

**CHILD ABUSE AMONG PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN  
BENIN CITY**

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**SEPTEMBER, 2024**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT WRITTEN IN THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION,  
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CHILDHOOD (B.ED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION)**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

We, the undersigned, certify that this study was carried out by CHISOM JOY ALEKE , with the matriculation number EDU1903796, of the Institute of Education, University of Benin City in Edo State, Nigeria, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of B.Ed. Degree in Early Childhood Education.

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God for his strength, guidance, protection, wisdom, and love in my life. I also dedicate it to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Aleke.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Child abuse is a pervasive issue affecting children worldwide, with severe consequences for their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. This study investigates the manifestation of child abuse among primary school pupils in Benin City, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a sample of 120 pupils from public and private schools. The findings corroborate existing literature on emotional and physical abuse, highlighting the need for urgent attention to prevent and address child abuse in educational settings. The study recommends awareness programme, teacher training and policy reforms to ensure a safe and supportive environment for children.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Child abuse among pupils in primary school is a fast-becoming universal phenomenon in the current world societies even though children's rights are being recognized and to some extent, protected by legislation and constitution in many of the countries in the world. childhood abuse potentially has a major economic implication for Nigerian schools and their student. Although the concept of children varies in different communities, children have commonly been said by Nigerians to be the leaders of tomorrow, despite such considerations and value attributes to children, it has become a great concern for scholars and people in general on the existence of child abuse i.e where children engage in street vending and Hawking, whereas they are meant to be protected and catered for, but rather, these helpless children are perpetuated for the selfish economic need of the adults Hearn (2016). It therefore has the potential to undermine schools' ability to satisfy standards of school progress entailed in the No Child Left Behind Legislation (U.S Department Of Education,2005), putting them at risk for loss of federal funding.

Child abuse has been defined by the African Network For The Prevention Against Child Abuse And Neglect (ANPPCAN) as the intentional and unintentional act that endangers the physical, health, emotional, moral, and educational welfare of the children. Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver, or other adults that

may endanger the child's physical, psychological, or emotional health development. In this definition, wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child's service by adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse (Hopper,2014). Child abuse is called cruelty to children, the wilful infliction of pain and suffering on a child through physical, sexual, or emotional mistreatment. Child abuse is a term that refers to the maltreatment of children by their parents or guidance. The definition of child abuse has been expanded considerably to include more than just the beaten and sexual abuse, it extends to any condition injurious to a child's health physical or emotional health that has been inflicted by parents, guidance, or other caregiver/ caretakers. A child generally is a boy or a girl of any age between infancy and adolescence. But for the convenience of the law, a definite age bracket is ascribed to a child. According to Eigbe(2006), a child in the southern states of Nigeria is a person between the ages 0-14 years, and in the northern states 0-12. prior to the term, child abuse normally referred to only physical mistreatment but since then, its application has expanded to include, in addition to appropriate physical violence unjustifiable verbal abuse, the failure to furnish proper shelter, nourishment, medical treatment, or emotional support. Child labour is the major obstacle to the achievement of Education For All (EFA)and this resulted in a setback in the achievement of the world target of universal primary education by 2015. According to Onye(2004), child abuse is evidence of poverty. Aderinto and Okunola (2008) equally recorded that some children were pushed into street hawking for the maintenance needs of the family. That means that they are the breadwinners of their

various families at an early age. It is a common sight in major parks and streets in Nigeria to see children of school age between 6-16 years as bus/ taxi mates, hawking wares, pushing trucks for money, or begging for money when they are supposed to be in the classroom learning points to the fact that the worst hit group children who are at the risk of diseases, exploitation, neglect, and violence. In 2017, the WHO estimated that up to one billion minors between the ages of two (2) and seventeen(17)years of age have endured violence. Although the potential impact of child abuse is very large, evidence of the causal effects of maltreatment on children's longer-term outcomes in school is generally lacking. Child abuse can result in immediate adverse physical effects but it is also strongly associated with developmental problems and with many chronic physical and psychological effects, including subsequent ill health, and high-risk health behaviours. children are defenceless, they should not be harmed or maltreated in any way as they are capable of appreciating the dangers they face and the adverse effect of ill-treatment on their future development.

Many studies have been made to determine the causes of child abuse, these studies show that people who abuse children have severe emotional problems and that most of them were injured or neglected by their parents. Many parents and guardians who commit child abuse have permanently or temporarily lost contact with reality. Some parents or guardians abuse children because the youngsters fail to meet the demands adults place on them, and others are too immature to care about the harm to the children. some send their underage kids to learn from school without the necessary precautions, in

the process many kids have been battered and even at times disposed of their schooling materials .Costa and Nelson (2015).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.**

The problem of child abuse has long been existing in Nigeria and has even become more devastating to the society as a whole. children suffered all forms of abuse ranging from child battering, child labour, child abandonment, neglect, teenage prostitution, and forced marriage. Child abuse has generated a lot of concern in the society. This is because; it harms the development and upbringing of the child.

In most cases, the parents are even the centre of the root cause of all this social maltreatment.

