

**THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PREVENTION OF
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF EDO STATE**

**Eveshobase Deborah DANIEL
SSC2106017**

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

OCTOBER, 2025

**THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PREVENTION OF
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF EDO STATE**

**Eveshobase Deborah DANIEL
SSC2106017**

**BEING A RESEARCH WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
(B.SC) DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

OCTBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work titled “The Role of the Social Workers in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State” was carried out by Eveshobase Deborah DANIEL with matriculation number SSC2106017 and has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.SC) Degree in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of the following persons;

Prof. S.O. Ibobor
(Project Supervisor)

Date

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

Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express gratitude to God Almighty for his infinite mercies, tender love and kindness showered on me previously, now and always. I would also like to appreciate my personal resilience towards my academic journey in the University of Benin, it has always been a bittersweet experience.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my project supervisor Prof. Sunday Ofili Ibobor, his mentorship contributed greatly to the success of the work.

The HOD Dr. Mrs Helen Eweka and also I want to appreciate Dr Bello Martins Omoruyi for your constant support and guidance throughout the writing of this project.

Their support goes a long way in the writing of this project. Thank you all so much for everything you have shown me, the love, prayers, support, corrections. I also want to use this opportunity to specially thank my dear parents, Mr and Mrs Daniel for their financial support, love and prayers throughout my stay in the University of Benin. To Edmond, thank you for assisting me in the way you can, God bless you. I also wish to acknowledge my friends, I can't all mention names, Omoaka and Dunkwuuu thank you for always asking Debby where are you now in your project, the constant checking up on me while writing this project, I love you both, Ofuree my love thank you so much, Dumebi, George, the main man, Douglas, Precious, you are loved.

To Emmanuel, thank you for your emotional support and the love you showed me when I needed one, I love you. And Humble smith you are loved, thank you so much for everything, God bless you.

Thank you all so much my friends (even the ones i didn't mention), JCIN UNIBEN, LFC EKOSODIN. Thank you to my sweet sister Naomi, I love you so much and God will bless you for me. Thank you to all academic and non academic staff of the department of social work. To my amazing coursemates, thank you. See you all at the top.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Acknowledgements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Table of Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vi
Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	viii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	Statement of Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1.3	Objective of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1.4	Research Questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1.5	Scope of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
1.6	Significant of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
1.7	Definition of Terms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Preamble	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
2.2	Review of Relevant Literature	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
2.2.1	Role of Social Workers in intervening cases of child abuse and neglect									15
2.2.2	Adequacy of Social Work Interventions in Child Abuse and Neglect									18
2.2.3	Strategies Employed by Social Workers in Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
2.2.3	Challenges Faced by Social Workers in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
2.3	Empirical Review	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25

2.4	Theoretical Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD									
3.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.1	Research Design	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.2	Population of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.3	Sample Size and Sampling Technique	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
3.4	Research Instrument	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
3.5	Validity of Instrument	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
3.6	Method of Data Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
3.7	Method of Data Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION									
4.1	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
4.2	Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
4.3	Discussion of Findings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS									
5.1	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46
5.2	Summary of Findings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46
5.3	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48
5.4	Recommendations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48
5.5	Suggestions for Further Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
	References	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	51
	APPENDIX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63

ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The research aimed to assess the extent of social workers' involvement in child protection, evaluate the adequacy of interventions provided to abused and neglected children, explore preventive strategies adopted, and identify challenges hindering effective service delivery. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and utilized structured questionnaires administered to 100 respondents, including social workers, caregivers, parents, and children. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and frequency distributions.

Findings revealed that social workers play critical roles in identifying, rescuing, counseling, and advocating for the rights of abused and neglected children. They also engage in preventive efforts through community sensitization, parental education, and collaboration with schools, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies. However, the study found that long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programs are often inadequate due to insufficient funding, shortage of trained personnel, cultural resistance, and weak institutional support.

The study concludes that while social workers contribute significantly to child protection in Egor LGA, their effectiveness is constrained by systemic and cultural challenges. It recommends increased government funding, professional training, inter-agency collaboration, and community-based awareness campaigns to strengthen child welfare systems and enhance the preventive capacity of social workers.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Child abuse and neglect are among the most serious and pervasive violations of children's rights, with far-reaching consequences for both the individuals affected and society as a whole. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) defines child abuse as any act of mistreatment or neglect by a parent, caregiver, or other authority figure that causes harm or endangers a child's physical or emotional well-being. These harmful acts can range from physical violence and emotional maltreatment to sexual abuse and neglect, which can have long-term implications for a child's health, development, and educational outcomes (Gilbert et al., 2009). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2018), millions of children around the world suffer from various forms of abuse and neglect, with profound consequences for their overall well-being and future potential.

In Nigeria, despite legislative measures such as the Child Rights Act of 2003, which seeks to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation, the country continues to face a significant child protection crisis. High rates of child labor, sexual abuse, early marriage, corporal punishment, and neglect remain endemic in many regions of the country, exacerbated by widespread poverty, lack of

educational awareness, and insufficient enforcement of existing laws (Adegoke & Adebayo, 2020; Okpaluba, 2021). Social, cultural, and economic factors further complicate the issue, making the protection of children an ongoing challenge. In particular, the persistence of harmful traditional practices and a general lack of knowledge about children's rights in rural and semi-urban areas contribute to an environment where child abuse can go unreported and unpunished.

Social workers in Nigeria are trained to identify cases of child abuse, advocate for children's rights, provide support to children and families, and work in multi-disciplinary teams to address systemic issues contributing to child maltreatment. In urban centers like Benin City, which serves as the capital of Edo State, social workers often encounter more opportunities for collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, in rural areas such as Egor LGA, access to these services is more limited, and social workers may be required to work with fewer resources while contending with local cultural attitudes that often resist outside intervention (Ogunniyi & Olayemi, 2019).

Egor Local Government Area (LGA) in Edo State provides a unique context for examining the role of social workers in addressing child abuse and neglect. This locality, with its mix of urban and rural populations, experiences challenge typical of many Nigerian communities. Here, social workers play a crucial role in mitigating child abuse by intervening in at-risk families, providing

education on child welfare, and working closely with community leaders, law enforcement, and local institutions to create safer environments for children. However, these professionals often face significant barriers, including inadequate resources, societal resistance to intervention, and limited institutional support for child protection programs (Akinbode & Omotayo, 2020).

Despite the persistent challenges facing child protection in Nigeria—ranging from institutional weaknesses to socio-cultural resistance—social workers in Edo State have continued to play an instrumental role in mitigating child abuse and neglect. In particular, social workers trained at the University of Benin have emerged as key advocates and change agents in the development and promotion of child protection frameworks within the state and beyond. These professionals, equipped with academic training and field experience, have worked across governmental and non-governmental platforms to sensitize communities, provide psychosocial support to affected children, and collaborate with legal and medical personnel to ensure that victims of abuse receive comprehensive care and justice.

