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INCIDENCE OF SEXUAL AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL ABUSE OF GIRL CHILD IN BIRNIN KEBBI AND JEGA TOWNS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Girl-child's sexual and psycho-social abuse is an important social problem worldwide which affects the physical, mental, psychological health of a girl-child, these incidences occurs in homes, families, schools, communities, and other places where girl-child should feel safe.

Purpose: This paper was designed to investigate the incidence of sexual and psycho-social abuse of girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns. Two hypotheses were raised to guide the study.

Methodology: Descriptive survey design was employed in the study. The population of the study comprised of the entire SSSII students from eight public girls secondary schools in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns. A sample of 300 students was drawn from the population of 3,017. Stratified random sampling was used to determine the sample size of each school in the quantitative approach. Simple random sampling was used to select the actual students that participated in the study. Girl Child Abuse Questionnaire (GCAQ) was adopted to collect the data. Experts in the relevant field validated the instrument, while the reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha at coefficient of 0.79.

Results/Findings: Based on the result of the study, significant difference existed in hypotheses 1-2. The study found that Birnin Kebbi town is more prone to abuse than Jega town.

Recommendations: It was recommended that parents should discipline children with love in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity so as to avoid the rate at which girls are involved in sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Keywords: Incidence, Sexual abuse, Psycho-social abuse, Girl-child

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The finding of the study will help teachers in many areas and create awareness for students to know what constitutes child abuse and that every child has certain rights that need not be violated. This knowledge will enable them to report to the appropriate authorities when such abuses occur. It creates awareness on how to solve the problem of abuse in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns. It also helps the government to know that the burden of abuse is shared by the child, parent and the society thereby taking appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of abuse and neglect.

INTRODUCTION

The term Girl child will be used to mean a young female (married or unmarried) between the ages of 11-18 years. The United Nation Conventions on the Right of Child (2016) defines child as anyone below the age of 18. Danjuma (2016) added that a girl-child is a female child that is within the age of 0 – 18 years of school age, married or unmarried and that is under the care of a husband, parent or a guardian. Osofia in Danjuma (2016) sees education of the girl-child to mean the skills and competences acquired by a girl-child to adapt her into society positively so as to achieve all inclusive development. Child abuse is a psychological or sociological term used to describe a variety of acts of treatment meted on a child which infringe on the child's physical, mental, emotional convenience and optimal development and survival (Noel, 2015). Gelles (2003) stated that the term child abuse caused a wide range of behaviour from actual physical assault by parents or other adult caretakers to neglect of child basic needs. Child abuse is also sometimes called maltreatment. The definition recognizes that such harm is no accident but something perpetrated on children by others, usually intentionally and that the actors inflicting this harm do not usually enjoy social approval (Okpoko, 2011). According to Warberton (2001) child abuse means treatment which causes actual harm, or places the child at risk of such harm, such as ill-treatment and failure to act to protect acts of commission (abuse) or omission (neglect).

Sexual abuse according to Kempe in Singh (2014) defined it as the involvement of dependent development, immature children and adolescents in

sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend and are unable to give informed consent to, or which violate the social taboos. Santa (2019) defined it as any sexual act between an adult and a child. Sexual abuse covers a range of activities or abusive behavior, certainly not just penetrative sex or direct physical contact. This includes Paedophilia (sexual attraction for pubertal children) inappropriate fondling, touching and verbal remarks. Included in this category are the actions such as: incest, molestation, rape and forced prostitution, oral/genital contact, or fondling of genital or breasts, sexual intercourse, or involvement in pornography. It often starts from exposure and self masturbation by the abuser and continues through actual body contact to some form of penetration (Minnett, 2000). Both men and women sexually abuse their children; these means the abusers are relatives or caretakers, such as: parent, baby sitter, or day care provider. It is usually carried out by the males in the family, often the father or step father, uncle, grandfather, or older brother; it may be by a family friend or a stranger (Okpoko, 2011).

Psycho-social abuse refers to both the parents and teachers tendency to deprive the child of his/her emotional rights as stated in the United Nation declaration of the rights of the child (Okpoko, 2011). This occurs when children are harmed by constant threats, verbal attacks, taunting and /or shouting, lack of affection, lack of understanding, intolerance, discrimination, isolation and minimal interaction with the child; in which case the child may be psychologically imbalanced or denial of basic social necessity of life such as: adequate clothing which translate to

provision of minimal or scarcity of dressing, leaving her almost naked or inability to cover her nakedness. It is any attitudes, behavior or failure to act on the part of the caregivers that interferes with a child's mental health or social development; failing to meet the needs of children in any area of their development i.e. neglecting children, will cause emotional damage. Many children and women suffer abuse or violence within the society (UNICEF, 2012). Mannett (2000) pointed out that child abuse may happen in any kind of home and any type of family but the abusers are often young and inexperienced parents or step parents or adults who were themselves abused as children or those under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Okpoko (2011) stated that the United Nations convention on the rights of child and the Organization of African Unity charter on the rights and responsibilities of the African child in which Nigeria is a signatory set out various declarations which every Nation State must adhere to for the protection and welfare of children. Some of these rights are: the rights to life/survival, education, health, live in a clean environment, relaxation and recreation. Others include the right to identity and communicate. Adding that, every child must be protected from indecent inhuman treatment, social exploitation and drug abuse.

