

The Nigerian Girl-Child and Sexual Abuse: The Plight of Victims in Bayelsa State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of child sexual abuse on children in Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. Relevant literatures that deal on child sexual abuse were reviewed. Three research questions guided the study. Survey and semi-structured interview were the research design employed. Sample size for the study was 200 sexually abused children drawn from the ages between 0 - 17 years from Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa was selected as the site of the research as a result of the recent high prevalence of girl-child sexual abuse in the selected location. Research findings showed that 92 (46.0%) of the respondents agreed that bad parenting played a major factor responsible for child sexual abuse in Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, that 94 (47.0%) believed vaginal bleeding to be one of the consequences. The study also revealed that 104 (52.0%) of the respondents agreed that sexual abuse can be prevented through developing and sustaining prevention programs. The study concludes that child sexual abuse is the inhibition of a child's physical, psychological, moral or social development due to negligence on the part of the parents, caregivers or other adults to provide the essentials. The study recommends that all stakeholders including the church, communities, government and caregivers must be involved in the process of arresting this menace.

Keywords: Bayelsa, Child, Effect, Girl, Sexual Abuse, Victim,

1. Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child (UN Convention, 1990). The U.S. Immigration Law, also describes a child as 'anyone who is under the age of 21 (Child Status Protection Act). Biologically, a child is anyone between birth and puberty (World Health Organisation, 1999). Children across the world have laws that seek to protect and safeguard their rights and wellbeing. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child therefore sets international standards for child-care and protection. The convention seeks to ensure that children are treated humanely and fairly without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, physical abilities and disabilities, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (UNICEF, 2007). Specifically, the convention is centered on ensuring that a child has the right to life, survival and development, protection from violence, abuse or neglect, an education that enables the child to fulfill their potential, raised by, or have a relationship with parent, and a right to express their opinions. States have a duty to prohibit child prostitution, child pornography and the sale of children into slavery and lastly, a child has the right to report the violation of any of his right (Lansdown, 2011).

In Nigeria, Children's Rights are protected by law and held sacred. Not only does the law protect the child, it also stipulates punishment for adults who take advantage of children or seek to negatively influence them. Specifically, the Nigerian constitution states that; "The law seeks to prevent cruelty against children while stating the rights and obligations of the Nigerian Child", (Child Rights Act, 2003).

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Among the many several rights of a child are the right to protect a child from all forms of abuse. It is therefore unlawful to have sexual intercourse with a child. Any person who contravenes this provision commits an offence of rape and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (ND))

Child sexual abuse is an important social problem worldwide which affects the physical, mental and psychological health of a child. It is defined as the involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he or she is not prepared for and cannot give consent to, or that violates the laws or social taboos of the society (Essabar, L., Khalqllah, A., Dakhama, B. 2015). Child sexual abuse is also the sexual exploitation or victimization of a child by an adult, adolescent or older child (Cohen, J. 2007). Child sexual abuse is one of the most traumatizing forms of violence against children, usually committed by a person in a position of power and trust in the child's life (International Rescue Committee, 2012). It usually involves coercion of the unsuspecting victim through trickery or bribery or it could be forceful; with acts ranging from rape to unwanted fondling. Sexual abuse also includes a range of behaviors including vaginal, anal or oral penetration and photographing a child for pornography. It may include physical contact (fondling a child's genitals, masturbation, oral-genital contact, digital penetration, vaginal and anal intercourse) or non-contact abuse (exhibitionism, voyeurism, and child pornography). Other types of sexual abuses include; non-genital touching, genital touching and penetration. Statistics have shown that 95 percent of child sexual abuses go unreported because of fear of stigmatization and 90 percent of child abuse victims know their abuser (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011).

The prevalence of child abuse has been difficult to ascertain due to many factors such as differing definitions and perceptions on what constitutes sexual abuse in children. Some studies use a narrow definition of child abuse to include contact abuse and intercourse only. Other authors classify some socio-cultural practices like child marriage and female genital cutting as forms of child abuse (Lalor, 2004; Olusanya et al., 1986).

Child abuse is generally under reported due to lack of or delayed disclosure by the victims which may be as a result of the inability of the child to understand that the behavior is inappropriate or harmful, poor communication skills especially in the very young or disabled, feelings of guilt and shame by the victims or fear of the perpetrator. In addition to the stigma associated with child abuse, victims may also experience short and long-term adverse health effects of the abuse such as transmission of HIV and other STIs, unwanted pregnancy, obstructed labor. Child sexual abuse is also associated with high risk behaviors such as prostitution, multiple sexual partners and substance abuse. In Nigeria, child sexual abuse is also a very serious case. Studies have shown that the prevalence of child sexual abuse is often, not reported because of societal perspective to the issue (Duru C., Ederiana O. and Felix O. Akinbami F. 2014).

Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State has witnessed several cases of child sexual abuse over the years and its largely under reported and commonly go unpunished as it is commonly perpetrated by persons close to family members. Thus, the study seeks to investigate child sexual abuse among children in Bayelsa State, with the aim of identifying mitigating factors underlying its occurrence and proffering solutions to curbing this heinous crime. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the factors responsible for child sexual abuse in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State; it examines the consequences of child sexual abuse on the child, parents and society in general and proffers solutions to curb child sexual abuse in the state. The study focused on events that took place in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State between 2010 and 2018. The study is therefore limited to the girl-child between the ages of 0-17.

2. Research Methodology

The study employed triangulation methodology. Structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview instruments were employed to explain the specific procedure used in gathering data. The respondents for the interview were purposively selected.

Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State was selected as the study area because of the recent high incidences of child sexual abuse in Nigeria. The girl-child was also selected as the sex surveyed because of high incidences among female children. Female children (victims) between the ages of 0-17 were also surveyed with no restriction to religion. The population for the study comprises of victims, parents and caregivers, and staff of selected NGOs.

Caregivers and parents interviewed were between the ages of 35-45 with formal education with a minimum of first degree, selected officers of the Nigerian Police Force from the rank of Divisional Police Officer (DPO) to Inspector of Police while top management officers of NGOs constitute part of the population of the study.

3. The girl-child and sexual abuse

Humans are gender-based beings with established biological category of male and female. This category is also affirmed and acknowledged by many ancient and modern religious scripts as against the modern domination of gender to include transgender. However, the male and female maturity is determined by age of which we have children (toddlers, adolescent and teenager) and adults. In other words, the girl-child could be a toddler, an adolescent, or a teenager depending on her stage of psychological development, but cuts across between 0 year to 17 or 18. This category of children is by culture and constitutions considered minor and unstable for engagement in certain activities (sex and menial jobs) in the society. This cultural norm and constitutional laws are regularly violated through exploitation, neglect and molestation as seen in the increasing cases of child abuse report across the globe. Thus, child abuse “constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power” (World Health Organization 2002: 59). Since child abuse is a broad range of subject, this work is concerned with child sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse could be described as the violation of an individual sexual right. Kidman (1993) gave a broad definition as a violation perpetrated by someone with power over someone who is susceptible. This violation takes a sexual form and can include physical, verbal and emotional components. It includes rape, date rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, incest and sexual molestation. It could be said to be any sexual contact between two individuals without agreement. It also involves the misuse of one’s sexual drive or force to achieve a desired purpose (pleasure, power, subjugation, defilement, exploitation, diabolical). Such an act is not restricted to a gender, age or race and none is immune to it irrespective of religious and cultural background. This implies that perpetrators of sexual abuse could either be a man or women in a gang or individual, religious or secular of any age. However, when a child becomes a victim of such an act it is known as child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse also involves a caretaker using a child for sexual gratification and can range from noncontact abuse (proposition, exhibition) to the extremes of actual penetration, to commercial sexual exploitation (Polonko, 2007: 449). In Polanco’s view, the abuser is someone known to the child which makes it easy to perpetrate the act- Kayode (2019) saw it as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, or is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that which violates the laws or social taboos of a society. This implies that child sexual abuse is a violation of societal norms.

Simply put, child sexual abuse is associated with any sexual contact between a child and an adult. In this case there is no room for consent since the victim is a child who by the law should not engage or be involved in any form of sexual activity. Therefore, anybody found engaging a child (0-17years) in any form of sexual activity is abusing the child and misusing his/her sexual force. The perpetrator is punishable under constituted laws and traditions of many societies. These perpetrators are many a times well known to the child as earlier noted and as such may go free unsuspected.

From the numerous cases of child sexual abuse, it can come in the form child marriage, parents sexually exploiting their children for economic purpose, sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not, forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity, making a child take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals, rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus, making a child masturbate and encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts.

The above forms of sexual activities are unstable for a child. Thus, it is viewed as a dehumanising act ravaging the globe with specific cure or remedy. Child sexual abuse has become sexual decadence menacing the moral fabric of many nation of which Nigeria is not exempted. However, this flare or passion for sex with a child is not a modern dilemma, rather has been in existence for ages but only intensified in this present era of globalization. To portray that child sexual abuse is not strange; Yuill and Evans (2007) stated that Pedophilia was coined by Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), to mean a range of desires and practices associated with adult sexual attraction to children. The adult misuse of their sexual force has led to the increase of child sexual abuse in the country.