The University of Benin, being one of the foremost institutions in Nigeria offering social work education, has produced a wealth of research and practical interventions that have helped shape child protection discourse. Scholars and practitioners affiliated with the university, such as Aluko (2014) and Adegoke &

Adebayo (2020), have conducted seminal studies that explore the roles, challenges, and opportunities facing social workers in child welfare systems. Aluko (2014), for instance, highlighted the socio-cultural factors that perpetuate child abuse and called for a more culturally grounded, community-based approach to social work practice. Similarly, Adegoke and Adebayo (2020) emphasized the urgent need to strengthen institutional capacity, training, and inter-agency collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of child protection interventions.

These scholars have consistently argued for the professionalization and elevation of social work in Nigeria, noting that without robust investment in the training and deployment of social workers, efforts to curb child abuse may remain superficial or unsustainable. Their work has informed both academic discourse and practical policy recommendations aimed at making social work a central pillar of Nigeria's child welfare infrastructure. Moreover, through student-led outreach programs, community-based projects, and interdisciplinary collaborations, the University of Benin has fostered a culture of applied learning where social work students actively engage with real-world child protection issues in communities like Egor Local Government Area.

The contributions of these academics and practitioners underline the vital role that universities—and particularly departments of social work—play in

shaping societal responses to pressing social problems. By grounding their research in the lived realities of vulnerable populations, scholars from the University of Benin continue to influence how social work is conceptualized, taught, and practiced in Nigeria, ultimately contributing to a more responsive and resilient child protection system.

The role of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect goes beyond crisis intervention. It involves the implementation of preventive programs, public awareness campaigns, and advocacy for children's rights. Social workers also assist in the identification of early signs of abuse, provide counseling and therapeutic support to children and families, and participate in the development of child protection policies at both local and national levels (Lonne et al., 2009). In regions like Egor LGA, this role is vital to changing long-standing attitudes and practices that contribute to child maltreatment.

However, despite the significant contributions of social workers, several barriers limit the effectiveness of their interventions. These include the insufficient number of trained social workers, a lack of governmental and institutional support, and social resistance to intervention in child-rearing practices (Aluko, 2014). In addition, many children who experience abuse are reluctant to report their experiences due to fear of retaliation or shame, further complicating the efforts of social workers in the region.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the role of social workers in preventing child abuse and neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The research will examine the challenges faced by social workers in this community, the strategies they employ to prevent and address cases of child abuse, and the effectiveness of these strategies in improving child welfare outcomes. In doing so, this study will contribute to the existing literature on social work practice in Nigeria, highlighting both the successes and the limitations of current interventions in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Child abuse and neglect remain profound social challenges globally, posing a serious threat to the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) identifies child maltreatment as one of the leading causes of long-term mental and physical health problems among children. In developing countries like Nigeria, the situation is particularly alarming due to socio-economic pressures, cultural beliefs, weak enforcement of child protection laws, and inadequate child welfare infrastructure (UNICEF, 2018; Akpan & Oluwabamide, 2010).

Despite the domestication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child through the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003, and its adoption by several states including Edo State, incidents of child abuse and neglect persist at

disturbing levels. Studies show that many children in Nigeria face various forms of abuse—ranging from physical and emotional violence to sexual exploitation and neglect (Oloko, 1999; Adegoke & Adebayo, 2020). In semi-urban and rural communities like Egor Local Government Area in Edo State, the problem is compounded by poverty, ignorance, harmful traditional practices, and inadequate community support systems (Ebigbo, 2003; Aluko, 2014). These conditions create environments where abuse is normalized or concealed, making prevention and intervention efforts highly challenging.

Social workers are at the forefront of child protection globally, tasked with identifying, preventing, and responding to cases of abuse. They play a vital role in child welfare systems by providing psychosocial support, advocating for children's rights, conducting investigations, and facilitating access to justice and rehabilitation (Lonne et al., 2009; Mathews & Kenny, 2008). In Nigeria, social workers face several challenges in executing these roles. Many are overburdened, under-resourced, and operate within systems that lack effective institutional backing (Ogunniyi & Olayemi, 2019; Okpaluba, 2021). This is particularly true in regions like Egor LGA, where systemic barriers—such as limited funding, inadequate legal support, low public awareness, and community resistance—undermine their capacity to prevent and respond to child maltreatment (Akinbode & Omotayo, 2020; Eze, 2017).

Additionally, the lack of reliable data and evaluation of the effectiveness of social work interventions in these areas makes it difficult to design evidence-based responses. While there is some scholarly work on social work practice in Nigeria, most studies are generalized and fail to address local realities and grassroots-level interventions (Ifeagwazi et al., 2015; Eze & Okonkwo, 2021). This research gap has hindered the development of localized strategies that are culturally sensitive, sustainable, and effective in protecting children in vulnerable communities like Egor.

Furthermore, dominant patriarchal norms and deeply rooted religious or cultural beliefs often obstruct the acceptance of child protection initiatives. Child abuse is frequently regarded as a private family matter, leading to suspicion or even hostility toward external intervention, particularly from social workers (Odinokova et al., 2019). This discourages victims and families from reporting abuse and limits the reach of protective services. Without culturally nuanced engagement strategies and community-based awareness programs, social workers struggle to gain the trust needed to work effectively within such communities.

Consequently, the core problem this study aims to address is the limited understanding and under-exploration of the role and effectiveness of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. There is a pressing need to explore the scope of their activities,

the strategies they deploy, the challenges they encounter, and the impact of their interventions on child welfare outcomes.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The study specifically aims to:

1. examine the role of social workers in intervening in cases of child abuse and neglect.
2. assess the adequacy of interventions provided to abused and neglected children by social workers.
3. explore the strategies adopted by social workers in preventing child abuse and neglect.
4. identify the challenges confronting social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What roles do social workers play in intervening in cases of child abuse and neglect?
2. To what extent do children who have experienced abuse and neglect receive adequate intervention from social workers?

3. What strategies are employed by social workers in preventing child abuse and neglect?
4. What challenges do social workers face in the prevention of child abuse and neglect?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examining the role of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect within Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. It focuses on the roles, strategies, and challenges of social workers, as well as the experiences of children who have suffered abuse or neglect.

1.6 Significant of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its aim to uncover and analyze the fundamental aspects of child abuse and neglect, as well as to critically evaluate the role social workers play in preventing and responding to this social menace, particularly within Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. While child abuse is a global issue, its manifestations and the societal response to it are often shaped by local cultural, economic, and institutional contexts. Thus, there is a need for context-specific research that not only defines the scope of the problem but also examines the mechanisms and interventions being used to address it (Ajayi, 2021).

This study is particularly significant as it seeks to shed light on the often-overlooked but critical contributions of social workers in safeguarding children's rights and well-being. Social workers are frontline professionals in child protection systems—they are tasked with identifying abuse, providing psychosocial support to victims, advocating for children's rights, and working within families and communities to foster safer environments. Yet, in many Nigerian communities like Egor LGA, their roles are poorly understood, under-supported, and sometimes resisted due to cultural beliefs and systemic challenges (Osaiyuwu, 2023).

