



KNOWLEDGE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON FACTORS THAT PROMOTE AND HINDER THE EARLY DETECTION AND PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

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ABSTRACT: *Introduction: School teachers have an important role in the early detection and prevention of children from being sexually abused and exploited. The aim of this study was to assess the factors that influence the early detection and prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA) among schoolteachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State. Method: This study was a cross-sectional descriptive study involving 53 permanent teachers selected from the database of the school's registry. This cross-sectional study was conducted between February and March 2021. Multistage cluster sampling technique was employed to obtain study participants from a list of sampling frames collated from the registry. Data collected was analyzed electronically using SPSS version 23. Frequency and percentage tables were generated for the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Statistical significance for association was tested using chi-square with a p-value less than 0.05 considered statistically significant. Results: 98.1% of the respondents had good knowledge concerning child sexual abuse. We found a significant relationship between factors influencing and hindering the early detection of CSA among schoolteachers ($r = 0.731$, $p = 0.003$). Also, there was a significant association between these influencing factors that encouraged early detection and level of knowledge about CSA of teachers ($p = 0.001$, $X^2 = 23.463$). Conclusion: CSA remains a problem in our schools and indeed in the wider society. Teachers should be equipped with tools and knowledge to identify signs of sexual abuse. There should be proper, discrete reporting channels in schools to ensure that students who are victims of abuse are protected and properly safeguarded.*

KEYWORDS: Child Sexual Abuse, Prevention and Detection, Secondary school Teachers.



INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is fast becoming a major public health concern worldwide and has been called a “silent health emergency” because of the biopsychosocial and mental health impact it has on its victim(s) which are potentially amendable to change if properly handled.¹

CSA is the unwanted contact or non-contact sexual experience perpetrated on a child and/or act of sexual intercourse between an adult and a child.^{2,3} This definition was updated recently by the World Health Organization and reinforced by Kumar et al (2019). when he described CSA as ‘the involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he or she does not understand, cannot give informed consent to, for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.’^{4,5} These activities include but are not limited to penetration, fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually, voyeurism, intercourse, exhibitionism, involving a child in prostitution or pornography, or online child luring by cyber predators.⁴

It is said that 40 million children annually are victims of child abuse and neglect by the age of 14 years.⁵ In USA alone, over 6 million children are referred to child protection service due to issues related to abuse, including CSA.^{5,6}

The biopsychological and health problems that result from CSA are growing at an escalating rate in Africa, but this has gone under-reported. This unfortunate reality is believed to result from our cultural silence in Africa. We do not typically discuss matters relating to sexual abuse in the public, there is an unwritten “non-disclosure” by the young victim which stems from fear of further harm from the perpetrator, being blamed, feelings of shame, and cultural inhibitions. More so, those who muster the courage to report abuse find that the perpetrators and offenders are ineptly persecuted.⁷⁻⁹ What complicates this further is that most sexual abuse usually occur in the settings that are familiar to the child and most of the abusers are known to the individual before the onset of the act.¹⁰

Various risk and protective factors against CSA have been discussed in literature. One safety net for vulnerable children that have been underutilized are teachers, especially in the formative years of childhood.^{11,12}

School teachers play a striking role in the lives of students and pupils. They are individuals in the society that act as stakeholders in safeguarding young children especially those thought to be vulnerable. They also listen to them picking up verbal and non-verbal cues, observe behavioral changes and also advocate for them the students under their care.¹³

In the 1970s, schools started implementing child sexual abuse prevention programs to help with this problem, whereby the school child sexual prevention programs encourage school students to disclose their past experiences in sexual abuse and also help in the prevention of future abuse of sexual abuse.¹⁴ This has been implemented in other advanced countries.¹⁵ Unfortunately, in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, these programs are nearly non-existent.

School teachers spend 5-10 hours with students daily, at least five days in a week and yet there is paucity of data on the ability and competence of these teachers to recognize or detect the signs of child sexual abuse. As these teachers spend a large chunk of the working week with



these potentially vulnerable students, the aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing early detection and prevention of child sexual abuse in a secondary school in Southwest Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive, cross-sectional study involving teachers recruited from a private secondary school in Southwest Nigeria. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used which contained questions about socio-demographics, factors influencing early detection of sexual abuse and the respondents' thoughts about preventing child sex abuse. The respondents were not required to write but just to tick the appropriate boxes which were provided for each option given. Names were not used for identification; coding numbers were used instead.

