

CHILD ABUSE: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN THE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The concept Child Abuse is a very eclectic one. Its understanding as it occurs varies from individuals, ethnic groups, religious institutions, professional bodies etc. This research discussed the occurrence of child abuse and the role of the social worker in the management. It further discussed the various forms of child abuse such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional / psychological abuse, child labour and sexual abuse / child marriage. Factors contributing to child abuse and neglect in our society were emphasized such as the parent or caregiver factors, family factors, environmental and protective factors. The population of study was the students of Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State in which the sample size of 222 respondents was used. The questionnaire was the instrument used in data collection and chi-square statistical analysis was used at establishing the significant difference that may exist among respondents' frequencies.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Role, Social Worker, Challenges, Management.

Background of the Study

According to the national association of social workers, the social work profession has a long tradition of involvement with the child welfare system, working to support millions of children and their families who are victims of child abuse every year. Social worker knows that working with the child means working with the whole family and with other environmental factors in a competent way. Moreover, social workers have battled child maltreatment for more than 100 years, and to the battle they bring a unique body of knowledge. Social workers are on the front lines protecting children and assisting them in finding safe living situations. According to David Howe (1992) the alleged failure of social workers and welfare agencies to prevent children from being abused by their parents and caretakers led to changes in the practice and organization in child abuse work. The way public inquiries and government framed the people of child abuse produced solutions which were essentially legalistic and bureaucratic. No longer was the aim to rehabilitate poorly functioning families, but to protect children from dangerous parents. But in order to achieve this aim, it was first necessary to identify the factors that would allow child protection agencies to recognize which families were dangerous and which are not. Once these factors were recognized, it was possible to develop administrative systems that would facilitate the collection and analysis of information obtained during the investigation of suspected families. These systems allowed welfare agencies to identify high risk cases.. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a

child , and can occur in a child's home , or in the organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with . Child abuse is not just physical violence directed at a child. It is any form of maltreatment by an adult, which is violent or threatening for the child, this includes neglect. Children are not just abused at home by their parent or caregiver they can also be abused by other adults on whom they depend on. According to UNICEF, abuse in all its forms is a daily reality for many Nigerian children and only a fraction ever receive help. Six out of every ten children experience some form of violence one in four girls and ten per cent of boys have been victims of sexual violence of the children who reported violence, fewer than five out of a hundred received any form of support. The drivers of violence against children are deeply rooted in social norms, including the use of violent discipline, violence against women and community beliefs about witchcraft all of which increase children's vulnerability.

Child abuse can be examined in the context of anthropology and it has its foundations in the study of the development of cultures (Bakan, 2001; Tower, 1996). According to Check (1989) he stated that during the medieval time, for instance there was neither a definition of childhood nor a vocabulary to differentiate it from adulthood. The most consistent belief was that children were the property of the parents without rights of their own (Tower 1996). History of child abuse and organized effort made to protect children can be traced back to the Elizabethan poor Laws or the old poor law in England in the mid - 1550s , which sought to provide care and support to impoverished children and families . Novels written by Charles Dickens in 1838 such as *Oliver Twist* highlighted the life of the forgotten poor and disadvantaged within the society which ignited some of the first social protests against societal neglect of the abused, abandoned, and crippled children (Tower, 1996), and since then movement emerged across the Western Europe and the United States, joining activists in the cause to stop the maltreatment of children.

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse is well established as an important societal concern with significant ramifications for the affected children, their families, and society at large. Although child abuse occurs in Nigeria, it has received little attention. This is probably due to the emphasis placed on the more prevalent childhood problems of malnutrition and infection (Olaitan Olusegun and Amos Idowu 2016). Another possible reason is the general assumption that in every African society the extended family system always provides love, care and protection to all children. There are some traditional child rearing practices which adversely affect some children, such as purposeful neglect or abandonment of severely handicapped children; with the alteration of society by rapid socioeconomic and political changes various forms of child abuse have been identified. These may be considered the outcome of abnormal interactions of the child, parents or guardians and society. They include abandonment of normal infants by unmarried or very poor mothers in cities, increased child labour and abuse of children in urban nuclear families by child minders. There is need for more effective legal protection for the handicapped child, and greater awareness for the existence of child abuse in the community by health and social workers. The tender years of early childhood offers great promise and challenges, all children are shaped by their early life experiences. Children grow optimally in safe and comfortable homes and communities with nurturing, dependable and attentive caregivers (Miranda, Arthur, Milan, Mahoney and Perry, 1998). Children who experience enriching environments view the world as a safe, exciting place to learn and explore, where adults are available, responsive and able to meet their needs (Delaney, 1998). These positive early life experiences stimulate a child's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development thereby increasing chances for health, happiness, productivity, and creativity. Many children however do not have these opportunities as a result of maltreatment...