Although child sexual abuse involves both the male and female children respectively, Nigeria been a patrilineal nation, the girl-child suffers more abuse than the male. This is because of their vulnerability and sensitivity of sexual matters in the society. That is why one of the greatest challenges besetting the remedy of girl-child sexual abuse is the stigma and shame associated with such act which restrains victims and victim's family from reporting the case. Affirming the above claim, Abeidet al. (2014) study on rape was perceived to be seldomly reported due to several barriers that favor the acceptance and non-disclosure of sexual violence. Rape of a child perpetrated by a known person or relative was not normally disclosed to legal authorities, as reporting it was seen as putting the family's honor and reputation at stake. For this reason, amongst others, the incessant cases of girl-child sexual abuse is on the increase in the country.

Ascertaining the increase of child sexual abuse in the country, Famumng (2017) gave the following statistic of rape in Nigerian states in the year 2017. According to statistics, 4035 rape cases were reported in Lagos State in 2017, 1000 in Kwara State in 2017, 600 in Gombe State in 2017 and 1200 in River States in 2017. These statistics is indeed alarming because Nigeria has laws protecting the children from sexual abuse. In the Nigerian law code, the Child Rights Act states that sex with a minor is rape, and anyone who has sexual intercourse with a child is liable to imprisonment for life upon conviction. Furthermore, Famumng (2017) opines that despite the above statistics and Nigerian law code, only 18 persons have ever been convicted of rape in Nigeria legal system. This implies impunity on the part of Nigerian law, and this has consequently led to a raise in girl-child sexual abuse.

In view of the alarming rise in girl-child sexual abuse, Egbejule (2016) reported the case of a girl named Imade who was sexually abused by her teacher when she was seven years. According to the girl, the teacher lured her with deceptive words and gave her a little sum of money. Afterwards he sexually abused her after school hours. The girl-child reported the case to her mother who complained to the school authority. All the school management could do was to relieve the teacher of his duties. The likelihood of this same teacher committing same offense is therefore high as there was no recorded report of the crime to the appropriate authority for onward prosecution of the teacher. Consequently, allowing child sexual abusers to roam the street is a threat to the moral fabric of the society which is being constantly destroyed by their activities. This is because the victims of the act and **their life is permanently bruised by the stigma associated with the abuse (Punch newspaper (May 19, 2016)). In other words, the lifelong trauma aside, sexual molestation can trigger fatality.**

The account of a primary five pupil in Bariga, Lagos, who was gang-raped by six men in January, underscores this. The girl says everybody in the community has been avoiding her since the incident occurred. In 2015, Sylvester Ehijele, 49, allegedly raped his seven-year-old daughter. Mrs. Ehijele said the last straw was when her husband, who had earlier defiled their 17-year-old daughter, violated their 18-month-old granddaughter. Another is the account of Funmilayo Adeyanju who stabbed her three-year-old son to death. Her neighbours in Ota, Ogun State, linked her act to depression, caused by the incestuous relationship that produced the boy. Rafiu Idonu, 26, was arrested by the police in Ile-Ogbo, Osun State, last year for defiling his cousin, aged 10. He strangled the girl for raising the alarm during the act. In addition, was the case of Matthew Umeh, 35 was arrested recently for allegedly raping his wife's 15year old sister who had been living with them from the age of five. Police reports stated that Umeh had been violating the minor since she was five years old. And lastly, is the repulsive case, a man raped his 12-year-old daughter in Ogbia, Bayelsa state. When the girl was four months pregnant, he took her to a quack health practitioner to procure a crude abortion for her (Punch newspaper, May 19, 2016).

Considering, the above cases, Nigeria is beset with male sexual predators who would stop at nothing in using their sexual powers to defile the girl-child. Affirming this claim, Effa-Chukwuma 2018 lamented that Sexual violence, especially, has assumed epidemic proportions in Nigeria, with children, ages 0-17 years constituting over 70 per cent of the victims. She concludes that the perpetrators are 95 per cent of the time not strangers to the children.

They are people they know, love and trust. They are family members, friends and neighbours, including fathers, cousins, uncles, drivers, teachers, pastors, imams amongst others. Of a truth many of the sexual abusers of the girl-child are shamefully family relatives. This was the case with the trending news of child sexual abuse on Nigeria media in 2018 of a girl named Ochanya Ogbanje though late, was abused for four years from age 8 to 13 years by her uncle and son. She was reported to have been turned into a sex slave by both men from the tender age of eight years.

