

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DETERMINANTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The peril of abusing children sexually has turned out to be an inclusive disquiet in latest era. More than a few countries parliamentary section continue reviewing the actual punishment(s) intended for the offenders. Regardless of these hard works, the incidence of sexual exploitation of children is still apparent. Then, what are the factors responsible for the rate of this collective crisis? Hence, this study critically assessed the determinants of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).

**Methods:** Critical reassessment of empirical studies on the dominant factors of Child Sexual Abuse.

**Results:** findings showed that the parenting deficiencies (parents living in severance, parents smoking or consuming alcohol non-stop, coming home lately after the close of work, pitiable bond with children and children that are in want for parental care at certain age), frightening surroundings (apprehensive children due to apparent insecure surroundings, unnecessary advances from neighbourhood, other forms parental complications and awful control from peers) and influence of social media (regular contact with social media). This study recommends preventative channel by firstly; tackling parenting deficiencies by parents themselves will go a long way in curbing the negative situation of child sexual exploitation. In addition, government should pilot the way in environmental protection by formulating and adopting policies that will improve security and safety in the society and children should be well-informed at home, school and religious centres on divulging unnecessary advances and prevention of social media that encourage wrong sexual activities and behaviour.

**Keywords:** assessment, child, sex, abuse, determinants, victims

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The peril of abusing children sexually has turned out to be an inclusive disquiet in latest era as it remains a major social-welfare and communal correlated crisis (Olusegun, Olaitan, Idowu & Amos, 2016). Amongst the abuses that children are faced with is Child Sexual Abuse. An individual sexually exploits a young person as soon as he or she exposes the young person to sexual acts or activities (Sirajo, Aliyu & Abdullahi, 2012). Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a pervasive crisis that can have negative effect on victims' welfare and efficiency all through their life time (Esposito, 2016). Several children who experience sexual exploitation show bodily, sexual or vocal signs of the exploitation such as pain during urination and/or bowel movements, bleeding, discharges or pain in mouth, genitals or anus sexually transmitted diseases, difficulty walking, sitting, standing among others. These negative impacts can prompt extensive stress and hardship for the

young person well into maturity, and recurrently cause worry for guardians, educators and different caregivers (Gwirayi, 2012).

The thought that kids might be sexual beings has long been disquieting to grownups in the general public. Children are able to experience sensory and tactile stimulation (even if they do not understand it as 'sexual' in the grown-up way), and it is likely that children engage in sexual self-stimulation at various point (Shannon, Kelly, & Adam, 2016). This brings to the intellect how our perceptive of child sexual exploitation is affected by our concern pertaining to child sexuality (Dawes, Richter, & Smith, 2005). It has been suggested in cultural practices that the stage called 'youth' is culturally constructed, and the aptness of children's sexual doings follows from ideas of what childhood is or should be. The fact that the convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as any person younger than 18 years of age is a very contemporary concept, and there is no doubt that in numerous parts of the globe, childhood ends for lots of persons well before or well after this discontinued point. This reality poses challenges for course of action and legal provisions in an area that is ethnically diverse (American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 2015).

From time to time, the victim may be so troubled by sexual exploitation that a lot of time passes before he or she is capable to comprehend or speak up concerning what happened. In some of these cases, grown-up survivors of child sexual exploitation may appear for the first time in their 40s or 50s and disclose the dreadfulness of their experiences. Child sexual exploitation is also coupled with changes in the metabolism of serotonin. The shock of the distress on the brain's trauma response systems can make children more exposed to later traumatic events and to the start of pathology and suicide (American Association of Suicidology, 2014). This is so because the risk of suicide becomes greater as the length and frequency of sexual exploitation increases (US Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Largely, sexual abusers are familiar with the young person they abuse. They may be relatives acquaintances, neighbours, babysitters among others. About one-third of abusers are related to the young person and most abusers are men (Medline Plus, 2015). One-third of child sexual exploitation sufferers are below the age of 12, and during the ages of 12-17, females have the uppermost occurrence of both forceful and non-forceful sexual exploitation (American Association of Suicidology, 2014).