Child abuse is an increasingly serious problem , given all that we read and hear today about the increasingly serious problem of child abuse in newspapers , on television news broadcasts in news magazines and on the internet , along with frightening statistics publicized by some organizations devoted to addressing child maltreatment , child abuse has reach a high level and is getting worse. According to the coordinator of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT), Titilola Vivour Adeniyi, there has been an increase in the reporting of sexual abuse, child rape and abuse. Social workers are on the front lines protecting children and assisting them in finding safe living situation. However, many social workers in child welfare are overburdened with high caseloads and mounting administrative details, while receiving low pay relative to other professions. Social workers who establish social welfare programs such as Safeguarding the Rights of a Child Workshop for Primary School Students (STRAC), Smart Teens Advocacy Initiative for Teenagers (STAI) and other voluntary agencies need money to carry out a lot of their responsibilities, for example the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Justice is underfunded . Many laws Violence Response Team under the Lagos State Ministry and policies were put in place with the purpose of protecting children from abuse. However they have not been effective for many reasons including poor enforcement mechanisms, poverty, corruption, lack of rehabilitation of sexual offenders, negative attitude of parents and inefficient judicial processes. Children are not educated or enlighten about the forms of child abuse especially sexual abuse, most kids are not aware that they are being abused because they do not know what to look at for . Children tends to abuse each other especially sexual abuse out of ignorance because of the type of movies they watch , what they watch their parent do, some kids that have been abused tends to abuse other kids out of ignorance . Most parent don't talk to their children about their body part, where they are to be touched and where they are not to be touched, they don't educate their children on the type of play that is acceptable and the type that is not acceptable especially the mummy and daddy playact which involves kids abusing themselves in one form or another.

Significance of the study

The study appraises the different factors responsible for child abuse in Nigeria, identifies the laws and institutions that protect children from abuse, evaluates the effectiveness of these various laws and institutions and facilitates further information of workable steps to curb child abuse in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

- (i) To find out if the general public is aware about the different forms of child abuse.
- (ii) To find out if the general public is aware of social workers in Nigeria.
- (iii) To examine the cause of child abuse in Nigeria.
- (iv) To examine the problems facing the government and social workers in addressing the issue of child abuse in Nigeria.
- (v) To examine the roles of social workers in child abuse.

Research Questions

- (i) Is the general public aware of the different forms of child abuse?
- (ii) Is the general public aware of social workers in Nigeria?
- (iii) What are the causes of child abuse in Nigeria?
- (iv) What are the problems facing the government and social workers in addressing the issue of child abuse in Nigeria?
- (v) What are the roles of social workers in child abuse?

Literature Review

This entails a review of the literatures related to child abuse and the role of social workers. The various forms of child abuse, the factors responsible for child abuse, the potential impact of child abuse, the role of social worker and the historical development of social welfare service in Nigeria. Child welfare is considered a special area of practice within the profession of social work, and the principles and values of the social work profession generally fit with policies that guide modern child welfare organizations. Child abuse is universal and most countries have laws about child abuse, but there are no universal definitions because the concept of child abuse and neglect is socially constructed. Therefore, consideration must always be made of the social context in which the alleged abuse occurs. One way of defining child abuse is by stating the conditions under which the child develops in an abuse-free lifestyle. When those conditions or rights are absent, the child is at risk of abuse.

The best universal guidelines are found in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child'. According to Olaitan Olusegun and Amos Idowu (2016) in Nigeria abuse against children is rampant although it is largely under-reported. Under-reporting stems from cultural justification of certain forms of abuse associated with cultural practices and reluctance of children to speak about prior abusive experiences, fear of their assailants' threats or their parents' reaction may be cause of their reluctance. Also, some children may be too young to understand the experience or unable to speak for themselves. The Child Right Act of 2003 also provides that children must be protected from child marriage, child betrothal, tattoos and skin mark, exposure and use of narcotic drugs, abduction, removal or transfer of children from lawful custody, child labor and unlawful sexual intercourse. Despite the various provisions that have been put into place to protect the rights of children, they are continuously subject to various forms of abuse, degrading treatment cruelty, and violence. Some of which are reported in Nigerian National daily newspapers and social media. When children are exploited or abused, they do not enjoy their childhood which leads to several consequences in future. On the other hand, when children are protected from abuse they will grow in healthy and confident manner, achieve their potential and contribute to the development of the nation.

According to World Health Organization, child abuse is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Quilgers described child abuse as being "defined within cultural understandings and standards (Quilgers in Bradshaw 2001:65). This actually means that there are different accepted levels of abuse and subsequent rates of registration, which compound problems of measurement and make it impossible to be precise about the level of child abuse in Nigeria. According to Caroline Day, Pam Hibbert and Spike Cadman (2008) in England and Wales the legal definitions of child abuse are set in the 1989 children Act and expanded in the revised working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Notwithstanding these definitions, Boswell stated that it is widely acknowledged that child abuse is a complex concept which does not easily lend itself to definition (1996). The NSPCC identifies three reasons for this:

- The difficulty of identifying the boundaries between maltreatment and any form of harm, including harm from less than optimal parenting or from social factors such as poverty.
- What is seen as acceptable treatment of children varies across cultures, countries, such as the use of corporal punishment, is no longer acceptable in others.

- Policy and practice has so far been unable to develop a single definition of abuse or neglect which can be understood by all while taking into account the great variety of harms that children can experience, the possibility of both primary and secondary harm and how children's experiences of harm can vary throughout their childhood.

According to Adi Fahrudin, Husmiati Yusuf and H.A Malek (2016) in both the physical punishment and sexual status of children, there are wide cultural differences to be found. Some cultures have a higher tolerance of parental, caregiver or teacher violence towards children than others do. Some countries has zero tolerance against hitting children, even by parents and such is socially constructed as a crime. In other countries, hitting children is an acceptable and parental and caregiver right. Similarly, cultures vary on their threshold age for sexual maturity and activities that are defined as crime in one country may be a commonplace in another. Ticket et al (1991) defines child abuse as the experience in which children are repeatedly exposed to violence among adults, their parents, he also explained that child abuse typically involves some form of intimidation, domination, manipulation, and exploitation by older adolescent or adults.

