

Psychosocial Correlates of Childhood Sexual Exploitation among Secondary School Students in Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Sexual exploitation experienced in childhood or adolescence is a negative eventful developmental experience that occur in the life time of a child that can have profound, long-term physiologic and psychosocial effects (Banyard, Williams, & Siegel, 2001; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2001; DeBellis, 2001). The long-term physiological effect in term of the alteration in their biological composition of their body like the broken of the hymen which in turn lead to loss of the virginity as a result of their first contact sexual experience; even some experience serious and abnormal bleeding from their virginal leaving the exploitation child with intense psychological and social stress specifically, posttraumatic state. This study examines the psychosocial correlates of child sexual exploitation among secondary school students in Keffi, Nasarawa State. A total of 250 secondary school students which consist of 117 males and 133 females from three selected school public school secondary school in Keffi Local government area of Nasarawa state participated in the study. A simple randomize sampling technique was used and survey research method was adopted for this cross-sectional research design. History of childhood sexual exploitation questionnaire, Rosenberg Self-esteem scale and Parenting style scale" Three hypotheses were formulated using correlation matrix, multiple regression and Pearson. The result revealed that, parenting style positively and significantly related to child sexual exploitation ($r = .241$; $df(248)$; $P < .01$). The study also indicated that self-esteem and parenting style jointly and independently influence child sexual exploitation [$R^2 = .364$, $F = 9.34$, $P < .01$]. The predictor variables accounted for 13% of the total variation on child sexual exploitation among secondary school students. Lastly, there is significant negative relationship between self-esteem and child sexual exploitation among secondary school students ($r = -.284$; $df = 248$; $P < .01$). in conclusion, the study established that self-esteem and parenting style are significantly related to child sexual exploitation among secondary schools in the selected schools. It was therefore recommended that factors prompting children to sexual exploitation should be highly discouraged and abolished; educating children about sex and their biological make up and changes especially the female children.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Parenting Style, Child Sexual Exploitation, Psychosocial Behavior and Student's Attitudes.

Introduction

Child trafficking is a form of child abuse. It is the exploitation of children for economic or sexual purposes, and includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for exploitation. Children may be sold, illegally adopted, forced into early

marriage, recruited into the armed forces, pushed into prostitution, or trafficked to work in mines, factories, or homes. In such environments they are exposed to extreme forms of abuse and are denied access to basic services and the meeting of their fundamental human rights. Sexual exploitation experienced in childhood or adolescence is a negative eventful developmental experience that occurs in the life time of a child that can have profound, long-term physiologic and psychosocial effects (Banyard, Williams, & Siegel, 2001; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2001; DeBellis, 2001). The long-term physiological effect in terms of the alteration in their biological composition of their body like the broken of the hymen which in turn leads to loss of the virginity as a result of their first contact sexual experience; even some experience serious and abnormal bleeding from their vaginal leaving the exploitation child with intense psychological and social stress specifically, posttraumatic state. Sexual exploitation children often experience serious flash back of the sexual event that happened to them and this in turn may affect their relationship with older adult because they see the world and older adult as exploitation and find it difficult to maintain cordial relationship with them. Often these sexually exploitation children are threatened with death not to expose what happens between them and the older adult.

Child sexual exploitation has increasingly gained widespread public recognition in various societies and become a focus of attention as a universal social phenomenon (Halperin, Bouvier, Jaffe, Mounoud, Pawlak, Laederach, Wicky & Astie, 1996)

Sexual exploitation has been previously defined as being any verbal or physical sexual experience, forced or against the wishes of the individual (Pierre, Shrier, Emans and DuRant, 1998). Some also define it as involving instances of harm to adolescents/children that are non-accidental and avoidable, whether from exploitation or neglect (Cobb, 2001), where others describe it as a violation perpetrated by a person who holds power over someone who is vulnerable. Exploitation can be direct contact or non-contact through physical, sexual, or emotional in nature and often involves some combination of these (Olson and DeFrain, 2001).

A substantial proportion of boys and girls are sexually exploited during adolescence. Reported prevalence figures of sexual exploitation vary (boys: 3% to 37%; girls: 6% and 62%), but even the most conservative estimates indicate this to be an important public health issue (Halperin 1996). According to Jackson (2002), in some countries sexual exploitation has become so widespread that it contributes significantly to HIV epidemic, STI and early pregnancies. Girls have been reported to be sexually exploited two times as much as boys in the form of rape, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, sexual assault, and all these take place in both rural and urban environments. Paine and Hansen (2002) realized a problem concerning dynamics in the trauma of child sexual exploitation, particularly when the child victim delays or completely withholds disclosure of the exploitation. This may contribute to difficulties in schools including low grades, being prone to adolescent pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV may carry a burden of guilt, shame, fear, bitterness, anger, lowered self-esteem and depression for years.