Hence, Okafor (2018) and Iyaji (2018) reported that Ochanya died on October 17, 2018 from complications of five years of anal and vaginal rape by her uncle Mr. Ogbuja Andrew (51 years old senior lecturer at the department of Catering and hotel Management of Beune State Polytechnic) and her cousin Mr. Ogbuja Victor (University student). The complications they stated left her with vesicovaginal fistula, making her continuously dribble urine. Despite the treatment of the disease, the young girl died.

According to Okafor (2018) Ochanya was age eight years when she moved in with her aunt MrsOgbuja Felicia who is the younger sister to Ochanya's mother, wife to MrOgbujaAndrew and mother of Mr.OgbujaVictor. The crime was concealed for five years because the abusers were her own relatives who were supposed to protect her from such abuse.

Considering the years of sexual abuse Ochanya endured and her final demise as a result of the act, Effa-Chukwuma (2018) stated that the death incidence led to the outbreak of the child sexual abuse on social media which brought about a huge public outcry for justice for the abused. To address the situation, the Nigerian law makers are pushing for death penalty henceforth for rape. The penalty is believed, would act as a caution to abusers to stay away from child sexual abuse or face death sentence. This is perhaps the only way to curb the growing scourge and menace of sexual abuse on the Nigeria girl-child.

4. African norm and perception of sexual activity

Generally, life in Africa is experienced within the confines of culture and religious traditions. As a result, the concept of sexuality in Africa is guided specifically by beliefs and values. In this wise, Leclerc Madlala (2007) is of the view that sexual cultures throughout the world comprise of the socially and culturally created experience of human sexuality, including shared norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge that shape and give meaning to behaviours related to sex. Therefore, following African tradition, sex is a sacred act which makes it more of a duty than pleasure. As Mbiti (1976) stated that in African societies, sex is not for biological purposes alone. It has also religious and social uses. One of its major uses is human procreation.

The creation of man from various religious myths and legends are the acts of God, gods and goddesses. Thus, the continuity of human creation which is procreation through the act of sex was given to man by the gods through the institution of marriage. As a result, the activities inherent in the act are wrapped and hedged with sanction to protect its sacredness consequently, wrong use or disposition to sexual matters stigmatises thus a sensitive discourse. In other words, the issue of sexuality activity is very sensitive.

The subject matter of sex considering its sensitivity can only be discussed within the confines of the marriage institution. As Diallo (2004) and Baloyi (2010) rightly observed that marriage is the only acceptable channel for full sexual expression and active sexual life. In Africa, anything short of the above avenue is an abuse of the "sacred act – sex". In usual traditional African community, the power or driving force of sex lies within the male folk while the female is the object for sexual activity. For this reason, even outside the institution of marriage, the male folk find it easy to discuss sexual matter amongst each other while it is a taboo to find the female asking questions about the act.

To buttress the sacredness of sexual act, Diallo (2004:173) from his study of Mali observed that according to what is perceived as 'tradition' in Mali, open discussions about sexual issues are taboo and often perceived as a lack of virtues. In addition, Mugambi and Magesa (1990:78) asserted that in African traditional society, it was taboo for a parent and a child to talk about sex and other related issues. Nevertheless, times are changing and this attitude should also change accordingly. In other words, Africans are committed to their traditions and that is why sexual issues till date are not open for discussion, and therefore, an abused child finds it difficult to report such case because of the repelling nature. For this reason, amongst other African cultural norms, female folks are never supposed to ever experience sex before marriage. Consequently, it is a shameful act for a young maiden to experience sex before marriage while the male folk may even boast of their expertise and experience in the act. In such a cultural environment, the incidence of rape on many occasions is blamed on the young maiden who is accused of eagerness to experience the act by enticing a man to engage in the act with her.

Thus, the prevalent and proliferation of sexual abuse in Nigeria could be described as the traditional breakdown of social norms and misinterpretation of sexual activities by the male folk. Many of these male folks who are the force behind most illicit sexual activity has a wife, whom they regard as a sexual object because of the African belief that sex is a pleasure for the male and a duty for the female. Despite the ever readily availability of their wives for sexual satisfaction they still go out to engage in illicit sexual activities (rape, incest and adultery) against the traditions of the land. Consequently, such acts lead to the breach of sexual norms, a crime severely punishable by the gods in the past. Thus, in the past sexual crimes whether hidden or reported, Africans believe that the culprits never go unpunished. In view of the above fact, the girl-child though without sexual rights is protected by traditions of the land. At present, considering the sexualrelegated position of girl-child in many African societies, who can report cases of sexual abuse and to whom should such a case be reported, if not to the male folk who are invariably the abusers.

