



Factors Responsible for Child Abuse and Neglect in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Borno State

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Abstract: *The child abuse menace is as old as the birth of the first child, until very recently child maltreatment has never been seen as a social problem. It was falsely assumed that such physical punishments are supposed to correct bad behavior and ensure conformity. But the consequential distorted personality of the child disproves the assumption. This study aims at showing that it is only through the care of children will one gains experience and develops an interest in finding out more about the affliction of the Nigerian child. In addition, the researcher hopes that those who are able to read this will get to know and pray that the past experiences of these silent sufferers will serve to prevent tomorrow as children from a similar fate.*

Keywords: *Child, Abuse, Neglect, Maiduguri, Metropolitan, Council*

Introduction

MMC Local Government Area of Borno State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the town of Maiduguri. It has an area of 436 km² and a population of 62,594 (Onyeche, 2012). Child abuse and neglect is a social and public health problem in Nigeria, as well as a children's rights issue. Abuse and neglect can lead to a wide range of adverse consequences for children and young people. There is generally not a single factor that results in the abuse or neglect of a child; it is usually a combination of various factors. In addition, the duration (such as the duration of an illness) or intensity (such as the level of drug or alcohol abuse) can make it more or less likely that a child will be at risk for abuse (Aber and Cicchetti, 2014).

Child abuse and Neglect is a term used for maltreatment and neglect of children. Child maltreatment may be formally described as: ...all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (Woodhouse, 2011).

Child neglecting the other hand is generally seen as a different phenomenon from maltreatment. Child neglect may be defined as: "any recent act or failure to act on the

part of a parent or caregiver, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" (Culp, 2011). Neglect is in many ways the more insidious harm against a child, with long-term effects at least as damaging as physical abuse (if not more so) but often going unnoticed (Bloom, 2011).

The term 'child abuse and Neglect and neglect' refers to the harm experienced by children or young people under the age of 18 years as a result of the actions, inactions or inability of people with a parental responsibility for them (Sylvestre and Mérette, 2010). Parental responsibility in relation to a child means all the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which, by law, parents have in relation to children (Greenfield, 2010). The harm experienced by the child or young person may arise from a significant event or may arise from the cumulative effect of abuse and neglect. Most parents love their children, but when stress, tiredness, lack of skills, information and support combine it can be overwhelming (Drotar, 2012).

It is certain that no child is ever to blame for abuse inflicted on him or her by an adult. There may be no 'child' factors present at all when a child is abused. However the risk of abuse of a child may be increased if the child has attributes that make parenting more difficult or has high needs. Relevant factors might include being a premature baby, persistently crying, being one of a multiple birth, and/or having behavioural or mental health problems (Rosenbaum, 2011).

Some children may be vulnerable because of emotional difficulties they have that both reflect and exacerbate social isolation. The resulting cognitive and emotional deficits serve as signals of vulnerability and/or interfere with their self-protective skills outside the home (Vissing, 2012). Thus, some children are victimized again and again. Cognitive and emotional deficits resulting from sustained abuse (including family violence) or neglect at home may increase the risk of a vicious circle of victimization outside the home as well. Thus, for example, experiences such as loss, conflict, deprivation or turmoil within the home may undermine a child's ability to protect themselves, making them a potential target for bullies or sexual predators (Abram, 2010).

Low educational attainment of caregivers has been identified as a risk factor for child maltreatment and neglect (Berger, 2010) and is also associated with poverty. Hence poverty (especially when compounded with other risks such as sole parenthood), low educational attainment and maltreatment can set up a cycle whereby one perpetuates the other (Jacobson, 2010). As with other risk factors, the strength of the relationship between low educational attainment and neglect and maltreatment is unclear, as are the causal pathways. Low educational attainment can both reflect and contribute to disadvantage including precarious employment and low income. Lack of education may also mean a parent has less understanding of issues associated with parenting, or has limited ability to learn themselves (Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010).

A further widely recognized stressor is sole parenthood (Alessandri, 2011). Two factors appear to contribute to sole parenthood as a stressor and risk factor for children: the first is the strong link between sole parent households and poverty, especially reliance on benefit income (Chaffin, 2011) although, due to the loss of the absent parent's wage-earning power, "the majority of single-parent, female-headed families [are driven] into poverty, *regardless of whether the mother works.*" [emphasis added] (Bloom, 2011); the other is that sole parenthood may be associated with lack of family or community-based

support networks. And a sole parent is doing the work of two people. While support provided to mothers is significantly associated with them being able to provide support for their children, there is no evidence that lack of support and/or wider family dysfunction necessarily leads to maltreatment (Aber and Cicchetti, 2014).

