

**INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL FACTORS ON REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE CASES  
AMONG TEENAGERS IN EKOSODIN COMMUNITY**

**BY**

**DEBORAH OSATO EMMUMEJAKPOR  
SSC2106037**

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

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

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**PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF  
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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that research work was carried out by Miss Deborah Osato Emmumejakpor with Matriculation number SSC2106037 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Sciences (B.Sc.) degree in Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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**Assoc. Prof. (Mrs.) T. B. E. Omorogiuwa**  
*(Project Supervisor)*

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**Dr. (Mrs.) H. E. Eweka**  
*(Head of Department)*

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**DATE**

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for his mercy and grace and to everyone who has been part of this Journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Title Page        | i   |
| Certification     | iii |
| Dedication        | iv  |
| Acknowledgements  | v   |
| Table of Contents | vii |
| Abstract          | xi  |

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

|     |                                   |    |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1.1 | Background to the Study           | 1  |
| 1.2 | Statement of the Research Problem | 5  |
| 1.3 | Objective of the Study            | 7  |
| 1.4 | Research Questions                | 8  |
| 1.5 | Significance of the Study         | 8  |
| 1.6 | Scope of Study                    | 9  |
| 1.7 | Definition of Terms               | 10 |

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 2.1   | Review of Relevant Concepts   | 12 |
| 2.1.1 | Concept of Empowerment  | 12 |
| 2.1.2 | Concept of Resilience   | 14 |
| 2.1.3 | The Role of Cultural Norms in Teenagers' Perceptions<br>of Sexual Abuse         | 15 |
| 2.1.4 | Influence of Sexual Abuse Stigma in Victim's Family                             | 17 |
| 2.1.5 | Gender Roles as Barriers to Abuse Disclosure                                    | 18 |
| 2.1.6 | Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Enhancing Abuse<br>Reporting Among Teenagers | 19 |
| 2.1.7 | Structural Barriers Hindering Disclosure in Communities                         | 20 |
| 2.2   | Empirical Review  | 21 |
| 2.3   | Theoretical Framework   | 24 |
| 2.3.1 | Social Learning Theory  | 25 |
| 2.3.2 | Attachment Theory   | 26 |

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

|     |                         |    |
|-----|-------------------------|----|
| 3.1 | Research Design         | 29 |
| 3.2 | Population of the Study | 29 |

|     |                                |    |
|-----|--------------------------------|----|
| 3.3 | Sample Size                    | 30 |
| 3.4 | Sampling Technique             | 31 |
| 3.5 | Instrument for Data Collection | 31 |
| 3.6 | Method of Data Collection      | 32 |
| 3.7 | Method of Data Analysis        | 33 |
| 3.8 | Ethical Considerations         | 33 |

#### CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 4.0   | Introduction   | 35 |
| 4.1   | Demographic Analysis   | 35 |
| 4.2   | Analysis of Research Question  | 38 |
| 4.2.2 | The Influence of Sexual Abuse Stigma in Victim’s Family  | 40 |
| 4.2.3 | Ways in which Traditional Gender Roles Affect Teenagers’<br>Willingness to Disclose Sexual Abuse | 42 |
| 4.2.4 | Ways in which Culturally Sensitive Strategies Can Encourage<br>Teenagers to Report Sexual Abuse  | 43 |
| 4.2.5 | Barriers within that Community Hinder Teenagers from<br>Disclosing Sexual Abuse                  | 45 |
| 4.3   | Discussion of Findings   | 47 |

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

|     |                           |    |
|-----|---------------------------|----|
| 5.1 | Summary of Findings       | 51 |
| 5.2 | Summary                   | 53 |
| 5.3 | Contribution to Knowledge | 54 |
| 5.4 | Conclusion                | 55 |
| 5.5 | Recommendations           | 57 |
|     | References                | 60 |
|     | Appendix                  | 64 |

## ABSTRACT

This study examined how cultural factors influence the reporting of sexual abuse among teenagers in Ekosodin Community. The research focused on the ways cultural beliefs, family stigma, gender expectations, and institutional barriers shape whether young people disclose abuse. A total of 384 respondents aged 13 to 17 participated, with data collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics.

The findings show that cultural silence, taboo attitudes toward sexual matters, and honour-based thinking strongly affect how teenagers interpret abuse. Many respondents indicated that victims are seen as bringing shame to their families, which discourages disclosure. Family stigma emerged as a major barrier, with most teenagers reporting that families fear reputational damage and often suppress discussion of abuse. Gender also played a notable role in the reporting of abuse. Girls were viewed as more believable when reporting abuse, while boys faced doubt tied to expectations of strength and emotional toughness. The study further revealed widespread distrust of authorities, long delays in case handling, and perceptions of bias or corruption in formal reporting channels.

Respondents identified the involvement of trusted community leaders, confidential reporting structures, and school-based awareness programmes as strategies that could encourage disclosure. The study concludes that under-reporting in Ekosodin is sustained by an interplay of cultural norms, family pressures, gendered beliefs, and institutional weaknesses. It recommends community-driven education, strengthened family support, gender-sensitive interventions, and improved institutional responsiveness as essential steps toward creating an environment where teenagers can report sexual abuse safely and without fear.



# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Sexual abuse among teenagers is a pervasive and deeply troubling issue that undermines the health, dignity, and future of young people worldwide. Defined as any unwanted sexual activity, including molestation, rape, or coercion, where consent is not freely given or cannot be given due to age or power imbalances (World Health Organization WHO, 2020), sexual abuse leaves lasting physical, psychological, and social scars (Alves et al., 2024). Teenagers, typically defined as individuals aged 13 to 17 years, navigating the critical developmental stage between childhood and adulthood (Sawyer et al., 2018), are particularly vulnerable to the devastating impacts of such abuse (WHO, 2020). For teenagers, who are already navigating the complexities of identity and social pressures, the impact of such abuse is particularly devastating. Sexual abuse, as a violation of human rights, encompasses a range of acts, from non-contact abuses like voyeurism to contact abuses such as rape or forced sexual acts (Finkelhor, 2008). Among teenagers, these acts often occur within trusted circles of family members, neighbours, or authority figures making disclosure even more challenging due to fear of betrayal or retaliation (Alaggia et al., 2019).

Sexual abuse among teenagers is a global public health and human rights concern, with evidence showing that the problem cuts across continents and cultures. In South America, the 2019 National School-based Health Survey in Brazil revealed that 14.6% of adolescents aged 13–17 had experienced some form of sexual violence, while 6.3% reported being forced into sexual intercourse (IBGE, 2021). In Europe, recent findings from the Netherlands indicate that 22% of

girls and 5% of boys aged 13–25 reported sex against their will, while among those specifically aged 15–17, 37.8% of girls and 13.4% of boys reported sexual violence or harassment (Rutgers & Soa Aids Nederland, 2023; Dutch Rapporteur on Sexual Violence, 2022). Similarly, in Asia, the Philippines’ National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children found that 17.1% of teenagers aged 13–18 had experienced sexual violence, with 3.2% reporting forced sex (National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children, 2016). The statistics are equally disturbing in North America, where the 2023 U.S. Youth Risk Behaviour Survey reported that 11% of high school students had experienced sexual violence within the past year, with higher prevalence among girls (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC, 2024). In Australia, the landmark Australian Child Maltreatment Study (2023) revealed that 25.7% of young people aged 16–24 had suffered sexual abuse before turning 18, underscoring the long-lasting effects of childhood victimization. These figures collectively paint a sobering picture: sexual abuse among teenagers is not only pervasive but also deeply entrenched across societies, transcending geography and culture, and highlighting the urgency for interventions that are both locally grounded and globally informed.

Research has consistently shown that cultural factors significantly deter victims from reporting sexual abuse. For instance, Fontes and Plummer (2010) highlight how cultural norms, including shame, stigma, and victim-blaming attitudes, create barriers to disclosure across diverse societies. In Western contexts, studies like those by Ullman (2010) reveal that fear of social repercussions and lack of trust in institutional responses discourage survivors from coming forward. In non-Western settings, particularly in Africa, cultural taboos surrounding sexuality exacerbate these challenges. Tamale (2011) argues that in many African societies, open discussions about sex are considered taboo, fostering a culture of silence that prevents victims, especially teenagers, from

seeking help. A global meta-analysis by Stoltenborgh et al. (2011) estimates that only 10–20% of child and adolescent sexual abuse cases are reported worldwide, underscoring the universal challenge of underreporting.

In African contexts, research has further illuminated how cultural and social structures suppress disclosure. Jewkes et al. (2015) note that patriarchal norms across sub-Saharan Africa prioritize male authority and family honor, often at the expense of victims' justice. In Nigeria, studies have highlighted the pervasive influence of cultural factors on sexual abuse reporting. For example, the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) reported that 25% of women aged 15–19 have experienced sexual violence, yet less than 10% of cases are reported to authorities (National Population Commission NPC, 2019). Afolayan and Afolayan (2020) emphasize that cultural expectations of silence, particularly among young girls, are reinforced by societal pressures to preserve family reputation. Similarly, Ezechi et al. (2016) found that in Nigeria, traditional beliefs that view sexual abuse disclosures as shameful or disruptive to community harmony significantly reduce reporting rates.

The prevalence of sexual abuse is alarmingly high in Africa, yet reporting remains low. A 2019 study by the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) revealed that 1 in 4 women aged 15–19 in Nigeria had experienced some form of sexual violence, with less than 10% of cases reported to authorities (National Population Commission [NPC], 2019). In communities like Ekosodin in Edo State, Nigeria, the issue is compounded by a shroud of silence, driven by cultural factors that stifle disclosure and perpetuate cycles of victimization. This study seeks to unravel how cultural beliefs, taboos, and gender norms shape teenagers' attitudes and behaviours toward reporting sexual abuse, emphasizing the urgent need for culturally sensitive interventions to empower victims and break the silence.

This underreporting is not merely a statistical gap; it reflects a deeper cultural crisis that demands exploration. Cultural factors, broadly defined as the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape a community's worldview (Hofstede, 2011), play a pivotal role in silencing victims of sexual abuse. In many African societies, sex and sexuality are cloaked in taboo, rendering open discussions shameful or forbidden (Tamale, 2011). This cultural silence creates an environment where teenage victims, navigating the already complex transition from childhood to adulthood, fear being ostracized or blamed for their abuse. Patriarchy, a dominant cultural force, reinforces gender norms that prioritize male authority and family honour over individual justice (Izugbara, 2018). Teenage girls, in particular, face immense pressure to remain silent to protect family reputation or avoid being labelled as "damaged." Similarly, teenage boys, though less frequently acknowledged as victims, grapple with cultural expectations of masculinity that equate silence with strength (Jewkes et al., 2015).

In states such as Lagos and Kano, studies have shown that these cultural taboos, combined with religious and community pressures, contribute significantly to the reluctance of teenagers to report sexual abuse, often resulting in victims being silenced or pressured into withdrawal of complaints (Akinlusi et al., 2014; Abdulmalik et al., 2019). Similarly, in Enugu State, entrenched beliefs about family honour and gender roles perpetuate stigmatization and discourage victims from seeking justice (Eze & Okon, 2020). Edo State is not immune to these dynamics; reports indicate that cultural values and community pressures in Benin and surrounding areas act as powerful deterrents to disclosure, making it difficult for teenagers to break the silence and access appropriate support services (Okonofua et al., 2022). According to Odigie et al. (N.D) researched on the pattern of sexual abuse among schoolchildren in Edo South senatorial district of Edo State.

