu North Local Government Area. Thereby enabling those connected with the upbringing of the child to be ware and adopt a proper method of treating and handling of the child. The objective of this study is to find the following:-

1. Forms of various types of abuse in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. Family background of the abused child.
3. Incidence of child abuse on male or female children.

Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes that the findings in this study would be useful in the following ways:-

1. It will create an awareness of the various forms of child abuse that is prevalent in Enugu North Local Government Area.
2. It will help to have a critical look at family background of the abused child to know how it has influenced the child's experience.
3. This study will also help to determine the extent of abuse on male and female children respectively. And it's effect on their academic performances in the primary school level.
4. It is also hoped that the government will realizes the implications of this social malady and formulate appropriate policies which will ultimately help to reduce the problem of child abuse and highlight the right of the child.

Scope of Study

This study is about child abuse, which is a social phenomenon that has pervaded the entire social structure and the fabric of Nigerian society and indeed the world. The scope of this study has been limited as much as possible to make it manageable and researchable. It is therefore limited to selected primary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. To be precise this study shall dwell extensively on five selected primary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. It shall examine in details the various manifestations of child abuse such as neglect abandonment, deprivation, starvation.

Research Questions

To adequately address the issue of child abuse in a scientific manner, the researcher deemed it expedient to formulate certain questions which are in consonance with and in fact highly related to the objectives of the study. The questions are stated as follows:

1. What are the various forms of child abuse in Enugu North Local Government Area, Enugu State?
2. Who is responsible for this various forms of child abuse in this local government?
3. What are the discernable features of families that are involved in child abuse?

II. Methodology

This explained the research procedure adopted for this study. The researcher has to reiterate here that the study attempts critically and incisive evaluation of the effects of child abuse on the education of the primary school child in Enugu North Local Government Area. This study centres around Enugu North Local Government Area. In particular the study focuses on Enugu North Local Government Area; the area is located at the heart of the state and in fact constitutes the aspect of the capital territory of Enugu State. Hence Enugu North Local government is the nerve centre and centre of socio-political and economic activities of the State. It has a relatively well developed communication network, thus any incidence of child abuse is promptly reported, to the Police or Welfare Clinics. This rationalizes the choice of this area.

Target Population

The target population of this study comprises all the victims and perpetrators of child abuse in Enugu North Local Government Area. Specifically spirited efforts will be made to examine all the cases of child abuse among primary school pupils in Enugu North. This includes parents and teachers of the children. This study shall dwell essentially on the incidence and effects of child abuse on pupils in primary schools located within the study area. Enugu North Local Government has over fifteen (15) primary schools with a population of well over twenty thousand pupils (20,000).

Sample

Sample is simply a representative number of the entire population. To reduce cost and make the work more manageable, the researcher concentrated the study on five (5) selected primary schools within Enugu North Local Government Area. The schools were selected by the use of stratified random sampling, a total of five schools were selected from all the zones that made up the Enugu North Local government Area. Therefore, the researcher shall examine those cases of child abuse that are recorded in Magistrate Court, Local Government offices with particular reference to Social welfare services, African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), and hospitals situated within the study area. Conscientious efforts were made to x-ray how child abuse affects the educational development of pupils in the selected schools.

Instruments and Their Reliability

Child abuse is a social phenomenon that takes various forms and dimensions. It is usually reported after the crime has been committed; therefore the nature of the study encouraged the researcher to rely principally on primary sources of data generation. Specifically the researcher shall concentrate mostly on recorded oral information that will be provided by the institutions and places mentioned in the sample. The materials/data will be collected from those who handled such cases directly. This we hope shall minimize the incidences of distortions, personal bias and value judgment and further more determine the authenticity and reliability of the materials.

III. Method of Data Collection

To adequately address the effect of child abuse among primary school pupils, which was conducted in Enugu North Local Government Area, the researcher hopes to interview the teachers and Head Mistresses/Head Masters and other relevant individuals within the school administrative framework. The researcher deliberately

avoided having direct dialogue with the affected pupils because the researcher wishes to avoid bias and value judgment which will likely affect pupils' responses because of their age.

The researcher intends to use both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include those mentioned above and hospital police stations and Magistrate Court, on the secondary sources the researcher will also look at and make use of Journals and memoirs, publications, newspaper reports, and magazines.

Method of Data Analysis

The records that will be collected from Magistrate Courts, Social Welfare Units, Police Stations– Juvenile Welfare Services, Local Government Offices, Hospitals all in Enugu North Local Government Area, will be presented in frequencies and percentages according to sources of information, these shall be used to analyze the research questions. Moreover, the researcher intends to use content analysis to ascertain the effects of child abuse on the education of the child. In particular the psychological development of the abused child shall be examined by adopting comparative analysis between the abused child and their un-abused counterparts. Content and comparative analysis will also enable the researcher to assess the learning experiences, (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) of the abused in Enugu North Local Government Area vis-a-via their counterpart who are fortunate.