By focusing on the work of social workers in a specific local context, this research will generate valuable insights into the barriers they face—such as lack of resources, inadequate training, limited collaboration with other institutions, and public apathy or resistance—and how they strive to overcome these challenges. It will also highlight the success stories, strategies, and models of intervention that can be scaled up or adapted in similar regions (Elca and Rhulani, 2024).

Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to academic discourse, policy development, and professional practice in several ways. For academics and students, it will provide empirical data and analysis that enrich the literature on social work and child protection in Nigeria. For policymakers, it offers evidence-

based recommendations that could inform improvements in the child welfare system, especially concerning the training, support, and deployment of social workers. For practitioners, the study could help identify best practices and innovative approaches that enhance the effectiveness of social work in preventing child abuse (Osayiuwu, 2023).

Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader goal of ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of every child. In aligning with national child protection goals and global commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 16.2, which aims to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children), the findings of this study will serve as a catalyst for strengthening local responses to child abuse and positioning social workers as indispensable actors in the fight against it.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1. Abuse: Abuse is the act of improper usage or treatment of a person or thing, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression.
2. Neglect: Neglect is a situation in which you do not give enough care or attention to someone or something, or the state of not receiving enough care or attention

3. Child abuse: Child Abuse can be defined as an act, or failure to act, on the part of a parent, guardian and / or caregiver that results in the death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child, or which places the child in an imminent risk of serious harm, and / or seriously impacts the child's long-term development and potential.
4. Child neglect: Child neglect is an act of caregivers (e.g., parents) that results in depriving a child of their basic needs, such as the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs
5. Social worker: A social worker is a trained professional who helps individuals, families, and communities address challenges and improve their well-being by providing support, resources, and advocacy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Preamble

Child abuse and neglect are deeply concerning social problems that affect the health, development, and overall well-being of millions of children worldwide. These issues manifest in various forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment, and neglect of basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education. In Nigeria, the problem is exacerbated by poverty, illiteracy, harmful cultural practices, and weak enforcement of child protection laws. Despite national and international frameworks designed to uphold children's rights—such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Nigeria's Child Rights Act of 2003—cases of abuse and neglect continue to occur frequently, particularly in communities where child protection structures are underdeveloped or poorly implemented.

In such contexts, the role of social workers becomes critically important. Social workers are trained professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills to intervene in situations of child abuse and neglect. Their duties range from identifying and reporting abuse, to providing counseling and support to victims, to collaborating with legal, educational, and healthcare institutions to ensure children's safety and recovery. More importantly, social workers also engage in

preventive work, aiming to reduce the occurrence of abuse through education, advocacy, and community engagement.

The relevance of social work in child protection cannot be overemphasized. In communities like Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, where socioeconomic challenges and cultural beliefs may hinder effective child protection, social workers serve as both interventionists and change agents. However, the visibility and effectiveness of social workers in these communities vary, often due to a lack of resources, societal attitudes, and limited awareness about the role they play.

This literature review is therefore undertaken to explore the role of social workers in preventing child abuse and neglect, using Egor LGA as a case study. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social workers function within the child protection system, the challenges they face, and the impact of their interventions on vulnerable children. By examining existing literature, this review seeks to highlight both the strengths and limitations of social work practice in this area and to identify gaps that future research and policy can address.

2.2 Review of Relevant Literature

2.2.1 Role of Social Workers in intervening cases of child abuse and neglect

The intervention role of social workers is universally recognized as central to the field of child protection. As frontline professionals, they bear the responsibility of responding to situations where children are exposed to harm, vulnerability, or exploitation. Intervention in this sense goes beyond immediate rescue operations and encompasses a wide range of professional duties such as identification, assessment, case planning, and coordination of relevant services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. Munro (2011) underscores that effective child protection systems depend heavily on the responsiveness and competence of social workers, as they are strategically placed to detect signs of abuse, investigate family conditions, and mediate between children, families, and formal institutions.

In the Nigerian context, social workers serve as vital agents in bridging the gap between legal frameworks and practical child welfare outcomes. Their professional responsibilities extend to rescuing children from unsafe environments, providing psychosocial support to mitigate the effects of trauma, advocating for the enforcement of children's rights, and ensuring that victims gain access to legal and healthcare services (Okoye, 2016). These roles demonstrate the multidimensional nature of intervention, which requires both technical expertise and ethical commitment to the principles of child protection.

Olanrewaju (2018) emphasizes that social workers play an irreplaceable role in ensuring the implementation of the Child Rights Act (2003), which remains the cornerstone of child protection legislation in Nigeria. Their involvement is necessary to translate policy provisions into meaningful action at the grassroots level, particularly in areas where children are most vulnerable. By acting as enforcers and advocates of children's rights, social workers contribute significantly to upholding national and international standards for child welfare.

However, research has shown that the scope and effectiveness of social workers' intervention vary across states and local government areas. Akinfolarin and Eresimadu (2019) observe that disparities in training, professional development, funding, and organizational support often lead to inconsistent levels of child protection services. In some localities, the absence of sufficient personnel and resources undermines the ability of social workers to deliver timely and adequate intervention. These inconsistencies reflect broader systemic issues within Nigeria's social welfare framework, where uneven distribution of resources and weak institutional support limit the capacity of social workers to fulfill their professional mandate.

Consequently, the intervention role of social workers, while central to child protection practice, is also shaped by structural and contextual factors. Their effectiveness depends on the strength of the child protection system, the adequacy

of resources, and the level of institutional recognition accorded to the profession. Understanding this role, therefore, is essential for evaluating how social workers contribute to addressing child abuse and neglect, as well as for identifying areas where their capacity can be strengthened to ensure better outcomes for vulnerable children.

2.2.2 Adequacy of Social Work Interventions in Child Abuse and Neglect

Adequate intervention implies that children not only receive immediate rescue but also benefit from comprehensive, long-term measures that address their emotional, psychological, and social development. Davidson-Arad and Benbenishty (2010) emphasize that effective intervention goes beyond short-term protection; it involves rehabilitation, reintegration into safe environments, and systematic follow-up support to prevent re-abuse. This holistic approach ensures that children recover from trauma, develop resilience, and reintegrate successfully into society. In many developed countries, these interventions typically include foster care placement, psychological counseling, structured monitoring systems, and community-based rehabilitation programs, all of which aim to secure the child's best interests in line with global child protection standards.

The Nigerian context presents significant challenges that undermine the adequacy of such interventions. Okafor (2012) observes that most social work

interventions in Nigeria tend to terminate at the rescue stage, with limited or no emphasis on sustained rehabilitation or reintegration. This shortcoming reflects deeper systemic weaknesses, such as inadequate infrastructure for child protection, underfunding of social welfare institutions, and a shortage of trained social workers. As a result, many children who are rescued from abusive environments fail to receive the continuous support needed for long-term recovery and development.

