

## **Prevalence of Child right Abuse in Households in Abia State, Nigeria**

**Umeh-Idika, A. S.**

Home Economics/Hotel Management and Tourism Department, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.  
Abia State, Nigeria.

### **\*Corresponding Author:**

Umeh-Idika, A. S

**Email:** [adyscojesus@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:adyscojesus@yahoo.co.uk)

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**Abstract:** The study identified the prevalence of child right abuse in households in Abia state. The study was a survey design. Data were elicited using questionnaire. The population comprised of all households in umuahia Abia state. A total of two hundred (200) households were randomly selected for the study. Mean was used for data analysis. The study answered three research questions. The finding revealed among other things that child rights are being abused in households. It was revealed that the abusers are parents, teachers, siblings among others. It was recommended that children should be allowed to express their rights without exploiting their vulnerability. Parents should take responsibility for their children. Government should provide basic necessities of life for the improvement of children's lives.

**Keywords:** child, right, abuse and household.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Children are the treasures of families in every society and without them, the family and society will be extinguished permanently, children as citizen of the society are entitled to their privileges' and rights that come with being a member of a country. In Nigeria as in other countries of the world, there are fundamental human rights and there are also right of the child and those of women. Sometimes the right of the child might be violated concuiously or unconsciously without being aware. And these may affect the child negatively in life. So there is need to know the right of the children and ensure that they are not violated.

Right can be described as freedoms and benefits that are guaranteed to people by law. There are some fundamental rights of every person and these rights are fundamental right that are written in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, chapter four (IV) section 33-48 pages 18-26. These fundamental rights includes: Right to life, right to dignity of human person, right to fair hearing, right to private and family life, right to freedom of thought, conscious and religion, right of freedom of expression and association, right of freedom of movement, right to acquire and own movable property anywhere in Nigeria. Despite all these rights, the Citizens Forum for Constitution Reform (CFCR) added more fundamental rights like right of health, right of education, right to work, right to culture, right to control resources, right of the child, right of a person with disability, right to mothers, and so on [1].

Also right is a statement showing the following:

- (1) A natural due,(11) a moral claim, (111)a legal entitlement

Meanwhile, the United Nations had stated that a child is anybody boy or girl who is 18 years or below, which means a child is a tender vulnerable person that depends on others for survival [2], the United Nation (UN) convention of the rights of the child was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989 and Nigeria followed suit in the adoption of the right of the child, since then the right of the child has being part and parcel of the society.

Every child ought to be cherished, loved, protected and cared for in the society where he finds himself/herself. Onyebueke listed five areas of needs of the child that the society[3] should devote special attention to as:

1. The special needs of children
2. The special interrelationships among these needs
3. The unique relationship of the new generation to the evolving society
4. The special dependency and vulneribity of children
5. The special organizational problems of juvenile care.

Children are very important in any society because they are the future leaders and hope of the

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nations. Societies stand or fail according to the quality of children and its values[4]. The quality of children can be determined through the type of care given to them. The way a society treats its children, is not only a measure of the conscience and morality of that society, it reflects its quality of comparison, sense of justice and commitment to the future of human kind. It is a mark of dedication to the improvements of children's lives and realistic yardstick for measuring level of progress and national development.

The United Nations (UN) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) recognized the children's need and therefore instituted the UN Convention of the Right of the Child and the African Chapter respectively. The right enshrined in the convention applies equally to children below the age of 18 years without regard to race, color, sex, language, religion political or other opinions. Another fundamental principle is that the best interest of the child should be used as the touchstone for all decisions and dignity[3]. The provisions of the convention guaranteed many rights which can be grouped broadly into survival, development, protection and participation rights. The convention stated that protection of children means much more than just ensuring their survival, it should necessarily involve guaranteeing quality nutrition, basic education and adequate shelter for all around improvement of life.

Currently almost all countries ratified the convention; it is on record that as the most widely ratified international treaty. Nigeria was one of the first countries to sign the convention, against these background it can be seen that we have provisions in our laws for the right of the child. It is worthy to note here that non-compliance to the stipulations of the convention leads to abuse of right of children. This principles is contravened everyday in our society inform of child abuse practiced in the homes[5]. Child abuse is a crime of harming a child physically, emotionally, and psychologically, it also includes violence, which may be defined as a state of injury that may be physical or mental. Therefore, excessive punishment of a child is regarded as child abuse or another state in which the child is subjected to any form trauma or abuse may be regarded as violation of child right[6]. Anyakoha stated that child abuse covers a wide range of actions that involves in physical, emotional or mental harm being inflicted on children of all ages[7]. Others are any act capable of instilling fear and inferiority feeling to a child such as disrespect, disapproval, disloyalty, shouting at and treating the person with contempt, cumulate to abuse. Anyakoha identified five ways in which children's right are abused in the households[7]. Thus, neglect abuse occurs when a person fails to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care or education for children. Physical abuse is the use of physical force against a child that may result in bodily injury or physical pain. While emotional

