

TRAJECTORIES OF CHILD RIGHTS SECURITY: SEXUAL HARRASMENT AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA (2019-2021)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Evidences show that sexual harassment amid the COVID-19 pandemic was on the rise in Lagos state with strong links to abuses of girl child rights and security. These challenges are due to lack of improper policies implementation which leads to the violation of girl child fundamental human rights. Despite several policies, laws and agencies in Nigeria for the protection and safe keeping of its citizens especially children as found in the “1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended”, several sexual harassment cases got increased drastically from 62% to 95% during the lockdown period in March 2020. The seriousness of this girl child abuses was examined in this research for national security and Nigeria’s image in the international arena. **Methodology:** The study adopted primary and secondary data towards achieving the set objectives. The population of the study comprised 250 residents of Ikorodu Local Government of Lagos state. Out of the 250 questionnaires administered, 204 copies were returned, indicating a response of 81.6%. Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were also used to analyze the data, while human security approach was adopted as its theoretical framework. **Findings:** show that girl child rights and security in Lagos was threatened due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Also, the inability of government to properly dispatch justice on culprits was a major factor that encouraged such behavior. **Conclusion:** Study therefore concludes that there is need for improved regulation of activities of child development, efficient supervision of those in charge of rehabilitation of sexually harassed victims in Lagos state in order to ensure that rules and regulations are followed, and provision of strict punishment for the sexual harassment offenders.

Key words: Child rights, Security, Sexual harassment, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Infectious diseases are not new in human race; but the novel corona virus (COVID-19) which is a severe respiratory syndrome reported in Wuhan China, December 19, 2019 was highly

alarming. The nonchalant attitude of the world leaders and uncared attitude of many citizens simply took a passing notice of what that has become one of its biggest health challenges in history. The Nigerian state and her institutions such as the health sector, and the media began to use hurriedly serious means to combat the disease in January 2020 as the world powers recorded index cases with concomitant hospitalizations and deaths. Nigeria recorded her first case of the virus on February 27, 2020. As the virus continues to spread across the states, it brought devastating impacts – poverty, economic downturn, remission in the health and educational sector, domestic violence, sexual harassment, among others. “The global pandemic according to Mbamalu (2020) has defied solutions and spawned dislocations of monstrous consequences that continue to pummel humanity”.

According to Mandela (1996), he opined that “in order to live in a healthy environment which produces leaders of tomorrow; we need to protect the future of our children”. In his own argument, Tajudeen, (2016) says, “Children rights are the assurance of the continuity of the human society Law and that development must go together since law is a necessary tool for social engineering”. Also, according to Akwara, Soyibo and Agba, (2010), they agreed that “Law will promote development and at a similar time, it will inhibit it”. Thus, development in any community must show in its laws otherwise old laws if not the lack of a legal regime might retard development. Law should be consonant with development and should be ready to social problems.

These laws provide order and meaning to the lives of children and mostly girl child, as it serve for collective action in the overall development of the society. With the COVID-19 that ravaged the world, there have been claims of significant increase in the infractions of girl child’s rights and sexual harassment. According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “there has been a rise of 57% in the number of minors contacting the National Sexual Assault hotline to report abuse. They recorded a toll of 22% increase from 35% in monthly calls from people younger than 18 and half were minors”. It was recorded as the first in the organization’s history. The Domestic and Gender violence response team of Lagos State government has also reported “an increase in reports of sexual and domestic violence from 62% to 95% since the lockdown in March OCHA, (2020)”. The abuse of children and minors during this pandemic has escalated in both frequency and dexterity. Sexual assault occurs commonly worldwide and is particularly pervasive within the developing world. It has had devastating impact on children and families across the world even with laws in place.

Hence, despite the fact that Nigeria has enough policies, laws and agencies based on the protection and safe keeping of its citizens especially Children such as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, it contained the basis of fundamental human rights in Nigeria which is contained in section 33-36 of the constitution, but regardless of the different policies that are to ensure that the child is safe there is still gross violation of child rights in the country owing to issues such as improper enforcement of these policies, little to no supervision of a childcare expert on child development projects, failure to punish of offenders that harm

children, no system of management of cases that threaten the harm of the child. The allowance of practices which endanger our children is a great threat to our national security.

