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**FULL-TIME JOINT MASTERS DEGREE STUDIES OF SOCIAL WORK WITH  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

**Roles of Social workers in Nigeria In Assisting Youths of Sexual Violence**

**FINAL MASTERS THESIS**

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## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

The menace of child abuse has remained a challenge to the development of the child and the country. Child abuse in different pattern and forms have been ascribed a high rate of commonality in world today. Each year, millions of children are explored by the Child Defensive Administrations for child abuse and maltreatment. According to UNICEF statistics 2020, one in every four Nigerian females is sexually abused before reaching the age of 18. Despite a rise in advocacy, justice is rare: Nigeria, with a population of 206 million, had only 32 rape convictions between 2019 and 2020, according to data from the country's national anti-trafficking agency.

Rape and other types of sexual abuse toward women are widespread and normalized in Nigeria, owing to social attitudes toward gender and sexuality (Chiazor et al., 2016; Tade & Udechukwu, 2020). As a result of this, some scholars claim that Nigeria has a "rape culture" (Amaka-Okafor, 2013; Ezechi et al., 2016). Krishnan (2015) identified the following attitudes as being associated with a society's reign of rape culture: sexual objectification, victim blaming, trivializing rape, refusing to recognize the damage caused by sexual harassment, denial of systemic rape, and slut-shaming. As empirical studies have shown, the Nigerian society's attitude toward rape or sexual assault exhibits some of the behaviors identified by Krishnan (Ezechi et al., 2016; Nwafor & Akhiwu, 2019). Existing research on sexual crimes and victimization in Nigeria has examined various aspects of sexual assault, ranging from child sexual exploitation to elder sexual abuse (Aborisade & Shontan, 2017; Adedayo & Aborisade, 2018; Akinlusi et al., 2014; Tade & Udechukwu, 2020).

Nigeria's 2003 Child Rights Act (UNICEF, 2003) demands that children's well-being be respected and prioritized. However, the rising incidence of child sexual exploitation has dominated media headlines, causing widespread concern. Child sexual abuse (CSA) encompasses all actions aimed at directly or indirectly inducing a child to engage in sexual behaviors that are inappropriate for his or her age, either by coercion or inducement. Child sexual abuse is described by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the participation of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to consent to

informedly, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot consent, or that violates a society's laws or social taboos" (WHO,2018).

Child sexual abuse is becoming more prevalent across the globe, and especially in Nigeria. It is occurring at such a rapid pace that it can no longer be dismissed as insignificant. It is important to emphasize that child rape does not often occur between strangers; the abuser is frequently a family member, a trusted family friend, or a child care provider. Rape of children is the ultimate form of sexual violence (Eze, 2013; Nwabueze & Oduah, 2018). It is a violent and humiliating act, accompanied by overwhelming fear for her survival and an almost overwhelming sense of powerlessness and helplessness. Fear and helplessness are heightened by the complicated procedure of documenting a rape. More concerning is the fact that, despite the severe punishment for rape, it continues to flourish due to legal technicalities and victims' inability to pursue their cases to their logical conclusion (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; Hoyle, Speechley & Burnett, 2016; Haskell & Randall, 2019).

Sexual abuse is the mistreatment or inappropriate use of sexuality, whether by action, rubbing of the breasts or buttocks, very close body contact, or actual sexual activity with another person. Additionally, it involves the use of terms that imply a desire to participate in sexual activity or practice of some kind. Throughout a woman's lifetime, a third will encounter some kind of abuse, whether physical or sexual. (World Health Organization, 2013) Even more vulnerable to violence are hawkers, the majority of whom are teenagers. (Motilewa, Johnson, &Ekpin, 2019). Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is one of the most common forms of childhood trauma, especially among females, according to the World Health Organization. (Pan, Lin, Liu, Zhang, Zeng, & Chen, 2020). Global reviews indicate that females have a slightly higher prevalence of CSA, with a 2–3 fold increased risk relative to males. (Ekpin, Johnson, &Motilewa, 2019).

Child sexual abuse is one of the most traumatizing forms of violence against children, usually committed by a person in a position of power and trust in the child's life (International Rescue Committee, 2012). It usually involves coercion of the unsuspecting victim through trickery or bribery or it could be forceful; with acts ranging from rape to unwanted fondling. Sexual abuse also includes a range of behaviors including vaginal, anal or oral penetration and photographing a child for pornography. It may include physical contact (fondling a child's genitals, masturbation, oral-genital contact, digital penetration, vaginal and anal intercourse) or noncontact abuse (exhibitionism, voyeurism, and child pornography). Other types of sexual abuses include; non-genital touching, genital touching and penetration. Statistics have shown

that 95 percent of child sexual abuses go unreported because of fear of stigmatization and 90 percent of child abuse victims know their abuser (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011).

Childhood abuse, such as CSA, can have both short- and long-term effects. Short-term impacts can be medical (bruising, infections, genital tract symptoms) or mental (learning and attention issues, integrating, perceived stress, sexual conduct problems) in nature (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Thompson et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016). Mental health issues (such as PTSD), attempted suicides, self-destructive behaviours, and other functioning and somatic symptoms have been found to be linked to CSA in the long run (Maniglio, 2009, 2010, 2013; Chen et al., 2010; Afari et al., 2014).

Social variables such as bad leadership, inadequate law enforcement, cultural, societal, and gendered norms, joblessness, inadequate income, gender disparity, and restricted opportunities for education are highly associated with sexual abuse (Laura & Kwako, 2010). There have also been studies that have shown that children who have been raised by stepfathers or without one or both parents are more likely to have been sexually abused as children (Collin-Vézina, Daigneault & Hebert, 2013).

The majority of the procreative healthcare repercussions of sexual assault include HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancies, hazardous abortions, STDs, tears, and blood loss. Approximately 32,000 unplanned pregnancies are caused by rape each year. CSA has long-term effects on the sufferer, their relatives, and society as a whole as well. A holistic approach is needed in order to effectively deal with the issue of CSA (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2012; Ayenalem, 2015; Lalor, & McElvaney, 2013).

American Academy of Paediatricians (AAP) has defined Sexual abuse as the engagement of a child and adolescent in sexual activities that he/she cannot comprehend and is developmentally unprepared for and cannot give informed consent to. (Sakelliadis, Spiliopoulou, & Papadodima, 2009) Also, sexual abuse is defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of the United States of America as the employment, use of persuasion, inducement, enticement, coercion to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct. (Bahroo, 2003) In Nigeria, there is no clearly elaborate definition of sexual abuse in the national legislation. However, Section 34 of the 1999 Constitution prohibits all forms of

torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and slavery, forced or compulsory labour and ensures the child's right to dignity of his/her person (Ajayi, 2003).

According to the Convention of the Rights of a Child (CRC) in Geneva 1989, a child is "a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as those people between 10 and 19 years of age. The great majority of adolescents are, therefore, included in the age-based definition of "child", adopted by the (CRC, 1999). Child sexual abuse is defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. (World Health Organization, 1999).

Nigerian child protection policy is rooted in the Child Rights Act, which President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo signed into law in 2003 (UNICEF Nigeria, 2007b). This defines all persons under the age of 18 years as children, outlining specific protections and prohibitions necessary to meet the mandate of providing all care necessary for child survival, well-being and development. The Act has been passed on a state level by 24 out of 36 Nigerian states (Defence for Children International, 2010). It covers child trafficking, child labour and child abuse, at the highest levels. A plethora of other policies and programmes, at national and international levels, supplement this framework and provide tools for implementation. However, while the passage of the Child Rights Act is a milestone for Nigeria's children and represents the country's commitment to the UNCRC, implementation is weak. Overall, key informant interviews highlighted that child protection is not prioritised in Nigeria. Government agencies charged with these objectives are among the most marginalised. There are very few professional personnel, such as social workers, particularly at local levels. Enforcement is very nearly non-existent, and preventative awareness-raising campaigns are sporadic and underfunded (UNICEF & ODI, 2009). Coordination is low, programming fragmented, planning spotty, data limited and budgets inadequate and vulnerable. Reliance on international agencies for funding and implementation is very high, with local Nigerian NGOs occasionally serving as intermediaries. This situation exacerbates fragmentation and makes sustained programming difficult.

In Nigeria this, child abuse has kept on be a menace in each society and this will be attributed to the financial circumstance that has seen families compromise the longer term of their

children in a offered to outlive as well as the failure of lawful implies built up by the government to ensure children (Bass, 2004) This shows that the directions that have been setup to protect children are not successful which tends to affect the economic advancement of the child as well as the suggestion it has on the economy of the nation.

## **1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Child abuse is a common thing in our society, a problem of the public from a long time. Children are often been regarded as the leaders of tomorrow and by implication any danger to them invariably affects the tomorrow. Child abuse have been described as that with severe short term and long-term consequences. As a matter of fact, the most effect of child abuse is being felt by child later in life; in their personality and relationship. Some children met their deaths in a short-term following physical abuse, as a matter of fact, the World Health Organization reported that 57, 000 homicides involving persons below the age of fifteen years have been traced in 2000. Others that did not die in short term live to suffer the consequences in their adult life.

Abuse may take many forms, physical, sexual, and psychological included. It is rooted in Nigerian cultural values and gender inequality. Recent streams of urbanism, population growth, and poverty have aggravated it (Aderinto, 2010). This study is limited to sexual abuse among all other abuses.

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, has almost half of its population (46%), as children below age 15 (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2013). If the facts and figures of research on child sexual abuse in Sub Saharan Africa are anything to hold unto, one wonders what the Nigerian context of the situation will be.

The Nigerian National Assembly had set the age of sexual consent as 18 (Ezeamalu, 2015), implying that any sexual activity involving a person less than 18 in Nigeria, is tagged child sexual abuse. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) guidelines (2015), has also defined sexual violence as sexual abuse not only including "forcing someone to have sex, but it can also include having sex with someone who is unable to refuse due to disability, illness, intimidation, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Sexual violence in all its manifestations, from verbal seduction to visual coercion by pornography to inappropriate touches and actual intercourse, continues to be underreported due to terror, social stigma, and the intra-familial aspect of certain encounters for victims.



Numerous teenagers simply wallow in their misery, trauma, humiliation, self-blame, and self-guilt, to name a few (Abayomi, 2014; Adeosun, 2015). Sexual abuse's psychosocial and emotional impact on adolescents often results in stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, it results in maladaptive behaviors, low academic motivation, suicidal ideation, and low self-esteem (Adigeb & Mbua, 2015; Ali & Ali, 2014).

Similarly, emotional abuse resulting effect is that most children often withdraw to themselves which may lead to depression and lack of concentration in school; others might develop poor self-conception, personality disorders, or other mainstream psychiatric condition. Child abuse and exploitation within the sphere of the home is a serious problem in Nigeria as social worker intervention is not well felt due to the lack of proper and adequate provision of child's labour law.

Legal provisions to protect children from physical violence are vague and contradictory because no proper and adequate plan has been placed in place. The Criminal and Penal Codes specify that a child's punishment cannot cause an injury or serious injury. Both codes also state that when deciding whether a correction is warranted, the age, physical and mental health of the child must be considered (FMWA&SD, 2009). Previous studies on sexual abuse assumed various definitions of abuse in children and adolescents. Most of them lack succinct description, details of what sexual abuse covers; all forms of the abuse are usually not expressed well enough a most importantly the social worker role is lacking for proper intervention for the victims of sexual abuse.

## **1.2 RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC**

The injustice act is not exclusive to adults alone, but it is children in Africa. And it is the view of the unhealthy act, the barbarous needless child violence that required the enforcement of Africa's child safety and children's rights most especially in Nigeria. Worryingly, the justice system's sluggish intervention and an absence of adequate agencies to assist victims of sexual assault in rapidly overcoming their distress have been described as pointing to the epidemic's growth across the country. Many victims of rape endure shame, trauma and some contemplate suicide and are even forced to commit suicide as a result, mostly due to fear of stigma. Sexual assault victims are often embarrassed, humiliated, and fearful, and they face little to no protection under the law. And the law enforcement tasked with protecting these victims commit assaults on them in a variety of ways, including sexual harassment (Chiazor et al, 2016). By virtue of the Act, this study is significant because it provides information on the incidence and

extent of child molestation in Nigeria without the intervention of the social workers. The research can help social workers by offering an insight into reasons children who are abused differently are not treated. The insight learned in this research will enhance the service delivery for professionals expected to engage with sexual abused. The study is relevant to child welfare practice, may generate policy changes to improve and reduce the incidence of child sexual abuse in Nigeria.

### **1.3 NOVELTY OF THE TOPIC**

This study seeks to investigate the roles of social workers in Nigeria are facing in dealing with child sexual abuse. Children are susceptible to a variety of risks in West and Central Africa which include child labor, sexual exploitation, child prostitution, conflict and any other emergency, female infanticide and early marriages (UNICEF, 1999).

According to figures from the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub Sector in Nigeria (2020), sexual violence (rape and sexual assault) accounted for 17% of total recorded cases, while forced marriage accounted for 10%. Although rape accounted for 15% of all sexual assault cases, assistance was sought in 22% of incidents within 0-3 days and 68% of cases after one month. Children were the victims of 21% of confirmed incidents—on average, one of every five reports came from children.

29 percent of all cases identified by children involved unaccompanied and separated children. Sexual abuse accounted for 48% of the cases identified by child survivors (either rape or sexual assault). A forced, early marriage accounted for 29% of the incidents recorded by child survivors).

Reports about child exploitation and abduction have increased in schools, with 276 Nigerian girls abducted by the Boko Haram terrorist group where the girls were subject to sexual abuse; psychological and physical abuses; forced labor; forced involvement in military operations forced marriages. (Chiluwa & Ifuko, 2015; Isah, Ruminjo & Beattie, 2015). Nigeria has been identified as a rape-supportive society, with the dynamic interaction of current social systems, socialization, and conventional attitudes favoring gender inequality (World Bank, 2019; Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice, 2016).

In the world, the socialization of men is often directed towards making them dominant, hostile, and even violent. Masculinity becomes synonymous with these traits of power and authority (Ogunola, 2018). Structural forces in Nigerian society have also been blamed for the

development of gendered norms and disparities associated with the idea of men as active and controlling, while women are passive and helpless (Babalola, 2014; Etobe et al., 2015). The research is new because it offers an insight into the role of social workers in the defense of children's rights. This research would also provide an outlet for the social worker not well educated in child sexual abuse

#### **1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The goal of the study is to investigate the roles of social workers in dealing with child sexual abuse in Nigeria. While the specific objective is to

1. To analyze theoretical presumptions of child's sexual abuse and its impact on child development
2. Examine the patterns and underlying factors of child abuse in Nigeria
3. Investigate the social worker roles on the services for children experiencing sexual abuse.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the patterns and underlying factors of sexual abuse in Nigeria?
2. What services are offered and available to children in the child welfare system appropriate to meet their individual needs?
3. What are roles of the social worker in providing services for children experiencing sexual abuse in Nigeria?

#### **1.6 RESEARCH METHODS**

The methods of this study included a comprehensive review of the literature on issues surrounding child abuse and specifically child sexual abuse; also, the role of social worker in ameliorating the problem of abuse; this is a qualitative study which gathered the result through key participants interview in Nigeria with professional social workers.

This study adopted a qualitative research design in gathering the data through Key Participants interview

## **1.7 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF STUDY'S STRUCTURE**

This study seeks to investigate the challenges social worker are facing regards child abuse. Introduction which will focus on the research problem, relevance of the topic, different theories and literature review will be done. Also, research design, sampling technique, procedures for data collection, Data analysis, ethical consideration, and research methods. Relevant theories will be review. Also, discussion of the findings, conclusion, recommendations, limitations and suggestion for further study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Social workers face several particular experiences as they do their job and negotiate with customers. Even then, certain ideas can allow Social Workers to consider and examine objectively some of the problems they face and how they can be used to find workable solutions. Social work theoretical methods are frequently used to understand individual behavior and function as starting points for practical models and treatments (Simmons, Shapiro, Accomazzo, & Manthey, 2016). The theory offers background and logical basis for study and for the understanding of social phenomena as well as for the interpretation of research results (Bryman, 2012).