The Child's Right Act 2003 incorporates all the rights and responsibilities of children, all laws relating to children into a single law and specifies the duties and obligations of government, parents and other authorities, organizations and bodies. The Child Right Act 2003 elaborately stated among others:

1. No Nigerian child shall be subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse or neglect
2. Betrothal and marriage of children are prohibited
3. Forced or exploitative labour; including employment of children as domestic help outside their own home or family environment

4. Buying, selling, hiring or otherwise dealing in children for the purpose of begging, hawking, prostitution or for unlawful and immoral purposes (UNICEF, 2011 p 1-2).

Danjuma (2016) stated that a developmental right is one of the basic rights of the child under the Shariah legal code. Kamaldeen (2011) observed that these rights positively develop children and prepare them for a responsible life; develop their personality, talent, mental and physical potentials. As reported in one of the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) it was narrated "*No father has given his child a better gift than good morals*". In another Hadith, it was narrated "*It is undoubtedly better for a man to teach his child morals than to give a measure of corn in charity*" (Danjuma, 2016). When any of these rights are violated/ denied the child has been abused. The child's enjoyment of these rights depends largely on the action taken by his or her society and parents. Therefore, the world conference on human rights in Vienna declaration and programme of actions adopted on 25th June 1993, urges all States, with the support of international cooperation to address the acute problem of children under difficult circumstances (Okpoko, 2011).

Research has shown that child abuse has very adverse effects on the victims and the effect can be on long-term or short-term basis (Diraditsile, 2018; Noel, 2015). In spite of that, child abuse is still being associated with shame, threat, fear, or taboo by many families and societies. Thus many of the cases are not reported to the mental health workers, social workers, or to the law enforcement agencies (Diraditsile, 2018). With the above attitude, the perpetrator continues to go unreported and the problem of child abuse continues to perpetuate itself. The effects of child abuse do not manifest on the life of the child alone but the society as well as the parents also share the burden of the problems.

Danjuma (2016) was of the opinion that the Ministry of Education should have clearly spelt out procedures

for dealing with cases of sexual harassment, abuse and school girl pregnancy in schools. The communities should be kept abreast with the enforced laws for the protection of the girl-child and her survival in the society. The above situation poses a problem for the mental health workers, social workers, and the law enforcement agencies: How can one still detect the cases of child sexual abuse going on in society? How can one predict such cases with maximum accuracy? Although there has been much in depth research on the rights of child, particularly in Nigeria, These are questions demanding study in the area of girl child sexual and psycho-social abuse in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sexual and psycho-social abuses are relative terms which indicate infringement on the rights to a healthy living among individuals. It is a subconscious of conscious incidence which is prevalent among communities and that affects all sexes. Girls of school age who are in or out of school are found to suffer sexual and psycho-social abuses which emanate from the social activities prevalent in their respective societies. Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns are places where economic activities are practiced in high percentage. These activities which include hawking, vending, house helps, nannies, apprenticeship to numerous businesses etc are found among young girls of school age. In the bid to survive, girls are faced with problems that expose them to sexual or psycho-social abuses.

Thus, these abuses range from lack of freedom to self actualization, personality development, gender security, lack of proper education, estranged moral attitudes and the failure in meeting with religious obligations to mention but a few. The main thrust of the study therefore is to investigate the incidence of sexual and psycho-social abuse of girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the incidence of sexual abuse of the girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.
2. To examine the incidence of psycho-social abuse of girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant mean difference in the incidence of sexual abuse of the girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.
2. There is no significant mean difference in the incidence of psycho-social abuse of the girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a survey research design. By using this approach, Osuala (2007) noted that the researcher could appropriately study representative samples, make inferences and generalization.

Population and sample

The target population for this study comprised of eight (8) Girls Secondary Schools in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns which consist of 3,017 Senior Secondary School II students. The use of this group of students is due to the fact that they are the category of students that are assumed to represent adolescent girls. Stratified random sampling was used to select the number of SSS II girls in the schools using 10% of the population based on the guidelines suggested by Osuala (2007). Simple random sampling was used to select the actual students that participated in the study. Thus, a total sample of 300 out of 3,017

Instrument for data collection

A five point Likert scale questionnaire was administered on the participants in order to generate data that provide viable responses to the research hypotheses. The instrument was divided into: Section A which sought the

background information of the respondents while Section B dealt with incidence of sexual abuse of girl child and Section C dealt with the incidence of psycho-social abuse of the girl-child.

