

An investigation in to the pattern of child abuse in Bauchi State, Nigerian.

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to investigate the patterns of child abuse in Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State. 279 respondents whose ages ranged between 12 to 24 years old participated in the study. The respondents were selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques from their respective schools. Self-administered questionnaire was employed by the researchers as an instrument of data collection. The findings revealed that the children in Toro Local Government Area suffered serious political and physical abuse some of which include punishing children with hunger, using sticks and belts on children, burnings and cutting of children body, children working for many hours in farm, children engaging in risky business like mining, charcoal burns and street hawking. The study recommends that the Bauchi State Ministry of Education in collaboration with the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should adopt the Child Abuse Preventive Measures for inclusion and implementation in the secondary schools across the state. This can be achieved through organizing of workshops to train principals, health and physical educators. Also, through synergy among the Bauchi State Ministries of Education, Youth and Sports, Information, Culture and Tourism and Higher Education in lending logistic and manpower support to the secondary schools in the implementation of the Child Abuse Preventive measures in schools.

Keywords: Child abuse, Child abuse prevention measures, Economic abuse, Pattern of abuse and Physical abuse.

Introduction

Child abuse is a global problem which has attracted the attention of researchers, government and non-governmental organizations over the years. Child abuse is a social problem which varies from family to family in different cultures and societies. Child abuse manifests in different dimensions across the globe from Europe to America and from Asia to Africa. The situation in West Africa, however, is undermined by poverty, malnutrition, child labor, rural–urban migration, ignorance and lack of education, parental lack of financial support and maintenance of children (Ike & Twumasi-Ankrah, 1999).

The Global Fund for Children (2007) asserts that children in West Africa are more likely to be raped, trafficked, beaten or abused and are less likely to go to school, receive proper health care or

be properly nourished compared with fifteen years ago, despite binding legislations meant to improve children's situation. Child abuse violates the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (Akhilomen, 2012). Child abuse, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009), refers to the maltreatment or injury of a child by an adult or adults. Such abuse(s) can be physical, emotional, sexual or a combination of the trio. Abuse(s) might be perpetrated by one person or by several persons, within a family or outside it, and in public or in private. The term can simply be referred to as the ill-treatment of a child by his/her parent or any other adult responsible for the child's health or welfare (Ezeoke, Awam & Enekwe, 2009).

In Nigeria, child abuse remains a major social problem that requires urgent attention. The incidence of child abuse amongst children is becoming alarming in the country and government's efforts towards combating this social ill have yielded little or no result at all. In an effort to alleviate the plight of Nigerian children, the Federal Government of Nigerian passed the Child Rights Act (CRA) on 31 July, 2003. This law was specifically made to protect Nigerian children from any form of abuse and neglect. It incorporates all the rights and responsibilities of children and consolidates all laws which provide for the protection and care of Nigerian children into a single legislation. Children under the English Common Law (2012) were considered as property owned by the parents, particularly fathers, who had great latitude over the treatment and discipline of their children. Such legal view was eventually incorporated into the early laws in the United States (as applied or operated in Nigeria) as well (Al- Shail, Hassan, Aldowaish & Kattan, 2012). Abuse of children is widespread in poor countries of Africa (including Nigeria), Asia and Latin America where child labor (a cultural practice which encourages children to be hardworking in order to support their family income) is part of the maltreatment (socialization processes) children experience as they grow. Child abuse also exists in advanced countries of Europe, North America and rich Asian countries, but at a minimal levels (Imo, 2015).

Bauchi State is located in North-Eastern Nigeria and is characterized by urban and rural areas. The main occupation of Bauchi people are farming and trading. Farmers' children are fully integrated in farming activities (Torimiro, 2009). Children are given out by parents as domestic servants and their education being neglected, many children take to street for trading or hawking, while others have become "almajeri" (street children). Child prostitution and child trafficking are also prevalent in Bauchi State (Ebigbo, 2003). Furthermore, the current spate of sectarian violence in the North-East also exposes school children, orphans and vulnerable children to abuse and neglect. There are studies on child abuse and neglect in Nigeria including Bauchi State. A report from United Nations Children Fund (2012) indicated that children from aged five to fourteen years, 29 per cent are involved in child labour in Nigeria, including Bauchi State.