The research used research questions to explain the condition and system of the social workers in helping the sexually female abused children. Feminist Theory of Rape was adopted. The theory is relevant to the study hence the adoption. This also help to know measures or programs put in place by the government for the social workers in the protection of children experiencing sexual abuse. The ideas contributed to understanding why and how social workers do what they do. Theories have helped to explain the various reactions and experiences.

## **2.1.THEORETICAL VALUE OF THE PAPER**

### **THEORETICAL PRESUMPTIONS OF CHILD'S SEXUAL ABUSE AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Feminist Theory of Rape**

According to Bryden and Grier (2011), feminists created a series of ideas regarding rape during the 1970s as part of their criticism of patriarchy; they quickly displaced psychologists as the accepted experts on its causes and motives. As frontline staff in rape crisis centers, feminists assumed responsibility for educating the general public about sexual harassment dynamics and prevention. As a result, the mantra "rape is about power and influence, not sex" gained widespread acceptance, eventually becoming common wisdom. With a few notable exceptions to be discussed later, this definition has received little study or criticism within feminist circles over the years (Cahill, 2001; MacKinnon, 1989; Scully, 1990).

The following segment will briefly study and discuss the radical/liberal feminist theory of rape. Due to the FFP's many flaws, the author will begin weaving the FFP's threads together, incorporating additional feminist and non feminist hypotheses to account for sexual harassment motives and dynamics.

Patriarchal influence and authority. According to radical/liberal feminists, rape is essentially an offensive act rather than a sexual act, and its motivations and complexities are motivated by anger rather than sexual need (Melani & Fodaski, 1974). Susan Brownmiller's 1975 novel, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, is often credited with popularizing radical feminist ideas. Her book detailed the history of rape contextualized the act of rape in social and political terms, reframed rape as a sexual act driven by male dominance and female exploitation, and elevated rape from a person to a political act (Cahill, 2001). Brownmiller contended that all rape is an exercise of control and that the purpose of rape is "nothing more or less than a deliberate process of coercion by which all men maintain a state of fear" for all women. (Brownmiller, 1975)

The shift in perspective to view rape as motivated by power rather than sex was critical in deflecting blame away from female victims, and as a result, the physical appearance and sexual background of rape survivors became less important (although clearly vestiges of the practice remain today). Terminology started to shift as well, with the words "victims" being replaced

by "survivors," and "rape" being replaced by "sexual harassment," to emphasize the assault's brutality rather than its sexual nature.

This change in terms and practice has culminated in the criminal justice system taking rape and its ramifications more seriously, although it should be noted that the turnover rate for rape cases remains very high (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012).

In relating this theory to the study, Nigeria has been identified as a rape-supportive society, with the dynamic interaction of current social systems, socialization, and conventional attitudes favouring gender inequality (World Bank, 2019; Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice, 2016). Men are often socialized in the country to make them powerful, hostile, and even violent. Masculinity becomes synonymous with these traits of power and authority (Ogunola, 2018). Structural forces in Nigerian society have also been blamed for the development of gendered norms and disparities associated with the idea of men as active and controlling, while women are passive and helpless (Babalola, 2014; Etobe et al., 2015).

### **2.1.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

#### **Child abuse**

Child abuse applies to a court of the caregiver. Sexual abuse comprises violent attacks exceeding the permissible body penalty. States may classify the behavior forms falling into this category in particular. In some situations, for example, the maturity level determines whether the action is acceptable (e.g., slapping an infant versus an older child across the face). Sexual assault usually includes a range of sexual behavior, including sexual disclosure, sexual touch, raping, and criminal exploitation (Brown & Saied-Tessier, 2015). Emotionally abusive acts include intimidation, terrorizations, or intentional fears of a child; denial, ridiculousness, embarrassment or humiliation of conduct; extreme isolation or behavioral limitations; and wrongdoing or involvement in illegality. However, only Delaware describes specific conduct that is emotionally abusive, most of the 48 states list emotional abuse; most states recognize emotional abuse through its impact on the mental health of children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). As child welfare action focuses on child-caregivers, cases of abuse can be categorized as overlooked by non-family members or siblings. In such cases, the child conducting the identification shall be the caregiver's actual or alleged failure to protect. For example, most sexual harassment and many cases involve non-family people as perpetrators (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Cases of abuse by a non-family member, a sibling,

or a person who is always in the household are considered to be neglect where the child victim is found unable to defend him or herself.

The definition of mandated reporters also differs in child abuse and neglect laws as stated. There are countries where all adults are identified as mandatory reporters, but most countries specify some working groups and children (CWIG, 2012a). State law generally excludes reporting obligation priests who serve in the role of receiving confession. States do, however, vary, whether priests or pastors are expected to report in any capacity. Nobody who is not classified as a mandated reporter can still write regardless of the assigned grades. Mandated reporters and others are covered legally for good faith reporting, while mandated reporters who do not report should be disciplined. No investigation on evidence has established whether the extent of inclusion in mandatory reporting legislation affects reporting rates, although it may affect reporting rates (McElroy, 2012)

Children's abuse and neglect are also offenses. These crimes are described and named differently by countries, but in general, criminal laws cover the same acts in all States. Sexual abuse is also a crime; the majority of incidents are classified as offenses. Physical assault is a crime unless there is a discipline exception to the action for corporal punishment. Any cases of sexual assault will probably be identified as crimes before a child is hospitalized or dies seriously. A minority of negligence cases include criminal conduct. If a child is not supervised, secured, or cared for, it can comply with and be charged with the criteria for the violation of criminal codes (e.g. risk, or negligence). However, this does not ensure that child violence and carelessness fall under the legal definition of criminality that is fully investigated and prosecuted by law enforcement. Law enforcement and prosecution proceedings seem to focus on sexual harassment and serious physical violence and neglect, resulting in physical injury or child death (e.g., starvation, inflicted medical trauma).

As in government regulations, child abuse and neglect are viewed for research purposes in different ways. Two defining criteria are applied by the NIS-4 (Sedlak et al. 2010a): a detrimental norm and a risk standard. The harm standard is limited to cases of child abuse and neglect that harm children, while the risk standard is for children who suffer no harm in any circumstances.



## **2.1.2 PATTERNS AND UNDERLYING FACTORS OF CHILD ABUSE IN NIGERIA**

### **Child abuse in Nigeria's context**

Several forms of child abuse exist in different Nigerian communities. Seven major forms of child abuse in the country, as listed by Ede and Kalu (2018), are: child labor, child abandonment, vagrancy, sexual abuse, girl child marriage, child trafficking, and female genital mutilation.

**Sexual Abuse:** This is simply the use of a minor to satisfy his libido or to prostitute him for income generation. In Ede and Kalu (2018), Martin (1993), described child sexual abuse as an act of "calling or pushing a baby to commit sexual activity" or as being "indecent exposure to a child's genitals," "showing a child's pornography," "actual sexual contact," "physical contact with the child's genitals," "seeing the baby's genitals without physical contact" or "using a child to produce"

Sexual abuse of children and adolescents occurs when an adult or a much older kid engages in sexual behavior before to the age of legal consent for the sexual enjoyment of an adult or a significantly older child. (Tang & Yan, 2004) It constitutes a grave violation of fundamental human rights and results in a slew of severe consequences. These consequences include depression, anxiety-related eating disorders, low self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, academic/learning difficulties, and behavioral difficulties such as substance addiction, destructive behavior, adult criminality, and suicide. (Steel, Sanna, Hammond, Whipple, & Cross, 2004). Sexual activities include any forms of oral-genital, genital, or anal contact, as well as non-contact sexual abuse such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, or the use of a child in the production of pornography (Walter, 2004). Sexual abuse injuries vary in severity according to the child's or adolescent's age and size, as well as the amount of force employed. Sexual abuse can result in internal lacerations and bleeding, as well as damage to internal organs, which can result in death in some situations. (Anderson, Mangels, & Langsam, 2004). Sexual abuse can also have a significant impact on victims' social well-being; victims may face stigma and ostracism from their relatives.

Sexually abused children and adolescents must consequently be evaluated accurately and diligently to ensure legal legitimacy. Sexual abuse is still primarily diagnosed based on the child's or adolescent's complaint of abuse, although anogenital examination produces few medical proof of sexual abuse. Legally confirmed incidents of sexual abuse, the majority of

which involve children, do not exhibit outward signs of sexual assault. As a result, disclosure is frequently the most critical piece of information in evaluating whether or not there has been abuse. (Sakelliadis, Spiliopoulou, & Papadodima, 2009). Sexual abuse encompasses a wide variety of behaviors, both contact and noncontact. Sexual abuse in childhood is defined by the World Health Organization to include both penetrative and non-penetrative kinds of sexual abuse (WHO, 2002).

Sexual abuse in contact can be penetrative or non-penetrative. Non penetrative abuse includes sexualized kissing, fondling, masturbation while the penetrative includes digital and/or object penetration of the vagina and/or anus, as well as oral-genital, genital-genital, and anal-genital contact. (Priebe & Svedin, 2009) Exhibitionism, inappropriate observation of a kid (when the child is dressed, using the bathroom, or bathing), the production or watching of pornography, and the engagement of minors in prostitution are all examples of noncontact activities. Sexual acts are imposed on the child and constitute an abuse of the caregiver's authority over him or her. Frequently, the sequence of activities evolves from noncontact to contact over time, during which the child's trust in the caregiver is abused and deceived.

Sexual abuse is a pervasive problem that cuts beyond ethnic, economic, social, and regional boundaries. Females and youth are typically targeted by violence, as they lack the money and social position necessary to resist or escape it. Estimating the incidence of sexual abuse and violence in the developing world with precision is challenging due to the paucity of studies on the subject. The cultural stigma associated with reporting abuse makes accurate assessment difficult, and few adolescent health initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa address these crucial issues.

**Girl Child Marriage:** In advance countries they encounter mostly the issue of disparage; that is, inequality in marriage or marriage with a commoner. But in Africa and in many parts of Nigeria we encounter the issue of child marriage. Certain family members, particularly in Northern Nigeria, receive dowries and give their small children their hand in marriage, regardless of whether they can or cannot cope with it. In the southern part, many "drive" their children to early marriage as soon as they learn that they become pregnant, regardless of the pregnancy circumstances.

**Female Genital Mutilation:** The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) defines this as 'procedures which, for non-medical reasons, can modify or injure female genital organs.' To be

easy to understand, female genital mutilation is a girl's circumcision mostly for cultural purposes.

### **2.1.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Chiazor et al. (2016) and Eze (2013) reported that existing data indicates that one out of five women in some countries experience sexual harassment by an abuse victim, whereas close to a quarter of girls report forced sexual initiation. Sexual abuse involves a variety of behaviours, including coercive sex in marriage and romantic relationships, rape by strangers, organized rape in war, sexual abuse (including requests for sex in exchange for work or school grades), and child rape, as well as human trafficking, female genital mutilation, and coerced exposure to pornography. The majority of these rape cases result in the death of their victims to conceal their evil acts or harm, or even infect them with sexually transmitted diseases. This has a detrimental effect on the rape victim's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, leaving them distraught and traumatized.

As a result, Akanbi (2020) believes that to combat this deplorable act, the five agents of socialization must be used. Beginning with the home, parents must educate and inform their children about rape, its atrocities, and consequences. Both males and females should receive appropriate sex education. He added that the number of rape cases has increased by a factor of ten in comparison to previous years' estimates. Regrettably, it is growing year after year. Although it is widely believed that no factor can excuse rape, it is possible that indecent dressing is a contributing factor in igniting the desire to rape.

According to current statistics, 90 percent of all victims are sexually assaulted by people they know. The majority of these women and children have been sexually assaulted by their grandparents, husbands, or uncles. Although leaving your child in the care of a neighbour is no longer healthy, returning is a different story. Due to inadequate prosecutions, a large number of criminals roam openly (Agiriga, 2019).

Additionally, Chiazor et al. (2016) stated that rape is the most heinous type of violence against women because it deprives them of their right to self-preservation. It is a universal occurrence that transcends race, tribe, and social class. It is a specific form of human aggression that carries significant symbolic significance in all cultures, ancient and modern. Rape is on the rise, and the consequences are becoming more dangerous to victims and their families, and therefore cannot be dismissed.

The latest surge of rapes and assassinations of women in Nigeria includes the following: In a Nigerian town, a man was arrested following 40 rapes. According to reports, the rape spree involved an assault on an 80-year-old woman and children as young as ten years old. According to reports, the Federation of Akinyele Local Government Students Union and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) staged a peaceful protest against the suspected murder of Grace Oshiagwu, 21, in Oyo State Akinyele Local Council (Agboluaje, 2020). The students, who held placards reading "Real Men Do Not Rape," "No Justice, No Peace," "Stop Giving Emotional Trauma," "Stop Killing Our Women, Our Dreams," "I Don't Want To Be The Next Victim," and "Students Demand Justice," claimed that they had documented four rape cases in that local council. The victims Barakat Bello and Grace were assassinated, while another happened at Sasa, and there were several instances of people being killed without being recorded.

According to Ibenegbu (2018), experts have identified at least four possible causes of rape in Nigeria, which include the following:

1. Weak Rape Laws: Rapists in Nigeria operate with such impunity as a result of the laxity of the anti-rape laws, which has posed a serious threat to women's safety. It is important to address the issue of law enforcement in Nigeria. When people understand that their acts will be held accountable regardless of their wealth or power, crime will dramatically decrease.

Tade and Udechukwu (2020) observed that the rise in rape cases in Nigerian society is due to loopholes in the country's laws and that the Law Court requires the victim to include the bed sheets used to rape, her panties, and refrain from washing herself before going to the Police Station or hospital; if the victim does not comply, the perpetrator has the luxury of walking free even if the act was committed. Although it is possible for a woman to wrongly accuse an innocent man of rape, it is not impossible.

2. Indecent Dressing: Statistics indicate that the current fashion trend of exposing numerous erogenous zones on the female body may result in sexual harassment from males. Additionally, research indicates that men perceive women with less clothing on their bodies as having a frivolous style of conduct. As a result, these women are regarded as more approachable for sexual intercourse. Males who lack self-control regard women who are less dressed as a cue for intimate activity. According to Chiazor et al. (2016), this style of dressing often attracts the opposite sex and induces lustful feelings, which can ultimately result in raping Women. In a society like ours, where everybody is 'dressing to kill,' girls dress to 'slay' in order to attract

suitors. Also, married women are required to dress half-necked in order to avoid losing their husbands to the local girls. It is a horrible state of affairs, but when we decide to change, change will occur. According to Aborisade (2016), rape victims are frequently perceived as facilitating their victimization through suggestive attitudes' and 'indecent dressing,' even though the Country has no dress code. As a result, victims of rape or sexual harassment are seen as individuals with poor moral virtues that must have influenced their attackers in some way.

3. Silence as a Culture: In Nigeria, silence is one of the leading causes of rape. Numerous families in Nigeria will choose to conceal the abuse, even against the victim's will, out of fear that the Woman would be unable to marry as a result. As a result, women in Nigeria tend to conceal themselves rather than face justice. Additionally, some shocking theories lead HIV-positive men to assume that intimate intercourse with a virgin girl would result in their cure from HIV. When a woman is raped and the incident becomes public, she and her family are "ostracized" in Nigeria due to the dishonour associated with rape. Due to the social stigma associated with rape, female victims are compelled to hide rape assaults in order to avoid humiliation and public embarrassment. And parents of raped children often struggle to come forward publicly to announce such incidents (Chiazor et al, 2016). Speaking out about your experience and informing the appropriate authorities is a positive move. Allowing offenders to walk free would result in an increase in rape incidents and a lack of justice for you or any other survivor of sexual assault.

Johnson-Salami (2016) asserts that a culture of secrecy exacerbates this issue in part due to police humiliation and coercion of suspects, as well as the "embarrassment" associated with public acknowledgment. This silence culture strengthens the stigma already attached to the survivor, rather than the attacker since the prevailing view is that women usually provoke the abuser to strike. As a result, victims are often reluctant to speak about their experiences because rape brings dishonor to a woman's family and culture.

4. Alcohol and Substance Abuse: The majority of rapes in Nigeria are indeed possible as a result of the country's alcohol and drug issues. Unemployed adolescents seek solace in alcohol and narcotics. This condition contributes to a rise in youth crime. Is it possible to rescue children and adolescents from alcoholism? There are thousands of different ways to do this, but the country's unemployment rate remains extremely high. Without work, youth will almost certainly turn to violence. How can Nigerians address the rape problem? There are several ways for the government to do this. Ladies must exercise greater sensitivity and caution.

