

Role of Child Support Policies in Mitigating Child Abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explored the Role of child support policies in mitigating child abuse in Lagos Mainland L.G.A, Lagos State Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to explore prevalence of child support policies curbing child abuse, identify the major causes of child abuse, find out the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse, and proffer solutions towards improving child support policies that could mitigate child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study adopted structural-functionalism and symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework upon which this study is hinged. Mixed method research design was employed as sampling techniques for this study. The population of the study is 317, 980 residents, out of which a sample size of 204 respondents were generated using Taro Yamane (1967) statistical formula. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the respondents. The instruments for data collection were a structured Questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guides. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistic and the results were presented in simple percentages, charts and frequency distribution tables. The study hypotheses were tested using Chi-square (X^2) inferential statistics. The data collected from the IDI were analyzed thematically using Nvivo (version 2.1) software. The study found that child support policies are highly effective in curbing child abuse in Lagos Mainland LGA. The study also found that child support policies are yet to gain adequate enforcement/implementation in some suburban areas of Lagos Mainland LGA. The study therefore recommends among other things, that the child abuse can be minimized by increasing public awareness about child support policies in Lagos Mainland LGA, Lagos State.

Keywords: child abuse, policies, socio-economic status

Introduction

There is a school of thought that believes that a child is a national asset, not just to the family but also to the nation at large. This statement encapsulates the fundamental truth that children are not only the future but also the present pillars upon which a nation's prosperity and progress stand. In Nigeria, a child is legally defined as any person below the age of 18 years according to the Child Rights Act of 2003 (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2013).

This definition is in line with international standards set forth by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Within Nigerian cultural contexts, a child is often regarded as a precious gift and a symbol of hope for the future. Children often symbolize continuity and the perpetuation of family and community traditions (Ogunleye, 2017). However, amidst this acknowledgment of their significance, the harsh reality persists that child in Nigeria, like many other parts of the world, face the scourge of child abuse.

Child abuse is legally defined as any act or omission that jeopardizes or impairs the physical, psychological, emotional, or social development of a child, as stipulated in the Child Rights Act of 2003 (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2003). More so, Child physical abuse in Nigeria refers to the intentional infliction of physical harm or injury upon a child by a caregiver or authority figure. This may include hitting, punching, kicking, burning, or using objects to cause harm, resulting in visible marks or injuries on the child's body (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2018). In another definition, UNICEF (2020) described child abuse as any form of sexual exploitation, coercion, or misconduct perpetrated against a child. This may include rape, molestation, incest, sexual assault, or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, leading to trauma, shame, guilt, and sexual dysfunction among victims.

The definitions above showed that child abuse encompasses various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, and neglectful acts perpetrated against children. Other types of child abuse include neglect which occurs when a caregiver fails to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education, and supervision, leading to malnutrition, illness, and developmental delays (Olumide, 2019). Child labour that involves the exploitation of children for economic purposes, often in hazardous or exploitative conditions, depriving them of their right to education and exposing them to physical harm and exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2020). Also, another type is child trafficking which involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, or organ trafficking (NAPTIP, 2020). Others

include child marriage, child abandonment, psychological abuse, child begging, child pornography, corporal punishment and many others.

Child abuse is a pervasive problem that inflicts profound and enduring harm on its victims, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, communities, and societies as a whole. The problems that arise from child abuse are multifaceted and encompass a range of physical, emotional, psychological, and societal repercussions. Child abuse can have devastating physical effects on victims. According to a study by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), physically abused children often suffer from injuries ranging from bruises and fractures to more severe trauma such as head injuries and internal organ damage. These physical injuries can result in long-term health complications and even death in extreme cases, posing significant challenges to the healthcare system and burdening society with the costs of medical care and rehabilitation.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of child abuse underscores the urgent need for a concerted focus on child support policies to mitigate this pervasive problem. Emphasizing more on child support policies is crucial for creating a protective environment that safeguards the rights and well-being of children across the country. First and foremost, robust child support policies play a pivotal role in preventing child abuse by addressing underlying socio-economic factors that contribute to vulnerability. Child support policies refer to the legislative measures and regulations aimed at ensuring the financial, emotional, and developmental needs of children are met following parental separation or divorce. These policies are established to enforce parental responsibility and provide guidelines for the calculation and enforcement of child support payments (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2013).

