

Original Research Article

Societal and Cultural Variables as Correlates of Child Abuse in Imo State

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Abstract

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Child abuse is an infringement on the rights of the child. The frequency of its occurrence has made it not only a national, but a global concern. The main objective of the study was the identification of sociocultural practices that expose the child to various abuses in Imo State. The study was a survey. Four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. The target population were children found hawking on the streets of Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe; the three major towns of the State. They were about 2500. The Null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Correlation statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study indicated that there was significant relationship between child abuse and the existing cultural practices. The findings further indicated that excessive domestic child labour, early girl child marriage, begging by children, hawking and preference for particular sex of child are some of the societal and cultural practices that influence child abuse. Other causes of child abuse other than cultural practices but aid child abuses were children voluntarily make themselves available as domestic servants for good, child hawking, high level of illiteracy, ready market for child labour, ignorance of associated dangers of hawking and begging, and the less expensiveness of child labour compared to hired adult labour. Other causes of child abuses included easy tameness of children compared to adult, high level of poverty, selective application of the Child Right Act, fear of victimization, and Corruption in prosecuting offender of child abuse by the legal agencies. Based on these findings, it was noted that if the situation was not checked more children would fall victim of child abuse. This will ultimately affect the leadership quality of our tomorrow's society. To forestall this problem, it was recommended that an alternative employment, and free education be provided for these street beggars and hawkers, more awareness on the disadvantages and dangers of early child marriage be publicized to discourage people from going into it; the issue of poverty and illiteracy level should be addressed by the government and society at large as to reduce hawking and begging, and finally as solutions to child abuse in relation to societal and cultural practices, there should be a total attitudinal shift and cultural revolutions of attitude and values using great deal of enlightenment.

Keywords: Child abuse, Cultural variables, Societal practices, Sociocultural practices

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom Children and Young Persons Act 2008, Chapter 23 defined children as persons under the

age of 18. In line with this, the Child's Right's Act 2018, passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja,

Nigeria, defined a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years. It categorically provided that such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations. In another perspective, Ohia (2017) defined a 'child' as a person who has not attained the age of 14 years and 'young person' as one who has attained the age of 14 years but she has not attained the age of 17 years. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2018) defined a child as any human being under the age of eighteen. In essence, a child is a person below the age of adulthood. In some cases, the child is referred to as a minor who is below the legal age of responsibility and accountability. Parents, guardians and other adults living with the child are expected to be responsible and to ensure that the child is protected from harm and danger. The Convention required that member states act in the best interests of the child. The rights of the child under the convention included the right to education, health care, love and care, adequate food and shelter, the right to live in a clean environment and the right to relaxation and recreation.

Though Nigeria, as a member state of the International Community fully endorsed this charter on Child Right by domesticating it in 2018, the rights of the child at the level of implementation, especially at the state level is still an issue. The non-implementation or rather partial implementation of these Rights has often paved way to what generally constitute child abuse. However, it is generally believed in most cultures and society that the child is still at its learning state and therefore does not have any right. The child is viewed as one without experience and needed to be directed by adults. According to INgalis (2003), experience is what happened to the child and many patterns of these experiences have simply not occurred frequently enough for them to have become familiar, safe, or generally predictable.

All the rights of the child are thus vested on the parents or guardians. What the child needs, wants, does, goes, see, wear, eats or say must pass through the scrutiny and strict guidance and approval of his parents or guardians. This has led to multiple abuses of the rights of the child from many fronts. Many variations however exist, as to what constitute child abuse. Mbakogu (2014) opined that child abuse may be difficult to discuss in Nigeria without eliciting the African and cultural perspective. This is because first as Africans, there exists a common heritage that seem to signify that similarities in culture, society or traditions may indicate a commonality of perceptions toward issues regarded as child abuse and eventually, similarities in strategies for addressing the problem.

Nevertheless, Gill (1979) reported that the worth of every child, despite individual differences and uniqueness is to be considered of equal. The child should be entitled to equal social, economic, civil and political rights, so that he or she may fully realize his or her inherent potential

and share equally in life. Therefore, any act of commission or omission by any individuals, institutions or the society as a whole, and any condition which deprives children of equal rights and liberties and interferes with optimal development, constitutes by definition as abuse or neglectful acts or conditions. The African Network of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN, (2006) gave five presentations of child abuse to include: child labour, street wandering, sexual abuse, child battering and abandonment. In Nigeria, the Federal Legislation provided a foundation for all its states by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviour that defined child abuse. The Federal Child Abuse and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended by the Keeping Children and Family Act of 2016 define child abuse as; Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm or exploitation. It further added that it include an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm. While the controversy in definition of child abuse rages on, the Nigerian child continues to suffer the effects of conflicts, poverty, ignorance, mal-nutrition, under-nutrition, starvation, diseases especially, exploitation, oppression and neglect.

