



PATTERNS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN EDO SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF EDO STATE

ODIGIE, EUNICE AND AIDEYAN, DANIEL OSARENMWANTA (PhD)

Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education, University of Benin

Email: euniceodige22@gmail.com daniel.aideyan@uniben.edu

Abstract

This study investigated the patterns of sexual abuse among secondary school students in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state. Four research questions were raised to guide the research. Literatures related to the studies were reviewed. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design and the population of the study comprised 107,271 students in public and private registered senior secondary school children in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state. The multi-staged sampling technique was used to select 384 respondents for the study. A Self-structured questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The research instrument was content validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained using the test-retest reliability method. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage and charts. Some of the findings revealed that majority of the respondents experienced contact and non-contact child sexual abuse with child sexual abuse incidences commonly occurring at homes, schools, and in the perpetrators' house. With reference to the findings, the researcher recommended among others that schools should collaborate with parents/caregivers to develop and implement comprehensive child protection policies that clearly outline guidelines and procedures for preventing, detecting, and responding to child sexual abuse both at home and in schools.

Keywords: Patterns, sexual abuse, perpetrator, victim, fondling.

Introduction

Children are seen as incredible gifts from God and unfortunately, these same children are subjected to sexual abuse. Sexually abusing children is not only unacceptable, but also deplorable. Nonetheless, these crimes are not as uncommon as we would like to think as countless number of children and adolescents are sexually abused and exploited across the world, to the point that child sexual abuse is rapidly being recognized as a serious health issue globally. The World Health Organization identifies adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages ten to nineteen and defines a child as any human being below eighteen years of age (World Health Organization, 2011). Similarly, the Child Right's Act 2003 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years (Toyo, 2006).

Sexual abuse refers to any sexual act or an attempt to obtain a sexual act using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home, school and work. The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any sexual activity can occur during any phases of child growth and development. Therefore, Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a serious global public health problem with long-lasting negative consequences on the mental, physical and social wellbeing of survivors (Kumar, Singh & Kar, 2017). The World Health Organization

defined child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared or which violates the laws and social taboos of society (World Health Organization, 2010).

Child sexual abuse can occur in various forms that include but are not limited to: asking or pressuring a child to engage in sexual activities (whether making an attempt or it was successfully carried out); indecent exposure of the genitals to a child; and child exposure to or involvement in pornography. Others are sexual behaviour such as touching of the breasts, buttocks and genitals, whether the victim is dressed or undressed, fellatio, cunnilingus and penetration of the vagina or anus with sexual organs or with objects (Ogunfonoka, 2012). Similarly, sexual abuse incidents can occur in a commercial or institutional establishment, a residence or surrounding location, a street or other public place, or in another location. However, the location of the incident varied with the specific offence type. More than half (56%) of sexual abuse occurred in and around a residence; whereas, over half (57%) of incidents of unwanted sexual touching occurred in a commercial establishment (Ogunfonoka, 2012). Furthermore, careful reviews of CSA perpetrators in Nigeria showed that majority of the perpetrators were friends, neighbours and family members and most perpetrators of sexual abuse are usually males (Abdulkadir, Umar & Musa, 2011).

In the United States of America, a national survey of child-victims revealed that most of CSA victims (95%) were assaulted by male perpetrators ((Finkelhor, 2009). The survey also reported that 10% of the victims were sexually abused by a family member whereas one-fourth of them were assaulted by strangers. In addition, 60,400 victims experienced oral, anal, or vaginal penetration whereas 55,900 victims did not experience penetration. Fourteen percent of victims were assaulted at their homes; 38% were assaulted at the perpetrator's homes. The majority of victims (70%) were physically injured and Victims were more likely to be victimized at night and on Fridays or Saturdays than on other days of the week (Finkelhor, 2009). The findings on the time of the abuse is contrary to that of Uchendu and Nwogoh (2015) who stated that day time CSA was significantly higher than nocturnal abuse.