Parents in Toro Local Government Area give out their daughters for marriage as early as nine years, send boys for "Almajiris" (street children) as early as 5years and neglect secular education. These can lead to adverse effects on the safety, health and moral development of the child.

Literature has revealed that there is child abuse and neglect in Nigeria and Bauchi State in particular. Child abuse is exposing children to painful and unwarranted suffering knowingly or unknowingly Denga (June, 03, 2021). Denga continues that both male and female children are abused in some cases by their parents, guardians, teachers, peers and the society in various forms.

Millions of Nigerian children face the problems of disadvantage, discrimination, abuse and exploitation in some appealing circumstances. According to Hodges (2001), abuses meted out on children and sometimes women remain a major challenge in Nigeria because it compounds the risk of survival and development of children, thus, requiring special protection measures if they are to be addressed effectively. The patterns of child abuse can take different forms. It might be in the form of physical assault, rape, seduction, abduction, child labor, abandonment, trafficking, malnourishment, street-hawking, neglect, child-begging, deprivation, child marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), illegal fostering and exploitation, etc. (UNICEF, 2013). Therefore, the problem of child abuse has generated a lot of concern in the society. This is because it has adverse effects on the development and the upbringing of the child. It affects the child's physiological wellbeing as well as his adjustment to his cultural and social environment. Many reports suggest that child abuse is in the form of neglect, abandonment, maltreatment, deprivation, starvation which was meted out on the child by parents or guardian as a corrective measure or disciplinary procedure to bring sanity has done more harm than good (Kisekkaa, 1985). Bowlby (1973) has shown that abused children exhibit more aggressive behaviors; have a poor concept and have difficulty in developing meaningful relationship in the environment.

Therefore, the cases of child abuse are alleged to prevail in Toro local government area and not much attention has been given to finding out the various patterns of child abuse. So, this study attempts to investigate the physical and economic patterns of child abuse in Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State

Conceptual Clarification

Physical Abuse: This type of abuse usually involves shaking, beating, hitting, burning and at times biting a child. Physical abuses may involve physical aggression directed at a child by an adult or someone responsible for the child's health or welfare. Ifeyinwa (2004) argues that physical abuse can result from severe discipline such as using a belt on a child, or any type of physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition. A major reason for physical abuse, according to UNICEF (2007), is economic hardship on parents or care givers and also as a result of the breakdown of traditional family unity.

Studies by Yu (2007), the US Department of Justice (2007) and Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence -ACADV (2010), indicated that child physical abuse has different forms including physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats thereof; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; and passive/covert abuse and deprivation. In addition, NSPCC (2014) identified burning, drowning, hitting, poisoning, scalding, shaking, suffocating and throwing object at a child as physical abuse. The

severity of injuries may range from relatively minor (bruises and lacerations) to moderate (scarring and abrasions) and severe (burns, sprains or fractured bones). In this study, physical child abuse refers to any act that is intentional, which leads to harm or injury to the child. In many cases, these forms of physical child abuse occur because parents see children as tool that can be manipulated the way they like without considering their rights. From the above information, children fall victim of different types of child abuse irrespective of sex.

Economic Abuse

The Labour Act Cap L1, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN), 2004 Section 33(2) (e) of the Labor Act provides that employment of citizens below the age of eighteen is prohibited unless employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural, or domestic character, and approved by the minister. Also, a child shall not be required to lift, carry, or move anything that is as heavy as too likely to impair or injure his or her physical development. Further, section 49 (1) prohibits child slavery and exploitation by stating that young persons shall not be under apprenticeship for more than five years. Additional provisions include the prohibition of children being employed at night or employed in a vessel, restriction on working hours, and registration of young persons in an organization.

Child labour is defined as “any form of work likely to have adverse effects on the child’s safety, health, and moral development (Betcherman, 2004). It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children, deprives them of the opportunity to attend school (International Labour Organization, 2002). Nigerian children work in a wide range of sectors and industries. In rural areas, children mostly work in agriculture. They are responsible for planting, weeding, harvesting crops, and tending to livestock. In urban areas, they work as vendors, shoe shiners, car washers, drug peddlers, and construction workers (Okafor, 2010). In most cases, child labor is determined by the family’s economic status, the size of the household, and the parent’s level of education (Okpukpara, 2006). It affects development and stands as an impediment to achieving sustainable development goals such as poverty reduction, and universal primary education (Betcherman, 2004).