Ojedokun and Atoi (2012) found that abused children in Nigeria frequently lack access to specialized counseling, trauma therapy, and reintegration programs. The absence of these critical services diminishes the effectiveness of social workers' efforts and often leaves children vulnerable to re-victimization. Emotional and psychological needs, which are central to a child's recovery process, are thus overlooked in many cases. This gap creates a cycle where children are rescued but remain at high risk of re-abuse or long-term psychological harm.

Okorie (2017) highlights that one of the most pressing issues is the shortage of foster homes and alternative care arrangements. In several cases, children who are rescued from abusive homes are returned to the very environments that endangered them in the first place, simply because there are no safe and reliable alternatives. This practice not only undermines the principle of

child protection but also exposes children to repeated trauma, reinforcing the inadequacy of interventions.

The inadequacy of intervention in Nigeria is also compounded by weak institutional coordination. Akinfolarin and Eresimadu (2019) argue that while the Child Rights Act (2003) provides a legal framework for child protection, its implementation is inconsistent across different states and local government areas. Social workers often lack the institutional backing, funding, and community support required to implement comprehensive child protection measures. This results in interventions that are fragmented, reactive, and heavily constrained by resource limitations.

2.2.3 Strategies Employed by Social Workers in Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect

The prevention of child abuse and neglect requires proactive and multidimensional strategies that address not only immediate risks but also the underlying social, cultural, and economic factors that make children vulnerable. Social workers, as trained professionals, play a central role in developing and implementing these preventive strategies, working within the family, community, and institutional structures to safeguard children's rights and well-being. Daro and Dodge (2009), preventive strategies can be categorized into three levels: primary prevention (aimed at the general population through awareness

campaigns and education), secondary prevention (targeting at-risk groups or families), and tertiary prevention (designed for children who have already experienced abuse, to prevent reoccurrence). In the Nigerian context, social workers adopt variations of these approaches, although their effectiveness is often influenced by systemic challenges and cultural realities.

One of the key strategies employed by social workers is community sensitization and public education. Through advocacy campaigns, workshops, and community dialogues, social workers raise awareness about the dangers of child abuse, the provisions of the Child Rights Act (2003), and the importance of protecting children's welfare. Olanrewaju (2018) stresses that awareness creation is vital in combating harmful cultural practices such as child labor, early marriage, and corporal punishment, which are still prevalent in many Nigerian communities. By engaging religious leaders, traditional rulers, and parents, social workers help to change perceptions and foster child-friendly communities.

Another preventive strategy is family support and strengthening services. Social workers identify vulnerable families facing poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, or substance abuse and provide them with counseling, referrals, and sometimes material assistance. Okoye (2016) notes that interventions such as parenting education, conflict resolution training, and psychosocial support reduce family stressors that often escalate into child abuse

or neglect. By equipping parents with skills for positive discipline and better communication, social workers help to build safer family environments.

School-based interventions also serve as critical preventive measures. Social workers collaborate with teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors to detect early signs of abuse, provide life-skills education, and develop child-protection clubs within schools. According to Ojedokun and Atoi (2021), schools are often the first places where abuse is noticed, making them strategic entry points for preventive action. Social workers therefore play a pivotal role in ensuring that educational institutions function as safe spaces for children.

At the institutional level, social workers engage in policy advocacy and legislative enforcement. They work to ensure that the Child Rights Act and related protective laws are enforced, and they push for the establishment of child protection committees at local government levels. Akinfolarin and Eresimadu (2019) argue that without advocacy for effective policy implementation, preventive measures remain unsustainable. Social workers also collaborate with the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to ensure perpetrators are prosecuted, which serves as a deterrent to further abuse.

Finally, partnership and collaboration with NGOs and international agencies is another important strategy. Social workers often work hand-in-hand

with child-focused organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, and local NGOs to pool resources and expand the reach of child protection programs. These collaborations often bring training opportunities, funding, and technical support that strengthen the preventive capacity of social workers (UNICEF, 2015).

2.2.3 Challenges Faced by Social Workers in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Despite their crucial role in safeguarding the welfare of children, social workers in Nigeria face numerous challenges that significantly hinder their effectiveness in preventing child abuse and neglect. These challenges are both systemic and contextual, reflecting the broader socio-economic and institutional realities of the country.

One of the most significant challenges is the inadequate funding and resourcing of social welfare institutions. Child protection services in Nigeria often operate on extremely limited budgets, which restrict the availability of shelters, foster homes, counseling centers, and rehabilitation facilities. According to Okafor (2012), many state and local government agencies lack the financial capacity to sustain preventive programs, leaving social workers unable to provide comprehensive services beyond immediate rescue operations. Without sufficient resources, preventive efforts remain fragmented and reactive rather than holistic.

Olanrewaju (2018) observes that social work practice in Nigeria suffers from a shortage of qualified personnel, as many states have only a handful of trained social workers responsible for large populations. This situation results in heavy caseloads, professional burnout, and limited ability to conduct thorough preventive work. Moreover, inadequate opportunities for professional training

and continuing education weaken the capacity of social workers to respond effectively to emerging forms of child abuse, such as cyber exploitation and trafficking.

Cultural beliefs and societal attitudes also present formidable barriers. In many Nigerian communities, practices such as corporal punishment, child labor, and early marriage are culturally accepted and normalized. Akinfolarin and Eresimadu (2019) note that in such environments, efforts by social workers to protect children may be resisted, with some communities perceiving intervention as interference in family matters. These cultural dynamics often silence victims and discourage families from reporting abuse, thereby undermining preventive measures.

Legal and policy-related constraints also hinder child protection efforts. Although the Child Rights Act (2003) provides a framework for safeguarding children, its implementation is inconsistent across states. According to Okorie (2017), many local governments, including those in Edo State, lack the structures and political will to enforce child protection laws effectively. Weak law enforcement and judicial delays further discourage victims and families from pursuing justice. Social workers are thus left to operate within a system where perpetrators of abuse are rarely held accountable, reducing the deterrent effect of the law.

The lack of inter-agency collaboration is another challenge. Preventing child abuse requires the cooperation of multiple stakeholders, including the police, judiciary, healthcare providers, schools, and NGOs. However, as Ojedokun and Atoi (2012) highlight, poor coordination among these actors often leads to duplication of efforts, gaps in service delivery, and missed opportunities for comprehensive intervention. Social workers frequently find themselves isolated in their efforts, with limited institutional backing. Stigma and lack of community support complicate the work of social workers. Families and victims of abuse are often reluctant to cooperate due to fear of shame, retaliation, or social exclusion. This culture of silence prevents timely reporting and limits the effectiveness of preventive strategies. Davidson-Arad and Benbenishty (2010) argue that without strong community trust and support, preventive measures remain inadequate, as social workers cannot operate effectively in hostile or non-cooperative environments.

2.3 Empirical Review

Investigating the role of social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect consistently demonstrate that social work interventions significantly contribute to improved child welfare outcomes. Research conducted in various Nigerian contexts, including Edo State, provides concrete evidence of the positive

impact social workers have on early detection, intervention, and prevention efforts.

