

**CHALLENGES OF CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES IN  
UROMI TOWN ESAN NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA EDO  
STATE**

**BY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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BENIN CITY**

**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
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AWARD OF POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA (PGD) DEGREE IN  
SOCIAL WORK.**

**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

## **CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this project was carried out by **Lynn Eseleose Ugege** with Matriculation Number: **PG/SSC2215919** of the department of social work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria for the partial requirement for the award of Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) degree in social work and was supervised by the undersigned.

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Head of Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This research is first and foremost dedicated to Almighty, my beloved mother Barr. Mrs S.B Ugege and my sponsors Dr Valentine Ehimare Imolele and Navy Capt A.O Imolele.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this project. First and foremost, I thank the Almighty for giving me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to carry out this work.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the Challenges of Child Welfare and Protection Services in Uromi Town, Esan North East Local Government Area, Edo State. The main objective was to investigate the barriers hindering effective child welfare and protection in Uromi and to identify strategies for improving the well-being of children. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from a sample of 100 respondents, including caregivers, teachers, community leaders, and social workers, selected through stratified random sampling. Structured questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection, and the results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that harmful cultural practices, poverty, and weak law enforcement were the major challenges affecting child welfare in Uromi. Although awareness of child protection laws was relatively high, knowledge and utilization of available welfare services remained limited. Additionally, most cases of child abuse and neglect were underreported due to fear, stigma, and lack of trust in existing structures. Encouragingly, the study found strong community willingness to participate in child protection initiatives if supported by government and NGOs. The study concludes that child welfare challenges in Uromi are rooted in cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts to bridge the gap between legal frameworks and practical implementation at the grassroots level. It is therefore recommended that government and NGOs: (i) engage community and religious leaders in awareness campaigns to discourage harmful practices, (ii) implement poverty alleviation and empowerment programs to reduce economic pressures on families, (iii) decentralize child welfare services through community-based social workers and confidential reporting systems, and (iv) establish participatory community child protection committees to harness local willingness and strengthen enforcement of child protection laws

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Child welfare encompasses the range of services designed to ensure children's safety, health, development, and overall well-being. In contrast, child protection specifically focuses on preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and all forms of violence against children (UNICEF, 2023). Globally, safeguarding children's rights has become a critical development issue. Frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) establish guiding principles and obligations for governments to ensure the protection and development of children.

In Nigeria, the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003 was enacted to domesticate these international standards. The CRA outlines specific rights of the Nigerian child, including the right to education, protection from abuse, and access to health services (National Human Rights Commission, 2022). Despite this legislative progress, the effective implementation of child protection laws remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities such as Uromi Town, located in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Uromi is an agrarian town where socio-cultural dynamics and economic constraints deeply influence child welfare outcomes. Although the town has experienced some modernization, traditional beliefs, poverty, and weak institutions continue to pose significant barriers to child protection. Child labour remains widespread in the area, as children often engage in street hawking, domestic work, and farming to support household income. According to the National

Bureau of Statistics (2023), over 39% of children in rural Nigeria are engaged in some form of economic activity, often at the expense of their education and development.

Cultural norms and practices further exacerbate the vulnerability of children. Early marriage, particularly among girls, continues to thrive in parts of Uromi, depriving young girls of their right to education and exposing them to health risks, including early pregnancy and childbirth complications ((Girls Not Brides, 2024), a global partnership of civil society organizations working to end child marriage founded by Nelson Mandela). Gender inequality also manifests in limited access to schooling and healthcare for girls, while corporal punishment and child neglect are sometimes justified under the guise of tradition or discipline.

The challenges of child welfare in Uromi are compounded by weak institutional responses. Law enforcement agencies and social welfare institutions often lack the training, resources, and community cooperation necessary to implement child protection measures effectively. As observed by UNICEF Nigeria (2023), many communities lack local-level structures for reporting and responding to child rights violations, which contributes to underreporting and the normalization of abuse.

Moreover, access to essential services such as education and healthcare remains inadequate. Although the Universal Basic Education policy in Nigeria mandates free and compulsory primary education, barriers such as poor school infrastructure, teacher shortages, and indirect costs (e.g., uniforms, transportation) prevent consistent school attendance (UNESCO, 2023 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). In terms of health, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) reports that many rural communities still face inadequate healthcare coverage, leading to high rates of malnutrition, vaccine-preventable diseases, and child mortality.

Given these multi-dimensional challenges, ensuring effective child welfare and protection in Uromi requires a coordinated, community-based, and systemic approach. Strengthening legal implementation, enhancing community awareness, improving household economic conditions, and building resilient social institutions are essential for promoting children's rights and safety. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the key barriers and influences shaping child welfare and protection practices in Uromi, with the aim of informing more effective local interventions and policy implementation.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

In Uromi, issues such as child labor, abuse, neglect, and limited access to education and healthcare persist. These problems are exacerbated by socio-economic hardships, cultural practices, and inadequate enforcement of child protection laws. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the community's development and the fulfillment of children's rights.

Despite concerted national and international efforts to promote child welfare and protection, children in Uromi Town, Esan North East Local Government Area a subset of Esan North East LGA in Edo State continue to encounter profound challenges that impede their holistic development. Although the Nigerian Child Rights Act of 2003 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantee a suite of rights for children, their realization in Uromi remains limited. This shortfall stems from deeply entrenched socio-economic hardship, harmful cultural practices, weak local enforcement of child protection laws, and inadequate access to essential services such as quality education and healthcare.

A particularly pressing concern is the prevalence of child labor. Economic hardship compels many children to perform various forms of labor including street hawking, agricultural work, domestic servitude, and even hazardous tasks that expose them to exploitation and abuse. These

children often endure long hours in unsafe conditions, depriving them of their right to education, protection, and a safe childhood.

Recent data from the 2022 Nigeria Child Labour Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics reveals that in Esan North East LGA, approximately 12% of children were engaged in child labor activities. Other related figures include 8% in another child-labor metric though the exact definitions (e.g., hazardous vs. any labor) may vary between datasets. These statistics provide localized insight into the scale of the problem in your study area.

This prevalence is primarily driven by pervasive poverty and high unemployment among families, coupled with the lack of effective social safety nets for vulnerable households. Cultural norms that tacitly accept children's roles in contributing to family income further perpetuate the cycle. Moreover, Edo State leads Nigeria in external child trafficking, with 20.4% of trafficked victims originating from the state, while internally trafficked children for labor or domestic services account for an additional 3.6%. These numbers underscore the broader context of exploitation beyond the confines of Uromi.

Legally, the presence of structures such as the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT) reflects formal recognition of the problem: since its inception, ETAHT has received over 5,000 returnees, provided vocational training to hundreds, and allocated significant resources toward rehabilitation efforts. Nonetheless, enforcement remains patchy at the local level, and these interventions have yet to fully translate into improved protection and well-being for children in Uromi and its environs. In addition to child labor, abuse and neglect are common problems that threaten the safety and well-being of children in Uromi. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse cases often go unreported due to fear, stigma, and societal acceptance of certain disciplinary practices. Many children suffer maltreatment at the hands of caregivers, teachers, or

employers, yet the lack of effective intervention mechanisms leaves them vulnerable. In some cases, children are abandoned or neglected due to parental separation, economic struggles, or misconceptions about certain illnesses and disabilities.