A number of countries parliamentary arm continue reviewing upward the theoretical punishment for the offenders. Notwithstanding these hard works, the incidence of sexual exploitation of minors is still manifest. Then, what are the factors responsible for the incidence of this shared disquiet? Thus, this study critically reviewed the factors that influence or determine the sexual exploitation of minors.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Relevant theories which explain the concept of child sexual abuse are examined with a view to guiding and providing deeper insights into the subject matter of this inquiry. Thus, Feminist theory of sexual coercion and Intersectional theory serve as the guiding theoretical framework for this study.

### **2.1. Feminist Theory of Sexual Coercion**

Radical feminists developed this theory of sexual coercion and blames the exploitation (sexual exploitation/abuse) of females (in this case, children) on men. Radical feminists see men as primary beneficiaries from the sexual exploitation of young children. Children are the oppressed groups who have to struggle for their own liberation from their abusers. Radical feminists are concerned with rights rather than gender equality and it is a child's right not to be sexually abused. In its broadest sense, radical feminism believes that there is a female/feminine nature that has been distorted throughout history; one that needs to be liberated and revalued (Abbot, Wallace & Tyler, 2005). Feminist theory of sexual coercion holds that men use sexual abuse as a process of intimidation and domination by which children who are their victims are kept in a state of fear (Malamuth, 1996; Brownmiller, 1975). According to Brownmiller (1975), "Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe.

Radical feminism sees society as patriarchal – that is, ruled and dominated by men. In this sense, society is the family setting where some children are sexually exploited by more powerful adults and older children. This theory views child sexual abuse as emerging from a social framework that emphasizes group conflict. That is, since males have constructed a patriarchal society in which men are holders of wealth and power, they engage in sexual abuse behaviours that maintain this control, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is coupled with the fact that physically, men are stronger and have sexual anatomy that makes sexual abuse of a child possible.

Children's weaker physical strength and size disparity makes them further vulnerable to sexual coercion and abuse either by adult men or older children, and this is both a physical and psychological disadvantage. Whether men sexually abuse children or not, they are subject to the political, economic, and social advantages of a patriarchal society. Men also benefit from the preservation of a power structure that may negatively impact on the rights of children, and as a result, they (men) may neglect to take the crime of sexual abuse seriously or fight on children's behalf (Brownmiller, 1975; Meulenhart, Danoff-Burg, & Powch, 1996).

The feminist theory of sexual coercion is useful for this study as it explains the sexual abuse of children in the sense that it proves that men use sexual abuse as a process of intimidation and domination by which children are kept in a state of fear and powerlessness in the study area. This theory further explains this study in relation to the study area as it gives explanations for the motivation for child sexual abuse which is, to exert control over the children and not necessarily out of lust.

The strengths of this feminist theory of sexual coercion are that:

- i. it shifts blame from victim/survivor to perpetrator;
- ii. it moves from individual blame/cause to societal factors such as the political, economic, and social advantages embedded in the patriarchal society

However, it has been criticized in a number of ways:

- i. the belief that patriarchy privileges all men is not correct because there is diversity among men
- ii. the theory focuses on broad cultural causes and does not provide solutions at individual levels especially for the child victim(s).

### **2.1.1 Intersectional Theory**

Intersectional theory was propounded by Patricia Hill Collins who was born in 1948. This theory represents a community-based social theory that articulates a particular group's understanding of its oppression by intersections of race, gender and class and the struggle against that oppression. The central issue for intersectional theory is the understanding that children experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity (Anzaldúa, 1990). Against this premise, feminist theory of intersection is very relevant in explaining the various determinants of child sexual abuse in the study area.

The oppression in this sense is child sexual abuse which can be acute (always happening) or mild for individual victims in the study area depending on configurations such as family setting, level of poverty, residential area, family orientation, birth order, among others (Aptheker, 1989). The explanation for this variation is that children may potentially experience oppression on the basis of gender; female children are, nevertheless, differentially oppressed by the varied intersections of other arrangements of social inequality such as wealth, access to public goods, among others. Children from rich homes may participate mildly in the act not as a result of poverty, but due to threat or pressure which may be the opposite reason for why children from poor homes may participate. These vectors of oppression and privilege include not only gender but also class, race, global location, sexual abuser's authority over the child, sexual preference, and age.

Furthermore, in consonance with this study the theory, argues for the need for parents/guardians and institutions to set up prevention strategies to protect children from the claws of the abusers as well as the coping mechanisms for children who have been victims of sexual abuse. This will bring about the eventual triumph of justice for every sexually abused child in Lagos State. However, this theory has been criticized on the basis of how to conceptualize and empirically observe the interplay of multiple vectors of sexual abuse of children. Similarly, questions are raised as to how these intersectional factors co-exist in balance and hierarchy.