In Lagos state which is highly populated, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team reported in March 2020 “an increase in the number of people calling the team to report abuses by persons taking advantage of the lockdown to perpetuate the dastardly act against unsuspecting persons”. For the protection of girl child, the problem of sexual violence needs to be addressed; if this problem is overcome, there will be a great improvement in the girl child security in Nigeria and a reduction in the level of sexual harassment meted on them in the country. The objective of this study is to examine the girl child rights and sexual harassment in Lagos state amid the COVID-19 pandemic. And also, explore policy solutions for improving girl child rights and its security indices in Lagos State. It is anticipated that the analytical, conceptual and empirical studies will enhance the understanding of child rights and sexual harassment experienced by some girl child in Lagos state. Policy wise, this study will create a platform for the policy makers and policy practitioners to promulgate policies that will give the girl child security.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this research is the Human Security theory. The theory dated back to 1994, when Mahbub ul Haq drew the global attention to human security in the United Nations Development’s report. Although it is a relatively new approach, Johns (2014), “asserts that human security is one of the more salient neologisms that arose from the ashes of the cold war. The logic behind its introduction and advocacy was the neglect of individual integrity by the realists who focused on territorial integrity in a world where states no longer faced the existential threat of war”. This theory centers on placing the emancipation and development of individuals at the center of the security agenda.

The basic assumption of the theory is to “understand the global susceptibilities whose proponent challenge, the traditional notion of national security through military security by arguing that multi-disciplinary security should be at the human rather than national level Ogata, (2005)”. This assumption is based on the scope of global security. “Human security theory as noted by Johns, (2014) is divided into: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security”. John further reviewed from the view point of economic security, human beings require an assured basic income usually earned from productive work or from a publicly financed safety net. Economic security problems are more serious in developing countries. Food security requires that at all times individuals have physical and economic access to basic food to eliminate world hunger. Health security guarantees minimum protection from various diseases and provision of health insurance schemes while environmental security aims to safeguard people from the long and short-term ravages of nature. Furthermore, personal security aims to protect individuals from physical violence from the state, external state, violent individuals, predatory adults and domestic abuse among others. Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships. Finally, political security aims to protect the basic rights and honor of people who live in a society.

Thus, in applying this theory to this study, it is reasoned that states are the major actors in ensuring the protection of individuals including children. They formulate policies which are geared towards development of individual security and protection of lives and property. It is important to note that certain institutions influence the formulation of suitable policies central to the protection of individuals of the country. This they carry out through recommending to the government on strategic issues that border on: socio-political, cultural aspects of national life. Hence, decision making.

Development of Child Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that, “a child is a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This further elaborates that a child is a person between the developmental period of infancy and puberty”. “The Child Rights are a subset of human rights with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to minors. Notably, having a right is to have the power to enforce or waive the duty of which the right is the correlative Archard, (2002)”. This ensures that as all human beings have rights, they are to be treated as equal and the rights enforced to protect them. Children must be treated with every form of “equality, respect and dignity”, not because they are ‘the future’ or the ‘adults of tomorrow, but they are the human beings of today. Protecting children mostly girl child from every iota of violence is germane to the United Nations World Vision’s work. Every child deserves to have the best life experiences and we must endeavour to ensure that the most vulnerable children are not left out. Children can only develop and feel safe in their homes and communities are they realize their potential. Sir William Blackstone (1765) recognized maintenance, protection and education as three parental duties to the child.

DuCharme (2020) goes further to explain that “childhood is considered the most critical and crucial stage in life and by its social status as a subordinate group in need of protection in order to be prepared for adulthood”. Childhood theorists such as Margaret Wise in her book “Good night noises” have also opposed this by arguing that children are considered good or evil due to their development and care in a particular environment. Locke (2001) also crowns it all with the popularized idea that “children begin as a blank slate and their personalities and moral compasses are not inborn but formed through their experiences. He does not deny children rights but strengthens the irrationality of childhood within the framework of psychology”.

Child Rights Abuse in Nigeria

The human mind is difficult to ascertain, while some gladdens in many others happy by lending the hands of help and fellowship, few are joyful in self-centeredness, which at times infringe on others rights, leading to harms and abuse of other party. Meanwhile, Tracy, (2020) defined abuse “as any action that intentionally harms or injures another person”. Therefore, “a person who harms another purposefully in anyway is committing abuse, child abuse is a violation of child rights Ortiz-Ospina (2017)”. Okeahialam, (2016) says, “The alteration of society by rapid socioeconomic and political changes such as unavailability of health care resources and dilapidated police sector has created various forms of child abuse especially in the urban areas”.