Forms of Child Abuse

There are different forms of child abuse such as sexual abuse and child marriage, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect

(a) **Sexual Abuse and Child Marriage:** Sexual abuse is any inappropriate contact between adults and children, or with other children. Most sexually abused children experience this abuse at the hands of trusted adult who is often skilled at manipulating and frightening the child into silence (Snyder, 2000). According to Sneddon (2003) sexual abuse occurs when a child is involved in sexual activities that he or she does not understand or in which he or she is unable to give informed consent. It may include an adult using a child for sexual gratification, a variety of sexual behaviors between a child and an adult or between children are considered sexual abuse. According to Wikipedia child sexual abuse also knows as child molestation is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Sexual abuse represents the involvement of a child or minor, dependent and immature in terms of the psycho-sexual development, in sexual activities that he/she is not capable to understand, which are unsuited for his/her age or for his/her psycho-sexual development, sexual activities that he/she bears being constrained by violence or seduction or which transgress the social taboos related to family roles; these activities usually include physical contact, with or without sexual penetration. According to Olaitan Olusegun and Amos Idowu (2016) child marriage is also a form of child sexual abuse it is the practice in which children are married to adults. Child marriage is more common in rural communities because such communities tend to have traditional attitudes deeply entrenched in customs, which are not easily altered by external influences. Nigeria is no exception to the prevalence of child marriage in rural communities especially the northern region of the country. Females children are given away in marriage at a young age to increase the wealth of the family members through payment of bride prices, another factor is the high value placed on a girl's virginity. Child marriage exposes children to adverse health effects and deprives them of their childhood time that is necessary for them to develop physically, emotionally, and psychologically. The Nigerian Child Right Act of 2003, provide that a marriage entered into with a girl younger than eighteen years old is null and void, however section eighteen of the Marriage Act provides that child below the age of twenty one can get married if consent is obtained from the parents. The implication of this provision is that children young as fifteen

can get married once their parents consent, which conflicts with the clear provisions of section 211 of the Child Rights Act of 2003.

Child sexual abuse includes a variety of sexual offenses, including:

- 1) Sexual assault: a term defining offenses in which an adult uses a minor for the purpose of sexual gratification, for example rape (including sodomy), and sexual penetration with an object. Sexual assault can also be seen as any penetrative contact of a minor's body, however slight if the contact is performed for the purpose of sexual gratification.
- 2) Sexual exploitation: is a term defining offenses in which an adult victimizes a minor for advancement, sexual gratification, or profit for example prostituting a child, live streaming sexual abuse and creating or trafficking in child pornography.
- 3) Sexual grooming: is a term defining the sexual conduct of a potential child sex offender who seeks to make a minor more accepting of their advances, for example making children watch pornographies.
- 4) Child-on-child sexual abuse: is a form of child sexual abuse in which a prepubescent child is sexually abuse by one or more other children or adolescents and in which no adult is directly involved. While this includes when one of the children uses physical force, threats, trickery or emotional manipulation to elicit cooperation, it also can include non-coercive situations where the initiator proposes or starts a sexual act that the victim does not understand the nature of and simply goes along with, not comprehending its implications or what the consequences might be.

(b) **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is often difficult to identify not only because of the ethics involved in doing so but because of the intra-familial issues that may be present, different cultural acceptance, religion and loyalty to parents and siblings often prevent the open declaration of the level of abuse that actually exist (Fergusson and Lynskey, 1997). The World Health Organization defines physical abuse as the intentional use of physical force against the child that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in harm for the child's health, survival, development, or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the object of punishing. Overlapping definitions of physical abuse and physical punishment of children highlight a subtle or non-existent distinction between abuse and punishment, but most physical abuse is physical punishment in intent, form and effect. Most nations with child abuse laws deem the deliberate infliction of serious injuries, or actions that place the child at obvious risk of serious injury or death, to be illegal. Bruises, scratches, burns, broken bones, lacerations as well as repeated mishaps, and rough treatment that could cause physical injuries can be physical abuse.

The psychologist Alice Miller noted for her books on child abuse took the view that humiliations, spankings and beatings, slaps in the face, etc. are all forms of abuse because they injure the integrity and dignity of a child, even if their consequences are not visible right away. Physical abuse of a child can lead to physical and mental difficulties in the future, including re-Victimization, personality disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder etc. According to Sarah E Wright (2015) physical abuse is when someone causes deliberate physical harm or injury to child or failure to prevent the child from physical injury. Physical abuse refers to injuries and adult behaviors that are not sexual in nature. Physical abuse may include injury from punishment that is not appropriate for the child's age or condition and can be a single or recurrent act by the adult (Sneddon, 2003). Physical abuse ranges from hitting of children to the extreme of torture: there is a fine line between discipline by parents or teacher and violence to children. According to Adi Fahrudin, Mohd Dahlan Malek and Husmiati Yusuf (2016) most

physical abuse of children occurs in their own home, followed by School setting, the practice of bullying can also lead to physical abuse. According to Gabriela Alexandrescu (2013) physical abuse consists in bodily harming the child during a single or repeated interaction, with a person that has responsibility or power over the child or who has a relationship of trust with the child, being the result of intended acts that cause sufferance to the child in the present or in the future.