Cultural beliefs and traditions further complicate efforts to protect children in Uromi. Practices such as early marriage, gender discrimination, and the preference for traditional healing methods over modern healthcare negatively impact children's rights and well-being. For instance, girls are often expected to marry at a young age, cutting short their education and exposing them to early pregnancies and domestic violence. Similarly, some cultural norms discourage formal education, particularly for female children, thereby limiting their future opportunities.

The weak enforcement of child protection laws is another critical problem in Uromi. Although Nigeria has ratified various child rights laws, their implementation at the local level remains inadequate. Law enforcement agencies often lack the necessary training, resources, and motivation to handle child protection cases effectively. Additionally, community members may be reluctant to report cases of child abuse due to fear of retaliation or cultural bias in favor of traditional disciplinary methods. As a result, many children continue to suffer in silence without access to justice or support services.

Furthermore, the lack of access to quality education and healthcare services poses a significant challenge to child welfare in Uromi. Many children are unable to attend school due to financial constraints, long distances to schools, or inadequate learning facilities. Schools in the area often struggle with overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, and a lack of essential resources such as books and teaching materials. Similarly, healthcare services are limited, with many families unable to afford medical treatment for their children. Preventable diseases, malnutrition,

and poor maternal health care contribute to high child morbidity and mortality rates in the community.

The persistence of these challenges underscores the urgent need for effective interventions to improve child welfare and protection in Uromi. Without targeted efforts to address these issues, children in the community will continue to suffer from neglect, abuse, and exploitation, limiting their potential and negatively impacting the future development of the society. This study seeks to identify and analyze the key factors affecting child welfare in Uromi and propose sustainable solutions to enhance child protection and well-being.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **Main Objective:**

The main objective of this study is to examine the challenges of child welfare and protection in Uromi Town in Esan, North east Local Government Area Edo State.

#### **Specific Objectives are to:**

- I. Examine the people's perception and knowledge on child welfare are protection in Uromi Town, Edo State
- II. Identify the challenges to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi town, Edo State?
- III. Identify the strategies to improve and promote effective child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- I. What are the people's perception and knowledge on child welfare are protection in Uromi Town, Edo State?

- II. What are the challenges to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi town, Edo State?
- III. What are the ways to improve and promote effective child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State?

### **1.5 Significance to the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons, as it contributes to the understanding of challenges of child protection services in Uromi Town and provides valuable insights for various stakeholders.

The findings from this research will enhance the body of knowledge on child welfare and protection in local communities, particularly in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area. It provides empirical evidence on the specific challenges children face and how socio-economic, cultural, and legal factors influence their well-being.

The findings of this study will be useful for policymakers at the local, state, and national levels. By identifying gaps in the implementation of child protection laws, the study provides recommendations for improving policies, ensuring better enforcement, and strengthening child welfare institutions.

The findings from study will raise awareness among community members about the importance of child protection and the harmful effects of cultural practices that violate children's rights. By engaging local leaders and parents, the research can help foster a more protective environment for children.

The findings from this study will ensure that child welfare contributes to overall community development. A well-protected child has better access to education, healthcare, and opportunities

for growth, which ultimately benefits the entire society by reducing crime, poverty, and social instability.

## **1.6 Area of the Study**

This study focuses on the challenges of child protection services in Uromi Town, the administrative headquarters of Esan North East Local Government Area in Edo State, Nigeria. Uromi is one of the largest towns in Edo State and serves as a major commercial and cultural hub for the Esan people. Geographically, it lies in the tropical rainforest belt of southern Nigeria, with a mix of rural and semi-urban settlements.

The town has an estimated population of over 200,000 residents, with a significant proportion being children and young people. The local economy is driven by farming, petty trading, small-scale businesses, and civil service employment. Despite its economic potential, poverty remains prevalent, and access to quality social services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare is often limited.

Culturally, Uromi is rooted in strong traditional values and practices, some of which positively promote communal child-rearing, while others such as early marriage, child labour, and gender-based discrimination pose challenges to child protection.

Institutionally, Uromi hosts some government agencies, schools, and healthcare centres, but the capacity of child protection structures such as social welfare offices, family courts, and non-governmental organizations remains inadequate to fully address the needs of vulnerable children. These socio-economic, cultural, legal, and institutional realities form the context within which this study examines the challenges of child protection services in Uromi.

### **1.6.1 Geographical Area**

The research is limited to Uromi Town, one of the major communities in Esan North East LGA, Edo State. While some findings may apply to other parts of Nigeria, the study specifically examines the unique challenges within Uromi.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Terms**

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the following key terms are defined as they relate to the research:

**Child:** A human being below the age of 18, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Nigeria's Child Rights Act (2003). Children are legally considered minors and are entitled to protection, care, and access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and shelter.

**Child Welfare:** A set of services and measures designed to promote the safety, well-being, health, and development of children, ensuring they grow up in secure and supportive environments.

**Protection:** refers to the act of keeping someone or something safe from harm, damage, or loss. It involves measures, laws, systems, or behaviors designed to prevent danger, abuse, exploitation, or injury. Protection can apply to individuals, groups, property, data, or the environment.

**Child Protection:** The actions and systems put in place to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children, safeguarding their rights and dignity.

**Child Rights Act:** The Child Rights Act (CRA) is a legal framework designed to protect and promote the rights and welfare of children (typically under 18 years old). It is based on international standards, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2022), which many countries have adopted into national laws.

**Challenges:** Obstacles or barriers that hinder the effective implementation of child welfare and protection efforts. These may include poverty, harmful cultural practices, poor legal enforcement, limited access to services, and lack of awareness.

**Child Abuse:** Any intentional act that causes physical, emotional, or sexual harm to a child, including neglect and exploitation. This abuse can occur at home, school, workplaces, or within the community.

**Child Welfare Services:** Child welfare services are designed to address the multifaceted needs of children by ensuring protection, health, education, and psychosocial support. In Esan North East LGA, these services are typically coordinated by the Edo State Ministry of Social Development, Gender Issues, and Child Development, in partnership with local government agencies and community organizations. Key services include: child protection and safety services, health and nutrition services, Psychosocial and counseling services, educational and recreational services.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Child welfare and protection are critical components of a society's development, ensuring the well-being of children and safeguarding them from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. In Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State, various challenges hinder effective child welfare and protection. This chapter reviews relevant literature on child welfare, the challenges faced in its implementation, and the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in addressing these issues.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Clarification**

##### **2.1.1 Concept of Child Welfare and Protection**

Child welfare refers to a broad range of social services designed to promote the well-being of children, ensuring their health, safety, education, and overall development. It encompasses policies and programs that protect children from neglect, abuse, exploitation, and violence. Child protection, as a subset of child welfare, focuses specifically on safeguarding children from harm and ensuring their legal rights are upheld.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), every child has the right to survival, development, and protection from harmful practices (United Nations, 2022). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also emphasize the need for effective child welfare systems, particularly in eradicating child poverty, ensuring access to quality education, and protecting children from violence and exploitation (United Nations, 2015).

Nigeria has domesticated the principles of the UNCRC through the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003, which aims to provide a legal framework for child protection. However, despite the existence of these laws, the implementation remains inconsistent across different states, including Edo State (Akinrinmade & Olatunji, 2020). In practice, many children in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas such as Uromi, still face barriers to accessing essential welfare services.

Research by Ebigbo (2003) highlights that child welfare policies in Nigeria are often underfunded and lack effective enforcement mechanisms. Similarly, Okafor (2010) notes that effective child welfare and protection in contexts like Nigeria cannot rely solely on statutory laws and formal policies.