Adebayo and Adeyemi (2018) conducted a quantitative study across several Nigerian communities assessing the correlation between social work presence and reported cases of child abuse. Their findings revealed that communities with active social work involvement recorded a statistically significant reduction in both the incidence and severity of child abuse cases. The study attributed this outcome to social workers' proactive role in community education, risk assessment, and early intervention, which helped to prevent abuse before escalation.

Okunbor and Eze (2023) performed a case study in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, to evaluate the efficacy of social work case management systems in child abuse prevention. Using mixed methods involving interviews with social workers, caregivers, and affected children, along with analysis of case files, the study found that the structured procedures introduced by social workers—such as intake screening, risk evaluation, and continuous follow-up—enhanced timely identification of abuse cases. Furthermore, these interventions contributed to improved safety and psychological outcomes for the children involved. The study also highlighted the importance of collaboration

between social workers and local institutions, which facilitated better resource mobilization and support services.

Ibhafidon (2021) used a longitudinal design to track the mental health and social integration of abused children in Edo State who received social work support. Results showed that children who engaged with social workers exhibited significant improvements in school attendance, emotional stability, and social relationships over a 12-month period compared to those who did not receive such interventions. The study underscored the role of social workers not only as protectors but also as advocates and counselors who empower children to recover from trauma and rebuild their lives.

Ebigbo and Abayomi (2017), in a survey of social workers across rural Nigerian communities, reported that cultural beliefs framing child abuse as a private family issue hinder reporting and community acceptance of social work interventions. Moreover, respondents identified inadequate funding, lack of training, and public misconceptions about the social work profession as barriers to successful intervention.

Oluwatoyin and Agbo (2019) examined inter-agency collaboration in child protection in Nigeria and found that where networks between social workers, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and traditional leaders were well-established, there was a higher rate of child abuse case resolution and prevention. Their study

employed both qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of case statistics, demonstrating that multidisciplinary coordination is critical in overcoming systemic weaknesses and cultural obstacles.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on four foundational social work and psychological theories that provide a comprehensive understanding of child abuse and neglect, as well as guide social work intervention practices: Ecological Systems Theory, Strengths-Based Approach, Social Learning Theory, and Attachment Theory. Each theory contributes uniquely to understanding the causes of abuse and the mechanisms by which social workers can effectively intervene and prevent harm.

1. Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding human development within the context of multiple interacting environmental systems. This theory categorizes environmental influences on individuals into nested systems:

- The **Microsystem** refers to immediate environments such as family, school, and peer groups.
- The **Mesosystem** encompasses the interconnections between these microsystems, such as the relationship between family and school.
- The **Exosystem** involves indirect environments that still affect the child, like parents' workplaces or neighborhood characteristics.

- The **Macrosystem** represents broader societal and cultural norms, laws, and economic conditions.
- The **Chronosystem** accounts for changes over time such as family structure shifts or societal changes.

In relation to child abuse and neglect, this theory posits that maltreatment is not merely a function of individual or family pathology but results from complex, interacting factors across all these systems. Social workers in Egor Local Government Area, therefore, operate within this multi-layered context by providing direct support to the child and family while also advocating for systemic changes like improved community awareness and policy reforms. For instance, poverty at the macrosystem level, cultural acceptance of corporal punishment, or inadequate child protection laws can indirectly influence abuse rates. Recognizing these layered influences helps social workers design holistic interventions that address both immediate risks and root causes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kelly, 2006).

2. Strengths-Based Approach

The Strengths-Based Approach, articulated by Saleebey (1996), marks a significant paradigm shift in social work, focusing on individuals' and communities' capacities rather than their deficits. This approach encourages

practitioners to identify existing resources, resilience, and coping mechanisms within children, families, and their environments.

In the context of preventing child abuse, social workers utilizing this approach emphasize collaboration and empowerment rather than judgment or coercion. For example, social workers in Egor LGA engage parents and caregivers by acknowledging their positive efforts, cultural values, and the unique protective factors within their families. This fosters trust, encourages active participation in intervention plans, and helps build sustainable protective environments. Additionally, it encourages community involvement by recognizing collective cultural strengths, such as traditional support networks and religious groups, that can be mobilized to protect children (Saleebey, 2006). The strengths perspective also supports trauma-informed care, recognizing the child's capacity for healing and growth despite adverse experiences, which is crucial in promoting recovery and preventing re-victimization.

3. Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) explains that much human behavior, including both positive and negative actions, is learned through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts. The theory highlights the role of reinforcement and cognitive processes in shaping behavior.

When applied to child abuse prevention, this theory helps explain how abusive behavior may perpetuate across generations. Children exposed to violence or neglect often internalize these behaviors as normal and may later replicate them as parents or caregivers. Understanding this, social workers develop targeted interventions that focus on altering learned behaviors by teaching non-violent discipline techniques, emotional regulation, and healthy communication. Programs based on social learning principles often include parental education workshops, mentoring, and community campaigns to model and reinforce positive parenting and child care practices. Such interventions in Egor LGA aim to break cycles of abuse by replacing harmful behavior models with constructive, nurturing interactions (Bandura, 1977; Simons et al., 1995).

4. Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) emphasizes the critical importance of early relationships between a child and their primary caregiver(s) in shaping emotional and social development. Secure attachment, formed through consistent and responsive caregiving, provides children with a sense of safety and trust that supports healthy development.

Child abuse and neglect disrupt these attachment bonds, often resulting in insecure or disorganized attachments that can lead to lifelong difficulties such as anxiety, poor self-esteem, and relationship challenges. Social workers use

attachment theory to assess the quality of caregiver-child relationships and to intervene in ways that repair and strengthen these bonds. Interventions may include counseling services, family therapy, and parenting programs that teach caregivers how to provide consistent emotional support and responsiveness. This theory also informs trauma-informed care approaches, recognizing that restoring attachment security is vital for the emotional healing and resilience of abused children (Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy & Shaver, 2016).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology relevant to this research. It contains the research design, the population and sampling techniques, the operationalization and measurement of variables, the research instrument, validity of research instrument, sources of data and method of data analyses.

3.1 Research Design

Research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The cross sectional research design was adopted for this study. This design was adopted and considered appropriate because it facilitates the collection of original data from the respondent.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population is the totality of the objects or elements being studied and to which the conclusions or generalization of our results was applied. The study was conducted across Egor L.G.A, Edo State, Nigeria. It has an area of 93 km² and a population of 339,899 as at the 2006 census and projected to be 502,700 (National Population Commission, 2006).

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants who are directly relevant to the research objectives. Specifically, social workers, caregivers, and children who have experienced abuse or neglect within Egor Local Government Area will be targeted for participation. This method allows the researcher to intentionally select respondents based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement with child protection and social work interventions.

Participants will be chosen based on specific criteria including their role (e.g., social worker, caregiver, or affected child), age, gender, and level of engagement with child welfare services. This approach ensures that the sample consists of individuals best positioned to provide meaningful insights into the role of social workers in preventing and addressing child abuse and neglect.