Tracy (2020) has these to say “more than one in five children mostly the girl child report having experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse in their lifetime”. The girl child abuse has become a rising plague sweeping over various countries especially Nigeria, meanwhile, one person has no right to exercise control over another through abuse. “Every human being is entitled to live an abuse free life as determined by the Nigeria constitution of 1999 as amended”.

Following the devastating aftermath of the world wars of the 20th century and its psychological and physical impact on children, the United Nations (UN) decided that “the human rights of children required special protection”. After World War I, the League of Nations (later known as the United Nations) drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “which included the rights to life, food, shelter, education, freedom of speech and religion, justice and peace”. Recognizing that children were especially vulnerable, the UN agreed to adopt the Declaration of Geneva on Children’s Rights. This declaration was short with only five statements, but it outlined a list of responsibilities towards children who were considered vulnerable.

Also, after the Second World War, the United Nations General Assembly accepted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child; “this declaration paved the way for the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, which became the first legally binding international text to protect children’s rights”. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. According to Zalta (2018) it sets out the rights of children in 54 articles and is guided by four beliefs:

- a. “Children should not suffer discrimination (Article 2).
- b. In all decisions affecting children, their best interests should be the main concern (Article 3).
- c. Children have the right to survive and develop healthily (Article 6).
- d. Children have the right to have their views taken into account in matters that affect them (Article 12)”.

Classification of Child abuse

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies child abuse into four major types, “they include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect”. Abuse often involves one or more of these types and the action may or may not (in the case of emotional) be violent. It is important that these terms are distinguished in order for people to properly label and describe their experiences.

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse according to the centers for disease control and prevention is “the intentional use of physical force that can result in physical injury”. In a study by Offer-Shechter (2000), “physical abuse includes intentionally burning or scalding, suffocating or drowning-holding a child under water, poisoning, hitting, excessive slapping or pinching, tying or forcing the child into a stressed position, withholding sleep, food or medication and any other physical harm”.

Also, Lansford, Zelli, Al-hassan and Alampay (2020) summarily agreed that, “in many countries, corporal punishment is increasingly seen as a form of physical child abuse.

2. Sexual Abuse

According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) sexual abuse is defined “as having sexual activity without consent and goes further to define child sexual abuse as any sexual activity with a minor”. A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity Chaplin, (2020) says “sexual abuse includes fondling, exhibitionism or exposing oneself to a minor, intercourse, masturbation in the presence of a minor or forcing the minor to masturbate, obscene phone calls, text messages, producing or sharing pornographic images, sex trafficking and any other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child’s mental, emotional or physical welfare. A perpetrator that engages in such activities with a child is committing a crime that will have lasting effects on the victims”.

“Sexual abuse is crime of sexual activity without consent but the victim is a child rather than an adult while sexual harassment is a broader term encompassing all three categories-sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual violence Webb, (2019)”. It is obvious that, sexual abuse a global pandemic is still sweeps across every country. It has birthed movements such as the #MeToo Movement in America and the popular hashtags in Nigeria such as #JusticeforTina, #Justiceforall that support victim-survivors to speak out. Sexual violence is abuse that can affect anyone regardless of his/her gender, race, nationality, age, sexuality, disability or socioeconomic status.

3. Emotional Abuse

Rees, (2008) succinctly examined emotional abuse and concluded that “emotional abuse lacks the public and political profile of physical and sexual abuse despite being at the core and frequently a child’s most damaging dimension”. According to Stark (2015) “emotional abuse is any kind of non-physical abuse imposed from one person to another”. This situation convinces the child that they are worthless and only valued as far as the other persons needs are concerned. “Emotional abuse includes frequently shouting or threatening them, emotional blackmail, limiting physical contact, mocking how they try to communicate, silencing them, not allowing children to express their views and opinions, online bullying or ill-treating another person in front of the child. This form of abuse is frequent in Nigerian homes and these types of maltreatment include some level of emotional abuse, Kavanagh (2020)”.

