The Roles of Social Workers in Curbing Child Defilement in Benin City, Edo State Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The study investigated the role of social workers in curbing child defilement in Benin City the Objective was to determine the effects of defilement on children in Benin City. The theoretical framework was family system theory. The population of the project was 294672 and the sample size of the study comprises of about 200 residents of Benin City. Recommendations were made based on the findings such as: Well-trained social worker can inform communities through community development programs about the dynamics of child defilement. This can be strengthening the tools of the social workers in the prevention of the child defilement, it is strongly suggested that apart from punishment provided in the laws for convicted offenders, anyone that is convicted must be made to undergo compulsory psychiatric rehabilitation. Anyone with full sanity would not defile a child and even much more their own children.. The particular psychological, physical, emotional and social harm suffered by the defiled children and their increased vulnerability to exploitation require that the governments and NGOs deal with them separately from adult rape victims in terms of laws, policies, programs and interventions. The best interest of the child must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning defiled children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies. In this study, the researcher explored through a qualitative study the role of the social worker in the curbing of child defilement using the questionnaire. The empirical study confirms that the information gathered from this study will benefit not only vulnerable children, families and victims of child defilement, but also empower the social workers and other role players to render a more effective service to children vulnerable to possible child defilement.

Keywords: Child, Effects Defilement, Social, Worker

Introduction

In Nigeria, it is widely accepted that children are the building blocks of any nation and they are the future leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, the development of future generations

greatly lies on them and as such, it is important the security and psychological health of these children should be of utmost importance to all in order to uphold such a futuristic position. However, their survival, development and protection hangs in balance as more and more of these children are been defiled. In fact, the high rate of sexual violation (pedophilia) in Nigeria which leads to the mental, physical, emotional and psychological distraught of these children, makes it nearly impossible for these children to love themselves let alone their own country, especially when the perpetrators of this heinous act are left unpunished due to the "twisted" and relaxed nature of the law on sexual defilement of children (Aucamp, Steyn. & Van Rensburg, 2014).

The majority of sexual defilement of children is carried out by someone who may be known to the child (victim), such as their own fathers, neighbors or indeed any close associate.

Sexual defilement of children devastates the lives of the children and their families causing severe physical and psychological pain and suffering, including death, and sexually transmitted infectious diseases. It is a form of gender-based violence which knows no border. Sexual defilement of children is a global pandemic affecting both the children of various classes and both the educated and uneducated, regardless of their race, ethnic background or religion. Sadly, female children are the most affected of this crime Chitereka, (2010). Most cases of sexual defilement are not reported for reasons such as the social stigma which attaches to the victim, and also, the fact that the security personnel may be unwilling to make an official report due to insufficient evidence. Even when reported and the accused is not convicted at the end of a trial, the parents of the child or victim is made to feel condemned and looked down upon (Aucamp, Steyn. & Van Rensburg, 2014).

Omodan, & Tsotetsi,.(2018) assert that child defilement has emerged as an issue of major global concern in recent years. Largely facilitated by globalization and modern communication technology, it is becoming increasingly transnational in scope. Child defilement has a wide range of adverse short medium and long term implications for the victim. It is associated for example with a range of negative mental health and physical health problems (kendall tackett 2011), the presence of substance abuse disorder (Breckenridge2012) and for girls in particular, re-victimization in both childhood and adulthood (Chitereka, (2010).

Although early intervention and the provision of appropriate support can help to ameliorate these effects (Adebayo, 2014), services responses rarely addresses mental,

physical and psychosocial needs concurrently and, at times can be experienced as highly punitive (salter and breckenridge2013). Thus while child defilement as being viewed as a crisis that social workers must protect children from, social worker's intervention in child defilement has also being seen as a potential source to eradicate \ reduce the incidence of child defilement

Statement of Problem

Defilement is debilitating experience for the victimized children with negative psychological social, educational and physical health outcomes that are not only detrimental to the affected child but also their families and society at large (Oseni, Lawani & Oyedeji. 2016) The convention on the Rights of the child compels parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of violence including The recently set UN Sustainable Development endeavors from 2015-2030 in which they acknowledge defilement as a fundamental obstacle to the health of the children and society as a whole. Their target '16.2' aims to end abuse and exploitation of children and target '5.2' aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation (United Nations General Assembly 2015).