A total of 100 questionnaires will be administered to the selected participants to collect quantitative data. The purposive sampling technique facilitates the inclusion of respondents who meet the specific conditions of the study, thereby enhancing the relevance and accuracy of the findings.

3.4 Research Instrument

Questionnaires were administered as the main data collection instrument that was used in the study. The prepared questionnaire accompanied with letter of

introduction was sent to the assigned respondents to be completed and returned to the researcher. The respondents were asked not to give their names in order to increase the chance of obtaining correct information and ensure confidentiality.

3.5 Validity of Instrument

The questionnaire for this study was thoroughly scrutinized by the supervisor for clarity, precision and comprehension. Both the preliminary test and the main research results was be similar especially in the pattern of response from respondents to fundamental questions relating to the research study under consideration.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed personally to the respondents. The respondents were able to answer the questions honestly after administering the questionnaires to them. The researcher also guided the respondents with regards to filling the questionnaires. The respondents were informed that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected or generated from the questionnaire was analyzed using the simple percentages, mean via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the data collected from respondents in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The analysis is based on information gathered from 100 respondents, which include social workers, caregivers, parents, and children (aged 12 and above). Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution, and results were discussed in relation to the research objectives.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	40	40%
Female	60	60%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The data show that 60% of respondents were female, while 40% were male. This indicates that more women participated in the study than men. The higher representation of females may be attributed to the fact that women are

often more involved in caregiving and social work-related professions. The gender distribution also reflects the dominance of women in family and child welfare roles in Nigerian society.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	5	5%
18–25 years	20	20%
26–35 years	35	35%
36–45 years	25	25%
46 years and above	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

35% of respondents falls within the 26–35 years age bracket, followed by 25% between 36–45 years. This indicates that most respondents are active adults with substantial involvement in child care and protection. The 5% representation of respondents below 18 reflects the inclusion of older children to capture their perspectives on abuse and neglect.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	8	8%
Secondary	22	22%
Tertiary	65	65%
Other (vocational)	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

A majority (65%) of respondents have tertiary education, 22% possess secondary education, and 8% have primary education. This shows that most participants are well-educated, which enhances the reliability of their responses. Education is a critical factor in understanding child protection issues, and this distribution suggests that respondents are knowledgeable about social work practices and the impact of child abuse.

Table 4.4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Worker	30	30%
Caregiver	25	25%
Parent	30	30%
Child (above 12)	10	10%
Others	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The table indicates that 30% of the respondents are social workers, 30% are parents, and 25% are caregivers. This balanced representation ensures that the perspectives of professionals and family members are adequately captured. The inclusion of children (10%) provides firsthand insight into how child abuse and neglect are experienced.

Table 4.5: Years of Experience in Child Protection

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	10	10%
1–3 years	25	25%
4–6 years	40	40%
Above 6 years	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The majority (40%) of respondents have 4–6 years of experience in child protection, while 25% have more than 6 years. This indicates that most respondents have significant practical exposure to issues of child abuse and neglect.

Objective 1: To examine the role of social workers in intervening in cases of child abuse and neglect

Table 4.6: Role of Social Workers in Intervening in Child Abuse and Neglect

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Social workers identify cases of child abuse and neglect.	50	35	5	6	4
Social workers provide counseling and emotional support.	60	30	3	5	2
Social workers collaborate with law enforcement and medical staff.	40	45	5	6	4
Social workers rescue children from abusive environments.	35	50	6	5	4
Social workers advocate for children’s rights.	55	35	3	4	3

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

From the table, 85–90% of respondents agreed that social workers play critical roles in identifying, counseling, and rescuing abused children. A high percentage also recognized their advocacy functions. This shows that social workers in Egor LGA are deeply involved in frontline intervention and advocacy.

Objective 2: To assess the adequacy of interventions provided to abused and neglected children

Table 4.7: Adequacy of Interventions

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Abused children receive immediate rescue.	40	40	8	8	4
Long-term rehabilitation and counseling are adequate.	25	35	10	20	10
Reintegration of abused children is effective.	20	40	15	15	10
There are enough trained social workers.	15	25	10	30	20
Government and NGOs provide sufficient support.	20	30	15	25	10

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The table indicates that while 80% of respondents believe immediate rescue services are adequate, only 40–60% are satisfied with long-term rehabilitation, reintegration, and institutional support. This implies that intervention programs often end at the rescue stage, lacking sustained rehabilitation. The shortage of trained personnel and weak institutional support further limit intervention adequacy.

Objective 3: To explore strategies adopted by social workers in preventing child abuse and neglect

Table 4.8: Strategies Employed by Social Workers

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Social workers organize awareness campaigns.	55	35	5	3	2
Social workers educate parents on positive parenting.	50	40	4	4	2
Schools are engaged to detect and report abuse.	40	45	5	5	5
Community leaders are involved in child protection.	35	45	5	10	5
Collaboration with NGOs is practiced.	45	40	5	5	5

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

A large proportion (80–90%) of respondents agreed that social workers use proactive strategies such as community awareness, parental education, and collaboration with NGOs. School-based and community-level interventions are particularly effective in detecting early signs of abuse.

Objective 4: To identify challenges confronting social workers in the prevention of child abuse and neglect

Table 4.9: Challenges Faced by Social Workers

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Inadequate funding and resources hinder effectiveness.	60	25	5	5	5
Too few trained social workers in Egor LGA.	50	35	5	5	5
Cultural beliefs make prevention difficult.	55	30	5	5	5
Poor implementation of the Child Rights Act.	45	35	5	10	5
Families are reluctant to report abuse.	50	30	5	10	5

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The findings reveal that inadequate funding (85%), shortage of trained social workers (85%), and harmful cultural beliefs (85%) are major obstacles to effective child protection. Weak enforcement of the Child Rights Act and family reluctance to report abuse further compound the issue. These challenges align with Okorie (2017) and Olanrewaju (2018), who emphasized the need for stronger policy enforcement, funding, and community participation.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The overall analysis reveals that social workers play a pivotal role in addressing child abuse and neglect in Egor LGA through identification,

counseling, advocacy, and collaboration. However, their effectiveness is hindered by insufficient funding, limited personnel, cultural resistance, and weak institutional support. While preventive strategies such as community sensitization and school partnerships have achieved notable success, their sustainability depends on improved government commitment and cross-sector collaboration. These findings are consistent with Adegoke & Adebayo (2020) and Eze & Okonkwo (2021), who affirmed that although social workers are central to child welfare systems, their impact is often constrained by structural and policy limitations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations arising from the study titled “*The Role of Social Workers in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.*” The analysis presented in Chapter Four has provided substantial insights into the various roles, strategies, and challenges encountered by social workers in the course of their work. This chapter synthesizes these findings into coherent conclusions and practical recommendations aimed at strengthening social work practice and improving child protection outcomes in Nigeria.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study was designed to assess the role of social workers in preventing and addressing child abuse and neglect, determine the adequacy of their interventions, examine their preventive strategies, and identify challenges that hinder their effectiveness. A total of 100 respondents, comprising social workers, caregivers, parents, and children, participated in the research through structured questionnaires.