Additionally, the Nigerian judiciary must ensure that rapists face swift and strict punishment in order to deter such actions among others (Ibenegbu, 2018)

5. Exposure to Immoral Websites: Pornographic films, sex novels, and magazines can all contribute to moral bankruptcy. Adolescents consume sex-related literature in the form of novels, comics, magazines, and newspapers. Apart from being subjected to sexually explicit ads in newspapers and on television, they often watch different forms of pornographic films. Along with sexually explicit music and films, pornographic literature targeted at teenagers piques their interest in sex. Certain parents encourage their children to spend an excessive amount of time watching television programs in which most advertisers use sex to sell their goods. These advertisements contribute to a tremendous amount of pressure being placed on the younger generation to engage in sex at all costs. As a result of this publicity, teenagers are constantly under pressure to engage in sexual experimentation, even though it involves rape. They become addicted to it in their attempt to witness it once, only to know how it feels. This is why all hands must be on deck to address the problem of rape (Chiazor et al, 2016).

6. Negative Peer Influence: Adolescents have a strong desire to belong among their peers. This compels them to do whatever it takes to avoid being seen as substandard. According to Chiazor et al. (2016), most teenagers attempt sex experimentation by raping to maintain their relevance and the approval of their peers. Children who receive more parental influence are more likely to follow socially acceptable sexual behaviour than children who receive more peer influence. In this scenario, parents should attempt to educate their children about sexual education at home before their peers do so outside the home.

Although, as mentioned previously, delays in the judicial system; judicial corruption; stigmatization; family ties (in situations where rape was committed by close families of the victims, the family might choose not to report the crime to the police for prosecution); fear of attacks and intimidation (Ibenegbu, 2018).

Orjinmo (2020) claimed that many Nigerians do not believe in a justice system; they believe it makes it difficult to convict convicted rapists and condemns women who are sexual harassment victims. He added that it is not unusual for rape to go unreported in Nigeria. Some victims and their families chose not to report cases to authorities out of fear of stigma, police extortion, and a lack of confidence in the judicial process. Additionally, those bold enough to complain have been subjected to insulting remarks at the police station. According to Orjinmo, rape victims

are either vilified for their attire, being in the wrong place at the wrong time or being accused of fabricating rape allegations.

Tade and Udechukwu (2020) published a report in which they studied approximately 331 rape cases from two national dailies. Rapists were identified as being between the ages of 18 and 55. The victims' ages have been estimated to range between one and twenty years. Rape victims were overwhelmingly female (90%) in comparison to males. The majority of rapists are classified as familiar enemies, which includes fathers, friends, and neighbours, and third-party guardianship is considered predatory.

Settings which give adults in positions of trust or authority unmonitored, private access to children and activities such as physical contact or personal care which provide situational opportunities for child sexual abuse and exploitation and creating a grooming relationship (ONS, 2016; Parkinson & Cashmore, 2017; Proeve, Malvaso & DelFabbro, 2016; Radford, 2017b; Ward & Rodger, 2018). Closed or isolated organizational settings, such as geographically remote children's homes, orphanages or correctional facilities and institutions that require or allow unsupervised physical contact between adults and children, such as care homes, single sex boarding schools, sporting facilities or some faith settings carry increased risk.

Further review suggests that unmonitored and unquestioned access between clergy and young boys left children situationally vulnerable (Bohm et al, 2014; Proeve, Malvaso & DelFabbro, 2016). Institutional practices, such as ritual baths in some African churches, may present opportunities for perpetrators and risks for children (Ajayi, 2020).

Leclerc, Small bone & Wortley (2013) found that the presence of a potential guardian reduced the duration of sexual contact and the occurrence of penetration, highlighting the importance of good supervision.

A poor or distant relationship with a parent and/or living with domestic violence, abuse or neglect or in a chaotic household with a low level of parental supervision, poor support and maternal emotional detachment can increase the risk of exposure to sexual abuse and exploitation (Assink et al, 2019; Choudry, 2018; Carlson et al, 2020; Proeve, Malvaso & DelFabbro, 2016) and, in particular in neighborhoods where this is more prevalent, make children and adolescents more vulnerable to victimization and to associating with others involved in criminal, abusive or exploitative behaviour

The 'cycle of violence' position draws from diverse strands of research into the impact of child exposure to domestic violence on the development of partner violence in adult relationships (Radford et al., 2019), on the impact of child maltreatment or child sexual abuse on later parenting problems (mostly by mothers, de Vries et al., 2018), and on the impact of bullying or childhood maltreatment and other childhood adversities on violence and crime in adolescence and later adult life (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). A major limitation of the cycle of violence studies is the failure to identify gender, most studies involving single sex samples, either mothers who were abused or neglected in childhood or convicted male sex offenders. Save the Children has invested in consultations with children and has produced guidance on child participation (Bala, 2018; Benelli, Fikiri & Oumarai, 2019; Lansdown, 2014; Save the Children, 2015; 2018). Large scale consultations have enabled children in humanitarian contexts to identify priorities (Benelli, Fikiri & Oumarai, 2019)

UNICEF have recently published evidence-based guidance on developing capacity in the workforce for child protection and social work (UNICEF, 2019). There are examples of positive outcomes in terms of increased reporting of cases of violence against children. In Serbia for example, UNICEF supported improvements in the national reporting and referral system for violence against children, focusing on the capacity of social workers. This led to an increase of 92% in reported cases of violence against children by 2015 (UN, 2019a).

Whereas the social work profession stands against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and promotes respect for diversity and human rights (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; Jaffee, Dessel, & Woodford, 2016; National Association of Social Workers, 2017)

Hatton and Duff (2016) conducted a meta-analysis and found 10 out of 11 studies found gender effects, such that men blame victims more than women. All of this together suggests opposing results to the Abeid et al. (2015) study. Greater support of the latter gender effect is in the strength of the studies, such that they are meta-analyses compared to a single study effect. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the population in the former study (Abeid et al., 2015) differs from the population in the United States, and thus, the generalizability of results should be cautioned.

Nigeria, like many other African countries, is extremely patriarchal (Agwu & Okoye, 2017). Gender roles and relationships are clearly defined and segregated (Osondu-Oti, 2016; Allanana, 2013). Gender influences virtually every area of life, including access to critical resources and



services such as information, education, employment, health, land, and credit, all of which tend to favor the female gender more than the male (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2001; Agwu & Okoye, 2017). Gender is a social construct that assigns males and females distinct roles in society. These roles, in turn, contribute to gender inequities (Kiboro, Gakuru, Misaro, & Nwangi, 2014).

These inequities are a result of discriminatory social institutions. Nigeria ranks 79th out of 86 nations on the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI, 2012) based on five social institution indicators: discriminatory family codes, restricted physical integrity, son bias/preference, restricted resources and entitlements, and restricted civil liberties. Promoting equality and equity between men and women in order to end this marginalization is no longer merely a matter of human rights; it is a necessary condition for sustainable development (Kemi & Jenyo, 2016).

It is extremely difficult for victims to expose incidences of abuse in many West African societies. Families are frequently hesitant to seek professional assistance, and the culture of silence and shame obstructs therapeutic prospects (Sossou & Yogtiba, 2009). According to the WHO (UN, 2004; 2005), opprobrium, especially when committed in the kid's safe haven of the home by someone the child knows and trusts.

According to Sossou and Yogtiba (2009), West African countries lack funding and child welfare programs, rendering them unable of providing proper support and services to sexual assault victims. Additionally, in some instances, the perpetrator's compensation payment to the victim's family serves as punishment, and the offense is not reported to the authorities.

According to Aderinto (2010), rising urbanisation and long-standing gender biases have increased girls' vulnerability to sexual abuse. He argues that in today's metropolitan environment, females are more likely to live in overcrowded households, where they face physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Additionally, he emphasizes that certain myths enhance girls' risk of sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS. For instance, there is a notion that sex with a virgin female can either heal or protect a man from HIV/AIDS. Additionally, many believe it is difficult to infect young females. Additionally, Aderinto (2010) also demonstrated a clear correlation between sexual abuse of girls during their childhood and the chance of engaging in high-risk sexual behavior in maturity.

HIV/AIDS-related stresses can have a detrimental effect on family structure and result in significant psychological discomfort for children (UN, 2005). According to the UN (2005), children who are vulnerable to HIV/Aids include orphans, children who have a sick parent, children who live in impoverished households caring for orphans, and children who are HIV positive themselves. Society frequently stigmatizes and excludes these youngsters from their community, education, a

### **Early marriage**

In Nigeria and West Africa, early marriage is frequent (UN, 2005). According to FMWA&SD (2008a), it is especially prevalent in poverty-stricken areas. Parents regard the process as a possible means of emancipating their child and the rest of the family from poverty. Children's rights ignorance, as well as other variables such as cultural and religious customs, all have a role. This is particularly prevalent in rural areas and the Islamic northern states (Eze-Anaba, 2003; Sossou and Yogtiba, 2009). According to data, one-third of women in the North-West region were married as adolescents, compared to less than one-eighth in the North-East and North Central regions (FMWA&SA, 2008a). Southern women are particularly unlikely to marry as teenagers, with rates as low as 5% in the South-West (ibid). In northern Nigeria, it is usual for families to withdraw a girl child from school and assign her responsibilities that prepare her for marriage and family care, such as smallholder farming and home chores (Eze-Anaba, 2003). As a long-standing customary practice, the majority of parents and communities do not see this as a problem. According to Sossou and Yogtiba (2009), girls view early marriage as a means of enhancing their economic standing and gaining social recognition, as well as evading family and household duties.

Many females grow up illiterate as a result of being yanked out of school and are scared by the Nigerian judicial system, which requires the usage and understanding of proper English. This lays the groundwork for a future of exclusion and vulnerability (Eze-Anaba, 2003). The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2004) emphasizes the dangers of early marriage, saying that it denies girls access to education, impairs their mental and physical development, and deprives them of reproductive health control. Giving birth to a child at an early age might potentially result in vesico-vaginal fistula. This is especially frequent in the northern hemisphere, where early marriage is more popular.

Child maltreatment refers to the abuse and neglect of children under the age of 18. It encompasses all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and

commercial or other exploitation that endanger the child's health, survival, growth, or dignity in the context of a relationship of duty, trust, or power. Exposure to intimate relationship violence is occasionally considered a type of child maltreatment as well (WHO, 2007). Child maltreatment is a global problem that results in many child fatalities and causes countless children to suffer every day, month, and year. According to a 2002 World Health Organization research issued by Dr. Desmond Runyan, an estimated 57,000 children die each year as a result of physical abuse. Sexual and psychological abuse are equally prevalent and difficult to quantify due to a lack of data and an urgent need to address them. Child abuse is a global problem that affects thousands of children each year and has major long-term implications for the victims. The long-term repercussions of child abuse include stress, which can impair early brain development, nervous system development, and immune system development. Additionally, maltreated adolescents are more likely to develop behavioral, mental, and physical health problems as adults as a result of obesity, smoking, depression, risky sexual behaviors, unwanted pregnancy, and alcohol and drug abuse. These long-term consequences can contribute to heart disease, cancer, suicide, and sexually transmitted infections, all of which have a negative impact on the country's economic growth due to unnecessary costs associated with hospitalization, mental health treatment, child welfare, and long-term health care (WHO, 2002).

Numerous risk factors contribute to child maltreatment difficulties. It is comprehensible and critical to recognize that children are the victims of child abuse and should never be held accountable for the effects of maltreatment. Risk factors are features of the child or caregiver that contribute to the likelihood of child maltreatment. Essentially, risk factors are difficult to identify quickly and precisely and may go unnoticed and unobserved. Additionally, some risk factors that may go unnoticed during investigations, such as psychiatric issues, can be clinically diagnosed. According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), some possible risk factors for caregivers include alcohol abuse, which is defined as an unrestricted and uncontrollable consumption of alcohol. Additionally, another risk factor for caregivers is drug misuse, which refers to the unrestricted and uncontrollable use of narcotics (Child Maltreatment, 2018). Additionally, 2003 research by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs demonstrated that since childbirth, parental drug misuse has impacted the number of children and their requirements (Kennison & Goodman, 2008).

Between 2016 and 2018, the NCANDS reported an increase in the number of victims with an alcohol abuse care provider, and the national percentage of victims with an alcohol abuse care

provider risk factor increased from 11.6 in 2016 to 12.3 in 2018. On the other hand, between 2016 and 2018, the number of victims with drug abuse caregivers grew. The national percentage of victims who were reported to have a substance addiction care provider grew from 28.9 in 2016 to 30.7 in 2018. (Child Maltreatment, 2018).

Forcing or luring a kid or young person into sexual behaviors that may not necessarily involve a high level of violence, regardless of whether the youngster is aware of what is happening. Physical contact may be made through penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or through non-penetrative behaviors such as masturbation, kissing, stroking, and touching outside of clothing. They may also involve non-contact actions like as exposing children to or producing sexual pictures, observing sexual behaviors, encouraging children to behave sexually inappropriately, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). This includes prostitution and the sexual exploitation of children for commercial or financial gain ([www.SiteWizard.co.uk](http://www.SiteWizard.co.uk)). Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA as "the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist another person in engaging in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct, or rape, and in cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationship."

Sex between a child and an adult is abusive due to their age gap, their use of force, and their lack of understanding. Child sexual assault, on the other hand, is never the victim's fault. Under the age of 18, all children and young people have a right to safety and should be safeguarded from harm in all circumstances. A recurring theme in child sexual abuse instances is that the abuse is carried out in exchange for something helpful to the victim or perpetrator. Sexual abuse can occur in a variety of settings, including the home, school, and workplaces that frequently employ children. According to global studies, the majority of abused children are female, and the abuser is typically a family member, cousin, neighbor, or babysitter who is familiar with the victims. Men commit the majority of sexual assault instances compared to women. Sexually abused children may experience long-term negative consequences such as serious mental health problems that result in suicide, major depression, trauma, aggressive behavior, anxiety, and personality disorders. Sexual abuse may also be associated with other forms of crime, such as child trafficking, domestic abuse, sexual violence in intimate relationships, grooming (including online grooming), the dissemination of abusive photographs of children, drug-related offenses, and gang-related activities (What is Child Abuse).

## **The girl-child and sexual abuse**

Human beings are classified biologically as male and female. Numerous ancient and modern religious texts also recognize and accept this category in opposition to the modern control of gender, which includes transgender people. Male and female maturity, on the other hand, are determined by age, and we have children (toddlers, adolescent, and teenager) and adults. In other words, the girl-child may be a toddler, an adolescent, or a teenager, depending on her psychological development stage, but falls between the ages of 0 and 17 or 18. This category of youngsters is deemed minor and unstable by their cultures and constitutions for participation in certain activities (sex and menial labor) in society. This cultural norm and constitutional regulations are routinely violated through exploitation, neglect, and molestation, as evidenced by the growing number of reported occurrences of child abuse worldwide.

Thus, child abuse "includes all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, as well as commercial or other exploitation, that result in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power" (World Health Organization, 2002). Because child abuse encompasses a broad spectrum of issues, this work focuses on child sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse is a violation of an individual's sexual right. Kidman (1993) defined sexual assault broadly as a violation committed by someone in authority over someone who is vulnerable. This offense is sexual in nature and may contain physical, verbal, or emotional components. Rape, date rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, incest, and sexual molestation all fall under this category. It could be defined as any sexual interaction between two individuals that is not mutually agreed upon. Additionally, it entails the exploitation of one's sexual drive or force in order to accomplish a desired goal (pleasure, power, subjugation, defilement, exploitation, diabolical). Such an act is neither gender, age, or race specific, and it affects everyone regardless of religious or cultural background. This means that sexual abusers could be men or women, members of a gang or an individual, religious or secular, of any age.

When a child is the victim of such an act, it is referred to as child sexual abuse. Youngster sexual abuse also occurs when a caregiver uses a child for sexual enjoyment. It can range from noncontact abuse (proposal, exhibition) to extreme penetration, as well as commercial sexual exploitation (Polonko, 2007). According to Polanco, the abuser is someone known to the child, which facilitates the act. According to Kayode (2019), it is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend or is unable to consent to, or that the child is

developmentally incapable of consenting to, or that violates a society's laws or social taboos. This means that sexual abuse of children is a violation of social norms.