High food prices reduce diversity and nutritional quality of the diet, and even quantity (Semba, 2010). This is likely to impact on the most vulnerable groups in both industrialized and developing countries. The poorest populations from urban areas are the most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition (Hawkwa 2010).

According to Grotberg (2000), argued that if a child decides to involve in workforce, he may face three resilience factors, namely: external power (I have), personal power (I’m) and interpersonal skills (I can). Having external support (I have), i.e. the support of family (parents) to work, are able to survive despite having to work with all the risks they may face. Thus, the child ability to develop personal power (I’m), which is loved and liked by others (family members, employers and co-workers), can love and empathize with others, be proud of themselves, independent and responsible, and have hope, as well as trust in a better future. While the ability of interpersonal (I

can), namely the ability of child laborers to manage various stimulation, measure self-temperament and to be able to express or communicate their feelings to the family and also others. Elfrianto (2007) in his research concluded that children feel better getting money every week, through working playmates. That means, the children are useful to themselves and their parents.

Theoretical Framework

In order to have a theoretical alignment for this research, conflict theory of Karl Marx (1848) has been used in analyzing the contemporary child abuse patterns in Toro Local Government Area, Bauchi State. The choice of the theory was precipitated by its popularity and analytical strength in explaining a wide range of social phenomena, including poverty, discrimination and domestic violence because many types of societal conflicts and economic struggle throughout history can be explained using the central tenets of conflict theory. Karl Marx stressed that all elements of a society structure depend on its economic structure.

The relevance of this theory to this study cannot be overemphasizes because all the patterns of child abuse emanated as a results of inequalities between the rich and the poor and lack of good governance and corruption among the citizens which expose the children of not well to do families into different kind of poor economic activities or child abuse for their survival and this send a strong signal of what would happen in the future if the issue of inequalities have not been address in Nigeria, in order to have an egalitarian societies so that the child of bourgeoisie and proletariat can attend the same school and class and run their lives without problems.

Research Methodology

The study used quantitative approach as the research design to investigate the patterns of child abuse in Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State. Based on this therefore, the researchers used survey research design because it is a method of gathering data from large sample of people relatively quickly and cheaply (Ary, et. al., 2010). The population of this study included secondary school students of Government secondary school Tilde Fulani, Government Girls College Nabardo and Technical College Gumau which were (346,000). But the target population was only SS 1 to SS 3 students which were 1,290 in number. To determine the sample size of this study, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table was used in which according to the table in a population of 1,290 the sample size was 297. Furthermore, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used by researchers in order to get a representative sample of the population. In order to drawn or get the respondents of this study from the three secondary schools, the entire target population was divided into different strata, and then randomly selected the final subjects from each stratum (School). According to Hunt & Tyrrell (2001), stratified sampling procedure could enable a researcher to determine desired levels of sampling precision for each group, it is a most effective technique and it gives the most representative sample of the population required. It is also a technique that ensures every stratum has equal percentage of or representation (Siti & Ruziah, 2012. p.44). Moreover, it is suitable for College or University study (Babbie, 2001).

