

Associated Factors with Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse among Ogun State Residents South-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

A fundamental right to life is the shielding of children from all sorts of violence. The most fundamental rights of children and adolescents are violated by child abuse. The examination of the CSA problem is difficult and complex. Women and children are the most vulnerable people in Africa when it comes to sexual abuse. This study assessed the associated factors (knowledge, attitude, and parent-child communication) with prevention of child sexual abuse among Ogun State residents in South-West, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted while 4260 respondents participated in this study. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the select sample size from the population of the study. The information collected from the respondents were sorted, coded, and analysed. Descriptive statistics of frequency distribution mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the data and provide answers to the research questions. This study revealed that parents' knowledge, attitudes and communication practices are very key to the prevention of child sexual abuse. It is concluded that a significant education in the community's awareness levels would help identify activities and tactics to curb CSA and contributing to a positive vision for a future where societal norms could shift toward decreased acceptance of CSA.

Keywords: *Attitude, Child Sexual Abuse, Knowledge, Parent-Child Communication*

INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse is a widespread issue that does not only affect a certain demographic or age range. Cases of child sexual abuse and molestation are frequently reported in the media. It appears that more youngsters are being subjected to this upsetting and violent behavior. A condition known as child sexual abuse is one in which a person under the age of 18 is subjected to mental, physical, financial, and sexual maltreatment. It is a widespread issue around the world. Child sexual abuse has severe physical and psychosocial repercussions that negatively impact a child's health, general well-being, and personality (Malhotra & Srivastava, 2016; Ayodele, Aderanti & Olanipekun, 2015). Between the developmental stages of infancy and puberty, children are considered to be less mature and to have fewer rights than adults. Legally, they must be in the custody of their parents or another trustworthy caretaker since they are deemed incapable of making important decisions. Because they are being deprived of their innocence, the carefree stage of life filled with love, a new world to discover, and the delight of mastery of oneself and the environment, the time of childhood for many youngsters is turning into a dream.

Christensen (2017) states that child sexual abuse (CSA) encompasses a wide range of sexual behaviors, including and extending beyond oral sex, touching the breasts or genitalia, masturbation, exhibitionism (exposing oneself), voyeurism (spying/watching), exposing a child to or involving a child in pornography, and encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity. People who are familiar with the youngster, his or her family, and their relationships are frequently the ones who commit this crime (Ayodele, 2009). For instance, a 2015 research by the US Department of Justice found that 93 percent of victims are aware of their abusers, with 34 percent of victims experiencing abuse at the hands of family members and 59 percent by someone the family considers to be close and trustworthy. Most of the time, the perpetrators groom the parents into giving them their trust while also putting an end to the child's resistance, giving them the chance to coerce their victims into consenting to sexual actions and concealment (Ayodele, 2011).

Depending on the context and criteria, the prevalence of CSA varies from 2 and 62% for girls and 3 and 16% for boys globally (United Nations Children Fund, 2019). According to estimates from Wihbey (2011) and Behere & Mulmule (2014), 34.4% of the population lives in Africa. According to UNICEF (2019), before the age of 18, six out of ten Nigerian children will have encountered some type of abuse, whether it was emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. In addition, a Nigerian investigation revealed that young girls are typically the victims (David et al., 2018; Iro-Idoro, Aluko & Ayodele, 2013). Due to underreporting, it is claimed that the data for CSA among men are somewhat erroneous (Wihbey, 2011; Behere, et al., 2014).

In studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, similar prevalence rates exist there as well (Yahaya, Soares, Ponce De Leon, & Macassa, 2012). Although the exact cost of CSA in Nigeria is unknown, estimates by Odu, Falana, and Olotu (2014) suggest that it ranges from 5% to 38% depending on location. Okunade (1998) found 100 incidences of sexual assault across national dailies, with victims' ages ranging from 2 to 16. There were 5 instances of incest, two of which resulted in the pregnancy of a daughter and two stepdaughters in Ilorin. Children in primary schools (6–12 years old) and adolescent girls (13–19 years old) in Benin City were major CSA victims, according to Olusanya (1986), with 48.2% of recorded instances over a three-year period occurring in children under the age of 13. Consequently, it is still challenging to identify the full scope of the issue. This can be related to the prevalent silence around the problem of child sexual abuse, particularly in African cultures where public discussion of sexual issues is taboo. The real impact of CSA is often concealed by victims' refusal to report abuse, particularly the very young, out of fear of retaliation from the abuser or of being held accountable. Shame and cultural taboos also contribute to this. Non-disclosure of abuse is also influenced by the unsatisfactory prosecution of criminals in reported situations (UNICEF 2014, 2016).

