



## Sociological Survey of Child Abuse in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

Sociological survey of child Abuse in Nigeria, is an investigative process to find out, the widespread of the menace across the country. In this paper which child Abuse is the focus, will look at the theme objectively, being the process where a Nigerian child is being misused. The appropriate meaning of the term or concept "child Abuse" is a situation where a Nigerian child is molested physically, ie through hard domestic work, beating, bullying or sexually exploited. Other child Abuse including, street hawking, hard labour, and trafficking that is moving Nigerian child across boarders to unknown countries

**Keywords:** Child Abuse, Trafficking, Street Hawking, Sociological Survey, Hard Labour and Exploitation

### **Introduction**

Sociology is one of the most interesting social sciences that revolves around every endeavour of human and society. It explains scientifically the roles of individuals in the society and the society itself.

Giddens, A. (2005) in his opinion defines Sociology:

Sociology is the study of human social life, groups, and society. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, as its subject matter is our own behaviour as human beings. The scope of sociological study is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of passing encounters between individuals in the street to investigations of global social processes.

In another definition of Sociology, Schaefer, R.T. (2007) said thus:

Sociology is a very scientific study of social behaviour and social groups. It focuses on social relationships, how the groups of people are affected by these kinds of factors, and how society itself might be altered by them.

A Nigerian sociologist of Education, in his view, Sule, M.I. (2010) pointed out in what he defined sociology: "Basically, Sociology is the scientific study of human interactions found in society. In a way, it's the most social of the social sciences disciplines because it deals with the behaviour of people in groups."

### **Sociological Survey An Overview**

A sociological survey on child abuse examines the prevalence, causes, and consequences of child maltreatment (also known as child abuse) within a societal context.

It explores how social factors like poverty, lack of social support, and cultural norms contribute to the abuse, as well as the impact of abuse on individuals and communities.

### Key aspects of sociological survey on child abuse

- **Social Norms:** In every society, especially in Nigeria (the focus of this paper), sociological surveys will explore attitudes, culture, and beliefs about individual children, as well as parental roles, and how prompt reporting of abuse to the authorities can help curb child abuse.
- **Consequences:** Surveys will also investigate the history of the abuse—whether short or long-term—and the consequences for the parties involved in the abuse, as well as punishments administered to prevent future occurrences.
- **Reporting:** Sociological surveys reveal that parents of abused children are often reluctant to report the matter to the police, to hide the identity of the abused children in Nigeria due to fear of stigmatization. This, along with lack of reporting to appropriate authorities, allows abusers to go unpunished and continue freely in society.
- **Protective Factors:** Sociological surveys also discovered and identified social and environmental factors as key agents expected to protect children from abuse. Unfortunately, these same factors often promote child abuse to some extent in Nigeria.
- **Risk Factors:** Sociological surveys found that social and environmental factors are the two most dominant risk factors in child abuse in Nigeria. Such risk factors are always on the increase and likely to lead to child abuse. For example, poverty and lack of social support can expose children to abuse in Nigeria.

### Prevalence of Child Abuse in Nigeria

Sociological surveys help us to know the level of widespread child abuse in Nigeria, as well as child neglect. It also highlights other different forms of child abuse like sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, especially in domestic housemaids, etc.

A Nigerian child is always in different crisis of life, ranging from sexual migration, a sad situation which by and adult of say 40 years and above having sex with underage girl of say 5-6 years thereby spoiling the future of such some are victims of trans boarder trafficking i.e. when young Nigeria girls are lured into prostitution by moving them abroad on the presence that, they will be domestic workers whereby they will be well paid.

In Nigeria today, child in crisis is genderless, because, take rape as a serious crisis against Nigerian child, is not limited to female alone, boy child are being raped too, this crisis has gone far and wide in the country. There are reactance where women's rights advancement and protection alternative [WRAPA] is focusing on not protecting the rights of female child from abuse that put them in crisis but boy child too, e.g. in Kano, [WRAPA] followed a case of a boy [10yrs] that was lured and raped by a 60 years old man, till there was just for the boy.

**C**hild abuse, is a crisis situation to a child in Nigeria society, a problem that a child encountered right from birth. Nigerian child is a victim of so many abuses, ranging from malnutrition and poor socio-economic background of the child's parents, which contributed a lot in denying the child from enjoying certain rights and privileges. The abuse is of great concern to both the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations, as neighboring towns and cities within Nigeria where child abuse crisis is happening almost everywhere in the world. In some cases, some of the causes of child abuse is religious, some are social, while some are for economic reasons. Nonetheless, abuse is abuse and a crisis to Nigerian child whenever and where ever it happens.