abuse involves anguish, pain or distress through verbal or non-verbal act to a child. Also sexual abuse occurs when someone lures or entices a child to be part of some sexual activity. It also occurs when someone subjects a child to male or female to fondling, rape or incest. Incest also is a sexual activity between people who are closely related. For instance, a child maybe sexually abused by a parent, step-parent, siblings and so on.

In Nigeria, including Abia State, abuse of child right within household seems unthinkable owing to the fact that the extended family system provides security, love, respect, protection, and means of survival among others. Household is a group of individual who live together and share things and other activities in common. They may not be related by blood but live under the same roof. This is a system that is practiced in Abia State [6]. Yet, the perpetration of abuse do not seems to exclude the children from households in Abia state. It is an everyday occurrence; several report and studies especially of developing countries have indicated that child right abuse does occur. For example the United Nation also estimated that about 706,000 to four million children and women are trafficked annually and that fifty percent of these figure are children as young as six years old, [8]. In another development, about 76 trafficked children were recently rescued from a large farm in Ogun State in Nigeria, where they were forced to work with their bare hands.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Center revealed that 330 children including those aged 14 and under 12, many of them from Africa have been trafficked to Britain over the past 12 months. Similarly Chiagoro reported that 229 children were trafficked in 1989 out of which 80 percent were girls engaged as domestic works helps and hawkers; two third of the boys were found in agricultural and fishing sectors[5].

It is estimated that for every one case of child right abuse, neglect, and exploitation, reported to authorities, about five more go unreported [5]. Among the different types of child right abuse identified, physical abuse was the most common while neglect was the least common in the households. Majority of the child right abuse were female (67 percent) [9]. Unfortunately no study that focused on the child right abuse in households in Abia State were known to the researcher, hence the study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the prevalence rate of child right abuse in households in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically the study determined:

1. The various forms of child rights abuse
2. Reasons for child right abuse

3. The influence of child rights abuse on the children.

#### Research questions

1. What are the various forms of child rights abuse in Abia State?
2. What are the reasons for child rights abuse?
3. What are the influences of the abuse on the child?

#### METHODOLOGY

**Area of the study:** The study was carried out in Abia state, Nigeria. Abia State is located in the Eastern part of the country. This thickly populated.

**Design of the study:** This study adopted a survey research design.

**Population of the study:** The population of the study was comprised of household in Umuahia North Local Government of Abia State. Umuaha is the capital of Abia State. Independent Electoral Commission showed

that Umuahia North L.G.A has a total population of 32,693 households, with 75 streets in the urban area.

**Sample for the study:** Purposive random sampling technique was used to select two hundred (200) households from Umuahia urban.

**Instrument for data collection:** The instrument for the data collection was a questionnaire developed through extensive literature based on the purpose of the study.

**Validation of the instrument:** The instrument was face validated by three experts in Home Economics Department, Michael Okpara of Agriculture, Umudike.

**Data analysis techniques:** Mean was used to analyze the data. A mean of 2.50 was accepted as high score while any mean below 2.50 was regarded as not important.

#### RESULTS

##### Various Forms of Child Rights Abuse

**Table 1: Mean rating of respondent on the various forms of child right abuse**

S/n	Form of Abuse	Mean Score
1.	Denial of freedom expression	4.00
2.	Discrimination against child	3.00
3.	Deliberate beating	3.20
4.	Deliberately wounded	3.70
5.	Spitting at the child	3.20
6.	Throwing objects at the child	3.20
7.	Pointing accusing finger at the child	3.00
8.	Locking the child outside	3.80
9.	Denying the food	3.80
10.	Not allowing child to go to school	4.00
11.	Inadequate medical attention	3.70
12.	Inadequate clothing	3.60
13.	Verbal attacks	3.30
14.	Enticing a child	3.00
15.	Luring a child to sex	3.85
16.	Fondly of the child	3.00
17.	Raping of the child	4.00
18.	Hitting the child with something	3.00
19.	Using belt or wire to beat	4.00
20.	Nakeding the child as punishment	2.80
21.	Sending on hawking	3.20
22.	Child trafficking	2.60
23.	Kidnapping of child	3.80

Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 1: above shows that all the respondents accepted the 23 items as various forms of child rights abuse in Abia State, they all meet the cut-off point of

2.50 and above. These 23 items are therefore various forms of child right abuse in households in Abia State.

