

# **Historical-Social Antecedents of Parents and Social Sustainance: A Synegeical Determinant of Child Abuse in Some Parts of Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a prevalent social issue that instigates severe health problems around the globe. Its health implications go beyond the immediate and could have a long-lasting effect on the psychosocial life of such individual. This study identifies the parental role and associated factors contributing to the occurrence of CSA in the context of Nigerian society. The main objective of the study was to investigate the prevalence of CSA in Nigeria society, identify the factors responsible for a passive parental role towards CSA and identify the effects of CSA on Nigeria society. Across-sectional research design was adopted, using questionnaires for data collection. Random sampling technique was utilized selecting 200 respondents (Male: 110, female: 90) from different walks of life. Research Questions were addressed using Chi-square, while the formulated hypothesis was tested employing correlation test. The findings of the study depict the parental role and its associated factors as highly implacable towards CSA in Nigerian society. This was evidence in the positive correlation between parental roles and perception towards CSA [ $r(198) = .67, p < .05$ ]. Conclusively, the study presents the severity of CSA, identifies the challenges faced by parents in Nigeria society and suggests conceivable ways for the eradication of this issue.

## **Introduction**

The menace of abuse in the society keeps increasing in a geometric pattern. This is a global occurrence, however, the trend in cultural imbibe society of Nigeria crave for concern, especially among children. The implication of child abuse, to the individual, parents, family, and society at large are numerous to ignore its occurrence (Adebayo, 2014). The poor state of security in the country is definitely a factor creating chances for reinforcement of such negative activities; however, this should not be a clause for the continuation in the perpetuation of such act within a moral society. From birth till the attainment of adult hood, humans are expected to be under guardians. This is a duty expected of the parents, thus the

parents plays typical role in the protection of their children from harms-way and also guide them on proper developmental process (Scarzello et al., 2016; Vasilyeva, 2016). The term parental role is often used to explain the responsibilities of parents during their entire course of child upbringing irrespective of socioeconomic and other factors (Taylor, 2000).

Child abuse ranges from mild emotional or psychological assault to physical assault and could even result to death (Ramirez, 2011). It occurs with a desecration or malfunctioning in the value of the fundamental of a child's psychosocial being. Child sexual abuse (CSA) which is a form of abuse is explained as the act of using the child for sexual gratification either by the care giver or any other adult or older adolescent. It involves making inappropriate touches or interactions with a child through, bribes, pressure, deception, power or demands. This touches could involve penetration of the genital organ in the female and could even be explained when the child is exposed to adult genital organs for the pleasure of the adult.

The inconclusive explanations for the reasons behind certain forms of sexual abuse perpetuated by adults on female infants makes it difficult to consider strong preventive modality from the angle of the adult, however, a more pre-conscious behavior from the child's care giver or parents could help manage the situations, especially when it's not incest. The psychological, physical and emotional consequences of child sexual abuse live a long lasting scar in the life of the child and hinder them from conforming properly into their society at both immediate and later life. Some of the resulting implications of these are anxiety, anti-social behaviors, depression, dislike for opposite gender, post-traumatic stress and lots more. It is thus essential to research and have better understanding of the association between possible preventive channels (that is parental and social sustenance) and the experience of sexual abuse among children.

### **Literature Review**

The primary relationship with a child is with the parent and their roles have direct impact on the child's personality and upbringing. Several factors had been identified around the parents that could contribute towards or buffer the occurrence of sexual abuse in children (Isaranurug et al., 2001). Some of these are the family structure and resources, family size and household composition, parents' personality and behavioural characteristics, and domestic violence in the immediate home (Bardi & Borgognini-Tari, 2001; Dubowitz & Black, 2001). The experience of stress and social isolation of the parents was also a related factor. It was explained that stress resulting from loss of income, health related problem, change in job, or other areas of the family environment (Bardi & Borgognini-Tari, 2001). This experience limits the attention given to the child and creates lapses and makes the child prone to abuse from significant others, especially within their immediate environment.

Based on the incessant occurrence of abuse, educationists have attempted to develop several awareness and prevention programs that would help in the prevention of CSA and rehabilitation of victimized children. Howbeit, the role of parents in this context is highly significant (Leventhal, Murphy & Asnes 2010).