Reports have also shown that abused children exhibit more aggressive behaviour; have poor self-concept and have difficulty in developing meaningful relationships in the school environment. (Corwin and Bensharor,2017). This study, however, centres on child abuse among pupils in primary school. It is in light of these that the study attempts to unravel the major causes of child abuse and how it affects the child in all aspects of life.

The problem of this study is asserted on the need to obtain information on child abuse among primary school pupils in Benin City.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.**

The purpose of the study is to acknowledge the causes of child abuse among primary school pupils in Benin City.

This study will also help to determine the nature and trend of child abuse among primary school pupils in Benin city

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- 1) Is there a difference in the child abuse faced by boys and girls?
- 2) What are the differences between child abuse in private schools and public schools in Benin City?
- 3) What are the causes of child abuse?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.**

This study aims to provide parents, caregivers, guardians, children, and the general public on the issue of child abuse. The study will also be significant and serve as a valuable tool for counsellors, educationists, teachers, lecturers and various associated studies of child abuse such knowledge may curtail any further action of exploiting the child, especially being used as an object of raising the family economy.

This study thus, attempts to create a model for proper upbringing of the child in the society.

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.**

The study laid emphasis on child abuse among primary school pupils using Benin City as a case study.

## **1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.**

Below are some constraints encountered in this work, the argument ranging from not knowing where to start, and how to get materials. Other limitations include financial constraints to purchase several books, visiting schools in Benin city is also seen as be very strenuous on the part of the researcher.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS.**

The following terms are defined for the essence of this work:

- 1) Abuse: The use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful e.g. drug, food, drink, etc.
- 2) Child abuse: Harsh or ill-treatment render on any child, it could be by physical or emotional means.
- 3) Neglect: Paying no attention, not giving enough care to leave undone what needs to be done.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATUR E REVIEW**

This chapter reviewed relevant and related works of literature on child abuse among pupils in primary school.

The literature reviewed was organized under the following subheadings:

- Concept of child abuse
- Various forms of child abuse
- Cause of child abuse
- Manifestation of Child Abuse In Primary School
- Impact of child abuse on the academic performance of a child
- Prevention of child against abuse
- Summary of literature review

#### **Concept of Child Abuse**

Child abuse has become a very popular topic of discussion and concern among professional, social, and cultural groups; as well as across the society at large. The terms abuse and maltreatment are often used interchangeably in the existing literature. Child maltreatment can also be an umbrella term covering all forms of child abuse and child neglect. child maltreatment depends on the prevailing cultural values as they relate to

children, child development, and parenting. It varies across the sectors of civil society which deal with the issue such as child protection agencies, legal and medical communities, public health officials, researchers, practitioners, and child advocates since members of various fields tend to use their definitions, communication across disciplines can be limited, hampering efforts to identify, assess, tract, treat, and prevent child maltreatment (Mfonobong&Umobong,2016).

In general, abuse refers to the (usually deliberate) act of commission while neglect refers to the act of omission. Child maltreatment includes both acts of commission and acts of omission on the part of the parents or caregivers that cause actual threatened harm to a child. Some health professionals and authors consider neglect as a part of the definition of abuse, while others do not; this is because the harm may have been unintentional or because caregiver the not understand the severity of the problem, which may have been the result of cultural belief on how to raise a child. Delayed effects of child abuse and neglect, especially emotional neglect and the diversity of acts that qualify as child abuse are also factors.

In recent times, much has been written about child abuse- various scholars have conceptualized the problem, and study of child abuse. In diverse ways, Okika( 2015)holds that the parents, teachers in guardians as a means of corrections or disciplines, or rather child is abused when he is denied some basic things that are fundamental by the parents or whosoever ought to provide such. Child abuse consists of many acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that result in harm,

the potential for harm, or the threat of harm to a child(0-18 of age) even if the harm is unintentional(Gilbert, Spatz, Wisdom, Braone, Fergusson, Webb, and Janson,2017).

Child abuse refers to "intentional acts that result in physical or emotional harm to the child" (American Psychological Association, 2020). Idowu (2016) Child abuse is a situation where children are turned into slaves, beaten, made to work from morning till night, not well fed, sheltered, and deliberately deprived of education. Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission, or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver, or other adults that may endanger the child's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development.

In this definition, wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child's services by adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse. Thus, the adult may not be directly related to the child but a person in whose care the child is left can be an abuser. These may include educators, healthcare workers, day-care workers, or other responsible adults (Child Welfare Information Gateway. 2018),

According to Frederick and Goddard (2010), children who have been abused show significant difficulties in school environments. Abused children struggle with cognitive tasks, display behaviour problems, and are at a higher risk for school failure. Specific characteristics that children suffering from maltreatment may display in school include being less engaged academically, having greater social skill problems, a negative view of themselves, difficulties in self-regulation, and showing less resiliency than their non-abused peers. These problems can persist and worsen because school personnel may

not be aware of precipitating problems such as maltreatment. Even when the teachers are aware that a particular student has experienced maltreatment, they often do not know how to address it therapeutically within an educational context. Children who enter school with good internal and external resources begin positively can interact with peers appropriately and negotiate through different developmental tasks being reinforced by their success. Conversely, children who have been maltreated enter school with limited resources and, as such experience learning and social difficulties including behavioural problems, risk of peer rejection, and disengagement in school (Frederick and Goddard, 2010).