Simply, child sexual abuse occurs when a youngster has sexual contact with an adult. Consent is not required in this scenario because the victim is a kid who is legally prohibited from engaging in or being involved in any sort of sexual conduct. As a result, anyone who engages a youngster (0-17 years) in any type of sexual behavior is abusing and misusing the child's sexual force. The culprit is penalized under many societies' established laws and traditions. As previously said, these criminals are frequently well-known to the youngster and hence may go unnoticed.

From the numerous instances of child sexual abuse, it can take the form of child marriage, parents sexually exploiting their children for economic gain, sexual touching of any part of the child's body regardless of whether the child is dressed or not, forcing or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity, compelling a child to remove their clothes or touch another's genitals, rape or penetration by putty.

Sexual acts such as those listed above are dangerous for a child. As such, it is considered as a dehumanizing act that is wreaking havoc on the globe without a precise treatment or therapy. Sexual abuse of children has devolved into sexual decadence, threatening the moral fabric of many nations, including Nigeria. However, this flare or passion for sex with a youngster is not a contemporary issue; it has been for centuries but has been amplified in the current period of globalization. To demonstrate that child sexual abuse is not unusual, Yuill and Evans (2007) claimed that Krafft-Ebing created the term pedophilia in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892) to refer to a spectrum of wants and behaviors connected with adult sexual attraction to children. Adult sexual abuse has resulted in an upsurge in child sexual abuse in the country.

Although child sexual abuse affects both male and female children, because Nigeria is a patrilineal society, female children face greater abuse than male children. This is due to their susceptibility and the society's sensitivity to sexual problems. That is why one of the most significant obstacles to resolving girl-child sexual abuse is the stigma and shame connected with the crime, which prevents victims and victim's family members from reporting the incident. To substantiate the above argument, Abeidet al. (2014) found that rape is seldom reported due to a number of hurdles that encourage acceptance and non-disclosure of sexual assault. Rape of a kid by a known person or relative was typically not reported to authorities, as revealing it was viewed as jeopardizing the family's dignity and reputation. As a result of

this, among other things, the country's persistent occurrences of girl-child sexual abuse are increasing.

Famumng (2017) provided the following statistics on rape in Nigerian states in 2017. In 2017, 4035 rape incidents were reported in Lagos State, 1000 in Kwara State, 600 in Gombe State, and 1200 in River States. These results are quite troubling, as Nigeria has enacted legislation to protect children from sexual abuse. The Child Protection Act is enshrined in the Nigerian legal system.

According to the Human Rights Act, sex with a minor constitutes rape, and anyone who engages in sexual intercourse with a child faces life imprisonment upon conviction. Additionally, Famumng (2017) asserts that, despite the aforementioned numbers and the Nigerian penal code, just 18 individuals have ever been convicted of rape in the Nigerian legal system. This suggests impunity on the side of Nigerian law, which has resulted in an increase in female-on-female sexual abuse.

In light of the worrisome increase in female-child sexual abuse, Egbejule (2016) detailed the case of Imade, a seven-year-old girl who was sexually molested by her teacher. According to the girl, the teacher enticed her with misleading words and provided her with a small amount of money. Following that, he sexually abused her outside of school hours. The girl-child informed her mother, who notified the school authorities. All the school administration could do was relieve the teacher of his responsibilities. Thus, the risk of this same teacher perpetrating the same act is substantial, given there was no record of the crime being reported to the relevant authority for further prosecution of the teacher.

As a result, permitting child sexual abusers to walk the streets is a threat to the moral fabric of society, which their activities are continually destroying. This is because the shame linked with the conduct permanently bruises the victims and their lives (Punch newspaper, May 19, 2016). In other words, leaving aside the lifelong trauma, sexual molestation can result in death.

According to Okafor (2018), Ochanya moved in with her aunt MrsOgbuja Felicia when she was eight years old. MrsOgbuja Felicia is Ochanya's mother's younger sister, the wife of MrOgbujaAndrew, and the mother of MrOgbujaVictor. For five years, the crime was covered because the perpetrators were her own relatives who were supposed to protect her from harm.

Considering the years of sexual abuse Ochanya underwent and her eventual death as a result of the deed, Effa Chukwuma (2018) noted that the death incident sparked a social media clamor

for justice for the abused. To solve the matter, Nigerian legislators are advocating for the death sentence for rape in the future. The penalty, it is hoped, would serve as a deterrent to abusers. may face the death penalty for child sexual abuse. This is perhaps the only approach to address the growing plague and threat of sexual assault against Nigeria's female children.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study adopted a qualitative method because the study focuses on the experiences of those involved. Qualitative research method normally looks for answers to questions by using predefined procedures and the questions are answered through collecting evidence. The findings that this method produces are not determined in advance. In addition, the findings are not just for the study but are of use beyond it where they may be applicable. Qualitative research methods provide clarity on actual experiences by people or respondents of the research at hand. In addition, qualitative research methods do help to identify unseen and intangible issues such as religion, ethnicity, social norms as well as socioeconomic status. (Mohajan, 2018). In general, qualitative research helps in the interpretation and the understanding of a wide range of reality of specific situations and meanings of qualitative data, which this study is about. Relating it to the current study, the quest was to highlight and develop knowledge about experiences in practice, values of different cultures as well as ethics in social work.

### **3.2 RESEARCH SETTING**

The study was conducted among social workers in Lagos State, Nigeria.

### **3.3 STUDY POPULATION**

The study participants were professional social workers in Lagos State, Nigeria

### **3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of an interest population for a research study. Sampling, including sample size and sampling strategy, is critical in all qualitative research. These factors can help qualitative researchers choose sample sizes and designs that best suit their research goals (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Sampling is a concept that transcends study and research frameworks. In other words, the researcher decides on what knowledge is to be sought with regard to the objectives of the study. People who can and are willing to provide



the information by virtue of knowledge or experience are therefore selected. Those selected are known to be proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest. Purposive sampling of key actors, in this case, are social workers who are working in child protection issues would be used. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which "components chosen for the sample are picked based on the researcher's judgment." Researchers frequently feel that by using competent judgment. Those who have encountered or have knowledge about complications in child protection or replacement events. Social workers were interviewed. Through purposive sampling, key respondents who are Social workers were involved in the data collection. In addition, having a key informant interview was conveniently considered with limited time and resources to mobilize people at different times and days

The participants in this study are 10 professional social workers who are working in criminal justice department, rehabilitation institutions and Neuropsychiatric Hospitals. The sampling criteria are:

1. The social worker had a minimum qualification of Bachelor degree in Social works and some possessed master in Social works
2. The Social workers are Professionals with Minimum of 3 years work experience

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

There are different methods of data collection in qualitative research including observations, textual or visual analysis and interviews which can be individual or group interviews (Silverman, 2000). This study however, focused on semi-structured interview as a method for data collection, both individual and group. This method was chosen because the study sought to know the key participants experiences, perceptions and roles pertaining to child sexual abuse and protection in their area. Interviews are therefore best suited if little is known about the study phenomenon or if specific observations from the individual participants are needed. Qualitative approaches such as interviews are thought to offer a deepening interpretation of social dynamics, rather than a purely quantitative approach, such as questionnaires.

The purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters for example child protection, social work and culture in this case. In terms of the interview, a semi-structured interview was used in the study. A Semi-structured interview consists of a number of key questions that help to define the areas

that are to be explored, but it also allows the interviewer or the interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or a response in more detail (Willing, 2008). The Social workers were interviewed individually through virtual platform.

### **3.6 PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The data was gathered through key informants semi-structured interviews with professionals (social workers) who were in the child and adolescent's section. Participants were recruited through the researchers' personal circles; those participants referred the researchers to other professionals that qualified for the study. The participants were given an informed consent form. The goal is to audio record the interview. After the interviews each participant were well appreciated. The researchers contacted each participant directly and the time and exact date was determined beforehand in accordance to the participants' schedule and convenience since professionals' work schedules varied.

Interviews was captured digitally after consent obtained from participants before participation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed literally. The electronic recording of interviews reduced stress and hampered the conversational process by eliminating the need to take notes by hand during the interview. When writing during interviews, one tends to forget important parts of the conversation. A thorough, unbiased, objective analysis and depiction of results can be obtained through recorded interviews. Thus, recording qualitative interviews was beneficial. Each interview sessions took about an hour to allowing for significant discussion.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS**

The collected data from the participants were transcribed and analyzed using content data analysis. The study embraced qualitative method through Key participant interview therefore, the responses of the participants were transcribed into word document with the use of terminologies and quotations as implied in the findings.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Ethics is defined as “the set for rules of conduct that enable us to operate defensibly in the political contexts in which we have to conduct educational research” (Chilisa, 2005). In addition, ethical issues in research include codes of conduct that are concerned with the protection of the researched from physical, mental, and/or psychological harm. The codes of conduct to protect the researched include ensuring the anonymity of the researched and confidentiality of the responses. In doing research, there are several aspects that surround

ethics, however, there are four main principles which are whether their harm to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy and whether deception is involved.

The interviews were taken in peaceful environments which was selected by the participants. A central individual was reached, initially, who further reached out to those who would volunteer to be a part of the study. In doing so, the rationale of the study was explained. Social workers were contacted individually and were asked if they would like to be interviewed about the issue.

Informed consent, was done verbally upon the beginning of the meeting and participants had the freedom to withdraw. Each participant was allowed to speak freely, and they were not in any way forced to respond to what they did not feel comfortable with. To enable and maintain their confidence and not crash their self-esteem, participant's responses will not be labelled as right or wrong and they were be assured that each response is of importance. As stated, participants chose the location for the interviews and this was a part of having their privacy respected, in addition, their identity in the study remains anonymous, rather codes and not their names were used. Consent was sought for each participant in the study nobody was forced to, and they were free to withdraw.

Transparency was practiced such that every necessary information that they needed to know will be told for example the rationale of the study, why they were chosen and that they were recorded for transcription's sake. They were fully aware of what is going on.

Limitation of research: This research work is limited to social workers in Nigeria .

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter comprises the overall presentation of the data obtained from the field in line with the research questions and also the analysis of the opinions of the respondents. The study embraced qualitative method through Key Participant interview; therefore, content analysis of the data was made while the responses of the participants were also transcribed into word document with the use of terminologies and quotations as implied in the findings.

## **4.1 THE PATTERNS AND UNDERLYING FACTORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN NIGERIA**

This section focuses on different kinds of sexual abuse in Nigeria as well as the factors which could be accounted for these behaviours either from the victim or the perpetrator.

### **Pattern of Sexual Abuse in Nigeria**

The information gathered on the field reveals that there are several patterns of sexual abused which could either applicable to a male or female based on the circumstances and situations which warrant the event. Sometimes when people are dealing with issue of sexual abuse, the attention of majority often relate it to children or underage experience but basically anybody can be sexually abused irrespective of age, gender and marital status. Any sexual activity which is forcefully inflicted on someone is sexual abuse; this also includes the use of force, lure, coercion and threat. However, the pattern of sexual abuse in Nigeria includes rape, molestation, sexual harassment, incest etc.

#### **a. Rape**

Rape is an unwanted sexual intercourse which is forcefully inflicted on some of either same sex or opposite sex. This indicate that just as female can be raped also a male can be a victim of rape. In this contemporary time, rape is most prevalent between adult and underage and the signs of rape can be mood swing, low esteem and stigma among others. A participant said:

*“rape is one of the sexual abuse that a lot of children have experienced in our country. Sometimes it happens between a very old man with a female teenager and sometimes it happens among youths which could be between male to female, female to male, female to female or male to male” (O A, Male).*

*“From our experience we notice that many of the perpetrators do seize the advantage of the victim or forcefully engage the victim to the act with threat” (O D, Female).*

#### **b. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs when an unwelcome sexual behaviour is been done to someone repeatedly contradicting wish of the particular individual. Moreover, sometimes sexual harassment can be physical, moral or emotional. Physical in the sense that there can be touching, hugging, kissing etc. and on the moral aspect of sexual abuse, the abuser in the act violates the human right of the person, devalue the social morale of the people and the ego of such individual is been dented. In addition, it can be in form of emotional experience when someone is been exposed to unwanted sexual information or communication that toy the

emotion of the victim which can possibly lead to emotional wounds, phobia, low esteem among other negative effects and apparently the female is mostly at the receiving ends of the occurrence.

*“Sexual harassment is a noticeable pattern of sexual abuse in Nigeria. This is form of hand touching, physical contact, exposing children to pornography, unwelcome kissing, hugging and so on. The children that are usually fall victim are those with disability, less privilege, orphans and those that are homeless” (A D, Male).*

### **c. Molestation**

This has to do with physical sexual assault especially in related to a minor who is believe that has no or little knowledge about what is being done to him or her. For example, there are cases of molestation in Nigeria which were attached to some popular celebrities and important personalities in the country. Molestation as a pattern of sexual abuse occur when the body (private parts) of an underage is been touched to arouse his or her sexual desire. Constitutionally, molestation is being recognised in Nigeria when it involves an underage child of less than 18 years. A participant claims that:

*“Any sexual touching or rough playing with a child that is less than 18 years in Nigeria is known as molestation and it is a punishable offense. For instance, we all heard of the molestation case of some popular celebrities in Nigeria in the recent time and we saw the responses of the general public because of the claims that it involves a minor” (A T, female).*

### **d. Incest**

Incest is a sexual abuse that is related to family member. This can be among siblings, the victim and uncle or any relative. Most of the children that are in this category are mostly incapacitated as some are said to be living under the control of the perpetrators.

*“Some children when they lost their parents, they may be forced to be living with their uncle or any relative and this in different occasion has led to sexual abuse. Surprisingly in this time we have heard of a father who sexually abuse his biological child threatening to harm such child if people got to know about it” (O A, Male).*

## **4.2 FACTORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN NIGERIA**

Concerning the underlying factors of sexual abuse in Nigeria, the study acknowledges that there are various factors which could be held responsible for the behaviours and these are varies one to another. The factors of sexual abuse as stated by the respondents are: environmental

factor, economical factor, technological factor, social factor (boredom and loneliness, peer group influence, indecent dressing/nudity) and health factor (physical disability of the victim, sexual disorder/dysfunction, and effects of substance and alcohol abuse).

### **Environmental Factor**

The environment is one of the determinants of sexual abuse because when the environment is not safe, it can give room for such activities and also there is possibility of forms of immorality to take place. Sexual abuse is more prevalent in rough and unsafe areas where thugs and hooligans are commonly found. Sometime rape take place in an uncompleted building or in the bush which means that environmental insecurity is a core factor of sexual abuse as claimed by one of the respondents.

*“We cannot do away with environmental factor on the issue of sexual abuse because an unsecure environment allows some of the victims to run into the problem. In the recent time we have responded to rape cases that took place in an uncompleted building as well as in the bush where the perpetrators were able to escape easily” (Ohio Patric, Male).*

### **Economical Factor**

The economic factor of sexual abuse reflects when a young child in a guest to get economic benefits engage in a relationship transaction with someone who would use her and pay off and at the end can lead to sexual abuse.

*“You know some of these female teenagers do engage is a relation with a man who is old enough to be their father just because of the money and luxuries which could follow it.” O E Male)*

### **Technological factor**

The impacts of technology cannot be neglected in a sexual abuse; as technology increases so also there are numerous negative effects of the internet for example. a person that have being exposed to pornography and other sex related activities would want to put all that have been learnt into practice.

*“Everything about sexual activities can be found on the internet which some of these children would search and will want to try such on any available opportunity” (A T, female).*

### **Social Factor**

The social underline factor of sexual abuse in Nigeria includes boredom and loneliness, peer group influence, indecent dressing/ nudity among others.

**i. Boredom and Loneliness**

A person who is always bored or lonely is vulnerable to sexual abuse because there is possibility of a perpetrator to walk in to such individual pretending to engage the person in a social activity to reduce her idleness whereas there might be negative thought of sexually abuse the person. One of the respondents says:

*“ with my experience as a social worker, I have seen a lady who was molested because she has nothing doing, she would be at home even when everybody has gone to work and through this the perpetrator have his way to her” (O E, Male).*

**ii. Peer Group Influence**

Peer group can also influence sexual abuse. For instance, some of the perpetrators learnt the behaviours from the groups where they belong to. Peer group influence has great effects on the behaviour of an individual and that is why it is always advisable to know monitor the kind of friends a child associate with and as well assess the behaviour of the child on a daily basis to know if there is any changes and whether such should be accepted or decline as a parent.