Psychosocial outcomes related to defilement of children demonstrate its negative impact on the children with deleterious and far reaching negative consequences on their physical and mental health. (WHO,2010) and the economic burden of any society is substantial (Corso & fertig 2010). Harsh penalties or sentences have been imposed upon all convicted child defilers which range from a minimum of 15 years to the maximum of life sentences (Agbo, 2019). The problem is that despite these harsh sentences, more and more children continue to be reported as having been defiled. This implies that the environment in which the children are growing up is no longer safe.

This may be attributed to ineffective communication strategies being used by the ministry of women affairs and social development to sensitize the general public against this vice. It may also imply that the messages being disseminated are not effective enough and that they could be targeted at wrong persons. Child defilement may lead to a wide range of adverse consequences for children and adolescents'. Child abuse is well-established as an important societal concern with significant ramifications for the affected children, their families and society at large. Acritical step in devising effective responses to the issue of child defilement is by the involvement of social workers.

Objective of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to examine the role of social workers in curbing child defilement in Benin City.

The specific objective is to determine the effects of defilement on children in Benin City

Review of Related Literature

Child sexual abuse is a violent crime committed against children. It can take many forms and it impacts negatively on the children's emotions, anatomy, physiology, psychology, familial and social relationships (Usman, 2020). This crime is committed against children regardless of their ethnic group or socioeconomic status. It could leave emotional scars and the children may suffer from psychiatric pathologies (Nejo, 2020). They may also suffer socially and in relationships. The children may struggle to get to terms with the experience and repercussions of sexual abuse and trauma Thus, they might perish or survive to struggle with the consequences (Richter 2008). Defilement is having sexual intercourse with a person (this includes both boys and girls) under the age of 18years. It doesn't matter whether the person has given consent or not. The major determinant of defilement is age. This leaves one to wonder what causes adult to defile innocent young ones.

The Effects of Defilement on Children

The ILO (2006) further states that children who have been defiled often report feeling a sense of shame, guilt and low self-esteem due to social stigmatization in their communities. They feel ignored by fellow members of the community and are expelled from school. Some children have been abused by their own family members and become repeated victims of defilement. Professional intervention into their family life for the purposes of recovery and prosecutions of defilers. This happens especially when the roles of the professionals concerned are not clearly defined and when the state does not have clear legislation to criminalize defilers. Finally, children have expressed feelings of guilt and shame when adults do not believe that they are victims, or when the defilers deny that they are responsible or at fault (ILO2006). Child defilement has a negative impact on victims and their families as well as the community and the nation as a whole. Children vulnerable to defilement are growing with potentially disastrous effects on the entire world community.

Child defilement can cause difficulties informing intimate and trusting relationships. Relationships can remind victims and survivors of the sexual abuse and there may be emotional barrier that make it difficult to talk about defilement with partners. The inquiry has heard that some victims and survivors feel that the defilement they suffered has damaged their relationship with their parents or siblings. This may be because the

perpetrator was a family member was a family member or a close friend of the family or they may have disclosed the abuse they suffered to a family member and siblings and felt that they were not believed.

The Roles of Social Workers Regarding Child Defilement

Intervention in defilement cases aims to stabilize the family and to maintain the family structure by focusing on addressing the risk factors. The goal is to ensure safety for all family members and working on developing new ways of relating with each other (Sinanan2011) The role of social workers in child defilement according to the following categories: Primary Intervention: According to The Child Rights Acts (2008), the target groups of primary prevention are all the children in the society. Primary prevention is when the social workers become pro-active in their approach in curbing child defilement. This approach encourages them to organize and conduct child defilement awareness campaigns and support the campaigns with information, training and media production. This may focus on the following run Information and Awareness Campaigns:

- Community based children radio and television programs:
  The Run information and awareness campaign is an operation of small radio and television activities lead by trained children with the assistance of child welfare organizations. The radio and television station should be attached to drop-in centers that offer catch-up education and recreational activities to community children. The radio and television program helps to prevent child defilement because it promotes the participation of children in the fight against defilement (ILO2006).
- Organize a drama group:
  The drama focuses on raising awareness for behavioral change. The drama performance will present the message of cause and effects of child defilement in a form that can be easily understood by children and the community at large. The drama performance stimulates the audiences to question their assumptions and perceptions about child defilement and take action (ILO2006).
- Empowerment projects:
  The establishment of the Microenterprise Development Model for vulnerable families is important: The social worker has the role of assisting vulnerable families to run community based economies through the formation of enterprises that aim to improve the socio-economic status of families with low levels of literacy in Benin city. The business model helps to prevent child defilement because it improves the family economic situation as a means of fighting poverty, which is one of the root causes of child defilement and child labour. It also unlocks

the entrepreneurial skills of vulnerable families and empowers family relations (ILO2006).

- Empowerment of single women, widows and mothers: The practice of empowerment addresses one of the most vulnerable, often forgotten groups in society. The empowerment practice brings this group to the attention of the public so that their problems and needs are appropriately addressed. The counselling program is necessary because it offers traumatized single and widowed women space to cope with their psychosocial difficulties, build their confidence and create proactive environment for their children (ILO2006).
- The establishment of a child and youth Centre: The establishment of a child and youth centre cannot be overemphasized. This is a multipurpose centre where vulnerable children and the youth can receive training in educational and vocational skills. The educational training programs must include child defilement and how to prevent it (Cincotta, Dispasquale, Holden, Johnson ,Mclntosh, Paplinger and Sinclair,2005).
- Social mobilization: The establishment of community vigilant teams: This is a voluntary formation of community vigilant teams in locations within South Africa as a country. The government, NGOs and private organizations must support their activities to raise awareness, detect risk cases and take action against child defilement. The community vigilant teams help to prevent child defilement by taking surveillance actions in their own communities and collaborating with nearby communities to detect cases of children at risk. Further, it is imperative to refer children at risk to relevant organizations, for example, IOM or Child line to receive appropriate education and welfare services (ILO2006).

Theoretical Framework: Family System Theory

Family counseling is an intervention approach based on the fact that child sexual abuse affects members of the family as well the child concerned. It involves intervening with a specific family to achieve specified objectives (Marley, Rasheed & Rasheed, 2011). Family therapy aims to meet the needs of the child concerned and that of other family members, particularly ensuring that the former is safe and protected within the family environment. It is further aimed at enhancing family members' interaction and functioning (Zastrow, 2010). As a group facilitator, the social worker, conducts assessment, helps the family understand the presenting problem and examine the underlying contributing factors to the sexual abuse. The social worker also assists the family in identifying problem solving steps and to sustain changes made in their way of living (Marley 2011).

Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design with a mixed method approach that included quantitative and qualitative research method. The main reason for using this design was due to the ability of this research design to gather data from large population consisting of multiple variables at a specific point in time and at cheaper cost. According to the National bureau of statistics the total population of youths and adult in Oredo local government area is 212877. The population projection for 2021 is 294672.

The sample size of this study consists of 200 respondents. |The sample technique to be employed shall be purposeful random sampling. This is the intentional selection of the respondents from the population. this intentional selection is relevant to this work by providing appropriate choices to the selection of a category of age, gender or class category of the respondents especially parents or those who have knowledge of the situation of child defilement and the involvement of social workers

Table 1: Age Range of respondent

Age Range	Frequency of respondents	Percentage of respondents
18-25	68	34%
26-30	44	22%
31-35	34	17%
36-40	38	19%
41 and above	16	8%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: field data 2021

From the above table, 34% of the respondent were within the age range of 18-25 years, 22% of the respondent were within the 26 -20 years, 17% 0f the respondents were within31-35 years, 19% of the respondents were within 36-40years while 8% of the respondents were 41years and above. Those respondents within the age range of 18-25 years (34%) were more, this shows that more youths and young adult participated in this study.