Also, under the patrilineal kinship system of many Nigerian societies, the girl-child suffers most when it comes to sexual abuse. In this case the abused is the female while the abuser is the male to whom the African tradition dims protector of the community. Under this guise, one can infer that African culture legalised child sexual abuse because of its consent of child marriage. Child marriage invariably exposes the girl-child to sexual abuse but in this case by a legal abuser–husband. Although Africans do not perceive child marriage as sexual abuse of the legality of marriage the only platform for sexual relations is involved yet the age of the girl-child suggests so.

Furthermore, many circumstances and situations are responsible for girl-child sexual abuse in Nigeria since traditions established norms to guide sexual activity. However, subverting the traditional norm of sexual activity in any African community by anybody is an abomination incurring severe punishment. Thus, the concept of sexual abuse is strange to Africans of post-colonial era. The common sexual abuse seen is rape (between adult) and incest but perpetrators are caught and punished. However, abusing children sexually is a hideous crime neither seen nor heard of in traditional African communities. But according to Leclerc-Madlala (2007) the legacies of colonialism, Christianity, Islam, and apartheid as well as the ongoing effects of poverty, civil war, and racism contributed to the reconstruction of sexual cultures and the norms that guide sexual relations in African, of which the consequences is not limited to exposure to documented sexual activities. This uncontrolled exposure is perhaps one of the root causes of girl-child sexual abuse because it constantly stimulates the sexual force or drive of perpetrators to engage in the act. In addition, is the wanton desire for diabolical wealth which many a times requires hideous act of sexually abusing a child. Also, the activities of unruly men who see women as sex objects to be toiled with, make it easy to sexually abuse the girl-child. With all these anomalies coupled with the sensitivity of sexual matters that restrains victims and victim's family from officially reporting such cases, it only increased the girl-child sexual abuse in the country.

5. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Section A: Demographic Information

Table 1- Respondent Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	150	75.0
Total	200	100

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation: According to the table above, out of the two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires administered, two hundred (200) questionnaires were returned. Therefore, seventy-five percent (150) female respondents returned their questionnaires, which contributed seventy five percent (75.0%) of the total sample.

Table 2 – Age Range of Children

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5-10	110	55.0
11-15	44	22.0
16-17	46	23.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation: The table above shows that 55% of children between the age range of five to ten (5-10) years are victims of child abuse, 22.0 % are between the age range of 11-15 years, and 23.0% are between the age ranges of 16-17 years. The result also showed that children at high risk of child abuse are between the age ranges of 5-10 years.

Table 3 – Age Range of perpetrators

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10-20	0	0
21-30	26	13.0
31-40	130	65.0
41-50	44	22.0
Others	0	0

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation: The table shows the perpetrators age range, 13.0% of the perpetrators are between the age range of 21-30 years, 65.0% are between the age range of 31-40 years, 22.0% are between the age range of 41-50 years. This therefore shows that majority of perpetrators are at the age of 31-40.

Section B: Analysis of Research Question

Table 4 - What is relationship between the victim and the perpetrator?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stranger	38	19.0
Neighbor	42	21.0
Family	90	45.0
Family Friend	30	15.0
Others	0	0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The table above shows the respondent's answers to the question: "what is the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator?" 19.0% of the victim claimed that they had no relationship with the perpetrators who are mostly strangers to them. 21.0% of the victims claimed that their perpetrator was a neighbor and 45.0 % claimed that perpetrator is a family member. 15.0% of the victim also claimed that their perpetrator was a family friend while none of the victims picked others. From the above result therefore, most of the perpetrators are family members.

Table 5 - Where is the location of the sexual abuse?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Child's house	130	65.0
Perpetuator house	50	25.0
In the bush	0	0
Uncompleted building	20	10.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The above shows the respondent's answers to the question "where is the location of the sexual abuse?" 25.0% of the victims claimed that the abuse was committed in the perpetrator house, while 65.0% of the victims claimed that the abuse took place at the child's house. 10.0% of the victim also claimed that the abuse was carried out in an uncompleted building, while none of the victim claimed that the abuse took place in the bush. The above result therefore shows that most of the abusive act took place in the child's (victim's) houses.