*“I can say most of the sexual abuser learn the behaviour from some of the friends they walk with and this has negative implication in our society such as raping or molesting an innocent young lady” (A D Male).*

*“Who should we blame for this? Anyway, I will encourage parents to be observant and monitoring changes in their children whether a male or female” (O A, Male).*

**iii. Indecent Dressing/Nudity**

Nudity or indecent dressing is a provocative dressing that show or reflect most part of the body. In this category, young ladies are most affected and are also at the receiving ends. This issue of indecent dressing has prompted a lot of rape, molestation and other forms of sexual assault. For example, a lady who exposes her private part of the body is vulnerable to sexual abused because the more the perpetrator who might be opposite sex has access to the victim, the more he responded to the act. This was affirmed in the statement of the participants.

*“One key factor to note is the abusive dressing mode of our female children nowadays. Imagine a lady who dresses half-naked might be raped or molested as a result of the uncontrollable desires of the opposite sex” (O D Female).*

*“You know that one is likely to be motivated by what seeing hence the perpetrator sometimes might not be able to resist it” (A T, female).*

### **Health Factor**

On the health factor of sexual abuse, the following subtheme can be considered: physical disability, sexual disorder/dysfunction, and effects of substance and alcohol abuse.

#### **a. Physical Disability**

The physically challenged children have in different occasion expose to sexual abuse as a result of their disability either to summon help, disclose the act or reveal the perpetrator. The physical disability can be blindness, dumb, deaf, cripple etc. Sometimes a blind person can be raped as a result of the deficiency to see the perpetrator and that is most category of physical disability that have overtime suffer from sexual abuse. The perpetrators do take the advantage of the victims’ disability to assault them sexually sometimes without being caught.

*“Most time we the social worker do pity the children with physical disability who equally fall victim of sexual abuse because of their health condition. In fact, we have several cases of sexual abuse that are related to physical disability.” (A D Female)*

#### **b. Sexual Disorder/Dysfunction**

Sexual disorder or dysfunction is the malfunctioning of the sexual organ of a person. The people with this category of health challenge severely found engaging in sexual abuse because of their inability to control their sexual urge. However, some of the people that have this problem are seeing raping or molesting an underage, minor or even sometimes little child to satisfy their sexual desires.

*“Those that have sexual disorder cannot control themselves and end up in raping and or molesting a young lady” (O P, Male).*

*“Immediately we receive a case that a very old man rapes a child sometimes as little as under 10 years, the first thing that comes to my mind is that perhaps the perpetrator is suffering of sexual dysfunction or the person has special agenda for the behaviour” (A D Male)*

#### **c. Effects of Substance and Alcohol Abuse**

Another noticeable factor of sexual abuse is the effects of substance and alcohol abuse. The study revealed that some of the perpetrators of such behaviour against children are either under the influence of substances or alcohol. A person who is high on alcoholic is liable to do



anything to satisfy his desires at all-time even when such action seems to has consequence. This is not only for male but also female. A respondent states that sexual disorder or dysfunction also contribute to large number of sexual abuse in the society. When an individual has sexual disorder, psychologically the sexual desires of the person will increase speedily and that alone can trigger abnormality in thinking and actions towards one another.

*“You know when someone is high on alcoholic, he or she is likely to be acting strangely and when such individual is free from intoxication, he would not believe the terrible offenses he or she might have committed” (O E, Male).*

### **4.3 THE AVAILABLE SERVICES PROVIDED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

The services provided for the children at welfare System in Nigeria are in different categories which can be accounted to the government, stakeholders, organizations, charity homes, foundations, religious bodies, individual philanthropist, and professional social workers and so on.

#### **Orphanage Home**

According to the statement of one of the professional social workers in the state; it was claimed that the government although not enough but is makes available some provision for the children in this category especially the orphans and less privileged among where it provides orphanage home for the handicaps and as well the abled children in order to be more relevant and useful in the society.

*“Government is trying by providing orphanage home where the needs of the children at child welfare system. This enables to revive the hope of the children especially the orphans” (O A, Male).*

#### **Social Amenities and Education Scholarship**

There are provisions of social amenities, security, supportive education system and also establishment of laws that protect the human rights of these children against sexual abuse and other forms of assaults or violations. Overtime some of these victims were able to overcome the stigma and go on with their lives.

*“Education scholarship are available for the victims of sexual abuse where they able to rise and continue their lives” (A F, Female).*

*“The children were not only accommodated but also there are provisions of their basic needs such as water, cloths, etc.” (O A, Male).*

### **Humanitarian Response**

In addition, the contribution of the NGOs and other private bodies and individuals cannot be overlooked because most times various foundation and organization rise to take-up the challenges that are facing by the children, they also supply them their daily needs such as foods, cloths, money, and other toiletries adequately. Overtime, the religious bodies do come for visitation, programmes and pray for the children and also donating different gift which are all parts of the available services for the children.

*“There are humanitarians services from various NGOs, Religious bodies and private individual to take care of the children at the welfare centre” (A D Male).*

### **Medical Attention**

Another service available is medical provision for the children and as well the victim of sexual abuse. The medical attention giving to the children allow them to undergo medical test which will help to know their health status and as well against imminent health problem that could emanate from the sexual assault. Concerning the issue of sexual abuse, when it gets to the police station or involving legal process, the first thing they ask is the medical report that will confirm the incident and as well give proof on the nature of the abuse. The medical report is more useful when the perpetrator was not caught in the act but maybe thereafter or after the time has passed. However, the medical provisions to a large extent are taking care off by the various NGOs such as Mirabelle Centre and other bodies in an effort to keep the hope of the children alive.

*“Let me say medical attention for the children is an important programme for the children at welfare service. This is to subject any form of sickness or health challenges to control by Doctors and Nurses that are made available” (O A, Male).*

*“The medical service for the children is free of charge having been take care by NGOs and other concern bodies” (O E Male).*

### **Security Provision**

The police play an important role in ensuring that the cases of sexual abuse or assault as well as molestation are thoroughly investigated to the root of the matter. Likewise, when an issue like that happen and do not want people to impose their corporal torture and jungle justice,

therefore, the police engage in such situation, So, when such incident happen the first thing is to make formal report that a child has been sexually abused and then the police take over the investigation, arrest and charge the perpetrator to court for legal prosecution.

*“The police and other civil security are always available to respond to any need in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children” (O A, Male).*

#### **4.4 THE ROLES OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROVIDING SERVICES FOR THE CHILDREN THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ABUSE IN NIGERIA**

This objective of the study explains the contributing roles of the social workers in providing services to the children who are victims of sexual abuse in Nigeria. However, this phase includes initial assessment, planning and contracting, statutory intervention, referrals, evaluation and termination.

##### **Initial Assessment**

Participating social workers discussed their role when working with sexually abused children during the initial assessment phase. This includes gathering information, circumstances of the abuse, the experience of abuse, adherence to time frames, and assessing the child’s wellbeing and risks.

##### **1. Gathering Information**

According to Butler and Roberts (2004) the development of an intervention plan is a course of action, which includes the process of gathering, categorizing, organizing and analysing information. In addition, gathering information is all activities that are done to know the detail of where, when and how the event take place and sometime it could emanate from referrals. Significant others and the referring agent could also provide information that will help with the initial assessment. Some of the participants said that:

*“Referrals are usually telephonic and from a diverse number of service providers including, Nigerian Police Force [NPF], clinics and Magistrate courts, as well as community members and walk-ins” (O D, Female)*

*“In order to get information, I requested panel meetings with the initial case manager and other colleagues who were involved in the case” (O A Male).*

*“I will need the information from the police, I will need information from the Doctor as well, to confirm that „the perpetrator indeed abused the child” (A F, Female).*

The entry-point for social work services is either through self-referral or secondary sources. In either instance, the informant assists in shedding light on the incident and the assessment of the child victim's circumstances. Moreover, in gathering information, social workers ensure that they interview all sources, including the child regarding incident. The information gathered assists in making the initial assessment and further intervention plans with, and for, the child. During the initial assessment, one of the social workers indicated that she utilizes various techniques and tools to gather information from the child victims.

*“Asking children to draw, so that they could depict exactly how they are feeling. I could have seen from the onset that this is not just about touching...that penetration took place and more than once. Because for her to draw that picture, it says, a small child, without being abused would not have known the private parts of the abuser” (O A Male).*

The focus is on the child as the primary client. In this instance, the social worker interviews the child to get their perspective on the incident. However, the social worker is not able to interpret what the child reveals through the drawing, as O A, Male indicated that she is not skilled in analysing the drawing.

## **2. Circumstances of the Abuse**

During the initial assessment phase, social workers assess the circumstances that led to the sexual abuse. The following examples illustrate the circumstances of the abuse. These include unemployment, mother's live-in boyfriend, nomadic life styles, living with non-family members, scant parental supervision and parental denial, and strangers accessing children in the neighbourhood and in their home.

*“There was a 15 year old child abused by the mother's boyfriend; the mother has been staying with this man for 10 years. And apparently the boyfriend has been inappropriately touching the child” (O E, Male).*

*“The mother led a nomadic lifestyle. The children were placed in foster care with a gay couple the youngest child portrayed explicit sexual behaviour and touched other children inappropriately” (A T, female).*

*“The child was staying with a male family friend and his partner; he had a sexual relationship with the child. She was only fourteen years, it was sexual abuse, and it was statutory rape” (O D, Female).*

The role of the social workers is such that they have to gather information in order to evaluate the circumstances that led to sexual abuse, such as, safety of the child's environment, the caregiver's ability to care for and protect the child concerned. This evaluation will assist the social worker to draft an intervention plan.

### **3. The Experience of Abuse**

The initial assessment also focuses on dimensions of the actual experience of sexual abuse, namely the child safety, age of the child, nature of the abuse and proximity of the perpetrator to the child.

*"Firstly, after receiving a referral you want to find out where the child is? How old is the child? What kind of abuse is it?"* (A F, Female).

*"Gather information of what happened to the child is very important to determine the next step"* (O A Male).

*"Before placement is to assess the safety of the child, how far the perpetrator has been living around the child's home, how does the perpetrator access the child?"* (O D Female).

However, social workers do conduct risk assessment in order to ascertain the safety of the child concerned from further abuse and possible intimidation by the perpetrator.

### **4. Timeframe for Initial Assessment**

Butler and Roberts (2004) propose that a timeframe of seven working days is allocated to the initial assessment. Participants indicated that they gather information, intervene and assess concurrently to safeguard the child. Statutory intervention is used to protect the child prior to a comprehensive assessment.

*"Some cases you "jump in the ship" then do something at that moment"* (A D Male).

*"Conduct further investigations when you are sure that the child is safe"* (A D Male).

*"However, mostly in child abuse cases are not something that you will come back to the office and plan"* (A D, Male).

Social workers consider child sexual abuse as critical. Consequently, the timeframe for initial assessment is reduced to one day. This ensures the child's safety.

### **5. Risk Assessment**

The aim of risk assessment is to take care that the child is not exposed to the same environment that resulted in the sexual abuse. The focus then is on assessing the family dynamics and caregiver's perception of the child's sexual abuse. The social workers' role will also be to retrieve information about the perpetrator and his influence in the family's life. Participants related that they assess the child's possible exposure to danger; the relationship between perpetrator and victim, circumstances of the incident, presence or lack of parental protection, and the family's perception of the child's ordeal. Social workers said the following on what they do to determine this:

*"How does the perpetrator access the child?"* (O D, Female).

*"How is the perpetrator related to the child?"* (O D Female).

*"Is the perpetrator living with the child at home?"* (O P, Male).

*"Where is the perpetrator at that moment?"* (A D Male).

*"Is the perpetrator someone who was looking after the child?"* (O P, Male).

*"Where did it happen, how and why?"* (O D Female).

*"If the incident happened during the day, I assess if there is parenting skills lacking from the mother"* O E, Male).

The relationship between the child concerned, the perpetrator and the caregiver's ability to care for the child, forms basis for risk assessment. These factors determine the level of risk that the child might be in, and the intervention plan. That is, whether the child will be removed into a place of temporary safe care or not.

Participants shared insights regarding families' perceptions of the children's sexual abuse experience. Family members felt the child-victim was creating difficulties for the family by reporting the sexual abuse. The child-victim was also blamed by the family for the arrest of the perpetrator, who is a family member. Furthermore, the child-victim was blamed for wanting to destroy a mother's happiness and actively wanting sex. Consequently, the child victim is blamed for the perpetrator's punishment.

*"She was afraid, confused, she does not even understand why the mother does not believe her. It is like, you know, her whole world was just like, turned around. She was staying with this mother and this thing was happening. She has been telling her mother all these years"* (A F, Female).

*“The whole family feels that the child is causing problems for them (A T, female).*

*“Because, apparently, the uncle was the one who was the bread-winner in that family. He was the one who was supporting them financially. So, once he was arrested there was an issue” (A F, Female).*

The social workers found that depending on the perpetrator’s relationship to the child concerned and role in the family, the former will be blamed for the abuse they endured; thereby isolating the child from concerned from the family. The consequence of family members’ perceptions of the child’s sexual abuse experience is that the child is begrudged, emotionally abandoned and unsupported in the therapeutic process.

*“So what happened is that the family started to have this resentment towards the child” (A F Female).*

*“So, in such situations then they won’t even support that child” (O E Male).*

*“My visit to the family and realizing that there was no-support that the child was getting and in fact was subjected to more abuse, because, the child was visiting the same uncle that was alleged to have raped her” (A F, Female).*

In conducting risk assessment, social workers focus on the child’s safety and support within the family. Effective social work interventions are compromised in instances where family members do not support child victims of sexual abuse.

## **6. Crisis Intervention**

Child sexual abuse is considered a crisis and accordingly this initial assessment phase has to guarantee the child’s safety. Tasks of crisis intervention in this phase consist of opening a criminal case and statutory intervention. One participant indicated that sexual abuse required urgent attention.

*“We do crisis intervention when the family come to report that the child has been sexually abused or assaulted. One needs to focus mainly on the victim” (A T, female).*

Social workers intervene with, and prioritise, sexual abuse cases with the objective of safeguarding the child.

### **a. Opening of Criminal Case**

In the initial assessment with the child, the social worker has to address a number of aspects with the caregiver and child. It should, e.g., be established whether the abuse has been reported to the Police. If no criminal case is open, social workers educate parents about the legal implication from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In addition, social workers are obliged to report the matter of sexual abuse to the relevant authorities in instances where parents/ caregivers/guardians do not do so.

In instances where the social worker has to open a criminal case, the case file is reallocated to another social worker to intervene further.

Participants indicated that they inform the parents and child of the role of the police and, in some instances, they act on behalf of parents to safeguard the child. They open or facilitate the opening of a criminal case against the perpetrator.

*“We often go to the police station to open a case, the police will take you to the District Surgeon, where an examination is conducted and a form is filled; so, my role was minimal”* (O A Male).

*“Because they said the child was too young to open the case, so I opened a criminal case against the uncle on her behalf”* (A F Female).

#### **b. Statutory Intervention during Initial Assessment**

Social workers may also render statutory intervention during this phase because the child’s safety and wellbeing should be paramount. This involves the statutory removal of the sexually abused child from the environment. Social workers remove the children from their familiar environments as a precaution against further abuse. This could be done immediately after disclosure of sexual abuse in line with the Children Act as laid by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This occurs in cases where the abuse happened within the family, where the perpetrator is a family member or the child’s disclosure of sexual abuse is not believed by the family.

*“If the child is abused by the parent, you cannot leave the child in that situation”* (O E Male).

*“So, we have to remove the child if the perpetrator is part of the family”* (O P, Male)

Safeguarding of a child is paramount when the perpetrator is a family member. This ensures that the child does not encounter perpetual sexual abuse in the same environment. Participants fulfil their statutory role by removing the child to a suitable alternative care facility wherein particular circumstances and needs are catered to.