Ever since the recognition in the 1970s of the sexual mistreatment of children as a widespread problem, professionals have wrestled with how to conceptualize and define CSA (Haugaard 2000). Although formulating a universally accepted definition is complicated by several theoretical and ideological considerations, some agreement has emerged among professionals regarding the defining features of sexual abuse. These characteristics are captured by the most recent. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which defines CSA as “the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually

### **Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse in Nigeria**

As of 2013 statistics, Nigeria has almost half of its population (46%), as children below age 15 (National Demographic and Health Survey, 2013). If the facts and figures of research on child sexual abuse in Sub Saharan Africa are anything to hold onto, one wonders what the Nigerian context of the situation will be. The recognized age of sexual consent as pronounced by the Nigerian National Assembly is 18 (Ezeamalu, 2015), implying that any sexual activity involving a person less than 18 in Nigeria, is tagged child sexual abuse. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) guidelines (2015), has also defined sexual violence as sexual abuse not only including “forcing someone to have sex, but it can also include having sex with someone unable to refuse due to disability, illness, intimidation, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs”. Based on this, the reviewed studies fall within the limits of this definition, describes the experiences of some children and adolescents in Nigerian homes and communities.

### **Consequences of Child Sexual Abuse in Nigeria**

The consequences of CSA on the Nigerian child cannot be overemphasized. These implications may be because most CSA is nonconsensual, i.e. against the child’s will. The child is often left with trauma, depression, guilt, self-blame, mental health disorder (Omorodion, 2009, Abayomi, 2014, Adeosun, 2015), juvenile delinquency (Abayomi, 2014), secrecy and lack of trust (Adeosun, 2015), unwanted pregnancy, abortion, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV/AIDS (Ikechebelu, et al. 2008), enhanced sexual risk behaviour (Olley, 2008) and a reduced interest in school, truancy and ultimately thwarted academics (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015). This list is by no means exhaustive, it is simply based on the twenty Nigerian authored reviewed articles, yet it aligns with the consequences of some other studies (Lalor & McElvaney, 2004; Worku, 2011; Singh et al., 2014) have previously identified.

Singh et al. (2014) categorized these consequences into Psychological (trauma, low self-esteem, depression, guilt, self-blame and mental health disorder), physical (unwanted pregnancy, STIs and HIV/AIDS); behavioral (truancy, juvenile delinquency, sexual risk behaviors’) and interpersonal (secrecy, lack of trust). The type of consequences CSA leaves on the victim is grievous and differs from child to child and may also depend on the kind of support system he or she has from the immediate family and others around (Okunola & Ojo, 2012). Some scholars think

that the grievous consequences of CSA on a child may be because most sexual abuse perpetrators are persons close to the victim (Obisesan et al., 1999; Abdulkadir et al., 2011; Akhiwu, Umanah, & OluEDO, 2013; Abayomi, 2014) and may include neighbors, siblings, parent to child, stepparents, step-siblings including persons of authority to the child such as teachers. Accurately from a survey of sexual abuse in Minna, Abdulkadir et al. (2011) reported that all their participants (boys and girls) had adult male perpetrators who were neighbors to the victims. The study of Akhiwu et al. (2013) also highlighted that out of 1028 cases treated at the Police medical Centre, Benin, 88.8% of the victims, indicated their perpetrators, were known to them. Most perpetrators were said to be either neighbour, acquaintances, blood relations, figures of authority, e.g. teachers (Akhiwu, et al. (2013); Adeleke, Olowokere, Hassan, Komolafe & Asekun-Olarinmoye, 2012, cited in Akinlusi, Rabi, Olawepo, Adewunmi, Ottun & Akinola, 2014).

Literature revealed that some samples indicated which were from clinical records from hospitals. For example, in the review of Bugaje, et al. (2012), the number of cases was reported to be 33, 313, meanwhile, only 20 of them were sexually abused. This shows that hospital records do not necessarily present an accurate picture of CSA prevalence because most abuse victims do not disclose (Adeosun, 2015). It appears those that get to the clinic are often cases of rape where tears and lacerations (Ige 2012) have occurred and the parents of the victims are so concerned that they could not but visit the clinic. This implies that if more non-clinical studies are conducted, a more accurate picture of actual prevalence may be revealed.