Child abuse and Neglect occurs in every country in the world, and despite considerable efforts and resources, rates of maltreatment and neglect in developed countries have not markedly diminished, nor are researchers much closer to being able to assess which children are at risk, and what programmes effectively change long-term behaviour so as to prevent maltreatment (Berger, 2010).

Child abuse and neglect have immediate and long-term consequences. In addition to negatively impacting on the child, child abuse and neglect impacts on the family, the school community, and even future generations. The ability to survive and thrive in the face of child abuse and neglect depends on a variety of factors, including the extent and type of abuse or neglect, whether it was continual or infrequent, the age of the child when abuse was initiated, the child's relationship to the abuser, and how the abuse or neglect was responded to if discovered or disclosed. Outcomes are also dependent on the child's personality traits, inner strength, and the support the child receives from those around them (Berger, 2015).

Neglected children are also at considerable risk. These children are more likely than other children to suffer from a serious physical injury due to an accident such as falling, drowning, fire, or ingesting poison. They are also at a greater risk than other children of being physically and sexually abused from an unrelated caretaker, often times a significant other or friend of their parent(s) (Berger, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Many child deaths, however, are not routinely investigated and postmortem examinations are not carried out, which makes it difficult to establish the precise number of fatalities from child abuse and Neglect in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Kaduna state. There are problems in properly recognizing cases of infanticide and measuring their incidence. Significant levels of misclassification in the cause of death as reported on death certificates have been found, for example, in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State. Deaths attributed to other causes – for instance, sudden infant death syndrome or accidents have often been shown on reinvestigation to be homicides.

Despite the apparent widespread misclassification, there is general agreement that fatalities from child abuse and Neglect are far more frequent than official records suggest in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State where studies of infant deaths have been undertaken.

Among the fatalities attributed to child abuse and Neglect, the most common cause of death is injury to the head, followed by injury to the abdomen. Intentional suffocation has also been extensively reported as a cause of death. Injuries inflicted by a caregiver on a child can take many forms. Serious damage or death in abused children is most often the consequence of a head injury or injury to the internal organs. Head trauma as a result of abuse is the most common cause of death in young children, with children in the first 2 years of life being the most vulnerable. Because force applied to the body passes through the skin, patterns of injury to the skin can provide clear signs of abuse. The skeletal manifestations of abuse include multiple fractures at different stages of

healing, fractures of bones that are very rarely broken under normal circumstances, and characteristic fractures of the ribs and long bones.

One of the syndromes of child abuse and Neglect is the “battered child”. This term is generally applied to children showing repeated and devastating injury to the skin, skeletal system or nervous system. It includes children with multiple fractures of different ages, head trauma and severe visceral trauma, with evidence of repeated infliction. Fortunately, though the cases are tragic, this pattern is rare.

Children may be brought to professional attention because of physical or behavioral concerns that, on further investigation, turn out to result from sexual abuse. It is not uncommon for children who have been sexually abused to exhibit symptoms of infection, genital injury, abdominal pain, constipation, chronic or recurrent urinary tract infections or behavioral problems. To be able to detect child sexual abuse requires a high index of suspicion and familiarity with the verbal, behavioural and physical indicators of abuse. Many children will disclose abuse to caregivers or others spontaneously, though there may also be indirect physical or behavioural signs.

There exist many manifestations of child neglect, including non-compliance with health care recommendations, failure to seek appropriate health care, deprivation of food resulting in hunger, and the failure of a child physically to thrive. Other causes for concern include the exposure of children to drugs and inadequate protection from environmental dangers. In addition, abandonment, inadequate supervision, poor hygiene and being deprived of an education have all been considered as evidence of neglect.

Data on non-fatal child abuse and neglect come from a variety of sources, including official statistics, case reports and population-based surveys. These sources, however, differ as regards their usefulness in describing the full extent of the problem. Official statistics often reveal little about the patterns of child abuse and Neglect. This is partly because, in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State there are no legal or social systems with specific responsibility for recording, let alone responding to, reports of child abuse and Neglect and neglect. In addition, there are differing legal and cultural definitions of abuse and neglect between societies. There is also evidence that only a small proportion of cases of child maltreatment are reported to authorities, even where mandatory reporting exists.