*“Finding a suitable placement for the child in terms of other services, professionals’ assessment will ensure that the child gets psychotherapeutic services”* (O E Male).

*“My role was to make sure that the child is getting proper care”* (O A Male).

After the child is suitably placed, social workers should plan and contract for on-going intervention.

### **Planning/Contracting**

Participants indicated that it was difficult to plan and contract services with children and their families for two reasons. First, parents do not take the necessary steps to ensure children’s safety and do not value the therapeutic process. Second, participants identified their workload as a hindrance to planning and contracting their services.

*“I had an appointment with her [biological mother] to come and see me so that I could take her to the detectives to open a case. She never pitched, when I contacted her, she said she will go. At the end of the day, unfortunately the case was never opened”* (O E Male).

*“Families do not consider sexual abuse as a criminal offence and are not supportive of the therapeutic process”* (A F Female).

*“So, it is difficult to say you will make a follow-up because sometimes you can say „I am going to see the child”, only to find that there are other things that are happening and you need to postpone. That alone will add more trauma to the child, to say “I won’t be seeing you rather than I will be seeing you”* (O E Male).

Social workers work in a psycho-social context that is not often supportive of best practices in protecting children exposed to sexual abuse. However, social workers do provide on-going intervention once the child is placed in care.

### **On-going Intervention**

Once the child is in a place of safety, social workers fulfil further responsibilities. Participants indicated that they ensure that the child receives significant benefits from alternative care.

*“So, my role was to make sure that where the child is, the child is getting appropriate service”* (O P, Male).

Participants take on the role of being a support system to children concerned in cases where the parents are not supportive. This role includes transporting the child to and from therapeutic

sessions; home visitations and informal contacts with the child concerned. Social support and available resources contribute to the development of a resilient child

*“So, I was the one who was responsible for transporting the child to and from the place of safety” (A F, Female).*

*“Ensure that the child participates fully in the therapeutic process with at specific assigned clinic” (A D, Male).*

*“When I am in the office, I will visit them and see them for a few minutes” (A D, Male).*

Participants keep contact with the children concerned for continuous evaluation of their progress; also, to ensure that the children participate fully in the therapeutic process. In addition, participants pointed out that they also try and trace extended family members to encourage contact between child and family.

*“When we send a child to an institution, with me in particular, that will be after I have tried looking for family members who would care for that particular child” (O P Male).*

*“It (placement) will help in the healing process of the child and it will be accessible to other people, like parents of the child” (A D Male).*

Participants explore placements that are near the child victim’s environment first, in order to avoid uprooting the child. Its accessibility by the child’s support system is important for continued contact between the child and the caregivers.

Finally, participating social workers revealed that they maintain contact with other professionals in preparation for the child’s reunification with the family and community.

*“I will still keep contact with the child and social worker at the children’s home or clinic. This is important as the child will have to come back to the community after all the intervention” (O P Male).*

Participants facilitate contact between children concerned, temporary place of care and family in preparation for re-unification. Social workers avoid rendering therapeutic services by linking children with other resources that renders the same service. They choose to support the children concerned economically and socially.

## **Referrals**

Participating social workers said that they refer abused children for therapeutic interventions.

*“I will refer the victim to people who will help him or her” (A T, female).*

*“We will refer for long-term psycho-therapy. We like not to do it ourselves”* (O A Male).

Children concerned are informed of the referral for therapeutic services. Participants revealed a number of reasons for referring children to other organisations for therapeutic intervention. Participants refer the child to ensure that the child is receiving proper professional intervention and, due to lack of confidence in their competency, to render therapeutic services.

*“I think for me was to facilitate and to make sure that the child is getting the best help because that was something that I could not provide”* (A D, Male).

*“I am at a stage where I have three sessions with the child or four sessions with this client and I feel that I am not helping. I would refer, but before doing that, I would speak to my client”* (O P, Male).

Social workers refer children to other organisations for therapeutic services that they can render. As a result, children have to relate the incident to several social workers before receiving therapeutic services. This process thus delays children from accessing supportive counselling. As the focus is more on statutory intervention, in order to place the child in temporary safe care.

### **Evaluation Activity**

Evaluation is a process that happens throughout the intervention process. Its aim is to evaluate the positive lessons, problem solving throughout the intervention and client’s readiness for termination. It also focuses on exploring the mechanisms to maintain change and skills learnt (Kantrowitz & Okun, 2008).

Participants evaluated the intervention process by continuously communicating with social workers in alternative care, progress of child, and family’s support and preparedness to be reunited with the child.

*“But then with the panel, as the social worker, you get to know what is happening with the child. The state of his or her progress at school; is she doing well, or is she getting counselling for the abuse?”* (O D Female).

*“That is why I mentioned the re-unification and supervision cases, when are they visiting the child, and how many times per day?”* (O A, Male).

Participating social workers communicate with both the temporary safe care, child concerned and family on the progress of the child regarding the therapeutic process. Social workers do not use credible assessment tools, such as the Ecomaps and Genomaps, to evaluate the child’s

healing process. They rely on feedback received from social workers and social service professionals in alternative care, and from family members, in planning for further intervention.

### **Termination**

Participants indicated that they do not terminate services with the children concerned and their families. One participant who was supervising a social work student stated that the student stopped to render services as there was another organization involved. The participant said the following:

*“But when she realized that a Clinic was rendering services that she was rendering, she refrained from rendering the service”* (O E, Male).

Termination of services to the children concerned was an ethical decision. However, the same family continued to receive services from both the Department of Health and Social Development and a Clinic, instead of one organisation. Participants further stated that they do not terminate services with the children and their families in cases where there was a referral and the child moved to another area.

*“So, I did not terminate after referral”* (A F Female).

*“I could not be part of the case for long, because they moved to another area at that time.” So, I am unable to follow it up”* (O A Male).

Participating social workers do not terminate their services with clients due to limited role clarification in terms of their scope of work, as well as the movement of children and their families.

### **Follow-Up**

Participants indicated that they do follow-up on children’s therapeutic progress in alternative care.

*“Even the social worker from the place of safety will contact me. We will have these panel discussions to say how this child is coping now, at home and or in school”* (A F Female).

Participants continuously communicate with social workers from institutions and other organisations to assess the child victim’s healing process. Furthermore, participants indicated that they do follow up on the children’ and family’s preparedness for re-unification.

*“I still keep contact with the child and social worker at the children’s home. This is important as the child will have to come back to the community after all the intervention”* (O A Male).

*“After the child was removed, I was preparing for re-unification process so that the child does not stay in a place of safety for a long time” (A F Female).*

However, certain Participating social workers indicated that they do not follow up on the placed child’s Progress. One participant, however, highlighted that it is important for follow-ups to be conducted.

*“Children are coming to the system and go, and we do not make follow-up to check how they are doing” (O D, Female).*

*“I think that it should be our role and priority because the child has to be reintegrated back in to the community, the family, we need to do that (reunification). But unfortunately for whatever reason we do not do that” (O D Female).*

Although social workers do not render therapeutic services, they have the best interest of the children concerned at heart. Their commitment is evident in that they follow up on the children’s therapeutic services with the aim of facilitating reunification process. However, there are those who do not see follow-ups as necessary step to ensure that the victims are properly fixed back to the society.

Based on the result of the findings, in respect to the stated research objectives in the study it was revealed from the key informant interview with the professional social workers as they stated that the pattern of sexual abuse perpetrated among young children which includes rape *“rape is one of the sexual abuses that a lot of children have experienced in our country. Sometimes it happens between a very old man with a female teenager and sometimes it happens among youths which could be between male to female, female to male, female to female or male to male”*. This is in line with study by Abeidet al. (2014) found that rape is seldom reported due to a number of hurdles that encourage acceptance and non-disclosure of sexual assault. Rape of a kid by a known person or relative was typically not reported to authorities, as revealing it was viewed as jeopardizing the family's dignity and reputation. As a result of this, among other things, the country's persistent occurrences of girl-child sexual abuse are increasing.

They went further to talk about the sexual harassment as one of the patterns of sexual abuse observed by the social workers. They reported that *“Sexual harassment is a noticeable pattern of sexual abuse in Nigeria. This is form of hand touching, physical contact, exposing children to pornography, unwelcome kissing, hugging and so on. The children that are usually fall victim are those with disability, less privilege, orphans and those that are homeless”* Kayode

(2019), found that involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend or is unable to consent to, or that the child is developmentally incapable of consenting to, or that violates a society's laws or social taboos. This means that sexual abuse of children is a violation of social norms. Also, Effa Chukwuma (2018) noted that the death incident sparked a social media clamor for justice for the abused. To solve the matter, Nigerian legislators are advocating for the death sentence for rape in the future. The penalty, it is hoped, would serve as a deterrent to abusers. may face the death penalty for child sexual abuse.

Molestation as the type and pattern of sexual abuse in form of physical sexual assault especially in related to a minor who is believe that has no or little knowledge about what is being done to him or her. They revealed that *“Any sexual touching or rough playing with a child that is less than 18 years in Nigeria is known as molestation and it is a punishable offense. For instance, we all heard of the molestation case of some popular celebrities in Nigeria in the recent time and we saw the responses of the general public because of the claims that it involves a minor”*. This supports the study by Egbejule (2016) detailed the case of Imade, a seven-year-old girl who was sexually molested by her teacher. According to the girl, the teacher enticed her with misleading words and provided her with a small amount of money.

Incest was revealed as a pattern of sexual abuse by revealing that *“Some children when they lost their parents, they may be forced to be living with their uncle or any relative and this in different occasion has led to sexual abuse. Surprisingly in this time we have heard of a father who sexually abuse his biological child threatening to harm such child if people got to know about it”*.

As regards those factors of sexual abuse in Nigeria, it was acknowledged in the study that there are various factors which could be held responsible for the behaviours and these are varies one to another. The factors of sexual abuse as stated by the respondents are: environmental factor, economical factor, technological factor, social factor (boredom and loneliness, peer group influence, indecent dressing/nudity) and health factor (physical disability of the victim, sexual disorder/dysfunction, and effects of substance and alcohol abuse).

*“We cannot do away with environmental factor on the issue of sexual abuse because an unsecure environment allows some of the victims to run into the problem. In the recent time we have responded to rape cases that took place in an uncompleted building as well as in the bush where the perpetrators were able to escape easily”*

*“some of these female teenagers do engage in a relation with a man who is old enough to be their father just because of the money and luxuries which could follow it.”*

*“Everything about sexual activities can be found on the internet which some of these children would search and will want to try such on any available opportunity”*

Based on the result of the findings some of the social factors includes boredom and Loneliness “*with my experience as a social worker, I have seen a lady who was molested because she has nothing doing, she would be at home even when everybody has gone to work and through this the perpetrator have his way to her”.*

Peer Group Influence *“I can say most of the sexual abuser learn the behaviour from some of the friends they walk with and this has negative implication in our society such as raping or molesting an innocent young lady”*

*“Who should we blame for this? Anyway, I will encourage parents to be observant and monitoring changes in their children whether a male or female”.*

Indecent Dressing/Nudity

*“One key factor to note is the abusive dressing mode of our female children nowadays. Imagine a lady who dresses half-naked might be raped or molested as a result of the uncontrollable desires of the opposite sex”.*

Also, health factors such as physical disability was also one of the factors responsible for sexual abuse among children. The perpetrator usually take advantage of the physically challenged children as they know that these children were helpless. *“Most time we the social worker do pity the children with physical disability who equally fall victim of sexual abuse because of their health condition. In fact, we have several cases of sexual abuse that are related to physical disability.”*

Sexual disorder or dysfunction is the malfunctioning of the sexual organ of a person. The people with this category of health challenge severely found engaging in sexual abuse because of their inability to control their sexual urge. *“Those that have sexual disorder cannot control themselves and end up in raping and or molesting a young lady”* In line with study by Chiazor et al. (2016), most teenagers attempt sex experimentation by raping to maintain their relevance and the approval of their peers. Children who receive more parental influence are more likely to follow socially acceptable sexual behaviour than children who receive more peer influence. In this scenario, parents should attempt to educate their children about sexual education at home before their peers do so outside the home.

Another noticeable factor of sexual abuse is the effects of substance and alcohol abuse. The study revealed that some of the perpetrators of such behaviour against children are either under the influence of substances or alcohol. The social workers has this to say *“You know when someone is high on alcoholic, he or she is likely to be acting strangely and when such individual is free from intoxication, he would not believe the terrible offenses he or she might have committed”* Ibenegbu, (2018) found that alcohol and substance abuse is one of the factors responsible for sexual abuse.

Furthermore, based on the services provided for the children at welfare System in Nigeria are in different categories which can be accounted to the government, stakeholders, organizations, charity homes, foundations, religious bodies, individual philanthropist, and professional social workers and so on. These includes orphanage home, social amenities and education scholarship, humanitarian response, medical attention and security provision

On this note, it was revealed that the police play an important role in ensuring that the cases of sexual abuse or assault as well as molestation are thoroughly investigated to the root of the matter. This is in line with study by Orjinmo (2020) claimed that many Nigerians do not believe in a justice system; they believe it makes it difficult to convict convicted rapists and condemns women who are sexual harassment victims. He added that it is not unusual for rape to go unreported in Nigeria. Some victims and their families chose not to report cases to authorities out of fear of stigma, police extortion, and a lack of confidence in the judicial process. Also, Famumng (2017) who found that, despite the aforementioned numbers and the Nigerian penal code, just 18 individuals have ever been convicted of rape in the Nigerian legal system. This suggests impunity on the side of Nigerian law, which has resulted in an increase in female-on-female sexual abuse.

In addition, the result of the finding revealed the contributing roles of the social workers in providing services to the children who are victims of sexual abuse in Nigeria, where the participating social workers in discussing their role when working with sexually abused children during the initial assessment phase by gathering information, circumstances of the abuse, the experience of abuse, adherence to time frames, and assessing the child’s wellbeing and risks.

Also, gathering information is all activities that are done to know the detail of where, when and how the event take place and sometime it could emanate from referrals. Significant others and the referring agent could also provide information that will help with the initial assessment.



Some of the participants said that: *“Referrals are usually telephonic and from a diverse number of service providers including, Nigerian Police Force [NPF], clinics and Magistrate courts, as well as community members and walk-ins”*

*“In order to get information, I requested panel meetings with the initial case manager and other colleagues who were involved in the case”*

The entry-point for social work services is either through self-referral or secondary sources. In either instance, the informant assists in shedding light on the incident and the assessment of the child victim’s circumstances. Moreover, in gathering information, social workers ensure that they interview all sources, including the child regarding incident. The information gathered assists in making the initial assessment and further intervention plans with, and for, the child. During the initial assessment, one of the social workers indicated that she utilizes various techniques and tools to gather information from the child victims.

*“Asking children to draw, so that they could depict exactly how they are feeling. I could have seen from the onset that this is not just about touching...that penetration took place and more than once. Because for her to draw that picture, it says, a small child, without being abused would not have known the private parts of the abuser”.*

The focus is on the child as the primary client. In this instance, the social worker interviews the child to get their perspective on the incident. However, the social worker is not able to interpret what the child reveals through the drawing, as indicated that she is not skilled in analysing the drawing.

More so, during the initial assessment phase, social workers assess the circumstances that led to the sexual abuse. *“The mother led a nomadic lifestyle. The children were placed in foster care with a gay couple the youngest child portrayed explicit sexual behaviour and touched other children inappropriately”*

*“The child was staying with a male family friend and his partner; he had a sexual relationship with the child. She was only fourteen years, it was sexual abuse, and it was statutory rape”*

The role of the social workers is such that they have to gather information in order to evaluate the circumstances that led to sexual abuse, such as, safety of the child’s environment, the caregiver’s ability to care for and protect the child concerned. This evaluation will assist the social worker to draft an intervention plan.

The experience of sexual abuse, such as the child safety, age of the child, nature of the abuse and proximity of the perpetrator to the child.

*“Gather information of what happened to the child is very important to determine the next step”*

*“Before placement is to assess the safety of the child, how far the perpetrator has been living around the child’s home, how does the perpetrator access the child?”*

However, social workers do conduct risk assessment in order to ascertain the safety of the child concerned from further abuse and possible intimidation by the perpetrator.