Similarly, there is a wide variation in the patterns of CSA across studies in Asia. Selengia, Thuy and Mushi (2020) reported that the rates of contact CSA in female samples range from 1.9% - 59.2% in China and India respectively and 1.8% - 9.1% for males in China. The prevalence for non-contact abuse ranges between 1.8% - 28.7% for females in China and India and 3.1% - 29.4% for males in China while that of penetrative sexual abuse ranges between 0.3% - 3.6% for males in Cambodia and China respectively and 0.6% - 57.1% for females in India. Selengia, Thuy and Mushi (2020) further stated that that the most severe forms of CSA was been observed in Africa including anal penetration and gang rape. For instance, a study in Tanzania in found 2.2% of females and 4.6% of males to have suffered anal penetration (McCrann, Lalor, & Katabaro, 2006). In the specialized clinics for post-sexual violence care in Zimbabwe, 60% of male victims reported forced anal penetration while in Democratic Republic of Congo 12.3% of girl victims experienced gang rape (Selengia, Thuy & Mushi, 2020).

Furthermore, friends were most cited followed by acquaintances or neighbours and relatives as perpetrators of CSA in Africa (Selengia, Thuy & Mushi, 2020). Specifically, friends were reported in Kenya (38.2%), Zimbabwe (42.3%), Nigeria (43%), and South Africa (61.3%) while family members or relatives were reported in Kenya (10.7%), Zimbabwe (18%), Nigeria (10%) and Swaziland (14%) (Selengia, Thuy & Mushi, 2020). In both Asia and Africa, the location of abuse was spread among home, school, perpetrator's home, public/open spaces and at special events although victim's home was the most common place of abuse followed by outdoors or public spaces and in school (Selengia, Thuy & Mushi, 2020). However, Daral, Khokhar, and Pradhan (2016) reported that most of the abuse in India took place when the victim was involved on a travel or journey (80.6%) followed by 31.2% during marriage events or other functions. Further investigation of CSA in Enugu State, a South Eastern part of Nigeria, revealed that 60% of girls below the age of 12 years had experienced various forms of CSA such as genital exposure and stimulation, seduction, and witnessing adults performing the act of sex (Ikechebelu, Udigwe, Ezechukwu, Ndnudi & Joe-Ikechebelu, 2008).

Also, in Oyo State, a South Western part of Nigeria, Balogun and Adenowuro (2020) opined that 13.3% had experienced only non-contact sexual abuse, 5.7% had experienced only contact sexual abuse, while 10% had experienced both. About half of the victims of contact sexual abuse had experienced the abuse in the afternoon between 12:00 pm and 4:00 p.m. Over half of the victims of contact sexual abuse were abused at the house of the perpetrator and most of the victims of both non-contact and contact sexual abuse indicated that their abusers were adolescents. In the same vein, the commonest perpetrators of both contact and non-contact sexual abuse were friends, neighbours, family members of the victims and strangers to the victims (Balogun & Adenowuro, 2020).

Conclusively, in almost all societies, particularly the African society, parents raise their children in consonance with the philosophy that a child is the most cherished asset and the hope of tomorrow. Hence, the United Nations (UN) Convention on the rights of the child provided that children in the care of a parent, guardian, teacher or any other person who has the care of children should protect them from all forms of torture or inhuman treatment and especially physical or mental abuse or neglect. Also, governmental regulations, decrees, enactments and child protective laws to discourage CSA have all been formulated by the government as a way of taming the worrisome increase in the incidences of CSA in Nigeria. Notable among these measures is the adoption of the Nigeria Child's Right Act in 2003 and the enactment of the Edo State child protection policy in 2015 as well as the attribution of jail term to some acts of CSA. Regrettably, while government and non-governmental organizations have continue to do their best to drastically reduce the incidence of CSA, the perpetrators of CSA seems not to relent as no week passes by without the media reporting about children who have been sexually abused across different parts of the country. Hence, the Nigerian society is still plagued with incidences of CSA. Also, while some previous studies (such as Chime, Orji, Aneke & Nwoke, 2021) have looked at some aspects of CSA including its pattern in some parts of Nigeria, it is imperative to bear in mind that studies conducted on the pattern of CSA among school children in other States in Nigeria, cannot be completely transplanted into the Edo State context. This

observable fact points to the need to investigate pattern of CSA school children students in Edo state as none of such studies to the best knowledge of the researcher, seems to have so far been conducted to fill up this gap.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the forms of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district?
2. What are the temporal patterns among school children in Edo South senatorial district?
3. What are the spatial patterns of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district?
4. Who are the perpetrators of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district?