(c) **Emotional or Psychological Abuse:** The American Psychiatric Association (2013) describe emotional abuse as non-accidental verbal or symbolic acts by a child's parents or caregiver that result or have reasonable potential to result, in significant psychological harm to the child. Sneddon (2003) explained emotional abuse as the emotional mistreatment or rejection of the child. Emotional abuse may include sustained repetitive inappropriate emotional responses and reactions to the child's emotions and behaviour, for example an inappropriate response may involve a parent getting angry with the child in reaction to the child accidentally breaking something and yelling excessively or calling the child names. In addition other emotional abusive behaviors include belittling or terrorizing the child, isolating them from others, and rejection or mis-socialization. Turner et al. (2012) added that emotional abuse may include hostile parenting such as inconsistency, poor stability, low nurturing, coercion, negative interactions, and rejection of the child. According to Adi Fahrudin, Mohd Dahlan Malek and Husmiati Yusuf (2016) deprivation of affection or denial of growth relationships can also be damaging to personality development. Emotional abuse can also be seen as when a child is deliberately denied feelings of being loved, wanted, secure and worthy.

According to Briere (1992) usually occurs with physical abuse, emotional neglect or abuse in the absence of physical damage instead, emotional neglect is a psychological state and it is usually something of internal perception. The effect of emotional abuse can be crippling, they are usually diagnosed by psychiatrists and psychologists. According also to patience (1996) emotional abuse is the injury to the child's psychological self, which is meant to be punitive. It is experienced as a form of parental hostility in terms of terrorizing rejection and insults. It manifests in cases of aggression, retreatism and general feelings of incompetence. Also, emotional neglect refers to emotional deprivation, lack of caring, loving and empathic towards a child.

(d) **Child Neglect:** According to Olaitan and Amos (2016) child neglect can be define as the failure to provide basic needed care for the child such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for the child's physical, intellectual and emotional development. There are various categories of neglect such as physical, medical, environmental neglect, emotional neglect and educational neglect. Neglect is often associated with inadequate parenting: neglected children usually have intellectual, physical, social, psychological and developmental problems. They are often socially withdrawn, suffer from malnutrition, and are susceptible to several fatalities due to the absence of caregivers at critical moments.

According to Wikipedia child neglect is a form of abuse, an egregious behavior of caregivers that results in a deprivation of child of their basic needs including the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional and safety needs. Child neglect depends on how a child and society perceives the parents behavior, it is not how parents believe they are behaving toward their child. Parental failure to provide for a child, when options are available is different from failure to provide when options are not available. Child neglect can take various forms such as:

- i. Nutritional neglect: This are food deprivation, lack of several food products essential for Growth, uneven meals, unsuited food products or that are inappropriate for the child's age.
- ii. Clothing neglect: Clothing that is inappropriate for the season or that are too small, too dirty or lack of clothing.
- iii. Neglecting hygiene: lack of body hygiene, unpleasant odour, parasites.
- iv. Medical neglect: This is the absence of necessary care, lack of vaccination and medical check-ups, lack of treatment prescribed by the doctor, not going to the recovery sessions.
- v. Educational neglect: under-stimulation, instability of the reward punishment system, lack of following school progress.
- vi. Emotional neglect: lack of attention, physical contact, affection gestures, praises.

(e) **Child Labour:** Child labour is defined as any form or work likely to have adverse effect on the child's safety, health, education and moral development (Sarah Wright 2015), It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, deprives them of the physical, opportunity to attend school. 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, domestic servants etc. In most cases, child labour is determined by the family's economic status, the size of the household, and the parents' educational level. It affects development and stands as an impediment to achieving sustainable development goals such as poverty reduction and universal primary education. Many working children are exposed to dangerous and unhealthy environments. According to Wikipedia in August 2005, the Nigerian government formally adopted three International labour Organization conventions setting a minimum age for the employment of children.

The US Department of Labour in its 2010 report claims Nigeria is witnessing the worst forms of child labour particularly in agriculture and domestic service. These children typically work long hours and for little pay, with their families. In Nigeria children engage in all sorts of child labour such as hawking, begging, carry heavy loads and experience a lot of health and educational problems ranging from injuries, pains of some sort, traffic accidents, chemical poisoning pneumonia, crawl-crawl difficulty in breathing, which have other serious health implications.

Factors responsible for Child Abuse

Child abuse is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes; no single factor can be identified as to why adults behave abusively or neglectfully toward children. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) identify multiple factors at the level of the individual, their relationships, their local community and their society at large that combine to influence the occurrence of child maltreatment. At the individual level, such factors include age, sex and personal history, while at the level of society factors contributing to child maltreatment include cultural norms encouraging harsh physical punishment of children, economic inequality and lack of social safety nets. Most acts of physical violence against children are undertaken with the intent to punish. Factors involved in the escalation of ordinary physical punishment by parents into confirmed child abuse may be the punishing parent's inability to control their angry or judge their own strength, and the parent being unaware of the child's physical vulnerabilities.

According to Child welfare Information Gateway (2013), environmental factors include poverty unemployment, social isolation, and community characteristics. The emphasis is that when poverty is interacting with risk factors such as depression, substance abuse, and social isolation increases the likelihood of maltreatment among parents. Specific life situation of some famines such as martial conflict, domestic violence, single parenthood, unemployment, financial stress and social isolation increase the likelihood of abuse. According to Eldefunso (1978) observe that urbanization encourage child abuse and neglect in the society. According to him continued growth of urban centers is perhaps one of the most important factors fostering child abuse because community concern for neglected children is less likely to be expressed on the neighborhood level in our growing urban areas. This in itself makes abuse a more likely occurrence. Okore (2001) stated that parents do not consider hawking as a form abuse, but as an act of behavioral training in business activities. The prevailing cases of child abuse in the society nowadays can be traced to poverty.