The timeframe for initial assessment is one of the key factors in the roles of the social workers. Based on the interview, the social worker revealed that

*“Some cases you “jump in the ship” then do something at that moment”*

*“Conduct further investigations when you are sure that the child is safe”*

Social workers consider child sexual abuse as critical. Consequently, the timeframe for initial assessment is reduced to one day in order to ensure the child’s safety.

From the result of the findings, on the risk assessment the social workers’ role will also be to retrieve information about the perpetrator and his influence in the family’s life. Participants related that they assess the child’s possible exposure to danger; the relationship between perpetrator and victim, circumstances of the incident, presence or lack of parental protection, and the family’s perception of the child’s ordeal. Social workers said the following on what they do to determine this:

*“How does the perpetrator access the child?” “How is the perpetrator related to the child?”*

*“Is the perpetrator living with the child at home?”*

*“Is the perpetrator someone who was looking after the child”*

The relationship between the child concerned, the perpetrator and the caregiver’s ability to care for the child, forms basis for risk assessment. These factors determine the level of risk that the child might be in, and the intervention plan. That is, whether the child will be removed into a place of temporary safe care or not.

Participants shared insights regarding families’ perceptions of the children’s sexual abuse experience. Family members felt the child-victim was creating difficulties for the family by reporting the sexual abuse. The child-victim was also blamed by the family for the arrest of the

perpetrator, who is a family member. Furthermore, the child-victim was blamed for wanting to destroy a mother's happiness and actively wanting sex. Consequently, the child victim is blamed for the perpetrator's punishment.

*"She was afraid, confused, she does not even understand why the mother does not believe her. It is like, you know, her whole world was just like, turned around. She was staying with this mother and this thing was happening. She has been telling her mother all these years*

*"The whole family feels that the child is causing problems for them*

The social workers found that depending on the perpetrator's relationship to the child concerned and role in the family, the former will be blamed for the abuse they endured; thereby isolating the child from concerned from the family. The consequence of family members' perceptions of the child's sexual abuse experience is that the child is begrudged, emotionally abandoned and unsupported in the therapeutic process.

*"My visit to the family and realizing that there was no-support that the child was getting and in fact was subjected to more abuse, because, the child was visiting the same uncle that was alleged to have raped her"*

Effective social work interventions are compromised in instances where family members do not support child victims of sexual abuse.

Moreso, tasks of crisis intervention in this phase consist of opening a criminal case and statutory intervention. One participant indicated that sexual abuse required urgent attention.

Social workers intervene with, and prioritise, sexual abuse cases with the objective of safeguarding the child by doing the following opening of criminal case, statutory intervention during initial assessment, planning/contracting, on-going intervention, referrals evaluation activity, termination, follow-up

Although social workers do not render therapeutic services, they have the best interest of the children concerned at heart. Their commitment is evident in that they follow up on the children's therapeutic services with the aim of facilitating reunification process. However, there are those who do not see follow-ups as necessary step to ensure that the victims are properly fixed back to the society.

The study investigated the roles of social workers in dealing with child sexual abuse in Nigeria Based on the results of the findings, it was concluded that some theoretical presumptions of child's sexual abuse and its impact on child development such as feminist theory of sexual

abuse which suggested that Nigeria has been identified as a rape-supportive society, with the dynamic interaction of current social systems, socialization, and conventional attitudes favouring gender inequality. Masculinity becomes synonymous with these traits of power and authority. Structural forces in Nigerian society have also been blamed for the development of gendered norms and disparities associated with the idea of men as active and controlling, while women are passive and helpless.

The study examined patterns and underlying factors of child abuse in Nigeria. This study investigated the roles of social workers in dealing with cases of children and youths who have been victims of sexual violence in Nigeria. The causes and consequences of the social problem were examined, and ultimately, the role of social workers' in helping out these kinds of situations in Nigeria. This study examined various measures that can be put in place to make their roles and interventions, much easier to achieve.

This study reveals that most of the children and youths who are sexually abused, are abused by close relatives or people who share common relations with them. They are always at the mercy of other people for their survival in the society, due to insensitivity and lack of political will on the part of those at the helm of affairs at the state level and federal level in improving lives of the people. It is the duty and responsibilities of government to ameliorate human condition in the society and facilitate smoothly, it behoves on them to map out strategy and put measures in place to ensure that all population in the society are taken care of. The government has the role of providing an enabling environment for all and sundry in the society and ensure that the social condition is favorable to everybody in the society especially the vulnerable groups in the society. However, discharging social justice and ensuring that there is social development in the society, hence, the role of social workers in the societal development.

This study was able to show that victims of sexual violence require special attention and special intervention which social workers can provide. Social workers who participated in this study were able to explain the antecedents of the interventions, working as case managers and constant check up on victims. The informants agreed that social workers still require a great deal of support to enhance their work life on the field. They all agreed that the persistence of sexual violence amongst children and youths in the region poses a threat to social cohesion in the region because the children have a high tendency to go into depression which affects their mental health and become criminal in the future because of their exposure to unwholesome lifestyles on the street. The informants also think that the prevalence of the community and family members judging and traumatizing among other social problems could be attributable to the absence of social

services delivered by social workers in a society. That is, not having social workers operating fully in the region could be the reason the problem persists.

The informants reveal that environmental, hereditary and spiritual factor is blamed especially as the factor that makes people commit such Heinous crimes. It was agreed by all the informants that children and youths have fundamental human rights but they are not enjoying it because the government and community are failing in letting the judiciary from dealing with such perpetrators. Bribing of families, judges just to close the cases after offenders have been charge to court providing for the less privilege in the society. Lastly, the informants believe that there is solution to them stepping up in their roles and doing more for children and youths who have suffered sexual violence in the country, thus, they provided myriads of steps and measure that can be taken to improve life of vulnerable groups in the society especially children and youths. Another daring thing is the issue of child marriage to children as low as eight years old, such law should be scrapped because this is a major trend for sexual violence in the northern part of Nigeria.

Therefore, this study concludes on the premise that the role of social workers is too important and great to be neglected in helping children and youths who have experienced sexual violence There is need for state governments to liaise the more the assistance and intervention of social workers if they really desire to curtail the cases of sexual violence among children and youth in the country. Thus, the following step or measures were offered by informants in order to improve life of vulnerable groups (children and youth in the society, social workers coming together in mounting pressure on the government to empower social workers in dealing with the problem. It was also encouraged that there should be awareness to children and youths about the importance of not allowing themselves to be violated, educate their parent, the community leaders, the religious leaders and other stakeholders in the society should not be too quick in judging, dissuading or blaming children and youths when they attempt to voice out what has happened to them. It was also believed that, the problem can be solved by formed advocacy for the presence of social workers in both government and private schools coalition for child right advocacy In addition, staging of constant public campaign for the state to enact child rights law and enacting of safeguarding policies for all states and adoption of social media tools etc. Another respondent offered that, staging a walk to the national assembly for the intervention of social workers in tackling the problem and the importance of social workers providing social services to all vulnerable groups in the society. It was also advised that, social workers should be strong in spreading information on the dangers of the persistence sexual violence rate in children and youth in the society in the society. Social workers working closely

with families to monitor progress of children and ensure that they have safe and accommodating home. Lastly, it was said that, stringent policies should be formulated to discourage this phenomenon, Proper sensitization and education should commence regarding the effects of this problems, Social Workers should be properly engaged in order to use the various social work methods- namely; case work, Group work, Community development, Social research, Social action and Social welfare administration to provide lasting solutions to these problems.

## 5.1 CONCLUSION

The study investigated the roles of social workers in dealing with child sexual abuse in Nigeria. Based on the results of the findings, it was concluded that

1. Some theoretical presumptions of child's sexual abuse and its impact on child development such as feminist theory of sexual abuse which suggested that Nigeria has been identified as a rape-supportive society, with the dynamic interaction of current social systems, socialization, and conventional attitudes favouring gender inequality. Masculinity becomes synonymous with these traits of power and authority. Structural forces in Nigerian society have also been blamed for the development of gendered norms and disparities associated with the idea of men as active and controlling, while women are passive and helpless.
2. The study examined patterns and underlying factors of child abuse in Nigeria. It was revealed from the study that rape, molestation, sexual harassment and incest were the prevailing patterns of child abuse in Nigeria. Apparently, environmental factor, economical factor, technological factor, social factor (boredom and loneliness, peer group influence, indecent dressing/nudity) and health factor (physical disability of the victim, sexual disorder/dysfunction, and effects of substance and alcohol abuse) were the underlying factors of child abuse in Nigeria.
3. Objective three investigated the roles of social workers on the services for children experiencing sexual abuse. It was concluded from the interview generated from the social worker that the social workers play an important role by doing some social workers interventions which includes initial assessment that involves gathering of information from the victim, circumstances of the abuse, the experience of abuse, timeframe for initial assessment, risk assessment, crisis intervention, opening of criminal case planning and contracting, statutory intervention, referrals, evaluation, termination and follow-up on any cases of child abuse.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATION

On the subject of the Roles of Social workers in Sexual violence towards children and youths prevalence in the Nigeria, is a problem that can be solve. Therefore, based on findings of this study as observed from the responses of the informants (social workers); the following recommendations were offered:

1. The government of state governments in the country and the federal government should wake up to the realization of the role of social workers in tackling problem of sexual violence among children and youths and empower them to ensure that such cases are curtailed and offender are brought to book completely ,the status quo of no one is above the law should be maintained and upheld and children and youths lives and wellbeing are prioritized Social workers should be allowed to perform their role in dealing with youths because of their vulnerability state, rather than living them in the hands of just anybody.
2. Effort should be put in place by the government and community to discourage such acts of violence to children and youths. This is attainable when the government set up and fund social service department or commission to be handled by trained social workers. The programs and events to be carried out in the commission should be left in the hands of professional and experienced social workers.
3. Social worker should be attached to every unit of the government especially those responsible for making social programs and intervention policies. Also, the government should identify social workers and their field of interest; allocate them to different vulnerable groups in the states and local governments, because it is dangerous not to have social workers in place in strategic parts of the country.
4. The government should liaise with the social workers by organizing seminars, conference, workshops and other social gatherings to educate and enlighten the populace on the negative implication of taking advantage of vulnerable groups like children and youths. The government should sanction those who rape and sexually molest Most importantly, the government and social workers operating in the rural places should enlighten and educate children and youth on sexual reproductive system, in order for them to have control over their sexual decision.
5. The government should endeavor to make provision for more logistical supports for the social workers to carry out their work effectively.
6. The government should fund the social worker so they can embark on research studies to tackle the menace of this social problems in the country at large.
7. Social workers across the country should continue to act like the agent of positive change they are by organizing symposiums, conferences, seminars, rallies, workshops and media



appearance enlightening the people on their importance in the society for public awareness of their operations and services in the society.

8. Social workers in Nigeria should beyond practicing at micro level and engage themselves macro level issues especially at the level influencing social policy that will ameliorate human condition in the society and canvassing for social justice, equity, maintenance and sustenance of fundamental human rights in Nigeria.
9. The Social workers should be offered monthly sessions also for their own mental health, because the constant number of cases they are faced with could hinder or slow their performance at work.

### **5.3 SUMMARY**

Child abuse is a common thing in our society, a problem of the public from a long time. Children are often been regarded as the leaders of tomorrow and by implication any danger to them invariably affects the tomorrow. Child abuse have been described as that with severe short term and long-term consequences. The main goal of the was to study investigated the roles of social workers in dealing with child sexual abuse in Nigeria while specific objective analysed theoretical presumptions of child's sexual abuse and its impact on child development, examined the patterns and underlying factors of child abuse in Nigeria, and investigated the social worker roles on the services for children experiencing sexual abuse. Qualitative method of research which involved key informant interview was adopted in this study. The study was conducted among social workers in Lagos State, Nigeria. For this study purposive sampling technique was to select ten (10) professional social workers who are working in criminal justice department, rehabilitation institutions and Neuropsychiatric Hospitals. This study focused on semi-structured interview as a method for data collection, both individual and group. This method was chosen because the study sought to know the key participants experiences, perceptions and roles pertaining to child sexual abuse and protection in their area. The data was gathered through key informants semi-structured interviews with professionals (social workers) who were in the child and adolescent's section. Participants were recruited through the researchers' personal circles; those participants referred the researchers to other professionals that qualified for the study. The participants were given an informed consent form. The goal is to audio record the interview. After the interviews each participant were well appreciated. The researchers contacted each participant directly and the time and exact date

was determined beforehand in accordance to the participants' schedule and convenience since professionals' work schedules varied.

Interviews was captured digitally after consent obtained from participants before participation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed literally. The electronic recording of interviews reduced stress and hampered the conversational process by eliminating the need to take notes by hand during the interview. When writing during interviews, one tends to forget important parts of the conversation. A thorough, unbiased, objective analysis and depiction of results can be obtained through recorded interviews. Thus, recording qualitative interviews was beneficial. Each interview sessions took about an hour to allowing for significant discussion.

The collected data from the participants were transcribed and analyzed using content data analysis. The study embraced qualitative method through Key participants interview therefore, the responses of the participants were transcribed into word document with the use of terminologies and quotations as implied in the findings.

The codes of conduct to protect the researched include ensuring the anonymity of the researched and confidentiality of the responses. The interviews were taken in peaceful environments which was selected by the participants. A central individual was reached, initially, who further reached out to those who would volunteer to be a part of the study. In doing so, the rationale of the study was explained. Social workers will be contacted individually and were asked if they would like to be interviewed about the issue. Informed consent, was done verbally upon the beginning of the meeting and participants had the freedom to withdraw. Each participant was allowed to speak freely, and they were not in any way forced to respond to what they did not feel comfortable with. To enable and maintain their confidence and not crash their self-esteem, participant's responses will not be labelled as right or wrong and they were be assured that each response is of importance.

The data collected were from the field in line with the research objectives were analysed. The study embraced qualitative method through Key participants interview; therefore, content analysis of the data was made while the responses of the participants were also transcribed into word document with the use of terminologies and quotations as implied in the findings. The result was further put into category, sub-category with example. The result revealed that there are several patterns of sexual abused which could either applicable to a male or female based on the circumstances and situations which warrant the event. Sometimes when people are dealing with issue of sexual abuse, the attention of majority often relate it to children or

underage experience but basically anybody can be sexually abused irrespective of age, gender and marital status. Any sexual activity which is forcefully inflicted on someone is sexual abuse; this also includes the use of force, lure, coercion and threat. However, the pattern of sexual abuse in Nigeria includes rape, molestation, sexual harassment, incest etc. Concerning the underlying factors of sexual abuse in Nigeria, the study acknowledges that there are various factors which could be held responsible for the behaviours and these are varies one to another. The factors of sexual abuse as stated by the respondents are: environmental factor, economical factor, technological factor, social factor (boredom and loneliness, peer group influence, indecent dressing/nudity) and health factor (physical disability of the victim, sexual disorder/dysfunction, and effects of substance and alcohol abuse).

The services provided for the children at welfare System in Nigeria are in different categories which can be accounted to the government, stakeholders, organizations, charity homes, foundations, religious bodies, individual philanthropist, and professional social workers and so on. In addition, the contributing roles of the social workers in providing services to the children who are victims of sexual abuse in Nigeria. However, this phase includes initial assessment, planning and contracting, statutory intervention, referrals, evaluation and termination.

the study concludes on the premise that the role of social workers is too important and great to be neglected in helping children and youths who have experienced sexual violence There is need for state governments to liaise the more the assistance and intervention of social workers if they really desire to curtail the cases of sexual violence among children and youth in the country. Thus, the following step or measures were offered by informants in order to improve life of vulnerable groups (children and youth in the society, social workers coming together in mounting pressure on the government to empower social workers in dealing with the problem. It was also encouraged that there should be awareness to children and youths about the importance of not allowing themselves to be violated, educate their parent, the community leaders, the religious leaders and other stakeholders in the society should not be to too quick in judging, dissuading or blaming children and youths when they attempt to voice out what has happened to them. It was also believed that, the problem can be solved by formed advocacy for the presence of social workers in both government and private schools coalition for child right advocacy In addition, staging of constant public campaign for the state to enact child rights law and enacting of safeguarding policies for all states and adoption of social media tools etc. Another respondent offered that, staging a walk to the national assembly for the intervention of social workers in tackling the problem and the importance of social workers

providing social services to all vulnerable groups in the society. It was also advised that, social workers should be strong in spreading information on the dangers of the persistence sexual violence rate in children and youth in the society in the society. Social workers working closely with families to monitor progress of children and ensure that they have safe and accommodating home. Lastly, it was said that, stringent policies should be formulated to discourage this phenomenon, Proper sensitization and education should commence regarding the effects of this problems, Social Workers should be properly engaged in order to use the various social work methods- namely; case work, Group work, Community development, social research, Social action and Social welfare administration to provide lasting solutions to these problems.