Child welfare is a product of societal concerns that necessitates the use of social workers as a profession. Despite the fact that there are few guides available, Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke and Akinrimisi (2012) imply that child protection authorities in Nigeria have not been equipped with adequate interventions to successfully address the issue of minors, despite the fact that the phenomena is illegal. Notwithstanding the lack rules, there has been a growing interest in protecting children from abuse in Nigeria, with researchers (Ben-Chendo et Al., 2014) urging the establishment of effective programmes and solution-oriented interventions to address child issues. Yet, in the Nigeria context, no contemporary social work study has been devoted toward the formulation of guidelines to address the phenomena of child issues from an ecological viewpoint.

Although Nigeria has accepted international treaties and committed to the protection of children under the Nigerian Child's Right Act (2003), there exists no intervention to direct social workers on exactly how they ought to approach child concerns and safeguard children. Therefore, Jones

et al.(2012, p.1) contend that an overlooked feature of existing social welfare measures in Nigeria "is the need to address children's vulnerability to the risks of child maltreatment".

Moreover, if children's lives are secured and preserved, they will have a better future. This viewpoint is based on both the studied literature and the Author's personal experiences, given her work in the field of child protection for over fifteenth years, as the "child welfare and social work field coordinator of the University of Benin community service programme". The author has worked on children's concerns in conjunction with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) and NGO's. Better future for children can be assured of their lives protected and safeguarded. This view hails from both the literature reviewed and the researcher's personal experiences in working on child protection. Since 2008, as the child welfare and social work field coordinator of the University of Benin community service programme, the author worked on children's concerns in partnership with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) and NGO's.

Based on the author's experience dealing with children in Nigeria, the author discovered that there are few programmes and guidelines that successfully address children's phenomena and well-being. Thus, a variety of reactionary initiatives to improve safety, remediation programmes and regulations to safeguard children from maltreatment occurred as a result of child protection systems and organizations publicizing children's concerns.

Understanding the contextual factors that add to the maltreatment of children and the impacts on them is basic for the improvement of suitable methodologies to encourage children's liberation from ill-treatment in Nigeria. The advantages of intervention will increase information and educate social work procedures to suitably react to the essentials of children in problems.

## **2.1.2 The relationship between Caregivers' Income Levels and the provision of Child Welfare and Protection services**

Caregivers' income levels significantly affect their ability to provide adequate welfare and protection for children. Income determines access to basic needs, education, healthcare, psychosocial stability, and protective services, all of which are essential for a child's well-being and development (UNICEF, 2021).

Firstly, access to basic needs such as nutrition, clothing, shelter, and healthcare is largely income-dependent. Families with higher income are better positioned to provide these necessities, thereby reducing the risk of child neglect and poor health outcomes. Conversely, poverty may increase children's exposure to malnutrition, homelessness, and preventable diseases (National Bureau of Statistics \[NBS], 2022).

Secondly, income influences access to quality services. Caregivers with sufficient financial resources can afford better schools, healthcare facilities, and protective services. They are also more likely to navigate legal and social systems that uphold child rights (Oloko, 2019). Low-income caregivers, on the other hand, may lack awareness or resources to utilize such services, thereby limiting the protective structures around the child.

Thirdly, the psychosocial well-being of caregivers is deeply tied to financial stability. Economic hardship can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and depression among caregivers, which may negatively affect parenting capacity and the emotional climate of the home (Akinboye & Adebayo, 2020). Stable income contributes to a more emotionally secure and nurturing environment.

Furthermore, income affects a caregiver's ability to seek professional help when needed. Higher income families are more likely to afford counseling, therapy, and legal assistance, which are essential during crises such as abuse, parental separation, or trauma. Financial barriers in low-income households often hinder timely intervention, increasing children's vulnerability (Save the Children, 2020).

Finally, income plays a preventive role in cases of abuse and neglect. Financial stress is a well-established risk factor for child maltreatment. Caregivers under economic pressure may unintentionally expose children to neglect, exploitation, or hazardous labor conditions (World Bank, 2021). Thus, improving household income is a critical step in strengthening child protection systems.

In the context of Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area, many caregivers face economic challenges due to unemployment, underemployment, and inadequate social support systems. These challenges directly impact their ability to meet children's needs and safeguard their rights, highlighting the need for income-enhancing policies and community-based support mechanisms.

### **2.1.3 The Role of Caregivers' Educational Attainment in the Awareness and Enforcement of Child Protection Rights**

Several studies have highlighted the pivotal role that caregivers' educational attainment plays in the awareness, understanding, and enforcement of child protection rights. Education equips caregivers with the knowledge and capacity to recognize child abuse, respond appropriately to violations, and make informed decisions in the best interest of the child (UNICEF, 2021). Educated caregivers are generally more aware of legal frameworks such as the Child Rights Act

(2003), and are better positioned to advocate for their children's rights, access social welfare services, and engage with authorities or community-based protection structures (Akinwale & Ogundele, 2018).

In the context of Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, the level of educational attainment among caregivers varies significantly, especially between urban and rural areas. Lower levels of formal education often correlate with limited awareness of children's rights and available protection mechanisms. Many caregivers in the area, particularly those with only primary or no formal education, may be influenced more strongly by traditional beliefs and practices that perpetuate harmful norms such as corporal punishment, child labor, or early marriage. These practices can conflict with modern child protection standards, thereby increasing children's vulnerability to rights violations (Esene, 2020).

Conversely, caregivers with secondary or tertiary education in Uromi tend to adopt more informed parenting strategies, discourage harmful cultural practices, and are more proactive in reporting abuse or seeking legal and social services when children's rights are threatened. These individuals are also more likely to engage in advocacy and community sensitization efforts, thereby contributing to a wider culture of child protection and welfare in their communities.

Thus, the level of education among caregivers not only determines their individual behavior but also has broader implications for community-level enforcement and acceptance of child protection policies and programs.

#### **2.1.4 How Cultural beliefs and Traditional Practices affect the Perception and Implementation of Child Protection in Uromi Community**

Cultural beliefs and traditional practices play a significant role in shaping how child protection is perceived and implemented within a community. These beliefs and practices influence both caregivers and community members' understanding of what constitutes harm or protection, as well as how child welfare services are accessed and received. Below are examples and explanations on how cultural beliefs and practices impact child protection:

**Cultural Interpretations of Abuse:** In some communities, certain behaviors considered abusive or neglectful elsewhere (like corporal punishment, child labor, or early marriage) are seen as necessary for child-rearing. For instance, some Nigerian communities still view child labor as part of a child's developmental process, despite it being categorized as exploitation by international child protection standards. This disconnect can hinder the identification and addressing of harm.

**Acceptance of Corporal Punishment:** In many cultures, corporal punishment is normalized as a disciplinary tool. For example, in certain parts of Africa, corporal punishment is seen as a sign of discipline and respect for authority, which may make it difficult for formal child protection agencies to intervene without encountering resistance.

**Distrust of External Authorities:** Communities with strong traditional practices often view government child protection services or NGOs as outsiders who misunderstand local customs. For example, in rural areas of Esan North East, distrust in government-run child welfare initiatives is common due to a perceived lack of cultural understanding.

**Preference for Informal Networks:** In Uromi, extended family members and community elders are often the first points of contact when child protection issues arise, as these systems are considered more culturally appropriate and trusted than formal institutions.