Figure 1

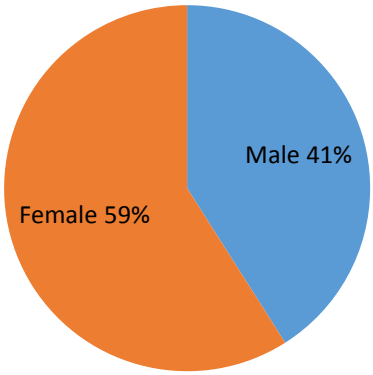


Table 2 on the respondents of male and Females

Sex	**Frequency of respondents**	**Percentage of respondents**
Male	82	41%
Female	118	59%
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: field work 2021

From the above table, 41% of the respondents were male while 59% of the respondents were female. This is because females are more prone to child defilement

Table 3: Impact of Child Defilement in the Society.

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Defiled children find it harder than others to make new friends	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	150 12 20 18	73% 8% 10% 9%

	Total	200	100%
Defiled children find it difficult to trust anyone	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	189 3 8 0	94.5% 1.5% 4% 0%
	Total	200	100%
Defiled children have problems getting involved in the society	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	120 60 15 5	60% 28% 10.5% 1.5%
	Total	200	100%
Defiled children are a burden in their family	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	5 7 50 138	2.3% 2.7% 23% 72%
	Total	200	100%
Defiled children are at a risk of contracting disease	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	172 25 3 0	76% 22.5% 1.5% 0%
	Total	200	100%

Source Field Work, 2021

On the issue of effects of defilement on the child, the result shows that 73% of the respondents strongly agreed that defiled children find it difficult than others to make new friends, 8% of the respondents also agreed while 10% respondents disagreed and 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed the result from the also revealed that 189(94.5) of the respondents strongly agreed that defiled children find it difficult to trust anyone while 3(15) of the respondent also agreed 8(4%) of the respondents disagreed and 0(0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed of this question the table three result shows that 120(60%) of the respondents agreed that defiled children have problems getting involved in the society, 60(28%) of the respondents also agreed while 15(10.5) of the respondents disagreed that defiled children find it difficult to trust anyone and 5(1.5) of the respondent strongly disagreed also result shows that 5(2.3) of the respondents strongly agreed that defiled children are a burden to their family, 7(2.7) of the respondents agreed while 50(23%) of the respondents disagreed and 138(72%) of the respondents strongly disagreed lastly 172(76%) of the respondents strongly agreed that defiled children are at a high rate of contracting disease, 25(22.5) of the respondents agreed, while 3(1.5) of the respondents disagreed and (0%) of the respondent strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Roles of Social Workers on Child Defilement

Have you heard of social workers involvement in child defilement?	Response	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	1 5 20 174	0.5% 5.5% 10% 84%
	Total	200	100%
Are cases of child defilement always reported to social workers	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	0 2 57 142	0% 1% 25% 74%
	Total	200	100%

In your opinion do you think that social workers have been helpful in curbing child defilement?	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	0 5 89 106	0% 2% 27% 71%
	Total	200	100%
Do you think social workers should add more effort in curbing child defilement	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	179 21 0 0	89% 11% 0% 0%
	Total	200	100%
Do you agree that the role social workers are paramount in curbing and intervening in cases of child defilement	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	123 53 22 2	68% 21% 9.7% 1.3%
	Total	200	100%
Do you think child defilement can be stopped in Benin city	Strongly Agreed Agreed Disagreed Strongly Disagreed	7 15 21 157	4% 6% 17% 71%
	Total	200	100%

Source: Field Work 2021

On the issues of roles of social workers in curbing defilement the result shows that 1 (0.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they have heard of social worker's involvement in child defilement, 5(5.5%) of the respondents agreed while 20(10%) of the respondents disagreed and 174(84%) of the respondent strongly disagreed the result from the table also revealed that 0(0%) of the respondent strongly agreed that cases of defilement are always