They observed that victims experienced contact and non-contact of sexual abuse with common occurrences in the home, school and at the perpetrator's home.

The fear of stigma is another powerful cultural barrier. In Ekosodin, as in many close-knit communities, victims' risk social exclusion or ridicule if they disclose abuse (Adegoke & Oladeji, 2015). Elders, often revered as gatekeepers of tradition, may impose silence to preserve community harmony, further discouraging teenagers from seeking help. These cultural dynamics create a vicious cycle where perpetrators operate with impunity, and victims suffer in silence, their trauma compounded by isolation and shame. Understanding these cultural factors is critical because they shape not only individual behaviours but also the broader societal response to sexual abuse. Without addressing these deeply rooted beliefs and norms, efforts to encourage reporting and support teenage survivors will remain ineffective. This study, therefore, aims to illuminate how cultural elements in Ekosodin influence teenagers' willingness to report or not report sexual abuse, offering insights that could inform targeted interventions. By amplifying the voices of these young survivors, we can challenge the silence, confront cultural barriers, and pave the way for a future where justice and healing are within reach for every teenager.

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

Despite increasing global attention to the issue of sexual abuse, the problem of underreporting remains deeply entrenched, particularly among teenagers. This challenge is not merely due to lack of awareness, but often stems from powerful cultural and societal constraints that inhibit victims from speaking out. In many African communities, including Ekosodin in Edo State, Nigeria, cultural norms such as silence around sexual matters, fear of stigma, and emphasis on family honour contribute to the reluctance of teenagers to disclose incidents of abuse. Teenagers in such settings face additional obstacles, including fear of not being believed, blame from

family or community members, and pressure to preserve the family's reputation. These complex social dynamics foster an environment where victims suffer in silence, and perpetrators often go unpunished. While national and international frameworks advocate for child protection and justice, their effectiveness is undermined when cultural realities are not fully understood or addressed.

However, existing scholarship has largely focused on broad regional or national patterns, with limited attention to community-specific contexts like Ekosodin. This gap in knowledge is particularly critical because Ekosodin, as an urban settlement in Benin City, presents a unique intersection of traditional cultural norms and urban influences. Its close-knit social fabric, coupled with deep-rooted respect for elders and strong family ties, may intensify pressures on teenagers to remain silent in cases of sexual abuse. Yet, little empirical research has been conducted to unpack how these cultural dynamics specifically influence reporting behaviours in this community. This absence of localized evidence necessitates a focused study that goes beyond generalizations to capture the nuanced realities of Ekosodin teenagers, thereby justifying the nature and direction of this research.

Research has pointed to specific cultural dynamics that exacerbate underreporting. Okonofua et al. (2018) highlighted how conservative values in Edo State, including reverence for elders and taboos around sexuality, create environments where victims fear ostracism or blame. Izugbara (2018) further noted that patriarchal structures in southern Nigeria, including Edo State, often protect perpetrators to maintain social cohesion, leaving teenage victims, particularly girls, silenced by family and community expectations. A study by Omoigui and Ogbeide (2021) in Benin City, near Ekosodin, found that teenagers are less likely to report abuse due to fear of stigma and the influence of traditional leaders who prioritize community harmony over

individual justice. Additionally, Adebayo et al. (2022) explored how family dynamics in Edo State, such as parental authority and expectations of loyalty, discourage teenagers from disclosing abuse, especially when perpetrators are family members.

Despite this body of research, a significant gap remains in understanding how these cultural factors specifically manifest in Ekosodin, with a unique blend of conservative values and close-knit social structures. While international and national studies provide valuable insights into the role of cultural norms, they often lack the specificity needed to address localized dynamics in communities like Ekosodin. The relationship between societal pressures, such as community stigma and the authority of elders, remains underexplored in this context. Existing studies in Edo State, while informative, tend to focus on urban centers like Benin City, leaving semi-urban communities like Ekosodin understudied.

The persistent underreporting of sexual abuse among teenagers in Ekosodin perpetuates cycles of victimization, emboldens perpetrators, and hinders access to justice and support for survivors. Without a nuanced understanding of how cultural factors operate in this specific community, interventions to encourage reporting and protect teenage victims will remain ineffective. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of cultural elements family dynamics, traditional beliefs, and societal pressures on teenagers' willingness to report sexual abuse in Ekosodin. By uncovering these localized dynamics, the research seeks to inform culturally sensitive strategies that empower teenagers, challenge the culture of silence, and foster a safer, more just environment for young survivors in Ekosodin and similar communities.

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

The aim of the research is to examine the influence of cultural factors on reporting sexual abuse cases among teenagers in Ekosodin community. The specific objectives are;

1. To identify cultural beliefs shaping teenagers' perceptions of sexual abuse.
2. To examine the influence of sexual abuse stigma in victim's families
3. To assess how traditional gender roles affect disclosure of abuse.
4. To propose culturally sensitive strategies that promote reporting.
5. To analyze barriers within community that hinder disclosure.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What cultural beliefs shape teenagers' perceptions of sexual abuse?
2. How do sexual abuse stigma influence victim's family?
3. In what ways do traditional gender roles affect teenagers' willingness to disclose abuse?
4. What culturally sensitive strategies can encourage teenagers to report abuse?
5. What barriers within community hinder teenagers from disclosing abuse?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research will be highly valuable to a wide range of stakeholders, including community health workers, child protection agencies, educators, social workers, and policymakers who are actively involved in safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of teenagers. By shedding light on the specific cultural barriers that hinder the reporting of sexual abuse within the Ekosodin

community, the study will provide critical insights into how cultural beliefs, family dynamics, and social expectations shape disclosure behaviour. These insights can inform the development of targeted, context-specific interventions that do not merely impose external solutions but are grounded in an understanding of local norms and values.

Such interventions may include culturally sensitive education and awareness programs, confidential reporting mechanisms tailored to community realities, and the training of key community actors such as religious leaders, teachers, and traditional authorities to become allies in supporting survivors. Furthermore, the findings can aid policymakers in formulating inclusive, responsive, and locally informed policies that balance the need for justice with respect for cultural traditions. Ultimately, empowering teenagers to speak out against abuse in a safe and supportive environment requires not only legal frameworks but also a transformation of the cultural narratives that keep victims silent. This research aims to contribute meaningfully to that transformation in Ekosodin and similar communities.

The study will also generate empirical evidence on teenage sexual abuse reporting patterns in Ekosodin, offering much-needed data for researchers and practitioners. It will enhance the capacity of local NGOs and advocacy groups to design programs that directly address the silence and stigma surrounding abuse. In addition, it will serve as a reference point for future academic research on cultural influences and child protection within Nigeria and beyond.

The findings will provide practical guidance for the training of teachers, school counsellors, and youth mentors, equipping them with strategies to support teenagers in disclosure processes. They will also strengthen collaboration between community leaders and formal justice systems, ensuring that survivors receive justice without cultural obstruction. The study will contribute to

national debates on harmonizing cultural practices with child protection laws, promoting a balance between tradition and rights-based approaches.

Moreover, the research will assist healthcare workers in identifying cultural cues that may point to hidden cases of sexual abuse, enabling timely intervention. It will support international development agencies in tailoring their funding and intervention strategies to grassroots realities, making their programs more effective. The study will also encourage parental engagement by showing how family dynamics can either suppress or facilitate teenage disclosure. Finally, it will provide a model for other semi-urban communities in Nigeria that grapple with similar cultural and social barriers to reporting sexual abuse.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is geographically and demographically defined to ensure a focused and in-depth investigation. It is specifically limited to the Ekosodin community, a semi-urban area located in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. This community presents a unique cultural setting characterized by traditional values, close-knit social structures, and a significant presence of both indigenous residents and young people, including students.

The research will concentrate exclusively on teenagers within the age range of 13 to 19 years, a group considered particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse due to their developmental stage, social positioning, and often limited autonomy.

The study will critically examine how various cultural factors influence the likelihood and manner in which teenagers in this community report incidents of sexual abuse. These factors include societal taboos surrounding open discussions of sexuality, rigid gender expectations that often favour male dominance, and family roles that prioritize honour and obedience over

individual rights. It will also consider the influence of traditional authorities, religious beliefs, and communal pressure that may contribute to a culture of silence. By narrowing its focus to this specific age group and locality, the research seeks to generate detailed, context-specific findings that reflect the lived realities of teenagers in Ekosodin. This will enhance the practical relevance of the study's recommendations and support the development of culturally sensitive interventions aimed at increasing abuse reporting and victim support within the community.

### 1.7 Definition of Terms

**Sexual Abuse:** In this study, sexual abuse refers to any unwanted sexual activity, including physical acts, verbal harassment, or coercive behaviors, directed toward teenagers, regardless of the perpetrator's relationship to the victim. It includes both contact and non-contact forms, as experienced or reported by teenagers in Ekosodin.

**Reporting:** Reporting is defined as the act of disclosing or communicating an incident of sexual abuse to an authority figure (e.g., parents, teachers, community leaders, health workers, police, or child protection agencies). In this study, reporting will be measured by whether teenagers express willingness to disclose abuse, the channels they would use, and the barriers that hinder disclosure.

**Cultural Factor:** Cultural factor refers to the shared beliefs, norms, values, and practices within the Ekosodin community that shape attitudes and responses toward sexual abuse. These include taboos around discussing sexuality, patriarchal structures, emphasis on family honour, and silence norms that affect teenagers' willingness to report abuse.

**Family Dynamics:** Family dynamics are defined as the patterns of interaction, authority, expectations, and communication within families that influence how teenagers respond to sexual

abuse. This includes the role of parental authority, emphasis on loyalty, family honour, and protective silence in shaping disclosure behaviours.

**Stigma:** Stigma refers to the negative labels, shame, discrimination, or social rejection that teenagers anticipate or experience when disclosing sexual abuse. It includes fear of being blamed, considered “damaged,” or bringing disgrace to the family or community, which discourages victims from reporting.

**Teenagers:** Teenagers are defined in this study as individuals aged 13 to 17 years living in Ekosodin community. This age group is the focus because of their developmental stage, heightened vulnerability to sexual abuse, and unique cultural and social pressures influencing disclosure decisions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Review of Relevant Concepts

Under this subheading, the following concepts that were reviewed are the empowerment and resilience concepts.

##### 2.1.1 Concept of Empowerment

The empowerment concept in social work and community practice traces its intellectual roots to critical pedagogy and participatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s, most famously articulated by Paulo Freire (1970). Freire argued that marginalized people move from a state of passive acceptance to active agency through critical dialogue and consciousness-raising, a foundation that social work adapted to support clients' self-determination and collective action. In social work scholarship, empowerment was further developed as a practice orientation aimed at reducing power imbalances between professionals and clients and enabling individuals and communities to access resources and make decisions that affect their lives (Zimmerman, 1995; Gutierrez, 1990).

Since then, empowerment has become a core normative concept in interventions addressing gender-based violence and child protection: it frames survivors not merely as passive recipients of services but as agents whose voices and choices matter. Empirical practice literature has translated Freire's theoretical ideas into approaches that combine information, skills-building, advocacy, and structural change so that individuals gain influence over the social determinants of their lives (Zimmerman, 1995). This historical lineage makes empowerment particularly suited for contexts like Ekosodin where cultural constraints limit teenagers' agency and voice.

A central assumption of empowerment is that lack of power whether economic, informational, or social underlies many forms of vulnerability. Thus, improving an individual's access to knowledge, skills, and supportive networks increases their capacity to act in their own interest (Zimmerman, 2000). In the context of sexual abuse reporting, this assumption translates into the belief that when teenagers possess information about rights and reporting channels, and when they feel supported rather than blamed, they are more likely to disclose abuse.