Effective child support policies serve as a means of early intervention, identifying at-risk families and providing them with the necessary resources and support to prevent abuse before it occurs. Early childhood development programs, parenting education, and family counseling services can equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to provide nurturing and supportive environments for their children (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2018). By empowering families and promoting positive parenting practices, these interventions can break the cycle of abuse and foster healthy family dynamics.

Unfortunately, from the researcher's observations, there is little or no empirical evidence to buttress the need to explore the impact of child support policies to mitigate child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. It is against this background that this study was borne.

Statement of the Problem

Childcare protection is a critical concern in communities, aiming to safeguard the well-being and rights of children. Unfortunately, violence against children occurs in homes, families, schools, communities and other places where children should feel safe. In the world, child abuse is also prevalent, such as in countries like the United States, where reports indicate a significant increase in cases (Smith, 2023). The rate is on the increase, with statistics showing a rise of 20% over the past decade (Jones & Brown, 2022). The rate of child abuse has continued to affect children profoundly because it leads to long-term physical and psychological consequences (Miller, Jenkins, Putzeys, Kaminski and Woodall, 2024). Children who experience abuse are at higher risk of developing mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, which can persist into adulthood (Adams, 2020). Moreover, the impact extends beyond individual suffering, affecting societal well-being through increased healthcare costs and decreased productivity (Johnson, 2019). Efforts to address child abuse must include both prevention strategies and robust support systems for victims to mitigate its pervasive effects on society (Taylor & White, 2023).

These abuses are also seen in Nigeria because according to UNICEF (2023) report, abuse in all its forms are a daily reality for many Nigerian children and only a fraction ever receive help. Six out of every 10 children experience some form of violence – one in four girls and 10 per cent of boys have been victims of sexual violence. Of the children who reported violence, fewer than five out of a 100 received any form of support. The drivers of violence against children (VAC) are rooted in social norms, including around the use of violent discipline, violence against women and community beliefs about witchcraft, all of which increase children's vulnerability.

UNICEF (2023) further stated that Nigeria has the largest number of child brides in Africa with more than 23 million girls and women who were married as children, most of them

from poor and rural communities. While data suggests a decline of 9 per cent in the prevalence of child marriage since 2003, and a projected further decrease of 6 per cent by 2030, Nigeria's rapid population growth means that the number of child brides will in fact increase by more than one million by 2030 and double by 2050.

There are several cases of child abuse in different parts of Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, Kaduna State precisely, over 300 persons were rescued by the police from an Islamic boarding school in September 2019. Among those rescued were children most of whom were between five years of age and under the age of eighteen. The place where these people were tagged "house of torture" as every child there had visible marks of torture on their mortal bodies. Most of them were also chained, and constantly beaten and raped by those who "teach" in the school, thereby violating their fundamental human rights (The Sun Newspaper, 2019). Also, Rex (2020) reported that in Lagos State in April 2019, another case of rape against a minor surfaced. The 13-year-old victim whose name was withheld was frequently raped by a 44-year-old man, KabiruOke – the husband of the victim's aunt whom she lives with, from October 2018 to January 2019. Rex (2020) further reported that also in Lagos, the Nigerian Police Force arrested a lady who allegedly caged a young boy who lived with them in the same cage with a dog. The 10-year-old boy who was brought to Lagos State from Anambra State in 2012 with his two siblings after they lost their parents was flogged with belt and later locked up with a dog in the kennel by a 24-year-old OnyinyeMbadike. But upon her arrest, Onyinye denied locking the boy in a cage with a dog; she said she only locked him in an empty dog kennel and not with a dog in the kennel because he took a hot drink from their refrigerator and started misbehaving.

The cases of child abuse have continued to have consequences on the children, such as profound emotional and psychological trauma (Smith, 2023). These consequences affect a child's development by hindering their ability to form secure attachments and develop healthy relationships (Jones & Brown, 2022). Children who experience abuse often exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression or withdrawal, which can persist into adolescence and adulthood (Miller et al., 2021). Moreover, the trauma of abuse can impair cognitive development and academic performance, leading to long-term educational challenges (Adams, 2020).