In Nigerian cultural practices, children are expected to help their parents or guardians in certain forms of work engaged in by their parents which could not be regarded as child labour. Mbakogu (2014) however reported that some cultural practices could be responsible for some of these child abuses.

For example, Abiamuwe et al. (2019) noted that some practices in Nigerian society violate the growth and full development of children. One of such practices is child labour. In Imo State and in keeping with societal practices children are expected to help their parents in certain forms of housework. However, some forms of work engaged in by children are regarded as child labour (Abiamuwe et al., 2019).

With the presence of different tribes and influx of visitors into Imo State, comes the practice of different cultures by its inhabitants. According to Olurode (2009), culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society; it is the totality of living.

Culture is learned and not genetically transformed. Cultural traits, mode of behaviour are learned through the process of socialization in a society. These cultural traits are usually learned within the family. It has been generally noted that what constitutes the family varies from society to society. The culture of a community influences the behaviour of the people and the pace of its socioeconomic development. With changing world and society, some of the cultural practices that have negative effects on the society are gradually giving way to new cultures and traditions. This is true in Imo State,

especially in the area of the rights of the child which is more frequently abused. To this end some cultural practices detrimental to the child had persisted.

The Imo citizens are said to exist in a wealthy country whose people are generally poor (UNICEF, 2017). This abject poverty has led to various cultures of survival to include such practices as child labour, hawking, begging (UNICEF, 2017) and children working as house-helpers (Ebigbo, 2008). In some cases, children are sent away for adoption to live with and work for 'better-off' relatives or friends, who may give preferential treatment to their own children (Omigbodun and Olatawura, 2008).

Ojanuga (2010) reported that street begging, a form of child abuse, is commonly practiced in Nigeria though not part of culture in Imo State. His research revealed that parents and teachers were responsible for the practice. The parents of child beggars were most often physically disabled and destitute, while teachers used the proceeds of beggar children to support their schools. This practice is mostly seen in the Northern part of Nigeria that are predominantly Moslems. With regard to what is culture and societal practice that could be said to be part of culture in Imo State. Mbakogu (2014) reported that female genital mutilation is practiced by about 33% of all households across ethnic and religious groups, in all parts of the country but with a prime rate in the Eastern and Southern regions of Nigeria. AFROL Gender Profile-Nigeria (2012) revealed that female children were still given away in marriage before attaining puberty as a means of prevention of the licentious act of premarital sex.

Early marriages were strategies adopted by poor families to supplement negligible incomes. From the work of Nuhu and Nuhu (2010) in Ilorin, North Central Nigeria, about 30% of parents send their children to hawk goods. While some parents reported that they needed to do this in their struggle to survive, some parents believed that a child must work before being fed or given basic needs. Their reasons were to prevent the child from becoming a lazy adult and to teach him how to live an independent life should the parents die. In another development, children from indigent families are handed over by their parents to live with relations that are more affluent (Oku, 2008). The deal here is that the child is expected to assist in all household activities, while the affluent relative trains the child for a brighter future. But most often than not, the principles of this trade by barter is not fully executed as most children are quickly turned into beast of burden, unpaid servants or street hawkers. Reports exist of sorrowful stories of road accidents, inhuman treatment such as chopping of hands, starvation, bathing in hot boiling oil or water on these children by their 'Ogas' or 'Madams' Abiamuwe et al., 2019.

In the light of these threats, the United Nations General Assembly declared the decade 2011-2018 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the children of the World. This declaration

was necessitated by growing concern with the prevalence and persistence of cultural violence in almost all the regions of the world, and the rise in violence at the family level, and violent acts in most countries.

It seems that a culture of violence is growing and becoming embedded with consequent human suffering in destruction of life and property, as well as enormous social dislocations. According to Allport (1979), the social development of a nation or a community must include, among other things, justice, fairness, and equal treatment for its citizenry. In this way, the nation will achieve, at least for a long time to come, a desirable "unity in diversity". It is against this background information that this study is conducted to examine the societal and cultural issues that correlate child abuse in Imo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse is indeed a very serious contemporary community problem. It has a lot of sentimental attachment, especially when culture and religion are in focus. Every region and ethnic group in Nigeria appear to be in the cloud of protecting and priding away in their perceived rich and valuable culture and societal value which have been fused into one. While the controversy in definition of child abuses rages on, the Nigeria child continues to suffer the effects of conflicts, poverty, ignorance, malnutrition, starvation, diseases, especially exploitation and neglect. Meanwhile, the right of the child to education, health care, love and care, adequate food and shelter and so on are neglected.