Methods and Materials

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive research design accurately and systematically describes, observes or validates aspects of groups collected through quantifiable information without manipulation of the variables (Siedlecki, 2020). Based on [Siedlecki \(2020\)](#) description of the descriptive survey research design, the researcher was able to use this design to effectively provide an in-depth investigation of the pattern of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state. Furthermore, The population of the study is one hundred and seven thousand, two hundred and seventy-one (107,271) senior secondary school students in both public and registered private schools in the seven (7) Local Government Area that makes up the Edo South senatorial district of Edo state. The total population of senior secondary school students in public schools in the seven (7) Local Government Area that makes up the Edo South senatorial district of Edo state is thirty-one thousand, seven hundred and twenty-five (31,725) while that of registered private school is seventy-five thousand, five hundred and forty-seven (75,547) (Edo state Ministry of Education, 2022).

A sample size 384 respondents was selected using the Cochran's formulae. The sample was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, three (3) Local Government Areas was selected from the seven (7) Local Government Areas in Edo South senatorial district of Edo using simple random sampling technique of balloting by replacement. In the second stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to group the schools into rural school or urban school based on their location. In the third stage, Two (2) schools (one public urban school and one public rural school) were selected from each of the three Local Government Areas using simple random sampling technique of balloting by replacement. Lastly, simple random sampling technique of balloting by replacement was used to select 18 female respondents and 14 male respondents from each of the selected schools. The same procedure was repeated to select sample from the registered private schools.

Ethical approval was obtained from University of Benin Teaching Hospital Research and Ethics Committee and a formal permission to allow the selected schools to participate in the research was granted through the Commissioner of Education and Principals of each of the selected schools. To maintain confidentiality of the respondents, respondents were asked not to indicate their names on the questionnaire.

Table 1: Sample distribution

School Type	No. of Schools Selected	No. of School Children Selected	
		Male	Female
Public Urban Schools	3	42	54
Public Rural Schools	3	42	54
Private Urban Schools	3	42	54
Private Rural Schools	3	42	54
Total	12	168	216

The research instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was content validated and a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained using the test-retest reliability method and thereafter subjecting the scores obtained from both administrations of instruments to Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The collected data was coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentages and charts.

Results and Discussions

Table 2: Frequency and percentage on the forms of non-contact child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State

S/N	Forms of non-contact child sexual abuse	Frequency		%	
		Male (n=86)	Female (n=154)	Male	Female
1.	Someone intentionally used sexually stimulating words in describing sensitive parts of your body such as your breast, lips, buttocks and vagina/penis	5	11	5.8	7.1
2.	Forced to look at the genitals of someone	3	7	3.5	4.5
3.	Persuaded to look at the genitals of someone	2	0	2.3	0
4.	Forced to show my naked body to someone	4	0	4.7	0
5.	Persuaded to show my naked body to someone	1	2	1.2	1.3
6.	Forced to watch someone masturbate	1	6	1.2	3.9
7.	Persuaded to watch someone masturbate	8	5	9.3	3.2
8.	Forced to watch pornographic video	5	5	5.8	3.2
9.	Persuaded to watch pornographic video	3	10	3.5	6.5
10.	Forced to watch pornographic picture	3	3	3.5	1.9
11.	Persuaded to watch pornographic picture	6	6	7.0	3.9
12.	Pictures of my naked body was taken by someone	1	2	1.2	1.3
13.	Shared pictures of my naked body with someone	2	5	2.3	3.2

Table 2 reveals the forms of non-contact child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. It can be observed that 44 (51.16%) out of the 86 male respondents had experienced different forms of non-contact child sexual abuse with persuaded to watch someone masturbate (9.3%) being the most common form of non-contact Senatorial District of Edo State. It can be observed that 42 (48.84%) out of the 86 male respondents had experienced different forms of contact child sexual abuse with fondling of the penis (15.1%) being the most common form of contact child sexual abuse being experienced by male respondents. Similarly, 68 (44.16%) out of 154 female respondents had experienced different forms of contact child sexual abuse with fondling of the vagina (13.6%)

being the most common form of contact child sexual abuse being experienced by female respondents. Therefore, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents have experienced various forms of contact child sexual abuse.