Apart from the psychological effects of CSA on the child, such as fear, anger, guilt, and confusion, the long-term effects on the child's development (such as emotional regulation, cognitive style, coping mechanism, etc.) are significant, particularly for the family, friends, and society (Akindele-Oscar & Ayodele, 2004). According to studies, sexual abuse as a child increases the likelihood that long-term psychological and social adjustment issues may develop. These issues may have an impact on married life and parenthood as they may be carried over into adulthood. It was reported report that 81% of patients hospitalized to psychiatric hospitals were CSA victims as children (Pinterest, 2018). Hence, the need for immediate and concentrated action with regard to the child's sexual health.

Furthermore, in order to achieve this, key players like parents are not only important but crucial in launching and maintaining protective and preventive measures against children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. Given their cultural and religious restrictions, parents who experience child sexual assault seem to address it very little. This is a particular cause for concern. Because of the concern that it would encourage kids to engage in sexual activity, child sexual abuse is considered taboo in some circles, and sex education is only lightly discussed (Ayodele, Aderanti & Olanipekun, 2015).

Parental involvement in CSA prevention initiatives has long been advocated (Oyekola, & Agunbiade, 2018). However, some studies have shown that parents lack fundamental knowledge about the nature of child sexual abuse and some are reluctant to discuss sex education due to cultural and religious restrictions; as a result, many people prefer that such topics be taught in schools (AlRahman et al., 2018; Chen, 2005; Guo, Jingqi, Buyi, Yingying, Yi & Yichen, 2019). CSA prevention programs should be taught at homes, child care centers, and schools, according to surveys, which indicate that the majority of parents support the idea. Mlekwa et al. (2016) noted that although parents' knowledge and attitudes on CSA were generally positive, their practices for preventing CSA were lacking in several areas. More emphasis needs to be paid to preventive programs specifically targeted at parents due to growing worry over the rising rise of CSA. Although the extent and success of parent-focused initiatives are unknown, it will be challenging to eradicate CSA unless parents are engaged in understanding their responsibilities and functions in supporting the kid in setting boundaries and integrating the child into society.

Despite various interventional programs and resources devoted to CSA prevention, the alarming rate of CSA is still rising (Darkness to Light, 2013). This is despite the fact that research shows that CSA can be prevented by raising awareness. However, studies have shown that parents must be involved in educational programs designed to give kids the sustaining protective and preventive skills they need. Parents should also be warned against starting practices that expose kids to CSA (such as hawking and sending them out at night, to name a few).

However, Ogun State Nigeria is one of the implicated states in Nigeria with a significant prevalence of CSA as seen by regular mentions in national newspapers, and measures to avoid it appear to be insufficient as numerous cases were noted during the lockdown as a result of Covid-19 in the year 2020. Additionally, a study conducted in Ogun State urges the urgent creation of advocacy messages against CSA (Omole et al. (2020). As a result, it is necessary to evaluate the associated factors (knowledge, attitude, and parent-child communication) with prevention of child sexual abuse among Ogun State residents in South-West, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of knowledge of residents in Ogun State to the prevention of child sexual abuse?
2. What is the attitude of residents in Ogun State to the prevention of child sexual abuse?
3. What are the communication practices of residents in Ogun State to the prevention of child sexual abuse?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive design in order to assess the knowledge, attitudes and communication practices of residents in Ogun State to the prevention of child sexual abuse in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was conducted between February and April 2023 in the three senatorial districts of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Population: The accessible population in this study included all the public/civil servants, traders, and parents. This includes male and female, educated and illiterates, as well as those from high/average socio-economic class and low socio-economic class. The inclusion criteria were those who were willing to participate in the study, while those who were not willing to participate in the study were excluded.

Sampling Size and Technique: The sample size for this study was determined by applying the Cochran (1997) formula as a standard method of randomization and identify the limits of errors considered as the most essential items in the survey. Sampling was done through multistage stratified random sampling technique. A sample size of 4260 was calculated. The State was stratified into four major political divisions namely: Remo, Ijebu, Yewa and Egba. There are twenty Local Government Areas in the four Political Divisions in Ogun State. Secondly, simple random sampling was adopted to pick two Local Government Areas from each of the Political Divisions. The simple random sampling was adopted to give all the LGAs in the political divisions equal chance of being selected. In total, eight Local Government Areas represented the interest of the four Political Divisions. See the Table 1 for detail:

Table 1: Political Divisions and their Local Government Areas

S/N	Educational Divisions	Local Government	Headquarter	Selected LG
1	Remo Political Divisions	Odogbolu	Odogbolu	
2		Ikenne	Ikenne	✓
3		Sagamu	Sagamu	✓
4		Remo North	Isara	
5	Ijebu Political Divisions	Ogun Waterside	Abigi	
6		Ijebu East	Ogbere	✓
7		Ijebu North East	Atan	
8		Ijebu North	Ijebu-Igbo	✓
9		Ijebu Ode	Ijebu-Ode	
10	Yewa Political Divisions	Ado-odo ota	Ota	✓
11		Ipokia	Ipokia	
12		Yewa South	Ilaro	
13		Yewa North	Ayetoro	✓
14		Imeko Afon	Imeko	
15	Egba Political Divisions	Odeda	Odeda	
16		Abeokuta North	Akomoje	
17		Abeokuta South	Ake	✓
18		Ewekoro	Itori	
19		Obafemi/owode	Owode	✓
20			Ifo	Ifo

Source: Field Report 2023

The participants were basically parents with different professional background. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study. The sample includes a total of 4260 participants.