It is evident that there has been high prevalence of CSA generally and there are numerous consequences associated with it. The knowledge of the perceptions of parents and significant others is essential as a determining factor for the prevention of CSA. When parents have adequate knowledge of the implications of CSA and portray negative attitude toward its occurrence, it will enhance their likely hood of behaving in ways that could prevent such acts. There are findings in some aspects of the world (Saudi Arabia, Botswana and Swaziland) recoding adequate knowledge of child sexual abuse among parents (Al Rammah et al., 2018; Mathoma et al., 2006). Do et al., (2019) was of the opinion that age gender and education level could determine the perceptions and actions towards preventing sexual abuse. However, these were among the children and not their parents. The present study seeks to elaborate on the perception of the parents and how these could relate to their actions in preventing the occurrence of child sexual abuse. Based on the literature, the following research questions were raised and also one hypothesis was formulated.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the perception of male and females on the existence of CSA problems around the world?
2. What is the public perception on the relevance of having sexual abuse preventive education in schools?
3. Do social factors determine the impact of positive parental roles on child sexual protection?

4. Does educational level affect the perception of engaging children in sexual abuse-related discussion?
5. Does educational level affect the perception of permitting children to participate in sexual abuse prevention education in schools?
6. Does parents' educational level determine the provision of helping guides on prevention modalities for CSA their children?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant relationship between parental role and perception of child sexual abuse

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design to investigate the peril of CSA in Nigeria society. The data was collected from two local governments; Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta South local government (Ogun State, Nigeria). The study applied a multistage simple method in selecting an appropriate sample to represent the entire population. Purposively, two local government areas were sampled within Ogun State. Random sampling techniques were further used to select communities and locations within the selected local government areas. Lastly, random sampling was again used in selecting 200 respondents with ages ranging between 28 and 45 years (Male= 110 and female= 90). They responded to a valid and structured questionnaire containing 4 sections. The first includes items measuring the socio-demographic features of the respondents. The second includes face validated 7-items on related aspects of the research questions and this was piloted to obtain a test-retest reliability coefficient value of .65. Section C contains a 5-item self-developed measure of parental role on child development. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree with 3 as indifferent. Piloting this phase, a Chronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient value of .78 was obtained. Lastly was section D that includes a 6-item self-developed measure on perception towards child sexual abuse. The scale had a Chronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient value of .87 in the pilot test conducted in the study. Frequency and percentage distributions were adopted to test the respondents' social-demographic characteristics, chi-square test was adopted to analyse the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to test the formulated hypothesis.

## Results

Presented here are the result of descriptive and inferential analysis of data related to CSA, parental role, and associated factors.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

Demographic	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	55.0
	Female	90	45.0
Age group	18-22 years	36	18.0
	22-26 years	56	28.0
	26-30 years	60	30.0
	above 30 years of age	48	24.0
Marital Status	Married	173	86.5
	Single	27	13.5
Family Size	2-4	77	38.5
	5-7	84	42.0
	Above 7	39	19.5
Family Type	Nuclear type	39	19.5
	Joint family type	125	62.5
	Extended family type	36	18.0
Education	Postgraduate	39	19.5
	Graduate	56	28.0
	Vocational Training/ Secondary School	62	31.0
	Primary School	25	12.5
	Other Qualification	18	9.0
Occupation	Government sector employed	57	28.5
	Private-sector jobs	56	28.0
	Local farmers	25	12.5
	Unemployed	62	31.0
Monthly income	₦15,000	56	28.0
	₦20,000	46	23.0
	Above ₦50,000	36	18.0
	Unemployed youth and housewives	62	31.0

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents which includes gender, educational backgrounds, family size and type, occupation and monthly income, etc. it was observed that respondents belonged to different sectors of life, having diversities in family size, structure, and revenues. This justified the distribution of the respondents and limits possibilities of biases.

**Table 2**  
**Chi Square Summary on Gender Variance in the Perception of the Existence of the Problem of CSA Around the World**

Gender	The problem of CSA exists around the world.				Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Female	6	2	16	56	80
Male	0	1	46	73	120
Total	6	3	62	129	200
<b>Chi-square test result</b>					
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
15.719	3	.001			

The result in Table 2 indicated that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the problem of CSA exists around the world. However, the number of those that disagree with the statement was higher among female respondents compared to the male respondents. The chi-square result indicated that the observed variances were valid for conclusion ( $X^2= 15.719$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, it indicated that both males and females had a similar perception of the existence of the problems of CSA all over the world. However, the numbers of females that negated the perception were higher than that of males.