Another important assumption is that power is relational and contextual: empowerment is not only about individual capacities but also about changing relational dynamics and community structures that reproduce silencing (Gutierrez, 1990). For Ekosodin, where family honour, elder authority, and communal norms shape behaviour, empowerment must therefore include community-level engagement educating parents, training teachers, and engaging traditional leaders so that the social environment supports, rather than punishes, disclosure.

Empowerment approaches have been widely used in violence-prevention and survivor support programs. For example, advocacy and empowerment-based interventions for battered women have combined safety planning, legal information, and linkage to resources to increase women's sense of control and reduce re-victimization (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Similarly, community mobilization programs that adopt empowerment strategies by raising awareness, shifting injunctive norms, and enabling local actors to support survivors have shown reductions in intimate partner violence and increased community support for victims (Abramsky et al., 2014).

Applied to this study, empowerment means designing interventions that provide teenagers with age-appropriate information on what constitutes sexual abuse, how to report safely, and where to obtain confidential help, while simultaneously working with families and leaders to create protective social responses. An empowerment lens in this study ensures the research not only

documents barriers but also identifies leverage points for strengthening teenagers' agency in culturally acceptable ways.

Empowerment will be operationalized in this study through measurable constructs and mixed methods indicators. At the individual level, indicators include teenagers' knowledge of reporting channels, perceived self-efficacy to disclose (e.g., "I can report abuse even if my family objects"), and prior help-seeking behaviours. At the relational and community levels, indicators include perceived availability of supportive adults (teachers, religious leaders), presence of local advocacy or NGO services, and community attitudes toward survivors.

### **2.1.2 Concept of Resilience**

Resilience as a concept emerged from developmental psychology and longitudinal studies of children who thrived despite adversity (Garmezy, 1971; Werner & Smith, 1992). Early resilience research sought to identify protective factors characteristics, relationships, and environments that allowed some children to adapt successfully in the face of risk. Over time, resilience moved from a trait-focused notion (e.g., "resilient individuals") to a dynamic, system-level perspective emphasizing interactions between individuals and their social ecologies (Masten, 2001).

Social work integrated resilience thinking to inform strengths-based practice: rather than defining clients by deficits, practitioners identify capacities and protective processes that can be mobilized to support recovery and adaptation (Masten & Barnes, 2018). For adolescents affected by sexual abuse, resilience frameworks emphasize both individual coping strategies and social supports (family, peers, institutions) that mitigate harm and enable disclosure and healing.

Resilience theory assumes that adversity does not deterministically produce poor outcomes; instead, positive adaptation is possible where protective factors counterbalance risks (Masten,

2001). Applied to sexual abuse reporting, this means that even in culturally repressive settings, some teenagers will find internal and external resources that enable disclosure and help-seeking such as supportive friends, empathetic teachers, or strong self-efficacy.

A second assumption is cultural and contextual variability: protective factors and resilient outcomes differ across environments and are shaped by cultural meanings (Ungar, 2008). What counts as resilience in Ekosodin may therefore be different from urban cities in Nigeria: for instance, reliance on respected elders may be protective if those elders are supportive, or it may hinder disclosure if elders prioritize reputation. This assumption underscores the need to study resilience within the specific sociocultural matrix of Ekosodin.

Resilience-informed interventions for abuse survivors focus on strengthening protective buffers and building coping skills. Programs that bolster social support networks, foster problem-solving skills, and improve access to mental-health services have been effective in helping adolescents recover from trauma and in some cases encouraging disclosure and engagement with services (Masten, 2001; DePrince & Freyd, 2001). Research on adolescent survivors often finds that peer support and trusted adults are critical determinants of whether a teenager discloses abuse (Kenardy et al., 2016).

In Ekosodin, a resilience application might involve identifying and amplifying local protective resources faith leaders who can be trained to respond supportively, school counsellors who provide confidential support, and peer groups that reduce isolation. Understanding what adaptive strategies teenagers already use (e.g., confiding in friends, seeking religious counsel) allows interventions to strengthen these pathways rather than imposing externally derived models that may not resonate locally.

Operationalizing resilience in this study entails both measurement of protective factors and investigation of adaptive outcomes. Quantitative items will measure perceived social support, access to trusted adults, coping self-efficacy, and emotional regulation skills. Resilience will also be operationalized as a moderating variable: the study will test whether higher levels of protective factors (social support, empowerment indicators) mitigate the negative effect of cultural stigma on willingness to report. In practical terms, detecting significant resilience pathways will enable targeted recommendations such as peer-led support networks or training programs for teachers that leverage existing community strengths to encourage safe disclosure (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2008).

### **2.1.3 The Role of Cultural Norms in Teenagers' Perceptions of Sexual Abuse**

Cultural beliefs including silence about sex, honour-based thinking, and victim-blaming narratives profoundly shape how adolescents perceive sexual abuse and whether they label an incident as abuse at all. Qualitative studies with Nigerian-origin women and survivors highlight that culturally mediated explanations (e.g., “it was my fault,” or “we do not speak of such things”) influence survivors’ own interpretations of harm and delay help-seeking (Ajayi et al., 2022).

Evidence from national surveys and violence-against-children studies shows that children who grow up in contexts where sex is taboo or where shame is attached to disclosure are substantially less likely to recognize or report abuse, because such cultural framing normalizes silence and reframes victimhood as family dishonour (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Systematic reviews underline the ubiquity of such culturally patterned perceptions: cross-national analyses show that descriptive beliefs about “how people behave” and injunctive beliefs about “what one should do” are major predictors of whether adolescents identify an experience as reportable abuse (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Devries et al., 2016). Mixed-methods research in

low- and middle-income settings repeatedly finds that misperceptions about prevalence (e.g., “nobody reports”) and normative expectations (e.g., “reporting dishonours the family”) suppress recognition and reporting among teens (García-Moreno et al., 2019). Together, these studies make a compelling case that interventions in Ekosodin must start by diagnosing local cultural beliefs about sex, shame, and acceptable responses to harm because until the community’s shared meanings change, teenagers will continue to misinterpret or minimize abuse and avoid disclosure (Buller et al., 2020).

#### **2.1.4 Influence of Sexual Abuse Stigma in Victim’s Family**

Family stigma as a central factor influencing victims’ willingness to disclose sexual abuse. In many socio-cultural contexts, including Nigeria, family members may react to disclosure with denial, blame, or minimization, reflecting broader societal attitudes that stigmatize survivors (Bhatia et al., 2024). This stigma is not only social but also psychological: families may fear reputational damage, gossip, or the disruption of family cohesion, which can result in silencing the victim or discouraging them from seeking formal help (Ikuteyijo et al., 2023).

Studies show that when families internalize or perpetuate stigma, survivors face multiple barriers to reporting and accessing care. For instance, qualitative interviews in Nigerian contexts indicate that victims are often pressured to conceal abuse, sometimes to “protect” the family or the perpetrator, leading to underreporting and reliance on informal, non-legal resolutions (Cunningham et al., 2023). The consequences of this familial stigma are significant: delays in seeking healthcare, missed forensic opportunities, and reduced psychosocial support all compound the victim’s trauma. Quantitative analyses of service utilization reveal that children and adolescents whose families stigmatize abuse are less likely to access post-assault services and experience poorer mental health outcomes (Alaggia & Millington, 2010).

Family-imposed stigma can also exacerbate internalized shame and self-blame among survivors, which are strongly associated with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress (Easton, 2013). The interaction between familial attitudes, cultural norms, and gendered expectations creates a dual burden for victims: managing the trauma of abuse while navigating stigmatizing family dynamics.

These findings underscore the need for interventions that target family-level stigma in addition to supporting survivors directly. Approaches may include confidential reporting mechanisms that protect the victim from familial retaliation, family counseling to reduce stigmatizing attitudes, and public awareness campaigns that reframe support for victims as a family and community responsibility rather than a source of shame (Bhatia et al., 2024; Easton, 2013). Addressing stigma at the family level is essential to improve reporting rates, enhance psychosocial outcomes, and break cycles of abuse-related silence.

### **2.1.5 Gender Roles as Barriers to Abuse Disclosure**

Traditional gender norm links Sexual disclosure to both the risk of sexual abuse and the likelihood of reporting. Studies across sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria show that patriarchal expectations which valorize female chastity and male authority create asymmetric pressures: girls are often socialized to be submissive and to avoid “bringing shame,” while boys are pressured to project invulnerability and thus may not disclose victimization for fear of being seen as weak or “unmanly” (Mbachu et al., 2025). Qualitative and survey research in regionally diverse populations confirms these gendered patterns: adolescent girls cite shame and fear of family reprisal as primary barriers, whereas boys report fears tied to stigma around masculinity and sexual identity (Ogunfowokan et al., 2024).

Several empirical evaluations underscore that where gender-transformative interventions have been implemented (programs that explicitly address male norms and female disempowerment), disclosure and support-seeking improve. Randomized and quasi-experimental studies (and systematic reviews of such interventions) demonstrate that shifting harmful gender norms in communities and schools can increase the likelihood that survivors are believed and supported, and can reduce the social penalties for reporting (Rogers et al., 2023). For Ekosodin, these studies suggest a dual imperative: research should measure gendered expectations and their differential effects on boys and girls, and interventions must be gender-sensitive supporting girls to report without further jeopardy and addressing masculine norms that silence boy survivors (Mbachu et al., 2025).

### **2.1.6 Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Enhancing Abuse Reporting Among Teenagers**

The evidence for culturally contextualized, community-based strategies is strong and persuasive. Community mobilisation and social-norms interventions such as SASA! in Uganda have demonstrated measurable reductions in gender-based violence and changed community attitudes toward survivors by engaging local leaders, using locally resonant messaging, and promoting supportive injunctive norms (i.e., shifting what people believe should be done) (Abramsky et al., 2014). Recent scoping reviews of norms-focused interventions show that approaches combining awareness, safe reporting channels, and credible local advocates most consistently increase help-seeking and reduce stigma (Leite et al., 2025).

Other empirical studies emphasize practical components that work in culturally conservative settings: confidential school-based reporting systems, training for religious and traditional authorities to offer non-punitive support, and survivor-led storytelling that re-frames disclosure as courageous rather than shameful. Evidence from implementation research in LMICs reveals

that when interventions are co-designed with communities and grounded in local norms, uptake and sustainability increase markedly (Evans et al., 2022). For Ekosodin, then, the literature supports interventions that are not imported wholesale but are co-created with elders, parents, teachers, and youth, and that prioritize confidentiality, culturally appropriate messaging, and the legitimization of supportive responses (Abramsky et al., 2014).

### **2.1.7 Structural Barriers Hindering Disclosure in Communities**

Empirical research identifies a multi-layered set of structural barriers: weak or hostile institutional responses, lack of youth-friendly services, policy-practice gaps, and community mechanisms that privilege mediation over justice. Studies in Nigeria and elsewhere document that even when legal frameworks exist, victims face obstacles such as fear of not being believed by police, absence of confidential medical and psychosocial services, and pressure from community leaders to resolve matters privately all of which discourage formal reporting. This is due to the public stigmatization and been viewed as a “secondhand material” (that is, less valuable) (Munala et al., 2025).