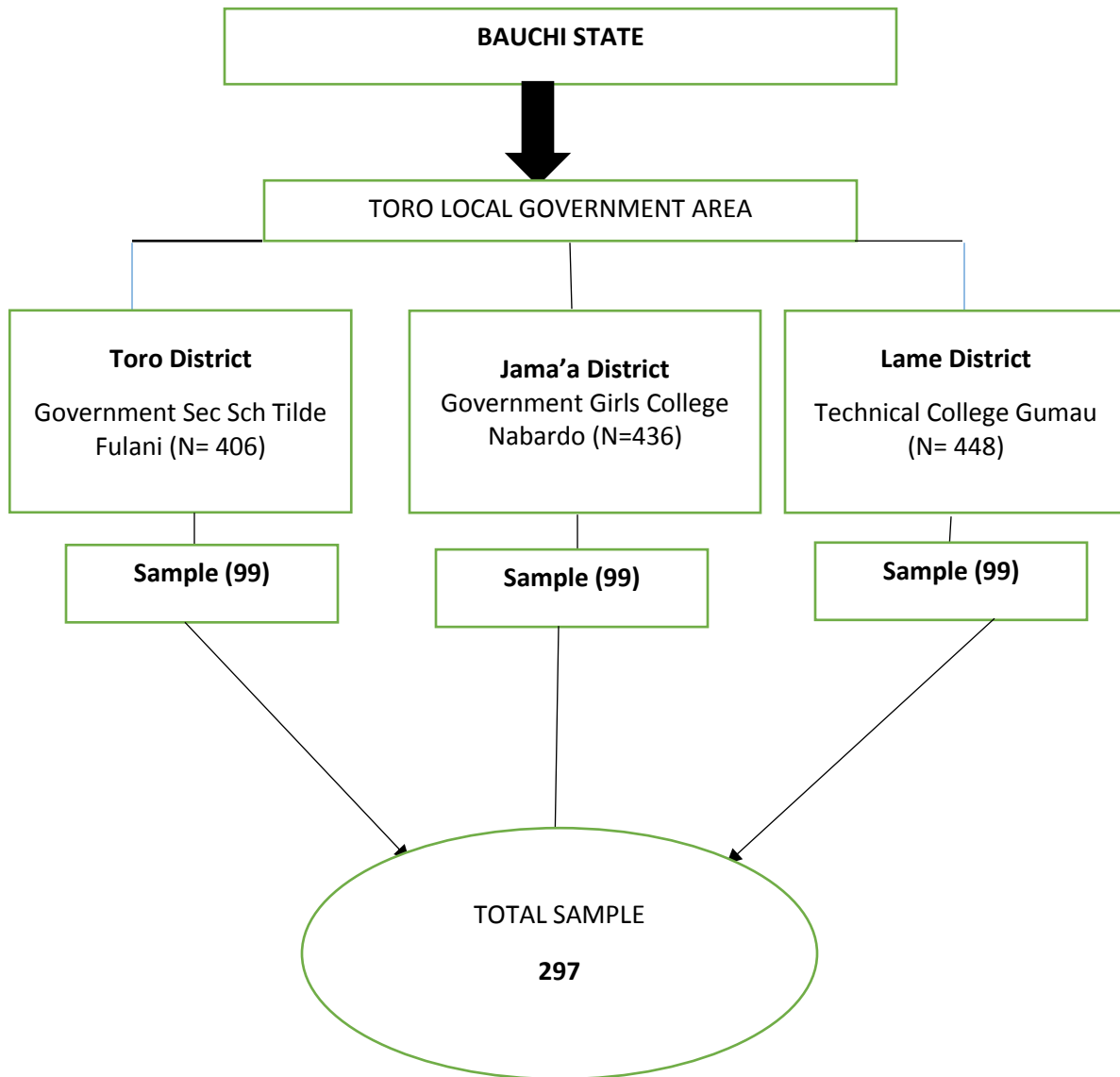


Figure 1. Shows the Process and Procedure of Data Collection done by the Researchers and Sample of Each Secondary School in the Study.

Finally, the questionnaire was used as the basic instrument of data collection to get information from the respondents. The researchers employed closed-ended questionnaire because they are easy to fill, save time, very confidential to the respondents and it is objective in nature (Owens, 2002).

According to Dillman (2000), the well-established methods of data collection within the context of social science is the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected.

Results and Discussions

Here the respondents were asked question with respect to their demographic characteristic such as sex, age, status.

Table: 1. Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	145	48.8
Female	152	51.2
Total	297	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage
12-15	40	13.5
16-19	93	31.3
20-23	125	42.1
24 & Above	39	13.1
Total	297	100
Status of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
SS1	83	27.9
SS2	103	34.7
SS3	111	37.4
Total	297	100

The table above shows that 145 respondents representing 48.8% while 152 respondents representing 51.2% were Female. This shows that majority of the respondents were female. On the age, 12-15 years were 13.3% and the largest percentage of respondents were 42.1% falls on age bracket 20-23 years and respondents of age 24 and above were the least with 13.1% respectively. On respondents’ status, SS1 were 27.9% followed by respondents of SS2 with 34.7% and lastly respondents of SS3 were 37.4% which has highest percent of respondents respectively.

