



KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEIVED EFFECT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUSHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT: Introduction: One in 10 children would be sexually abused before their 18th birthday; about one in seven girls and one in 25 boys would be sexually abused before they turn 18. The statistics continues to increase even as low and middle-income nations of the world are gradually coming out to report cases of child sexual abuse. **Aim:** This study aimed to assess the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government. **Methods:** 414 respondents from selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government participated in the study using the multistage random sampling technique. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26 and bivariate analysis was conducted using Chi-square test. **Results:** More than half of the adolescents fall within the age range of 15–17 years and majority were females. In addition to this, just a little above half of the participants were Christians and just below half of the students were in SSS 2. Also, more than half of the participants were Yorubas and well above half were from a nuclear family. Just about half of the adolescents have good knowledge about sexual abuse. In the measures of association, the relationship between the level of knowledge of sexual abuse and the perceived effect of sexual abuse was statistically significant. The relationship between adolescents' perception of the effect of sexual abuse and their concept of the common forms of sexual abuse was also statistically significant. **Conclusion:** This study revealed that the adolescents under study had knowledge about sexual abuse and this knowledge determined their perception of the effect of sexual abuse, and this in turn determines what they consider as child sexual abuse. It is therefore necessary to intensify efforts on educating and re-educating children and adolescents on sexual abuse, how to identify it and how to prevent it through campaigns and health promotional activities.

KEYWORDS: Child, Sexual Abuse, Adolescents, Nigeria, Perception.



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

According to Townsend and Rheingold (2013), sexual abuse is a traumatic experience that involves any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors, when one exerts power over the other. It could also be forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act, which might be non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet. Child sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face with the most serious array of consequences, but only few people realise this. The 2006 World Report on Violence against Children estimated that in 2002, approximately 150 million girls and 73 million boys were subject to contact CSA worldwide, including 1.2 million trafficked children and 1.8 million exploited through prostitution or pornography (Pinheiro, 2006; WHO, 2006; Andrew et al., 2004). The foregoing is true even as Townsend (2013) posited that about one in 10 children would be sexually abused before their 18th birthday; about one in seven girls and one in 25 boys would be sexually abused before they turn 18.

In low and middle-income nations like Nigeria, children and adolescent sexual abuse is often underestimated, underemphasized and most times not reported. Its negative toll on the various parts of the child's development—which includes physical, emotional and social functioning—is devastating. Sexual abuse amongst children and adolescents has been identified as the major cause of low self-esteem and stigmatization; therefore, families, communities, societies and the nation at large are not left out of the resultant effect (Manyike et al., 2015). Goodwin (2015) posited that a syndrome of nightmares, anxiety, depression, ego constriction, aggression and reenactment of the abuse are found in children that are victims. Sexual abuse contributes immensely to poor school performance, substance abuse, delinquency, prostitution, sexual dysfunction, mental illness, suicide, and transmission of abusive behaviour to subsequent generations.

Despite the damaging effect of child sexual abuse on the individual, family and the society, it is not certain if the various categories of people are knowledgeable about this menace and its effect on the abused children and adolescents. Drimadzi and Klopper (2007) conducted a research among female students in Malawi and discovered that majority of the respondents (93.6%) were aware that sexual abuse is a crime but only a few could correctly perceive abusive acts as sexual abuse, such as touching of private parts by a friend or touching their breasts by a lover without permission. Most of the respondents (93.6%) however identified sexual intercourse that involves an adult and a child as sexual abuse. Mahbouba et al. (2016) in a study revealed that 84% of children had good knowledge and could identify the signs and symptoms in abused children. In addition, 79% of children had good knowledge to report sexual abuse. A study in China investigated the level of prevention knowledge of child sexual abuse among school-aged children and discovered an accurate knowledge level between 44% and 80%. It was concluded that Chinese school-aged children need knowledge and skills related to child sexual abuse prevention (Jin et al., 2016).