**Gendered Expectations in Parenting:** In many societies, cultural beliefs about gender roles can lead to disparities in how children are treated. In some parts of Uromi, girls are expected to take on more household responsibilities than boys, limiting their opportunities for education and personal development, which can affect their long-term well-being and child protection outcomes.

**Early Marriage and Childbearing:** In some ethnic communities in Esan North East, early marriage of girls remains culturally accepted. This often leads to the violation of girls' rights, including their education and protection from exploitation, with harmful practices continuing despite legal frameworks against them.

**Use of Traditional Healers:** In certain rural communities of Edo State, traditional healers are often relied upon to address children's health issues. For example, spiritual healers are sometimes sought to address behavioral problems, which can delay proper medical or psychological intervention, putting children at risk.

**Resistance to Medical Intervention:** In some cultures, there is a strong preference for traditional medicine over modern medical practices. For example, in Uromi, some families may prioritize traditional remedies for children suffering from abuse-related injuries, potentially delaying critical medical treatment.

**Emphasis on Collective Responsibility:** In many communities, child protection is seen as a shared responsibility. In Uromi, elders and extended family members often intervene in cases of suspected child harm, but their intervention can be limited by social norms that prevent challenging harmful practices within the family, such as corporal punishment.

**Social Stigma:** Families in Uromi seeking formal child protection services may face social stigma. For example, a family that reports child abuse may be ostracized for not adhering to community values, which discourages them from reaching out for help, even when they need it most.

**Religious Teachings and Child Protection:** In certain communities, religious teachings influence child-rearing practices. In some cases, religious leaders in Uromi may condone practices like corporal punishment, which contradict international standards of child protection but are justified as part of a child's moral training.

**Spiritual Explanations for Behavioral Issues:** In Esan North East, behavioral problems in children are sometimes attributed to spiritual causes, which can lead families to seek spiritual solutions rather than professional child protection services, delaying necessary interventions.

**Normalization of Child Labor:** In agricultural communities like Uromi, child labor is often seen as a rite of passage, with children expected to contribute to the family's livelihood. While international conventions prohibit child labor, these practices persist due to cultural norms that view work as essential for a child's upbringing.

**Exploitation of Children for Economic Gain:** In economically disadvantaged parts of Edo State, children may be sent to work in markets or farms to contribute to family income, a practice that is often culturally accepted despite being exploitative and harmful to the child's well-being.

**Evolving Cultural Norms:** As global awareness of children's rights increases, communities like those in Esan North East are beginning to re-evaluate traditional practices. For example, media campaigns and NGO programs have helped shift attitudes on issues like child marriage and child labor, leading to increased support for child protection initiatives.

Role of Media and NGOs: Organizations like UNICEF and local NGOs have worked closely with community leaders to challenge harmful cultural practices and raise awareness about children's rights. In Uromi, collaborative efforts between community elders and NGOs have successfully promoted the elimination of certain harmful practices, such as early marriage.

By integrating these examples into your study, you will provide a comprehensive and context-specific analysis of how cultural practices and beliefs impact child welfare and protection in Uromi, helping to ensure that your research reflects local realities and challenges.

### **2.1.5 The impact of gender roles on the responsibilities and decisions around child care and protection**

Gender roles play a significant role in shaping the responsibilities and decision-making processes surrounding child care and protection, particularly in traditional societies like those found in Edo State and Uromi. In these communities, caregiving responsibilities are predominantly assigned to women, who are expected to manage the day-to-day child-rearing tasks such as feeding, discipline, and providing emotional support (UNICEF, 2021). In Uromi, a town within Edo State, women are traditionally seen as the backbone of family life, responsible for nurturing and ensuring children's well-being. However, despite their central role in caregiving, women often lack the authority to make critical decisions regarding children's welfare, such as seeking medical treatment or involving child protection services. These decisions are often under the control of male heads of households, who are seen as the final authority in the family structure (Save the Children, 2019). This gendered division of roles can lead to delays in or outright avoidance of protective actions, particularly in cases where male authority might oppose external intervention or when women feel disempowered to challenge harmful practices.

Moreover, gender expectations in Uromi and throughout Edo State heavily influence how children are raised. In many households, girls are tasked with domestic chores and caretaking responsibilities from a young age, limiting their opportunities to attend school or engage in social activities. Early marriage, which remains common in parts of Edo State, is another consequence of gendered expectations. In Uromi, cultural practices often encourage early marriage for girls as a way of preserving family honor and ensuring economic stability. However, this practice deprives girls of their right to education, health, and protection, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Akinola, 2020). Despite legal frameworks that seek to prevent early marriage, these practices persist in some rural areas where cultural traditions carry significant weight. Boys, in contrast, typically have more opportunities to pursue education and are less likely to face early marriage, yet they too are subjected to strict gender norms that may limit their emotional expression and psychosocial development. In many families in Edo State, boys are expected to be strong, resilient, and the future providers for their families, which can lead to emotional suppression and neglect of their mental health.

This gendered approach to child care and protection significantly impacts the effectiveness of child protection systems. In Uromi, and similar communities within Edo State, cultural and gendered expectations often undermine the ability of women to act in their children's best interests, particularly when those interests conflict with male authority or traditional values. As such, gender-sensitive child protection policies are crucial to addressing these challenges and ensuring that both girls and boys receive the care, education, and protection they deserve. Changing entrenched gender norms and encouraging broader community involvement in child protection efforts can help mitigate these issues, fostering a more supportive and equitable environment for all children, irrespective of gender.

### **2.1.6 Early marriage, prevalent in many communities in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State**

This has severe implications on the rights, health, and overall well-being of children, particularly girls. Early marriage, defined as the union of individuals below the age of 18, disrupts the normal developmental trajectory of girls, depriving them of their fundamental rights to education, health, freedom, and personal autonomy. This practice often has long-term consequences that affect not only the girls involved but also their families and communities at large.

In Uromi, early marriage is closely tied to the discontinuation of education for many girls. Once married, girls are often expected to take on household responsibilities, which leads to their withdrawal from school. This prevents them from acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for personal development and future economic independence. For instance, it is not uncommon for families in Uromi to prioritize the marriage of girls over their education, seeing it as a traditional pathway for girls. This trend deprives them of the opportunity to further their studies, limiting their chances for employment and economic empowerment in the future (Akinola, 2020). The lack of education also perpetuates gender inequality, as girls remain trapped in low-income, dependent roles, while boys are often given more educational opportunities.

Early marriage in Uromi exposes girls to significant health risks, particularly concerning pregnancy and childbirth. Girls who marry early are likely to conceive and give birth before their bodies are fully developed, which can lead to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. The risks include maternal mortality, obstetric fistula, pre-eclampsia, and postpartum hemorrhage, as young girls are physically unprepared for the demands of pregnancy and childbirth (UNICEF, 2021). Additionally, adolescent pregnancies are associated with higher rates of low birth weight and premature births, which increase the likelihood of infant mortality. In

Uromi, where many girls are married at ages as young as 13 or 14, the dangers of childbirth-related complications are particularly high, making maternal and child health a critical concern.

Furthermore, girls who marry early are often subject to gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual abuse. The power imbalance in these marriages, where the girl is often much younger and physically weaker than her husband, creates an environment where abuse is more likely to occur. This increases the psychological and emotional distress for young brides and leads to long-term mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (UNICEF, 2020).

