

## Primary Prevention Knowledge of Parents and Teachers of Nursery and Play Group on Childhood Sexual Abuse

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Aug 12, 2012

Revised Oct 23, 2012

Accepted Nov 8, 2012

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#### Keyword:

Childhood sexual abuse

Focus group discussions

Knowledgeable community

Nursery

Play group

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### ABSTRACT

This research explored child sexual abuse (CSA), knowledge and prevention media among parents of pupils and teachers of nursery schools and playgroup. This research was conducted in qualitative mythology, through in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focus group discussions (FGD). In-depth interview held for 10 nursery school teachers and playgroup teachers. For children aged 0-5 years, FGD was conducted towards 10 parents of nursery School and 12 parents of playgroup. The study explored the following: parents' and teachers' knowledge on child sexual abuse prevention. The child sexual abuse prevention messages were provided to the children and topics they discussed and their attitudes towards child sexual abuse prevention education in school. The proposed primary prevention media strategies for parents were speech and posters as well as for nursery and playgroup teachers who understood the CSA impact. Research concluded that parents didn't understand CSA concepts; media proposed for primary prevention are through dialogue and poster. Nursery, playgroup teachers and parents understood with poster media. Parents and teachers were encouraged to focus on the early prevention by building child sexual abuse knowledgeable community.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse is a serious violation of children's right. The global evidence growing with an estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 having experienced force sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual abuse involving physical contact confirmed it (WHO 2006). Child sexual abuse is an abuse of power where older, stronger, and more knowledgeable persons take advantage of children for their own sexual and emotional gratification. Child sexual abuse is a physical act and a psychological experience. As a physical act, child sexual abuse involves both touch and non-touch behaviours. As a psychological experience, child sexual abuse represents an abuse of power and authority, where perpetrators satisfy themselves emotionally and sexually, and the children are hurt and confused (Gilgun and Alankaar 2008). Within the spectrum of sexual abuse, there is a distinction between contact and non-contact abuse. Contact abuse includes act such as intercourse or oral –genital contact. Non –contact abuse comprises behaviour such as exposing children to act sexually with others.

Reported rates of sexual abuse vary widely. This variance is mainly due to methodological issues such as how sexual abuse is defined and which population are surveyed (Myers, Berliner, John, Hendrix, Jenny and Reid 2002), a nationally representative cross-sectional sample of American children aged 2-17 years found 1 in 12 children had been sexually victimized (defined as exposure to sexual assault, attempted

rape, flashings, sexual harassment or statutory sexual offenses) in the study year (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner and Hamby, 2005), Child sexual abuse (CSA) has emerged as human rights, public health and development emergency with global dimensions (WHO, 2004, Pinheiro, 2006 and CDC foundation, 2010).

Child sexual abuse occurs in places normally considered safe such as home and schools, at the hands of perpetrators who are known and trusted by the child or who have authority over the child (Richter and Higson, 2004).

According to Akindolie (2012), child sexual abuse is a hidden epidemic gradually eating deep into Nigeria society. Unfortunately, people hardly speak about it due to our culture and fear of stigmatization. Children are sexually abused secretly, even by the people they love and depend on. Retrospective, prevalence surveys with adults conducted in the United States and Canada found 20-25% of women and 5-15% of men had experienced contact Sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1994). Research demonstrated that the effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) can be severe and devastating on an individual's psychological emotional, and physical well being (Kilpatrick et al 2003). These emotional and behavioural difficulties can lead to significant disruption in children's normal development and often have a lasting impact, leading to dysfunction and distress well into adulthood (Saunders, KilPatrick, Hanson, Resnick & Walker, 1999). The consequences of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) are not limited to victims but also affect society as a whole. The rate of abuse varies according to the definition used for example, when touch sexually by force was used as a question, 5.2% of participants were deemed sexually abused (Madu, 2001) compared to 26.3% when unwanted genital fondling (Collins, 1997) was used. Despite the discrepancies in reporting across studies, the existence of child sexual abuse as a serious social problem in Africa cannot be denied. Ecker (1994) was informed in Keffi, Nigeria that "Old men are advised to have sexual contact with virgin girls in order to cure "Sexually transmitted diseases" (P.20). In the Republic of South Africa this belief has been blamed as a cause for the recent spate of infant rapes (Bowley and Pitcher 2002a, Bowley, & Pitcher 2002b).