Several research studies have identified poor academic performance in sexually abused children and adolescents. Daignault and Hebert (2009) in their study found that 39% of 7 to 12-year-old girls with a history of child sexual abuse had academic difficulties. 7 to 12-year-old girls with a history of child sexual abuse were 50% more likely to display cognitive



ability below the 25th percentile. 26% of 7 to 12-year-old girls with a history of child sexual abuse reported that their grades dropped after they were abused and 48% had below-average grades. A history of child sexual abuse significantly increases the chance of dropping out of school. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, delinquency, crime, and teenage pregnancy were all found to be the resultant effects of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2012).

Hiltrec (2015) opined that learning about sexual abuse prevention is necessary and thus the first step towards ensuring the safety of children. It is therefore necessary to assess the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature that investigated these variables in the southwestern part of Nigeria. This study intends to close this gap by investigating the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government Area (LGA), Lagos.

Statement of the Problem

According to Townsend (2013), child sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem faced by children and with the most serious array of consequences. About one in 10 children would be sexually abused before their 18th birthday (Daigneault, Esposito, Bourgeois, Hébert, Delaye, & Frappier, 2017). About one in seven girls and one in 25 boys would be sexually abused before they turn 18 (Jaberghaderi, Greenwald, Rubin, Zand, & Dolatabadi, 2004; DeVoe & Faller, 1999). It was estimated that 2013, about 400,000 babies born in the U.S. would become victims of child sexual abuse unless something is done to stop it (Harker, Jütte, Murphy, Bentley, Miller, & Fitch, 2013). Findings from a study showed that the respondents acknowledged the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Botswana and Swaziland and further demonstrated their knowledge of the predisposing factors, perpetrators of the problem, and effects of sexual abuse on children. Hence the study recommended proper awareness and knowledge about sexual abuse prevention as one of the necessary steps towards the safety of children (Mathoma, Maripe-Perera, Khumalo, Mbayi, & Seloilwe, 2006). This necessitated this study to investigate the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government.

Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of knowledge on sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.
2. To explore the common forms of sexual abuse related to adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.
3. To assess the perceived effects of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.

Significance of the Study

Investigating the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government would assist public health nurses,



school teachers, and administrators in developing several phases of intervention to create awareness, develop prevention strategies, identify sexually abused students and rehabilitate victims with debilitating effects.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of knowledge on sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government?
2. What are the common forms of sexual abuse known to the adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government?
3. What are the perceived effects of sexual abuse known by adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the knowledge of sexual abuse and the perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.
2. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' perceived effect of child sexual abuse among adolescents and their idea on the common forms of child sexual abuse.

Scope of the Study

Male and female senior secondary school students between the age 12–19 years attending eight (8) schools in Mushin Local Government were recruited into this study. Mushin Local Government was divided into four axes: Idi-araba, Itire, Ilupeju and Moshalashi. Two schools were selected from each axis namely: Idi-araba Senior High School, Idi-araba; Mushin Community Senior High School, Idi-araba; Itire Community Senior High School, Itire; Community Senior Secondary School, Mushin; Estate Senior Grammar School, Ilupeju; Ilupeju Senior Secondary School, Ilupeju; Birch Freeman Senior High School, Moshalashi; and Ransome Kuti Memorial Grammar School, Moshalashi.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive design was used to assess the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents in selected schools in Mushin Local Government.

Research Setting

The setting used for this study is Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos state. Mushin is a Local Government Area in Lagos located 10 km north of the city core, adjacent to the main road to Ikeja, and is largely a congested residential area with inadequate sanitation, low-quality housing and low socio-economic status. It had 633,009 inhabitants at the 2006 census with a good number comprising market women, commercial bus drivers, hoodlums and unemployed



youths. This could be a major trigger for sexual abuse. Mushin is home to one of the prominent teaching hospitals in Nigeria—Lagos University Teaching Hospital, and it has over 30 government owned secondary schools.

Target Population

The Target population for the study were adolescents attending selected secondary schools in Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos State. The population in the eight selected schools are shown below.

Table 1: Selected schools with total number of adolescent students.