Early marriage in Uromi also has significant psychological effects on young girls. These girls, often still in their formative years, are forced into adult roles that they are not emotionally prepared for. The pressure to take on responsibilities as wives and mothers at a young age can lead to emotional trauma, feelings of isolation, and low self-esteem. Many girls report feeling trapped in their marriages and powerless to change their circumstances, leading to mental health struggles (Akinola, 2020). In some cases, girls may also experience identity confusion and loss of agency, as they are expected to conform to social norms that restrict their autonomy and limit their social interactions outside the home.

Early marriage reinforces gender inequality by placing girls in subordinate positions within their families and communities. In Uromi, as in many parts of Edo State, traditional beliefs about gender roles place women and girls in domestic spheres, where their primary function is to support their husbands and raise children. This cultural expectation limits the ability of girls to participate in decision-making processes, both in their families and communities. Girls who marry early are often denied the opportunity to develop the skills, confidence, and independence needed to make choices about their futures, further entrenching social empowerment.

The lack of economic independence is another significant consequence of early marriage. In Uromi, girls who marry young are often financially dependent on their husbands or in-laws, which makes it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships or improve their socio-economic status. Without access to education or vocational training, they are largely confined to domestic labor, making it nearly impossible to break the cycle of poverty that often accompanies early marriage (Save the Children, 2019).

Early marriage violates both Nigerian laws and international human rights standards. The Child Rights Act of Nigeria, which sets the minimum age of marriage at 18, is often overlooked in communities like Uromi, where traditional practices take precedence over national legislation. By marrying girls off before the age of 18, communities in Uromi are violating the rights of children to freely choose their spouses, the right to education, and the right to protection from harm. This legal disregard not only undermines the rights of girls but also perpetuates a cycle of inequality and vulnerability

The consequences of early marriage extend beyond the individual girl to affect future generations. In Uromi, children born to young mothers face a higher likelihood of experiencing similar disadvantages as their mothers, including limited access to education, poor health outcomes, and higher susceptibility to poverty. The intergenerational effects of early marriage further perpetuate the cycle of inequality, as young mothers are often unable to provide the care, attention, and resources necessary to break out of poverty (UNICEF, 2020). This inter-generational cycle of disadvantage hinders community development and exacerbates social and economic inequalities.

The implications of early marriage on the rights, health, and well-being of girls in Uromi are far-reaching and profound. Early marriage deprives girls of their educational rights, exposes them to significant health risks, and undermines their social and emotional development. It perpetuates

gender inequality, social dis-empowerment, and legal violations, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and limited opportunities for young girls. Addressing early marriage in Uromi requires a multi-faceted approach that includes the enforcement of child protection laws, education and awareness campaigns, and community-driven initiatives to challenge harmful cultural practices. Empowering girls through education and social support is crucial to breaking the cycle of early marriage and improving the overall well-being of girls in Uromi and Edo State.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

The empirical review draws on existing literature to examine various factors influencing child welfare and protection. Studies have shown that income levels, employment status, education, cultural practices, gender roles, and early marriage significantly affect child welfare outcomes. These factors are particularly pertinent in understanding the challenges faced by children in rural and semi-urban communities such as Uromi, Edo State.

### **2.2.1 Income and Child Welfare**

Income plays a crucial role in shaping the welfare of children. According to Olanrewaju et al. (2023), children in low-income households in Nigeria face multiple disadvantages, including being out of school, experiencing malnutrition, and engaging in exploitative labor. These children are often deprived of essential services such as education and healthcare. The financial constraints faced by caregivers in Uromi may similarly result in inadequate access to quality schooling and healthcare, further exacerbating vulnerabilities. The study suggests that children from wealthier households are more likely to attend school, receive proper nutrition, and live in safer, more stable environments. In contrast, children in low-income families often face a higher likelihood of being involved in child labor, which limits their developmental potential and exposes them to various risks, including physical abuse and exploitation.

### **2.2.2 Employment and Access to Basic Needs**

The employment status of caregivers has a direct impact on children's access to basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare. Ibrahim & Dauda (2022) explored this relationship in northern Nigeria, highlighting that children whose caregivers are unemployed or engaged in informal employment have limited access to these basic needs. These children often face neglect and are at higher risk of abuse, as the lack of stable employment can lead to financial instability, which in turn affects the caregiver's ability to provide adequate care. In Uromi, where informal employment is common, caregivers working in irregular or unstable jobs may find it difficult to secure reliable income, further jeopardizing their children's well-being. The instability of such employment reduces caregivers' capacity to consistently meet the physical, emotional, and educational needs of their children, often leading to children being more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

### **2.2.3 Education and Child Rights Awareness**

Caregiver education is a critical factor in the effective protection of children's rights. Adebayo (2021) found that caregivers with higher levels of education, particularly those with tertiary education, are more likely to understand children's rights and engage in proactive practices to protect them. Educated caregivers are more aware of the importance of education for their children and are more likely to ensure that their children attend school regularly. They are also more likely to report cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. In contrast, caregivers with lower educational levels may lack awareness of child protection laws and may be less likely to advocate for their children's rights. In the context of Uromi, the level of education among caregivers directly impacts their ability to enforce and protect their children's rights. Educated

caregivers are better positioned to navigate legal systems, seek support from child protection agencies, and ensure their children are safe from harm.

#### **2.2.4 Cultural Practices and Child Protection**

Cultural practices can sometimes conflict with child protection laws, posing significant challenges to the enforcement of children's rights. Research by Eke & Obi (2022) in southeastern Nigeria examined how harmful cultural practices, such as early marriage and corporal punishment, persist despite the existence of legal frameworks designed to protect children. These practices, rooted in deep-seated traditions, often undermine efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of children. In communities like Uromi, where traditional beliefs hold considerable influence, cultural norms may hinder the full implementation of child protection policies. For instance, the practice of early marriage is often justified by cultural traditions, despite its harmful effects on girls' health, education, and overall development. Such practices are often perpetuated due to a lack of awareness or resistance to change, and they directly conflict with the provisions of the Child Rights Act (2003), which seeks to eliminate harmful practices.

#### **2.2.5 Gender Roles and Caregiving**

Gender roles within Nigerian households have a profound effect on child welfare. Uche and Ayodeji (2023) highlight that gender norms often place the primary responsibility for childcare on women, leaving men with limited involvement in child-rearing and protection. This gendered division of labor not only reinforces unequal power dynamics but also limits the resources and decision-making capacity available to ensure the well-being of children. In many cases, women bear the brunt of child welfare responsibilities, and their caregiving roles may be further exacerbated by economic pressures. In communities like Uromi, where traditional gender norms

are strongly entrenched, this imbalance in caregiving responsibilities may contribute to the marginalization of fathers in decisions regarding child protection. The exclusion of fathers in caregiving can result in less comprehensive care and may lead to a lack of coordination in child welfare decisions. Additionally, gender inequalities may hinder the ability of women to seek help or report child protection issues, as they may face societal stigma or lack the necessary support.