**Table 2: Reasons for child abuse**

S/n	Reasons for Child Abuse	Mean Score
1.	Ignorant of the child's right	2.90
2.	Poverty	3.00
3.	Illiteracy	3.50
4.	Graving for wealth	3.60
5.	Greed in the society	3.50
6.	Over population	1.90
7.	Disrespect for laws	2.50
8.	Unemployment	3.50
9.	High rate of school dropout	4.00
10.	Vulnerability of children	4.00

Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 2 shows that the respondent accepted 9 out of 10 items as reasons for child rights abuse in Abia state. They all meet the cutoff mark of 2.50 and above, item six was not accepted as a reason for child rights

abuse in the area of the study, it was not up to cutoff point of 2.50. These show that the prevalence is on the high side.

**Table 3: Mean ratings of respondent on the influence of the child right abuse on the improvement of the children's lives.**

S/n	Forms of Influence	Mean Score
1.	Children are left in a state of daily fear	3.50
2.	Child is emotionally unstable	3.60
3.	A child leaves with the trauma in life	4.00
4.	The child does not have trust on adult	3.75
5.	It makes a child to repeat the pattern when he is grown	3.00
6.	It affects the physical development of the child	3.00
7.	It affects the sexual life of the child when grown	4.00
8.	It affects the education of the child	4.00
9.	Children grow up to be bullies in the society	3.50
10.	They can contact terminal disease	3.20
11.	They are disfigured	3.00
12.	They are maimed	3.20
13.	Abuse of child right makes room for the child's improvement	1.50

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 3: shows that the respondents accepted twelve items as influence of child rights abuse in the State. They all have the cutoff point of 2.50 and above. Item 13 was not accepted as an influence for child right abuse because it was not up to the cutoff point of 2.50.

### Findings of the Study

The following findings were made:

1. 23 forms of child rights abuse in households in Abia State, Nigeria
2. 9 reasons of child rights abuse in households in Abia State
3. 12 negative influences of child right abuse in household in Abia State were also found and they were against the improvement of child lives because their finding indicated high prevalence rate in the society.

### DISCUSSIONS

All the items in table 1 which are on various forms of child rights abuse is in line with findings of Anyakoha and Eluwa [10]. Chiagoro says that child right abuse occur in various forms and they are very common in families, irrespective of status and location [5]. The finding disagreed with Anyakoha also who stated that parents discipline their children by flogging them[7]. It also disagreed with Umeh who observed that parent deny children food and gifts as a way of inculcating values to them[4].

Chiagoro had observed that women keep their house help in unacceptable and inhuman conditions that they would never approve for their own progenies [5]. Denial of freedom of expansion, raping of children, not allowing children go to school, and using belt and wire in the child had high scores. These might be because

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forms of abuse could easily be meted to the child without attracting the attention of neighbors' and outsiders. The finding is also in line with Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Women Development [6] that all sort of things are used as punishment measures on the other child such as hot waters, electric wires, belt among others. While others are denied the right to go to school. The findings on the reasons are in line with Kembe ,who opined that poverty having created loopholes for child kidnapping and trafficking to thrive in Nigeria[11]. Also Echezona had observed that daughters are relied upon for financial support[12]. She also stated that many families have relented in their endowed responsibility towards the children as result of material acquisition. This is also in agreement of Anyokoha, who stated that parents should know and respect the right of the child for the improvement of the child[7].

The findings are in line with World Health Organization that violence against women and children have serious consequences for the physical and mental health of the child [13]. It also stated that abused children are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and sexual dysfunction. It further pointed out that violence may affect the reproductive health of girls; Abuse will also result in sexual transmitted disease (STD).

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that there are various forms of child rights abuse in households in Abia state and there are various reasons why abuses are meted out. Some of these reasons are because the child is the other child not the biological child and poverty has caused households to abuse the rights of the child by giving the child out as a slave or in marriage. It was also found that all these abuses have negative influence on the improvement of children. Physical abuse is perpetrated against girl child more than the boy child. Generally it was found that a child rights abuse are meted out more in the households which is supposed to improve the child living standard.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it is recommended that:

1. Seminar and workshop should be focused on child rights abuse to bring the ills of these hidden households problems to lime light.
2. Home Economics professionals should disseminate this information on child rights abuse through extension work services to the communities

3. Government through law enforcement agencies should prosecute and litigate child right cases to protect the growing children.
4. Abused children should be given listening ears and protection.
5. Guidance counselors and social workers should counsel and advise sexually-abused children.

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