Childhood sexual abuse occurs across all socio-economic, educational, racial and ethnic groups. The known risk factors for childhood sexual abuse include being a female, being 12 years or older, or having a physical disability (Putnam 2003). Due to the fact that CSA is so prevalent and impairs the health and welfare of children and adolescents, a series of CSA prevention programmes have been conducted in schools and communities in the USA, Canada and other countries since 1977 to increase public awareness of the CSA problem (Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992). Childhood sexual abuse is a serious violation of children's right. Accordingly, all adults share a collective ethical responsibility to ensure that the prevention of abuse is a priority.

Protection of children from sexual abuse is increasingly recognized as integral to the protection of human rights in general and is considered an element of international law (UN 2002 and Save the Children 2003)

Sexual play is rampant in preschoolers as children start to become aware of each other bodies and develop a natural curiosity for each other. Childhood masturbation can frequently start during this age.

Childhood crushes will also often surface during this age. This is a perfectly health and normal part of growing up, but parents should take extra caution during this age. If their cruse falls on a person who could be even somewhat prone to pedophile tendencies, it could be a disaster ([www.keepyourchildsafesafe.org](http://www.keepyourchildsafesafe.org)).

A Nursery school is a school for children between the ages of one and five years, staffed by qualified and other professionals who encourage and supervise educational play rather than simply providing child care. In Nigeria Nursing education can also be seen as pre-primary education.

Pre-Primary education in the National Policy on Education (2004) is an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 years plus prior to their entering primary school. The purpose of pre-primary education shall be to:-

- (a) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school;
- (b) Prepare the child for the primary Level of education;
- (c) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices etc.);
- (d) Inculcate social norms;
- (e) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc;
- (f) Develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit;
- (g) Learn- good habits, especially good health habits: and
- (h) Teach the rudiments of numbers, letter colours, shapes forms, etc, through play.

Several Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) prevention efforts target parents and guardians, given that parents are in unique position to educate and protect their children from sexual victimization. Understanding the efficacy of these efforts in raising parents' awareness of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) and preventing CSA occurrences is vital important to anti-sexual violence field. One study of 5,241 respondents found that

awareness and concern about child sexual abuse is relatively high among U.S adults (stop it Now! 2010). Studies have shown that 95% of adults understood that most sexually abused children are victimized by someone they know, and 64% understood that many sexually abused children are victimized by other adolescents (Stop it Now! 2010).

Several studies found that parents supported CSA prevention efforts spear headed by doctors, teachers and schools (Babtsikos, 2010 )

Debling, Thakkar-Kolar, Berru, and Schroeder (2010), however, indicated that CSA can take many forms (i.e. inappropriate touching and photographs).

Research provides conflicting information on whether or not parents protect their children body parts, from CSA by teaching them correct names of body parts. Deblinger, Thakkar-Kolar, Beeu, and Schroeder (2010), found that 62.7% of respondents taught their children anatomically correct terms for genitals. On the other hand, a literature review by Wurtele and Kenny (2010), analyzed three studies on young children had found that majority had not been taught proper names of genitals.

Primary prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) involves preventing the occurrence of sexually abusive acts by taking action before the sexual assault occurred (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2004). Parents and caretakers are often the first educators of children, and thus are in unique position to foster primary prevention of CSA. The notion of parents as agents in child sexual abuse prevention is relatively neglected area of research within the child maltreatment literature, research has generally been focused on the provision of parenting intervention to improve parent child functioning and a decrease risk or actual occurrence of physical and emotional abuse within families (Macmillan et al. 2009). It is unfortunate that parents and guardians do not have enough information to help prevent this social canker from spreading .While at work, the lives of their children are entrusted in the hands of relatives, lesson teachers, swimming instructors, domestic staff and family friends ,who at one way or the other secretly abuse them.