Frequency and percentage on the forms of contact child sexual abuse among school children in Edo

South Senatorial District of Edo State

S/N	Forms of non-contact child sexual abuse	Frequency	Frequency	%	%
		Male (n=86)	Female (n=154)	Male	Female
1.	Someone fondled with my buttocks	3	6	3.5	3.9
2.	Someone fondled with my breast	1	12	1.2	7.8
3.	Someone fondled with my vagina	0	21	0	13.6
4.	Someone fondled with my penis	13	0	15.1	0
5.	Forced to kiss someone	4	4	4.7	2.6
6.	Persuaded to kiss someone	4	5	4.7	3.2
7.	Forced to have vaginal penetration with finger	0	7	0	4.5
8.	Persuaded to have anal penetration with finger	3	0	3.5	0
9.	Forced to have vaginal intercourse	0	12	0	7.8
10.	Persuaded to have vaginal intercourse	0	5	0	3.2
11.	Forced to have anal intercourse	3	2	3.5	1.3
12.	Forced to have oral intercourse	6	9	7	5.8
13.	Forced to have vaginal penetration with an object	0	2	0	1.3
14.	Forced to have anal penetration with an object	1	1	1.42	0.6
	Someone tried to have sexual intercourse with me but did not succeed	4	6	4.7	3.9

Table 3 reveals the forms of contact child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. It can be observed that 42 (48.84%) out of the 86 male respondents had experienced different forms of contact child sexual abuse with fondling of the penis (15.1%) being the most common form of contact child sexual abuse being experienced by male respondents. Similarly, 68 (44.16%) out of 154 female respondents had experienced different forms of contact child sexual abuse with fondling of the vagina (13.6%) being the most common form of contact child sexual abuse being experienced by female respondents. Therefore, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents have experienced various forms of contact child sexual abuse.

Figure 1: Spatial patterns of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state.

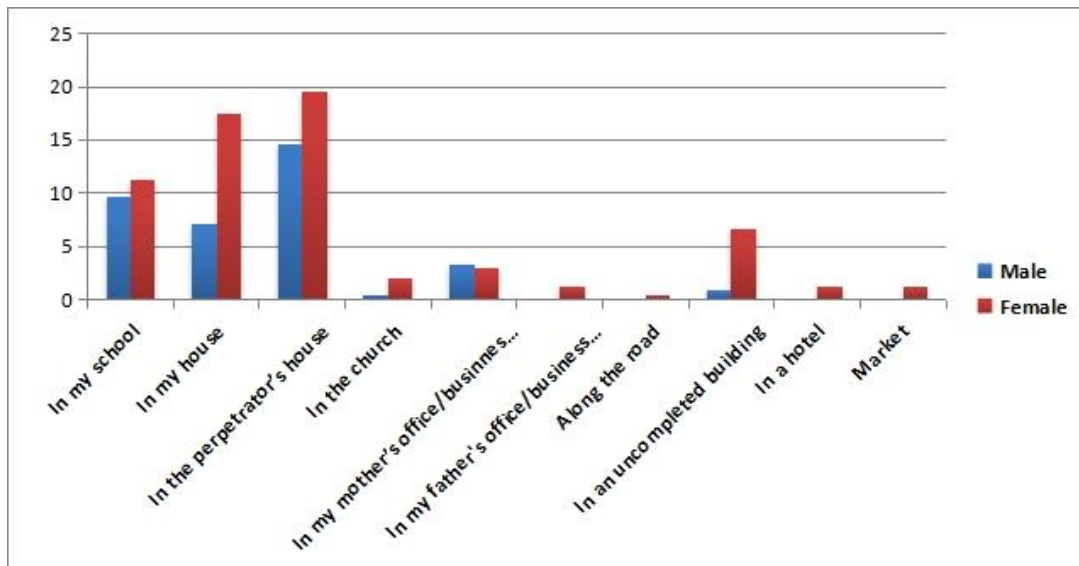


Figure 1 shows the places where child sexual abuse takes place among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. It can be observed that the most common place where child sexual abuse took place among male and female respondents were in the school, in the house and in the perpetrator's house with a score of 9.58%; 11.25, 7.08%; 17.5% and 14.58%; 19.58% for male and female respondents respectively. Thus, it is inferred that while child sexual abuse can take place across various places, perpetrator's house is the most common place for child sexual abuse to take place among the respondents.