According to Kolo (2008) poverty is the most important factor responsible for child abuse in Nigeria. According to him poor economic situation in the country has made it difficult for low income earners to provide basic needs such as education, shelter and healthcare for their children which result in some children becoming domestic servant to help support the family and engaging their children in selling goods (hawking). Poverty has a bigger impact on child abuse, children who grow up in poverty can be more vulnerable to some forms of maltreatment particularly neglect and physical abuse. Paxson and Wsaldfogel find that increases in the fraction of children in extreme poverty result in increases in maltreatment of different kind but most especially neglect.

Risk factors associated with child maltreatment can be grouped in five domains:

1. Parent or caregiver factors
- 2 Family factors
3. Child factors
4. Environmental factors
5. Protective factors

It is being increasingly recognized that child maltreatment arises from the interaction of multiple actions across these five domains. The sections that follow examine risk factors in each category.

Definition of a social worker

Social workers comprise a profession that had its beginnings in 1889 when Jane Addams founded Hull House and the American settlement house movement in Chicago's West Side. The ethics and values that informed her work became the basis for the social work profession. They include respect for the dignity of human beings, especially those who are vulnerable, an understanding that people are influenced by their environment, and a desire to work for social change that rectifies gross or unjust differences. The social work profession is broader than most disciplines with regard to the range and types of problems addressed the settings in which the work takes place, the levels of practice, interventions used, and populations served. It has been observed that social work is defined in its own place in the larger social environment, continuously evolving to respond to and address a changing world. Although several definitions of social work have been provided throughout its history, common to all definitions is the focus on both the individual and the environment, distinguishing it from other helping professions.

Social workers may be engaged in a variety of occupations ranging from hospitals, schools, Clinics, police departments, and public agencies, court systems to private practices or businesses.

They provide the majority of mental health care to persons of all ages in this country, and in rural areas they are often the sole providers of services. In general, they assist people to obtain tangible services, help communities or groups provide or improve social and health services, provide counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups, and participate in policy change through legislative processes. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior, of social, economic and cultural institutions, and of the interaction of all these factors.

Social workers are professionals who aim to enhance overall wellbeing and help meet basic and complex needs of communities and people. Social workers work with many different populations and types of people, particularly focusing on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, abused and living in poverty. Depending on their specialty, job title and place of employment, a social worker may be required to participate in legislative processes that often result in the formation of social policies. They lean on social work values and principles, as well as academic research to carry out their work.

The Roles of social workers in Child Abuse

This field requires a specific and diverse skill set in order to best protect and help children. To start, future and current professionals in this field must be able to handle stress well, empathize, communicate well both verbally and through writing, and have the ability to multi-task. Another important quality to have in order to most effectively work within this field is to be able to balance working with difficult Situations and not carry that over into life outside of work. Social workers in child welfare and protection positions must be able to manage, supervise, organize, and compile information as well as work well within teams and one-on-one with individuals. To prepare for the types of situations that a social worker will face in this area, the minimum education requirement is typically a bachelor's degree in social work, sociology, criminal justice, or psychology.

1) Investigations and Case Work: On a daily bases, Child Protection Social Workers are responsible for investigating any allegations of child abuse, endangerment, neglect, or other circumstances in which a child or children may not be safe in a current living situation. Referrals are often issued by family, friends, schools, physicians, and other interested parties who have witnessed or suspect an issue with a child's safety. This requires for social workers in children's protection to investigate and gather evidence to either substantiate or dismiss the allegations.

Workers often talk to the referring party, parents or guardians, and the children involved in the case to begin to make a determination the next course of action. From interviews to collecting physical evidence, the job requires daily interaction, investigation, and report writing to document all findings.

2) Working with Families: In cases where abuse, neglect, or endangerment is substantiated, a protective services worker will petition a judge in order to issue the order of removal. Many times, this requires a social worker in this specialization to testify and submit reports for various court proceedings. In other cases, a decision to remove may not be made directly after a referral.

Often, though, enough evidence of some lack of parenting or other circumstance could alert a case worker in protective services to possible need for additional resources. This might include parenting classes, anger management class, family counseling, financial assistance, or other types of intervention. A children's protective services worker will work with families in these instances in order to find the community and state resources needed. Working in positions in order to protect children offers case workers many personal rewards, but the positions can also be demanding, emotionally charged, and stressful. With the combination of the right skills, education, and experience, a Child Protection Social Worker can improve the lives of children throughout a community.

3) Creating safe spaces: The social worker's priority should be to get the children to safety. There are many safe shelters throughout the country to help achieve this. Through roles such as community education coordinator, social workers can use their empathy and cultural sensitivity to help these children understand that they are not alone and the abuse is not their fault. Social workers can also act as positive adult role models the presence of caring relationships. With the stable adults in their lives help relieve the stress children feel at home. After school programs and community Centers can offer similar safe spaces as well as important socialization and support from peers. This can be instrumental in reducing anxiety for children of abuse, especially those with exacerbated feelings of isolation. Working in these types of programs, social workers can facilitate social play that makes them comfortable paying them the special attention they need.

