

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD ABUSE AMONG YORUBAS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Child abuse generically is human created or tolerated conditions to inhibit or preclude the development of inherent potentials of children. This study was carried out to investigate factors influencing child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis. The descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was adopted for this study. The accessible population for the study comprises all families mainly among the Yoruba tribe in six local government areas of Oyo state. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. A total of one hundred and fifty-six respondents (156) were used for the study. The study main instrument for the data collection was a self-structured questionnaire tagged 'Factors Influencing Child Abuse Among Yorubas Scale' (FICAYS) ($r=0.69$). The data collected were analysed using percentages and frequency counts for bio data, ANOVA (analysis of variance), multiple regression analysis and chi-square were utilized to answer the research questions. The findings show that socio-economic contributed to child abuse as most families agreed that low socio-economic status of families make them expose their children to street hawking. The F cal value of the four variables are 22.186 showing that age, education, marital status and income level contributed to child abuse among families in Yoruba land. The result shows that cultural factor has to a great extent contributed to child abuse among Yoruba families ($\chi^2=89.9 < 0.05$). The data show that income $\beta=0.443$ contributed most to child abuse, followed by marital status $\beta = .258$; educational qualification $\beta = .203$ and age $\beta = .128$. The findings show that age, education, marital status and income level among Yoruba families influenced child abuse. Based on the findings, it was recommended that parents, guardians and teachers should take proper care towards the upbringing of the children. They should be responsible for their welfare. Child right education should be

embraced in cultural practices by all and sundry and government should make and enforce law against harmful traditional, social and cultural practices that affect children's live and development.

Key words: Child abuse, Yoruba families, Socio-economic factors, child rights.

Introduction

Child abuse is globally recognised as a huge problem (Lampe, 2002; Runyan, Wattam, Ikeda, Hassan & Ramiro 2002; World Health Organization, 2006). Generically, child abuse is conceived by Malik (2010) to be acts of commission or omission originated from human beings aimed at inhibiting the development of inherent potentials in children. Child abuse has been described as a complex, cosmopolitan and longstanding problem which exists at home, school, street, society, work and religious places (El Bcheraoui, Kouriyé & Adib, 2009; Kaur & Verma, 2010). Child abuse consists of any act, or failure to act, that endangers a child's physical or emotional health and development (Odu & Alokun 2011). Child abuse generally covers physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Just like children, adolescents are also not invulnerable to these dimensions of abuse at home and school or workplace. Of all these, emotional abuse is recognized to be central (Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2012).

Child abuse is one of the most pronounced social problems that has recently gained the recognition and attention of the Nigerian public. According to a UNICEF report (2004) approximately 40% of the total child

population under the age of 5 years suffered malnutrition, 63% between 6 months to 3 years' experience stunted growth, while anemic underweight and infant mortality rate is 81%. The situation in Nigeria is not better than any other developing or developed country but non availability of the statistics at government level regarding the prevailing situation of child abuse makes it more difficult. Although child abuse has become a focus of concern for government and public sectors in the last two decades in Nigeria, there are contributory factors to the incidence. According to EFA (2012) report since 1999, the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has increased from 7.4 to about 10.5 million. United Nations International Children Educational Fund (UNICEF, 2006), reported that about fifteen million children under the age of 14 and 18 % of children between the ages of 10 and 15 are involved in hard labour.

The family as the first agent of socialization is expected to serve, not only as educators, but also be responsible for meeting and fulfilling basic socio-emotional needs, such as belongingness and esteem needs of children . As stated by Edhi Foundation source 2003 cited in Kamran, 2004, there has been a 30%

increase over the previous year in the number of children run away from home. They left due owing to a number of factors such as child battering from parents, domestic violence and financial problems particularly in the family. The Yoruba people are an ethnic group of southwestern Nigeria and southern Benin in West Africa. The Yoruba constitute over 35 million people in total; the majority of this population is from Nigeria and make up 21% of its population, according to the CIA World Factbook (2013), thereby, making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. The majority of the Yorubas speak the Yoruba language which is a tonal Niger-Congo language.