4. Neglect

The concept of neglect is not new to children folks, Adigun, Mikhail, Krawiec and Hatcher, (2020) says “neglect is when a parent or caregiver persistently fails to meet the basic physical and psychological needs of a child, resulting in impairment of the child’s health or development. This includes not providing appropriate food, clothing, or medical care, locking a child in a room or closet, lack of provision of adequate shelter, abandoning a child to emotional or physical danger and excluding them from the family home”. The inability to respond to a child’s basic emotional needs could constitute neglect which is why it is often

related to emotional abuse. In a study by Peterson (2014) he concludes that “neglect is carried out by family members and older children”.

Gilbertson, (2019), buttress child abuse and opines that “child abuse in all its forms is a daily reality for Nigerian children and only a fraction receive helps”. The reason for violence against children mostly the girl child is rooted in social norms, including the use of violent discipline, violence against women as well as the community beliefs about witchcraft, which all increase the women vulnerability. Examined the Nigeria’s girl child abuses, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (2017) says, “Nigeria has the largest number of child brides in Africa with more than 23 million girls and women who were married as children. Six out of every 10 children experience some form of violence - one in four girls and 10% of boys have been victims of sexual violence. It is estimated that number of child brides will increase by more than one million by 2030 and double by 2050 due to the population growth”.

Traditionally, domestic violence is committed against females and these abuses or violence takes many forms, Olaitan, Olusegun and Idowu, (2018) states the violence as “physical, sexual, emotional, and mental, some common forms of violence in Nigeria are acid attacks, rape, molestation, wife beating, husband beating and corporal punishment. There is currently a push in Nigeria for federal laws concerning domestic violence and support for domestic violence issues, the Nigerian government has therefore continued to take legal proceedings to prosecute those who perpetrate this act”.

Injustices against women are spontaneous and dynamic, it involves multiple abuses which are easily directed at women and girls, which atimes affect them throughout their life time. This is why United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence and Injustice against Women (2008) defined violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary, deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. Coker (2010) also submitted that “women who experienced both physical and sexual violence, scored higher on scales measuring ill health, than women who experienced physical violence alone, he concluded that sexual violence might be a marker of severe violence and also, of violence escalation”.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought a new twist to girl child violence in Nigeria, as abuses melted on girl child were on the high rise considering previous experiences. Despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of abuse especially during the COVID-19, there seems to be no end to the nemesis in the pandemic in Nigeria. Owing to what OCHA, (2020) considers as “inadequate access to basic needs, traditional protection, structures or security fears, some women and girls have reportedly become vulnerable to sexual exploitation, noting the rise in current campaigns against rape and other forms of abuse in the country, the state needs to rise to the occasion and deal with it. There is a great need for policy actions and legislation that will curb the menace of abuse in Nigeria and also ensure that victims get the justice they deserve”.

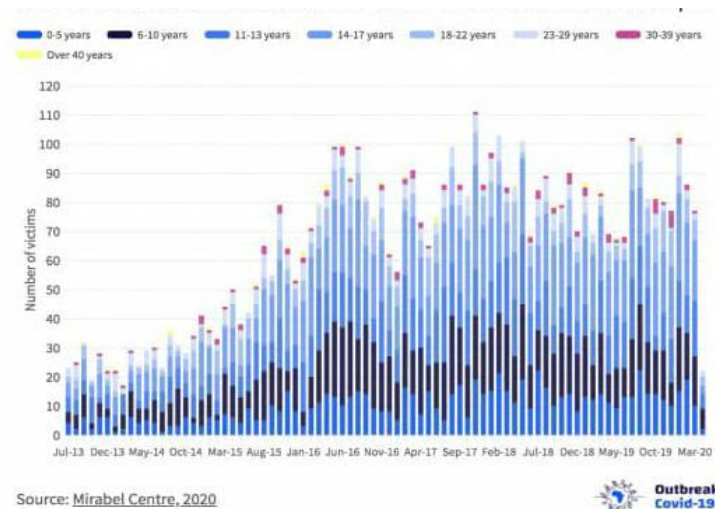
Sexual Harassment in COVID-19 Pandemic

“In the opening address of the Global Solutions Summit 2020, the president of the Global Solutions Initiative, Snower Dennis stated that the Corona virus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two, quoted by The Guardian Newspaper (2020)”. He further posits that “the virus has spread to every continent since its emergence. The pandemic is much more than a health crisis; it is also a socioeconomic crisis. People are continuously losing jobs and income with no idea of when normality will return”. Also, the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated that “195 million jobs could be lost which could mean that 800million people will not be able to meet their basic needs”. As the virus continue to spread across the state, it brought devastating impacts – poverty, economic downturn, remission in the health and educational sector, domestic violence, sexual harassment, among others.