4) Providing counseling: For social workers licensed to provide counseling through private practice, it will be similarly important to emphasize that these children are not alone and that nothing they have experienced is their fault. Often children of abuse do not even understand that what they have been subjected to is wrong and not an appropriate show of affection. Social Workers bring cultural competence to complex situations, considering environmental factors when assessing a family's dysfunction. They know how important it is to work with the whole family, helping identify and address the challenges they face as individuals, as a family, and as part of their communities. This sensitivity is essential to repair adult behavior and provide children with the tools to understand abuse, cope with it, and regain self-esteem.

5) Advocating in communities: Domestic violence is prevalent across the globe and does not discriminate against class or race. Raising awareness is critical and social workers can play a key role. Many of the mothers experiencing intimate partner violence have been silenced by fear.

Social workers can be their voice, making the issue known and informing women of their legal medical, and financial options, in turn bringing the child closer to safety. Advocates also can help validate victims' feelings of neglect and mistreatment, facilitate their access to resources, and assist in regaining control through shelters, community agencies, hotlines, or victim services agencies

6) Breaking the cycle: Unfortunately, many child abuse cases go unreported. Whether you work in child services, youth programs, court advocacy, or otherwise, collect data. The more facts and figures we have on the issue, the more compelling of a case we can make as to how prevalent domestic violence against children is and now urgent it is that we act. In order to break the cycle of violence, however, we need to work with perpetrators. Through voluntary or court-mandated batterer-intervention programs and family counseling, social workers can provide valuable services, including therapy and group discussion facilitation, to those who inflict this abuse chances are they were children of abuse themselves.

Theoretical framework

(i) Social learning theory

Social learning theory is based on the idea that an individual learns through modeling, observation, and cognitive processes (Bandura, 1997). According to social learning theory, crime and criminal behavior is learned. When examining child abuse specifically, social learning theory posits that abusive behaviors can be learned. According to social learning theory, parents and caregivers who abuse or neglect their children do so because they experienced or witnessed abuse or neglect at a young age. Wisdom (1989) suggested that there is a higher likelihood of abuse by parents if the parents were themselves abused as children. The intergenerational transmission of violence, or circle of violence, is premised on the principles of social learning theory wisdom (1989) noted that the intergenerational transmission of violence refers to the assumptions or hypotheses about the consequences of abuse and neglect in relation to a number of different outcomes. In other words, children who are exposed to violence in childhood view violence as acceptable behavior. Widom (1989) indicated that children who have been abused or neglected have a higher risk of becoming criminals, delinquents, and violent. Individuals with a history of child maltreatment were three times more likely to perpetrate child abuse (Milaniak & Widom. 2015). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Widom (1989) did not indicate that every abused or neglected child will become criminal or violent. Intervention and recognition of child abuse can reduce the chances of delinquency and criminal behavior in children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

The intergenerational transmission hypothesis asserts that Children grow up to repeat what they experienced and saw as children with their own children. Social learning is most often presumed as a primary mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment, Social learning theory, as applied to the intergenerational transmission hypothesis, postulates that abusive behavior is learned through the witnessing of abusive parenting and subsequent modeling of an abusive parent. Parents who used severe physically aggressive techniques were more likely to report witnessing partner aggression in childhood (Straus, 1994; Straus & Smith, 1990). Moreover, numerous studies have found relations between parent abuse history and the occurrence and severity of child abuse perpetration.

(ii) Attachment theory

Bowlby (1975) hypothesized the theory of attachment and defined the concept of attachment as "any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual, usually conceived as stronger and/or wiser. Ainsworth and Solomon (1978) expanded Bowlby's (1973) definition of attachment and identified, as well as categorized, different types of behavioral attachment styles. These attachment styles include

- 1) Secure attachment
- 2) Insecure-avoidant attachment
- 3) Insecure ambivalent attachment
- 4) Disorganized-disoriented attachment

In a secure relationship, the parent or caregiver is attentive to the needs of the child, a secure child who has received consistent, sensitive, and attentive care is able to strike a balance

between autonomous exploration of his or her own environment and dependency. Second, in insecure - an avoidant relationship, the child physically and emotionally avoids the parent or caregiver and does not rely on the parent or caregiver to help manage distress. Third, an insecure-ambivalent child demonstrates resistance and behavioral conflict with the parent or excessive immaturity as a way of attracting and maintaining the caregiver's attention and monitoring skills". The fourth attachment style, disorganized-disoriented, includes children who cannot depend on the parent or caregiver for comfort and protection. The parent or caregiver of a disorganized-disoriented child demonstrates typical responses to infant signals and behaves in a frightening manner when near a child (Tarabulsky et al. 2008). Researchers have reported that physically abused or neglected children are more likely to exhibit insecure attachment than children who have not experienced physical abuse or neglect.

Methodology

The study population was made up of the students of Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun state. There are three Colleges in the University, the College of Business and Social Sciences, College of Natural and Applied Sciences and College of Art and Communication Studies. The sampling method used is the stratified and random sampling methods since every student could not be studied. More so, this method ensures the representation. In order to arrive at a good representation of the study population, samples were drawn from all the three colleges. Survey monkey online survey calculator would be used to determine the total amount of questionnaire to be distributed. The population of Crawford university student is 1164, confidence level is 90%, and margin of error 5%, sample size for Crawford University is 222. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; the first is for personal information, consisting of bio data to help discover the respondent, age, sex, level and other relevant information. The other section has to do with the answers of the respondent to the researchers questions. The primary data were generated from survey method that is through the use of self-designed questionnaire by the researcher and the respondents. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using the frequency tables, and simple percentage method. The research would make use of chi-square statistical analysis, which aimed at establishing the significant difference that may exist among respondent's frequencies.