More recent mixed-methods studies show that institutional mistrust is compounded by practical access issues (distance to services, cost, and timing), and by service providers’ limited cultural competence for example, healthcare workers or police who inadvertently blame victims or prioritize family reconciliation (Ogedegbe et al., 2025). Systematic analyses of service barriers further indicate that strengthening front-line capacities (training, child-friendly protocols, confidentiality safeguards) and establishing coordinated referral pathways are empirically supported strategies to overcome institutional deterrents (Munala et al., 2025). For Ekosodin, the implication is clear: addressing community silence alone is insufficient; institutional reforms and

capacity building (health, education, justice) are necessary complements if reporting rates are to increase meaningfully (Ifayomi et al., 2024).

## **2.2 Empirical Framework**

Egbe Enobakhare and Tijani Oseni, (2021) In their work observed the Psychological Trauma that affect teenagers who are victims of sexual abuse from a case study of Miss C.C., a 13-year-old J.S.3 student accompanied by her parents presented to the General Practice Clinic with complaints of crawling body sensation, heaviness of the head, palpitation and recurrent inability to sleep of four weeks duration. Her symptoms were preceded 6 weeks before presentation by non-consensual intercourse with two armed robbers that invaded their home at night. The event was her sexual debut and there was no repeat episode thereafter. The robbers did not use a condom and she bled mildly in the process. Robbers ejaculated into her vulva. She had no medical care after the incidence as parents encouraged her to bath and using the lime fruit she was given by her mother, she washed the vulva. Her mother believed that lime fruit could prevent any infection and prevent pregnancy that could arise.

She developed worrying thoughts with the predominant content being that her future had been put in jeopardy because she may get pregnant for unknown men or get infected with human immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). She was preoccupied with concerns that she would be unable to get married as a single mother with a child. She was concerned that she had lost her virginity. She reported constant crawling body sensations two weeks after the assault that progressively worsened. She believed that insects were crawling around her body but any attempt to wipe them off revealed no insect and this was worse when idle. She also had the feeling that her

head was too heavy for her neck especially when in school during lectures and she progressively lost concentration in many aspects. About the same time, she developed palpitations and poor sleep. She went to bed at 10 pm but repeatedly woke up at about the time that she was raped. Her parent took her through a thorough medical investigation

On her next appointment, she had seen the psychiatrist who provided interactive counselling. The family had contracted security services to alert them of any eventualities. She was confident she could become a good lawyer in future and had learned being raped was a common occurrence not peculiar to her. She no longer had feelings of being unsafe. She was adherent to medications and had improved significantly with better sleep and no nightmare. Her recollections had ceased and related better with siblings and parents.

This work did not do a thorough observation and exposition on Governmental and societal factors that are capable of implicating teenagers to sexual abuse which is obvious in the case study above

Afolabi, (2020) examines child sexual abuse, survivors and perpetrators of sexual abuse, girl child and sexual abuse, consequences of child sexual abuse and the way forward to curbing child sexual abuse in the society. The way forward to curbing it include prompt reporting of incidents of sexual abuse to appropriate authorities for adequate intervention, policy instruments and laws forbidding the evil act and indicating sanctions against perpetrators, medical and psychological treatment/counseling for survivors, public enlightenment against acts of child sexual abuse among others. The study utilized secondary data drawn from existing literature, journals, books and libraries.

Tumwesigye (2021) the study sought to explore the tragic challenges and experiences social workers working with children encounter. The study provides an analysis of the social worker's challenges and dilemmas in working with abused and neglected children. Furthermore, the findings reveal mechanisms on how social workers cope with the challenges. In the future, more research on the same topic is needed to be able to support better social worker's practices when working with children exposed to abuse and neglect

Akpoghome and Nwano (2016) assessed sexual defilement of children in Nigeria. They expressed that children all over the world are the future of every nation and to this extent, they need to be protected from vices that are capable of ruining their lives and future. Sexual defilement of children in Nigeria has been on the increase recently and this calls for the attention of well-meaning citizens and the government to arise and protect this vulnerable group. The paper looks at the definitions of sexual defilement and who a child is. The paper shows that a child is any person that is below the age of eighteen years and sexual defilement will occur where an adult or another child has sexual intercourse with a child with or without the child's consent. The paper notes that girls and boys are defiled although the cases involving boys are under reported. The paper discovers that there are several circumstances that would expose a child to defilement. It notes that perpetrators of this heinous act are most times acquaintances. The paper also notes that the Courts have not been imposing sentences that will deter perpetrators, although the Supreme Court of Nigeria has severally condemned these sentences. The paper, therefore, recommends that the courts should live up to their responsibilities and further calls on all to arise and fight this scourge that is threatening the future of our children and nation.

Olusegun and Idowu (2016) examined the concepts and various forms of child abuse which exist in Nigeria. It appraises the different factors responsible for child abuse in Nigeria, identifies the laws and institutions that protect children from abuse, and evaluates the effectiveness of these various laws and institutions, and facilitates further information on workable steps to curb all forms of child abuse in Nigeria. This paper concludes with the realization that the menace of child abuse and its resultant effects on children in Nigeria can only be resolved through a combination of efforts by the government and other relevant stakeholders in order to revamp.

Diraditsile, (2018) explored sexual abuse of school children by teachers in senior secondary schools in Botswana. It adopts a cross sectional quantitative approach. Data was collected from 3 senior secondary schools in the capital city of Gaborone, where the study was conducted. A survey questionnaire was self-administered to 330 randomly selected participants of whom 300 were students and 30 teachers. Each school comprised 100 students and 10 teachers. The study utilized social exchange theory to explain human interactions related to sexual abuse of students by teachers. The findings provide evidence that sexual abuse is hidden and is a detrimental experience for school children. It also emerged from the findings that there were many factors that contribute to sexual abuse of children by teachers in schools, and many victims do not report the abuse for fear of blame or further victimization the perpetrators. This paper examines implications for social work practice given that social workers, by the nature of their work, intervene at individual, family and societal level. Lastly, future research, policy direction, and implications are discussed.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Under this section, the social learning and attachment theories under these issues were origin, assumptions, application and operationalization were discussed.

### **2.3.1 Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory (SLT) was developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s as an expansion of behaviourist theories that emphasized direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Unlike classical behaviourism, Bandura introduced the concept of observational learning, arguing that individuals learn behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses by observing and imitating others in their social environment. He demonstrated this through his famous Bobo Doll experiment, where children imitated aggressive behaviour after observing adult models (Bandura, et al 1961).

Over time, SLT evolved to include concepts such as modelling, vicarious reinforcement, and reciprocal determinism showing how individuals are shaped not only by direct experiences but also, by the behaviours and expectations of those around them (Bandura, 1986). The theory has been applied globally to issues like violence, substance use, gender norms, and abuse reporting.

SLT assumes that human behaviour is largely learned within social contexts, not just through personal experience but also by observing others and interpreting the outcomes of their actions. Teenagers, therefore, acquire beliefs about sexual abuse and reporting by watching family members, peers, and community leaders (Akers & Jensen, 2017).

Another assumption is that reinforcement can be direct or indirect. For example, if teenagers see others who reported abuse being stigmatized, they learn to avoid reporting to escape similar consequences. Conversely, if they observe victims being supported, they are more likely to

imitate that behaviour. In Ekosodin, where silence is culturally rewarded and reporting often punished, SLT suggests that non-disclosure becomes the modelled and reinforced norm.

SLT has been widely applied to research on sexual abuse and violence. Studies show that in patriarchal societies, children internalize silence around sexual matters because adults avoid discussing sex or punish attempts to disclose (Jewkes et al., 2015). In Nigeria, research highlights that teenagers mirror the silence of elders and peers, reinforcing underreporting as a cultural habit (Okonofua et al., 2018).

Applied to Ekosodin, SLT explains how cultural beliefs such as associating disclosure with family dishonour are transmitted intergenerationally. Teenagers learn that silence protects family reputation, while speaking out invites shame. Through repeated exposure to these modelled behaviours and their social consequences, teenagers adopt silence as the “normal” response to abuse.

Operationalizing SLT in this study involves measuring how observational learning shapes teenagers’ perceptions of reporting by examining exposure variables, such as whether the teenager witnessed or heard about others reporting abuse; outcome perceptions, including what happened to those who disclosed, whether they faced punishment, stigma, or received support; and modelling variables, such as identifying the role models who influence reporting, including parents, peers, or religious leaders. By linking these measures to disclosure intentions, the study can empirically demonstrate how modelled behaviours and cultural reinforcements sustain silence in Ekosodin.

### 2.3.2 Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory was pioneered by John Bowlby in the mid-20th century, originally to explain the importance of early caregiver-child bonds for emotional and psychological development (Bowlby, 1969). Later, Mary Ainsworth expanded the theory with her “Strange Situation” experiments, which identified attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant, disorganized) (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The theory argues that consistent and nurturing early attachments foster trust and security, while disrupted or abusive attachments lead to mistrust, insecurity, and difficulties in help-seeking.

Since then, Attachment Theory has been widely applied in child welfare, trauma studies, and abuse disclosure research. It emphasizes how relational bonds shape an individual’s capacity to seek protection, disclose abuse, and trust authority figures (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

The theory assumes that children and adolescents develop internal working models of trust, safety, and communication based on their attachment experiences. Teenagers with secure attachments are more likely to trust caregivers and report abuse, while those with insecure or avoidant attachments may conceal experiences out of fear of rejection or disbelief (Zeanah & Smyke, 2015).

Another assumption is that attachment is not only familial but also cultural and institutional. In communities like Ekosodin, where collective honour outweighs individual wellbeing, teenagers may perceive caregivers and community figures as unreliable or unsupportive, fostering avoidant patterns of silence. Thus, weak attachment bonds exacerbate cultural pressures to remain silent.

Empirical studies confirm that secure attachment relationships are critical for disclosure. For example, Allnock and Miller (2013) found that children were more likely to disclose abuse when

they felt emotionally safe with caregivers. In African contexts, insecure attachment shaped by authoritarian parenting and cultural taboos reduced teenagers' willingness to report sexual violence (Klebens et al., 2018).

In Ekosodin, Attachment Theory explains why teenagers may choose silence: they anticipate negative responses from parents (anger, disbelief, shame) and lack attachment-based trust. The cultural premium on family honour further weakens the attachment bond as a safe disclosure channel, reinforcing silence.

Operationalizing Attachment Theory in this study involves assessing the quality of teenagers' relational bonds and how these influence reporting by examining parental attachment quality, such as whether the teenager feels safe discussing sensitive issues with parents; community attachment, including whether the teenager trusts teachers, religious leaders, or elders to handle abuse disclosures supportively; and anticipated caregiver response, focusing on how teenagers expect families to react if they disclose abuse. Measuring these dimensions enables the study to demonstrate how attachment insecurities, intensified by cultural values of honour and silence, act as barriers to reporting sexual abuse among Ekosodin teenagers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a survey research design to explore the influence of cultural factors on the reporting of sexual abuse cases among teenagers in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria. The survey design is particularly suited for this research because it allows for a comprehensive examination of attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours within a specific population, capturing the relationship of cultural factors such as family honour, shame, traditional gender roles, and community stigma (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By employing quantitative method this design provided an understanding of how cultural beliefs shape teenagers' willingness to disclose abuse, offering insights that are both measurable and deeply human.

#### 3.2 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises teenagers aged 13 to 17 years residing in the Ekosodin community, located in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. This age group is particularly significant because it represents a developmental phase characterized by increased vulnerability to sexual abuse, peer pressure, identity formation, and evolving social awareness. Teenagers within this range often experience heightened interactions both within and outside the family, making them a critical group for examining how cultural beliefs, family norms, and gender expectations influence perceptions and disclosure of sexual abuse.