Instrument for Data Collection

Girl Child Abuse Questionnaire (GCAQ) was adopted to collect the data. The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation to ascertain content and face validity while the reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.79 and the correlation value was considered appropriate for the instrument to be used for data collection.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The instrument was administered to the participants by the researchers. All

the 300 copies of the questionnaires were retrieved showing 100 percent return rate. The data generated from the field were collated and the mean score analysis for the 20 items was carried out to provide answer to the hypotheses raised in the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The statistical technique used in analyzing the data collected is t-test statistical tools. The t-test is used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant mean difference in the incidence of sexual abuse of the girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

Table 1: t-test between Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns' participants on their experience on incidence of sexual girl child abuse

Town	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-value	P
B/Kebbi	150	46.510	9.4492			
					298	3.100
Jega	150	45.290	10.0100			.299

Source: Field work, 2020

The results of the t-test statistics in table 1 revealed that, significant difference existed between Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns in the level of incidence of sexual girl child abuse. This implies that the mean incidence of sexual girl child abuse of 46.510 and 45.290 for Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns respectively showed that Birnin Kebbi town had

higher incidence of sexual girl child abuse than Jega town. The t-value was 3.100 which are greater than the p-value of .299 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant mean difference in the incidence of psycho-social abuse of the girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns.

Table 2: t- test between Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns' participants on their experiences on incidence of psycho-social girl child abuse

Town	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t-value	P
B/Kebbi	150	46.800	7.81251			
					298	2.130
Jega	150	45.500	8.20171			.029

Source: Field work, 2020

The above independent t-test statistics in table 2 showed significant difference between Birnin Kebbi and Jega town in the incidences of psycho-social girl child abuse. This implies that the mean incidence of psycho-social girl child abuse of 46.800 and 45.500 for Birnin Kebbi and Jega town respectively showed that Birnin Kebbi town had higher incidence of psycho-social girl child abuse than Jega town. The t-value was 2.130 which is greater than the p-value of .029 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed that significant difference existed between Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns in the level of incidence of sexual child abuse. It was revealed that Birnin Kebbi town had higher incidence of sexual girl child abuse than Jega town. This finding is in line with the findings of Adedoyin and Adegoke (2015) that opined sexual abuse such as girl prostitution to be common in urban areas. It is also supported by the studies of Fetugu, Adefowope and Ade (2003) which revealed that abuse can be found in both rural and urban setting.

This study found that there is significant difference between Birnin Kebbi and Jega town in the incidences psycho-social girl child abuse. It was revealed that Birnin Kebbi town had higher incidence of psycho-social girl child abuse than Jega town. This finding corroborates with UNICEF (2001) Who found that ill-spoken words by adults may cause more damages in their future life. It is also supported by the finding of Bot and Jat (2000). Teacher (2000) found that preference of male child over female child due to tradition and cultural practice leads the girl child to experience some problems such as humiliation, unhappy life style, low self esteem, poor mental development and suicide attempt. The outcome of all this may be that majority of these maid servants, whose masters only look at the benefit they drive from girl servants, have their emotional development being adversely affected.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on incidence of sexual and psycho-social abuse of girl child in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns. The study reviewed several literatures on child and Girl Child abuse sexually and psycho-socially in order to give insight on the study. The study involved 300 subjects, 150 selected students from Birnin Kebbi and 150 from Jega towns. The outcomes of the study concluded that there are incidences in magnitude of sexual girl child abuse in Birnin Kebbi and Jega towns. Birnin Kebbi town also had higher magnitude of psycho-social incidence of girl child abuse than Jega town. Significant relationship exists between the girl child abuse and its components of psycho-social consequences of sexual problems and misbehavior consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion of the study, it is recommended that parents should discipline children with love in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and avoid the rate at which girls are involved in sexual assault, sexual abuse and also improve in the way they handle girls at home. Teachers create awareness for students to know what constitutes child abuse and that every child has certain rights that need not be violated which enable them to report to the appropriate authorities when abused. Kebbi state government should take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of abuse and neglect.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authorship and Level of contributions

The first author (Muza) wrote and compiled the manuscript. The second author (Danjuma) contributed in the review of literature, data analysis and editing of the manuscript. All the authors participated in the administration of the instrument.

Disclaimer Statement

This study is not part of any theses submitted to a college, institutes or university for award of any certificate or degree. It is the authors' own work.

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