Sexual exploitation has been associated with a variety of health compromising behaviors and health problems, often considered attempts to cope with the trauma engendered by the exploitation (Barker & Musick, 1994; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Hutchinson & Langlykke, 1997). Children/Adolescents with a history of sexual exploitation are more likely than their non-exploitation peers to report depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempts, disordered eating behaviors, substance use and exploitation, school problems, early sexual debut, teen pregnancy involvement, delinquent or violent behaviors, running away, and prostitution (Bensley, Spieker, Van Eenwyk, & Schoder, 1999; Chandy, Blum, & Resnick, 1996; Holmes & Slap, 1998; Kelly, 1995; Rotheram-Borus, Mahler, Koopman, & Langabeer, 1996).

The prevalence of child sexual exploitation has been a major problem in the North-East part of Nigeria, a situation where by children reported a case of molestation, rape, exposure to pornography, submission to sexual intercourse with penetration and any other sexual vices from the other adult. Early marriage during adolescence or childhood period; which is cultural acceptable in the Northern part of Nigeria can also be seen as child/adolescent sexual exploitation especially when the child is subject to sexual intercourse because the child/adolescent has not attained the full maturity of marriage even his/her biological organs though may be ready for production but have not been fully developed to the stage of reproduction without complication.

Psychosocial factors are the psychological and sociological factors that contribute to this prevalent social problem of child sexual exploitation. Self-esteem as well as parenting style can influence child sexual exploitation.

Finkelhor (1993) found that an inability to exercise parental control was associated with child sexual exploitation, in his nationally representative survey. Finkelhor (1997) also reported that the use of corporal punishment in the previous 12 months was not related to child sexual exploitation. In contrast Brown, Cohen, Johnson, & Salzinger (1998) found that harsh punishment by parents was associated with child sexual exploitation and Edwards and Alexander (1992) found parents of sexually exploitation children were more authoritarian, more conflictive, and held patriarchal beliefs.

Finkelhor, Ormond and Turner (2007) found that a lack of parental monitoring and family problems increased the rates of sexual victimization. Using data from a longitudinal study of the impact of child sexual exploitation on girls' development, Kim, Noll, Putnam and Trickett (2007) concluded that mothers of sexually exploitation girls provided less positive structure, used punitive discipline more frequently than mothers of girls who were not exploitation. However, using data from the same study, Kim, Trickett and Putnam (2010) concluded that multiple factors such as mother's childhood experience of exploitation, their experiences of being parented, mental health problems and social supports combine to determine parenting practices. The authors suggest that professionals working with mothers of sexually exploitation children assess a mother's current psychosocial functioning and their childhood experiences of parenting.

Poor parent-child interaction has been associated with increased risk of child sexual exploitation, (Dube 2005; Vogeltanz 1999; Butler, 2013; Finkelhor, 1980). In a nationally representative sample of young people aged between 10 and 16, Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995) found that poor interaction between the parent and child nearly tripled the likelihood of child victimization. Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood (1996) found low parent attachment was significantly associated with child sexual exploitation and Paveza's (1988) study of mothers reported that families in which the mother and daughters had a distant relationship were eleven times more at risk for intra-familial exploitation. Low levels of parental care have also been identified among adults who reported being sexually exploitation as a child. (Hill, Davis, Byatt, M., Burnside, Rollinson, & Fear, 2000; Fleming, Mullen, & Bammer, 1997)

In contrast, a study of the role of parent-child interaction on the incidence of exploitation in Colombia detected no association between sexual exploitation and negative parent-child interactions. The authors purport that child sexual exploitation may be a different phenomenon than other forms of exploitation possibly responding to or being influenced by other influences such as culture (Ramirez, Pinzon-Rondon & Botero, 2011).

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself, (for example, "I am competent", "I am worthy"), as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame (Wikipedia).

A mechanism that may help to explain the distress of sexually exploitation children is the potential damage to self-concept, leading to a proliferation of negative self-evaluations and negative core beliefs, including a sense of inferiority and low self-efficacy. Finkelhor and Browne (1985), Gibb (2002) many studies have demonstrated an association between sexual exploitation and low self-esteem in children (Feiring, Taska & Lewis, 2002; Stern 1995).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the ecological model, feminist and gender theories, Finkelhor's four pre-conditions model of sexual exploitation and integrated models and framework.

The Ecological Model

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model of human development includes four interacting systems and these interacting systems have influence on child history of sexual exploitation. The interacting system of a child using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model are; Micro-system which is with the relationship between a child and his/her immediate environment e.g. family, meso-system which is the interrelations among various immediate settings of the child, the exo-system which comprises the formal and informal social structures of the child such as school this settings may otherwise impose upon or encompass the child's immediate settings) and the macro-system which is the cultural

values and belief systems that influence the other setting or system (micro, meso and exo-systems).

Belsky (1980) on the other hand gave a model concerning the etiology of child maltreatment within the family based on Bronfenbrenner's model for example childhood histories of abusive parents or caregiver, the microsystem (the family/settings where the exploitation takes place), the exo-system including formal and informal social structures such as social support systems, social economic status, neighborhood that did not impinge the exploitation child but exert an impact upon his or her growth and development and, lastly, the macro-system including larger cultural belief and values in the society for example, the societies' attitudes towards exploitation, maltreatment, violence, corporal punishment, and children as a whole. The ecological model is used by international organizations such as WHO and ISPCAN in the context of policies, programmes for child maltreatment prevention and victim services (W10, 1999; WHO & ISPCAN, 2006).