### **2.2.6 Early Marriage and Child Well-being**

Early marriage remains a significant challenge for child welfare in rural Nigeria, with detrimental effects on the health, education, and rights of young girls. According to Girls Not Brides (2024), early marriage continues to undermine girls' opportunities for education, exposes them to early pregnancies, and increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence. In rural communities such as Uromi, the practice of early marriage is often justified by economic or cultural reasons, with families believing it will secure the future of their daughters. However, early marriage often leads to the disruption of education, early childbearing, and an increased risk of physical and emotional abuse. These consequences not only affect the immediate health and well-being of the child but also limit their opportunities for personal and economic development in the long term. Early marriage also perpetuates gender inequality, as girls are often married off at an age when they are not mentally, physically, or emotionally prepared for the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Effective analysis of child welfare and protection challenges requires both a contextual and normative approach. This study adopts two complementary theories: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and the Rights-Based Approach to Child Protection. Together, they provide a holistic framework for understanding the complex interplay of environmental, cultural,

socio-economic, and legal factors influencing the well-being of children in Uromi Town, Esan  
North-East LGA of Edo State

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Preamble

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted for the study on child welfare and protection in Uromi, Esan North-East Local Government Area, Edo State. It describes the research design, study population (with sub-group population figures), sample size, sampling techniques, data sources, research instruments, methods of data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which allows for systematic collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This design is appropriate for identifying and analyzing challenges in child welfare and protection by exploring relationships between variables such as caregivers' income, education, employment, cultural practices, gender roles, and early marriage.

#### 3.2 Population of the Study

The study population comprised caregivers, community leaders, social workers, teachers, health workers, and officials from relevant government and non-governmental agencies involved in child welfare and protection in Uromi Town.

Based on demographic data:

**Table 3.2.1: Estimates based on proportionate population and occupational data from Edo State profiles**

<b>Population Group</b>	<b>Estimated Size</b>
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Total Uromi population	108,608 people
Children under 5 years	10,444 people
Parents/guardians (caregivers of children)	~27,000 people
Community leaders (traditional, religious heads)	~300 people
Social workers/health personnel	~150 people
Teachers (primary and secondary)	~1,200 people
NGO/government child welfare officials	~50 people

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

From the total population, a sample size of 100 respondents was drawn for this study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation of all key subgroups. The strata include:

Caregivers (parents/guardians)

Community leaders

Social workers and health personnel

Teachers

NGO/government child welfare officials

Within each stratum, respondents were randomly selected until the required total of 100 was reached. This method ensures that the views of all relevant categories were fairly represented.

### **3.4 Sources of Data Collection**

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires while secondary data source were various literature review papers on child welfare and protection.

### **3.5 Instrument of Data Collection**

The instrument adopted for this study was structured questionnaire and the sections include demographic information (age, gender, education, income, employment status) and statement that address the research objectives. The questionnaire adopted both open and close ended questions.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

This study adopted face and content validity. The questionnaire was given to supervisor and went through scrutiny by the social work department research committee board for expert review and modification. Their recommendations reflected in the final questionnaire for the administration.

A pilot study involving 10 respondents from a neighboring community with similar characteristics was conducted to measure the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher were considered acceptable.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

The researcher and trained assistants administered the questionnaires in person and ensure they all filled it and return it for the analysis.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, and means to summarize demographic data and trends through SPSS statistical software.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

This study complied with the established ethical standards by:

Obtaining informed consent from all participants

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

Avoiding any emotional or psychological harm

Allowing participants the right to withdraw at any stage of the research

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### Preamble

This chapter presents the results and findings derived from the field survey conducted on the challenges of child welfare and protection in Uromi town, Esan North East LGA, Edo State. The data collected were analyzed to address the research objectives and answer the formulated research questions. The presentation focuses on providing descriptive insights knowledge and perception, challenges and strategies to improve child welfare and protection.

#### 4.1 Socio-Demographic Analysis

Table 1: presents the socio-demographic details of the respondents, showing the distribution of the respondents across several socio-demographic variables.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	40	40.0%
Female	60	60.0%
<b>Age</b>		
18-25 years	27	27.0%
26-35 years	24	24.0%
36-45 years	25	25.0%
46-55 years	24	24.0%
<b>Marita Status</b>		
Single	42	42.0%
Married	50	50.0%
divorce/separated	8	8.0%
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
No Formal Education	9	9.0%
PSLC	8	8.0%
O LEVEL	26	26.0%
Tertiary Level	57	57.0%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Civil Servant	17	17.0%
Trader	8	8.0%
Artisan	8	8.0%

	Unemployed	43	43.0%
	self-employed	24	24.0%
<b>Religion</b>			
	Christianity	92	92.0%
	Islam	8	8.0%

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**(Source: Field Survey, 2025)**

The above demographic analysis revealed that 60% of the respondents were female while 40% were male. This indicates that women constituted the majority of the sample, reflecting their likely higher engagement in issues relating to child welfare which aligns with the traditional role of women as primary caregivers. In terms of age distribution, respondents were fairly spread across age categories: 27% were aged 18–25 years, 24% were between 26–35 years, 25% were aged 36–45 years while another 24% were between 46–55 years. This balanced representation suggests that perspectives on child welfare cut across both younger and older adults in Uromi.

With respect to marital status, half (50%) of the respondents were married, 42% were single, while 8% were divorced or separated. This distribution implies that insights were drawn from both experienced parents and younger unmarried adults which enriches the understanding of community perceptions. Regarding educational qualification, 57% attained tertiary education, 26% had O’Level certificates, 8% had primary education, while 9% had no formal education. The relatively high proportion of tertiary-educated respondents suggests that many participants were well-informed which could influence their perspectives on child welfare and rights. Occupationally, the largest group was unemployed (43%), followed by self-employed individuals (24%), civil servants (17%), traders (8%), and artisans (8%). The dominance of unemployed respondents highlights the prevalence of economic hardship in the community which may directly or indirectly affect child welfare. On religion, Christianity was the predominant affiliation (92%), while 8% reported belonging to Islam. This reflects the dominant Christian orientation of Uromi Town.



## SECTION B

### 4.2 The Results of the Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** What are the people’s perception and knowledge on child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State?

**Table 2:** descriptive analysis of perception and knowledge of child welfare and protection

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Are you aware of any child welfare or protection laws in Nigeria</b>		
Yes	68	68.0%
No	32	32.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Are children in Uromi adequately protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation</b>		
Yes	0	0.0%
No	49	49.0%
Not sure	51	51.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Who do you think is the most responsible for child protection in the community</b>		
Parent/guardian	50	50.0%
School	9	9.0%
NGOs	6	6.0%
Government	20	20.0%
Religion Institution	5	5.0%
Community Leader	10	10.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Which of the following child protection challenges have you observed in Uromi</b>		
child abuse; child labour; street hawking; neglect	34	34.0%
child abuse; neglect; poor access to education	24	24.0%
poor access to education	8	8.0%
poor access to education; neglect	16	16.0%
street hawking	18	18.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

The above table revealed that the awareness of child welfare and protection laws in Nigeria, 68% indicated awareness while 32% were not. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness, though a significant minority still lacked knowledge of such laws. However, despite this awareness, 51% of respondents believed that children in Uromi are not adequately protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, while 49% were uncertain. Notably, none agreed that children were adequately protected. This highlights a glaring gap between awareness of child protection laws and their perceived effectiveness in practice.

On responsibility for child protection, 50% of respondents identified parents/guardians as the most responsible, while 20% mentioned government agencies, while 30% mentioned schools, NGOs, religious institutions, and community leaders. This indicates that child protection is largely perceived as a family responsibility, with less emphasis on broader institutional involvement.

In terms of observed challenges, 34% highlighted the combination of child abuse, child labour, street hawking, and neglect as prominent; 24% identified child abuse, neglect, and poor access to education; 18% mentioned street hawking alone; while smaller percentages cited poor education and neglect. This reflects the multidimensional nature of child welfare challenges in Uromi, where abuse and neglect are compounded by socioeconomic factors like poverty and lack of access to education.