**Table 3**  
**Chi Square Summary on Gender Variance in the Perception of Children Getting Sexual Abuse Prevention Education in School**

Gender	Children should get sexual abuse prevention education in school.				Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Female	3	5	46	26	80
Male	16	68	23	13	120
Total	19	73	69	39	200
<b>Chi-square test result</b>					
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
70.067	3	.000			

The result in Table 3 revealed that a large number of the sampled female (72) and just 36 of the sampled males concur with the idea that children should get sexual abuse prevention education in school. The chi-square result indicated that the observed variances were valid for conclusion ( $X^2= 70.067$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implied that there were differences in the perception of males and females on the view that children should get sexual abuse prevention education in school. This was in such a way that most of the sampled females had the perception, while more of the males did not. However, the overall distributions indicated that most of the

respondents concur with the idea that children should get sexual abuse prevention education in school. Such training will protect children from any probability of sexual abuse victimization in their lives.

**Table 4**  
**Chi Square Summary on Gender Variance in the Perception that Positive Parental Role is Affected by Social Factors**

Gender	I believe that a positive parental role is suffered due to social factors, i.e., parental attitude, poverty, moral values, cultural and demographic differences, etc.				Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Female	11	2	65	2	80
Male	1	0	46	73	120
Total	12	2	111	75	200
<b>Chi-square test result</b>					
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
75.832	3	.000			

It was noted in Table 4 that the largest number of the respondents (111) agreed with the perception that positive parental roles are affected by social factors. On the bases of gender, most of the responding females (65) agreed, while most of the responding female (73) strongly agreed. However, those that strongly disagree among females (11) were higher compared to the males (1). The chi square result confirm that the variances noted in the frequencies were valid for conclusion ( $X^2=75.832$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implied that male and female had different perceptions towards the impact of social factors on positive parental roles.



**Table 5**  
**Chi Square Summary Showing the Impact of Education Level on the Perception about the discussion of Sexual Abuse-Related Issues with Children**

Education	Discussing sexual abuse-related issues with children is not a healthy activity.					Total
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Above	3	6	0	9	0	18
Graduate	1	44	0	11	0	56
Vocational training	0	0	1	22	0	23
Intermediate	1	17	0	0	0	18
Matric	0	2	1	18	0	21
Post-Graduate	1	36	1	1	0	39
Primary	0	1	1	1	22	25
Total	6	106	4	62	22	200
<b>Chi-square test result</b>						
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)				
305.586	24	.000				

Note: A=Agree, D= Disagree, N= Neutral, SA= Strongly Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree

Table 5 showed responses on the impact of education level on perception about discussing sexual abuse-related issues with children. It was noted that large numbers of the respondents (106) negated (disagree) this statement that discussing sexual abuse-related issues with children is not a healthy activity. The chi-square result also affirmed that the variances in the responses along with educational attainment were significant ( $X^2= 305.586$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implied that the highest educational attainment of the respondents determines their perception towards the benefits of discussing sexual abuse-related issues with children. This was such that most of the respondents that had highest level of negation with the statement that said discussing sexual abuse-related issues with children is not a healthy activity were graduates (44). This was followed by post-graduate fellows and the least which on the contrary supported that such discussion was not a healthy activity as those with primary school qualification.

**Table 6**  
**Chi Square Summary Showing the Impact of Education Level on the Perception about Allowing Children to Learn Sexual Abuse Prevention Education in Schools**

Education	I allow my children learn sexual abuse prevention education in schools					Total
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Above	0	3	0	11	4	18
Graduate	0	6	2	12	36	56
Vocational training	0	17	2	4	0	23
Intermediate	0	0	1	2	15	18
Matric	0	19	1	1	0	21
Post-Graduate	0	0	15	9	15	39
Primary	0	23	0	2	0	25
Total	0	68	21	41	70	200
<b>Chi-square test result</b>						
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)				
193.194	24	.000				

Note: A=Agree, D= Disagree, N= Neutral, SA= Strongly Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree

The responses on statement relating to the impact of educational attainment on perception about allowing children to learn sexual abuse prevention education in schools was presented in Table 6. It was noted that the variances in the observed distributions were valid for conclusion based on the chi-square result ( $X^2= 193.194$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implied that the responses could be generalized for the study population. The result indicated that most of the respondents generally (111) supported the idea that they allow their children to learn sexual abuse prevention education in schools. Based on educational attainment, the graduates had the highest level of strongly agree (36) and agreement (12), while this was followed by the post-graduate persons. In summary, it implies that a higher level of education instigates proper and positive perception towards allowing children to learn sexual abuse prevention education in schools. Thus, parental education is a significant factor in achieving the best protection against sexual victimization by educating the children on sexual abuse-related information.