Data Analysis and Presentation

In this chapter, the data collected will be tabulated and analyzed in relation to the research questions formulated for the computed frequencies and percentages of the target sample. Therefore the researcher shall present the data collected from documentary sources (case files) from social welfare office in Enugu North Local Government Area, Police Stations, Magistrate Courts and educational institutions located within our study area. The data collected will be grouped under the theme stated in the research questions.

Research Question I:

What are the various forms of child abuse and who is responsible for these child abuses in Enugu North Local Government Area?

This question was posed to determine among others, those who are actually responsible for the perennial child abuses as well as the forms and dimensions this is taking. Child abuse takes various forms it could come in form of physical assault, child battering, neglect, sexual abuse, child abandonment, etc. However, our discussions with our target popular on revealed a much more exhaustive forms of child abuse, there include hawking, sexual abuse, rape, beating/physical punishment lying both mentally and physically, intent pregnancy, forced marriage, child betrothal, child labour, excessive work, abortion, female circumcision, poor medical attention, starvation, tribal marks, in cast, house help, in fact the lot is not exhaustive.

Meanwhile, those responsible for various forms of child abuse shall be represented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Those Responsible For the Various Forms of Child Abuse:

Forms of Child Abuse	Perpetrators
Abandonment	Mentally sick mothers, unmarried mothers, father who have no means of livelihood.
Neglect	Parents, Siblings, Caretakers, Guardians.
Battery	Parents, Siblings, Guardians/Caretaker Peer Group.
Maltreatment	Parents, Guardians, Siblings, Caretakers.
Sexual Abuse	Caretakers, Siblings, Persons unknown to the child.
Forced Marriages	Parents, Guardians, Caretakers.
Starvation	Caretakers, Parents, Guardians.
Child Labour	Caretakers, Parents, Guardians.

The table did not exhaust the various forms of child abuse and these responsible for the remains act but it at least illuminates the principal actors whose actions and activities relates article 18 of the African Charter on human, and people's rights, a section of which stipulates that the states shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against woman and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.

As mentioned in table 1 above, the parents, Caretakers and guardians are principal culprits. They are mentioned in child abandonment, neglect, battering, maltreatment, forced marriage, starvation and child labour. Therefore any solution to these abuses should centre on these actors.

Research Question Ii:

What are the discernable features of families that are involved in child abuse?

The above question seeks to identify the salient and unique characteristics of the families that are immerse in child abuse. The researcher discovered that most of the abused children come from poor family backgrounds; hence poverty was identified as one of the basic features of families that are involved in child abuse. Other

features include increasing stress, abused parents, ignorance, of what constitutes abuse, prolonged sickness. This will be better represented in a frequency table below and the table below and the table will contain the family background of abused children.

Table 2: Family Background of Abused Children (500 x Pupils)

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Orphan	34	6.8%
Multiple births	52	10.4%
Motherless	16	3.2%
Mentally Sick	22	4.4%
Illegitimate Pregnancy	13	2.6%
Divorced Homes	79	15.8%
Prolonged Illness	41	8.2%
High Socio-Economic Status	27	5.4%
Poverty	216	43.2%

Table two (2) indicates the family background of the abused child. From this table it is noted that the most common and of course the one that has the highest occurrence is the prevalence of poverty, 216 (43.2%). Moreover, the least feature of families of abused children is the incidence of illegitimate pregnancy 13 (2.6%). Hence most of the pupils are from legitimate homes with 27 (5.4%) of them emerging from families with high socio-economic status. Again families with multiple births account for 52 (10.4%) of the pupils while pupils from mentally sick families were 22 (4.4%).

Research Question Iii:

To what extent is child abuse practices affected by gender difference? To determine the above question the researcher collected records from Park Lane Hospital, Social Welfare, and Unit within the study area, Police station (CPS) and Magistrate Court, This was vividly tabulated below:

Table 3: Incidence of Child Abuse on Male and Female Children

Places Visited	Boys	Girls	Total
Parklane Hospital	62	49	111
Social Welfare Unit	23	26	49
Police Station	34	33	67
Total	119	108	227

Table 3 indicates the incidence of child abuse on male and female children in Enugu north. From the table, out of the 227 case reported, 119 were boys while 108 were girls males are therefore more susceptible to child abuse. The researcher discovered these, as the various forms of child abuse which are prevalent and predominates within the study area: hawking, sexual abuse, neglect, beating battering, maltreatment, abortion, and incest. In addition, it was established that the magnitude/frequency of their various involvements differ as the greatest culprits are the parents, caretakers and guardians.

These were however established in response to the research question 1. The findings conform with the view of scholars such as Kempe and Kempe (1978); Ekpe (1986:212). These works well on the various forms of child abuse, while Kempe and Kempe (1978) and Gelles emphasizes on physical violence; Robert (1974), Goldstein (1979) and Kinaid (1979), found their binoculars on child neglect furthermore, Finkelhor David (1978), Kempe and Kempe (1978); Paul Henry Musson (1984:401) etc., all concentrate on sexual abuse. On the issue of child abandonment, Atkinson (1979): 308) correctly observed that some women have been known to abandon their born infants or even kill them. Meanwhile, these scholars identified these forms of child abuse as prevalent in almost all human organizations and continued that the consequences are usually great and grave on the child and the society in general.