**Research Question 2:** What are the challenges to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi town, Edo State?

**Table 3:** Descriptive analysis of the challenges to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi town, Edo State

<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Do you think cultural beliefs in Uromi hinder child protection efforts</b>		
Yes	60	60.0%
No	32	32.0%
Not sure	8	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Are there government or community-based programs in Uromi that is aim at supporting child welfare</b>		
Yes	8	8.0%
No	41	41.0%
Not aware	51	51.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Have you ever reported or witness a case of child abuse or neglect</b>		
Yes	8	8.0%
No	92	92.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>What are the majors barriers to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi</b>		
ignorance; government irresponsibility	8	8.0%
Lack of awareness	18	18.0%
Poverty	16	16.0%
poverty; cultural practice; lack of education	8	8.0%
poverty; cultural practices; inadequate government support; lack of education	17	17.0%
poverty; ignorance; lack of education	8	8.0%
Weak law enforcement; lack of education	25	25.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Cultural beliefs were found to be a significant barrier: 60% of respondents agreed that cultural practices hinder child protection efforts, 32% disagreed, while 8% were uncertain. This underscores the entrenched influence of cultural norms in shaping child welfare outcomes such as practices that may perpetuate neglect or exploitation.

On the availability of government or community-based child welfare programs, 51% of respondents claimed they were not aware of any, 41% denied their existence outright, while only 8% reported awareness. This indicates a significant gap in the visibility and accessibility of child protection initiatives in Uromi. Furthermore, when asked if they had ever reported or witnessed a case of child abuse or neglect, only 8% responded affirmatively, while an overwhelming 92% had not. This suggests a culture of silence, fear, or lack of trust in reporting mechanisms, which greatly undermines effective child protection.

Respondents identified several barriers to child welfare, with 25% citing a combination of poverty, lack of awareness, lack of education, weak law enforcement, and inadequate government support. Others identified ignorance and government irresponsibility (8%), poverty alone (16%), and poverty combined with cultural practices (17%). This shows that the major impediments to child welfare are structural and systemic particularly poverty, inadequate enforcement of laws, and harmful cultural practices.

**Research Question 3:** What are the ways to improve and promote effective child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State?

**Table 4:** descriptive analysis of perception and knowledge of child welfare and protection

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>What do you think can be done to improve child welfare and protection in Uromi</b>		
Provision of essential services and needs	8	8.0%
Addressing harmful cultural practices	9	9.0%

Creating awareness on child protection and welfare law	24	24.0%
Parent should protect their children	8	8.0%
provision of quality education for school children	17	8.0%
Employment of social workers as child welfare officer	17	17.0%
Creation of poverty alleviation programmes	9	9.0%
Effective law enforcement and punish the offenders	8	8.0%
<b>Would you be willing to participate in community efforts to protect children's rights</b>		
Yes	74	74.0%
No	18	18.0%
Maybe	8	8.0%
<b>What role should the government play to enhance child protection in your community</b>		
Protection and promotion of child right and welfare	16	16.0%
Provision of free and quality education	8	8.0%
Provision of quality healthcare	16	16.0%
Effective enforcement of child protection law and punishment of perpetrator of child right act	59	51.0%
creation of specialized agencies	8	8.0%

**(Source: Field Survey, 2025)**

The above table revealed the respondents' suggestion of various strategies for promoting child welfare in Uromi. A significant proportion (24%) emphasized creation of awareness on child welfare and protection law. Others employing social workers as child welfare officers (17%), provision of quality education for children (17%), addressing harmful cultural practices (9%), creation of poverty alleviation programmes (9%), effective law enforcement and punishment of the offenders (8%) and access to essential services (8%). This demonstrates that respondents see solutions as lying in both structural reforms (employment of professionals, government action, poverty alleviation) and socio-cultural change (awareness, law enforcement).

Regarding the willingness to participate in community efforts to protect children's rights, 74% indicated readiness, 18% said no, while 8% were undecided. This reflects strong community interest in improving child welfare, although participation may depend on the provision of adequate structures and support systems.

On the role of government, respondents emphasized multiple interventions such as Protection and promotion of child right and welfare (16%), Provision of free and quality education (8%), Provision of quality healthcare (16%), creation of specialized agencies (8%), effective enforcement of child protection law and punishment of perpetrator of child right act (51%). These responses highlight community expectations that government should provide both preventive and corrective mechanisms to safeguard children's welfare.

### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

This study investigated the challenges of child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State. The findings are discussed here in relation to the research questions.

The first major finding revealed that cultural beliefs and practices significantly hinder child welfare and protection in Uromi. A majority of respondents agreed that certain entrenched traditions perpetuate neglect, child labour, and weak reporting of abuse. This finding is consistent with the study of Omorogiuwa and Igun (2023) who examined the influence of cultural and religious beliefs on girl-child education in Egor Local Government, Edo State, Nigeria, using a sample of 500 respondents in a descriptive survey design. Their study showed that cultural traditions constrained girl-child enrolment and participation in school, thereby limiting protection rights. Similarly, a qualitative study conducted in Akwa Ibom State by Udo et al. (2023), which engaged 30 in-depth interviews and six focus group discussions, found that socio-cultural contexts strongly influenced civil registration of under-five children, with many parents relying on cultural practices instead of formal institutions. These studies align with the present finding, underscoring that cultural norms remain a barrier to child protection. The implication is that interventions must be culturally sensitive and involve community and religious leaders in order to promote change.

The second major finding identified poverty and economic hardship as critical challenges affecting child welfare in Uromi. Respondents emphasized that poverty leads to neglect, child labour, street hawking, and poor access to education. This is consistent with the large-scale study of Manyong et al. (2021), which surveyed 1,642 households across five Nigerian states using quantitative regression models. Their study revealed that poverty and household hunger directly contributed to poor child nutrition and welfare outcomes. Similarly, Adewumi and Bwowe (2024), in a cross-sectional study conducted in Ondo State with 300 households, found that economic hardship was the most significant factor driving child labour, exposing children to exploitation and threatening their education. Both studies confirm that poverty not only underpins poor welfare outcomes but also exacerbates vulnerability to abuse and neglect. The implication of this finding is that child protection interventions in Uromi cannot succeed in isolation from poverty reduction strategies such as cash transfers, school feeding programs, and livelihood empowerment schemes.

Another finding showed that awareness of child protection laws was relatively high in Uromi, yet knowledge of government or community-based programs was very low, and reporting of abuse cases was rare. Only a small fraction of respondents had ever reported or witnessed child abuse, while most remained silent. This finding resonates with the work of Eyang and Ckclaimz (2025), who conducted a quantitative survey of 150 participants in Cross River State to assess perceptions of child protection social workers. They found that less than half of respondents had adequate knowledge of child protection services, and most did not know how to access or report cases of abuse. In a related study, Onalu, Ramsey-Soroghaye, and Okah (2022) explored safety concerns among under-15 house helpers in Nigeria through ten qualitative interviews. They discovered that most victims of abuse suffered in silence because reporting mechanisms were

weak, stigmatized, or distrusted by communities. These findings align with the present study by highlighting the wide gap between the existence of child protection laws and their actual implementation at the grassroots level. The implication is that strengthening awareness, trust, and accessibility of child welfare institutions in Uromi is essential for breaking the cycle of silence.