Adamu (2015) linked the growing problem in the society to increased industrialization, urbanization and technological advancement, coupled with economic problems. She observed that the needs of the family have become increasingly complex and more sophisticated to meet the challenging need to raise a decent family. In the bid to do this, roles had to be distributed to all members of the family, including the children. This action has brought about the introduction of new cultural practices. Cultural practices such as child hawking, child labour and child trafficking, early marriages (for both sex), child begging, child battering are generally practiced with increasing intensities. Reports abound that have seriously indicted some of these cultural practices in favour of child abuse.

The researchers observed for instance, the lack of comprehensive welfare system in general, and more specifically, protective services for minors, has resulted in the neglect of some children who are exploited by poor families for street begging. Others include sexual abuse and domestic drudges among others. Although laws exist to protect minors and children, they are seldomly forced. The problem of this study therefore is put in a question

form is: "To what extent do societal and cultural practice correlate child abuse in Imo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which societal and cultural practices correlate child abuse in Imo State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the societal and cultural practices that correlate with child abuses in Imo State.
2. Identify the predisposing factors to various forms of child abuses in Imo State.
3. Determine the factors influencing implementation of the child Right Act in Imo State.
4. Identify various forms of child abuse in Imo State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do societal and cultural practices influence child abuses in Imo State?
2. What factors predisposes the child to various forms of child abuses in Imo State?
3. What are the factors influencing the implementation of the Child's Right Act in Imo State?
4. What are the various forms of child abuse in Imo State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Societal and cultural practices will not significantly correlate with child abuses in Imo State.
2. There is no significant Correlation between cultural practices and forms of child abuses in Imo State.
3. There are no significant Correlation between factors influencing the implementation of the child right act and Child abuse in Imo State.
4. There is no significant Correlation between cultural practices and child abuse in Imo State.

METHOD

Correlational research design was used for the study. The study targeted children who were found hawking on the streets of Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu; the three major towns of the State. The targeted children also included those involved in domestic child labour, those begging on the streets, and so on. Population also included teachers in the primary schools in the tree major towns. Teachers were included so that their views could be compared with those of the children who were abused. They were about 2500 children. Simple random sampling technique was

used to select 510 respondents of supposed child abused children and teachers in primary schools drawn from the three major towns of Orlu, Okigwe and Owerri.

Sociocultural Child Abuse Questionnaire (SCAQ) was developed following the literature reviewed to assess the level of child abuse. The questionnaire contained 25 items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from (Strongly Agree) to (Strongly disagree) and was used to elicit information from the respondents. Each of the items was assigned a value thus: SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2 and SD = 1

The instrument measures sociocultural practices and various forms of child abuses existing in Imo State, factors that predispose the child to various forms of child abuses and influence cultural practices have on the implementation of the child's right in Imo State. The instrument was presented to three experts in Psychology, Counselling, Measurement and Evaluation respectively from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Guttman Split-half and reliability co-efficient was considered appropriate and used. Sociocultural child abuse questionnaire (SCAQ) item analysis yielded co-efficient alpha level of .79 and standard alpha level of .718. The researchers involved six trained research assistants, two each from the three Senatorial zones of Imo State. Data was collected and analyzed using frequency, percentages and mean to answer research questions and Pearsons Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) for the hypotheses. For purposes of analysis "strongly agreed" was merged with agree to give "agree" while "strongly disagree" was merged with disagree to give "agree" "disagree".

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first research question of this study was:

To what extent do societal and cultural practices influence child abuses in Imo State?

To ascertain to what extent societal and cultural practices influence child abuses the opinions of the respondents, teachers and supposed abused children who were referred to as pupils were summed up and presented in Table 1.

Data in Table 1 showed some societal and cultural practices that could influence child abuses existing in Imo State based on the opinions of teachers and pupils respondents. The pupils with the highest mean of 2.900 indicated that excessive domestic child labour and paid domestic servant for others or working as house-helps in Imo State are the highest cultural practices existing in Imo State. Details of response showed that 478 of the pupils (61.2%) and 303 (38.8%), respectively agreed and

Table 1. Opinion of respondents on the level of societal and cultural practices that influence child abuses