Measures: The name of the tool is “Associated Factors with Prevention Of Child Sexual Abuse Questionnaire.” It was a 37-item questionnaire which was self-developed by the researchers. The scale reflects the participants’ knowledge (10 items), attitude (10 items) and communication practices (7 items) to the prevention of child sexual abuse (10 items). The items were with five options ranging from ‘not likely at all’ to ‘very likely’. It was found that the total item correlations of the scale changed between .76 and .81. The inner consistency coefficient of the scale is .79. The consistency coefficient attained by the test-retest technique is .77.

Ethical considerations

For ethical considerations, the principle of voluntary participation which requires that people must not be compelled or coerced into participating in research was employed by explaining the purpose of the study to each individual participant. Also, the participants agreed to the request of the researchers to record the sessions. Thereafter, the participants signed a consent form, and those who are illiterates thumb printed. The participants were assured of confidentiality.

Data Analysis: Data were edited, cleaned, coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 software program. Data were summarised by means of descriptive statistics including the frequency table. Also, research questions were tested at 0.05 alpha level using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) and Analysis of Variance statistical tool.

RESULTS

Table 2: The level of knowledge of residents in Ogun State on the prevention of child sexual abuse

Category	Criteria	Frequency	%	Remark
41-50	Very High	562	13.2	Respondents with very high level of knowledge
31-40	High	1021	24.0	Respondents with high level of knowledge
21-30	Moderate	1315	30.9	Respondents with moderate level of knowledge
11-20	Low	448	10.5	Respondents with low level of knowledge
1-10	Very Low	914	21.4	Respondents with very low level of knowledge
N = 4260; Mean = 28.3 (56.6%); SD = 8.11				

The result presents the level of knowledge of residents in Ogun State on the prevention of child sexual abuse. Their level of knowledge on child sexual abuse prevention was categorized as very high (41-50), high (31-40), moderate (21-30), low (11-20), and very low (1-10). Majority 1315 (30.9%) of the respondents had moderate knowledge of child sexual abuse prevention, 1021 (24%) of the respondents had high knowledge level, 914 (21.4%) had very low knowledge level, 562 (13.2%) of the respondents had high knowledge level and the remaining 448 (10.5%) had low knowledge level of child sexual abuse prevention. The overall weighted mean is 28.3 (56.6%). Therefore, it could be said that the knowledge level of child sexual abuse prevention is good.

Table 3: Descriptive results of the attitude of parents towards prevention of child sexual abuse

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage
Parents' attitude	4260	19.00	47.00	31.91	7.906	63.82

Table 3 reveals the attitude of parents about prevention of child sexual abuse. The parents had a mean score of 31.91 which is equivalent to 63.8%, thus it could be said that the attitude of parents about prevention of child sexual abuse is good. Table 4 below further revealed the baseline attitude of parents about prevention of child sexual abuse into three (3) different domains.

Table 4: Descriptive data showing the baseline attitude of parents about prevention of child sexual abuse

Category	Criteria	Frequency	%	Remark
35-50	Very good	2071	48.6	Number of respondents with very good attitude towards prevention of child sexual abuse.
18-34	Fairly good	2189	51.4	Number of respondents with fairly good attitude towards prevention of child sexual abuse.
1- 17	Bad Attitude	-		Number of respondents with bad attitude towards prevention of child sexual abuse.

Table 4 above presents the baseline attitude of parents about prevention of child sexual abuse into three (3) different domains. The domain was categorized as bad attitude (1-17), moderately or fairly good attitude (18-34) and very good attitude (35-50). Two thousand one hundred and eighty-nine (51.4%) of the respondents have moderately/fairly good and 2071 (48.6%) have very good attitude. It could be said that the parents have good attitude towards prevention of child sexual abuse.