Feminist and Gender Theories

Feminist theories lay emphasis on cultural, values and beliefs dimensions of child sexual exploitation and highlighted the importance of gender, patriarchy, masculinity/male socialization and power/powerlessness (Brackenridge, 1992; Cossins, 2000; Featherstone & Fawcett, 1994; Lancaster & Lumb, 1999). The theories strongly advocate for female and how women's movement played a vital role in the discovery and rediscovery of child sexual exploitation especially in the 1970s.

Finkelhor's Four Pre-Conditions Model of Sexual Exploitation

Finkelhor advanced four pre-conditions model of sexual exploitation which is an effort to bring together various factors that have been discovered to play a dominant role in the occurrence of sexual exploitation among children both within and outside the family. This model has a high level of generality and is intended to be adaptable to all types of sexual exploitation (Finkelhor, 1987). Finkelhor (1987) stated four preconditions that must be achieved before sexual exploitation can take place which are: Motivation to exploitation children so as to either satisfy an important emotional need, sexual arousal or blockage in the alternate means of sexual gratification. Secondly to overcome internal self-consciousness against acting on the motivation like using way to carry out such illicit behaviour such as alcohol, stress, cultural taboos and personality factor for example impulse disorder. Thirdly, the external impediment to acting on the motivation; external impediments may prevent sexual exploitation, but these are weakened when children are poorly supervised. Lastly, when children are emotional insecure, lack of knowledge about sex, fear, having a cordial and trust relationship with the exploitation can undermine child's resistance to sexual exploitation.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. Parenting style will be significantly related to child sexual exploitation.
2. There will be significant negative relationship between self-esteem and child sexual exploitation.
3. Self-esteem and parenting style will jointly and independently influence child sexual exploitation.

Methods

The research method adopted for this quantitative research was cross-sectional design using survey research method. A total number of two hundred and fifty (250) secondary school students which consist of one hundred and seventeen (117) male and one hundred and thirty-three (133) female were selected from Government College, Government secondary school and Federal Government science secondary school in Keffi Local government area of Nasarawa State using simple random sampling techniques. The researcher adopted already developed instruments, "History of childhood sexual exploitation questionnaire, Rosenberg Self-esteem scale and Parenting stylescale" Three hypotheses were formulated using correlation matrix, multiple regression and Pearson.

Results

The result of the findings confirmed the stated hypothesis for this study. The finding of the study revealed that, parenting style was positively and significantly related to child sexual exploitation ($r = .241$; $df = 248$; $P < .01$). Results also indicated that self-esteem and parenting style jointly and independently influence child sexual exploitation ($R^2 = .364$, $F = 9.34$, $P < .01$). The predictor variables accounted for 13% of the total variation on child sexual exploitation among secondary school students. Lastly, there is significant negative relationship between self-esteem and child sexual exploitation among secondary school students ($r = -.284$; $df = 248$; $P < .01$).

Conclusions

The study established that self-esteem and parenting style are, significantly related to child sexual exploitation among secondary school student in three selected schools in Keffi Area of Nasarawa state, Nigeria. The researcher therefore suggested that factors prompting children to sexual exploitation should be highly discourage and abolished for example, banning children from watching sex Videos, strictly adhering to the parental guardian on video to be watched, prohibiting pornography; caresses, masturbation, fondling among many others while factors that will increase the child/adolescent's self-esteem, avoid being exploitation should be encouraged and embraced by the society, educating children about sex and its consequences would also help to eradicate or reduce the increase in child sexual exploitation and monitoring and educating the child about his/her development progress especially when the child has reached adolescent stage where most of his/her sexual organs begin to develop. Also, Parents should be dynamic in the style of parenting so as to properly nurture and raise their children. Parents need to be open and transparent in the course of

nurturing their children to help them avoid factors that influence them to being sexually exploitation and accompanying consequences (Infections including HIV, STDs, Unwanted pregnancy, guilt and shame, low self-esteem, depression and traumatic experience etc).Government should ensure that offenders of sexual exploitation should be disciplinedand punished so as to discourage/reduce impending offenders from committing the same offence. Lastly psychological intervention should be provided by the parents, society, or government so as to improve child's self-esteem.

Recommendations

The following recommendations represent an actionable framework that can guide and support future child abuse and neglect research reflecting the needs and knowledge gaps detailed throughout this research:

1. The development of a national strategic plan to initiate the process of State coordination and resource allocation that is necessary to support the field of child abuse and neglect research.
2. This study represents critical steps toward the creation of a sustainable infrastructure for child abuse and neglect research.
3. While these infrastructure recommendations should be considered in the implementation of a national strategic plan, they are actions of considerable importance that merit separate and specific consideration from the agencies and institutions targeted as key actors.
4. Finally, provide for the evaluation of State and Local Government policies related to child abuse and neglect.

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