S/No	Items	Category of Respondents	Category of response				Mean
			Agree	Disagree	% F%	%	
			F	%	F	%	
1	Babysitting for others when mates are in school	Teachers	136	26.7	374	73.3	2.1176
		Pupils	205	26.2	576	73.8	2.1067
2.	Begging by children	Teachers	279	54.7	321	45.3	2.5070
		Pupils	423	54.2	358	45.8	2.4827
3.	Hawking by children	Teachers	277	54.3	233	45.7	2.4882
		Pupils	413	52.9	368	47.1	2.4545
4.	Early girl child marriage	Teachers	285	55.9	225	44.1	2.5000
		Pupils	423	54.2	358	45.8	2.5531
5.	Preference for particular sex of child	Teachers	265	52.0	245	48.0	2.7296
		Pupils	399	51.1	382	49.9	2.7042
6.	Excessive domestic child labour	Teachers	299	58.6	211	41.4	2.8451
		Pupils	478	61.2	303	38.8	2.9001
7.	Working in farms, cutting Grasses at the expense of going to school	Teachers	239	46.9	271	53.1	2.7059
		Pupils	373	47.8	408	52.2	2.7247
8.	Paid domestic servant for others or working as house helps	Teachers	293	57.5	217	42.5	2.8294
		Pupils	469	60.1	312	39.9	2.4001
9.	Babysitting for others to realize money for parents and guardians	Teachers	237	46.5	273	53.5	2.7020
		Pupils	341	43.1	442	56.3	2.6428
10.	Circumcision of children	Teachers	217	42.5	293	57.5	2.6055
		Pupils	325	41.6	456	58.4	2.5830

disagreed that excessive domestic child labour in Imo State exist and is a form of child abuse. 469 of the pupils (61.1%) agreed that paid domestic servant for others or working as households was the second highest most existing cultural practices in Imo State associated with child abuse. 73.3% and 73.8% of the teacher and pupil respondents, respectively opined that babysitting for others, when mates are in school does not very much exist in Imo State.

When the views of the teachers and pupils were put together in a descending order of agreed rating the findings indicated as follows as societal and cultural practices that influences child abuse

- Excessive domestic child labour was a societal and cultural practice that influence child abuse (59.9%)

- Paid domestic servant for others or working as house-helps as societal and cultural practices exposes the child to abuse (58.8%)

- Early girl child marriage (55.05%)
- Begging by children (54.45%)
- Hawking by children (53.6%)
- Preference for particular sex of child (51.55%)
- Working in farms, cutting grasses at the expense of school (47.35%)
- Babysitting for others to realize money for parents and guardians (45.1%)
- Circumcision of female children (42.05%)

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is:

Table 2. Person Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics on the relationship between Child Abuse in Imo State and the existing cultural and societal practices.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Corr. Index r	Critical R	df	Sig 2-tailed
Child Abuse	2500	60.8373	8.9143	.885**	.195	1289	.000
Existing Societal /Cultural practices	2500	26.0782	3.4860				

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 3. Opinions of Teacher and pupils' respondents on why child abuse persist in Imo State

S/No	Items	Category of respondents	Category of response				Mean
			F	Agree %	Disagree %	F %	
1	Child labour is less Expensive compared to hired adult labour	Teachers	281	55.1	229	44.9	2.7980
		Pupils	315	40.3	366	59.7	2.7554
2.	Child hawking after school is a good source of additional income	Teachers	299	58.6	211	41.4	2.8451
		Pupils	478	61.2	303	38.8	2.9001
3.	Ignorance of associated Dangers of pupils hawking	Teachers	253	49.6	257	50.4	2.7725
		Pupils	387	50.0	394	50.0	2.7682
4.	High level of Illiteracy	Teachers	291	57.1	219	42.9	2.8255
		Pupils	467	59.8	314	40.2	2.8976
5.	High level of poverty	Teachers	187	36.7	323	63.3	2.7235
		Pupils	287	36.7	494	63.3	2.7572
6.	Children are easily tamed Compared to adult	Teachers	203	39.8	307	60.2	2.5667
		Pupils	311	39.8	470	60.2	2.5583
7.	There is ready child Labour (like hawking) going to school	Teachers	273	53.5	237	46.5	2.7353
		Pupils	407	52.1	374	47.9	2.7145
8.	Children voluntarily make themselves available as domestic servants for food	Teachers	316	62.0	194	38.0	2.8685
		Pupils	496	63.5	285	36.5	2.9120

Null Hypotheses 1

Societal and cultural practices will not significantly correlate with child abuses in Imo State.

Data for testing hypothesis I are presented in table 2. The outcome of the Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics revealed significant relationship between Child Abuse and the existing cultural practices. This was because the calculated alpha Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 was less than the 0.01 level of tolerance. Moreover, the calculated correlation index r value of 0.885 was greater than the 0.195 critical r value.

Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant correlation between child abuse and the existing cultural practices was rejected.

Research Question 2

The second research question of the study was:-
What factors predispose the child to various forms of child abuses in Imo State?

The data in Table 3 showed why child abuse persists in Imo State. Majority of the pupil's respondents with the mean response of 2.9001 believed that child hawking after school hours was a good source of additional income and financial support to the family. Details showed that 478 of the pupils (61.2%) agreed on this, while only 38.8% disagreed. About 496 pupils, representing 63.5%, also believe that children voluntarily make themselves available as domestic servants in exchange for food, cloth, shelter etc. The teacher

Table 4. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics on the relationship between societal and cultural practices and why child abuse persist in Imo State.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Corr. Index r	Critical R	df	Sig 2-tailed
Societal and Cultural practices	2500	66.8373	8.9143	.885**	.195	1289	.000
Child Abuse	2500	21.8125	3.6640				

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

respondents (62%), while indicating that hawking and begging and child labour persist in Imo State, agreed with the opinion of the children, that children voluntarily made themselves available as domestic servants in exchange for food, cloth, shelter, etc. The teachers (62%) also supported the views of the pupils that child labour was another source of additional income and financial support to the family. But when the views of the teachers and pupils were put together in a descending order of agreed rating, the findings were as shown below as why child abuse persist in the state.

- Children voluntarily made themselves available as domestic servants for food (62.75%)
- Child hawking after school was a good source of additional income (59.9%)
- High level of illiteracy was a factor sustaining child abuse (58.45%)
- Ready market for child labour was a factor sustaining child abuse (52.8%)
- Ignorance of associated dangers of hawking and begging (49.8%)
- Child labour was less expensive compared to hired adult labour (47.7%)
- Children were easily tamed compared to adult (39.8%)
- High level of poverty was a cause of child abuse (36.7%)

Null Hypotheses 2

There is no significant correlation between cultural practices and forms of child abuses in Imo State. Table 4

Results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics revealed that a significant relationship exist between Societal and Cultural practices and Child. Reason for this outcome was that the calculated alpha Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 was less than the 0.01 level of tolerance, while the value for the correlation index r value of 0.883 was greater than the critical r value of 0.195.

Consequently, the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant correlation between Societal and Cultural Practices and Child Abuse was rejected.

Research Question 3

What are the factors influencing the implementation of the Child's Right Act in Imo State?

Table 5 indicated the opinion of Teacher and Pupils on the factors influencing the implementation of child right act in Imo State. The majority of the pupils (505) representing 64.8% of the sample size said enlightenment on loopholes in the enforcement of the act lead to more crime being committed while 275 other pupils (35.2%) disagreed on this opinion with the highest mean response of 3.0038. 60.70% and 58.0% of the pupils and teacher respondents respectively viewed that the fear of victimization hinders proper application of the Child Right Act. This fear they both agree will encourage the selective application of the child's act, thus encouraging the abuse of more children.

The teacher respondents' opinion on this question showed that their highest mean of 2.9688 was that enlightenment on loopholes in the enforcement of the act led to more crime committed, this was according to 323 of the teachers (63.8%) agreed, while the rest 187 (36.7%) disagreed on this. The teacher respondent's second highest mean opinion of 2.7057 was that there was gross corruption in prosecuting offenders of child abuse as details of the teacher respondents showed that. However, a corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is:

When the views of the teachers and pupils were put together in a descending order of agreed rating, the findings were as shown as follows:

- Enlightenment in the loopholes of the Child Right Act led to more crime (64%)
- More victim fell victim of child labour (59.35%)
- There was selective application of the Child Right Act (58.8%)
- Fear of victimization hindered proper application of the Child Right Act (58.25%)
- There was corruption in prosecuting offender of child abuse by the legal agencies
- There was unwillingness in the enforcement of the Child Right Act (45.1%)
- Cultural beliefs prevented strict adherence to the Child Right Act (40.65%)

Table 5. Opinion of Teacher and Pupils on the factors influencing the implementation of Child Right Act in Imo State.