**C**hild abuse crisis in Nigeria society covers a very wide range of different behavior to a child, e.g. direct assault by the parents, molestation by house masters to house maids; or caretakers to tenants etc. all these happening are on daily basis and real in Nigeria society. The concept of child abuse crisis therefore, is not limited but in particular and peculiar to some tribes, religious bodies, organization and groups. Child where it is practical than others place in Nigeria, despite the fact that Nigeria is rich in socio-economic or socio-cultural among African countries. Yet Nigeria child is a victim of abuse crisis, child is an crisis, he/she become disturbed and this can, affect the child's mental health and socialization in the society.

### **Concept of Child Abuse**

**A**damu, (2005) look at the concept of child abuse thus: "child abuse is any act that endangers the physical, mental, and emotional capabilities of a child that makes him or unable to fully participate in the developmental aspect of the society". The same definition of the concept, quoting Falashade, (1989) as in Adamu, (2005) "abuse of a child also include, lack of care or exploitation, which is not healthy, to the holistic development of a human being (Child)".

**B**usari, (2007) states child abuse is not new, it I as old as human history. Abuse and neglect may be conditioned by the people's culture, religion, age, sex, educational level and experiences with child bearing and rearing". In the studies of abused children, a number of symptoms in the children are related to the quality of parenting that they experienced whether in biological, adoptive or foster homes. The severity of emotional symptoms in the children are related to child's perception of the importance of his/her home. Child abuse in some cases started right from the time of conception to birth when the mother suffered a lot in the course of bearing the child, the mother may be bored and by the time that the child finally arrive, the aby will suffer neglect from the mother and that marks the beginning of child abuse.

**I**n some cases as well, some parents take cover by whatever they worship or believe in to abuse their children, that is, by sending the child away to stay with the gent of their worship.

## Types of Child Abuse in Nigeria

There are so many factors that promote child abuse in Nigeria. These factors are therefore, the direct causes of child abuse in Nigeria society they are many and in different forms especially in our society today which include:

- a. **Street trading/hawking:** Street trading or hawking is a situation whereby you see a Nigerian child trading or hawking is streets or market places and along major roundabouts in towns and cities or junctions. These children are normally seen carrying packed sachet water, known as pure water for sell, running after passengers. Some carry and sell bread, groundnuts, etc. Which as a result of these; children are sexually abuse by male counterparts and pretense buyers as a result, end up in wanted pregnancies and resulting to raving motherless babies in Nigerian society. In some cases, these children are being knocked down and sometimes killed by motorists or oncoming vehicles.
- b. **Off-schooling:** Off-schooling has meaning, the denial of educational opportunity, the importance of education which is training the young ones to become useful in the society as one of the objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE), instead, those unfortunately children are seen as house-maids/boys, load carriers, around motor parks and market places some are such as street beggars especially in Northern part of the country, because they were not given the chance or opportunity to go to school for formal education is one of the worst child abuse currently in practice in African countries in the world. Some started schooling but drop out, due to poor socio-economic background of the parents, cannot pay school needs of the child, they contributed greatly to become out of school children. Nigeria has the highest out school children in West Africa, and almost all states in Northern Nigeria have greater number of out of school children in Nigeria.
- c. **Child Trafficking:** Child trafficking is another form of child abuse currently in practice would over is a great concern to international communities and other child care agencies. Intact, child trafficking is another slavery indirectly and painful situation that a child found himself or herself in, that is, a situation which involve moving of children across the boarder, with false hope of giving them, lucrative jobs overseas. Child trafficking is of course, relocating of children from their place of origin to a new place entirely different from his or her country, e.g. Europe and some African countries. The agents of child trafficking also have people they are working for permanently, residents in other countries of the world. On successful carrying the child across, these children are introduced to some unhealthy job such as prostitution, house maids, cleaners, etc. and the Oga-madam will collect the pay in respect of these child. Most of the victims of child trafficking in Nigeria are ladies. Despite all media coverage, awareness campaigns and condemnation of child abuse, child trafficking is still on the increase. Trafficked children are always in crisis of mental health psychological and physical a strange land, where they will be stranded and subject themselves to all forms of physical and psychological abuse in a strange land.