Figure 2: Temporal patterns of child sexual abuse among school children in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state

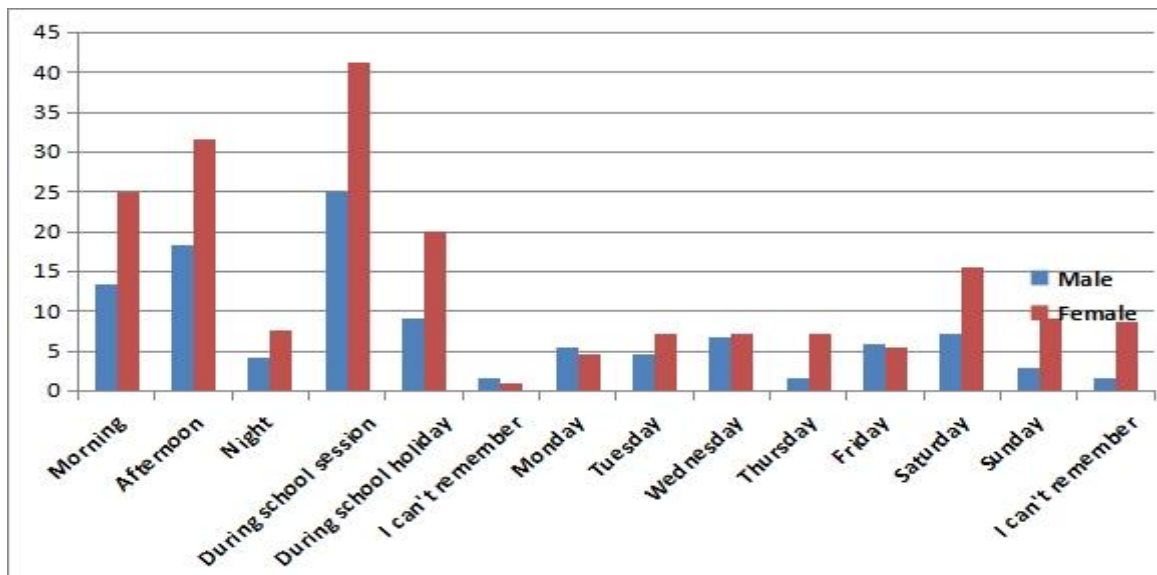


Figure 2 reveals the period of time where child sexual abuse takes place among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. The chart in figure 2 indicated that the occurrence of child sexual abuse was common during the day (morning 13.33% and 25%; afternoon: 18.33% and 31.66%) for both male and female respondents respectively as against 4.16% and 7.5% at night for male and female respondents respectively. It was also observed that child sexual

abuse occurred more during school session with 25% and 41.25% for both male and female respondents respectively as against 9.16% and 20.08% during school holiday for both male and female respondents respectively.

Finally, the occurrence of child sexual abuse took place during the various days of the week but occurred more on Saturdays (7.08% and 15.41%) for both male and female respondents respectively. The score for other days of the week where child sexual abuse took place for both male and female respondents respectively are: Monday (5.41%; 4.58%); Tuesday (4.58%; 7.08%); Wednesday (6.66%; 7.08%); Thursdays (1.66%; 7.08%); Friday (5.3%; 5.41%) and Sunday (2.91%; 9.16%). It can be deduced therefore that, majority of the respondents experienced child sexual abuse during the day; during school session and on Saturday.

Figure 3: Perpetrators of child sexual abuse among secondary school students in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