In addition to these direct impacts, child abuse has ripple effects that extend to families, communities, and society at large. Families may experience increased stress and dysfunction, further perpetuating cycles of abuse and neglect (Johnson, 2019). Communities grappling with high rates of child abuse often face strain on social services and healthcare systems, which are tasked with supporting affected children and their families (Taylor & White, 2023). Addressing the consequences of child abuse requires comprehensive interventions that prioritize early detection, therapeutic support, and systemic changes to promote child safety and well-being (Roberts & Green, 2024). It is against this background that this study seeks to explore the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How prevalent is child support policies in curbing child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?
2. What are the major causes of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?
3. What is the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Review of Related Literature

Prevalence of Child Support Policies Curbing Child Abuse in Lagos Mainland Nigeria

Öster and Agell (2017) examine the prevalence of child support policies curbing child abuse in Austria. The study adopted cross sectional research design. The study has a population of 258. Questionnaire was used for data collection and chi-square was used for data analysis. The study found that the prevalent of child support policies, including legal frameworks, social services, and educational initiatives, are instrumental in reducing child abuse globally. Effective implementation has shown to lower abuse rates by providing protective measures, support services, and awareness campaigns that promote child safety and well-being.

Okenyi, Ngwoke, Ugwu, Aneke, Ifelunni, Ebizie and Ugwuanyi (2019) carried out a study to estimate the predictive powers of parental support and domestic violence on child abuse among pupils in South-East, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational survey research design with a population of 481,533 primaries five pupils in public primary schools in South-East, Nigeria. A sample of 400 primaries five pupils was drawn using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Three instruments were used for data collection: Parental Social Support Questionnaire (PSSQ), Parental Domestic Violence Questionnaire (PDVQ) and Child Abuse Questionnaire (CAQ). The reliability of the instrument was established by trial-testing on 30 primary five pupils that were not part of the sample. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability coefficients of 0.88, 0.80 and 0.75 were obtained for parental social support questionnaire, parental domestic violence and child abuse questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis. Specifically, the Coefficient of Determination (r^2) was used to answer research questions and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) aspect of simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parental social support significantly predicted child abuse negatively while domestic violence significantly predicted child abuse positively. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that parents should provide enough social support to their children's proper development and emotional stability.

Major Causes of Child Abuse in Lagos Mainland Nigeria

Aaltonen, Macdonald, Martikainen and Kivivuor (2018) examined the causes of child abuse in Kano. The study relied on fixed-effects regression models to assess the association between changes in unemployment status and changes in violent crime, property crime, and driving under the influence (DUI) over a 6-year period. The study found that the causes of child abuse include parental stress, substance abuse, intergenerational transmission of violence, and socioeconomic factors like poverty and unemployment. Psychological issues and lack of parenting skills also contribute, highlighting the complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors in child maltreatment.

Jimoh, Muhammed-Idris and Aliyu (2021) investigated prevalence, pattern of child abuses and factors influencing child physical abuse among working class parents in Samaru, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This was a cross-sectional study carried out among 129 working parents in Samaru, Zaria in 2016 using pretested, semi-structured and interviewer-administered questionnaires. The subjects were selected by multistage sampling method. Data analysed using IBM SPSS version 21. The study found that the prevalence of child abuses among working class parents was 42.6%. Multi-forms of child abuse in this study were found among the respondent. Educational level, nature of family, number of children and family size were statistically significantly associated ($p=0.001, 0.001, 0.003$ and 0.008) with child physical abuse with the statistically respectively. The study concluded that child abuse was found to be prevalent among the working class parents despite parental educational status and socio-economic background. Factors associated with child physical abuse like family size and nature of family have statistical significance (p value < 0.05). There is urgent need for community-based educational programmes to increase awareness of the problem and action on changing parental attitudes and behaviour might also help to prevent this societal menace.

Wargel-Fisk, Kerr, Hall, Litvitskiy, Flaspohler, and Meyer (2024) investigated the prevalence, best practice use, and member engagement on school mental health teams. This study surveyed a cross-sectional sample of elementary principals ($n = 314$) across the United States whose schools implement multi-tiered SMH programs. Most principals (89%, $n = 280$) reported using teams to organize these programs. Schools in urban/suburban communities, with 300 or more students, or with specific school funding for SMH activities were more likely to have SMH teams. Only one-third of principals reported that their team members participated in related training. Other SMH team best practices were commonly reported (by two-thirds or more teams). Results of a linear regression model indicate that larger teams (six or more members) and teams with access to resources had significantly higher member engagement scores. The study's findings provide recommendations for practice and future research directions.