It should be mentioned that child abuse has likely existed since the beginning of time. Professional research on the topic is generally believed to have started in the 1960s. The release in 1962 of the paediatric physician's essay "The Battered Child Syndrome". According to FindLaw. com, Howy c.Kimgesch elucidated the signs and symptoms of child abuse and showed how it became medically diagnosable at that point. Even recurrent bone fractures in infants were not always understood to be the consequences of deliberate trauma before the publication of the paper. Rather than seeking out true illnesses, physicians frequently believed parents' tales of unintentional mishaps caused by local pranksters. Children from ethnic minorities were forcibly removed from their homes in several Western nations during the 20th century, up until the 1970s.

Child abuse and neglect is the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible

for the child's welfare under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened (UNICEF, 2005). Child abuse and neglect is the maltreatment of children by parents, friends, caregivers, or other parent bodies. Child abuse cuts across all racial, ethnic, and religious groups and exists in all strata of the society. Sadly, it is most children who are considered to need protection that has been abused by family members, friends, acquaintances, or hired caregivers (Imo, 2015).

So what is the worldview or social stance on child abuse in Nigeria? According to sociological jargon, Fatokun (2007) defined child abuse as any act or inaction that is detrimental to a child's and society's overall social, political, mental, economic, psychological, moral, medical, educational, and physical development, including the socialization process of disciplinary measures in a particular culture, religion, and environment. People who have a deep relationship or attachment to a child are typically the ones who commit the crime of child abuse. Such relatives could come from the significant others in the society: Parents, guardians, caregivers, older siblings, teachers, and the clergy. This implies that the act is rarely carried out by (total) strangers (Ekrikson, E.1996). According to Al-Shail, Hassan, Aldowaish, and Kattan (2012), children make their families and people around them happy from the moment of conception. As they get older and prepare to lead the country as future leaders, they play a vital role in their community. Nigeria is a country where child abuse is a common occurrence, yet it is rarely recorded. This is because some forms of abuse are culturally justified and go unreported. Fear of their assailants' threats or their parent's reaction may be the cause of

their reluctance. Also, some children may be either too young to understand their experience or unable to speak for themselves. The Child Rights Act (2003) stipulates that several forms of abuse, including but not limited to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, child labour, Underage marriage or betrothal, tattoos, or drug usage, are prohibited. Nigerians nevertheless experience a variety of forms of abuse. When kids experience bullying, they have a better time growing up, which lowers their chances of success as adults. However, because she protects her children from harm, they will grow up to be healthy, confident, and capable of reaching their full potential.

For centuries, the Nigerian child has been seen as "an instrument or property with no absolute privilege of its own". In traditional African society, the belief was that children should merely be seen and not heard. Children were not allowed to listen to adults' discussion/conversation let alone make contributions. This situation was prevalent not only in society but found its way in the educational system. Consequently, teachers only allowed children to make contributions when they deemed them necessary (Mfonobong, 2016).

Parents now push over the responsibility of caring for their children to the school. Many young children who would have been at home for about two years have been pushed over to school (Mfonobong, 2016). The task thus becomes enormous for the teachers and the school management to carry leading to many children being neglected, despised, and abused daily. This undermines the provision for the right child on 'protection against indecent and inhuman treatment like abuse and neglect ' earlier stated.

Rather, the child has been subjected to all kinds of maltreatment and is not protected, valued, or defended. Most times, the treatment meted out to young children as corrective measures constitute one form of abuse or the other (Ezeoke, Awam & Eneke, 2009).

### **Various Forms of Child Abuse**

Mimiko (2020) provides the following forms of child abuse mostly faced by children in contemporary times:

**Physical Abuse:** This can be referred to as physical aggression directed at a child by an adult. It can involve excessive beating, striking, kicking, battering, burning, bruising, shaking, and corporal punishment. When a child is intentionally used as a target of physical abuse, they are intentionally hurt or put in danger of being hurt. This is the act of an older person aggressively abusing a child. When adults intentionally harm children or place them in situations where they run the risk of harm or death, it is referred to as physical abuse. Adults engaging in such activities run the risk of causing burns, cuts, unlawful bruising, scrapes, fractured bones, harsh treatment, and recurrent accidents in children. It includes acts like beating, biting, throwing, hitting, shaking, pinching, punching, kicking, poisoning, burning, slapping, and strangling, which may or may not leave a physical mark. It is the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. It includes abuse subjecting the child to degrading and inhuman conditions, and severe beating in the name of chastisement, correction, or anger. Physical abuse may result in either temporary or permanent damage to organs, bones, and brain tissues which can be fatal. This is the use of physical force in a way that injures the

victim or puts him/her at risk of being injured. Physical abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse. Physical violation is an act of using physical force against another person in a way that ends up causing bodily harm to the person or puts the person in a position of risk of being harmed. Physical abuse ranges from physical constraint to murder. Physical abuse includes: pushing, throwing, kicking, slapping, grabbing, hitting, punching, beating, tripping, battering, bruising, choking, shaking, pinching, biting, holding, restraining, confinement, breaking bones, assault with a weapon such as a knife or gun, burning and murder.