Schools	Total Number of students
Community Senior Secondary School, Mushin.	1421
Ransome Kuti Memorial Grammar School, Agege motor road, Mushin.	1165
Estate Senior Grammar School, Ilupeju	861
Idi-araba Senior High School, Idi-araba.	459
Mushin Community Senior High School	321
Birch Freeman Senior High School, Moshalashi, Mushin.	1070
Ilupeju Senior Secondary School, Ilupeju	299
Itire Community Secondary School, Itire garage, Itire.	812
Total	6,408

Sample size determination

Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used to select the number of respondents used; the formula is

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where n = sample size

N = the population size

e = confidence interval at 95% (0.05).

The population size was derived from the total number of students in the eight selected schools in Mushin Local Government.

Therefore, using the formula, $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

where n = sample size

N = the population size (6408)

e = confidence interval at 95% (0.05).



$$\text{Therefore, sample size, } n = \frac{6408}{1 + 6408(0.05)^2} = 376$$

10% attrition rate = $376 + 37.6 = 413.6$ (approximately 414).

Thus, 414 adolescents were recruited for the study.

Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique was adopted for this study. It involves three stages of sampling procedure.

Stage 1: Simple random selection

This involves a random selection of the selected schools based on geographical location. Mushin Local Government was divided into four axes; two schools were randomly selected from each axis of the four axes of Mushin Local Government Area. This made a total of eight schools from each LGA: Idi-araba, Itire, Ilupeju and Moshalashi and two schools selected from each axis namely Idi-araba Senior High School, Idi-araban Mushin Community Senior High School, Idi-araba; Itire Community Senior High School, Itire; Community Senior Secondary School, Mushin; Estate Senior Grammar School, Ilupeju; Ilupeju Senior Secondary School, Ilupeju; Birch Freeman Senior High School, Moshalashi; and Ransome Kuti Memorial Grammar School, Moshalashi.

Stage 2: Proportionate sampling technique

This was calculated by using the formula below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of students in each school}}{\text{Total number of students in the eight schools}} \times \text{sample size}$$

Total number of students in the eight schools

Table 2: Sample size for selected secondary schools using proportionate technique

Schools	Number of students
Community Senior Secondary School	92
Ransome Kuti Memorial Grammar School	75
Estate Senior Grammar School	56
Idi-araba Senior High School	30
Mushin Community Senior High School	21
Birch Freeman Senior High School	69
Ilupeju Senior Secondary School	19
Itire Community Secondary School	52
Total	414



Stage 3: Simple Random Sampling Technique

Adolescents who fall within 12–19 years old in each selected secondary school were selected at random using a ballot box.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the study was a self-developed questionnaire containing close-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire contained 4 sections including:

Section A: Socio-demographic data.

Section B: Knowledge on sexual abuse.

Section D: Forms of sexual abuse.

Section E: Perceived effects of sexual abuse.

Validity of Instrument

Face and content validity were ensured by the researchers and other experts in health sciences; experts in test and measurement were also consulted to help ensure validity.

Data Collection Procedure

Before sharing and administering the questionnaire, permission was sought from the ethical team of Babcock University Health & Research Ethical Committee and thereafter, from the principals of each secondary school selected after explaining the objective of the research to them. The respondents were asked to complete the instrument themselves by ticking options they think is appropriate to each question. Consent and permission was sought from the respondents before data collection.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data derived from the completed questionnaire were analysed using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data such as tables and pie charts, and chi-square test was used to test for significance among variables including knowledge of sexual abuse, knowledge of prevention of sexual abuse, family relationship/status, and ethnic group.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was also obtained from Babcock University Health Research Ethics Committee, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State. Permission to carry out the research was obtained from the principal of each school in Mushin, Lagos State. The objective of the study was explained to the respondents and participation was made voluntary; it was confidential as the names and addresses of the respondents were not required. Respondents were free to decline participation or drop out of the study at any point.