In most countries of the world, physical abuse or battering is the most common type of disciplinary measures employed by most parents (Malik, 2001). Actually, inadequate respect for the interest of children and insensitivity to their needs and emotions is not a new phenomenon as children all over the world have been regarded as mere possession of their parents. The only difference between developed and developing countries such as Nigeria is that while child abuse within the family is considered a criminal act in the developed countries, in Nigeria it is not considered as such since it is viewed as a disciplinary measure. Thus, in many countries, child abuse and neglect were often ignored or denied as a result of people's acceptance of violence in a given culture or due to their belief that the culture must focus on preserving the family (Schwartz-Kenney, Mc-Cauley, & Epstein 2001). Some cultures simply deny

that child neglect or abuse occurred. Therefore, cultural factors and the personality characteristics of the abusing parents and educational level appear to be strongly associated with child abuse (Gelles, 1973; Steele, 1975).

The social systems approach to family functioning had also suggested the role of the family characteristics and culture in child abuse (Garbarino, 1977; Belsky, 1980). Rohner, Melendez, and Krimer-Rickaby (2008) posed that parental acceptance, both maternal and paternal, in childhood is associated with parents' adjustment as adults. Being a conservative socio-cultural context, the customs of our culture profoundly affect the chances of abuse. Some of the researches have focused the impact of different child rearing styles of the parents. Rohner (1975a; Rohner & Kahlequ, 2005) argue that acceptance, being the presence of warmth and affection and rejection, the absence of warmth in the life of a child may have a decisive impact on his/her personality development. The accepting parents show their love or affection physically or verbally by fondling, hugging, kissing or caressing a child whereas the rejecting parents dislike and disapprove their children. The parenting behaviours like harsh punishment and emotional rejection had been found to be important risk factors for violent and aggressive behaviours in adolescents (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2001).

Child abuse is a term used for maltreatment and neglect of children. Child maltreatment may be formally described as: all forms of physical or

emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or poor treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting to actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002)

Childhood maltreatment and neglect is often divided into four types:

Physical abuse

Sexual abuse

Emotional/psychological abuse

Neglect is added as a fourth category of child abuse (Krug et al., 2002,; World Health Organisation, 2006)

Types of Child Abuse

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDCP) (2013a) defines child abuse as any act or series of acts of

commission (abuse) or omission (neglect) by a parent or other care giver that results to harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child (Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon, & Arias 2008). The definitions for the sub-types of child abuse was given by CDCP as physical abuse (including abusive head trauma), sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and two forms of neglect: failure to provide and failure to supervise) presented in the Table 1 below . These definitions are aligned with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definitions and support Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, which specifically protects children from all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse while in the care of parents and other care givers (Runyan, Wattam, Ikeda, Hassan, & Ramiro, 2002).

Table 1 Subtypes of Child Abuse

Subtypes of abuse	Definition
Physical abuse	Intentional use of physical force against a child that results in, or has the potential to result in, physical injury. <i>Exceptions</i> Physical injuries to the anal or genital area or surrounding areas (e.g., anal or genital bruising or tearing; internal injuries resulting from penetration by a penis, hand, finger, or other object) that occur during attempted or completed sexual abuse (SA), or other physical injuries that result from attempted or completed SA (e.g., bruises due to restraint, hitting, pushing) are considered as SA and do not constitute PA.
Sexual abuse	Any completed or attempted (non-completed) sexual act, sexual contact with, or exploitation (i.e., non-contact sexual interaction) of a child by a caregiver.
Psychological abuse	Intentional caregiver behaviour that conveys to a child that he/she is worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or valued only in meeting another's needs.

Neglect	The failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm.
Failure to provide	Failure by a caregiver to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, medical/dental, or educational needs, or combination thereof.
Failure to supervise	Failure by the caregiver to ensure a child's safety within and outside the home given the child's emotional and developmental needs.

Source: Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon, and Arias,. (2008).