The Nigeria girl child experience revealed that, in the first week of the pandemic, there was a case report of Sefiya by her mother to the Child Protection Network and Childhood Advancement team stating that she was assaulted sexually. “Sefiya, a four-year-old at the time was sitting under the shade of a tree with her mother, grandmother and two other relatives at Ikorodu when she spotted a bricklayer passing by and shrieked. She accused the bricklayer, Mr. Taofeek Egunleye of pulling her pants at school the day before. At first her mother Mariam was unsure as Mr. Egunleye was familiar to the family but as Sefiya kept bouncing and pointing at him, she decided to take it seriously. Mariam reported and was interviewed alongside Sefiya who described what happened in graphic details. Sefiya said she had just left her class to get a drink of water from the container nearby when Mr. Egunleye approached her and promised to buy her sweets and Zobo if she accompanied him. Sefiya left with him but instead of heading to the shops where she hoped to get the sweets, he would buy her, Mr. Egunleye dragged her to the toilet where he assaulted her. Mr. Egunleye is currently in Kirikiri prison Lagos but court proceedings have been delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions”.

Getting justice for minors and teens has been delayed since Covid-19 became a national emergency The Mirabel Centre (2020), “The Mirabel Centre, a Lagos-based sexual assault referral center compiles data which shows that ironically while cases of attacks increased, reports from victims fell during the lockdown. The activists working with the Centre claim that the lockdown made it difficult for abused victims to easily and quickly report attacks which are a very big challenge”.

The chart below shows the age group of victims who reported to the Mirabel Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Lagos between July 2013 and April 2020.



97% of the victims are female and 81% are minors. 75% of assaults are defilement of a child and 18% are rape. According to the 2017 revision of the world population of 2016, Nigeria was 185,989,640 strong. Out of this number, 85 million are children. In 2020, Nigeria's population increased to 206,139,587 and of this number 46% of the populations are children (equivalent to 94 million Nigeria children). Over nine million children of this number under the age of eighteen are exposed to sexual violence every year and little Sefiya is among this number who suffer from different forms of abuse and violence from adults every year. This social epidemic that has been pushed to the shadows is perhaps worse than the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of scale, number, and lifelong impact Umukoro, (2020).

The Criminal Code

According to Section 357 of the Criminal Code, the offence of rape is committed when “a person has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or a girl without her consent or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or employing threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or employing false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman by impersonating her husband” (Criminal Code Act, 2004). From these provisions, consent is very germane in the prosecution of rape but to ensure justice for a girl child who may not be able to physically protect herself, consent obtained under duress will not be regarded as duress. To buttress this, the Nigerian Supreme Court defined rape as “forcible sexual intercourse with a girl or woman without her giving consent to it” (Iko v. State 2001). Also, the Supreme Court held that for the crime of rape to have been committed, “the prosecution must prove that the accused had sexual intercourse with the victim without her consent” (Natasha v State, 2016)

The authors assert that the law be amended to include the provisions of the rape of a boy child and men. This assertion stems from the fact that boys have been reported to have been sexually violated in Nigeria with limited laws to protect their rights from such harassment and violence. More so, only men can be violators of the provisions of this section. The punishment for the

offence of rape is provided for in Section 358 of the Criminal Code which states that “any person who commits the offence of a rape is liable to imprisonment for life, with or without caning” (Criminal Code Act, 2004). Any defendant found guilty of rape will be liable to life imprisonment. It is pertinent at this juncture to note that, Kaduna state has made death penalty the punishment for rape and some scholars are clamouring for more states to follow suit since there was a rise in the sexual violence committed against a girl child albeit the law¹ has served as deterrence to potential suspects (Kaduna State Penal Laws on Rape (2019),

The Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act

Section 1(1) of the Violence against Person’s Prohibition Act, makes provision for the definition of rape which is:

A person commits the offence of rape if-

- (a) “He or she intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person with any part of his or her body or anything else;
- (b) The other person does not consent to the penetration; or
- (a) The consent is obtained by force or means of threat or intimidation of any kind or by fear of harm or employing false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act or the use of any substance or addictive capable of taking away the will of such person or in the case of a married person by impersonating his or her spouse” (Violence Against Person’s Prohibition Act, 2015).