RESULTS

Table 3: Socio-demographic data

Variables	Frequency (N=380)	Percentage (100%)
Age:		
12-14years	57	15
15-17 years	275	72.4
18 years and above	48	12.6
Sex		
Male	92	24
Female	288	76
Religion:		
Christianity	204	53.7
Islam	172	45.3
African traditional	4	1.1
Others	-	-
Class:		
SSS 1	131	34.5
SSS 2	155	40.8
SSS 3	94	24.7
Ethnic Group:		
Yoruba	260	68.4
Igbo	70	18.4
Hausa	17	4.5
Others	33	8.7
Family type:		
Nuclear	274	72.1
Extended	65	17.1
Single parent	11	10.8
Adopted	-	-
Others	-	-

Table 3 shows that the majority, 272 (72.4%) of the adolescents fall within the age range of 15-17 years, and the majority of the adolescents in this study were females, 288 (76%). In addition to this, the table shows that the majority, 204 (53.7%) of the participants are Christians; most, 172 (45.3%) of the students are in SSS 2. Also, a minority, 17 (4.5%) of the participants are Hausas. Lastly, 274 (72.1%), which is the majority of adolescents, are from nuclear families.

**Table 4: Adolescents' knowledge on sexual abuse**

Question	Frequency (N=380)	Percentage (100%)
Have you ever been taught about sexual abuse?		
Yes	349	92.1
No	31	7.7
If yes, by who?		
Father	38	10.7
Mother	92	26.6
Teacher	148	42.4
Internet	45	12.9
School seminars	26	7.4
Did they explain that children may be sexually abused by family friends or family members?		
Yes	345	90.8
No	28	7.4
I don't remember	4	1.1
Did they tell you to inform an adult when it happens to you?		
Yes	370	97.4
No	7	1.8
I don't remember	3	8

From table 4, more than half (92.1%) of the adolescent have been taught about sexual abuse; out of the 92.1%, most were taught by their teacher (42.4%) while just 7.4% learnt about sexual abuse from school seminars. Over 90% of the adolescents were told they could be abused by family members. Ninety-seven percent (97%) were taught to report any case of sexual abuse to an adult.

Research question one: What is the level of knowledge on sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government? The table below will answer this research question.

Table 5: Level of knowledge of adolescents on sexual abuse

Level of knowledge	Frequency (n=380)	Percentage (%)
Good (15-22)	192	50.5
Fair (8-14)	129	33.9
Poor (0-7)	59	15.6
Total	380	100

Table 5 shows that the majority of the adolescents, 192 (50.5%) have good knowledge on sexual abuse. It can therefore be concluded that most of the adolescents in selected schools in Mushin Local Government are knowledgeable about sexual abuse.



Research question two: What are the common forms of sexual abuse among adolescents? The table below will answer the research question.

Table 6: Common forms of sexual abuse among adolescents.

Questions	Frequency (N=380)	Percentage (100%)
An adult exposing a child to his/her private body parts?		
Yes	306	80.5
No	63	16.6
Undecided	11	2.9
Masturbation?		
Yes	244	64.2
No	128	33.7
Undecided	8	2.1
Peeping at a child undressing or bathing?		
Yes	306	80.5
No	71	18.7
Undecided	3	0.8
Fondling (caresses, rubs, kisses on the whole body and on a child's genital?)		
Yes	315	82.9
No	65	17.1
Undecided	-	-
Watching pornographic pictures, drawings, films etc.?		
Yes	310	81.6
No	67	17.6
Undecided	3	0.8
Rape?		
Yes	291	76.6
No	82	22.1
Undecided	7	1.2
Introduction of objects into a child's private parts?		
Yes	291	76.6
No	82	21.6
Undecided	7	1.8

Table 6 displays the common forms of sexual abuse among adolescents; of all the forms, the most common from this study is fondling which is caresses, rubs, kisses on whole body and on a child's genitals as agreed by 82.9%, while masturbation was the least identified by 64.2%.



Research question Three: What are the perceived effects of sexual abuse on adolescents in selected schools in Mushin Local Government? The table below will answer the research question.