Table 1: Information on Awareness of Respondents about Different Forms of Child Abuse

S/N	ITEMS						
	To find out if the general public is aware about the different forms of child abuse.	SA	A	FA	FD	D	SD
1.	Emotional abuse is a form of child abuse	81.1	10.8	5	1.4	0.9	0.9
2.	Physical abuse is a form of child abuse	58.1	28.4	7.7	3.6	1.4	0.9
3.	Sexual abuse is the most common form of child abuse	64.4	18.5	9.9	4.5	1.4	1.4
4.	Neglect is a form of child abuse	58.1	25.2	6.8	5.0	3.2	1.8
5.	Child labour is a form of child abuse	59.5	23	8.6	4.1	3.6	1.4

Source: Author's Computation (2022) using SPSS 20.0

Majority of respondents (81%) strongly agree that emotional abuse is a form of child abuse, 11% of them agree to this statement, 5% fairly agree, 1% fairly disagree, 2% of respondents disagree and disagree to this statement. More than half of respondents (58%) strongly agree, 28% agree, 8% fairly agree, 4% fairly disagree while just 2% of them strongly disagree and disagree that physical abuse is a form of child abuse. More than half of respondents (64%) strongly agree that sexual abuse is the most common form of child abuse, 19% agree, 10% fairly agree, 5% fairly disagree while just 3% disagree and strongly disagree to this statement. More than half of respondents (58%) strongly agree that neglect is a form of child abuse, 25% agree, 7% fairly agree, 5% fairly disagree while just 5% disagree and strongly disagree to this statement. 60% of respondents strongly agree, 23% agree that child labour is a form of child abuse, 9% fairly agree to this, 4% fairly disagree, 5% disagree and strongly disagree to this statement.

Table 2: Information on the Causes / Factors Responsible for Child Abuse in Nigeria.

	To examine the causes / factors responsible for child abuse in Nigeria.	SA	A	FA	FD	D	SD
1.	Poor educational background encourage child abuse	52.7	25.2	12.2	5.9	3.2	0.9
2.	Poverty is one of the causes of child abuse	55	24.3	9.9	5.4	3.2	2.3
3.	Children of low socio economic status are more likely to be abused and neglected	48.6	29.3	9	5.4	5.4	1.8
4.	Adults that are abusing children are also a victim of child abuse while they were young	52.7	18.5	11.7	8.6	5.9	2.7
5.	Neglectful families tend to have more children or greater numbers of people living in the household compared to non-neglected families	50.5	27.9	10.4	5.4	5	0.9

Source: Author's Computation (2022) using SPSS 20.0

Table 2 presents respondents' opinion on the causes and factors responsible for child abuse in Nigeria. More than half of respondents (53%) strongly agree that poor educational background encourage child abuse, 25% agree, 12% fairly agree, 6% fairly disagree, while just 4% disagree and strongly disagree to this statement. 55% of respondents strongly agree, 24% agree, 10% fairly agree, 5% fairly disagree, 3% disagree while just 2% strongly disagree that poverty is one of the causes of child abuse. 49% of respondents strongly agree, 29% agree that children of low socio economic status are more likely to be abused and neglected, 9% fairly agree, 5% fairly disagree, 5% disagree while just 2% strongly disagree to this statement. 53% of respondents strongly agree that adults that are abusing children are also a victim of child abuse while they were young, 19% agree, 12% fairly agree, 9% fairly disagree, 6% disagree while 3% strongly disagree to this statement. 51% of respondents strongly agree that neglectful families tend to have more children or greater numbers of people living in the household compared to non-neglected families, 28% agree to this, 10% fairly agree, 5% fairly disagree while just 6% disagree and disagree to this statement.

Table 3: Information on Roles of Social Workers in Child abuse

	To find out if the general public is aware of social workers in Nigeria and to examine the roles of social workers in child abuse.	SA	A	FA	FD	D	SD
1.	Social workers perform a very important role in child abuse.	42.3	30.6	14.4	7.2	3.6	1.4
2.	Social workers are making effective effort to curb child in the society.	49.5	24.3	14.0	5.9	5.0	1.4
3.	We have social workers in Nigeria.	39.6	28.4	14	8.1	5.9	2.7
4.	Social workers create a safe space for victims of child abuse.	41	27.5	15.3	7.7	5	3.2
5.	Social workers investigate and gather information through the use of interviews and collecting of physical evidence.	41	32	16.7	5	2.7	2.7
6.	Social workers help to break the circle of child abuse in the society.	40.1	22.5	18.5	8.6	7.2	2.7
7.	Social workers enlighten the general public about child abuse.	66.2	18.9	6.8	4.1	1.8	2.3

Source: Author's Computation (2022) using SPSS 20.0

42% of the respondents strongly disagree that social workers perform a very important role in child abuse, 31% agree to this, 14% fairly agree, 7% fairly disagree while just 5% disagree and strongly disagree to this statement. Half of respondents (50%) strongly agree, 24% agree that social workers are making effective effort to curb child in the society, 14% fairly agree, 6% fairly disagree, 5% disagree while just 1% strongly disagree to this. 40% of respondents strongly agree that there are social workers in Nigeria, 28 of them agree, 14% fairly agree, 8% fairly disagree, 6% disagree while just 3% strongly disagree to the statement, 41% strongly agree, 28% agree, 15% fairly agree, 8% fairly disagree while 8% of them disagree and strongly disagree that social workers create a safe space for victims of child abuse. 73% of respondents strongly agree and agree that social workers investigate and gather information through the use of interviews and collecting of physical evidence, 17% fairly agree to this, 5% fairly disagree while just 5% of them disagree and strongly disagree to this statement. 63% of respondents strongly agree and agree that social workers help to break the circle of child abuse in the society, 19% of them fairly agree, 9% fairly disagree, 7% disagree while 3% strongly disagree to this. 66% strongly agree that social workers enlighten the general public about child abuse, 19% agree to this, 7% fairly agree, 4% fairly disagree while just 4% of respondents strongly disagree and disagree to this statement.