Section 1 (2) of the Violence against Person’s Prohibition Act, stipulates that:

“A person convicted of an offence under subsection (1) of this section is liable to imprisonment for life except-

- (b) Where the offender is less than 14 years of age, the offender is liable to a maximum of 14years imprisonment;
- (c) In all other cases, to a minimum of 12 years imprisonment without an option of fine.
- (d) In the case of rape by a group of persons, the offenders are liable jointly to a minimum of 20 years imprisonment without an option of fine” (Violence Against Person’s Prohibition Act, 2015)
- (e) Section 1 (3) of the Violence against Person’s Prohibition Act, stipulates that: “The court shall award appropriate compensation to the victim as it may deem fit in the circumstance” while Section 1 (4) of the Violence against Person’s Prohibition Act, stipulates that: “A register for convicted sexual offenders shall be maintained and made accessible to the public” (Violence Against Person’s Prohibition Act, 2015).

By the provision of the Violence against Person's Prohibition Act, “a person commits rape when penetration in any opening of a victim’s body occurs, when the victim does not give express consent to the act of rape and the attacker obtains this consent by force or threats or intimidation of any kind or by fear of harm or by illegal misrepresentation or the use of opium

which takes away the will of a person or a spouse by impersonating his or her partner”. It should also be noted that the violence against the person's prohibition Act is an improvement of the Nigerian Criminal Jurisprudence on rape as it recognizes that the offence of rape is not gender-specific, as a male or a female can become a victim of this grievous offence called Rape.

Furthermore, the Violence against Person's Prohibition Act, states that the punishment that follows “the commission of the offence of rape is imprisonment for life” However, it also provided that “where the sexual offender is below 14 years of age, they are liable to a maximum of 14 years imprisonment” It went further to state that when the case of rape is by a group of persons, the offenders are all liable to a minimum of 20 years imprisonment without an option of fine.

The Child Rights Act

This Act takes care of the rights and responsibilities of every Nigerian child including the welfare and justice administration. Lagos state is one of the 24 states that has adopted (The CRA as a state law the National Human Rights commission). The various parts address broadly rights and responsibilities, protection and welfare of children, duties and responsibilities of government, institutions for children, as well as other miscellaneous matters.

The Child Rights Act makes provision for the offence of rape and its punishment in Section 31, it states that “no person shall have sexual intercourse with a child and a person who contravenes the provision of subsection (1) commits an offence of rape and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life. Where a person is charged with an offence under this section, it is immaterial that the offender believed the person to be or above the age of eighteen years; or the sexual intercourse was with the consent of the child” (Child Rights Act, 2003). This means that the provisions of the Child Rights Act stipulate statutory rape wherein sexual intercourse with a girl child who is below eighteen years of age is an offence with or without her consent.

This provision is vital since it is trite law that anybody below the age of eighteen is a child, being a child cannot give consent.

Criminal Procedure Law of Lagos State 2011

The criminal law of Lagos state is a law meant to provide rules on criminal conduct, regulate public order and for other purposes. IT is common knowledge that prior to the introduction of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law, the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) was applicable in Lagos State. The provision of the C.P.L. is based mainly on the Criminal Procedure Act, which was introduced to Nigeria on 1st June 1945 by its imperial overlords. Therefore, the Criminal Procedure Act evidently qualifies to be described as one of the relics of colonial Administration in Nigeria. Incidentally, until the introduction of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law, there was no major review of the Criminal Procedure Act.

The Lagos State Ministry of Justice under the able leadership of the Attorney-General of the State Olasupo Shasore (SAN) organized an interactive workshop to review these laws as he

states that it is important to review laws to reflect development in the society. Section 257 (b) and chapter 25 which provides for sexual offenses under Section 262 are mainly to protect children from sexual harassment and any crime under Section 257 is treated as a misdemeanor.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section presents the data collection during the investigation of this study, the analysis of the data gathered and the discussion of result. A number of 250 questionnaires were handed out and 204 respondents representing 81.6% were collected and used for this research. Simple percentage method was used to analyze the response to the questionnaire.