reported to social workers, 2 (1%) of the respondent agreed while 57(25%) of the respondent disagreed and 142(74%) of the respondent strongly disagreed the other table shows that 0(0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social workers have been helpful in curbing child defilement, 5(2%) of the respondent agreed while 89(27%) of the respondent agreed and 106(71%) of the respondent strongly disagreed. The other table shows that 179(89%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social workers should add more effort in curbing child defilement, 21(11%) of the respondents agreed while 9(0%) of the respondent disagreed and 0(0%) of the respondent strongly disagreed. The fifth table shows that 123(68%) of the respondent strongly agreed that the role of social workers are paramount in curbing and intervening in cases of child defilement, 53(21%) of the respondent agreed while 22(9.7%) of the respondent disagreed and 2(1.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The last table shows that 7(4%) of the respondent strongly agreed that child defilement can be stopped in Benin, 15(6%) of the respondent agreed while 21(17%) of the respondent disagreed and 157(71%) of the respondent strongly disagreed.

Discussion of finding

From the analysis of the research question we found out that defiled children find it difficult to make friends and get involved in the society. Although the physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences of child defilement weigh heavily on the shoulders of the children who experience it, the impact of the defilement does no tend there. Society pay child defilement in both direct costs (e.g. Hospitalizations, foster care payments) and indirect costs (e.g. long –term care, lost productivity at school, juvenile and criminal justice systems costs). A study by researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed estimates using 2015 data for the cost of child defilement. For nonfatal incidents of child defilement, the researchers estimated a lifetime costof$831,000perchild, and for fatal incidents of child defilement, it estimated a lifetime cost of $16.6million per child (Peterson,Florence,&Klevens,2018).It appraised the annual cost of nonfatal child defilement to be $428 billion (based on the number of substantiated cases of nonfatal maltreatment) or $2trillion (based on the number of investigated instances of nonfatal maltreatment).The costs in this study include both tangible costs(e.g., child welfare ,healthcare, juvenile justice) and intangible costs(e.g. Pain, suffering, grief).

Furthermore, during the course of the research several laws regulating cases of defilement were reviewed and if which includes Section218 of the Criminal Code Act provides that any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of thirteen is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for life with or without caring. While an attempt to have carnal knowledge of a girl under thirteen is punishable with fourteen years'

imprisonment. Social workers are responsible for helping individuals, families, and groups of people to cope with problems they're facing to improve their clients 'lives. One aspect of this is teaching skills and developing mechanisms for clients sorely onto better their lives. The social worker alongside government and nongovernmental organizations have great role to play in curbing and protecting the lives of children against defilement.

Conclusion

Child defilement is no longer a strange occurrence in Nigeria. Defilement has been done on a lot of children with little or no reports made to the appropriate authorities. This reason for this might be because the victim or even the victim's family of defilement usually have social stigma issues to contend with. The complexity of defilement present difficulties not only to an overburdened child welfare system, but also to the communities' researchers, legislators and other service providers. it is key therefore that these team work together to develop promising and a proactive practice for preventing defilement and mitigating its effect on children and the society. Part of this process is providing individuals, families and communities with the knowledge, resources and services to deal with the challenges associated with defilement. Social workers can only provide a part of the solution. Defilement must be viewed not only as an individual or a family problem but also a community issue requiring a community response.

Finally, it should be stressed that child defilement is a multiclausal problem demanding multiple levels of intervention from the multidisciplinary team of professionals whose expertise and sphere of interest concede at the correction of this "private trouble" and "public issue" .Although child defilement is a pervasive and complex problem with many causes, we should not take a defeatist attitude towards its prevention. Despite the absence of our strong evidence to guide our preventive efforts. At the very least, showing increased concern for the victims and parents, increasing our attempts to enhance their skills as parents or care givers nay help most vulnerable children from the nightmare of defilement.

Recommendations

1. Social workers should be trained to understand the dynamics of child defilement, the effect on the defiled child, the factors that contribute to child defilement as well as the role of the social workers in prevention strategies. As trainings on this will strengthen and enable the social workers to render a more effective service to defiled children.
2. Well trained social worker can inform communities through community development programs about the dynamics of child defilement. this can be strengthening the tools of the social workers in the prevention of the child defilement

3. It is strongly suggested that apart from punishment provided in the laws for convicted offenders, anyone that is convicted must be made to undergo compulsory psychiatric rehabilitation. Anyone with full sanity would not defile a child and even much more their own children.

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