Table 7: Perceived effects of sexual abuse on adolescents

Effects	Frequency (N=380)	Percentage (100%)
Depression?		
Agree	290	76.3
Disagree	79	20.8
Don't know	11	2.9
Guilt and shame?		
Agree	286	75.3
Disagree	88	23.2
Don't know	6	1.6
Unwanted pregnancy?		
Agree	268	70.5
Disagree	97	25.5
Don't know	15	3.9
High self-esteem?		
Agree	207	54.5
Disagree	150	39.5
Don't know	23	6.1
Fear?		
Agree	244	64.2
Disagree	117	30.8
Don't know	19	5
Happiness?		
Agree	170	44.7
Disagree	189	49.7
Don't know	21	5.6
Suicidal thinking?		
Agree	261	68.7
Disagree	102	26.8
Don't know	17	4.5
Injuries?		
Agree	278	73.2
Disagree	82	21.6
Don't know	20	5.3
Anger?		
Agree	260	68.4
Disagree	103	27.1
Don't know	17	4.5
Infection?		
Agree	318	83.7
Disagree	44	11.6
Don't know	18	4.7



Table 7 shows the perceived effects of sexual abuse on adolescents; of all the effects, infection (83.7%) was the most selected and anger (68.4%) was least selected.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between the level of knowledge of sexual abuse and the perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.

Level of Knowledge Perceived Effect of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents

Table 8: Crosstab

Level of Knowledge	Good (15-22)	Fair (8-14)	Poor (0-7)	Total
	192	129	59	380
Depression	290	79	11	380
	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	
Total	482	208	70	760

Table 9: Pearson Chi-square Table

DF	X ² Tab	X ² Cal	P-value
2	5.991	64.82	0.05

At $p=0.05$, $DF=2$, $X^2CAL=64.82$ greater than ($>$) $X^2TAB=5.991$; the relationship is therefore statistically significant and the null hypothesis rejected. The hypothesis is restated as, there is a significant relationship between the level of knowledge of sexual abuse and the perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between the respondents' perceived effect of child sexual abuse among adolescents and their idea on the common forms of child sexual abuse.

Suicidal thinking (as a perceived effect of child sexual abuse among adolescents) an adult exposing a child to his/her private part (as a common form of sexual abuse among adolescents)

**Table 10: Crosstab**

An adult exposing a child to his/her private part	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
	306	63	11	380
Suicidal thinking	261	102	17	380
	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	
Total	567	165	28	760

Table 11: Pearson Chi-square Table

DF	X ² Tab	X ² Cal	P-value
2	5.991	14.07	0.05

At $p=0.05$, $DF=2$, $X^2CAL=14.07$ greater than ($>$) $X^2TAB=5.991$; the relationship is therefore statistically significant and the null hypothesis rejected. The hypothesis is restated as, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' perceived effect of child sexual abuse among adolescents and their idea on the common forms of child sexual abuse.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from this study revealed that 72.4% of the adolescents fell within the age range of 15–17 years and 76% were females. In addition to this, 53.7% of the participants were Christians and 45.3% of the students were in SSS 2. In addition, 68.4% of the participants were of the Yoruba ethnic group and 72.1% were from a nuclear family.

The study found that 50.5% of the adolescents had good knowledge about sexual abuse, 33.9% had fair knowledge about sexual abuse while just 15.9% had poor knowledge. Overall, majority of the respondents are knowledgeable about sexual abuse. It was also gathered that 92.1% of the adolescents had previously been taught about sexual abuse, and out of the 92.1%, 42.4% were taught by their teacher while 7.4% were taught in school seminars. Over 90% of the adolescents were told they can be abused by family members. This is consistent with the findings of Mahbouba et al. (2016) in Egypt who discovered that 84% of the children have good knowledge about sexual abuse. Jin et al. (2016) also concluded, in a study carried out in China, that Chinese school-aged children are in need of knowledge and skills related to child sexual abuse and its prevention, even though their level of knowledge is between 44% and 80%.

Furthermore, of all the forms, the most common from this study was fondling which was identified by 82.9, followed closely by watching pornographic pictures, drawings and films as identified by 81.6%, while an adult exposing a child to his/her private body parts and peeping at a child undressing or bathing were identified by 80.5%, and masturbation being the least was identified by 64.2%. This is in consonance with the findings of Kessler (2014), who identified fondling, exposing oneself to a minor, pornographic images and intercourse as some of the



forms of sexual abuse. Drimadzi and Klopper (2007) also discovered that the respondents who are female students identified touching of private parts by a friend, touching their breast by a lover without permission and sexual intercourse that involves an adult and a child as sexual abuse.