Sexual abuse: sexual abuse, is taking advantage of a child's tender years and innocence to subject the child to engage in sexual activities that he/she does not fully understand and to which he/she cannot give any informed consent. Sexual abuse occurs when an adult forcefully has sexual activity or activities with someone against their wish. This kind of abuse exposes a child to sexual acts that transcend his/her understanding. sexual abuse includes behaviours such as rape, incest, oral sex, touching a child's, sexual organs, showing pornography to a child, child trafficking, and all forms of sexual activities done by someone in higher authority or greater power than the child such as siblings, parents, teachers, elder ones around, members of the family, maids, gatekeepers and so on. Sexual abuse includes all forms of sexual assault, harassment, or exploitation. It involves forcing a person to participate in sexual activity and using a child for sexual purposes including child prostitution and pornography. Marital rape also comes under this. Sexual abuse occurs in other forms of frightening and distressing sexual violence

including; being forced to have oral/anal sex, penetration by objects, being forcibly touched in a sexual manner, and sexual harassment. Rape or sexual assault for some people is a perpetual act while for some it is a one-time experience; it can happen by living with an abusive guardian or be something that is experienced at a point in life. Sexual abuse is the deliberate use of sex as a weapon to demonstrate power over, and to inflict pain and humiliation upon another human being, it may also include threat, humiliation, and intimidation. It is inappropriate sexual intercourse with someone who shares a biological relationship with the victims.

Emotional Abuse: It involves harming a child's sense of self and can include acts (or omission) that result in, or place a child at risk of, behavioural, cognitive, emotional, mental, and health problems. Emotional abuse includes instances of verbal abuse by subjecting a child to constant criticism and humiliation and never commending the child for his/her efforts. Normally this results from having an unreasonable expectation from a child. Also, many parents fail to express love to their children, such attitudes shatter a child's fragile ego and convey the message that the child is unloved and unwanted. It may also lead to feelings of depression, guilt, and fear. This type of child abuse occurs when a child's emotions, social life, and intellect are being tampered with. Yelling at children and bullying are examples of emotional or psychological abuse that may affect children's self-esteem and confidence. Children's emotions are affected when they witness fights at home or if they are from broken homes. Emotional abuse also occurs in schools, by seniors or bullies, teachers, or adults. Children that are constantly humiliated, shamed, or

rejected, often see themselves as worthless or incapable of being successful. This can lead to depression, lack of concentration in school, lowered self-esteem, dysfunctional relationships, and ineffective coping skills. Emotional abuse includes threatening a person or his or her possession or harming a person's sense of self-worth by putting him/her at risk of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Emotional abuse affects the emotional balance of the victim. it undermines the self-esteem of the victim and often leads to depression and deliberate isolation from the family and friends. It is sometimes referred to as emotional battering though not as serious as physical violence but it harms the mental state of the victim. Emotional abuse means a pattern of degrading, humiliating conduct towards any person including repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling, repeated threats to cause emotional pain, or the repeated exhibition of possessiveness that constitutes a serious invasion of such person's privacy, liberty, integrity, or security.

Neglect: This is a failure to provide basic needed care for the child such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care, and other necessities needed for the child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development. Child neglect is not easy to spot. Sometimes a parent might be physically or mentally unable to care for a child, such as with a serious injury, untreated depression, helplessness, apathy, and low self-esteem. Other times, alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe. When the basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, health)of a child are not met, such a child is being neglected. Neglect is a form of abuse that usually happens

when a caregiver ignores the child and does not care about the existence or well-being of the child. This includes failure to provide for dependants who may be adults or children, denying family members food, shelter, medical care, and protection from harm or a sense of being loved and valued.

**Economic Abuse:** Economic abuse includes stealing from or defrauding a loved one, withholding money for essential things like food and medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting family members for financial gain, preventing a loved one from working, or controlling his/her choice of occupation. It includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially to the upkeep of the family, and the denial of food and other basic needs. It means forced financial dependence, unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources, and unreasonable disposal or destruction of household effects or other property in which any person has an interest. the situation also becomes worse when the woman does not have any means of income for herself and her children.

### **Causes of Child Abuse**

In African society, child abuse and neglect are relatively new concepts, even though parents, caretakers, and other adults have been abusing, killing, and neglecting children for hundreds of years. only since the middle of the 20th century have laws been passed mandating the report of persecution of child abuse and neglect. Poverty, ignorance or lack of knowledge, drug or substance misuse, difficult financial circumstances, or

employment factors to child abuse and neglect. Child abuse in Nigeria is a complex issue with multiple causes stemming from social, economic, cultural, and individual factors.

poverty is a significant factor contributing to child abuse in Nigeria. Economic stress often leads parents or caregivers to engage in abusive behaviours due to financial strain. The inability to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare can lead to frustration and aggression towards children (Fayehun, 2017).

According to UNICEF 2014, children who come from dysfunctional families have a high chance of being abused. They are already exposed to marital conflicts and domestic violence. Certain cultural belief approves of the correction of children, these beliefs contribute to the perpetuation of child abuse in Nigeria such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriages, physical punishment, etc.