Table 1: Child Rights Security distribution of respondents

| Statement | Strongly Agree (SA) | Agree (A) | Neutral (N) | Disagree (D) | Strongly Disagree (SD) | Mean |
|--|---------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|------|
| Child Rights security is linked to National security. | 92(45.1) | 74(36.3) | 21(10.3) | 10(4.9) | 7(3.4) | 40.8 |
| Girl Child security in Lagos state appears to be threatened by COVID-19. | 43(21.1) | 85(41.7) | 43(21.1) | 24(11.8) | 9(4.4) | 40.8 |
| Girl Child security in Lagos is in danger solely because of neglect. | 87(42.6) | 72(35.3) | 28(13.7) | 12(5.9) | 5(2.5) | 40.8 |

Field Survey, 2021.

Interpretation

The above table analyzed that 166 of the respondents representing (81.4%) Agree that girl child rights security is linked to National Security, 21 of the respondents representing (10.3%) are neutral with the claim while 17 of the respondents representing (8.3%) Disagree with the term. Therefore, it's certain that girl child rights security is linked to National Security. Also, the analyzed table above shows that 128 of the respondents representing (62.8%) agree that girl child rights security in Lagos State appears to be threatened by COVID-19 while just only 43 of the respondents representing (21.1%) are neutral with the statement and 33 of the respondents representing (16.2%) disagree. These show that truly, that the girl child rights security in Lagos State appears to be threatened by COVID-19. Basically, the above analyses shows that 159 of the respondents representing (77.9%) Agree that girl child rights security in Lagos State is in danger solely because of neglect. 28 of the respondents representing (13.7%) are neutral to this statement, 17 of the respondents representing (8.4%) disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's certain that girl child rights security in Lagos State is in danger solely because of neglect.

Table 2: COVID-19 Link distribution of the respondents

| Statements | Strongly Agree (SA) | Agree (A) | Neutral (N) | Disagree (D) | Strongly Disagree (SD) | Mean |
|---|---------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|------|
| COVID-19 Is Linked To Girl Child Rights Violation | 25(12.3) | 50(24.5) | 58(28.4) | 48(23.5) | 23(11.5) | 40.8 |
| COVID-19 Lockdown Increased Violence On Girl Child In Lagos State | 63(30.9) | 72(35.3) | 40(19.6) | 21(10.3) | 8(3.9) | 40.8 |
| COVID-19 Increased The Strain On Girl Child Rights Protection. | 51(25) | 88(43.1) | 46(22.5) | 14(6.9) | 5(2.5) | 40.8 |
| Sexual Harassment On The Girl Child Is Linked To COVID-19 | 25(12.3) | 56(27.5) | 46(22.5) | 51(25) | 26(12.7) | 40.8 |

Field Survey, 2021.

Interpretation

The above table analyzed that 75 of the respondents representing (36.8%) Agree that COVID-19 is linked to girl child rights violation while 71 of the respondents representing (34.8%) disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's certain that COVID-19 is linked to girl child rights violation. Also, the analyzed table above shows that 135 of the respondents representing (66.2%) agree that COVID-19 lockdown increased violence on girl child in Lagos state. 40 of the respondents representing (19.6%) are neutral while just only 29 of the respondents representing (14.2%) disagree with the statement. These show that truly, COVID-19 lockdown increased violence on girl child in Lagos state. The above table analyzed that 139 of the respondents representing (68.1%) Agree that COVID-19 increased the strain on girl child rights protection while 46 of the respondents representing (22.5%) are neutral and 19 of the respondents representing (9.4%) disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's certain that COVID-19 increased the strain on girl child rights protection. Basically, the above analyses shows that 81 of the respondents representing (39.8%) Agree that sexual harassment is on the high side on the girl child and linked to COVID-19. 46 of the respondents representing (22.5%) are neutral, 51 of the respondents representing (25%) disagree while 26 of the respondents representing (12.7%) strongly disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's certain that sexual harassment is linked to COVID-19.

Table 3: Causes of Sexual Harassment amid COVID-19 pandemic

| Statements | Strongly Agree (A) | Agree (A) | Neutral (N) | Disagree (D) | Strongly Disagree (SD) | Mean |
|--|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|------|
| Inadequate laws to protect the child are a reason for girl Child Rights violation in Lagos State | 87(42.6) | 91(44.6) | 15(7.5) | 7(3.4) | 4(2) | 40.8 |
| Most cases of girl child Sexual harassment in Lagos state are consequences of COVID-19 lockdown | 55(27) | 46(22.5) | 51(25) | 20(9.8) | 32(15.7) | 40.8 |
| Dependency of the child is a reason for sexual harassment | 87(42.6) | 72(35.3) | 28(13.7) | 12(5.9) | 5(2.5) | 40.8 |

Field Survey, 2021.