## **3 REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

Studies have publicized that probing the threat and shielding factors for child sexual exploitation, victimization, and perpetration allows practitioners, researchers and rule makers to better realize how to expand and put into action avoidance and intervention strategies (Whitaker, Le, Hanson, Baker, McMahon, Ryan, Klein & Donovan, 2008).

In a revise offered by Farah (2010) which focused on minor exploitation and neglect in relation to parental patterns of acceptance-rejection towards their offspring and the weight of demographic variables in Pakistani

socio-cultural scenery. An indigenously created Child Abuse Scale was utilized to make a distinction between minors with various levels and sorts of exploitation and disregard. Urdu form of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire for dad and mother, were utilized to observe the examples of child nurturing styles together with a statistic analysis. The assessment was concluded with an randomly chosen test of 200 children (100 young boys and 100 young girls) of age going from 8-12 years ( $M = 10.8$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ). The information was gathered from five urban communities of Punjab. The outcomes revealed that in contrast with somewhat abused children, seriously abused children saw their peers all the more dismissing. Results as well showed that mother's education and family unit size are striking determinants of child sexual exploitation.

Ijagbemi (2019) investigated the socio-cultural context, prevalence, determinants and prevention strategies of child sexual abuse in Lagos State, Nigeria. Five local governments (Ikeja-216; Shomolu-278; Lagos Mainland-219; Ojo-412 and Epe-125) making a total of 1250 respondents were used. Questionnaire and in-depth interview were adopted to obtain data. Both descriptive and inferential methods were engaged for data analysis. The study revealed that mothers late home coming at night, fear of living in the environment where 'area boys' hideout, father smoking cigarette and drinking alcohol without control, parents' extent of living together as husband and wife, the age of the child, the kind of person(s) the children lived with, the religion of the respondent and the respondents' fathers level of education are the determinants of Child Sexual Abuse.

Meinck, Cluver, Boyes and Mhlomo (2015) reviewed 23 quantitative studies, all of which revealed high levels of child sexual exploitation in varying samples of minors and fully developed persons. In spite of the actuality that reviews were diverse, a scope of connects of exploitation at a range of degrees of the Model of Ecologic Development were recognized. These incorporated network level variables (introduction to tormenting, sexual viciousness, and country/urban area), family unit level components (destitution, family unit savagery, and non-family unit), family unit level (guardian sickness specifically AIDS and emotional wellness issues, parental figure changes, family working, child rearing, guardian- child relationship, and substance abuse), and child-level elements (age, inability, physical wellbeing, conduct, and sex).

Paine and Hansen (2016) examined the factors influencing children to self-disclose sexual exploitation. Self-disclose of sexual exploitation of minors was fundamentally vital to initiate genuine and supportive intervention. The discoveries of the analysis verified that long postponements in disclosure and even nondisclosure were common. A total review of the clinical and research writing on CSA and a diagram of related assortments of writing were led.

Ezekiel, Mosha, Kisanga, Mpembeni, Anaali, Kamazima and Muhondwa (2017) investigated the factors, structures, setting of exploitation and culprits of child sexual exploitation in certain regions of Tanzania. Key witness interviews were conducted among grown-ups including guardians of the sufferers to investigate factors related with sexual exploitation of minors under 10 years of age in Tanzania. The meeting aide focused on factors of sexual exploitation of minors, the kind of perpetrators and the setting into which this exploitation take place. The authors found that frequencies of child sexual exploitation in Tanzania and the major structures were butt-centric and vaginal entrance and the most predisposed were young girls. The exploitation were rarely disclosed because of shame and embarrassment. The reasons for child sexual exploitation were poverty, want and corruption, fantasies and convictions, urbanization, isolated traditions and poor parental thoughtfulness.

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

This study engaged a review of appropriate pragmatic literatures on the determinants of sexual exploitation of minors. The accessible resources reviewed was keen on broad factors such as parenting complications, environmental child pressure and risk connected with collective and medial hazardous contents and exploitation.

In the critical review of pragmatic literature, author(s), focal point of the study, method of analysis adopted, targeted populace and sample used, including the findings were collated, summarized and discussed.