Impacts of Child Support Policies in Mitigating Child Abuse in Lagos Mainland Nigeria

Papps and Winkelmann (2020) examined the relationship child support policies and mitigating child abuse in New Zealand. The data set covers sixteen regions over the period 1984 to 2016. Random and fixed effects models are estimated to investigate the possibility of a causal relationship between child support policies and mitigating child abuse. Hypothesis tests show that two-way fixed effects models should be used. The regression results provide some evidence that child support policies mitigate child abuse by providing legal protections, financial assistance, and social services to vulnerable families. These policies promote stable environments, reduce stressors that lead to abuse, and offer educational programs that teach positive parenting practices, thereby enhancing children's safety and well-being.

Gaber, Awadeen, Mohamed and Sherbeny (2024) Assess the impact of domestic violence on primary school children at Beni-Suef City. Descriptive research design used to achieve the aim of current study. Sample: A convenience sample. Setting: Khaled Ibn Al-Walid in Abd El salam Arif and Al Ajami Primary school in Al Rahba. Tool: Two tools used to achieve the aim of this study, First Tool: A Structured interviewing questionnaire which consisted of three parts to assess personnel characteristics of primary school children, general data about family, primary school children's knowledge regarding domestic violence, Second Tool: Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale (CEDV) by Linda Chamberlain, 2016. The study showed that, small number of the studied participants had a good level of knowledge regarding the domestic violence, large number of the studied participants had experienced low domestic abuse and higher number of the studied participants had a medium impact of domestic violence. Conclusion: calculated that was a highly significant positive association between their total abuse score and their impact of violence score which means a negative association between studied participant's knowledge and abuse and impact of domestic violence.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted structural-functionalism and symbolic interactionism to explain the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse. Structural-Functionalism provides insights into how child support policies can mitigate child abuse by emphasizing the role of social institutions in maintaining social order and promoting norms that protect

children's well-being. According to this theory, social structures such as family, education, and government serve specific functions in society, including socialization, regulation, and support, which are critical in preventing and addressing child abuse (Parsons, 1951).

Child support policies informed by Structural-Functionalism focus on strengthening these social institutions to fulfill their roles effectively. For instance, policies may emphasize the family unit as a primary agent of socialization and support, promoting positive parenting practices and providing resources to enhance caregiving skills and responsibilities. Furthermore, Structural-Functionalism highlights the importance of education in transmitting societal norms and values that condemn abuse and promote child protection. Child support policies may include educational initiatives in schools to raise awareness about child rights, teach conflict resolution skills, and empower children to recognize and report abuse (Parsons, 1951).

Moreover, government interventions guided by Structural-Functionalism aim to regulate and oversee child welfare systems, ensuring that laws and policies are in place to protect children from abuse and neglect. This includes establishing reporting mechanisms, funding support services for at-risk families, and implementing legal measures to hold perpetrators accountable (Parsons, 1951). By integrating Structural-Functionalism into child support policies, societies can strengthen the functioning of social institutions that play pivotal roles in preventing and addressing child abuse. These policies not only promote stability and cohesion within communities but also uphold norms that prioritize children's safety, well-being, and development in nurturing environments.

More so, this study also adopted symbolic interactionism as it provides a valuable framework for understanding the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse by examining how these policies shape the meanings parents and children assign to their roles and relationships. The theory posits that human behavior is influenced by the subjective meanings derived from social interactions (Mead, 1934). In the context of child support policies, providing financial assistance and social services can significantly alter the way parents perceive their role as caregivers. When parents receive adequate support, their ability to fulfill their responsibilities is enhanced, which in turn strengthens their

sense of competence and reduces feelings of frustration or inadequacy that may lead to abusive behaviors. These improved conditions foster healthier, non-abusive parent-child interactions.

Blumer (1969) emphasized that social meanings are created and modified through interaction. As parents engage with child support programs, they are exposed to new parenting strategies and societal expectations about nurturing behaviors, which help them reinterpret their roles in positive ways. For instance, access to parenting classes, counseling, and financial aid can influence how parents view discipline, emotional support, and communication, reducing the risk of harmful behaviors. Furthermore, Symbolic Interactionism highlights the importance of social context in shaping behavior. By providing external resources and reducing stressors, child support policies create a more supportive environment where positive parent-child relationships can thrive.