In 1999, the wife of former Vice President of Nigeria, Haj. Amina Titi Abubakar came up with (WOTCLEF) Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation, that aimed at serious attempts to stop human trafficking and child labour in Nigeria, to avoid putting Nigerian child in crisis, with the following focus:

- Conducting research on how best way to address human trafficking in Nigeria.
- Rendering necessary help to victims
- Developing way on how to deal with human trafficking in Nigeria.
- Setting up rehabilitation/solution centres to take care of the victims

WOTCLEF therefore under Her Excellency Haj. Amina Titi Abubakar become a humanitarian organization, dedicated to the eradication of child trafficking, child labour, abuse of rights of a Nigerian child, women and HIV/AIDS. In 2003, Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) established “National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related matters” (NAPTIP) which complement the effort of WOTCLEF and set prohibition law 2003.

**Internal Labour Organization I.L.O convention 182, (1999) declares that:**

Trafficking of Girls and boys under 18 years of age is a practice similar to slavery and as such, a worst form of child labour.

- d. **Child Labour:** Child labour is a situation whereby a child is exposed to hard work, which as a result, exposed the child to a danger. Child labour in Nigeria is common, especially when a child is forced to carry load, which are more than his/her capacity, made to work for hours without resting which is dangerous to his/her health. In most case, the ages of these children are between 6-7 years and they are seen carrying heavy load of goods on their heads moving for hours. This is unhealthy and the environments they are moving also subject them to danger.
- e. **Early Marriage:** This is a controversial observation, because Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Some groups are culturally alright with their children getting married early while in some quarters, religious too, they try to guide against future disappointment from their children, i.e. when they grow and start having affairs which may result into unwanted pregnancies. Religious they condemn and unacceptable to their religious belief, for this form the basis in rational for early marriage.

To a concerned child care giver and those that advocate child's right, early marriage is an act of child abuse especially with the danger to their health, the rampant cases of vesico-vagina fistula (VVF) as a result of early marriage and the disease is seriously affecting young girls who got impregnated at the age they are not yet ripe enough for child deliveries or having babies. The disease of VVF which is a result of complication or difficulty during child birth can be seen as crisis when the lady involved is passing urine or faces. When this is becoming constant she is abandoned by husband socially demoralized, and in crisis.

**f. Child Molestation or Rape:** Children are in crisis as a result of rampant ongoing child's molestation or rape both boys and girls ranging from 0-7 are victims of rape in Nigeria, security, agents are not helping to curb out the menace in most cases, police are not prosecuting the offenders slow administration of justice as well as selective justice thereby promoting impunity continue to make it worst.

International Federation of Women Lawyers in Nigeria (FIDA) are on the move to assist victims of rape to get justice, that exactly what women right advancement and protection alternative (WRAPA) are doing to curb out the menace, but the security agent and judiciary are the problem especially when high class is involved.

**g. Psychological Intimidation:** In some cases, the rich and wealthy individuals in Nigerian society, will hire house maids to do some domestic work in their houses. These maids stay in the same house with the children of these rich people and naturally, since they are housemaids, they will not receive equal treatments. The maids are cub-servient while the other children look superior over the maids. Preferential treatment will always abuse the maids and put them in crisis more by eating the left over food of the children, wash for them, therefore there is very tendency for the maids to be abused sexually by the children of the house owners, putting such housemaids to psychological crisis.

Their mode of dressing is not the same as well as freedom in the house. Psychological, therefore, children of the house owners are masters over the maids, even if the house maids are older than the children of the house owners. This is also an abuse, which put such a child in crisis.

**h. Role of Universal Basic Education in Eradicating Child Abuse Crisis:** Universal Basic Education (UBE) is part of Education for all (EFA) by the UNESCO. It started in Nigeria, during the tenure of Gen Olusegun Obasanjo then Military Head of State, 1976 and was coined Universal Primary Education (UPE). Unfortunately, along the line, the programme failed despite huge money spent after twenty (20) years precisely (1999) Obasanjo who left government in 1979, came on board again as a civilian president and started similar programme Universal Basic Education, which was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999, at Sokoto. The Universal Basic Education has the following objectives as in alilonu 2006:81.

- Developing the entire Nigerian children and quality education
- Provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age going 0-5.
- Reducing drastically the case of school drop outs or out of school child formal school system through improved Basic education for all.
- Caring for learning needs of young Nigerian's who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their school through good means of promoting basic education.
- Ensuring appropriate acquisition of basic education at all levels and qualitative and compulsory too.

Having seen the objectives of the Universal Basic Education has taken care of the role of UBE could play to reform and rehabilitation the abused children in Nigeria society. One of the causes of child abuse, which is pitiful and painful is the off-schooling or denial of educational opportunities and one of the objectives of Universal Basic Education is to provide a Nigerian child with quality and free education at the basic level.

i. **Effect of Child Abuse and the Future:** The effect of child abuse is crisis in any society, the future of the abused children is to be self-defeating and hopelessness to the society, the effect is seen mostly on public security, and peace of the society, most of the problems in Nigeria today can be traced to the effect of the activities of such children.