Ekosodin hosts a large student population due to its proximity to the University of Benin. This demographic characteristic introduces a dynamic cultural mix and exposes teenagers to varying

degrees of traditional and modern influences. By focusing on this specific population, the study aims to capture the ways in which cultural constructs shape the experiences and reporting behaviours of adolescents with regard to sexual abuse. The insights derived from this population was instrumental in informing culturally responsive interventions tailored to similar communities across Nigeria.

### 3.3 Sample Size

Due to the unavailability of data on the population of communities in Nigeria, which is a major drawback all population censuses that has been conducted so far, Cochran Sample size determination for an unknown population will be adopted. The formulation is given below;

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where  $n_0$ : Sample Size calculated

$Z^2$ : Z-score correspondence (1.96)

$p$ : Attribute population (0.5)

$e$ : Desired Margin of Error (0.05)

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416(0.25)}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{0.960}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = 384$$

a total sample of 384 teenagers were selected from Ekosodin community using a combination of stratified and systematic sampling techniques to ensure balanced representation across the study area. The use of these methods is aimed at minimizing sampling bias, enhancing the generalizability of the findings and convenience due to the sensitivity of the time frame for the research.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

A multistage sampling technique will be adopted. To begin with, the study area was divided into four strata based on spatial or neighbourhood demarcations within the community. The demarcations were carried by the researcher in order to simulate a state of equality in selecting 96 respondents from each stratum. Each stratum (A, B, C, & D) contributed 96 respondents, ensuring equal representation and capturing potential variations in socio-cultural and economic characteristics within different parts of Ekosodin.

Within each stratum, systematic sampling was employed to identify households with eligible teenage respondents. The process began by selecting the first house on a randomly chosen street within the stratum as the starting point. From that base, every third house was selected sequentially until all houses on the street are exhausted. This process was repeated across other streets within the stratum until the target of 50 respondents per stratum is achieved. Where a selected household does not have a teenager aged 13–17, the next eligible household was chosen. In households with more than one teenager, one respondent was randomly selected using simple balloting to maintain equal chance of participation. This multi-stage approach ensures both spatial coverage and demographic diversity, thereby enriching the validity of the study outcomes.

### **3.5 Instrument for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire is designed to elicit comprehensive and reliable information from teenage respondents regarding cultural beliefs, family dynamics, gender roles, and their influence on the perception and reporting of sexual abuse.

The instrument consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended items are formulated using Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and dichotomous (yes/no) formats to enable quantitative analysis and ensure consistency in responses. These questions focus on measurable variables such as awareness of sexual abuse, attitudes toward reporting, and perceptions of cultural norms.

In addition, open-ended questions are included to capture nuanced, personal, and context-specific insights from the teenagers. These allow respondents to express their views in their own words, thereby uncovering cultural beliefs, emotions, and personal experiences that may not be fully represented in closed formats.

The questionnaire is divided into thematic sections that align with the study's objectives, covering demographic information such as age, gender, and educational status; cultural beliefs and perceptions of sexual abuse; the influence of family honour and shame; gender roles and disclosure practices; and strategies for encouraging abuse reporting.

To enhance clarity and appropriateness for the age group, the questionnaire was written in simple, age-appropriate English and was pre-tested among a small group of teenagers in a nearby community to ensure reliability and cultural sensitivity.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

Data collection was carried out through the administration of structured questionnaires to teenage respondents within the Ekosodin community. To ensure that the process was efficient, ethical, and culturally sensitive, a team of trained friends and colleagues was engaged as assistants.

These assistants were carefully selected based on their familiarity with the locality and fluency in English and the predominant pidgin English, enabling them to effectively communicate with respondents and clarify any ambiguities in the questionnaire.

Prior to fieldwork, the research assistants underwent a brief training/talk session covering key topics such as the objectives of the study, ethical handling of sensitive topics (such as sexual abuse), obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and proper administration of both closed and open-ended questions.

The copies of questionnaire were distributed to selected households using the mixed sampling approach described earlier. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only teenagers who gave verbal consent were allowed to participate. Data collection spanned several days, with the assistants working across the four identified strata within the community to ensure spatial and demographic representation. Completed questionnaires were checked daily for completeness and clarity before being accepted for analysis.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores were employed to summarize and interpret the responses. These

statistical measures helped identify patterns and trends in teenagers' perceptions, reporting behaviour, and the cultural factors influencing disclosure of sexual abuse. The results were presented in tables and charts for clarity and ease of interpretation.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Administering the questionnaire for this study requires strict adherence to ethical standards, given the sensitive nature of sexual abuse and cultural factors surrounding it. First, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that teenagers clearly understand the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any given time without negative consequences. Participation was only proceeded after explicit consent is granted. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. No identifying information such as names or contact details was collected, and all responses was coded to protect participants' identities. Sensitive data was securely stored and accessible only to the researcher for academic purposes.

The study also prioritized the psychological wellbeing of participants. Because questions on sexual abuse can trigger emotional distress, respondents were informed in advance about the nature of the questions and reassured that they may skip any question they are uncomfortable answering. Additionally, cultural sensitivity guided the administration of the questionnaire. Questions was carefully worded to avoid offensive or stigmatizing language.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data derived through the questionnaire administered on the respondents in the Ekosodin Community. The analysis and discussion were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as discussion of the information gathered.

#### 4.1 Demographic Analysis

**Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

| Demographic Variable | Category | N          | %           |
|----------------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Age of Respondents   | 13       | 79         | 20.6%       |
|                      | 14       | 85         | 22.1%       |
|                      | 15       | 72         | 18.8%       |
|                      | 16       | 72         | 18.8%       |
|                      | 17       | 76         | 19.8%       |
| <b>Total</b>         |          | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Gender               | Female   | 216        | 56.2%       |
|                      | Male     | 168        | 43.8%       |
| <b>Total</b>         |          | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Ethnicity            | Bini     | 238        | 62.0%       |
|                      | Esan     | 5          | 1.3%        |
|                      | Hausa    | 37         | 9.6%        |
|                      | Igbo     | 42         | 10.9%       |
|                      | Ijaw     | 5          | 1.3%        |
|                      | Itsekiri | 5          | 1.3%        |
|                      | Urhobo   | 5          | 1.3%        |
|                      | Yoruba   | 47         | 12.2%       |
| <b>Total</b>         |          | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |

|                           |                           |            |             |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Educational Status</b> | No formal education       | 7          | 1.8%        |
|                           | Primary                   | 14         | 3.6%        |
|                           | Secondary                 | 352        | 91.7%       |
|                           | Tertiary                  | 11         | 2.9%        |
| <b>Total</b>              |                           | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Religion</b>           | Christianity              | 285        | 74.2%       |
|                           | Islam                     | 75         | 19.5%       |
|                           | Traditional-Christian mix | 13         | 3.4%        |
|                           | Traditional               | 11         | 2.9%        |
| <b>Total</b>              |                           | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Custodian</b>          | Alone                     | 11         | 2.9%        |
|                           | Both parents              | 192        | 50.0%       |
|                           | Guardian                  | 77         | 20.1%       |
|                           | Single parent             | 104        | 27.1%       |
| <b>Total</b>              |                           | <b>384</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The age distribution shows that respondents fall between 13 and 17 years, with fairly even representation across the categories. Those aged 14 years (22.1%) form the largest group, followed closely by 13 years (20.6%), 17 years (19.8%), and both 15 and 16 years (18.8%) each. This even spread ensures that the findings reflect the perspectives of adolescents at varying developmental stages. The inclusion of participants at the younger and older ends of adolescence is crucial since awareness and attitudes toward sexual abuse often evolve with age and exposure.

In terms of gender, the sample comprises 216 females (56.2%) and 168 males (43.8%), indicating a slight female dominance. This gender composition is valuable because it allows comparison between male and female viewpoints, particularly given that sexual abuse is often

socially constructed as a female issue. The presence of male respondents adds depth to understanding how gender roles and expectations influence disclosure and community response.

The ethnic distribution reveals that the majority of respondents are Bini (62.0%), consistent with the study area, Ekosodin Community, which lies within a predominantly Bini-speaking region. Other ethnic minorities include Yoruba (12.2%), Igbo (10.9%), and Hausa (9.6%), with smaller representations from Esan, Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo (1.3% each). This ethnic diversity, though tilted toward the majority group, offers insight into how cultural norms specific to different ethnic identities shape beliefs about sexual abuse and stigma.

Educational background shows that an overwhelming 91.7% of respondents are in secondary school, confirming that the study is largely youth-based and educationally active. Only a few respondents had no formal education (1.8%), primary education (3.6%), or were in tertiary institutions (2.9%). The dominance of secondary school students reflects the age bracket of 13–17 years, where formal education and exposure to civic or social instruction can influence awareness of abuse and reporting channels.

Religion also plays a defining role in shaping moral values and community norms. The data indicates that Christianity (74.2%) is the predominant faith among respondents, followed by Islam (19.5%), with smaller proportions practising Traditional-Christian mix (3.4%) and Traditional religion (2.9%). This religious composition reflects the general pattern of faith in southern Nigeria and suggests that religious teachings and leaders can significantly influence how issues of sexual abuse are discussed and addressed.

Regarding custodianship, half of the respondents (50.0%) live with both parents, while 27.1% live with a single parent, 20.1% with a guardian, and 2.9% alone. This distribution provides

insight into family structure and support systems. The fact that nearly half of respondents do not live with both parents highlights the potential influence of family stability on vulnerability and openness to report abuse. Teenagers living with guardians or single parents may experience different forms of supervision, emotional support, or freedom, all of which can affect how they perceive and respond to sexual abuse. The demographic composition shows a relatively balanced and representative adolescent sample dominated by Bini and Christian respondents, with most being in secondary school and living under parental care. These characteristics are important for contextualising later findings, especially on how cultural beliefs, gender roles, and family conditions intersect to shape attitudes toward sexual abuse reporting in Ekosodin community.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Research Questions**

This section contains the presentation of finding/results of the research questions. Under this section the research questions in section 1.4 were converted to the following subheadings: forms of cultural belief that shapes teenagers' perception of sexual abuse, the influence of family honour and shame on sexual abuse cases reporting, ways in which traditional gender roles affect the affect teenagers willingness to disclose sexual abuse, ways in which culturally sensitive strategies can encourage teenagers to report sexual abuse, and barriers within community and institutional structures hinder teenagers from disclosing sexual abuse.

#### 4.2.1 Forms of Cultural Beliefs that Shapes Teenagers’ Perceptions of Sexual Abuse

**Table 4.2: Cultural Beliefs That Shape Teenagers’ Perception of Sexual Abuse in the Community**

|  |   | Responses  |               | Percent of Cases |
|--|---|------------|---------------|------------------|
|  |   | N          | Percent       |                  |
| <b>Cultural Beliefs that Shape Teenage<sup>a</sup></b> | Victims bring shame to their families                             | 151        | 24.2%         | 40.3%            |
|  | It is a Taboo to Discuss Sexual Matter Publicly                   | 159        | 25.4%         | 42.4%            |
|  | Elders’ Authority Should Not Be Questioned on Sexual Abuse Issues | 162        | 25.9%         | 43.2%            |
|  | Boys cannot be Victims on Sexual Abuse                            | 152        | 24.3%         | 40.5%            |
| <b>Total</b>   |   | <b>625</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>166.7%</b>    |
| <b>a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.</b>        |   |            |               |                  |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.2 illustrates how deeply embedded cultural beliefs shape teenagers’ attitudes toward sexual abuse within the community. The responses highlight several recurring notions that influence how abuse is understood, discussed, and reported.