Case series have been published in many countries. They are important for guiding local action on child abuse and Neglect, and raising awareness and concern among the public and professionals (Corso and Mercy, 2011). Case series can reveal similarities between the experiences in different countries and suggest new hypotheses. However, they are not particularly helpful in assessing the relative importance of possible risk or protective factors in different cultural contexts, this study is therefore set to investigate the factors that are responsible for child abuse and neglect among parents in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective is to examine the factors responsible for child abuse and neglect among parents in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State. Therefore, its specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the means of child abuse and neglect among parents in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State
2. Identify the factors that are responsible for child abuse and neglect among parents MMC L.G.A child abuse and neglect in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of Borno State
3. Examine the factors that protect a child from risk of abuse or neglect in the study area

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions have been generated to guide the study;

1. What are the means of child abuse and neglect in Maiduguri Metropolis Local Government Area of **Borno** State?
2. What are the factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect among parents in Kajuru L.G.A of Kaduna State?

Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology that was used for the study discussed under the following sub-headings:

Study Area

The study involved the use of a descriptive survey research design. Survey research, according to Ary (2002) is a research design used to obtain information concerning the current position of phenomena. The information thus gathered from the survey, results into analyzed findings and interpretations. This design was so chosen because it is very friendly and easy to administer. The use of lots of questionnaires and trained research assistants provide the researcher with a huge data for analysis that will help to reduce the level of error.

Population for the Study

In order to have a comprehensive view of the area of research, the target population included children and teachers randomly selected from local Government primary schools located in three selected Local Government Areas from the three senatorial districts in Borno State. According to the 2010 population census estimate of the Kaduna State Ministry of Education, Kaduna State has a total of 1604 primary schools under the Borno State Universal Basic Education Programme. The schools were located in the 27 Local Government Areas in the State. There were a total number of 8,587 teachers and 273,163 pupils.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

There are twenty-seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno State. These LGAs are constitutionally divided into three senatorial districts; the north, south, and central districts. For this study, two LGAs were randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts. In order to randomly select the LGAs, the names of all LGAs in each of the districts were in turn written on a piece of paper, folded, and put into a bag. The bag was then shaken and a folded paper blindly picked, and its content was recorded. Only two LGAs were picked from each district. Thus, six LGAs were randomly selected from this exercise. This sampling technique was used to ensure good coverage of the State. This same technique was also repeated in the selection of the schools where the

pupils and teachers residing in each of these selected LGAs were randomly picked, and the questionnaire was administered. The age of the children did not exceed 20 years of age. The LGAs drawn from the North Senatorial District included Furrum and Borno. Those from the Central Senatorial District included Metropolitan and Jere South and Damboa, and those from the South Senatorial District included Chibok and Bui. It would have been cumbersome to work with a very large population as indicated in the area Krejcie and Morgan (1970) recommended that three hundred and fifty (350) respondents are acceptable as sample size, and a five percent (5%) of the selected population is enough. Due to the great disparities in the population figures of the teachers and pupils of the LGAs, as indicated in Table 3.1, the researcher used a sample size of 20% and 1% of the population of teachers and pupils, respectively for this research work.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, designed by the researcher. The same type of questionnaire was administered to both the pupils and their teachers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections.

Section (A) for personal data on gender, age, marital status, and educational qualification. Section (B) focused on questions based on the three research questions for the study derived as items 1 to 10 for research question 1, items 10 to 18 for research question 2, and items 19 to 24 for research question 3. A 4-point scale was used weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 - respectively with the categories.

- Strongly Agree (SA)
- Agree (A)
- Disagree (D)
- Strongly Disagree (SD)

According to Ekeh (2003), a mathematically determined mean value of 3.0 issued as a criterion to judge the means of the items in these sections of the questionnaire. Any item with a mean equal to or higher than 2.5 indicated that it is "agreed" or acceptable, while item with a mean less than 2.5 is regarded as "disagree" or unacceptable. Ekeh gave the formula for this calculation as $(1+2+3+4)/4 = 2.5$

Method for Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using various statistical methods. The Likert scale was used for data analysis as indicated. The section on personal data was tabulated in form of frequencies and percentages. Due to the parametric nature of the data, descriptive statistics such as percentages, and the Research Null hypotheses were tested using the inferential Pearson Correlation statistics, at 0.05 levels of significance. Therefore, based on this (0.05) probability level of significance. The weighted mean was used to answer the research questions and to accept or reject the stated null hypothesis. To avoid statistical complications during the analysis, all the 'strongly agree' and 'Agree' were converted to as 'Agree', while the 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' were regarded as 'Disagree'.