Table 6 - What complaints and genital findings can be seen in the sexually abused girl children?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vaginal bleeding	57	57.0
Vaginal/perinea pain	10	10.0
Vaginal discharge	19	19.0
Abdominal pain	13	13.0
Others	0	0
Total	100	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The above table shows the respondent's answers to the question "what complaints and genital findings can be seen in the sexually abused female children?" 57.0% of the respondents claimed that vaginal bleeding is a common complaint by the sexually abused girl child, while 10.0% of the respondent claimed that vaginal/perinea pain is one of the complaint by victims. On the other hand, 19.0% of the respondents claimed that vaginal discharge is one of the complaints by the sexually abused girl child.

Also, 13.0% of the respondents claimed that abdominal pain is one of the complaints from the victims, the above result therefore shows that most of the complained and genital finding is vaginal bleeding; this is also in consonance with study's interview findings.

Table 7 - What are the factors responsible for child sexual abuse?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of sex education	78	39.0
Bad parenting	92	46.0
Risky sexual behavior	20	10.0
Indecent dressing	10	5.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The above table shows the respondent's answers to the question: "what are the factors responsible for sexual abuse?" 39.0% go for lack of sex education, 46.0% go for bad parenting, 10.0% believe it's due to risky sexual behaviour and none of the respondent opined that it was due to indecent dressing. From the aforementioned, the following are the factors responsible for sexual abuse, starting with the highest percentage to the lowest; bad parenting, lack of sex education and risky sexual behaviour.

Table 8 - How can child sexual abuse be prevented?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Counseling service in the local Government prevention programs	76	38.0
Developing and sustaining prevention programs	104	52.0
Strengthen families	12	6.0
Policy development	8	4.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field Work, 2019

Observation; The above table shows the respondent's answers to the question: "how can child sexual abuse, be prevented?" 38.0% of the respondent opined that counseling service in the local Government prevention programs is one way a child sexual abuse can be prevented. Also, 52.0% of the respondent claimed that developing and sustaining prevention programs will help in preventing child sexual abuse, 6.0% of the respondent believe that strengthen family's ties will assist in preventing child sexual abuse, while 4.0% of the respondent go for policy development. From the findings therefore, the following can be used in preventing child sexual abuse in Bayelsa; developing and sustaining prevention programs, counseling service in the local Government prevention programs, strengthen families and policy development. In summary, the most important of the measure that can assist in preventing child sexual abuse is; developing and sustaining prevention programs. This also answers one of the research questions; what are the solutions that can assist in curbing child sexual abuse in Bayelsa State?

Table 9 - Awareness of child rape cases in Bayelsa for the last one year

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	134	67.0
Not aware	66	33.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The above table shows that awareness of child rape cases in Bayelsa for the last one year, 67.0% go for the people who are aware of child rape cases and 33.0% go for those who were not aware.

Table 10 - Victim's sex

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	66	33.0
Female	134	67.0
Total	200	100%

Source; field survey 2019

Observation; The above table shows that 33.0% of the victims of child sexual abuse are male victims and 67.0% are female victims. From this result, it shows that most of the victims of child sexual abuse are female.

Table 11 - Where are the cases of child abuse been reported?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	140	70.0
Human right groups	50	25.0
Parents	10	5.0
Others	0	0
Total	200	100%

Source; field work, 2019

Observation; The above table shows the respondent's answers to the question: "where are the cases of child abuse been reported?" 70.0% of the victim report cases of child sexual abuse to the police, while 5.0% of the victim report cases of child sexual abuse to parents.

Table 12 - Why are people not reporting cases of child abuse?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No body to report to	22	11.0
Felt no thing will be done	18	9.0
Afraid	140	70.0
Ashamed	20	10.0
Others	0	0

Source; field survey, 2019

Observation; The above table shows the question: "why are people not reporting cases of child abuse?" 11.0% of the victim do not report cases of girl-child sexual abuse because they believe that there is no body to report to, 9.0% opined that nothing will be done if they report therefore there is no reason to report. On the other hand, 70.0% of the victim are afraid of what the society will say as well as the effect of the stigmatization attached to disclosing. 10.0% of the victim claimed that ashamed of what and how the society will treat them if they disclose and report cases of girl-child sexual abuse. From the result of the findings, people are not reporting cases of child abuse because they are afraid.