Effect of Social Welfare Service on Child Abuse

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	121.417 ^a	25	.000
Likelihood Ratio	61.543	25	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.467	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	221		

a. 27 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Source: Author's Computation (2022) using SPSS 20.0

Table 4 shows the effect of social welfare on child abuse. The Chi-square coefficient (121.417) has probability value of 0.000, this value is less than 5% significance level, it is therefore concluded that social welfare service has significant effect on child abuse. Test of the Hypothesis

Summary and Discussion of Results

Information elicited from the respondents show that majority of the respondents are in their early 20s (age bracket of 21 – 25 years), majority of respondents are female. As students, almost all respondents are single. Majority of them are in their final year. The implication of the demographic profile is that as finalists, respondents are believed to have deep knowledge compare to respondents that believe to other levels. Female gender is the most vulnerable gender when it comes to abuse. It is believed that information from them is reliable.

Information on awareness about child abuse shows that majority of respondents are aware of the different types or forms of child abuse. It was also gathered from respondents that the causes of child abuse may include poor educational, poverty and neglect. It problems facing government and social workers as gathered from respondents is financial product, inadequate information and negative attitude of parents. It was also gathered in the study that social workers perform very important role in child abuse, create safe pace of victims of child abuse and help break the circle of child abuse in the society.

The Chi-square analysis estimated showed that government and social welfare service have significant effect on reduction of child abuse. Findings of the study also revealed that the general public is aware of social welfare service.

Summary and Conclusion

The concept of child abuse and neglect is a very eclectic one. Its understanding as it occurs varies from individuals, ethnic groups, religious institution, professional bodies etc. The research did discuss the occurrence of child abuse and neglect as it occurs in various forms like physical abuses, verbal abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, child labour, child abandonment and child sexual abuse. Furthermore, the researchers also made available the factors that contribute to child abuse and child neglect in our society; this include the parent or caregiver factors, family factors, child factors, environmental and protective factors.

The experience of child abuse and neglect has very significant consequences in the life of an individual. It has effects on the health and physical well being, intellectual and cognitive development and emotional, psychological and behavioural aspect of his/her life. All this were critically analysed in this study. Basically, this study does not only state or lament the problems of child abuse and neglect in our society, it also enumerates factors that contribute to its occurrence and its consequences on the child. The aggregate views of the respondents and the analysis of their responses were fully and meticulously presented in chapter four of this research project.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of children are reported to be victims of child abuse and neglect every year. An untold number of other children are also maltreated but not reported. However, from the research that has been conducted in this study, it can be concluded that child abuse and neglect is one that needs to be tackled aggressively to maintain the sanity of our social infrastructure. The cycle of abuse has to be nipped in the bud. Child abuse should be taken seriously in our society. Abuse of children will always create problems for those children and the society at large. Abuse may cause the children to be depressed. It may make them lose their self-esteem, self-confidence and ego. Abuse may affect the academic performance of the children involved. Abuse may make children distrust others and cause sleeping disorder and other self-destructive behaviours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the paper, the researchers deemed it fit to proffer some recommendations to address the issue of child abuse and the role of the social worker.

Firstly, Parents should be sensitized on the problem of child abuse. Some parents cannot distinguish between child abuse and discipline at homes. Public awareness on what constituted the abuse of a child must be increased throughout the nook and cranny of the Nigerian Society. Parents need to understand what child abuse really is and the forms of the abuse. Some consider abuse as discipline but they are two different things. Parents need to understand the point where child abuse and child discipline intersect or where discipline crosses over and becomes an abuse. Moreover, some parents lack good act of parenting. Some Nigerian parents need to be taught the act of parenting. The researcher therefore recommend public talks, seminars, workshops and training by the government at various levels, non-governmental organizations and religious bodies to assist in this regard.

Secondly, the laws that protect the rights of the children must be fully implemented with all sincerity. The violators of the law must be judiciously prosecuted by the law enforcement agencies. The researchers recommend the training of some officers of the law that would specially take care of the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases in the country as such will deter the incidences of child abuse and neglect in the country. We equally want the government to always review laws protecting the rights of children in line with the updated law at the international level; such laws must also be implemented.

Thirdly, the researchers implore the non-governmental organizations and religious bodies to assist in launching and implementing programs of various forms that would counter the problems of child abuse in the country.

Fourthly, Schools should also endeavor to organize a kind of orientation programme to sensitize the children on avoiding potentially harmful scenarios. It should also be noted that

the identification and prompt reporting of any suspected case of child maltreatment to the police or other relevant law enforcement agency is very crucial.

Lastly, the religious leaders in our various religious institutions should also provide counseling for their congregation and preach against various forms of child abuses and neglect.

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