From the table, four major belief patterns emerge, each reflecting the collective mindset that governs how sexual abuse is socially perceived. The first belief, that victims bring shame to their families, was acknowledged by 151 respondents (24.2%) and 159 respondents (25.4%) under similar phrasing, indicating a combined perception that family honour is compromised when abuse occurs. Together, nearly half of all responses (49.6%) suggest that many community members view sexual abuse not merely as a crime against the individual but as a source of

disgrace for the entire family. This belief encourages silence, discourages victims from seeking help, and often leads to concealment to protect the family's public image.

Another significant cultural perception evident from the table is the belief that “elders’ authority should not be questioned in sexual abuse issues.” This sentiment appeared in 162 (25.9%) and 152 (24.3%) of the total responses. This reflects a society where hierarchical respect and obedience to elders are prioritised over justice or truth, even in sensitive matters like abuse. When such authority structures dominate, victims particularly teenagers may feel powerless to challenge or accuse older individuals, especially if the alleged perpetrator is a respected community member, teacher, or relative.

The total of 625 responses represents 166.7% of cases, meaning that many respondents identified more than one cultural belief shaping their understanding of sexual abuse. This multiplicity underscores that stigmatising attitudes are not isolated but interwoven into a complex web of cultural expectations, moral codes, and family honour systems.

In interpreting these findings, it becomes clear that cultural norms play a decisive role in suppressing open discussion and formal reporting of abuse. The repeated emphasis on stigmatization, family reputation, and unquestioned authority fosters an environment where victims are silenced, and perpetrators may go unpunished. For teenagers, this cultural conditioning translates into fear of judgement, lack of trust in community structures, and internalised guilt, even when they are the victims. Table 2 demonstrated that cultural beliefs remain a powerful barrier to justice and support for abused teenagers. Any intervention aimed at improving reporting and protection mechanisms must therefore address these deep-seated social attitudes. Sustainable progress will depend on community-level sensitisation, dialogue with

traditional and religious leaders, and education that reframes sexual abuse as a violation of human rights rather than a family disgrace.

#### 4.2.2 The Influence of Sexual Abuse Stigma in Victim’s Family

**Table 4.3: Family Feels the Effect of Sexual Abuse Stigmatization**

|                   | N   | %     | Mean |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Agree             | 142 | 37.0% | 2.73 |
| Disagree          | 82  | 21.4% |      |
| Strongly Agree    | 99  | 25.8% |      |
| Strongly Disagree | 61  | 15.9% |      |
| Total             | 384 | 100%  |      |

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.

The data in Table 4.3 provides insight into how strongly respondents perceive the influence of stigma on families of sexual abuse victims. The responses reveal that 142 respondents (37.0%) agreed, and 99 respondents (25.8%) strongly agreed that families feel the effect of stigmatisation. In contrast, 82 respondents (21.4%) disagreed and 61 respondents (15.9%) strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 2.73, the overall tendency is towards *agreement*, suggesting that most teenagers recognise that families experience some degree of social stigma when sexual abuse occurs within the household.

This finding implies that stigma is not just directed at the individual victim but extends to their family unit. In closely-knit communities, where reputation and honour are highly valued, sexual abuse is often viewed as a source of shame. Families may fear being labelled, ridiculed, or socially excluded. Such fears can lead to silence, denial, or attempts to conceal incidents, thereby preventing open discussion or formal reporting of abuse. Essentially, the family becomes both a secondary victim and a reinforcing agent of secrecy.

The mean value further shows that although agreement is prevalent, it is not unanimous. The proportion of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed (about 37%) reflects that not all families are equally affected by stigma. This may depend on factors such as the family’s level of education, religious orientation, exposure to awareness campaigns, or the presence of supportive social networks. In families where progressive attitudes or understanding of victims’ rights exist, the impact of stigma may be less pronounced.

The result also sheds light on a wider cultural dynamic that sexual abuse is still shrouded in taboo and moral judgement, rather than treated purely as a criminal or social welfare concern. This entrenched perception contributes to underreporting and the reluctance of both victims and their families to seek help from authorities or support services. The findings demonstrate that stigmatisation of sexual abuse has deep social and psychological repercussions within families. It discourages disclosure, undermines victims’ recovery, and perpetuates the culture of silence that sustains abuse. Addressing this issue requires community-level sensitisation, open dialogue led by trusted figures (religious and traditional leaders), and consistent advocacy that reframes sexual abuse as a societal problem rather than a private disgrace.

#### 4.2.3 Ways in which Traditional Gender Roles Affect Teenagers’ Willingness to Disclose Sexual Abuse

**Table 4.4: Traditional Gender Roles of Who to Be Believed When Sexual Abuse Is Disclosed**

|              | N   | %     | Mean |
|--------------|-----|-------|------|
| Both equally | 130 | 33.8% | 3.13 |
| Boys         | 90  | 23.4% |      |
| Girls        | 156 | 40.7% |      |
| None         | 8   | 2.1%  |      |
| Total        | 384 | 100%  |      |

Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4.4 presents respondents' views on who within the community is more likely to be believed when cases of sexual abuse are reported. Out of 384 respondents, 156 (40.7%) believed that girls are more likely to be believed, 130 (33.8%) felt that both boys and girls are treated equally, 90 (23.4%) thought boys are more likely to be believed, while only 8 respondents (2.1%) felt that none are believed at all. The mean score of 3.13, which falls slightly above the midpoint, leans toward the view that girls are more readily believed than boys when disclosing sexual abuse.

This result reflects a gendered perception of victim credibility, shaped by traditional gender roles and cultural expectations. In many communities, girls are socially constructed as more vulnerable and in need of protection, while boys are often seen as strong, resilient, and less likely to be victims. This belief pattern contributes to a culture where female victims are granted sympathy and credibility, whereas male victims are met with doubt, ridicule, or silence.

The implication of this pattern is significant. It suggests that while awareness of abuse against girls is growing, sexual abuse against boys remains underreported and socially invisible, partly because boys fear disbelief or social shame. Such bias reinforces harmful masculinity norms that discourage emotional expression or help-seeking among male victims. It also undermines the broader fight against sexual abuse by creating a hierarchy of victimhood, where gender influences who is heard and who is dismissed.

Moreover, the proportion of respondents who believe both genders are equally believed (33.8%) signals a gradual shift in perception, possibly reflecting the impact of advocacy, education, and awareness programmes that emphasise equality in protection and justice. However, this emerging balance is still overshadowed by traditional attitudes that attach stigma and disbelief more strongly to male disclosure.

When viewed alongside earlier findings, such as the recognition that families experience stigma when a member is sexually abused, this table deepens the understanding of how cultural beliefs and gender roles intertwine to shape silence and disclosure patterns. Families already burdened by shame may further discourage boys from speaking up, fearing that disclosure would challenge social expectations of masculinity. The findings from Table 3 illustrate that traditional gender roles continue to influence how communities interpret and respond to abuse reports. While progress is visible in recognising abuse as a shared human concern, entrenched beliefs still privilege the credibility of girls’ experiences over those of boys. This calls for targeted interventions that challenge gender stereotypes, create safe spaces for all victims, and promote equal recognition and support regardless of gender.

#### 4.2.4 Ways in which Culturally Sensitive Strategies Can Encourage Teenagers to Report Sexual Abuse

**Table 4.5: Culturally Sensitive Strategies for Encouraging Teenagers to Report Sexual Abuse in Ekosodin Community**

|  |   | Responses |         | Percent of Cases |
|--|---|-----------|---------|------------------|
|  |   | N         | Percent |                  |
| <b>Cultural Strategies to Encourage Sexual Abuse Reporting<sup>a</sup></b> | Confidential Reporting Channels                 | 94        | 19.2%   | 27.2%            |
|  | Support Groups for Victims                      | 93        | 19.0%   | 26.9%            |
|  | Awareness Campaigns in Schools/Churches/Mosques | 102       | 20.8%   | 29.5%            |
|  | Involvement of Trusted Community Leaders        | 110       | 22.4%   | 31.8%            |

|   |                                      |     |        |        |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|
|   | Stronger Punishment for Perpetrators | 91  | 18.6%  | 26.3%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                    |                                      | 490 | 100.0% | 141.6% |
| <b>a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.</b> |                                      |     |        |        |

**Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.**

Table 4.5 presents respondents’ views on culturally sensitive strategies that could encourage the reporting of sexual abuse within the community. The data identifies several approaches perceived as effective in breaking the silence that surrounds abuse cases.

The most frequently cited strategy is the involvement of trusted community leaders, mentioned by 110 respondents (22.4%), representing 31.8% of cases. This indicates that respondents see local authority figures such as chiefs, elders, or religious leaders as crucial intermediaries in encouraging disclosure. In a culturally conservative setting like Ekosodin, where traditional hierarchies command respect, endorsement and support from community leaders can legitimize the act of reporting abuse and reduce the fear of backlash or disbelief.

The second most prominent strategy is awareness campaigns in schools, churches, and mosques, with 102 responses (20.8%), accounting for 29.5% of cases. This underscores the belief that consistent education and open discussion in trusted social and religious spaces can help normalize conversations about sexual abuse, dispel myths, and reduce stigma. By integrating awareness into existing community and religious platforms, the message of protection and accountability reaches both young people and adults.

Confidential reporting channels (94 responses, 19.2%) and support groups for victims (93 responses, 19.0%) follow closely. These responses reveal that teenagers desire safe, private spaces where they can disclose abuse without fear of exposure, judgement, or retaliation. Support

groups, in particular, offer peer-based reassurance that victims are not alone and that recovery and justice are possible.

Finally, stronger punishment for perpetrators was identified by 91 respondents (18.6%), reflecting 26.3% of cases. This shows that respondents associate visible and firm legal or social sanctions with deterrence and justice. Many believe that consistent enforcement of consequences would discourage offenders and send a clear message that abuse will not be tolerated.

The total response percentage of 141.6% indicates that respondents selected multiple strategies, which suggests that effective reporting requires a combination of approaches rather than a single solution. The table demonstrates that while young people recognize structural barriers rooted in culture and stigma, they also see culturally aligned solutions that could make disclosure safer. The findings point to the need for community-driven interventions that combines education, leadership involvement, victim support, and confidentiality to build trust and create an environment where teenagers can report sexual abuse without fear or shame.

#### **4.2.5 Barriers within that Community Hinder Teenagers from Disclosing Sexual Abuse**

Table 4.6 highlights the major community-level barriers that prevent teenagers from reporting sexual abuse. The data reveals that several overlapping social and institutional obstacles contribute to the persistent silence surrounding abuse cases.

**Table 4.6: Community Barriers That Hinder Teenagers from Reporting Sexual Abuse in Ekosodin Community**

|   |  | Responses  |               | Percent of Cases |
|---|--|------------|---------------|------------------|
|   |  | N          | Percent       |                  |
| <b>Community Barriers that Hinder Abuse Reporting<sup>a</sup></b> | Fear of not Being Believed               | 148        | 22.2%         | 39.9%            |
|   | Fear of stigma and shame                 | 117        | 17.5%         | 31.5%            |
|   | Lack of trust in authorities             | 128        | 19.2%         | 34.5%            |
|   | Corruption or bias in reporting channels | 128        | 19.2%         | 34.5%            |
|   | Long delays in handling cases            | 146        | 21.9%         | 39.4%            |
| <b>Total</b>  |  | <b>667</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>179.8%</b>    |

**a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.**

**Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.**

The most commonly identified barrier is the fear of not being believed, cited by 148 respondents (22.2%), representing 39.9% of cases. This finding shows that many teenagers lack confidence in the response they would receive if they disclosed abuse. Distrust of adults, community leaders, and even peers create a sense of futility victims anticipate being doubted or blamed rather than supported. This aligns with earlier findings that cultural and gender expectations influence whose voices are taken seriously, particularly disadvantaging male victims.