S/No	Items	Category of respondents	Category of response				Mean
			F	Agree %	Disagree F	% F%	
1	There is corruption in prosecuting offender of child abuse by the legal agencies	Teachers	239	46.9	271	53.1	2.705
		Pupils	373	47.8	408	52.2	2.7247
2.	There is selective application Of the Child Right Act	Teachers	293	57.5	217	42.5	2.829
		Pupils	469	60.1	312	39.9	2.900
3.	There is unwillingness In the enforcement of Child Right Act	Teachers	237	46.5	273	43.5	2.702
		Pupils	341	43.7	440	56.3	2.6428
4.	More Victim fall victim Of child abuse	Teachers	217	57.5	293	42.5	2.805
		Pupils	320	59.0	456	41.0	2.583
5.	Enlightenment in the Loopholes of the Child Act lead to more crime	Teachers	323	63.3	187	36.7	2.968
		Pupils	505	64.7	275	35.3	2.0038
6.	Fear of victimization hinders proper application of the Child Right Act	Teachers	214	58.0	296	42.0	2.588
		Pupils	307	60.7	474	39.3	2.5327
7.	Cultural beliefs prevent Strict Adherence to the Child Right Act	Teachers	214	42.0	296	58.0	2.588
		Pupils	307	39.3	474	60.7	2.5327

Table 6. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics on the factors influencing the Implementation of Child Right Act in Imo State.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Corr. Index r	Critical R	df	Sig 2-tailed
Factors	2500	66.8373	8.91431	.742**	.195	1289	.000
Implementation of the Child Right Act in Imo State	2500	43.9566	3.29594				

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Null Hypotheses 3

There is no significant correlation between factors influencing the implementation of the child right act and child abuse.

Data for testing hypothesis 3 are presented in table 6. Data in Table 6 showed the existence of significant relationship between factors influencing implementation of the Child Right Act and Child Abuse. This was because the calculated alpha Sig (2-tailed) and the calculated correlation index r value of 0.742 was greater than the r critical value of 0.195. Consequently, the null hypothesis, from which state that there was no significant relationship between factors and the implementation of the child right act in Imo State was rejected.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question of this study was what was the various forms of child abuse in Imo State?

The data in Table 7 showed forms of child abuses in Imo State. Majority of the pupil's respondents with the mean response of 2.9001 believed that child hawking after school hours was a good form of child abuse. Details showed that 478 of the pupils (61.2%) agreed on this, while only 38.5% disagreed. About 496 pupils, representing 63.5%, also believe that children voluntarily making themselves available as domestic servants in exchange for food, cloth, shelter, etc are forms of child abuse. The teacher respondents (62%), while indicating

Table 7. Forms of child abuse

S/No	Items	Category of respondents	Category of response				Mean
			F	Agree %	Disagree F	% F%	
1	Child hawking	Teachers	281	55.1	229	44.9	2.7980
		Pupils	315	40.3	366	59.7	2.7554
2.	Sexual Abuse	Teachers	299	58.6	211	41.4	2.8451
		Pupils	478	61.2	303	38.8	2.9001
3.	Child Labour	Teachers	253	49.6	257	50.4	2.7725
		Pupils	387	50.0	394	50.0	2.7682
4.	Child battering	Teachers	291	57.1	219	42.9	2.8255
		Pupils	467	59.8	314	40.2	2.8976
5.	Begging	Teachers	187	36.7	323	63.3	2.7235
		Pupils	287	36.7	494	63.3	2.7572
6.	House helps	Teachers	203	39.8	307	60.2	2.5667
		Pupils	311	39.8	470	60.2	2.5583
7.	Early Marriage	Teachers	273	53.5	237	46.5	2.7353
		Pupils	407	52.1	374	47.9	2.7145
8.	Prostitution and Child Trafficking	Teachers	316	62.0	194	38.0	2.8685
		Pupils	496	63.5	285	36.5	2.9120

Table 8. Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Cultural Practices and forms of child abuse in Imo State

		Cultural Practices	Child Abuse
		1	
Cultural Practices	Pearson Correlation		0.657
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	2500	2500
Child Abuse	Pearson Correlation	0.657	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	2500	2500

that begging and hawking were forms of child abuse with the opinion of the children, that children voluntarily made themselves available as domestic servants in exchange for shelter, food, cloth, etc. The teachers (62%) also supported the views of the pupils that child labour was another source and form of child abuse.

When the views of the teachers and pupils were put together in a descending order of agreed rating, the findings were as shown as below:

- Prostitution and child trafficking are serious forms of child abuse (62.75%)
- Child hawking after school was a good source of child abuse (59.9%)
- Child battering was a form of child abuse (58.45%)
- House-helps is a form of child abuse (47.8%)
- Early marriages (39.8%)
- Begging (36.7%)

Null Hypotheses 4

There is no significant correlation between cultural practices and forms of child abuse in Imo State.