Statement of the Problem

Some distinctive variables that appear to be linked with the issue of child abuse with specific reference to Nigerian society is based on a general practice that mothers prefer sons to daughters and fathers show gentle attitude towards daughters. Most of these studies on child abuse have been carried out in some developed countries as well as developing countries focusing on the effects, causes as well as some factors influencing child abuse. There appear to be limited research focusing on the joint effect of socio-economic and cultural factors regarding child abuse with specific reference to Yoruba families. Hence, the present research focuses on the circumstances that foster child abuse among Yoruba families in Nigerian society.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i) examine the forms of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis;
- ii) find out the extent to which socio-economic factor (age, education, marital status and income level) of Yorubas influence child abuse in Ibadan metropolis;
- iii) determine the relative contribution of each of the identified factors to

child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis;

- iv) examine the relationship between child abuse and cultural factor among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis;

Research Questions

Based on the problems stated above, the study provides answers to the following questions

- 1) What are the forms of child abuse among Yoruba families in Ibadan metropolis?
- 2) To what extent will socio-economic factor (age, education, marital status and income level) among Yorubas influence child abuse in Ibadan metropolis?
- 3) What is relative contribution of each of the identified factors to child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis?
- 4) What is the relationship between cultural factor and child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis

Methodology

Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study because the event under investigation has already occurred. The

participants were 156 married Yorubas (70 male and 86 female). The participants' age ranged from 30-60 years with a mean age of 12.05 and standard deviation of 1.07. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. In the first stage the purposive technique was used in selecting six local governments in Ibadan metropolis. The reason for this is due to the fact that the Yorubas mostly reside in these local government areas. In the second stage, the quota sampling technique was used in allocating 180 respondents for the study. The stage three involved the selection of the actual respondents from each of the local government areas; selection of 30 respondents each from the six local government area. The study main instrument for the collection of data was a

self-structured questionnaire tagged "Factors Influencing Child Abuse among Yorubas Scale" (FICAYS). A pilot study was carried out among 10 respondents in a local government that is not among the ones selected for the study within an interval of two weeks. A Cronbach coefficient of alpha of 0.69 was established showing the accuracy of the instrument. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages and frequency counts for bio data while ANOVA (analysis of variance), multiple regression analysis and chi square was utilized to answer the research questions

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

What are the forms of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis?

Table 1 Frequency distribution showing forms of child abuse among the Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis

S/N	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Verbal abuse	22	14.1
2.	Hawking/ Child labour	42	27.0
3.	Constant beating ,caning and hitting child with an object (physical assault) to correct the child	44	28.2
4	Educational neglect when parents do not want to spend their money on their ward's education	28	17.9
5	Nutritional neglect (parent's lack of knowledge regarding a healthy diet or from poverty)	20	12.8
	Total	156	100

Table 1 above shows that 14.1 % respondents agree that verbal abuse is a form of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis. 27.0% respondents agree that hawking/ child labour is a form of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan

metropolis, 28.2% respondents agree that constant beating ,flogging and hitting child with an object (physical assault) to correct the child is a form of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis, 17.9% respondents agree that educational neglect

when parents do not want to spend their money on their ward's education is a form of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis, 12.8% respondents agreed that nutritional neglect (parent's lack of knowledge regarding a healthy diet or from poverty) is a form of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis. From the above data, verbal abuse, hawking/ child labour, constant beating, flogging and hitting child with an object (physical assault) to correct the child, educational neglect when parents do not want to spend their money on their ward's education and nutritional neglect (parent's lack of knowledge regarding a healthy diet or from poverty) are the forms of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis.

The findings regarding forms of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis indicate that Yorubas practice more of physical abuse followed by hawking and child labour. It could be observed that physical abuse and child labour are more prevalent among the Yoruba families particularly in Ibadan metropolis as parents believe in using physical punishment as an essential disciplinary measure because they had learned it from their own parents. It seems that Yoruba families do not take care of the educational and nutritional needs of their children.

This finding is in line with the submission of de Silva (2001) that in Sri Lanka physical abuse by caning a child is still a permitted form of punishment in

government schools, and parents and teachers believe they have the right to impose corporal punishment. This is also the case in Kenya, where physical punishment is an acceptable way of disciplining children (Onyango & Kattambo, 2001).