The long delays in handling cases were also reported by 146 respondents (21.9%), accounting for 39.4% of cases. This reflects frustration with bureaucratic or inefficient systems where justice is slow or inaccessible. Delays in investigation, prosecution, or support services can discourage victims and families from pursuing formal reporting channels, reinforcing a cycle of silence.

Equally important are lack of trust in authorities and corruption or bias in reporting channels, each identified by 128 respondents (19.2%) and contributing 34.5% of cases. These responses reveal a deep-seated skepticism toward the fairness and integrity of existing child protection institutions. When victims perceive that police, welfare officers, or community mediators act selectively or corruptly, they are less likely to report, fearing further victimization or injustice.

The fear of stigma and shame, reported by 117 respondents (17.5%), representing 31.5% of cases, underscores the enduring social dimension of silence. Victims and their families often internalize feelings of disgrace, believing that public knowledge of abuse will tarnish their reputation. This belief, rooted in cultural norms of family honour, discourages disclosure and perpetuates secrecy.

The total percentage of 179.8% indicates that many respondents identified different barriers, showing that these obstacles are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Fear, distrust, and systemic inefficiency/failure together create an environment where abuse can persist unchallenged. Table 4.6 illustrates that community and institutional barriers collectively undermine the willingness of teenagers to report sexual abuse. Addressing these challenges requires rebuilding public confidence through transparent legal processes, prompt response mechanisms, and sustained community education. Efforts should also prioritize cultural reorientation encouraging empathy, confidentiality, and accountability to ensure that victims are not only heard but also protected.

### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

This study examined the influence of cultural factors on the reporting of sexual abuse cases among teenagers in Ekosodin Community. The discussion integrates the major findings from the analysis of data with the reviewed empirical literature, organised around key thematic areas:

cultural beliefs, family stigma, gender roles, culturally sensitive strategies, and community barriers to disclosure.

The results from Table 2 and other cultural indicators demonstrate that prevailing community beliefs exert a powerful influence on how teenagers perceive and respond to sexual abuse. Many respondents identified cultural norms such as the notion that victims bring shame to their families and that elders' authority should not be questioned in sexual abuse matters as dominant barriers to open discussion or reporting. This aligns with Ajayi et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2021), who found that adolescents raised in cultures where sex is taboo internalize shame and guilt when abuse occurs, often reframing victimhood as family dishonour. Similarly, the study aligns with García-Moreno et al. (2019) emphasised that normative expectations like "reporting dishonours the family" suppress recognition and delay disclosure among young people.

The present findings confirm that Ekosodin's cultural environment mirrors these broader regional patterns: silence and fear of disgrace are not merely individual attitudes but socially reinforced codes of behaviour. Until the community's shared meanings about sexual abuse shift from disgrace to accountability teenagers will continue to underestimate or conceal experiences of harm.

Findings in Table 4.2 further reveal that a majority of respondents (mean = 2.73) agreed that families in Ekosodin feel the effect of sexual abuse stigmatization. This confirms Bhatia et al. (2024) and Ikuteyijo et al. (2023), who observed that familial fear of reputational loss often translates into victim silencing or non-reporting. Similar patterns were described by Cunningham et al. (2023), who noted that victims are pressured to conceal incidents "to protect the family."

The evidence suggests that stigmatization operates both socially and psychologically. Families internalize community judgement, thereby discouraging disclosure. This dual process echoes Alaggia and Millington (2010) and Easton (2013), who linked family stigma to reduced help-seeking and poorer mental-health outcomes among adolescent survivors. For Ekosodin, the implication is clear reporting frameworks must address not only victims' fears but also the family's perceived shame, through counselling and family-focused sensitization.

Table 3 shows that respondents generally believed girls are more likely to be believed when they report abuse (mean = 3.13). This outcome resonates strongly with Mbachu et al. (2025) and Ogunfowokan et al. (2024), who found that patriarchal norms shape asymmetric expectations of victimhood: girls are socialized to be chaste and vulnerable, while boys are pressured to appear strong and unaffected. The result reinforces the idea that traditional gender scripts still structure the social credibility of victims.

Empirical work reviewed by Rogers et al. (2023) demonstrates that gender-transformative interventions can shift these perceptions, enhancing belief in both male and female survivors. In Ekosodin, however, the persistence of gendered disbelief shows that masculinity norms continue to silence boys, while female disclosure remains constrained by fears of blame and shame. Effective responses must therefore confront these gendered biases directly through community education and youth-centered dialogue.

Findings from Table 4.5 reveal that teenagers identify culturally grounded measures particularly the involvement of trusted community leaders (22.4%) and awareness campaigns in religious and school settings (20.8) as the most effective means of encouraging reporting. These findings closely reflect the empirical literature on culturally adapted interventions. Abramsky et al. (2014)

and Leite et al. (2025) showed that community mobilization, local leadership engagement, and norm-shifting campaigns can substantially increase help-seeking.

Respondents' emphasis on confidentiality, support groups, and harsher punishment for perpetrators. This is parallel to the practical components outlined by Evans et al. (2022), who found that co-created, community-specific approaches achieve higher uptake and sustainability. Thus, for Ekosodin, culturally sensitive programming that combines education, confidentiality, and visible community endorsement holds the greatest promise for transforming silence into action.

Finally, Table 4.6 identifies the major community and institutional deterrents. Fear of disbelief (22.2%), delays in case handling (21.9%), lack of trust in authorities, and corruption or bias in reporting channels (each 19.2%). These mirrors the structural weaknesses described by Munala et al. (2025) and Ogedegbe et al. (2025), who documented how weak institutional responses and limited cultural competence among service providers erode victims' trust.

The persistence of these barriers underscores that social change alone is insufficient. Institutional reforms training, child-friendly protocols, and confidential referral systems are needed to complement community-level awareness. This is consistent with Ifayomi et al. (2024), who argued that sustainable progress in reporting requires synergy between community re-orientation and institutional capacity building.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the influence of cultural factors on the reporting of sexual abuse among teenagers in Ekosodin Community. The analysis integrated demographic characteristics, perceptions of cultural norms, family attitudes, gender roles, and institutional barriers to understand the dynamics shaping disclosure behaviour. The findings reveal a pattern of silence, fear, and selective belief that reflects deeply rooted cultural and social structures.

The demographic data showed that the respondents were mainly adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years, with a slight female majority (56.2%). Most were Bini by ethnicity, in secondary school, and living with both parents. This demographic structure provided a relevant population for exploring the cultural and familial contexts influencing teenagers' understanding of and responses to sexual abuse.

Findings from the analysis of cultural perceptions indicated that cultural beliefs remain a dominant force shaping how teenagers interpret and react to sexual abuse. A significant proportion of respondents acknowledged that their community regards sexual abuse as a taboo subject and views victims as bringing shame upon their families. This confirms that cultural silence, honour-based thinking, and respect for elders' authority continue to suppress open dialogue and discourage victims from reporting abuse. The study therefore underscores that cultural framing in Ekosodin still favours discretion and secrecy over accountability and justice.

The findings also revealed that family stigma plays a major role in discouraging victims from reporting abuse. With a mean score of 2.73, most respondents agreed that families in the

community feel the impact of stigmatization when a member experiences sexual abuse. Families often internalize social shame, worry about reputation, and prioritize silence over the well-being of victims. This familial pressure to conceal abuse reinforces community silence and delays help-seeking behaviour.

Gender emerged as another critical determinant of disclosure. The mean score of 3.13 on who is believed when abuse is reported indicates that respondents perceive girls as more likely to be believed than boys. This reflects enduring gender stereotypes that portray girls as vulnerable and truthful while expecting boys to be strong and emotionally resilient. Such beliefs create unequal conditions for disclosure, silencing male victims and reinforcing patriarchal values that equate masculinity with strength and invulnerability.

The study further found that teenagers recognize culturally sensitive strategies as essential for improving reporting. Respondents highlighted involvement of trusted community leaders, awareness campaigns in schools and religious institutions, confidential reporting channels, and strong punitive measures as key interventions. These findings suggest that effective responses must build on local authority structures and culturally resonant communication, ensuring that community leaders play an active role in normalizing disclosure and protecting victims.

Finally, the research identified multiple community and institutional barriers that hinder reporting. Prominent among these were fear of not being believed, long delays in handling cases, lack of trust in authorities, and corruption or bias in formal reporting channels. These systemic weaknesses have created an environment of mistrust where victims doubt the fairness and responsiveness of institutions. Consequently, silence becomes a survival strategy rather than a choice.

The study thus established that teenagers' willingness to report sexual abuse in Ekosodin is constrained by cultural, familial, gendered, and institutional factors. Cultural taboos and fear of disgrace normalize silence; family stigma reinforces secrecy; gender norms distort credibility; and weak institutional responses deepen mistrust. Together, these forces sustain a cycle of underreporting. The findings point to the need for integrated interventions combining community education, family counselling, gender-sensitive advocacy, and institutional reform to dismantle the social and structural barriers that prevent teenagers from speaking out about sexual abuse.

## **5.2 Summary**

This study focused on the roles of cultural beliefs, family stigma, gender expectations, and institutional barriers in influencing whether young people choose to speak up or remain silent. The respondents were teenagers aged 13 to 17, drawn mostly from secondary schools, reflecting a population directly affected by the social norms under study.

Cultural beliefs remain a powerful force in sharpening the reporting of sexual abuse on teenagers by teens. Many teenagers live in a community where sexual matters are treated as taboo and where victims are seen as bringing shame to their families. These ideas create an environment in which silence becomes normalized and reporting becomes risky. Families play a strong part in this. Several respondents agreed that families feel the weight of stigma when abuse occurs, and this often leads to denial, blame, or pressure on victims to keep quiet.

Gender also shapes who is believed. Respondents noted that girls are more readily trusted when reporting abuse, while boys face judgement tied to ideas about masculinity. This creates unequal conditions for disclosure and reinforces the silence of male victims. The study also showed that teenagers recognize the value of culturally grounded strategies that involve trusted leaders,

community education, and confidential reporting channels. These approaches were seen as important for improving trust and encouraging disclosure.

It emphasized that institutional responses remain a huge concern. Fear of not being believed, long delays, and lack of trust in authorities were among the major barriers identified. These weaknesses in formal systems make it difficult for victims to rely on official reporting channels.

The study showed that teenagers' willingness to report sexual abuse is shaped by a combination of cultural silence, family pressures, gender norms, and weak institutional support. Addressing any one of these factors in isolation will not be enough. A coordinated effort that includes community education, family engagement, gender-sensitive support, and stronger institutional mechanisms is needed to create an environment where teenagers can report abuse safely and confidently.

### **5.3 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study advances understanding of how cultural forces shape the reporting of sexual abuse among teenagers in Ekosodin, and it does so in several important ways.

First, it provides clear evidence that cultural silence, honour-based thinking, and deeply rooted beliefs about family reputation continue to define how young people interpret abuse. While earlier studies have noted the influence of culture in broad terms, this research shows exactly how these beliefs operate within a specific community and how they influence disclosure behaviour among teenagers. By grounding cultural norms in measurable patterns of perception, the study adds nuance to existing theories on social norms and adolescent help-seeking.