Finally, the study revealed a strong willingness among community members in Uromi to participate in child protection initiatives. Most respondents indicated readiness to engage in awareness campaigns, promote children's safety, and support enforcement of child protection laws. This finding is supported by Omorogiuwa and Igun (2023), who also reported that community members in Edo State recognized their role in supporting girl-child education and proposed strategies such as involving religious leaders and expanding awareness. Likewise, Adewumi and Bwowe (2024) found in Ondo State that community respondents strongly advocated for strict law enforcement, social protection, and sensitization to reduce child labour. These studies affirm that despite challenges, communities are willing partners in promoting child welfare. The implication is that government and NGOs should build on this willingness by involving communities in participatory child protection programs, appointing local social workers, and supporting grassroots initiatives.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the challenges of child welfare and protection in Uromi Town, Edo State. The socio-demographic analysis revealed that the majority of respondents were female, most were within the active age range of 18–45 years, and over half had tertiary education. However, unemployment was prevalent which reflects the economic hardships that shape household dynamics and children’s welfare.

The first finding showed that cultural beliefs and practices play a major role in shaping child welfare outcomes in Uromi. Many respondents agreed that harmful traditions and entrenched cultural norms hindered child protection efforts particularly in cases of child labour, neglect, and underreporting of abuse.

The second finding revealed that poverty and economic hardship are among the strongest challenges to effective child welfare. Respondents noted that financial struggles expose children to labour, street hawking, and neglect, while also denying them access to education and healthcare.

A third key finding highlighted a significant gap between awareness of child protection laws and the actual utilization of welfare services. While many respondents acknowledged knowledge of such laws, very few had ever reported abuse cases, and most were unaware of existing government or community-based programs. This suggests that reporting mechanisms remain inaccessible, underutilized, or distrusted.

Finally, the study found that there is strong willingness among community members to participate in child protection initiatives. Respondents recommended awareness creation, employment of social workers, effective government policies, and law enforcement as strategies to improve the welfare of children in Uromi.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The findings of this study confirm that challenges to child welfare in Uromi Town are rooted in cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Cultural beliefs and practices, while integral to community life, often perpetuate harmful practices that undermine children's rights. Economic hardship, particularly poverty and unemployment, was shown to exacerbate vulnerability to neglect and exploitation. At the institutional level, awareness of child protection laws exists, but weak implementation, low trust, and poor accessibility hinder effective protection.

Nonetheless, the strong willingness of community members to support child welfare provides an opportunity for designing locally driven solutions. This highlights the need for a multi-dimensional approach that combines cultural engagement, economic empowerment, institutional strengthening, and community participation. If effectively implemented, these measures can bridge the gap between legislation and practice thereby promoting the holistic welfare and protection of children in Uromi Town and beyond.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the four major findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Addressing of Cultural Barriers through Community Engagement:** Government agencies, NGOs, and civil society groups should design culturally sensitive programs that involve traditional rulers, religious leaders, and other community influencers.

These leaders should be at the forefront of campaigns to discourage harmful practices such as child labour and neglect. Public awareness should also be promoted through community meetings, local radio, and indigenous-language campaigns.

2. **Strengthening Poverty Alleviation and Economic Empowerment Programs;** to reduce poverty-driven vulnerabilities, government should expand conditional cash transfers, school feeding initiatives, and healthcare subsidies for low-income households. Additionally, livelihood empowerment schemes, vocational training, and microcredit opportunities should be provided for parents, particularly unemployed and self-employed respondents.
3. **Enhancing Awareness, Accessibility, and Reporting Mechanisms:** Child protection services should be decentralized to the community level through welfare desks and the deployment of trained social workers. Awareness campaigns should focus on educating residents on where and how to report abuse cases. In addition, confidential reporting systems such as toll-free hotlines, mobile apps, and child-friendly centres should be established to encourage reporting without fear of reprisal or stigma.
4. **Harnessing Community Willingness for Participatory Child Protection:** The strong willingness of community members should be institutionalized through the creation of community child protection committees. These committees, made up of parents, teachers, youths, and volunteers, should serve as watchdogs at the grassroots level. Employing social workers within the community will further strengthen monitoring, response, and collaboration with formal child protection institutions.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

Future research should expand the scope by examining gender-specific experiences of child welfare in Uromi, as boys and girls may face different vulnerabilities. Comparative studies could also be conducted in other towns within Edo State to assess whether cultural and economic influences on child welfare are similar or context-specific. Finally, mixed-method research designs incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews could provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of children and their caregivers.

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**APPENDIX**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

Dear Ma/Sir,

I am a Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) student of Social work Department in University of Benin, researching on “**CHALLENGES OF CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION IN UROMI TOWN IN ESAN, NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA EDO STATE**”. This study is conducted as part of the requirements for my award of PGD Degree in the University of Benin. I hereby solicit for your consent and cooperation as your responses will be used for academic purposes only and treated with utmost confidentiality. I will be glad if correct and honest information is given to enhance the quality and credibility of this thesis.

Thank you for anticipated co-operation.

**UGEGE LYNN ESELEOSE**

Instruction: Tick (✓) boxes that match your choice of answers to the following questions.

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION** (Please tick (✓) the appropriate option)

Section A: Demographic Data

Instruction: Please tick (✓) the option that applies to you.

**1. Gender**

Male ( ) Female( ) Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Age:** 18–25 years ( ) 26–35 years ( ) 36–45 years ( ) 46–55 years ( ) 56 years and above ( )

**3. Marital Status**

Single ( ) Married ( ) Divorced/Separated Widowed ( ) Educational Qualification ( )

**4. Educational Qualification**

No formal education ( ) Primary education ( ) Secondary education ( ) Tertiary education Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Occupation**

Civil servant ( ) Farmer ( ) Trader ( ) Artisan ( ) Unemployed ( )

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Religion: please specify** \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: Knowledge and Perception of Child Welfare and Protection**

7. Are you aware of any child welfare or protection laws in Nigeria? \_\_\_\_\_

8. In your opinion, are children in Uromi adequately protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation?

Yes ( ), No ( ) Not sure ( )

9. Which of the following child protection challenges have you observed in Uromi? (You may select more than one)

Child abuse ( ), Child labour ( ), Street hawking, Poor access to education ( ), Neglect by parents or guardians ( ), Domestic violence ( ), Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

10. Who do you think is most responsible for ensuring child protection in the community?

Parents/Guardians ( ), Government ( ) Religious institutions ( ) Schools ( ) Community leaders ( ) NGOs ( )

**SECTION C: Challenges to Effective Child Welfare and Protection**

11. What are the major barriers to effective child welfare and protection in Uromi?

**(Tick all that apply)**

12. Poverty ( ), Cultural practices/traditions ( ) Lack of awareness ( ), Weak law enforcement ( ), Inadequate government support ( ), Lack of education ( ), Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you think cultural beliefs in Uromi hinder child protection efforts?

Yes ( ), No ( ), Not sure ( )

14. Are there government or community-based programs in Uromi aimed at supporting child welfare?

Yes ( ), No ( ), Not aware

15. Have you ever reported or witnessed a case of child abuse or neglect?

Yes ( ), No ( ), If yes, was appropriate action taken? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION D: Recommendations and Solutions**

16. What do you think should be done to improve child welfare and protection in Uromi?

\_\_\_\_\_.

17. Would you be willing to participate in community efforts to protect children's rights?

Yes ( ), No ( ), Maybe ( )

18. What role should the government play to enhance child protection in your community?

\_\_\_\_\_