This result is consistent with Odu and Alokun (2011) observation that there are various types of child abuse. There are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Physical abuse of the child is an injury resulting from physical aggression. Even if the injury was not intended, the act is considered physical abuse. Emotional child abuse is any attitude, behaviour, or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health social development. It can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. Neglect is a very common type of child abuse among Yorubas in Ibadan metropolis.

Research Question 2

To what extent will socio-economic factor (age, education, marital status and income level) among Yorubas influence child abuse?

Table 2a: Showing ANOVA Result of the Relative Contribution of Socio-Economic Factor (Age, Education, Marital Status and Income Level) Among Yorubas To Child Abuse

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	31.975	2	15.988	22.186	.000
Residual	109.534	154	.721		
Total	141.510	156			

$F(2,154) = 22.186$; $R = .505$, $R^2 = .636$, $\text{Adj.}R^2 = .634$; $P < .05$).

Predictors (constant), age, education, marital status and income level contribute to child abuse among Yoruba families. Dependent variables of all the four variables contribute to child abuse among Yorubas. The results in the table 2 above show that all the independent variables, such as, age, education, marital status and income level were all significant. This shows that a combination of the four independent variables (age, education, marital status and income level) were significant in predicting child abuse among Yorubas. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions (R) of 0.

634, accounting for about 63.0% of the variance in child abuse among Yorubas. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the multiple regression data produced an F- ratio of 22.186 (significant at 0.05 level) indicating that R^2 value was not due to chance. Thus, it is shown in the table 2 that socio-economic factor jointly contribute to child abuse among Yorubas.

Research 3

What is the relative contribution of each of the identified factors to child abuse among Yorubas?

Table 2b: Regression Analysis showing relative contribution of each of the identified factors to child abuse among Yorubas

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.977	.187	.123	3.643	.000
Age	.214	.155	.128	1.203	.000
Education	.377	.163	.203	1.304	.000
Marital status		.109	.258	.789	.426
Income level	.414	.135	.443	1.022	.307

Table 2b above shows the regression weights, the standard error of estimate, the t value and the level which the t value is significant for each independent variable. The result above shows the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The values of the standardized regression weights (β) associated with the variables indicated that income $\beta = 0.443$ $P < .05$ was the greatest contributor to child abuse, followed by marital status $\beta = .258$ $P < .05$; educational qualification $\beta = .203$ $P < .05$ and age $\beta = .128$ $P < .05$. This means that the combination of the variables is capable of predicting child abuse among Yorubas. In other words, age, education, marital status and income level among Yorubas too contributed to child abuse.

According to this finding, income played a very important role in determining child abuse among Yorubas, with the highest relative contribution of 0.443. Drucker (1997) asserts that although child abuse occurs across the socio-economic spectrum, evidence shows

that poor families are more likely than those with more economic resources to be identified and labeled as being maltreated. The probable explanation for this could be that income level of both parents if low makes it difficult for them to cater for their children; hence they force the children to do some odd jobs to make ends meet and invariably become breadwinner, of the family. Therefore, parental income level is an important contributing factor towards child abuse.

The results of the current research further indicated that child abuse and parental age are in closer association with each other. Therefore, it might be concluded that child abuse exists in families with different age groups among Yorubas. The finding of this study shows that age of parents is closely related to child abuse. In Yoruba families, people marry at different age. This could affect child rearing practices.

Educational attainment of Yorubas also significantly predicts child abuse. The result above is in agreement with the

findings of Egeland and Brunnuell, (1979); Zuravin and Grief, (1989) who suggest that limited parental education to be associated with physical abuse and neglect of children. Similarly, Najman, Shaw, Bor, O'Callaghan, Williams and Anderson (1994) argue that there is a tendency for working class parents to use less corporal punishment in disciplining their children and less educated mothers heavily rely upon corporal punishment.

Malik (2001) reveals that parents use physical punishment as necessary for disciplining the child whether illiterate or highly educated, they show similar attitude towards their children and family. Low educational attainment of caregivers has

been identified as a risk factor for child maltreatment and neglect (Murphey & Braner, 2000; World Health Organisation, 2006; Begle, Dumas, & Hanson, 2010; Martin, Williams, Bor, Gorton, & Alati, 2011), and is also associated with poverty. Therefore, parental educational level is an important contributing factor towards child abuse.