Inclusion Criteria

- Permanent staff at Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State involved in teaching secondary school students.

Exclusion Criteria

- Temporary/ad hoc/locum teachers at Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.
- Teachers who opted not to participate in the study.

Sample Size and Recruitment of Study Participants

The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

where:

n = sample size

N = population size (60)

e = level of precision expected at a 95% confidence level and $p = 0.05$, assured. This was calculated to be 53.

The respondents were selected using a multistage cluster sampling technique from the school's teaching staff database and electronic invites sent to them to participate in the study with the volition to opt out of the study.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from Babcock University Health Research Ethical Committee (BUHREC) and a letter of introduction from the Department of Nursing. A copy of the ethical approval was handed to the research and ethical office of the secondary school.



Informed consent was obtained while anonymity and confidentiality was maintained during and after data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used for analysis of data. The data collected from the questionnaire will be manually sorted out and coded. It will be imputed into the computer for analysis using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software version 23. Frequency and percentage tables will be generated for demographic characteristics of the respondents. Statistical significance for association will be tested using chi-square with p-value less than 0.05 considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency n=53 (%)
AGE	
21-25 years	29 (54.7)
26-30 years	12 (22.6)
31-35 years	6 (11.3)
Above 36 years	6 (11.3)

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. More than half (54.7%) of the respondents were 21-25 years, the rest being 26-30 years (22.6%), 31-35 years (11.3%) and above 36 years (11.3%), with an overall mean of 27.72 ± 0.37 . Most of the respondents were Christians (92.5%) (data not shown).



Table 2: Factors That Influence the Early Detection of Child Sexual Abuse among School Teachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Establishing a mutual relationship between school students and school teachers, encourages early detections of child sexual abuse	30 (56.6%)	15 (28.3%)	3 (5.7%)	3 (5.7%)	2 (5.7%)
Good communication skills by the school teacher encourages early detection of child sexual abuse among school students/ children	27 (50.9%)	23 (43.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)
When trust is established between school teachers and school children, it aid in the early detection of sexual abuse	37 (69.8%)	12 (22.6%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Good manner of approach, to the school children, enables school teachers to be able to detect when a school student is being abused sexually	27 (50.9%)	19 (35.8%)	3 (5.6%)	3 (5.6%)	1 (1.9%)
Good communication gesture, and environment encourages creates a sense of safety and encourages the early detection of sexual abuse among school children.	32 (60.4%)	17 (32.1%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Good location and environment is important in the early detection of sexual abuse	19 (35.8%)	17 (32.1%)	11 (20.8%)	4 (7.4%)	2 (3.8)

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

Table 2 shows that 56.6% strongly agreed that establishing a mutual relationship between school students and school teachers, encouraged early detections of child sexual abuse. 50.9% strongly agreed that Good communication skills by the school teacher encourages early detection of child sexual abuse among school students/children, 69.8% strongly agreed that when trust is established between school teachers and school students/children, it aids in the early detection of sexual abuse, while 50.9% strongly agreed that good manner of approach to the school students/children enables school teachers to be able to detect when a student is being abused sexually. Also, 60.4% strongly agreed that good communication gesture and environment create a sense of safety and encourage the early detection of sexual abuse among school students/children, and 35.8% strongly agreed that a good location and environment is important in the early detection of sexual abuse.



Table 3: Factors That Hinder the Early Detection of Child Sexual Abuse among school Teachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Ignorance and lack of interest in knowing about child sexual abuse by the teacher	32 (60.4%)	13 (24.5%)	8 (15.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Poor relationship and interaction between teacher and children also hinders the early detection of child's sexual abuse	28 (52.8%)	22 (41.5%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)
Cultural difference between staff and children lead to poor detection of child sexual abuse	18 (34.0%)	11 (20.8%)	17 (39.5%)	4 (7.5%)	2 (3.8%)
Poor attitude of the school teacher can prevent a child from reporting child sexual abuse	26 (49.1%)	20 (37.7%)	5 (9.4%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Fear and mistrust also affects the early detection of child sexual abuse	30 (56.6%)	19 (35.8%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Gender of the school teacher can hinder children reporting cases of sexual abuse	25 (47.2%)	19 (35.8%)	5 (9.4%)	3 (5.7%)	1 (1.9%)