Some parents and caregivers are involved in substance abuse (drug, alcohol), when intoxicated they neglect the child or hit the child thereby resulting in physical injuries other times the child is sexually abused. parents or caregivers who suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or any other personal cases always tend to abuse a child in one way or another.

Another factor that creates room for child abuse and neglect is the situation where parents are compelled to live up to higher socio-economic standards. Therefore always leaving the child in the hands of nannies, caregivers, friends, and relatives.

## **Manifestation of Child Abuse In Schools.**

The different forms of abuse stated above show that child abuse occurs in schools and could have a damaging effect on the educational development of children:

children can be subjected to general dirtiness and unhealthiness or broken promises by caregivers without valid reasons. Parents can therefore abuse and neglect their children physically, emotionally, morally, and educationally.

Some parents fail to provide academic materials (fees, textbooks, uniforms) to their children until such children as driven home. This leads to stunted mental and emotional growth. parents neither enquire about their child's school work nor ensure that their children are properly clothed. Some engage their wards in so much domestic work that they have no time for study (Fan, F.A,2005).

Physical abuse comprises spanking, violence, burn, over-aggressive beating like beating a child with belt buckles, etc.

Even though spanking is culturally approved for correcting a child, most times the teachers do this in anger, and in the process, the child is left injured and in the process physically inflicted with bruises and pain.

(Mfonobong Umobong, 2016) Teachers hold great expectations of young children and so when these children fall short they are mercilessly flogged. Children are flogged for committing minor offenses like coming to school late or failing to do homework and

other major offenses like fighting and insulting others. Most teachers and school authorities assume that children are stubborn, indisciplined, and unintelligent and the only way to drive out this 'foolishness' from the children is to use the rod in order not to spoil the child. Most times, teachers fail to listen to pupils' apparent show of misbehaviour. They hold more strongly to their beliefs and ideas that they are unwilling to hear the pupil out. Thus they unleash corporal punishment on the student making the student scared and unwilling to attend school.

In addition, there is also a belief that there should be unconditional acceptance for learners and recognition that the child is worthy and should be treated not as an animal but as a human being with feelings.

Teachers inflict emotional pain on pupils, for instance in an attempt to punish pupils for misbehaviour, the teacher usually asks pupils to kneel or stand with one foot in front of the classroom, the mere fact that they are being punished in front of other pupils lowers their self-esteem and if constantly punished that way may lead to poor performance, hostility, and apathy. Other punishments adopted include taunting harsh treatment as well as belittling them. Instances in cases where teachers use sinister language in addressing pupils such as words/phrases like 'fool', 'olodo/empty head', 'I know you will never know it', etc. These words not only belittle the child but also ridicule and lead to a lack of concentration and withdrawal of pupils to themselves and eventual dislike of school.

Teachers have also been found who fail to provide love, support, care, and guidance to children under their care. Another type of emotional abuse that occurs in schools is bullying. The younger and newer pupils are readily bullied by the senior or older pupils, who ought to be their emotional support system. This can readily impact the kids, causing them to distance themselves from their friends and develop personal-social maladjustment.

These points show that teachers/school authorities intentionally or unintentionally indulge in emotional abuse which ultimately affects the child's ability to learn. Thus the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provide for the protection of the child against physical and psychological abuse, discrimination, and all forms of threat, be they weapons or words.

Sexual abuse occurs frequently in households, schools, and other public settings, interfering with a child's ability to develop normally and healthily. In particular, in schools where they are young, innocent and naive girls, are often taken advantage of by the male teachers. Some teachers lure these students with not only petty gifts but sometimes transfer their parental affection to them, leading to having illicit relationships or affairs.

Not only does this relationship exist between male teachers and female pupils, but it also exists between male teachers and male pupils; particularly in an all-boys school.

In addition to caressing and playing with the pupil's genitalia, these male teachers may also coerce the young pupil to play with his own and engage in homosexual behaviour. The interaction between female pupils and female teachers, particularly in an all-girls' school is likewise affected by this.

In schools, there are instances of neglect that can be found and negatively impact on a child's educational progress. Certain schools could not offer sufficient care when it comes to physical abuse, cleanliness, safety, and oversight for their school-age children. Some day-care facilities let kids run around and soil their clothes, whereas others are left with wet diapers unattended for hours. In the nursery and primary section, pupils lack supervision while coping with notes or doing classwork. This can result in unattended play and serious injuries; leading to hospitalization and missed school days.

Additionally, inadequate school resources like desks, chairs, and other learning equipment create a non-conducive school climate. It is uncommon to find pupils studying in classrooms with leaking roofs or under dilapidated structures, which can negatively impact their learning ability.

Very few teachers have time to attend to the emotional needs of the pupils in their classrooms. Sometimes a child comes to school late and sleeps through the school period or pays little to no attention in the classroom and yet the teacher does not show any sign of concern or love toward such a child. Such a child becomes alienated and may withdraw from school. Neglect can also affect cognitive development, leading to deficits in language skills, attention, and problem-solving abilities (Dubowitz et al.,2016).

Pupils who fall ill in school are left unattended to until the school hours are over. They therefore do not benefit in the classroom during those days. Each school must have a sick bay where pupils can be treated until their parents pick them up.