Interpretation

The above table analyzed that 178 of the respondents representing (87.2%) Agree that inadequate laws to protect the child are a reason for Girl Child Rights violation in Lagos State while 11 of the respondents representing (5.4%) disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's of the truth that inadequate laws to protect the child are a reason for Girl Child Rights violation in Lagos State. Basically, the above analyses shows that 101 of the respondents representing (49.5%) Agree that most cases of Girl Child Sexual harassment in Lagos state are consequences of COVID-19 lockdown. i.e. lockdown in March 2020. 51 of the respondents representing (25%) are neutral, 52 of the respondents representing (25.5%) strongly disagree with the claim. Therefore, it's certain that most cases of Girl Sexual harassment in Lagos state are consequences of COVID-19 lockdown. The table above shows that 159 of the respondents representing (77.9%) agree that dependency of the girl child is a reason for sexual harassment while 17 of the respondents representing (8.4%) partially disagree with the claim. These show that truly, dependency of the child is a reason for sexual harassment.

Discussion of Findings

Objective one of this study examines child rights security situation of Lagos State. The findings from the questionnaire shows that the respondents agree that the girl child rights security in Lagos is threatened and a factor of this is neglect, which is in line with findings of Human security theory adopted for this work, that human beings need care and support in terms of food, shelter and a sense of community. Akinlusi, Rabiun and Olawepo (2014) identified different sources of sexual harassment problems in Nigeria, in their study, they included "the dependency of the child as one of the causes of sexual harassment in the country". The major objective of this study is to assess the nature of sexual harassment during the COVID-19 lockdown in relation to girl child rights security in Lagos State. The respondents from the questionnaire link COVID-19 to girl child rights violation and also agree that COVID-19 increased the strain on the (female gender) girl child rights protection in Lagos state which in turn affects human life expectancy of people, these findings are in line with study by Joshua (2018) which agrees that "most cases of sexual harassment are consequences of COVID-19 lockdown, he also posits that if Nigeria can adopt proper child regulatory measures, it will increase the human life expectancy of children in the country". Rinkesh (2019) also agrees that "sexual harassment affects human health due to the increased body accommodation, which can cause trauma or sexual diseases in people. Rinkesh continues that, "there is a link between girls sexual harassment during COVID-19; he therefore concluded "that societies impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown development are creating room for vile acts".

Summary of Findings

This study examined Child Rights and Sexual Harassment in Lagos state during the COVID-19 period of 2019-2021. The time period that was chosen was done so as to look at the recent state of Lagos with regards to its child rights security. This study employed Primary data in the form of questionnaires and this study also employed the use of secondary data sourced from past reports on the status of sexual harassment in Lagos state, past works from journals,

published works and news reports. In order to achieve the study's stated objectives; questionnaires were shared to knowledgeable residents of the Ikorodu Local Government Lagos state. Questions asked were aimed at finding the link between child rights security and COVID-19 in Lagos State. The findings of this survey revealed that when asked questions on the relationship of both variables that more than 50% of respondents agreed that there is indeed a links between COVID-19 and child rights security in Lagos State. From existing literature, we are also able to see that sexual harassment in Lagos in regards to COVID-19 pandemic is high and affecting the people who live around such environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study therefore recommended that, owing to the build of sexual harassment on the girl child already present in Lagos State, government has to invest in ensuring that forms of awareness of girl child rights in the state are properly carried out as well as processed to ensuring that protection of the girl child start to take off, in order to give the girl child security status of Lagos a fresh start. Also, proper supervision and regulation in the works place should be enforced. Government of Lagos should put in place provisions for strict punishment for sexual harassment offenders and girl child rights violators that perpetrate these crimes after reinforcement of regulations set out for them. Study also affirms enhancing, refurbishment and empowerment of rehabilitation facilities, equipped with trained personnel to efficiently supervise those in charge of rehabilitation of sexually harassed victims in Lagos state in order to ensure that all rules and regulations are followed, and no one is derailed from the rules set out for the rehabilitation development, towards reintegrating of the abused back to the society. Conclusively, this research proposed a re-orientation, promotion and more awareness programs on all social media the protection of child rights, and to educate her citizens against all vices that are anti-human and bad attitudes. This will give everyone equal right to life as well as boost the corporate image of Lagos state in particular and Nigeria in general.

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