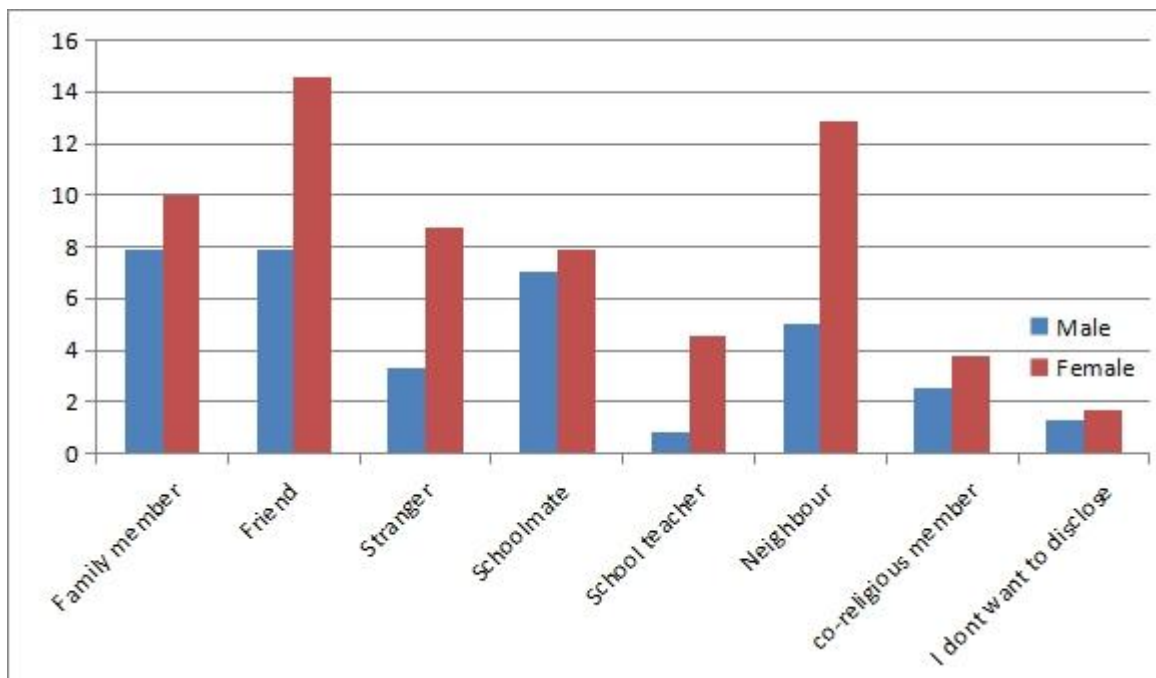


Figure 3 shows the perpetrators of child sexual abuse among secondary school students in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. It was observed that majority of the female respondents (14.58% and 12.9%) indicated that they were sexually abused by friends and neighbours respectively. Also, majority of the male respondents (7.91% and 7.91%) indicated that the perpetrators were family members and friends respectively. Other perpetrators of child sexual abuse for both male and female respondents respectively were strangers (3.33% and 8.75%); schoolmate (7.08% and 7.91%); school teacher (0.83% and 4.58%); and co-religious members (2.5% and 3.75%). It can be deduced that majority of the respondents were sexually abuse by their friends.

Discussion of Findings

On the forms of CSA among school children in Edo South senatorial district of Edo state, findings revealed that majority of the respondents have experienced various forms of contact and non-contact CSA including verbal sexual abuse, exposure and stimulation of the genitals as well as sexual penetration. This finding corroborates the findings of Balogun and Adenowuro (2020) who reported a CSA prevalence of 29.0% with respondents experiencing both contact and non-contact forms of CSA. Specifically, findings from the study revealed low prevalence of penetrative CSA among secondary school students in Edo State. The low prevalence of penetrative CSA reported in this study may be attributed to the cultural and societal norms in Edo state which frowns at penetrative CSA and CSA in general. However, the contrast in the prevalence of penetrative CSA in this study and other studies may be due to the variation in the availability and effectiveness of child protection laws and regulations across geographical zones.

Further on the patterns of the patterns of CSA among school children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, findings revealed that the most common place where child sexual abuse takes place among the respondents were in the school, in the house and in the perpetrator's house. Majority of CSA perpetrators were family members, friends and neighbours with CSA occurring more during the day; on Saturdays; during school session; and majority of the perpetrators were older than their victims.

In a study on the places where CSA likely occurred, Selengia, Thuy and Mushi (2020) corroborated the finding of this study by reporting that the location of abuse was spread among home, school and perpetrator's home. However, Daral, Khokhar, and Pradhan (2016) contradicted this finding by reporting that most CSA took place when the victim was involved on a travel or journey. Reporting on the identity of CSA perpetrators, Abdulkadir, Umar and Musa, (2011) corroborated the findings of this study by opining that a careful reviews of CSA perpetrators in Nigeria showed that majority of the perpetrators were friends, neighbours and family members and most perpetrators of sexual abuse are usually males. In contradicting this finding, Selengia, Thuy and Mushi (2020) reported that strangers are the most common CSA perpetrators.