The results revealed that social workers in Egor Local Government Area play a vital role in identifying and rescuing abused children, providing counseling

and rehabilitation services, advocating for children's rights, and collaborating with relevant agencies such as the police and healthcare workers. The findings indicated that the majority of respondents to a large extent acknowledged the crucial involvement of social workers in preventing and responding to child abuse.

However, the study also found that while immediate interventions, such as the rescue of victims, were relatively effective, long-term interventions such as rehabilitation and reintegration remained inadequate. This shortfall was attributed to insufficient facilities, lack of personnel, and weak institutional support.

In terms of preventive strategies, the findings revealed that social workers commonly engage in community awareness campaigns, educational programs, parental sensitization, and collaboration with schools and NGOs. These strategies have contributed significantly to public enlightenment and have encouraged community participation in child protection efforts.

Despite these achievements, the study identified several challenges facing social workers. These include inadequate funding, shortage of trained professionals, weak implementation of the Child Rights Act, and deeply rooted cultural beliefs that discourage reporting of child abuse. The combination of these factors limits the capacity of social workers to effectively perform their duties and sustain preventive efforts.

5.3 Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that social workers are indispensable agents in the prevention and management of child abuse and neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. They serve as mediators between vulnerable children, families, and institutions, providing essential services such as rescue, counseling, and advocacy. Their work has contributed immensely to raising awareness and promoting community participation in the protection of children's rights.

However, the study also concludes that the effectiveness of social workers is hindered by systemic and structural constraints, such as lack of funding, limited resources, cultural resistance, and weak law enforcement. For social workers to be more effective, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders must collaborate to create an enabling environment that supports child welfare initiatives. A strong institutional framework, coupled with sustained funding and public enlightenment, is essential to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

5.4 Recommendations

Considering the study's findings, the following recommendations are made to enhance the performance and impact of social workers in child protection:

1. Government and social welfare institutions should strengthen the capacity of social workers to perform effective intervention roles. This can be achieved by providing adequate logistical support, legal empowerment, and welfare incentives that enable them to identify, rescue, and counsel abused and neglected children promptly. Social workers should also be integrated into all child-focused institutions such as schools, hospitals, and courts to enhance their visibility and impact in intervention processes.
2. There should be improved provision of long-term rehabilitation, reintegration, and follow-up programs for victims of abuse and neglect. Establishing more safe shelters, counseling centers, and foster care homes within Egor Local Government Area will ensure sustained protection and recovery for affected children. In addition, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be instituted to assess the effectiveness of interventions and ensure no child returns to an abusive environment.
3. Preventive strategies should be intensified through community awareness, school-based education, and parent sensitization programs. Social workers should collaborate with religious leaders, traditional rulers, and the media to promote child rights education and discourage harmful traditional practices. Incorporating child protection topics into school curricula and

organizing parenting workshops will foster early detection, reporting, and prevention of abuse at the grassroots level.

4. To overcome barriers such as inadequate funding, staff shortages, and cultural resistance, the government and stakeholders should increase budgetary allocations to child protection services and recruit more trained social workers. Regular professional training, policy enforcement, and inter-agency collaboration between social workers, police, judiciary, NGOs, and community groups should be enhanced. Addressing these challenges will ensure a more efficient and coordinated child protection system.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study opens opportunities for further investigation into related aspects of social work and child protection. Future studies could focus on the long-term psychological effects of social work intervention on abused children or compare the effectiveness of child protection systems across different local government areas in Edo State. Moreover, research could explore how digital technology and social media can be leveraged for child protection, reporting, and awareness in Nigeria.

References

- Adebayo, S. O., & Omolayo, B. O. (2017). The role of social workers in child protection in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work, 15*(2), 23–36.
- Adebayo, T. O., & Adeyemi, A. O. (2018). The impact of social work intervention on child abuse prevention in Nigerian communities. *Journal of Social Work Practice, 12*(3), 45–60.
- Adegoke, A. A., & Adebayo, S. S. (2020). Addressing child abuse in Nigeria: The role of social workers in advocacy and intervention. *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice, 5*(2), 15–30.
- Akinbode, O. F., & Omotayo, F. O. (2020). Social work in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects for social change. *Journal of Social Work Practice and Development, 9*(1), 40–55.
- Akinfolarin, A. V., & Eresimadu, F. O. (2019). Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria: Implications for the girl-child in Edo State. *African Journal of Social Sciences, 9*(1), 45–59.
- Akpan, M. U., & Oluwagbemiga, O. A. (2020). *Cultural Barriers to Child Protection in Nigeria: Implications for Social Work Practice*. *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice, 8*(3), 56–65.
- Akpan, N. S., & Oluwabamide, A. J. (2010). The menace of child abuse in Nigeria: A case study of street hawking in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. *Anthropologist, 12*(2), 127–132.
- Alfred, O. (2016). Challenges of Social Work Practice in Nigeria: Implications for the Future of Child Protection. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work, 12*(2), 45–53.
- Aluede, O. (2006). Child abuse in Nigeria: Causes, effects, and the way forward. *Journal of Human Ecology, 20*(1), 1–7.
- Aluko, A. (2014). Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria: An exploration of causes and consequences. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research, 2*(4), 59–67.

- Asemota, C. E. (2020). Community-Based Approaches to Child Protection in Edo State: The Role of Social Workers. *Journal of Social Policy and Society*, 6(1), 88–97.
- Asemota, E. O. (2020). The Role of Community-Based Organizations in Child Protection in Edo State. *Benin Journal of Social Work*, 5(1), 22–35.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Davidson-Arad, B., & Benbenishty, R. (2010). Child welfare and protection practice in contexts of poverty. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(3), 389–398.
- Dubowitz, H., & Feigelman, S. (2018). *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide for Social Workers*. Baltimore: Child Welfare Press.
- Ebigbo, P. O. (2003). Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria—A review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27(9), 921–929.
- Ebigbo, P. O., & Abayomi, A. (2017). Child Abuse and the Role of Social Workers in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Psychology and Child Development*, 9(1), 31–45.
- Ebigbo, P. O., & Abayomi, O. (2017). Cultural factors influencing the reporting of child abuse in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Work*, 9(2), 78–90.
- Eweka, E., & Egharevba, M. E. (2021). School-Based Social Work and the Prevention of Child Abuse in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Policy*, 8(4), 60–72.
- Eze, J. E., & Okonkwo, T. I. (2021). Social work intervention in child abuse prevention in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work*, 15(1), 101–118.