#### 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Child sexual exploitation occurs because of many factors working jointly all of which are, to a great point, beyond the control of the minor(s). While no child is invulnerable to this negative observable fact, there are children and family characteristics that considerably increase or lower risk of sexual exploitation. Amongst the determinants of child sexual exploitation are *parenting deficiencies* (parents living in severance, parents

smoking or consuming alcohol unruly, parents that come home lately after the close of work, poor rapport and bond with children in the act of parenting and children that are in want for parental care at certain age), *environmental intimidation, pressure or threat* (fearful children due to apparent insecure environment, unnecessary advances from neighbourhood and other forms of parental problems and bad pressure from peers) and *influence of social media* (regular access to the use of some of types social media)

## **5.1 Parenting Deficiencies**

The act of parenting is a responsibility that entails several activities. The expression of parenting include boosting the child's self-reliance, empowering influential methodology of seeing the child accomplishing something accurate, setting restrictions and staying sound with order, set aside a few minutes for the children in tuning in to them, being a well-mannered good model, making communication a need with no supposition, being adjustable and enthusiastic to change the child nurturing method, demonstrating true child nurturing admiration to the children and knowing ones needs and impediments in child nurturing so as to chip away at the shortcomings (Kids Health Medical Experts, 2019).

### *5.1.1 Parents Living in Separation*

Parents living in severance might find it hard to be effectual in the act parenting of their children. Children who live with two married biological parents are at a little jeopardy of sexual abuse. The danger of being sexually exploited increases where children live with step-parents or a single parent (Sedlak, Mettenburg, Basena, Petta, McPherson, Greene, & Li, 2010). Parental marital conflict has been recognized as a threat factor for sexual exploitation victimization.

### *5.1.2 Parents that Come Home Lately After the Close of Work*

Parental conduct goes a long way in determining whether the minor will be sexually exploited or not. Research has shown that childhood sexual exploitation often co-occurs with unpleasant family unit (Finkelhor, Ormrod & Turner 2009). The situation in which parents come home lately after the close of work will likely result to neglect of the child. Children that have physical or social concerns characteristically end up being sexually abused. It is not unprecedented for children who have been sexually battered to exhibit manifestations of disease, genital damage, stomach torment, intermittent urinary tract contamination or social issues.

### *5.1.3 Poor Relationship with Children in the Act of Parenting*

Absent and sensitively disconnected parenting (Butler, 2013) is one of the major factor that can encourage child sexual exploitation. It is imperative, in the act of parenting, that a good bond be established with the children. There are many a time that the children will have disquieting issues which they could not deal with because it is beyond what the child can handle. Being an indisputable friend of such child, he or she will feel safe to share the issue with the parent and get a fitting advice on the way forward or solution to the dilemma. Poor relationship between the child and the parent or guardian will lead to bad parenting after all (Ijagbemi, 2019).

### *5.1.4 Children that Lack Parental Care at Certain Age*

Furthermore, danger of child sexual exploitation tends to intensify as minors grow and develop (American Psychological Association, 2013). There were some suggestions that age as a risk factor functions in a different way for girls and boys, in that girls may be at heightened risk starting earlier and lasting longer than for boys (Putnam, 2013). Amid a number of characteristics that have been linked with increased risk of child sexual exploitation is the instance of minors that are in want of parental attention at certain age (Ijagbemi, 2019). This could be because of mother's educational training and family size (Farah, 2010). It has been found that most sexually harmed children were female with 65 percent of them being 10 years old or younger and that the average age for all children was 8½years (Lang, Rouget and Santen,1988). This implies that female children of ages 10 years and less are susceptible to sexual exploitation and thus need effective parenting at this age.

### *5.1.5 Fearful Children Due to Perceived Unsafe Environment*

The incapability of parent(s) to have the funds for safe environments probably due to low level of parents' schooling, which will be consequential to likelihood of low income, has also been found to be related with sexual assault of girls (Butler, 2013). Research proposed that with low educational achievement comes the possible low level of income and affordability of necessities of life (Butler, 2013). Lower family income

(poverty) and living in communities (environment) with from top to bottom rates of violence have also been identified as risk factors (Black, Heyman& Smith Slep, 2001).