Conclusively, regarding the time of CSA occurrence, while the study by Finkelhor (2009) contradicts the finding of this study by reporting that CSA victims were more likely to be victimized at night, Uchendu and Nwogoh (2015) corroborated the finding of this study by stating that day time CSA was significantly higher than nocturnal abuse. However Finkelhor (2009) study corroborates the finding of this study when they stated that CSA abuse was higher on Fridays or Saturdays than on other days of the week. In line with this, the researcher attributes the peculiarities in the identity of the perpetrators as well as the times and places of CSA occurrence to the fact that in gaining access to the victim, the perpetrators need to create trust and familiarity in order to reduce the suspicion of sexual abuse by parents/caregivers and in carrying out CSA, the perpetrator may want to choose places and times where they can have easy access and control over victims.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. School children in Edo South senatorial district have experienced various forms of contacts and non-contact child sexual abuse.
2. Child sexual abuse incidences among school children in Edo South senatorial district mainly occurred at homes, schools, and in the perpetrators' house.
3. The common child sexual abuse perpetrators among school children in Edo South senatorial district were family members, friends and neighbours who were older than the victims.
4. Child sexual abuse incidences among school children in Edo South senatorial district occurred during the day while school was in sessions.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should provide public enlightenment on the risk factors and prevention of CSA to help combat its occurrence.
2. Schools should collaborate with parents/caregivers to develop and implement comprehensive child protection policies that clearly outline guidelines and procedures for preventing, detecting, and responding to child sexual abuse both at home and in schools.
3. The law enforcement agencies, the legislative and judicial arms of government should work cooperatively to ensure that CSA perpetrators regardless of who they are get penalties that are commensurate with the crime.
4. Schools should provide support and resources for survivors of child sexual abuse, including counselling services and referrals to appropriate professionals.

References

- Abdulkadir, I., Umar, L. W., & Musa, H. H. (2011). Child sexual abuse; review of cases seen at General Hospital, Suleja, Niger State. *Annals of Nigerian Medicine*, 5, 15–19.
- Balogun, F.M., Adenowuro, O.E. (2020) Prevalence and pattern of child sexual abuse: a cross-sectional study among male secondary school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Journal of Child Adolescent Health*, 4(1), 1-8.
- Chime, O. H., Orji, C. J., Aneke, T. J., & Nwoke, I. N. (2021). Prevalence, pattern and predictors of child sexual abuse among senior secondary school students in Enugu Metropolis. *Malays Journal of Medical Science*, 28(4), 123–137.
- Daral, S., Khokhar, A., & Pradhan, S. (2016). Prevalence and determinants of child maltreatment among school-going adolescent girls in a Semi-Urban Area of Delhi, India. *Journal of Tropical Paediatrics*, 62, 227-240.
- Finkelhor, D. (2009). Violence, abuse, and crime exposure in a national sample of children and youth. *Journal of Tropical Paediatrics*, 124(5), 1411-1423.
- Ikechebelu, J. I., Udigwe, G. O., Ezechukwu, C. C., Ndnudi, A. G., & JoeI-kechebelu, N. N. (2008). Sexual abuse among juvenile female street hawkers in Anambra State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 12, 111-1119.
- Kumar, M. T., Kumar, S., Singh, S. P., & Kar, N. (2017). Prevalence of child abuse in school environment in Kerala, India: An icast-ci based survey. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 70, 356-363.
- McCran, D., Lator, K., & Kataro, J. K. (2006). Childhood sexual abuse among university students in Tanzania. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 1343-1351.
- Ogunfonoka, A. A., Fajemilebin, R. B. (2012). Impact of a school-based sexual abuse prevention education program on the knowledge and attitude of high school girls. *Journal of School Nursing*, 28(6), 459–468.
- Selengia, V., Thuy, H. N. T., & Mushi, D. (2020). Prevalence and patterns of child sexual abuse in selected countries of Asia and Africa: A Review of Literature. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 146-160.
- Siedlecki, S. (2020) Understanding Descriptive Research Designs and Methods.
- Toyo, N. (2006). Revisiting equality as a right: The minimum age of marriage clause in the Nigerian Child Rights Act, 2003. *Third world quarterly*. 27(7), 1299-1312.
- World Health Organization (2010). Violence and Health in the WHO African Region. Brazzaville: World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa.
- World Health Organization (2011). Preventing adolescents: a guide to implementing the recommendations of world report on adolescents and health. Geneva, Switzerland.