Furthermore, on the issue of those responsible for child abuse, this findings validates the earlier writings of Monstreal (1975), Martin (1978), Observed that most perpetrators of this in human and dastard act are the parents, guardians and caretakers. However, Monstreal (1975) added that apart from parents, baby-sitters batter, older children batter smaller children, brothers and sisters batter their smaller sibling. It was observed, in response to research question II, that the commonest feature of the families of abused children is the prevalence of poverty. It was observed that poverty could make parents, guardians or caretakers to subject the child to stringent deprivations. Kempe and Kempe (1978) for example noted that neglect implies the feature of the properly in safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of the child.

Robert (1974) holds the view that the neglected child is usually deprived adequate food, shelter, love and communication with others, while he is simultaneously assaulted. Implicit in all these, is that these relative deprivations are caused and sustained by the prevalence of poverty. It was discovered here that the abused children perform below the non-abused. Therefore, non-abused non-neglected children perform academically

much better than their abused and neglected counterparts. Ekpe (1986) had earlier observed that abuse can have psychological as well as physical consequences on child. Psychological consequences include negative self-concept, low self-esteem, aggressive behaviours, difficulties in relating to peers and adults, impaired capacity to trust others and generalized unhappiness. Similarly, Onwuzurike (1986) maintained that many studies have shown that abused children themselves manifest various symptoms of behavioural deficiencies, including hostility, tension, insecurity, higher incidence of mental retardation and speech difficulties, stubbornness, unresponsiveness, negativism, depression etc. It is essentially because of the aforementioned that those scholars observed correctly that abused children perform below the non-abused. This equally validates the finding stated in III above.

General Implication Of The Study

The result of this study reveals that child abuse is on the increase and has some adverse effects and therefore, implies that the government, families, schools and society in general should help to curb its occurrence. If a child is denied the rights and privileges to grow up in a smooth and fertile environment he might end up being a burden or an outlaw to the society his peer group or family. A child who is found in this kind of situation will not contribute meaningfully to the society and will be morally bankrupt. In a situation like this, the child turns to be a rogue, drug addict and rapist committing all sorts of atrocities, which could be detrimental to his good living and for the welfare of the society in general. The government will not only run the risk of providing social amenities for such children but also spend huge amount in keeping them in remand homes, motherless babies' homes and social welfare centres. Also from study, it was observed that the incidence involving lack of proper parent care cum control is high due to non-challent attitude of some parent and caretakers who takes delight in the suffering of our given than to their pleasure.

IV. Conclusion

In our society today, abused children are exposed to arduous work, over burdened and exposed to dangers of various kinds, in the streets in the house and are sometimes denied adequate food, education and medical care. The worst, of all is that some of these children are denied their night sleep because they engage in hard labour till very late in the night. Because of this, these children tend to sleep in school even when classes are going on. At the end such children tend to fail their classes and are called names like block head, dunce, idiot, and so on even when they are not directly responsible for their own failures. Educators who teach children should know that some absence pictures should not be brought into the classroom because; they are likely to increase the immoral life of students. Indecent teaching on this should not find their ways into the school curriculum for they are likely to upset the students.

Another deduction could be that ignorance on the part of these abusers contributes a lot because many of the abusers do not know when the children are abused. In the course of the study, the researcher also noted with dismay that those responsible for the various forms of abuse are mentally sick mothers who are classified into two, mad mothers, who do not recognize the worth of the child, and mentally disturbed mothers who run momentary brain problems: they also abuse the child, also unmarried mothers, guardians, caretakers and so on. The implication of these to the schools, families, government, society are numerous and of great effect. There should be a good foundation laid for the child at home so that there could be proper transition from home to school the caretaker and siblings should not be hostile to the children kept in their care, so that they will not see them as enemies.

V. Recommendation

As a result of the aforementioned implications which arose from the investigations the researcher recommends as follows:-

1. In case of proper parental care parents, guardians as well as caretaker should be made to understand through improved counseling services, the proper way of nurturing and rearing children. Jobs must be provided for every parent so that proper care of children could be assured.
2. Strong monitoring units should be created by the government to take care of those children who are adopted by foster parents and to make sure that abandonment and neglect of babies is reduced. Government should evolve a more stringent measure which will be aimed at checking this ugly incidence in the society.
3. Voluntary organizations, women organizations, social clubs should join in the campaigns and crusade of total war against child abuse.
4. Enlightenment programmes through the Directorate or Social Welfare unit should be organized on rural basis to educate the rural masses on the ills surrounding child abuse and its adverse effect.
5. Recreational facilities for the youths must be provided in all local government areas and formation of youth clubs supervised by responsible adults should be encouraged. Library facilities outside the school premises

must be available to all children for continuing informal or a relaxed atmosphere. This measure if well implemented will no doubt, keep a great number of our children off the streets.

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