Based on the result of the findings, the following recommendations were made

- The government in the country and the federal government should wake up to the realization of the role of social workers in tackling problem of sexual violence among children and youths and empower them to ensure that such cases are curtailed and offender are brought to book completely, the status quo of no one is above the law should be maintained and upheld and children and youths lives and wellbeing are prioritized. Social workers should be allowed to perform their role in dealing with youths because of their vulnerability state, rather than living them in the hands of just anybody.
- Effort should be put in place by the government and community to discourage such acts of violence to children and youths. This is attainable when the government set up and fund social service department or commission to be handled by trained social workers. The programs and events to be carried out in the commission should be left in the hands of professional and experienced social workers.
- Social worker should be attached to every unit of the government especially those responsible for making social programs and intervention policies. Also, the government should identify social workers and their field of interest; allocate them to different vulnerable groups in the states and local governments, because it is dangerous not to have social workers in place in strategic parts of the country.
- The government should liaise with the social workers by organizing seminars, conference, workshops and other social gatherings to educate and enlighten the populace on the negative implication of taking advantage of vulnerable groups like children and youths. The government should sanction those who rape and sexually

molest Most importantly, the government and social workers operating in the rural places should enlighten and educate children and youth on sexual reproductive system, in order for them to have control over their sexual decision.

- The government should endeavor to make provision for more logistical supports for the social workers to carry out their work effectively.
- The government should fund the social worker so they can embark on research studies to tackle the menace of this social problems in the country at large.
- Social workers across the country should continue to act like the agent of positive change they are by organizing symposiums, conferences, seminars, rallies, workshops and media appearance enlightening the people on their importance in the society for public awareness of their operations and services in the society.
- Social workers in Nigeria should beyond practicing at micro level and engage themselves macro level issues especially at the level influencing social policy that will ameliorate human condition in the society and canvassing for social justice, equity, maintenance and sustenance of fundamental human rights in Nigeria.
- The Social workers should be offered monthly sessions also for their own mental health, because the constant number of cases they are faced with could hinder or slow their performance at work.

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**ANNEXES 1**  
**RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- 1) WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK
- 2) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IN YOUR OWN WORDS AS A SOCIAL WORKER MAKE PEOPLE SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN?
- 3) HOW COMMON WOULD YOU EXPLAIN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN NIGERIA TO BE?
- 4) HOW DO YOU HELP CHILDREN EXPERIENCING SEXUAL VIOLENCE?
- 5) WHAT ARE THE MAIN ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTHS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE?
- 6) WHO ARE OTHER PROFESSIONALS THAT WORK WITH SOCIAL WORKERS IN ORDER TO HELP CHILDREN EXPERIENCING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND WHAT ROLES DO THEY PLAY?
- 7) WOULD YOU ENLIGHTEN ME ON THE OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES PUT IN PLACE AS A SOCIAL WORKER IN ASSISTING YOUTHS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE?
- 8) IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING SEXUAL VIOLENCE WHAT THE MAIN CHALLENGES YOU FACE?
- 9) WHAT ROLES DOES THE COMMUNITY AND FAMILY MEMBER PLAY IN HELPING SOCIAL WORKERS WHEN IT COMES TO TACKLING SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- 10) WHAT OTHER AGENCIES ARE AVAILABLE IN HELPING CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- 11) WHAT MAJOR HELP WOULD YOU SAY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS IMPLEMENTED IN HELPING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR TACKLING IT

Category	Subcategory	Example
1. Pattern of Sexual Abuse in Nigeria	Rape	<p><i>rape is one of the sexual abuses that a lot of children have experienced in our country. Sometimes it happens between a very old man with a female teenager and sometimes it happens among youths which could be between male to female, female to male, female to female or male to male” (Joseph Babatunde, Male).</i></p> <p><i>“From our experience we notice that many of the perpetrators do seize the advantage of the victim or forcefully engage the victim to the act with threat” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).</i></p>
	Sexual harassment	<p><i>“Sexual harassment is a noticeable pattern of sexual abuse in Nigeria. This is form of hand touching, physical contact, exposing children to pornography, unwelcome kissing, hugging and so on. The children that are usually fall victim are those with disability, less privilege, orphans and those that are homeless” (Adekanye Deolu, Male).</i></p>
	Molestation	<p><i>“Any sexual touching or rough playing with a child that is less than 18 years in Nigeria is known as molestation and it is a punishable offense. For instance, we all heard of the molestation case of some popular celebrities in Nigeria in the recent time and we saw the responses of the general public because of the claims that it involves a minor” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).</i></p>

Incest

*“Some children when they lost their parents, they may be forced to be living with their uncle or any relative and this in different occasion has led to sexual abuse. Surprisingly in this time we have heard of a father who sexually abuse his biological child threatening to harm such child if people got to know about it” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

2. Factors of Sexual Abuse in Nigeria  
Environmental Factor

*“We cannot do away with environmental factor on the issue of sexual abuse because an unsecure environment allows some of the victims to run into the problem. In the recent time we have responded to rape cases that took place in an uncompleted building as well as in the bush where the perpetrators were able to escape easily” (Ohio Patric, Male).*

Economical Factor

*“We cannot do away with environmental factor on the issue of sexual abuse because an unsecure environment allows some of the victims to run into the problem. In the recent time we have responded to rape cases that took place in an uncompleted building as well as in the bush where the perpetrators were able to escape easily” (Ohio Patric, Male).*

Technological factor

*“Everything about sexual activities can be found on the internet which some of these children would search and will want to try such on any available opportunity” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).*

**Social Factor**

- iv. Boredom  
Loneliness

and

*“ with my experience as a social worker, I have seen a lady who was molested because she has nothing doing, she would be at home even when everybody has gone to work and through this the perpetrator have his way to her” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).*



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v. Peer Group Influence *“I can say most of the sexual abuser learn the behaviour from some of the friends they walk with and this has negative implication in our society such as raping or molesting an innocent young lady” (Adekanye Deolu, Male).*

*“Who should we blame for this? Anyway, I will encourage parents to be observant and monitoring changes in their children whether a male or female” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male)*

i. Indecent Dressing/Nudity

*“One key factor to note is the abusive dressing mode of our female children nowadays. Imagine a lady who dresses half-naked might be raped or molested as a result of the uncontrollable desires of the opposite sex” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).*

*“You know that one is likely to be motivated by what seeing hence the perpetrator sometimes might not be able to resist it” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).*

**Health Factor**

a) Physical Disability

*“Most time we the social worker do pity the children with physical disability who equally fall victim of sexual abuse because of their health condition. In fact, we have several cases of sexual abuse that are related to physical disability.” (Adeniji Funmi, Female)*

b) Sexual/  
Disorder/Dysfunction

*“Those that have sexual disorder cannot control themselves and end up in raping and or molesting a young lady” (Ohio Patric, Male).*

*“Immediately we receive a case that a very old man rapes a child sometimes as little as under 10 years, the first thing that comes to my mind is that perhaps the perpetrator is suffering of sexual dysfunction or the person has special agenda for the behaviour” (Adekanye Deolu, Male)*

c) Effects of Substance and

*“You know when someone is high on alcoholic, he or she is likely to be acting strangely and when such individual is free from intoxication, he would not believe the terrible offenses he or she might have committed” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).*

d) Alcohol Abuse

*“Government is trying by providing orphanage home where the needs of the children at child welfare system. This enables to revive the hope of the children especially the orphans” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

3. The Available Services Provided to Meet the Needs of the Children in the Child Welfare System

*“Government is trying by providing orphanage home where the needs of the children at child welfare system. This enables to revive the hope of the children especially the orphans” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

Social Amenities and Education Scholarship	<p><i>“Education scholarship are available for the victims of sexual abuse where they able to rise and continue their lives” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).</i></p> <p><i>“The children were not only accommodated but also there are provisions of their basic needs such as water, cloths, etc.” (Joseph Babatunde, Male).</i></p>
Humanitarian Response	<p><i>“There are humanitarians services from various NGOs, Religious bodies and private individual to take care of the children at the welfare centre” (Adekanye Deolu, Male).</i></p>
Medical Attention	<p><i>“Let me say medical attention for the children is an important programme for the children at welfare service. This is to subject any form of sickness or health challenges to control by Doctors and Nurses that are made available” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).</i></p> <p><i>“The medical service for the children is free of charge having been take care by NGOs and other concern bodies” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).</i></p>
Security Provision	<p><i>“The police and other civil security are always available to respond to any need in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children” (Joseph Babatunde, Male).</i></p>



4. The Roles of the Social Workers in Providing Services for the Children that have Experienced Sexual Abuse in Nigeria

**Initial Assessment**

- Gathering Information

*“Referrals are usually telephonic and from a diverse number of service providers including, Nigerian Police Force [NPF], clinics and Magistrate courts, as well as community members and walk-ins” (Olufemi Deborah, Female)*

*“In order to get information, I requested panel meetings with the initial case manager and other colleagues who were involved in the case” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

*“I will need the information from the police, I will need information from the Doctor as well, to confirm that „the perpetrator indeed abused the child” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).*

- Circumstances of the Abuse

*“There was a 15 year old child abused by the mother’s boyfriend; the mother has been staying with this man for 10 years. And apparently the boyfriend has been inappropriately touching the child” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).*

*“The mother led a nomadic lifestyle. The children were placed in foster care with a gay couple the youngest child portrayed explicit sexual behaviour and touched other children inappropriately” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).*

*“The child was staying with a male family friend and his partner; he had a sexual relationship with the child. She was only fourteen years, it was sexual abuse, and it was statutory rape” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).*

- The Experience of Abuse    *“Firstly, after receiving a referral you want to find out where the child is? How old is the child? What kind of abuse is it?”* (Adeniji Funmi, Female).

*“Gather information of what happened to the child is very important to determine the next step”* (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).

*“Before placement is to assess the safety of the child, how far the perpetrator has been living around the child’s home, how does the perpetrator access the child?”* (Olufemi Deborah, Female).
- Timeframe for Initial Assessment    *“Some cases you “jump in the ship” then do something at that moment”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

*“Conduct further investigations when you are sure that the child is safe”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

*“However, mostly in child abuse cases are not something that you will come back to the office and plan”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).
- Risk Assessment    *“How does the perpetrator access the child?”* (Olufemi Deborah, Female).

*“How is the perpetrator related to the child?”* (Olufemi Deborah, Female).

*“Is the perpetrator living with the child at home?”* (Ohio Patric, Male).

*“Where is the perpetrator at that moment?”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

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*“If the incident happened during the day, I assess if there is parenting skills lacking from the mother” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).*

- Crisis Intervention

*“We do crisis intervention when the family come to report that the child has been sexually abused or assaulted. One needs to focus mainly on the victim” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).*

- a. Opening of Criminal Case

*“We often go to the police station to open a case, the police will take you to the District Surgeon, where an examination is conducted and a form is filled; so, my role was minimal” (Joseph Babatunde, Male).*

*“Because they said the child was too young to open the case, so I opened a criminal case against the uncle on her behalf” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).*

- a. Statutory Intervention during Initial Assessment      *“If the child is abused by the parent, you cannot leave the child in that situation”* (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).
- “So, we have to remove the child if the perpetrator is part of the family”* (Ohio Patric, Male).
- “Finding a suitable placement for the child in terms of other services, professionals’ assessment will ensure that the child gets psychotherapeutic services”* (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).
- “My role was to make sure that the child is getting proper care”* (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).

b. Planning/Contracting

*“I had an appointment with her [biological mother] to come and see me so that I could take her to the detectives to open a case. She never pitched, when I contacted her, she said she will go. At the end of the day, unfortunately the case was never opened”* (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).

*“Families do not consider sexual abuse as a criminal offence and are not supportive of the therapeutic process”* (Adeniji Funmi, Female).

*“So, it is difficult to say you will make a follow-up because sometimes you can say „I am going to see the child”, only to find that there are other things that are happening and you need to postpone. That alone will add more trauma to the child, to say “I won’t be seeing you rather than I will be seeing you”* (Joseph Babatunde, Male).



c. On-going Intervention

*“So, my role was to make sure that where the child is, the child is getting appropriate service”* (Ohio Patric, Male).

*“So, I was the one who was responsible for transporting the child to and from the place of safety”* (Adeniji Funmi, Female).

*“Ensure that the child participates fully in the therapeutic process with at specific assigned clinic”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

d. Referrals

*“I will refer the victim to people who will help him or her”* (Adedokun Titilayo, female).

*“We will refer for long-term psycho-therapy. We like not to do it ourselves”* (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).

*“I think for me was to facilitate and to make sure that the child is getting the best help because that was something that I could not provide”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

*“I am at a stage where I have three sessions with the child or four sessions with this client and I feel that I am not helping. I would refer, but before doing that, I would speak to my client”* (Ohio Patric, Male).

e. Evaluation Activity

*“But then with the panel, as the social worker, you get to know what is happening with the child. The state of his or her progress at school; is she doing well, or is she getting counselling for the abuse?” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).*

*“That is why I mentioned the re-unification and supervision cases, when are they visiting the child, and how many times per day?” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

f. Termination

*“But when she realized that a Clinic was rendering services that she was rendering, she refrained from rendering the service”* (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).

*“So, I did not terminate after referral”* (Adeniji Funmi, Female).

*“I could not be part of the case for long, because they moved to another area at that time.” So, I am unable to follow it up”* (Joseph Babatunde, Male).

g. Follow-Up

*“Even the social worker from the place of safety will contact me. We will have these panel discussions to say how this child is coping now, at home and or in school” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).*

*“I still keep contact with the child and social worker at the children’s home. This is important as the child will have to come back to the community after all the intervention” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

*“After the child was removed, I was preparing for re-unification process so that the child does not stay in a place of safety for a long time” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).*

Security Provision

*“The police and other civil security are always available to respond to any need in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children” (Joseph Babatunde, Male).*

5. The Roles of the Social Workers in Providing Services for the Children that have Experienced Sexual Abuse in Nigeria

**Initial Assessment**

- Gathering Information

*“Referrals are usually telephonic and from a diverse number of service providers including, Nigerian Police Force [NPF], clinics and Magistrate courts, as well as community members and walk-ins” (Olufemi Deborah, Female)*

*“In order to get information, I requested panel meetings with the initial case manager and other colleagues who were involved in the case” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).*

*“I will need the information from the police, I will need information from the Doctor as well, to confirm that ,,the perpetrator indeed abused the child” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).*

- Circumstances of the Abuse “There was a 15 year old child abused by the mother’s boyfriend; the mother has been staying with this man for 10 years. And apparently the boyfriend has been inappropriately touching the child” (Olawunmi Emmanuel, Male).

“The mother led a nomadic lifestyle. The children were placed in foster care with a gay couple the youngest child portrayed explicit sexual behaviour and touched other children inappropriately” (Adedokun Titilayo, female).

“The child was staying with a male family friend and his partner; he had a sexual relationship with the child. She was only fourteen years, it was sexual abuse, and it was statutory rape” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).
- The Experience of Abuse “Firstly, after receiving a referral you want to find out where the child is? How old is the child? What kind of abuse is it?” (Adeniji Funmi, Female).

“Gather information of what happened to the child is very important to determine the next step” (Olusegun Ayodeji, Male).

“Before placement is to assess the safety of the child, how far the perpetrator has been living around the child’s home, how does the perpetrator access the child?” (Olufemi Deborah, Female).
- Timeframe for Initial Assessment “Some cases you “jump in the ship” then do something at that moment” (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

*“Conduct further investigations when you are sure that the child is safe”*  
(Adekanye Deolu, Male).

*“However, mostly in child abuse cases are not something that you will come back to the office and plan”* (Adekanye Deolu, Male).

- Risk Assessment

*“How does the perpetrator access the child?”* (Olufemi Deborah, Female).

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