Primary school teachers are reasonably well- informed about sexual abuse but may have an inaccurate knowledge about the age group of victims and abuses. Male teachers were less well- informed and less likely to believe a child disclosure of sexual abuse than their female colleagues (Maria 2006). To help children in the prevention of sexual abuse teachers must know the nature and importance of this problem, approaching it in a sex education context (Lopez & Fuertes, 1999). Primary school teachers have expressed training needs to approach sexuality topics with little children in several studies (Mbanaja, 2004, Veiga et al. 2006). Little or no research has been done on teachers.

The present study investigated the parents' and teachers' knowledge of childhood sexual abuse prevention of Nursery and play group children and how this prevention can help to catch the children young, so they will not be victims of sexual abuse.

Media campaigns have been used frequently to educate the public about various health-related issues and offer the advantage of broad-based dissemination to large audience with minimal cost (Means, Owen, Forsyth, Cavit), Fridinger (1998). It is interesting to note that parents most often obtain their information on sexual abuse from media. However, currently there is a significant shortage of investigations examining mass media campaigns related to CSA primary prevention. In fact, to date there is only one known study specifically evaluating a media campaign approach focused on CSA. These programs, titled **STOP IT NOW**, was examined by Chasan-Taber and Tabernick (1999). The goal of the program was to increase awareness and knowledge about CSA, to encourage adult or adolescent abuses to self report their abuse, and to support family and friends to confront sexually abusive behaviors.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sexual violence against children is recognized internationally as the most severe violation of their human rights. It can have severe, long-term and even life-threatening effects on child's physical psychological, spiritual, emotional and social development. Children subject to child sexual abuse are vulnerable to experiencing such conditions as depression, low self- esteem, problem with trusting others, anger, poor social skills, substance abuse, HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STID), and various forms of physical harm. The study examined the primary prevention knowledge of Parents or Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA)

### 2.1. Research Questions

1. What is the knowledge of parents on child sexual abuse prevention?
2. What child sexual abuse topics have parents talked about with their children?
3. Statement of the Problem
4. What are the parents' attitudes towards child sexual abuse prevention education in schools?

5. What do teachers know about child sexual abuse prevention?
6. What child sexual abuse topics have teachers with their pupils?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This research was essentially qualitative utilizing the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and in – depth interviews (IDIs) to collect information from parents and teachers of nursery and play group.

This study was carried out in Ondo West local government in Ondo State, Nigeria. There was no rigid sampling procedure employed. Interviews were held based on availability of respondents and willingness to participate. However, respondents that were involved were parents whose children fall on either playgroup or Nursery School and teachers of Nursery School and teachers of playgroup.

Three Schools were chosen and, for convenience, parents of children in play group and nursery were used for the study also the teachers of pupils in nursery and playgroup were also used for the study. Two methods of data collection were utilized mainly FGDs and IDIs. FGDs were held with parents of nursery and playgroups and twenty-two were held in all. The FGDs was facilitated by researcher herself and assisted by a female note-taker also. The discussion was also tape-recorded with the consent of the participants. Ten IDIs were conducted with teachers of Nursery School and playgroup. The objective here was to generate further insight into their knowledge on childhood sexual abuse prevention at early age in children's life. Arising from the nature of data collected, data analysis was qualitative. Discussions were taped and then transcribed.

A manual analysis of the transcript was then done to identify common trends in the response and also to note variations where they are significant.

#### **3.1. Findings from Survey Research Questions**

What is the knowledge of parents on childhood sexual abuse prevention? Parents said there should be a mutual communication between the children and parents, so they will know when the children need help. They should allow the children to ask questions and ask questions from the children, so as to know their emotional feelings. Parents also said that their female and male children should be separated when they want to sleep at home, also they should not take their bath together at home. They also said that parents should be able to meet almost all needs of the children, so that they will not look at others that will hurt their body.