Child trafficking among primary school pupils is a significant issue, with children being coerced into illegal activities such as drug trafficking. This exploitation often occurs within crime syndicates, where children are used as couriers for narcotics or even as spies, particularly in rural areas (Smith 2019; Jones et al.,2020).

Child trafficking affects primary school pupils in profound ways. This heinous act not only robs children of their childhood but also leaves deep scars on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

It disrupts the very foundation of education by pulling children out of school, often under false promises or through coercion. this interruption in their education can have long-lasting consequences, hindering their academic progress and limiting their future opportunities.

Addressing child trafficking in primary schools requires an approach that involves community engagement, and law enforcement agencies. Schools must implement robust safeguard measures to identify and support at-risk children, while also educating them about their rights and how to seek help if they or someone they know is being trafficked.

In Benin city, some children get involved in hawking, others are engaged in manual labour in motor parks, collecting plastics and doing one menial activity or another to earn some money. It is not only carried out at home but also takes place in the school.

Some teachers exploit children using them to work on their farms. Children are also sent out by their teachers to fetch water, cook, and wash clothes at the time they should be learning. Some of the children are not conversant with these kinds of work, it therefore presents challenges and affects their health.

### **Impact of Child Abuse on the Academic Performance of Pupils**

Pupils' academic performance refers to a pupil's strong performance in a given academic area. It is the knowledge obtained or skills developed in the school subjects usually designed by test scores or marks assigned by the teacher. It includes both the curricular and curricular performance of the pupils. It indicates the learning outcomes of the pupils. Pupils' academic performance is the outcome or the extent to which pupils have achieved their educational goals(Mildred,2019). Pupils' academic performance means student's success in meeting the short-term or long-term goals in education. In the classroom, pupils perform their potential efficiently, and as a result of, learning takes place; the learning outcome changes the behaviour pattern of the student through different subjects. Pupils' academic performance is an assessment strategy by which the evidence about students' learning is gathered through students' work on a performance task. It is an observable or measurable behaviour of a person in a particular situation usually an experimental situation.

Pupils' academic performance refers to the extent to which pupils have achieved mastery of the objectives of the subjects. They are exposed to them in school (Qudus,2020). It represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a

person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university. It includes excellence in sporting behaviour, confidence, communication skills, and others (Sanusi,2019).

Child abuse negatively affects the child physically, psychologically, and behaviourally. According to Ukedjo (2020), children who are maltreated usually get low grades in school and do not excel in society, which slows down the economy. Children who have been victimized by one or more forms of abuse exhibit some behaviours different from others in school with attendant effects on their academic performance.

In general, child abuse slows down academic advancement. children never trust anyone anymore because they have been let down and mistreated by those who should be their source of happiness, confidence, protection, and security; as a result, they feel that no one can be trusted and that no place is safe. Behaviour changes result from this, including emotional and physical pain, withdrawal from relationships with people of the opposite sex, anxiety, mental stress, depression, difficulty interacting with others, melancholy, hooliganism, thuggery, rebelliousness, malnourishment, anger, scars on the body parts, addiction, sexual difficulties, and unhealthy appearance and attire. Due to difficulties focusing, these traits cause the child to perform poorly academically.

In public primary schools in Onitsha metropolis, Anambra state, Ezenekwe (2018) conducted research on the effects of child abuse on pupils' academic performance. It is a survey research that is descriptive. Purposive and quota sampling methods were used to draw the sample, and non-probability sampling was used. The instrument utilized to

collect the data was the interview schedule. The qualitative response regression model was used to examine and obtain data. According to the study's findings, child maltreatment in Onitsha has a detrimental effect on children's mental health, physical fitness, and school enrolment rates. The report suggested, among other things, that curriculum for schools should include instruction on child maltreatment to raise awareness of children's rights and consequences of the child abuse on the mental, physical, and social development of children to reduce the menace of child abuse.

Obiahu (2016) investigated the impact of child abuse on the academic performance of pupils in Bayelsa state. Descriptive surveys were employed in the study as the study design. The study employed that the stratified random sampling technique to identify 52 schools out of 161, from which samples of 1,139 pupils and 208 teachers were obtained using the simple sampling technique. The study was led by five research questions and five hypotheses. Using the test, the hypotheses were examined. The study used a structured questionnaire designed by a researcher to collect data. Twenty-five (25) items were included in the questionnaire to get responses from teachers and students based on the study. The study's conclusion showed that the reading habits of abused and non-abused pupils differ significantly. It is also applicable in their subject mastery, classroom participation, passing grades in examinations, and submission of assignments. Based on the prevalence of child abuse in our society, it was recommended that there should be public enlightenment programs to combat ignorance and public awareness of the right to freedom from all forms of abuse.

## **Prevention of Child Abuse**

Child abuse has its share of difficulties, but they are not impossible. No matter how close they are to the abuser, parents, guardians, and other caregivers should still instil in their kids values of self-control; and the right to say no from an early age to prevent child abuse.

Education is the key to preventing child abuse. It is important to create awareness and educate parents, caregivers, teachers, and children about child rights, healthy parenting practices, and how to recognize signs of abuse. There should be a school-based program that teaches children about body safety, boundaries, and safe adults to talk to. Children should be empowered to recognize and report any case of abuse whether it concerns them or someone they know.