Hypotheses

This study will test the following hypotheses:

1. Socioeconomic status is a significant major cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.
2. Provision of child support policy can significantly mitigate against child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Methods

This paper adopted a mixed methods research design. According to Creswell (2012), this approach to research is used when this integration provides a better understanding of the research problem than either of each alone. However, quantitative data includes close-ended information such as that found to measure attitudes (e.g., rating scales). The analysis of this type of data consists of statistically analysing scores collected on instruments (e.g., questionnaires) or checklists to answer research questions or to test hypotheses. On the other hand, qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher usually gathers through interviews, focus groups, and observations. The analysis of the qualitative data (words, text, or behaviours) typically follows the path of aggregating it into categories

of information and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection. The study was conducted in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. Lagos Mainland Local Government is a local government area in the Lagos Division of Lagos State, Nigeria. It is in central Lagos and has its headquarters at Ebute Metta. Lagos Mainland Local Government is one of the most densely populated areas in Lagos State with a population of 317,980 people according to the 2006 Nigerian census, with a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Notable towns and areas within the Lagos Mainland local government include Otto/Iddo, Olaleye Village, Maroko, Ebute Metta, Glover, Oko-Baba, Oyadiran Estate, Abule-Oja, Iwaya, Yaba, and Igbobi. The target population of this research work were residents in the area between the ages of 18 and 65years old. According to the report of the last census of the National Population Commission in 2006 as seen in the websites of the National Population Commission of Nigeria and National Bureau of Statistics, Anambra State has a total population of 317,980. This study covered the impact of child support policies in mitigating child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. A sample size of 204 participants was chosen for this study. The sample size was obtained using Taro Yamane’s sample size determination formula. This formula was used to ensure that the population of the study is adequately represented. The formula is given as thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = sampling error (0.07) or 7%

Note, N= 317,980

$$n = \frac{317,980}{1 + 317,980 (0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{317,980}{1 + 317,980 (0.0049)}$$

$$n = \frac{317,980}{1 + 1558.102}$$

$$n = \frac{317,980}{1559.102}$$

= 203.95, appx. = 204

The study used questionnaire schedule as an instrument of data collection to collect quantitative data, while In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide was used to collect qualitative data. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. The quantitative data will be gotten through the questionnaire. The respondents' demographics will be presented in frequency distribution tables and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as simple percentages. More so, the responses from the copies of the questionnaire will be presented in frequency distribution tables and also analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as simple percentages. Each of the frequency tables will be interpreted below it. The study will adopt the use of Chi-square(X^2) inferential statistics to test the hypotheses for the study. Analyses of quantitative data will be carried out using SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences version 25).

The qualitative data will be transcribed and read to determine appropriate interpretation of its content and then coded. The aim was to gain an understanding of the data gathered and be able to make meaningful comparison between different bits of data with a view to establishing themes, patterns, and connections. The qualitative data will be thus analyzed thematically. However, thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun &Clarke, 2006). It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated with a specific research question (Daly, Kellehear, &Gliksman, 1997).

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Distribution of respondents	Variables	Frequency	Percent
2	Distribution of respondents by gender	Male	71	64.5
		Female	129	35.5
		Total	200	100.0
1	Distribution of respondents by age	18 – 25	29	14.5
		26 – 35	60	30
		36 – 45	70	35.0
		46 – 55	31	15.5
		56 and Above	10	5.00

		Total	200	100.0
3	Distribution of respondents by marital status	Single	24	12
		Married	61	30.5
		Divorced	43	21.5
		Widowed	37	18.5
		Separated	35	17.5
		Total	200	100.0
4	Distribution of respondents by levels of educational attainment	FSLC	15	7.5
		SSCE/GCE	91	45.5
		B. Sc./HND	67	33.5
		Masters/PhD	27	13.5
		Total	200	100.0
5	Distribution of respondents by occupational status	Students	15	7.50
		Employed	79	39.5
		Self-employed	69	34.5
		Unemployed	37	18.5
		Total	200	100.0
6	Distribution of respondents by religious affiliation	Christianity	146	73.0
		Islam	20	10.0
		African Traditional Religion	30	15.0
		Others	4	2.00
		Total	200	100.0
7	Distribution of respondents by number of children	None	28	14.0
		1 – 2	48	24.0
		3 – 4	74	37.0
		5 & Above	50	25.0
		Total	Total	100.0
8	Distribution of respondents by monthly income	N1, 000 – N30, 0000	29	14.5
		N31, 000 – N60, 000	49	24.5
		N61, 000 – N90, 000	69	34.5
		N91, 000 & Above	53	26.5
		Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows the personal data of the respondents which revealed that most (64.5%) of the respondents were females while the least (35.5%) were males. This shows that females participated more in the exercise. In addition, in the age distribution of the respondents,