#### **5.1.6 Undue Advances from Neighbourhood/Relatives**

Unnecessary advances have also been found as one of the promoting factors of the sexual exploitation of minors. According to Ezekiel et al, (2017), the act of child sexual exploitation are committed by people in close association with the children and those trusted by the children (including neighbours). Also, American Association of Suicidology (2014) discovered that most sexual perpetrators know the child they abuse. They may be family friends, neighbours, caregivers or babysitters. About one-third of perpetrators of the sexual abuse of minors are related to the child and most abusers are men (Medline Plus, 2015).

#### **5.1.7 Influence of Social Media (frequent access to the use of some of types social media)**

Social media have twisted into a characteristic piece of the consistent daily realities of children and youngsters, and it has turned out to be simpler to meet new persons online by means of games and chats. Unpardonably, this has equally unlocked new threats with respect to sexual exploitation recordings and images. According to Ijagbemi (2019), social media was found to be one of the influential factors of child sexual exploitation. Often, issues including child sexual exploitation has become identified through an inadvertent revelation of images on a computer or other gadget like television and can appear to develop 'out of nowhere' from a generally trusted and non-suspicious person. Most times, several unwelcome popups with insecure evidence effortlessly appear on starting up a system or device. Also, there are fears about a child being presented to indecent material or reached by somebody wrongly, by means of the internet or other ICT apparatuses like a cell phone as well as regular visit to or the utilization of certain sorts of social media pages with risky substance will probably advance sexual exploitation.

#### **5.1.8 Intimidating Environment**

According to Ijagbemi (2019) in an in-depth interview conducted for some of the sexually harmed children that came from homes and communities where there was a lot of dysfunctions in character, speech and behaviour, children are predisposed to sexual exploitation. In such communities, individuals consume liquor and smoke marijuana openly. From one of the case studies carried-out, the teenager that was sexually abused by one of the neighbours and was also sexually harmed by two other men in the community. Therefore, community or environment with such threatening conduct (where people drink alcohol and smoke marijuana publicly) can frighten children and will also encourage unnecessary advances towards them bringing about the possible occurrence of child sexual abuse.

#### **5.1.9 Other Forms of Parental Difficulties and Bad Influence from Peers**

As concerning the sex of the child as a factor that can influence child sexual exploitation, studies have unswervingly found that sufferers of child sexual exploitation are disproportionately females (Butler, 2013). Furthermore, other studies have observed that likened to male children, female children are at two to three times of higher danger of child sexual exploitation victimization (Black, Heyman& Smith, 2011). Thus, parents that found it hard to give appropriate training and care for female children will possibly make the female children susceptible to sexual exploitation. Other pre-disposable factors of child sexual exploitation comprise children in low socio-economic status families. Research has shown that they were three times as likely to be identified as a victim of child sexual exploitation. Children who live in countryside are almost two times more likely to be identified as sufferers of child sexual exploitation (Sedlak, Mettenburg, Basena, Petta, McPherson, Greene, & Li, 2010). Additionally, bad influence from peers is a prominent factor. Children whose friends had been involved in abuse or have seen others in the acts and likely to indulge in such conduct. Research has similarly shown that children who witness or are victims of other misconducts are significantly more likely to be sexually harmed (Finkelhor, Ormrod& Turner, 2010).

## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Sexual exploitation is an unusual challenge, different in many of its dimension from other types of child abuse, misconduct and child wellbeing difficulties. The menace of abusing children sexually has become a comprehensive concern in recent times. Thus, this study has assessed the determinants of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). It was found that childrearing deficiencies such as parents existing in separation might find it difficult to be effective in the act of parenting of their children and children who live with a single parent that has a live-in partner are at the highest risk. Parental substance abuse has also been found to be linked with increased risk of sexual victimization of children. Also, negative influence from peers is a prominent factor.

Children whose friends had engaged in abuse or have seen others in the acts and likely to indulge in such behaviour. Social media have turned into a characteristic piece of the regular daily existences of children and youngsters, and it has turned out to be simpler to meet new individuals online by means of games and chat. This study recommended precautionary and protective measures by first tackling parenting deficiencies (by the parents) will go a long way in curbing sexual exploitation of minors. In addition, government should lead in environmental safety by formulating and adopting policies that will improve security and safety in the society, and the children should be educated at home, school, religious centres on exposing of undue and unnecessary advances from opposite sex and avoidance of social media that promote wrong sexual behaviour.

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