Table 5: Information on parents communication practices on prevention of child sexual abuse

N = 4260	Correct Response (%)	Rank
Discussing with children about their private parts (parts covered by swimsuit/bathing suit) that they should not be touched by others	3358 (78.8)	2nd
Instructing the children to say "NO" when someone wants to see or touch their private parts	4260 (100.0)	1st
Informing children that if sexual abuse happens, parents or other trusted adults should be informed immediately	2318 (54.4)	5th
Instructing children not to go with others, even familiar grown-ups, unless they have parental permission	2372 (55.7)	4th
Instructing children not to accept gifts from strangers, unless they have parental permission	3352 (78.7)	3rd
Encouraging children to talk with parents about sexual issues	1997 (46.9)	6th
Providing children with books or audiovisual products about CSA prevention	589 (13.8)	7th

The outcome of this study revealed that "Instructing children to say 'NO' when someone wants to see or touch their private parts" is the most utilized communication practice between parents and children on prevention of child sexual abuse among the residents of Ogun State. This followed by "Discussing with children about their private parts (parts covered by swimsuit/bathing suit) that they should not be touched by others"; "Instructing children not to accept gifts from strangers, unless they have parental permission"; "Instructing the children not to go with others, even familiar grown-ups, unless they have parental permission", and "Informing children that if sexual abuse happens, parents or other trusted adults should be informed immediately". It was further revealed that the parents poorly provides children with books or audiovisual products about CSA prevention (13.8%); while encouraging children to talk with parents about sexual issues (46.9%) was fairly utilized.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study showed that there is good understanding about child sexual abuse prevention among inhabitants of Ogun State in South-West Nigeria. Thus, it may be concluded that the parents who took part in this study were aware of what CSA entailed. This supports the findings of Hassan, Faye, Killion, Lewin, and Totten (2015), which found that crucial aspects of CSA to be aware of include comprehending the various meanings of CSA, knowing who the abusers are most frequently, knowing risk factors by age, and recognizing the intersectionality of domestic violence and child abuse. Therefore, parents' awareness of CSA prevention will immediately affect their children's awareness of CSA prevention. The results of Salloum's (2020) study on the knowledge, attitude, and practices of parents in the prevention of CSA, which was conducted in El Salvador, are in line with this study. Salloum noted that most parents were aware of CSA, that they saw prevention as their responsibility, and that they had discussed it with their kids. According to other studies (Abeid, Muganyizi, Massawe, Mpembeni, Darj, Axemo, 2015; Babatsikos, 2010), there is a higher degree of understanding for preventing child sexual abuse than previously thought. A number of efforts, such as public education on child sexual abuse prevention, are likely to have contributed to the high level of knowledge among parents.

The parents' attitude toward preventing child sexual abuse is positive. The results suggest that parents' attitudes and beliefs about CSA prevention are a reflection of their perception of the risk of child abuse, their level of comfort when discussing this subject with kids, risk factors, the likelihood that kids will report abuse, their duty to educate kids, their attitudes toward prevention programs, their intention to talk about prevention with kids, their intention to attend prevention programs, and their reaction to hypothetical disclosure of abuse. Most study participants' responses echoed most of these in their answers. The study supports Fredrick's findings from 2016 that the majority of parents had a positive attitude toward avoiding child sexual abuse. Similar results have also been observed in Chinese studies (Chen & Chen, 2005; Chen et al., 2007). Growing proof of a link between child sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS is seen to be one of the possible explanations for the study's more favorable attitude toward preventing child sexual abuse (Lindegren et al., 1998). Transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses can result from child sexual abuse. The high degree of optimism for preventing child sexual abuse in the survey may be attributable to the respondents' high level of knowledge.

The communication practices of prevention of child sexual abuse among parents is good and that parents' communication practices of prevention of child sexual abuse varies. Instructing children to say 'NO' when someone wants to see or touch their private parts" is the most utilized communication practice between parents and children on prevention of child sexual abuse among the residents of Ogun State. The implication of this is that parents have now realized that the greatest place to talk about sexual issues is at home, and that they are the best teachers. In accordance with research by Deblinger, Thakkar-Kolar, and Berry (2010) and Walsh et al. (2012), parents are regarded as effective at protecting their children if they have discussed specific abusive behaviors like inappropriate touching, perpetrator identities (that they may be loved or well-known adults), and what to do in an abusive situation.

CONCLUSION

A fundamental right to life is the shielding of children from all sorts of violence. The most fundamental rights of children and adolescents are violated by child abuse. The examination of the CSA problem is difficult and complex. Women and children are the most vulnerable people in Africa when it comes to sexual abuse. This study have shown that parents' knowledge, attitudes and communication practices are very key to the prevention of child sexual abuse. It is concluded that a significant and significant education in the community's awareness levels would help identify activities and tactics to curb CSA and contributing to a positive vision for a future where societal norms could shift toward decreased acceptance of CSA.

It is recommended that the culture of silence and failing to disclose child sexual abuse crimes to the appropriate authority should be avoided by families of the victims. Instead of accepting their situation, they ought to be delighted to visit appropriate quarters in order to solve their problem. The government must set up institutional channels so that people who have been the victims of child sexual abuse can denounce those actions in a private, secure setting.

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