most (35%) of the respondents were between the age range of 36 – 45years, 31(15.5%) and the least (5%) were within the ages of 56 years old and above. This implies that most of the respondents were between the ages of 36 – 45 years old. More so, in the same table 1, it was revealed that most (30.5%) of the respondents were married and the least (12%) were single. This infers that most married people participated in the study.

Furthermore, table 1 revealed that from the educational attainment of the respondents, majority (45.5%) of the respondents have attained SSCE/GCE level while the lease (7.5%) have FSLC. This shows that majority of the respondents were SSCE certificate holders. Besides, most of the respondents 69(34.5%) were self-employed and the least (7.5%) were students. This indicates that most of the respondents were self-employed. In addition, majority of the respondents, 149(73%) were Christians, and the lowest number of the respondents 4(2%) were other religions. Furthermore, majority (37%) of the respondents has 3 – 4 children and the least (14%) has no children. This means that majority of the respondents have 3 – 4 children. More so, on the monthly income of the respondents, most (34.5%) of the respondents earn between N61, 000 and N90, 000 in a month while the least (14.5%) earn between N1, 000 – N30,000 in a month. This denotes that majority of the respondents earn between N61, 000 and N90, 000 in a month.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1. How prevalent is child support policies in curbing child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Questionnaire items 10, 11 and 12 were designed to provide answers to research question 1 and the findings are shown in tables 2, 3 and 4 respectively. First, the respondents were asked to state on how familiar they are with child support policies in Lagos Mainland. The responses are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Respondents’ views on whether they are familiar with child support policies in Lagos Mainland

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	49	24.5
High	69	34.5

Low	53	26.5
Very Low	29	14.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 shows that most (34.5%) of the respondents were highly familiar with child support policies in Lagos Mainland while the least (14.5%) have very low familiarity with child support policies. This result implies that majority of the respondents are highly familiar with child support policies. More so, the in-depth interview data affirmed this position:

My familiarity with child support policies in Lagos Mainland means I understand the legal obligations and guidelines parents must follow to provide for their children's financial needs after separation. This knowledge equips me to navigate the system effectively, ensuring children receive the necessary support for their well-being and development **(26years old man in Akoka street)**.

This response implies that the respondents are familiar with child support. However, the respondents were further asked to state how effective they believe these policies are in curbing child abuse. The responses are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Respondents' views on how effective they believe these policies are in curbing child abuse

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	44	22
High	71	35.5
Low	60	30
Very Low	25	12.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 shows that most (35.5%) of the respondents highly believe that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse while the least (12.5%) of the respondents have very low

believe that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse. This result implies that most of the respondents have high believe that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse.

In my view, child support policies in Lagos Mainland are not fully effective in curbing child abuse. While they address financial needs, they often fail to monitor how funds are used, leaving room for neglect. A lack of enforcement and follow-up makes it difficult to ensure children’s welfare is adequately protected(25years old woman in Sabo Street).

The respondents have low belief that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse. However, the respondents were further asked to state the extent child support policies are enforced in their community. The responses are shown in Figure 1.