Another effect of the child abuse, is that, the future of these children is blocked, the potentials in them is killed, these children could be future Nigeria scientist, or technologist at this time of science and technology advancement, but were killed at the early years, therefore the effect and future of these children in Nigeria is that potential future scientist and technologist are killed and blocked, a serious child crisis. Nigerian need the contribution of these children, they are future hopes of the country. They could come up with science and technology new invention and innovation that will put Nigeria first in the world if not for the crisis these children are in as a result of child abuse, trafficking and labour.

Most of the children involved in social vices like sara-suka ecomoc boys, area boys, 'yan daba, kalare boys etc. are as a result of past neglect.

The current problems of insurgency and banditry in Nigeria, are some of these abuse and neglected children who couldn't go to school and has nothing doing for life, were recruited as bandits and thugs currently disturbing peace of the society and putting everybody into the crisis of insecurity. North-East, north-west and north central Nigeria is badly witnessing the activities of bandits resulting from those off schooling, out of school children who are recruited to kill, kidnap and as arsonist.

j. **How to Eradicate Child Abuse in Crisis in Nigeria; the way forward:** To stop abuse crisis in Nigeria society, one of the ways forward is to put an end to such ugly situation that a child found himself or herself in, by addressing the issue that has already reached the crisis level in Nigeria.

The UNESCO in 1959 declared that the right of a child be implemented and government should see it as duty to help stop this practice. Other concern citizens and stakeholder in child care always contributed in carrying out the campaigns to reach out to people, especially areas where such practices are still on. Nigeria is still part of all the international organization, kicking against these, all efforts must be intensified to ensure successful eradication of any form of child abuse. Activities of national agency for prohibition of trafficking in persons and related offences NAPTIP must be strengthened and allow law to deal with offenders, this will reduce the menace to great extent.

There is need for more awareness on the right of Nigeria child how to protect him/her. Media houses, television stations, radio stations and other reach out medium should be used so that parents should know, and children also be aware of their full rights to avoid future abuses. Already some organization like war against women trafficking and child labour eradication foundation are doing well to protect Nigeria child.

**C**ultural and religious organization should be play active roles in condemning the acts. The in human aspect of child abuse and maltreatment is preached out during religious gatherings as well as cultural festivals or meetings.

**T**he Nigerian government should promote the child's right act and a Nigerian child be given the right to enjoy quality education, free from all form of abuses, in and outside the country, a child must have equal right with all other children, irrespective of the socio-economic status of their parents. Therefore, a Nigeria child must be protected by the right from all forms of abuses.

Non-governmental organization should be not be left out they are also stakeholders in promoting and protecting the right of a child, therefore, NGOs be commended and call upon for more efforts to protect and preserve the right of a Nigeria child from unnecessary. This helps in a long way to protect the right of a child through information, awareness campaign and widespread of information, promoting the right of a child condemning child abuses. Already, women rights of women and children in Nigeria.

### **Challenges**

- There is always selective justice in punishing perpetrators child abuse in Nigeria
- Administration of justice toward offender in child abuse in poor.
- No law that punishes parents neglecting children
- No rehabilitation centres for victims of child abuse for organization to fight child abuse encourage.

### **Solution**

- Curbing out the menace will only be successful if government will step in and allow justice be done to whosoever is involved in child abuse, selective justice must be discourage as a way forward to child crisis.
- Administration of justice towards offenders must be strict, government must ensure justice to the victims of the crisis.
- To eradicate child neglect, another form of abuse parents involved must be punished for others to see and reconcile with their children.
- Government and NGOs should see to the establishment different rehabilitation centres for the victims of child abuse, this will go a long way to remove the trauma in them, and become normal citizen.
- All and sundry should support by campaign against child abuse which is being champion by different NGOs, like, WRAPA, WOTCLEF and NAPTIP, awerness and several punishments be advocated.

## Conclusion/Suggestions

Government's role as well as other stakeholders in promoting the right of a child, as well as parents, guardians can see to the final, wiping away of the problems of child abuse, which is ready a serious problem in tarnishing the image of Nigerians overseas. Parents should show love to any child. Rich and wealthy people in the society should assist to educate the child from poor parental background or low socio-economic background.

- There is need to be proactive on the side of government and all citizen in security need of Nigeria, lack of adequate security is a big challenge in any society.
- Entrepreneurship/skill acquisition centres must be put in place to reduce youth involvement in crime; this will improve them and be useful Nigerians.
- Creating more employment opportunities will curb out the menace of child abuse and youth involvement in banditry.

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