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

Table 3 shows that 60.4% strongly agreed that ignorance and lack of interest in knowing about child sexual abuse by the teacher hinders the early detection of child sexual abuse, 52.8% strongly agree with poor relationship and interaction between teacher and children, while 39.5% were neutral in the response that cultural difference between staff and children leads to poor detection of child sexual abuse. Also, 49.1% strongly agreed that the poor attitude of the school teacher can prevent a child from reporting sexual abuse, 56.6% strongly agreed that fear and mistrust also affects the early detection of child sexual abuse, and 47.2% strongly agreed that the gender of the school teacher can hinder children from reporting cases of sexual abuse



Table 4: The Actions Taken by School Teachers in the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse among School Students in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Teachers should take responsibility in managing and preventing child sexual abuse in schools	30 (56.6%)	19 (35.8%)	4 (7.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Educating school Children about child's Sexual Abuse can help in Prevention of child sexual abuse	32 (60.4%)	15 (28.3%)	6 (11.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Advocating for the right and protection of children been abuse sexually can prevent them from being abused sexually	37 (69.8%)	16 (30.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Playing an external parental role in the life a children prevents a child from being abused sexually	28 (52.8%)	16 (30.2%)	7 (13.2%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Counseling children on the signs to observe to know when they are about to be abused sexually will prevent a child from being abused sexually	38 (71.7%)	14 (26.4%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Encouraging and counseling children to speak up when they feel abused will help prevent child sexual abuse	42 (79.2%)	10 (18.7%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Table 4 shows that 56.6% strongly agreed that teachers should take responsibility in managing and preventing child sexual abuse in schools, 60.4% strongly agreed that educating school children about child sexual abuse can help in its prevention, and 69.8% strongly agreed that advocating for the right and protection of children being abused sexually can prevent them from being victims. Also, 52.8% strongly agreed that playing an external parental role in the life a child prevents them from being abused sexually, 71.7% strongly agreed that counseling children on the signs to observe to know when they are about to be abused sexually will prevent a child from being victims, and 79.2% strongly agreed that encouraging and counseling children to speak up when they feel abused will help to prevent child sexual abuse.



Table 5: The Knowledge of School Teachers about Child Sexual Abuse in Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever heard about Childs Sexual Abuse before?		
Yes	52	98.1
No	1	1.9
If Yes to the above, how and where did you hear about it?		
Home	19	35.8
Social Media	19	35.8
Television	5	9.4
Friend	4	7.6
Health worker	3	5.7
Radio	2	3.8
All the above	1	1.9
As a school teacher are you aware that students are been abused sexually		
Yes	49	92.5
No	4	7.5
As a school teacher are you aware of the signs exhibited by school students when they been abused sexually		
Yes	46	86.8
No	7	13.2
As a school teacher are you aware of the consequences of child sexual abuse		
Yes	50	94.3
No	3	5.7
Are you aware of the factors that influences the early detections child sexual abuse		
Yes	46	86.8
No	7	13.2
The early detection of child sexual abuse helps in the prevention of child sexual abuse		
Yes	49	92.5
No	4	7.5
Educating School Students on child sexual abuse is important		
Yes	53	100
No	0	0

Table 5 shows that 98.1% had heard about child sexual abuse before and the source of information includes Home, 19 (35.8%); Social Media, 19 (35.8%); Television, 5 (9.4%), Friends, 4 (7.6%); Health Worker, 3 (5.7%); Radio, 2 (3.8%); and All the Above, 1 (1.9%).



Also, 92.5% were aware that students are being abused sexually, 85.8% were aware of the signs exhibited by school students when they been abused sexually, and 94.3% were aware of the consequences of child sexual abuse. Also, 85.8% were aware of the factors that influence the early detections child sexual abuse, 92.5% agreed that the early detection of child sexual abuse helps in its prevention, and all respondents agreed that educating school students on child sexual abuse is important.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Level of Knowledge of School Teachers about Child Sexual Abuse in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Level of knowledge concerning child sexual abuse	Good	52	98.1
	Poor	1	1.9
	Total	53	100.0

Table 6 indicates that 98.1% of the respondents had good knowledge concerning child sexual abuse while 1.9% had poor knowledge concerning child sexual abuse in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship between Factors Influencing and Hindering the Early Detection of Child Sexual Abuse among School Teachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	r	P	Decision
Factors influencing early detection of child sexual abuse	14.2604	2.43355	40	0.731	0.003	Sig
Factors hindering early detection of child sexual abuse	13.4939	2.51681	7			

$p < 0.05$

The result presented in the table above reveals that there is a significant relationship between factors influencing and hindering the early detection of child sexual abuse among school teachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State ($r = 0.731$, $p = 0.003$).