Summary of Findings

This study was based on examining the effects of child abuse and neglect in Borno State with the following three specific objectives:

- i. identify the cultural practices and various forms of child abuse and Neglects in Borno State;
- ii. identify the predisposing factors to various forms of child abuse and Neglects in Borno State;
- iii. determine the influence of these the implementation of the child Right Act in Borno State;

The study involved the use of descriptive survey research design using questionnaire to generate data. The target population included children(pupils) and teachers of Local Government Primary Schools, residing in three Local Government Areas (LGAs), located in the three Senatorial Districts of Borno State. The LGAs included Borno South, Damboa and Biu. In order to randomly select the LGAs, names of all LGAs in each of the districts were in turn written on a piece of paper, folded and put into a bag. The bag western shaken and a folded paper blindly picked, and its content recorded.

The age range of the pupil's respondents for the study was from 11 to 20years, while that of teachers was from 18 years, and above. The personal data of the respondents included their educational background, gender, and marital status. A total of 1291 respondents comprising of 510 teachers and 781pupils were used as the sample sizes for the study.

The three postulated Research Null hypotheses of this work were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics at 0.05 levels of significance. The test relationships were between child abuse and Neglect in Borno State and the existing cultural practices, child abuse and Neglect and why hawking/begging persist in Borno State, and Influence of cultural practice son the implementation of child right Act. The null hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the confirmation of a significant relationship within the limit of 0.05.

Using the Pearson Product Moment correlation statistic, the test results on the three null hypotheses indicated that there was significant relationship between child abuse and Neglects and the existing cultural practices, child abuse and Neglect and reasons why hawking and begging persist in Borno State and Influence of cultural practices on the implementation of child right act. Thus, all the three Null hypotheses were rejected.

The summary of the result is as follows:

- Excessive domestic child labour is a form of child abuse and Neglect (59.9%).
- Polygamy in Borno State exposes the child to some forms of child abuse (58.8%).
- Early girl child marriage is a form of child abuse and Neglect (55.05%).
- Begging by children in Borno State is a form of child abuse and Neglect (54.45%).
- Hawking by children is a form of child abuse and Neglect (53.6%).
- Preference for particular sex of child is a form of child abuse and Neglect (51.55%).
- Other forms of child labour include working in farms, cutting grasses etc. (47.35%).
- Monogamy in Borno State exposes the child to some child to some forms of abuse (45.1%).
- Circumcision of children (Male and Female) exists in Borno State (42.05%)

- Circumcision exists in Borno (26.45%).
- Children voluntarily make themselves available as domestic servants for food, etc. (62.75%).

The result of the test hypothesis revealed that:

1. Cultural practices such as hawking/begging, early girl child marriage still predominantly existed in Borno State and significant relationship was established between child abuse and Neglect and the existing cultural practices in Borno State.
2. Ignorance about the dangers, high level of illiteracy and poverty were the reasons why hawking and begging persisted in Borno State and significant relationship was established between child abuse and Neglect and why hawking and begging persist in Borno State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that excessive domestic child labour, child begging and hawking are the main child abuse and Neglects in Borno State. The cultural practices that exposed children to these forms of abuses included polygamy, 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 and Neglect, coupled with the failures of the legal agencies and child care institutions, more children will fall daily as victims of one form of child abuse and Neglects 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

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made. A society with no children is a society with no tomorrow. Children are the leaders of tomorrow. Solutions to child abuse and Neglect in relation to cultural practices therefore, require a total attitudinal shift using great deal of enlightenment champagnes and persuasions. In order to reduce or eradicate child abuse and Neglect, the following recommendations are hereby put forward.

1. There should be public awareness in religious, community homes and by all media on the effect of Cultural practices such as hawking/begging girl circumcision and early girl child marriage in Borno State. Faith based organizations should also join the civil society groups in creating the awareness on child abuse and Neglect as some of the abuses have religious undertone.

Religion is a powerful tool that is capable to transform and renew the mindset of a person or people.

2. Government should encourage for education, especially at the primary and secondary level for all our children, and employment for the youth. High level of illiteracy and poverty were one of the reasons given as to why hawking and begging persist in Borno. Education is cable of giving the children who voluntarily

surrender themselves to the labour market self confidence, a sense of direction and hope.

3. Policies and programmes of the Borno State government should be largely geared towards societal expectations of children to the aspirations and expectations of the children themselves.

4. Government should enforce the child implementation Right act to punish offenders of child abuse and Neglect in Borno State.

5. The attention of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission of Nigeria (EFCC) should be drawn to investigate the issues of corruption labelled against officials connected with the protection of the Rights and welfare of the Nigerian child.

Suggestion

This study only looked at the effects of child abuse and Neglect. It would be very interesting to consider the effects of these abuses on the behaviour of the victims in their various stages of adult life. Such stages would include the adolescent stage, the spinster and bachelor stage, the married stage, and old age.

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