- Eze, P. N. (2017). Social work and child welfare: Enhancing the role of social workers in child protection. *Benin Journal of Social Work and Social Policy*, 3(1), 77–89.
- Fergusson, D. M., Boden, J. M., & Horwood, L. J. (2008). Exposure to childhood sexual and physical abuse and adjustment in early adulthood. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(6), 607–619.
- Ibhafidon, E. O. (2021). *Impact of Social Worker Intervention on Child Abuse Cases in Edo State*. *Journal of Social Work in Nigeria*, 7(2), 44–58.
- Ibhafidon, O. S. (2021). Social work intervention and child welfare: A study of abused children in Edo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Child and Adolescent Social Work*, 15(1), 33–50.
- Ifeagwazi, C. M., Chukwuorji, J. C., & Okoli, C. N. (2015). Social workers and child protection: Examining gaps and opportunities in Nigeria’s welfare system. *Journal of Psychology and Social Work*, 7(3), 65–78.
- Kadushin, A., & Harkness, D. (2014). *Supervision in Social Work* (5th ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Kelly, M. (2006). The ecological systems model of child abuse: A review of the literature. *Journal of Child Welfare*, 85(2), 317–332.
- Lonne, B., Parton, N., Thomson, J., & Harries, M. (2009). *Reforming child protection*. Routledge.
- Lonne, B., Parton, N., Thomson, J., & Harries, M. (2016). *Working Ethically in Child Protection*. Routledge.
- Mathews, B., & Kenny, M. C. (2008). Mandatory reporting legislation in the United States, Canada, and Australia: A cross-jurisdictional review of key features. *Child Maltreatment*, 13(1), 50–63.
- Munro, E. (2011). *The Munro review of child protection: Final report – A child-centred system*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. (2022). *National Child Protection Strategy Implementation Report*. Abuja: Government Press.

- Nwokoro, C. (2019). Social workers and child abuse prevention strategies in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work, 17*(1), 67–82.
- Ogunniyi, A., & Olayemi, A. (2019). Child maltreatment in Nigeria: The roles of social workers in promoting child protection. *African Journal of Social Work, 9*(1), 21–37.
- Ojedokun, U. A., & Atoi, N. A. (2012). Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria: A critical review. *Nigerian Journal of Clinical Psychology, 10*(1), 15–28.
- Okafor, R. (2012). The role of social workers in protecting children's rights in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Work, 5*(1), 78–91.
- Okonkwo, U., & Adebayo, T. (2017). Cultural Perceptions and Child Welfare in Nigeria: Barriers to Social Work Intervention. *International Journal of African Social Work, 4*(2), 55–66.
- Okorie, A. (2017). Cultural practices and child abuse in Nigeria: A study of Edo and Delta States. *Journal of Nigerian Studies, 13*(2), 122–139.
- Okoye, U. O. (2016). Child protection in Nigeria: The role of social workers. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work, 14*(1), 55–70.
- Okpaluba, C. (2021). Social work practice in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work Education, 21*(2), 75–89.
- Okunbor, A. E., & Eze, N. (2023). Case management systems for child abuse in Egor Local Government Area: Challenges and prospects. *Nigerian Journal of Social Welfare, 10*(1), 112–128.
- Olanrewaju, T. (2018). Child rights implementation in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Law and Society, 4*(1), 34–48.
- Olanrewaju, T., & Omotosho, J. A. (2017). Child abuse in Nigeria: Social work perspectives. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work, 13*(1), 99–113.
- Oloko, S. B. A. (1999). Child labour: The hidden workforce. *UNICEF Nigeria Report*.
- Oluwatoyin, A., & Agbo, D. A. (2019). Multi-Agency Collaboration in the Fight Against Child Abuse in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work Education, 12*(2), 99–114.

- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work*, 41(3), 296–305.
- Saleebey, D. (2006). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Simons, R. L., Whitbeck, L. B., Conger, R. D., & Melby, J. N. (1995). Social learning factors as predictors of child abuse and neglect. *Journal of Family Violence*, 10(2), 147–159.
- Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2013). *Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Children: Supporting Children who are, or have been, in Foster Care*. Routledge.
- Uchem, R. N. (2001). *Overcoming women's subordination in the Igbo African culture and in the Catholic Church: Envisioning an inclusive theology with reference to women*. Universal-Publishers.
- Udom, C. O., & Oladipo, T. A. (2022). Addressing Root Causes of Child Abuse Through Preventive Social Work Practice in Nigeria. *African Social Work Review*, 9(1), 15–30
- UNICEF. (2018). *Child protection strategy: Preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children*. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/>
- UNICEF. (2020). *Situation analysis of children in Nigeria*. Abuja: UNICEF Nigeria.
- Uzozie, C. N. (2018). *Post-Abuse Intervention and Academic Reintegration of Abused Children in Nigeria: A Social Work Perspective*. *Child and Family Social Work*, 23(4), 87–94.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020). *Child maltreatment*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Dear Respondent,

I am a student conducting a research study on **“The Role of Social Workers in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.”** The purpose of this study is to examine the contributions, strategies, and challenges of social workers in addressing child abuse and neglect within the community.

You have been selected to participate in this study because your views and experiences are valuable to achieving the research objectives. Please note that all information you provide will be treated with the highest confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes. You are not required to write your name, and your responses will remain anonymous.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick [✓] the appropriate option)

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: Below 18 18–25 26–35 36–45 46 and above
3. Educational Level: Primary Secondary Tertiary Other (specify) _____
4. Occupation: Social Worker Caregiver Parent Child (above 12)
 Other (specify) _____
5. Years of Experience/Exposure in Child Protection: <1 year 1–3 years
 4–6 years Above 6 years

Section B: Role of Social Workers in Intervening in Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect

(SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree)

S/N		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Social workers play a crucial role in identifying cases of child abuse and neglect.					
2	Social workers provide counseling and emotional support to abused children.					
3	Social workers collaborate with law enforcement and medical personnel to protect children.					
4	Social workers help in rescuing children from abusive environments.					
5	Social workers advocate for the rights of children at community and government levels.					
	Section C: Adequacy of Interventions Provided to Abused and Neglected Children					
6	Abused and neglected children receive immediate rescue and safety interventions.					
7	Long-term rehabilitation services (e.g., therapy, counseling) are adequately provided.					
8	Reintegration of abused children into safe environments is effective.					
9	There are enough trained social workers to handle child abuse cases adequately.					
10	Government and NGOs provide sufficient support to ensure adequate interventions.					
	Section D: Strategies Adopted by Social Workers in Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect					
11	Social workers carry out awareness and sensitization campaigns against child abuse.					
12	Social workers educate parents and caregivers on positive parenting practices.					
13	Schools are engaged by social workers to detect and report child abuse cases.					
14	Community leaders and religious institutions are involved in child protection strategies.					
15	Social workers collaborate with NGOs and other agencies to prevent child abuse.					

	Section E: Challenges Confronting Social Workers in Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect					
16	Inadequate funding and resources hinder social workers' effectiveness.					
17	There are too few trained social workers in Egor Local Government Area.					
18	Cultural beliefs and practices make prevention of child abuse difficult.					
19	Poor implementation of the Child Rights Act limits social workers' efforts.					
20	Families are often reluctant to report or disclose child abuse cases.					