The data presented in Table 8 revealed that the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) between Cultural Practices and Child abuse in Imo State was 0.657. This indicated that the identified Cultural Practices predicted about 66% child abuse. Therefore, there is strong and positive relationship between Cultural Practices and forms of child abuse in the study area.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

Data presented in Table 1 showed some cultural and societal practices influencing child abuse. The table indicated excessive domestic child labour and paid

domestic servant for others or working as house-helpers are the highest cultural practices influencing child abuse. Other societal and cultural practices influencing child abuse included early girl child marriage, female circumcision, children babysitting for others when their mates were in school, preference for male children to the maltreatment of female children and sending children to work in farms, clearing farm, cutting grasses when others were in school and so on.

These findings support the finding of Mbakogu (2014) who reported that some cultural practices could be responsible for some child abuses. Mbakogu (2014) also reported that female genital mutilation was practiced by about 33% of all households across ethnic and religious groups in all parts of the country but with a prime rate in the Eastern and Southern regions of Nigeria. AFROL Profile-Nigeria (2012) revealed that female children were still given away in marriage before attaining puberty as a means of preventing the licentious act of premarital sex. Early marriages were strategies adopted by poor families to supplement negligible incomes. Some parents also send their children to hawk goods. Parents involved said that they needed to do this in their struggle to survive while some parents maintained that a child must work before being fed or given basic needs. Their reasons were to prevent the child according to Igbo culture becoming a lazy adult and to teach him how to live an independent life should the parents die.

In a related development, children from indigent families are handed over by their parents to live with relations that are more affluent. The idea here was that the child is expected to assist in all household activities, while the affluent relative trains the child for a brighter future. However, in most cases the principles of this oracle of barter is not fully executed as most children are quickly turned into best of burden, unpaid servants or street hawkers. Reports exist of sorrowful stories of road accidents, inhuman treatment such as chopping of hands, starvation, bathing in hot boiling or hot water on these children by their so called relatives (Nuhu, (2010); Iwuchukwu, (2008) and Oku, (2008).

In Igboland it is believed that one person does not have the sole responsibility of training a child. As a result of this believe and traditions young children are given out as young domestics where children work in the households as house-helpers in the house of some elite and subelite families who work in the middle and upper echelons of public and private bureaucrats in urban areas. These children or house helps have little or no education. The house helps carry out chores such as cleaning, laundering, cooking, errand running and baby minding. Some of them combine domestic chores with economic services such as street vending, farming, hawking and minding of shops for their employers (Iwuchukwu, 2008). However, domestic work has become more hazardous, partly because of the young age at which some children get engaged as servants.

There has also been a change in the way in which children get engaged as servants. According to Iwuchukwu (2008) in the past engaging as Children/Servants was done mainly through employers. This is Igbo culture because it is believed that upbringing of a child and his training is never a job one person only. In this wise, as noted earlier parents give out their children as house-helpers as a form of traditional fostering arrangement, whereby children would receive education or vocational training in return for work in the household. However, this link with the child's parents and of its obligation have been abused by some employers. Children now in the guise of keeping to Igbo culture and value of training of children not being the responsibility of one person or only one's parents now as children are procured from impoverished rural families by middle men, driven only by commercial motive and transported long distance to work in urban households. Such children work in extremely precarious situations, rarely are they seen and their welfare monitored by their families. They frequently work very long hours with little or no rest periods and are often fed and clothed worse than the children of the house. Such children again are deprived of emotional care and affection, beaten more than other children and are deprived of opportunity to go school. They are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation by not only from their employers but also from other workers in the household (Oku, 2008).

The study also revealed that as a result of some children voluntarily making themselves available as domestic servants to food, carry out hawking after school, as well as high level of illiteracy, ignorance and high level of poverty, child abuse has continued to persist. This finding corroborates the findings of Nuhu and Nuhu (2010) who found out that about 30% of parents send their children to hawk goods to raise money to supplement the income of the family. Some parents also insisted that children needed to hawk as part of their training for survival, before feeding or being provided basic needs. In a situation whereby the biological parents of a child is insisting on the child to carry out hawking of doing some other work after school or even in place of school it would not be surprising then that hawking would persist.

The most common reason that could be advanced for such parental attitude is poverty. This lends credence to the findings of Kazi (2011) who stated that children work for a variety of reasons and the most important of them all is poverty. Children work to ensure survival of their family and themselves even though they are not well paid. They serve as major contributors to family income in developing countries (UNICEF, 2016). Abiamuwe, et al stressed that millions of girls from impoverished homes work into horrific circumstances, some are trafficked, forced into prostitution and or pornography. Millions of girls work as domestic servants and unpaid household help and are especially vulnerable to exploitation and

abuse due to poverty. The above notwithstanding, some children may also work because of school. This corroborates Redlinger (2014) cited by Abiamuwe et al (2019) when they stated that difficulty of accessing education is often a cause as well as a symptom of child labour. In many instances, according to Abiamuwe et al (2019) school requires an enrolment fee, and additional costs for uniforms and supplies. Such expenses may force a child into labour.