Engaging communities in child protection is vital. community leaders, religious institutions, and NGOs play pivotal roles in creating safe environments for children. They can establish child protection committees and support networks for victims and families(UNICEF,2019). Encouraging communities to support vulnerable families and providing safe spaces for children to report abuse is vital. Many children in Nigeria are reluctant to report abuse due to fear, stigma, or lack of trust in authorities.

The media platform is a good way to create awareness, advocate policies, and mobilize the public to support and pressure the government to take action. By using the

media platform, child protection services including hotlines and shelters can be publicized

Nigeria has laws like the Child Rights Act(2003) and the Violence Against Person (Prohibition) Act (2015) that protect children from abuse. However, enforcement and implementation remain challenges due to corruption and lack of resources. Strengthening law enforcement and the judicial system is crucial.(Okeke-Uzodike,2017). Harmful cultural practices should be confronted by the full force of the law.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review critically examined child abuse in relation with pupils in primary schools. Child abuse could be seen in the reviewed literature as a practice whereby children are maltreated, battered, or deprived of some necessities in the home, street, or at school.

The literature review also examined various forms of child abuse commonly faced by pupils. Some of the forms of abuse revealed in the literature reviewed include physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. This is followed by the causes of child abuse. The review of the study revealed that a major cause of child abuse is poverty. This also leads to the manifestation of child abuse, the review highlighted various ways in which child abuse is experienced by pupils in school.

The review of literature was concluded with an examination of the impact of child abuse on pupils' academic performance and the prevention of child abuse. This study clearly shows that child abuse negatively affects the child physically, and psychologically

thereby resulting in poor performance in school. It also shows that one of the best ways to prevent child abuse is to create awareness and educate pupils on how to recognize child abuse and report it.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discussed the methods and procedures employed in the study. It is structured under the following headings:

- Research Design
- Population of the study
- Sample and sampling procedure
- Research instrument
- Validity of instrument
- Reliability of the instrument
- Method of data collection
- Method of data Analysis

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research project was conducted using the descriptive survey method. This design appears to be the best in investigating child abuse among pupils in primary schools in Benin City because it provides detailed information.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of the study consist of both private and public school pupils in Benin City.

### **3.3 Sample and sampling techniques**

A sample of 10 public schools and 10 private schools was selected from the study using the random sampling techniques. 120 pupils from selected schools participated.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

The structured questionnaire is the instrument used in this study. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A is the Respondent's demographic details which contains gender, class(prim I-5), school(public/private). Section B contains the questions which the respondent is supposed to reply to, there is a total of twelve (12) questions.

### **3.5 Validity of the Instrument.**

The researcher's supervisor evaluated the validity of the instrument based on its relevance to the research topics, coverage, content, acceptable language use, and clarity of expression. The final draft includes the appropriate corrections that were made.

### **3.6 Reliability of the instrument.**

The split-half method of reliability will be applied to analyze the correlation between items in order to evaluate the instrument's dependability. After the surveys are completed, they will be divided into equal halves, with each category receiving a separate score that will be used in the analysis.

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

A hundred and twenty copies of questionnaire were administered and retrieved from the study population personally by the researcher. This method made it possible to achieve a one hundred percent response rate.

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

The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed using mean deviation and tables. The responses were evaluated on four scale response type of Yes and No

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter deals with presentation of results and discussion of findings. The results of the analysis are presented in the order of the research questions that guided the study.

#### Presentation of Results

##### Research Question One

What are the child abuse manifested ?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing the child abuse**

Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
Have you ever been pushed by your teacher	2.60	.781	No
Have you ever been kicked by your teacher	2.46	.871	No
Have you ever been gotten injured from flogging	2.60	.573	No
Has your teacher ever slapped you	2.65	.632	No
Has your teacher ever scolded you	3.60	.705	Yes

**Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)**

In response to research question one, Table 1 showed that the respondents rated item one to four as no with a mean rating ranging from 2.46 to 2.65 while the standard deviation also ranges from .573 to .871. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.58. With these results, the above mean score shows the child abuse manifested by teacher's as no .

## Research Question Two

is there a difference in the child abuse faced by boys and girls?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the difference in the child abuse faced by boys and girls**

Item	Mean	SD	Remarks	N	
Have you ever been yelled at	3.53	.872	Yes	50	Girls
Has your teacher ever told your classmates to laugh at you	3.40	.705	Yes	50	Boys
Has your teacher or your classmates ever called you names like empty head ,dull brain	3.14	.997	Yes	50	Boys
Has anyone ever touched your private part area	2.57	.668	No	50	Boys
Has anyone ever punched you	3.38	.941	Yes	50	Boys

**Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)**

In response to research question two, Table 2 showed that the respondents rated item one, two, three and five as yes with a mean rating ranging from 3.14 to 3.53 while the standard deviation also ranges from .705 to .997. The mean rating of abuse girls is 3.53 while the mean rating of abuse boys ranges from 2.57 to 3.40. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.40. With these results, the above mean score shows a difference in the child abuse faced by boys and girls as yes.

### Research Question Three

What is the difference in the child abuse in public school and private school ?