6. Discussion of Findings

The study shows that 39.0% of respondents have no knowledge of sex education, 46.0% felt it was bad parenting that have led to girl-child sexual abuse, while 10.0% believed it was risky sexual behaviour that is responsible for girl child sexual abuse. On the other hand, none of the respondents felt that indecent dressing is a factor responsible for child abuse. From the afore-mentioned, the following are the factors responsible for sexual abuse, starting with the highest percentage to the lowest; bad parenting, lack of sex education and risky sexual behaviour. The study also outlined four factors that are responsible for child abuse and they include; emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage and dis-inhibition.

As regards the consequences of child sexual abuse on the child, parent and the society in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, table 6 shows that 47.0% of the respondents believed vaginal bleeding to be one of the consequences of child abuse, while 10.0% believed vaginal/perinea pain to be a consequence. 19.0% believed vaginal discharge is also a consequence, while 13.0% also believed abdominal pain to be one of the consequences, while 11.0% also believed painful scrotum to be one of the consequences of child sexual abuse on the child, parent and the society.

Furthermore, the study shows that most of the victim complained of vaginal bleeding; post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, as a common consequence of child sexual abuse that they experienced. Their ability to trust adults to take care of them is also jeopardized. Further study also shows that when children do not disclose sexual abuse and/or do not receive effective counseling, they can suffer difficulties long into the future. On the other hand, children who have the support of an understanding caregiver and effective treatment can recover without long-term effects". The study further reveals solutions that can assist on curbing child sexual abuse in Bayelsa State. The study in table 8 shows that 52.0% of the respondents believed that sexual abuse can be prevented through developing and sustaining prevention programs, 38.0% of the respondents also believed that the counseling service in the local government areas can serve as one of the prevention measures against child sexual abuse, while 4.0% believed policy development to be one of the prevention measures, 6.0% believed strengthening the families could prevent sexual abuse among female children.

7. Effects of Sexual Abuse on the Nigerian Society

Girl-child sexual abuse, also known as girl-child molestation is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a girl-child for sexual stimulation. Forms of girl-child sexual abuse include engaging in sexual activities with the girl-child (whether by asking or pressuring or by other means), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.) or using the girl-child to produce child pornography. Girl-child sexual abuse on the female child could impair their normal functioning and psychosocial development. Victims of childhood sexual abuse may experience a range of effects both immediate (i.e. occurring within two years from the incident) and long-term. The immediate effects, referred to as symptoms, may occur in all areas of development: sexual, emotional, social, and cognitive and physical (somatic) and they depend largely on the child's age. For example, a girl-child of school-age may demonstrate symptoms making up the "ideal child syndrome", while symptoms shown by an adolescent may include self-injuries and suicide attempts (WHO, 2003). Therefore, the effects of sexual abuse on the girl-child include: Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including gonorrhoea, syphilis, herpes genitals, chancroid, HIV/AIDS, among others. These sexually transmitted diseases could lead to stigmatization and discrimination, which in turn also reduce the abused children to objects of pity thereby categorizing them into the status of unhealthy consumers in a consumerist society (Wilson, H and Wisdom C. 2009).

Also, Psychological trauma has been identified as one of the effects of sexual abuse on the girl-child. Psychological abuse is any injury, wound, or shock, which could be bodily or structural, but also mental. It could be an emotional shock, resulting in frequent disturbance. Sexual violence is a violence that affects children. A female child who has undergone or witnessed sexual violence may become withdrawn, anxious or depressed, aggressive and sometimes exert control over younger siblings. The girl-child often time traumatized when sexually abused. She may experience intense pain, bleeding, painful abdominal menstruation, infection or trauma among others (East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community, 2011). Examples of psychological traumas include; Fear. Most offender make the girl-child swear to secrecy. Also, sexual abuse is usually accompanied by intimidation, bribery or threats. This makes the abused child afraid to make a report to the appropriate persons, organisations or institutions because of what the consequence of the report might be. Another example of psychological trauma is the feeling of helplessness/powerlessness. Often, the girl-child in this situation feels that they have no control over their own lives or even over their own bodies. They feel that they have no choices available to them. The girl-child also carries the burden of guilt and shame with her for a long time. The girl-child knows something is wrong and blames herself not others for the abuse. The offender often encourages the girl-child to feel that the abuse is his or her fault and sometimes she will feel that she is indeed the cause of the abuse. Also, often, the offender makes the girl-child feel responsible for keeping the abuse a secret. Sometimes the girl-child also feels responsible for keeping the family together and the burden of this responsibility may hinder the abused child from experiencing a normal childhood.