Children should wear appropriate cloth and tell them the reasons to wear appropriate cloth that will cover their nakedness. Parents should let the children know the consequences of their actions, when they try to perform any sexual abuse to themselves or to their mates. They also said that the two parents that is husband and wife should be able to keep themselves away from exposing themselves during intercourse to their children. There is also a need that children should be prevented not to watch unprofitable film, like blue film.

#### **3.2. Research Question 2**

What childhood sexual abuse topics have parents talked about with their children? Parents said that they taught their children on how to dress properly by not exposing their nakedness. They will also teach their children about self- esteem to know the value of his/her body. In the sense that low self- esteem may lead the child to unconscious art in way that he/she will do what is wrong to himself or others in the Community.

#### **3.3. Research Question 3**

What are the parent's attitude towards childhood sexual education prevention in Nursery School and playgroup? Most parents believe that their children are too young to understand the topic. A parent said that childhood Sexual abuse education should be taught by all caregivers. There were however, some parents that said CSA education in the school, might lead to their children learning more sex.

#### **3.4. Research Question 4**

What do teachers know about childhood sexual abuse prevention?

From the interview conducted with teachers, most of them said it can be prevented through sensitization and protection. The teacher can also advise the children not to allow the adult male to touch their private parts. The teacher should be quick to detect what will happen to the children. It is necessary for the teachers to know the movement of the child in the classroom, that they should not sit on the boys laps. The boy and girls should not go to the toilet together. The curriculum should include what is called sex education to sensitize the children.

### 3.5. Research Question 5

What are the childhood sexual abuse topics that teachers have talked about with their pupils? A teacher said that childhood sexual abuse does not have a topic that only thing is to enlighten the girls not to go out with boys to a hidden area.

Majority of teachers said that since it is not in the school curriculum that they can only encourage the parents not to expose their children on sexual abuse at that tender age, so that the children will not come to school and practise such behaviour.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has identified some of the strengths and gaps on primary prevention knowledge of parents and teachers of nursery and playgroup on child sexual abuse. It did not mention that children can be molested by familiar people, the adult male or female in the child's house (Akindolie 2012), parents are also aware that they should not have sexual intercourse where their children are. Parents only taught that it is only girls that can be sexually abused, forgetting that the boys can also be sexually abused too. This deficiency of knowledge was also found by Stop it Now (2010).

It was also observed that parents did not tell their children on the issues that their private parts should not be seen or touched by others and at times they will use another term to describe parts of body instead of the real term which implies that little or no research exist on the content and efficacy of parents' and caregivers' oriented educational programmes and written material on CSA primary prevention (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2001).

Regarding parents' attitude to CSA prevention in nursery and play group, majority of the parents said it is too early for children to know their sexual organs which goes contrary to study carried out by (Babatsikos, 2010).

On the knowledge of teachers on childhood sexual abuse prevention, it was found out that teachers knew that children shows their genital organs to other children when they are showing the pants they are wearing, at times the little boys will use their penis for urination to start chasing other children, it can be their fellow boys or girls. This is in line with (Ariza et al 1991).

Concerning the topics that are being taught by teachers on sexual abuse, the teachers said that they do not teach topics on sexual abuse since it was not included in objectives of pre-primary school in National Policy on Education (NPE 2004). It is noted that sex education in school is limited. It is clear that curriculum for Nursery and Playgroups should be designed very carefully to address parents sensitivities.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of the current study on parents' and teachers' knowledge and practice are inadequate to protect the children and pupils from childhood sexual abuse- CSA. The results indicated the content, attitudinal and skill areas that parents and teachers need in order to educate and protect the children. It is due to the sensitive nature of the topics, there must be official support for schools and parents to co-operate together in developing a CSA prevention curriculum that will meet the needs of their children. Participants were exposed to poster media. Findings from the current study, although minimal, indicated that CSA prevention through media may affect awareness and potentially, primary prevention behaviour.

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