Table 8: Cross-tabulation between Influencing Factors That Encourage Early Detection and Knowledge Level of Teachers about Child Sexual Abuse in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.

	Remark		d.f	X ² -value	p-value	
	Good (%)	Poor(%)				
Factors that influence early detection of Child abuse	51 (96.2)	2 (3.8)	3	23.463	0.001	Significant



Table 8 above reveals that there was a significant association between the influencing factors that encourage the early detection and knowledge level of teachers about child sexual abuse in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State with a p -value < 0.05 (0.001 , $X^2 = 23.463$). Therefore, the result rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis, which states that there was a significant relationship between influencing factors that encourage the early detection and knowledge level of teachers about child sexual abuse in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the factors influencing early detection (or otherwise) and prevention of child sexual abuse in a secondary school in Southwest Nigeria.

From our study, most of the respondents (98.1%) had good knowledge concerning child sexual abuse (Table 5 and 6), mostly from their home environment and social media (35.0% respectively). Very few got to know about CSA from a healthcare professional (5.7%). This reported high knowledge about high knowledge about CSA was reported in another Tanzanian study who assessed parental knowledge about child abuse.¹⁶ As teachers have laudable knowledge about this subject, they can be contracted into school-based sexual abuse prevention programmes if adequately equipped and trained. This preposition is supported by a Cochrane review by Walsh et al. (2015), who suggested that school-based programmes, regardless of the type of programme, were effective in increasing participants' skills in protective behaviours and knowledge of sexual abuse prevention concepts.¹⁵

The respondents agreed that building a mutual relationship, good communication skills and trust between school students and schoolteachers encourage the early detection of child sexual abuse (see Table 2). Furthermore, the teachers believed that a conducive environment creates a sense and feeling of safety and encourages the early detection of sexual abuse among school students/children. This opinion was shared by more than half of the respondents. However, we do note cases where “trusted individuals,” including teachers, have unfortunately been the preparators of CSA.^{9,16,17} In fact, in a study by Lasisi et al. (2021), as many as 62.7% of students reported that the main act of sexual violence against them were done by their teachers.⁹ This is a wake-up call to the government, security agencies and schools regarding recruitment processes for teachers; they should vet and do background checks as part of pre-employment screening.

The result of the study also shows that ignorance, lack of interest in learning about child sexual abuse by the teacher, poor teacher-student relationship and interaction, cultural difference in perceptions of abuse, fear and mistrust hinder the early detection of child sexual abuse (see Table 3). This has disturbing consequences as we observed in our study that having a poor attitude towards students' welfare can prevent a child from reporting sexual abuse. The complex interaction between these factors we identified were also highlighted in a few other studies.^{1,18}

Teachers agreed they should be taking more responsibility in managing and preventing child sexual abuse in schools (see Table 4). We believe this can be done by the teachers through educating school children about child sexual abuse, advocating for the right and protection of



children, and playing an external parental role in the lives of these potentially vulnerable children. Overwhelmingly, 71.7% strongly agreed that counseling children about potential situations where there are likely to be abused sexually is necessary, and 79.2% strongly agreed that encouraging and counselling children to speak up when they feel abused will help prevent child sexual abuse (see Table 4). These findings were similar to a study by Ogunfowokan et al. (2012), who evaluated the impact of a School-Based Sexual Abuse Prevention Education Program on the Knowledge and Attitude of High School Girls.¹⁹

The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between factors influencing and hindering the early detection of child sexual abuse among schoolteachers in Babcock University High School, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State (see Table 7 and 8). Again, this is consistent with findings documented by other workers.^{17,18,20}

Based on these findings, there is a need for the relevant stakeholders to take seriously these factors influencing and hindering the reporting or detection of child sexual abuse and institute programmes on sex education in secondary schools. As the media forms a bulk of source of the knowledge about sexual abuse, mass media companies should help in public enlightenment, most especially in rural areas, to increase the support of children who are victims of sexual abuse. Finally, there is a need for the government to establish and equip child protection services (including schools) in safeguarding, protecting, and identifying children who are victims of child sexual abuse.

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