In addition, the perceived effects of sexual abuse as recorded by the respondents in the study includes infection, which was identified by the majority at 83.7%. Depression was identified by 76.3%, followed closely by guilt and shame by 75.3% of the respondents. However, a majority (54.5%) perceived high self-esteem as an effect of sexual abuse. This is in congruence with the findings of Daignault and Hebert (2009) who discovered academic difficulties in children of age 7–12 years who had histories of sexual abuse with many of them dropping out of school. Jones et al. (2012) and Finkelhor et al. (2012) were able to isolate drug abuse, alcohol abuse, delinquency, crime, and teenage pregnancy as the resultant effects of child sexual abuse. Goodwin (2015) also posited that mental illness, delinquency, sexual dysfunction, prostitution, poor school performance and transmission of abusive behaviours to the next generation are all.

Hypothesis one: A significant relationship was found between the level of knowledge of sexual abuse and the perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents attending selected schools in Mushin Local Government. The implication is that how children and adolescents perceive the effect of sexual abuse depends on their knowledge about sexual abuse. This is consistent with Mahboubia et al. (2016), who discovered that the adolescents under study had good knowledge and could identify the signs and symptoms in victims of child abuse. Proper awareness and knowledge about sexual abuse prevention is one of the necessary steps towards the safety of children (Hiltrec, 2015).

Hypothesis two: A significant relationship was found between the respondents' perceived effect of child sexual abuse among adolescents and their idea on the common forms of child sexual abuse. The implication is that adolescents' perception of child sexual abuse depends on their idea of the common forms of child abuse. This suggests that it will be difficult for an adolescent to see a problem as consequential to child sexual abuse especially if they do not see an occurrence as sexual abuse. This is consistent with the findings of Drimadzi and Klopper (2007), who discovered that even though the respondents described child sexual abuse as a crime, only a few could correctly perceive abusive acts as sexual abuse. Jin et al. (2016) discovered discrepancies in the knowledge of Chinese school-aged children and their ability to identify the forms of child sexual abuse.

SUMMARY

This study was carried out to assess the knowledge and perceived effect of sexual abuse among adolescents in selected schools in Mushin Local Government, Lagos. Adolescents attending eight (8) selected schools in Mushin Local Government with ages 12–19 years were recruited for the study. A cross-sectional descriptive study design was used. The findings from this study revealed that majority of the respondents have good knowledge about child sexual abuse, although the knowledge level varied. Despite this knowledge level, there were discrepancies in the respondents' perception of the effect of sexual abuse and their concept on the common forms of sexual abuse. This is because the relationship between the level of knowledge of adolescents and the perceived effect of sexual abuse were statistically significant. This is also



true with the relationship between the respondents' idea of the common forms of sexual abuse and their perception on its effect.

Implication to Nursing

Public health nurses can use this study result as a baseline data that would inform community and school-based interventions such as awareness campaign, workshop and seminars in secondary schools to educate children and adolescents on sexual abuse and its effects. It will also help nurses to identify sexually abused children from the effects seen in the children and provide individualized and specialized care/counselling to such victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

- Safeguarding children and adolescents is the responsibility of everyone because there is a need for concerted efforts to orientate and educate them on sexual abuse, the effects and how to identify and prevent it.
- Governments and policy makers should ensure greater punishments for perpetrators of child and adolescent sexual abuse.
- Policies should be made to create a department for safeguarding children and adolescents and ensure that they are vested with the required power to safeguard them from sexual abuse.
- Further research to assess the same variables under consideration but with a greater sample and varying geographical location is hereby suggested.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that even though adolescents under study had good knowledge about sexual abuse, this knowledge determined their perception of the effect of sexual abuse, and this in turn determines what they consider as child sexual abuse. It is therefore necessary to intensify efforts on educating and re-educating the children and adolescents on sexual abuse, how to identify it and how to prevent it, through campaigns and health promotional activities.

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