When such is the case, free compulsory education is recommended to alleviate child labour in the present, and improve long-term economic conditions, removing an underlying cause of child labour and abuse (Abiamuwe, et al, 2019). Also related to the above is the fact that child labour and abuse could be reduced when children are sent to school. Children are at times prompted to work by their parents. As a result of the above, parents should be made to understand the importance of schooling since they are the child's first agent of socialization whose decisions are mostly appreciated, (Abiamuwe et al., 2019).

The study further reveals that selective application of the child right act, corruption in prosecution of offenders in the child's rights act, cultural beliefs, unwillingness in the enforcement of the act, lack of enlightenment and fear of victimization are some of the factors affecting the implementation of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria. According to Oku (2008), the right of all children is justifiable because apart from being human beings such rights are the best way of protecting them from harm and ensure that they are not forgotten by their communities and the society at large. Also respect for the right of children makes it possible for them to learn to respect the rights of other people.

These rights included developmental rights, protection rights and participation rights (FRN, 2001). These broad categorized rights were derived from the ten most important rights stated in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the children. They include right to life, right to identity, right to freedom of association, right to communicate, right to freedom from discrimination and right to protection from exploitation and inhuman treatment (Oku, 2008).

From the foregoing and having revealed that the child right act is not being fully implemented as a result of the factors noted above one wonders what could then be done to ensure that the child's right is protected. In this regard, Oku (2008) found out that teaching children what constitutes their full rights, educating the adult members of the society on what one made up the full rights of children and supporting the activities of any organization which promotes any of the rights of children by the government could help to protect the child's right. Other issues that could help according to Oku, (2008) include; encouraging house-helpers to report any cases of abuses or neglect to any responsible adult within their reach or to law enforcement agents available and educating the adult

members of the society on the consequences of violence against house-helpers.

Finally the study reveals that there is strong and positive relationship between cultural practices and forms of child abuse. It also revealed some forms of child abuse to include child hawking, child labour, begging, early marriages, house-helpers, child battering and so on. This findings supports the findings of UNICEF (2012) as were cited by Seriki-Mosadolorun, Ajuluchi, Adeniji and Locas (2019) when they reported that an estimated 246 Million children are engaged in child labour. They further stated that nearly 70% (171 million) of these children work in hazardous conditions including working in mines, working with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture or with dangerous machinery. They also stressed that the child labour is everywhere but invisible, toiling as domestic servants in homes, laboring behind well of workshops, hidden from view in plantations. Again UNICEF (2012) further maintained that millions of girls work as domestic servants or an unpaid household helps and are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Millions of others work under horrific circumstances, some are trafficked, forced into debt bondage or other forms of slavery, forced prostitution and or pornography or even recruited as child soldiers in armed conflict like the Boko Haram in Nigeria (Seriki-Mosadolorun et al. (2019).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that excessive domestic child labour, child begging and hawking are the main child abuses in Imo State. The cultural practices that exposed children to these forms of abuses included early girl child marriage, and preference for particular sex of child. Other factors which are not cultural practices but aided child abuses included high level of illiteracy and poverty, corruption in the legal agencies and institutions, ready market for child labour, fear of victimization hinders proper application and the selective application of the Child Right. This factor has to do with the attitude of the people. Based on these predisposing factors to child abuse, coupled with the failures of the agencies and child care institutions, more children will fall daily as victims of one form of child abuses or the other. This will ultimately affect the leadership quality of our tomorrow's society if not checked. Thus, if children are regarded as the leaders of our tomorrow, all hands must therefore be on deck to protecting them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A society with no children is a society with no tomorrow. Children are the leaders of tomorrow. Solutions to child abuse in relation to cultural practices

therefore, require a total attitudinal shift using great deal of enlightenment.

2. To break through the cycle of child abuse, there is the need for a cultural revolution of attitude and values. Since our culture teaches and in fact inculcate into the minds of parents and elder siblings that parents and elders have right to beat a child.
3. There is need for Parental attitudes and practices to change.
4. Laws that prohibit child labour needs to be in place and rigorously enforced.
5. Forming solidarity groups to fight against child abuse even at the community levels.
6. There should be serious enlightenment, symposia and conferences to be carried out at all levels of community, Local Government Area, State and Federal to highlight the evils associated with child abuse.
7. Parents should be advised to have small family size that they can carter for.

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