**Table 7**  
**Chi Square Summary Showing the Impact of Education Level on Provision of Children with Helping Guides on CSA Prevention.**

Education	I provide my child with helping guides on CSA prevention.					Total
	SD	D	N	A	SA	
Above	0	5	1	8	4	18
Graduate	0	8	4	14	30	56
Vocational training	0	7	14	2	0	23
Intermediate	0	0	1	3	14	18
Matric	0	17	2	2	0	21
Post-Graduate	0	0	0	25	14	39
Primary	0	4	14	7	0	25
Total	0	41	36	61	62	200

  

Chi-square test result		
Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
189.716	24	.000

A=Agree, D= Disagree, N= Neutral, SA= Strongly Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree

As indicated in Table 7, a good number of the respondents (62) generally gave a strong agreement to the statement that said they provide their children with helping guides on CSA prevention, while a similar number (61) agreed with it. This means that parents provide their children with helping guides on CSA prevention. The test of association revealed that respondents that were graduates had the highest support for the statement, while this was followed by those with a postgraduate qualification. The observed variance was significant with the chi-square test ( $X^2= 189.716$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Parental education and attention have deep-rooted implications for protecting children from such victimization.

### Test of Hypothesis

**Table 8**  
**Simple Correlation Showing the Relationship between Parental Role and Perception towards Child Abuse**

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p
Parental Role	15.34	3.74	200	198	.67	<.05
Perception towards Child Abuse	13.98	5.77				

Table 8 indicated that there was a significant relationship between parental roles and perception towards child abuse [ $r(198)= .67$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. This positive relationship implied that the higher and more involved the parental roles, the more

positive the perception of parents towards child abuse tends to be. This result confirmed the formulated hypothesis and it was accepted.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study tested parental and social sustenance factors surrounding child sexual abuse. The findings showed that there were variances in gender based on their perceptions of preventive measures against CSA, however, both genders perceived CSA as a negative phenomenon. Further findings revealed that educational qualifications also affect people's actions and practices towards preventing CSA. This is consistent with previous findings by Al Rammah et al.(2018) and Mathoma et al. (2006) that reported that parental perception would determine and contribute towards the prevention of CSA within the society. The parental role is highly related to the precautionary measures and efforts at parent's side to protect their children from any chance of being sexually abused in any way. There is a set of responsibilities on the shoulders of parents for bringing up their children in the best possible ways. CSA is a kind of a nightmare for the parents and appears as an alarming situation for society to take necessary precautionary measures for the prevention and case handling. Even the sexual abuse prevention programs are useless unless there are positive parents' roles and strong participation of parents in the plans. The respondents believed that the right understanding of the parental role and a healthy involvement of parents could significantly help in designing revised prevention plans for CSA to protect their children from being victimized.

Testing hypothesis, it was observed that parents that had a high understanding of the parental role also had a strong perception towards child sexual abuse. By implication, when parents are conscious of their parenting roles in making sure that their children are protected to a certain age, there are strong indications that such parents will perceive CSA in a way that they will act in a preventive pattern.

The findings similarly depicted that although, sometimes, parental role towards CSA is suffered by several socio-economic factors. However, still, the burden of responsibility is on the shoulders of parents to take precautionary and necessary measures in all possible ways to avoid sexual abuse occurrences to their children. They should keep watch on friends, family members, and other actors of society that tend to get close to their kids for sexual victimization. Although parental education has a strong impact on educating the children from being sexually victimized, still Vocational Trainee or less educated parents realize the same responsibility for protecting the children in such issues.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a critical social dilemma in the world and Nigerian society. This investigation classified the parental role and associated factors towards CSA in Nigeria society. The study highlighted the severity of CSA and its impacts on different walks of life belonging to Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta local government, Ogun State, Nigeria. The statistical results depicted the parental role and its associated factors as highly implacable towards CSA. This study serves as a source of sensitization and guidance for sensible parents. Besides, the study

equally urges care to those parents who deprive their children of proper nurture. The parents should realize the importance of the issue to help protect their loved ones from being sexually abused by others.

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