Second, the study contributes new insight into the interaction between family stigma and teenage reporting. It demonstrates that family responses are not merely shaped by culture but actively

reinforce silence through fear of shame and reputational damage. This layered understanding moves beyond generic discussions of stigma and shows how family dynamics create immediate barriers that institutions often fail to see.

Third, the study offers a refined perspective on gendered credibility. It shows that boys and girls are not only affected differently by abuse but also believed differently when they attempt to report. This highlights a gap in the literature, where male victims are often overlooked or under-examined. By documenting how gender scripts influence credibility, the study strengthens arguments for gender-sensitive interventions.

Fourth, the research brings a culturally grounded lens to strategies for improving reporting. Instead of assuming that legal reforms or awareness campaigns alone are enough, the findings highlight the need for interventions anchored in local authority structures, trusted community figures, and culturally acceptable communication channels. This contributes to a growing body of work advocating for context-specific, community-owned approaches to safeguarding young people.

Finally, the study exposes structural weaknesses in the institutional response system. It emphasized that weak trust, corruption, delays, and poor cultural competence are challenging issues. It showed how these factors intersect with cultural beliefs to discourage reporting. This layered analysis offers a more holistic understanding of why under-reporting persists, bridging gaps between public health, social work, and community studies.

These contributions deepen the academic conversation on sexual abuse reporting by showing that disclosure is not a single act but the outcome of interrelated cultural, familial, gendered, and institutional forces. The study provides a framework that scholars, social workers, and

policymakers can use when designing interventions that are culturally realistic and genuinely supportive of teenage survivors.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study set out to examine the influence of cultural factors on the reporting of sexual abuse among teenagers in Ekosodin Community. Drawing on both empirical evidence and field data, it has demonstrated that the decision to disclose or remain silent about sexual abuse is deeply rooted in the cultural, familial, and social structures that govern community life. The findings revealed that while awareness of abuse exists, the pathways to disclosure remain obstructed by entrenched norms of shame, gender expectations, and institutional weaknesses.

The study concludes that cultural beliefs and values play a defining role in shaping how sexual abuse is perceived and addressed. In Ekosodin, sexual matters are still treated as taboo, and victims are often seen as bearers of family disgrace. This cultural silence not only prevents open discussion but also reinforces the perception that reporting abuse threatens family honour. Consequently, victims especially teenagers struggle to interpret abuse as a violation rather than as a personal or familial failure.

Familial stigma further compounds the challenge. Families, driven by fear of public ridicule and loss of social standing, often suppress disclosure, prioritizing reputation over recovery. Such attitudes perpetuate a cycle of silence in which victims are denied validation, care, and justice. Gender norms deepen these disparities: girls are more readily believed, while boys face disbelief and ridicule, a reflection of patriarchal scripts that associate vulnerability exclusively with femininity. These findings affirm that gendered expectations not only shape who is considered a “credible” victim but also determine access to protection and empathy.

At the structural level, the study found that institutional barriers such as lack of trust in authorities, corruption in reporting processes, and prolonged case handling erode confidence in formal systems. The interaction between these systemic failures and cultural taboos sustains a context in which silence is safer than disclosure. The limited accessibility of confidential and youth-friendly reporting mechanisms further discourages victims from seeking help.

Despite these challenges, the study also identified ways for change. Respondents recognized that involving trusted community and religious leaders, implementing awareness campaigns in culturally appropriate spaces, strengthening confidentiality mechanisms, and enforcing stronger sanctions against perpetrators could improve reporting rates. These strategies align with the empirical literature, which highlights that locally grounded, community-owned interventions yield more sustainable results than externally imposed reforms.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

From a social work perspective, the findings of this study underline the need for culturally grounded and community-responsive interventions to address the social, familial, and institutional barriers that inhibit teenagers from reporting sexual abuse in Ekosodin. Each recommendation presented here focuses on practical, achievable measures that social workers can initiate, coordinate, or advocate for within the community's socio-cultural context.

First, social workers should strengthen community-based education and awareness programmes that challenge harmful cultural norms surrounding sexual abuse. Many respondents indicated that silence, shame, and fear of family disgrace prevent victims from coming forward. Social workers, in collaboration with traditional and religious leaders, should lead participatory sensitization campaigns that reframe sexual abuse as a violation of human rights rather than a source of family

dishonour. These initiatives should use local languages, community forums, and youth-friendly media to promote open dialogue, clarify misconceptions, and encourage supportive responses to survivors.

Second, it is essential for social workers to establish and coordinate confidential reporting and referral systems within the community. The study found that fear of exposure and distrust of authorities discourage disclosure. Social workers can develop safe spaces within schools, churches, and youth centers where trained professionals and peer advocates receive reports confidentially and link victims to psychosocial, legal, and health services. Building trust through confidentiality and non-judgmental engagement will help victims feel protected and respected when seeking help.

Third, family-focused interventions should be prioritized to reduce stigma and promote supportive responses within the home. The findings showed that families often internalize social shame and discourage victims from reporting. Social workers can design family counselling programmes that address negative beliefs about reputation, shame, and victim-blaming. These sessions should educate parents and guardians on the importance of emotional support, early intervention, and collaboration with professionals. Empowering families to become allies rather than barriers is central to improving reporting and recovery outcomes.

Fourth, social workers should advocate for and help implement school-based prevention and support programmes. Since most respondents were secondary school students, schools represent a critical setting for early intervention. Social workers can facilitate training for teachers and counsellors on identifying signs of abuse, responding appropriately, and guiding affected students toward help. Establishing peer support groups within schools can also provide a safe

platform for teenagers to discuss sensitive issues and learn about their rights in a supportive environment.

Fifth, effective social work practice in Ekosodin must include collaborative engagement with community and institutional stakeholders. The study revealed deep mistrust of authorities and perceptions of corruption in formal systems. Social workers should act as intermediaries, building bridges between victims, community leaders, the police, and welfare agencies. By promoting accountability, monitoring service delivery, and ensuring transparency, social workers can help restore community confidence in reporting mechanisms and service institutions.

Lastly, social workers should engage in policy advocacy and professional capacity building to institutionalize protection for teenagers. Beyond community outreach, there is a need to integrate culturally sensitive practices into local government frameworks. Social workers should push for policies that mandate youth-friendly, gender-sensitive, and confidential reporting structures within social welfare and education systems. Continuous professional training should be provided for social workers, teachers, police officers, and healthcare personnel on trauma-informed care, cultural competence, and child rights protection.

The study is an eye opener on gender sensitive issue that relegates male before female. I strongly advocate that sexual abuse among male teenagers should be investigated in order to bring to light the level degeneration and mental health issues they combat with in their day to day struggles with sexual abuses. The focus has always been on female and of such more attention should be paid to male teenagers. It should be noted that a sexually abused male/female victims is likely to become a perpetrator of sexual abuse mostly in climes in which sexual abuse reporting is discouraged due to cultural advocated silence, family pressures, gender norms, and weak institutional support.

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## APPENDIX 1

**Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Benin,  
Benin City**

Dear respondent

I am a student of the above name department and institution, currently conducting research on *Influence of Cultural Factors on Reporting Sexual Abuse Cases Among Teenagers in Ekosodin Community* as part of the requirement for the award of B.Sc. degree in the above name department. This research is purely academic and anonymity is guaranteed. I would appreciate it if you could carefully read and answer the questions as honest as possible. Thank you for your anticipated corporation.

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**DEBORAH OSATO EMMUMEJAKPOR**

### **Section A: Demographic Information**

1. Age: \_\_\_\_
2. Gender:  Male  Female  Other
3. Ethnicity:  Bini  Hausa  Igbo  Yoruba  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Educational Status:  No formal education  Primary  Secondary  Tertiary (if applicable)
5. Religion:  Christianity  Islam  Traditional  Other (specify)
6. Who do you live with?  Both parents  Single parent  Guardian  Alone

### **Section B: Cultural Beliefs and Perceptions of Sexual Abuse**

6. In your community, how often is sexual abuse openly discussed?  Very often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never
7. Do you believe sexual abuse is a serious issue in your community?  Yes  No  Not sure
8. How often does your religious leader teach sexual abuse reporting?  Very often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never
9. How often does your community leaders teach sexual abuse reporting?  Very often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never
10. How often does your parent/guardian teach sexual abuse reporting?  Very often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never
11. Which of the following beliefs exist in your community about sexual abuse? (**Check all that apply**)  Victims bring shame to their families  It is a taboo to discuss sexual

- matters publicly  Elders' authority should not be questioned sexual abuse issues   
Boys cannot be victims of sexual abuse  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do teenagers feel safe reporting sexual abuse to community leaders?  
 Yes  No  Sometimes
13. In your own words, what cultural belief do you think makes it hard for teenagers to report sexual abuse?
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### **Section C: Influence of Sexual Abuse Sigma in Victims Family**

11. Do you think families in your community worry more about their stigmatisation than the wellbeing of the victim?  Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
12. If a teenager reports sexual abuse, how would the family most likely react?  Support and protect the victim  Blame the victim for bringing shame  Keep it secret to protect family reputation  Report to authorities
13. Abused victim's family feels the effect of stigmatization.  Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
14. How likely are teenagers to hide abuse to protect their family form stigmatisation?  Very likely  Likely  Not likely  Not sure
15. In your opinion, how does family shame affect a teenager's decision to report abuse?
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### **Section D: Gender Roles and Disclosure Practices**

16. In your community, who is more likely to be believed if they report abuse?  Boys  Girls  Both equally  None
17. Are boys discouraged from reporting abuse because they are expected to be "strong"?  Yes  No  Sometimes
18. Are girls discouraged from reporting abuse because they are expected to be "obedient"?  Yes  No  Sometimes
19. In your view, how do traditional gender roles affect teenagers' decision to speak out about abuse?
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## Section E: Accessibility of Teenagers in Reporting Sexual Abuses to Leaders

20. How accessible are the community leaders to teenagers in reporting sexual abuse?  Inaccessible  Moderately Accessible  Highly Accessible
21. How accessible are the religious leaders to teenagers in reporting sexual abuse?  Inaccessible  Moderately Accessible  Highly Accessible
22. How accessible are the security personnel to teenagers in reporting sexual abuse?  Inaccessible  Moderately Accessible  Highly Accessible
23. How accessible are the SARC/NAPTIP to teenagers in reporting sexual abuse?  Inaccessible  Moderately Accessible  Highly Accessible

## Section E: Strategies for Encouraging Abuse Reporting

19. What measures would encourage teenagers to report abuse in your community? (**Check all that apply**)  Confidential reporting channels  Support groups for victims  Awareness campaigns in schools/churches/mosques  Involvement of trusted community leaders  Stronger punishment for perpetrators  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
20. Who do you think should play the biggest role in encouraging reporting?  Parents  Teachers  Religious leaders  Traditional leaders  Police  Others
21. Do you think empowerment programs (e.g., rights education, counselling, safe spaces) can increase reporting?  Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
22. In your opinion, what specific culturally sensitive strategies can help teenagers in Ekosodin report abuse without fear?
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## Section F: Barriers within Community

23. How effective are the existing child protection institutions (community leaders) in your community?  Very effective  Effective  Not effective  Not sure
24. What barriers prevent teenagers from reporting abuse to these institutions? (**Check all that apply**)  Fear of not being believed  Fear of stigma and shame  Lack of trust in authorities  Corruption or bias in reporting channels  Long delays in handling cases  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
25. Do you think community leaders (elders, chiefs, religious leaders) encourage or discourage abuse reporting?  Encourage  Discourage  Neutral
26. In your own words, what community or institutional barriers do you think make it hard for teenagers to disclose abuse?

**Thank You**