Furthermore, a girl-child who experiences incest often feels different from other children. They are often secretive. This even isolates them from non-offending parents and brothers and sisters. Betrayal is another example of psychological trauma. Most abused children feel betrayed because they are dependent upon adults for nurturing and protection and the offender in turn, is someone who they should be able to love and trust. They may also feel betrayed by a non-offending parent who they feel has failed to protect them. Most girl-child who have experienced sexual abuse feel anger. Anger is one of the strongest feelings which many children may have about their sexual assault. Children may feel anger against the perpetrator and against others who they feel failed to protect them.

Also, the girl-child may feel anguish due to a sense of loss, especially if the perpetrator of the abuse was loved and trusted by the child. The girl-child experiences persistent flashbacks. Flashbacks for an abused girl-child come like nightmares which happen while the child is awake. They are a re-experience of the sexual assault and the child may experience all the feelings which they felt at the time it first occurred. Maternal and infant mortality and morbidity (MMR) The maternal mortality rate (MMR) is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or motivated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes). "The MMR includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, for a specified year.

Child Maltreatment is also one of the effects of girl-child sexual abuse. Children who are victims of abuse suffer from its effects for the rest of their lives. While the family environment is a place where children feel the safest, it is also where they are prone to a higher risk. Therefore, society, families and teachers should be informed about child discipline and abuse.

8. Summary of Findings

Girl-child sexual abuse has been a menace in all societies of the world. It is an ill that the society has had to contend with it, with attendant consequences. Girl-child sexual abuse is been carried out by perpetrators against all girl-child irrespective of the age of the victims. It is a menace that all society has condemned in all ramifications because it has to do with a girl-child. Girl-child sexual abuse has had a long history, and evidence of its existence has been found in almost every domain.

The UN convention in its charter, and alongside with several resolutions uphold the rights of a child (children between the ages of 0-17). A child therefore has a right to live, to be heard, to be educated, to survival, to participation, and right to development. Therefore, the violation of the rights of a child (ren) becomes a grievous crime against humanity. Nigeria, a sovereign state in the West African sub region has a signatory to the UN convention on the rights of a child. Nigeria therefore has domesticated the UN convention on the rights of a child, and it is enshrined clearly in its constitution. It is worthy to note that the child has been faced with child neglect, child labor, trafficking and slavery, child prostitution, lastly, lack of access to education. On the other hand, in recent times there has been a rise in the violation of child (ren)'s right in the form of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulations and it has become a common occurrence at all level of the society. Therefore, this study has been able to enlighten the public on the effect of child sexual abuse on children who are victims, caregivers, the people of Bayelsa state and the society. It has further been able to sensitize the society most especially parents and caregivers on the need to be careful with who they entrust their wards to as this study has shown that perpetrators of the crimes can be anybody and most times close relatives. Furthermore, this study has been able to show that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria frowns at anyone who is involved in the act by way of prosecution (25 years jail term). Lastly, the study encourages victims and their caregivers to report any case of child sexual abuse.

9. Conclusion

Girl-child abuse is a serious global challenge. Although most studies on it have been conducted in developed countries, there is compelling evidence that the phenomenon is common throughout the world. Much more can and should be done about the problem. Recognition and awareness, through essential elements for effective prevention, are part of the solution. Preventive efforts and policies must directly address children, their caregivers and the environments in which they live to prevent potential abuse from occurring, and to deal effectively with cases of abuse and neglect that have taken place. The concerted and coordinated efforts of a whole range of sectors are required here, and public health researchers and practitioners can also play a key role by leading and facilitating the process. All stakeholders in the prevention of girl-child sexual abuse needs to make all effort ensure children have at the very least a safe and abusive-free environment in which to grow up. Also, all stakeholders including the church, communities, government must be involved in the process of arresting this menace. This can be done by ensuring that religious organisations provide sound religious education, religious organisations should organize seminars and other outreach programs, where they teach their members on the dangers of engaging in sexual abuse. During this meeting, professional counselors should be invited to teach and enlighten the people on sex education and dangers of engaging in sexual abuse. Parents should discuss freely with their children reproductive health and sexual education as they are the primary sexuality educators of their children.

Also, government at all levels should mount intensive enlightenment campaigns through public talks, seminars, conferences and workshops to create more awareness on the need for sexuality education in our schools to check sex-related problems of the adolescents. Young adults should also have access to sexual and reproductive health information in government institutions. Most importantly, the law against sexual abuse should be enforced effectively; such as life imprisonment for anybody involved in sexual abuse. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations should finance programs geared at educating the masses on the dangers of engaging in child sexual abuse, both on the victim and the Victimizer.

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