According to this finding, marital status played a very important role influencing child abuse. The result of the current research further indicated that marital status of parents is closely related to child abuse whether such marital statuses could be single parent, married, divorced and separated

Research Question 4: What is the inference of cultural factor on child abuse among Yorubas?

Table 3: Chi-Square Contingency Table Showing the Influence of Cultural Factor to Child Abuse among Yorubas

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	X ² cal	Df	X ² crit	P	rmk
Culture permits parents to beat their children	55 35.2%	64 41.1%	37 23.7%	-	89.9	18	28.86	0.05	sig
Culture permits parents to take male children to work on their fathers' farm in Yoruba setting is child abuse	44 28.2%	89 57.1%	20 12.8%	3 1.9%					
Culture encourages parents sending children to hawk in traditional Yoruba setting is child abuse	89 57.1%	12 7.7%	41 26.3%	14 8.9%					
Culture permits parents inflicting bodily injury on their children for not running errands	30 19.2%	70 44.9%	31 19.9%	25 16.0%					
Culture permits parents spanking or caning their young children out of cruelty	56 35.9%	23 14.7%	34 21.8%	43 27.6%					
My natives customs and shared beliefs and practices influence how I think which in turn affects my attitude towards my children upbringing	47 30.1%	40 25.7%	45 28.8%	24 15.4%					
Shared beliefs and practice of my cultural group makes me to practice childbearing practices laid down by it	43 27.6%	45 28.8%	38 24.4%	30 19.2%					

Table 3 above shows that 76.3% respondents agree culture permits parents to beat their children while 23.7% respondents disagree, 85.3% respondents agree culture permits parents to take male children to work on their fathers' farm in Yoruba setting is child abuse while 14.7 % respondents disagree, 64.7% respondents agreed culture encourages parents sending children to hawk in traditional Yoruba setting is child abuse while 35.3% respondents disagreed, 64.1% respondents agreed cultural permit parents inflicting bodily injury on their children for not running errand while 35.9% respondents disagreed, 50.6% respondents agreed culture permits parents spanking or caning their young children out of cruelty while 49.4% respondents disagreed, 55.8% respondents agreed their natives customs and shared beliefs and practices influence how they think which in turn affects my attitude towards my children upbringing while 44.2% respondents disagreed, 56.4% respondents agreed shared beliefs and practice of their cultural group makes me to practice childbearing practices laid down by it while 43.6% respondents disagreed. The χ^2 cal value of 89.9 is greater than the χ^2 critical value of 28.86 at 0.05 level of significance. The finding shows that cultural factor has to a great extent contributed to child abuse among Yorubas families. The finding shows that culture permits them to beat their children, permits parents to take male children to work on their fathers' farms in Yoruba setting, encourages them sending children to hawk in traditional Yoruba setting, permits parents to inflict bodily injury on

their children for not running errand, permits them spanking or flogging their young children out of cruelty, natives customs and shared beliefs and practices influence how parents think. This in turn affects their attitude towards children's upbringing. Also shared beliefs and practices of parents' cultural group make them to practice childbearing practices laid down by it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of the study is to find out the factors influencing child abuse practices with peculiar reference to Yorubas. This study has been able to show that child abuse is a global problem that takes place among various cultures and tribes of which Yoruba is inclusive. From the study, it could be seen that there are various forms of child abuse among Yorubas, particularly, in Ibadan metropolis. This study empirically reveals that age, education, marital status and income level separately and jointly influence child abuse practices among the Yorubas. Evidence from the study has shown that cultural factor also contributes to child abuse.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

- parents, guardians and teachers should assume full responsibility for the upbringing and welfare of the children;
- child right education should be embraced in our culture by all and sundry;
- government should make and enforce law against harmful traditional, social

and cultural practices that affect children's live and development; government at all levels should sensitize the public on the dangers of child abuse as well as enact laws to reduce the incidence of child abuse in the society; and government through community education campaign can promote positive family relationships. Specifically, as this will encourage positive attitudes towards the care of children, understanding of the developmental stages of childhood, and an appreciation of a child's view of the world.

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