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation showing the difference in the child abuse in public school and private school**

Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
Have you ever been left alone by yourself without care	3.31	.973	Yes Public
Have your parents ever refused to give you food or water	3.22	.826	Yes Public
Have your parents ever refused to buy you school materials	3.51	.671	Yes Public
Have your parents ever refused to pay your school fees and force you to stay at home	2.47	.604	No Private
Have your parents ever spanked you for not willing to go school	3.32	.784	Yes Public

**Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)**

In response to research question three, Table 3 showed that the respondents rated item one, two, three and five as yes with a mean rating ranging from 3.31 to 3.51 while the standard deviation also ranges from .671 to .973. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.37. With these results, the above mean score shows there is difference in the child abuse in public school and private school as yes.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that the child abuse manifested by teacher's as no. This finding corroborates with that of Ojugo and Okoza ( 2016) Intimidating, threatening, isolating or/and humiliating are some teachers' behaviours that

inflict emotional abuse on pupils. Such behaviours not only undermine the trust that should encompass pupils-teacher relationships, but also degrade pupils' sense of connection with their school.

Research question two findings indicated a difference in the child abuse faced by boys and girls as yes. This finding is in line with that of Osasuyi and Osunbor (2019) who stated that both boys and girls faced physical abuse; physical abuse is the deliberate intention to inflict pain. When someone hears the term “child abuse”, they most commonly associate it with physical abuse. Wounds, bruises, burns, fractures, and sore muscles are signs of physical abuse, but abuse can also result from severe acts of discipline. Injuries that don't coincide with the explanation and untreated medical or dental needs are also red flags for physical abuse.

The data output of research question three showed the difference in the child abuse in public school and private school as yes. This finding support that of Martins (2018) who confirmed the insight of child abuse and neglect of children; Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. Physical abuse may include beating, shaking, burning, and biting. The threshold for defining corporal punishment as abuse is unclear. Approximately 10% of students in private schools have reported experiencing sexual abuse. This is slightly higher compared to the 7% in public schools. It's important to note that these figures may not fully capture the extent of the problem.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **SUMMARY**

The study investigates child abuse among pupils in primary schools in Benin City, aiming to provide educational personnel with a better understanding of what constitutes child abuse and its impacts.

Through descriptive survey, the research uncovered that children suffer from various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect. It was particularly alarming that many teachers inflicted severe corporal punishment.

The repercussions of child abuse are profound, affecting children physically, psychologically, and behaviourally. Abused children often perform poorly academically, and develop deep-seated mistrust towards others. This study underscores the critical need for interventions to safeguard children, promote their well-being, and create a supportive educational environment in Benin City.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Child abuse is a pervasive and devastating phenomenon in Benin City, with far-reaching consequences for their well-being and academic success. The findings of this study highlight the need for educational personnel to recognize and address the various forms of child abuse. The negative outcome creates an urgent need for comprehensive

interventions and support systems within the educational framework to protect children and promote their overall well-being.

To address these issues, educators, policymakers, and community leaders need to collaborate in creating a safer and more supportive environment for children. This includes implementing stricter regulations against abuse, providing training for teachers on positive disciplinary methods, and ensuring a robust support system for affected children. By doing so, we can help foster an environment where children can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Develop and implement child protection policies that will protect children from abuse.
2. Parents should educate their children about child abuse.
3. Engage parents and the community in preventing child abuse.
4. Parents and caregivers should see beating, hitting, and burning as physical abuse and not as a way of discipline and so should desist from using it on their children.
5. Establish counseling services for victims of child abuse.
6. Constant and sustained training of the guidance and counselor in schools.
7. Implement mandatory training sessions for teachers on recognizing, preventing, and appropriately responding to child abuse.

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**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

Dear Respondent,

**REQUEST FOR THE COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am **CHISOM JOY ALEKE**, a final year student of the above named department and institution. I am conducting a research on the topic “**CHILD ABUSE AMONG PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE**”.

This research partially fulfils the requirements for the Bachelor of Education in Early childhood Education award. I hereby solicit your cooperation in filling out the questionnaire and assure you that all information provided will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

**CHISOM JOY, ALEKE**

**(Researcher)**

**SECTION A (PERSONAL DATA)**

**GENDER:** Male (  ) Female (  )

**CLASS:** PRY 1 (  ) PRY 2 (  ) PRY 3 (  ) PRY 4 (  ) PRY 5 (  )

**SCHOOL:** PUBLIC (  ) PRIVATE (  )

## SECTION B GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructions: please ticks (√) the most preferable option by using the following, bearing in mind that no answer is right or wrong.

Yes

No

S/N	ITEMS	Yes	No
1.	Have you ever been pushed by your teacher?		
2.	Have you ever been kicked by your teacher?		
3.	Have you ever been gotten inured from flogging?		
4.	Has your teacher ever slapped you?		
5.	Have you ever been yelled at?		
6.	Has your teacher ever told your class mate to laugh at you?		
7.	Has your teacher or your class mate ever called you names like empty head, dull brain?		
8.	Has anyone ever touched your private area?		
9.	Have you ever been left alone by yourself without care?		
10.	Have your parents ever refused to give food or water?		
11.	Have your parents ever refused to buy you school materials?		
12.	Have your parents ever refused pay school fees and force you to stay at home?		