Physical abuse of children in Toro Local Government.

Table2: Are children punished with hunger?

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	149	50.2
No	128	43.1
Can’t say	20	6.7
Total	297	100

In table 2, majority of the respondents agreed that children are been punished with hunger 50.2%, while 43.1% of the respondents have contrary views whereas 6.7% of the respondents didn’t express their views. This shows that children are punished by hunger not because there is no food to eat rather for the children to feel the hunger as punishment, thinking that the children will not

repeat the same mistake, not knowing that the hunger will create another issue which may risk the child life, because they must eat.

Table 3: Are sticks and belts used in punishment children?

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	189	63.6
No	108	36.4
Can't say	00	00
Total	297	100

As indicated in table 3, which revealed that 63.6% of respondents agreed that children are punished with sticks and belts while 36.4% of the respondents are in disagreement, all respondents express their view. This shows that both Parent, Teachers and others use sticks and belt on children which may cause serious harm on the child wellbeing or create permanent disabilities on the child such as losing sight or damaging a very important organ.

Table 4: Are burnings and cutting used as punishment on children?

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	94	31.6
No	201	67.7
Can't say	02	0.7
Total	297	100

In Table 4, 31.6% of the respondents are with the view that burning and cutting are use as punishment on children while the larger percentage of 67.7% are with contrary views, and 0.7% were undecided. This shows that most of the respondents are not in agreement that burning and cutting are used in punishing children in Toro Local Government. This shows that other means are use but not the above mention.

Economic abuse on children in Toro Local

Table: 5. Do children work on the farm for more than five hours?

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	244	82.2
No	53	17.8
Can't say	00	00
Total	297	100

Table 5, shows that majority 82.2% of the respondents are on the view that children work on farm for more than five hours while respondents with contrary views are 17.8% of the sample, all respondents expressed their views. This shows that most of the children work for more than five hours because of the environment and nature of the society they found themselves where everything is based on how powerful one he/she is economically.

Table 6: Are many children engaged in risk business such as mining, charcoal burning, street hawking etc?

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	256	86.2
No	38	12.8
Can't say	03	1.0
Total	297	100

In table 6, 86.2% of the respondents agreed that many children are engaged in risk business such as mining, charcoal burning, and street hawking which was the largest percent of the respondents, while 12.8% of the respondents are having contrary views whereas 1.0% of the respondents are undecided. This revealed that most of the children are engaged in risk business which can easily exposed them to venerable lives such as stealing, prostitution, street ganging or can leads the children death.

Conclusion

This study has examined the patterns of child abuse, particularly physical and economic abuse on children in Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The findings of the study revealed that children in Toro are seriously abused, with that they suffer tremendous setback arising from high level of illiteracy, thug, early death, maternal mortality, child mortality, deathly diseases etc. Therefore, the findings revealed that in the areas there are insecurity such as robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, prostitutions, and lack of tolerance which led to political setback, economic meltdown and social restlessness among Toro communities. Others problems include unemployment, lack of portable water, poor feeding, lack of access to good balance diet and difficult access to good healthcare service. The findings of the study revealed that the pattern of child abuse in Toro Local Government Area constitute a great issue to livelihood and security in the communities. Unfortunately, this problem, is not a natural disaster but a manmade issues that can be address.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested;

- i. This study recommended that the State Bauchi State Ministry of Education in collaboration with State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should adopt the Child Abuse Preventive Measures for inclusion and implementation in all secondary schools across the State. This can be achieved through employing the train the trainers' workshops by experts to train principals, Health and Physical Educators; it helps them to detect children who are at potentially at risk, religious teachers; it helps to guide student on the right moral instruction and Guidance Counselors will be equipped with skills in handling issues that concerns child abuse.
- ii. More also, the Bauchi State Ministry of Education in collaboration with Ministry of

Youth and Sport, Ministry of Information Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Ministry of Higher Education should lend logistic and manpower support to the secondary schools in the implementation of the Child Abuse Preventive measures in schools. Lastly, close monitoring of the parents at risk is needed, correcting cultural beliefs which promote high risk behavior is necessary.

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