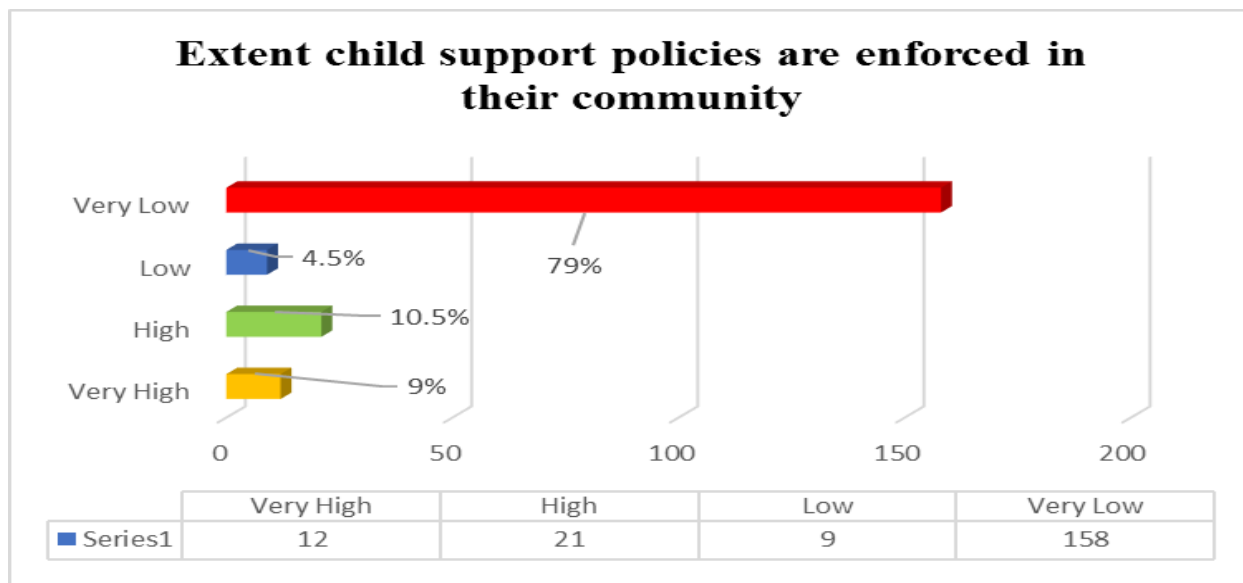


Figure 1: Respondents’ views on the extent child support policies are enforced in their community

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results of figure 1 revealed that most (79%) of the respondents have very low believe that child support policies are enforced in their community while the least (4.5%) of the respondents have low believe that child support policies are enforced in their community.

More so, the in-depth interview data affirmed this position:

From my experience in Lagos Mainland, child support policies are not effectively enforced in the community. Despite legal provisions, many parents evade responsibilities due to weak monitoring systems and lack of accountability. This often results in children not receiving the support they deserve, leading to economic hardship and potential neglect **(28years old man in Borno Way)**.

These results show that most of the respondents have very low believe that child support policies are not effectively enforced in their community.

Research Question 2. What are the major causes of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Questionnaire items 13, 14 and 15 were designed to provide answers to research question 2 and the findings are shown in tables 3, 4 and figure 2 respectively. First, the respondents were asked to state on how familiar they are with child support policies in Lagos Mainland. The responses are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Respondents’ views on the major causes of child abuse

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	59	29.21
High	72	35.64
Low	54	27.72
Very Low	15	7.43
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 3 revealed that most (35.64%) of the respondents have high believe that there are major causes of child abuse in their community while the least (7.43%) of the respondents have very low believe that there are major causes of child abuse in their community. This implies that there are major causes of child abuse in their community.

More so, the in-depth interview data confirmed this position:

In my community, many factors can lead to child abuse. I have seen that poverty, lack of education, and domestic instability

are major causes of child abuse. Many families struggle to provide basic needs, and without proper resources or support, children often become vulnerable to neglect, exploitation, and emotional harm, perpetuating a cycle of abuse and hardship **(25years old man in Apapa Road)**.

This response indicated that there are major causes of child abuse in their community. However, the respondents were further asked to how significant poverty a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland is. The responses are shown in table 6.

Table 4: Respondents' views on how significant poverty is a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	69	34.5
High	62	31.0
Low	51	25.5
Very Low	18	9.00
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 4 revealed that most (34.5%) of the respondents have very high believe that poverty significant is a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland while the least (9%) have very low believe that poverty significant is a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland. These results revealed that poverty significant is a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland. More so, the in-depth interview data confirmed this position:

In my experience, poverty is a significant cause of child abuse. I've witnessed how financial struggles push families into survival mode, leading to neglect and even exploitation of children. Limited resources often create stress and frustration, which can manifest in harmful behavior toward vulnerable children in impoverished households **(29years old man in Jagun Molu Street)**.

This response indicated that poverty significant is a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland. More so, the respondents were further asked to state the extent lack of education contribute to child abuse in Lagos Mainland. The responses are shown in table 7.

Table 5: Respondents’ views on the extent lack of education contribute to child abuse in Lagos Mainland

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	65	32.5
High	65	32.5
Low	49	24.5
Very Low	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

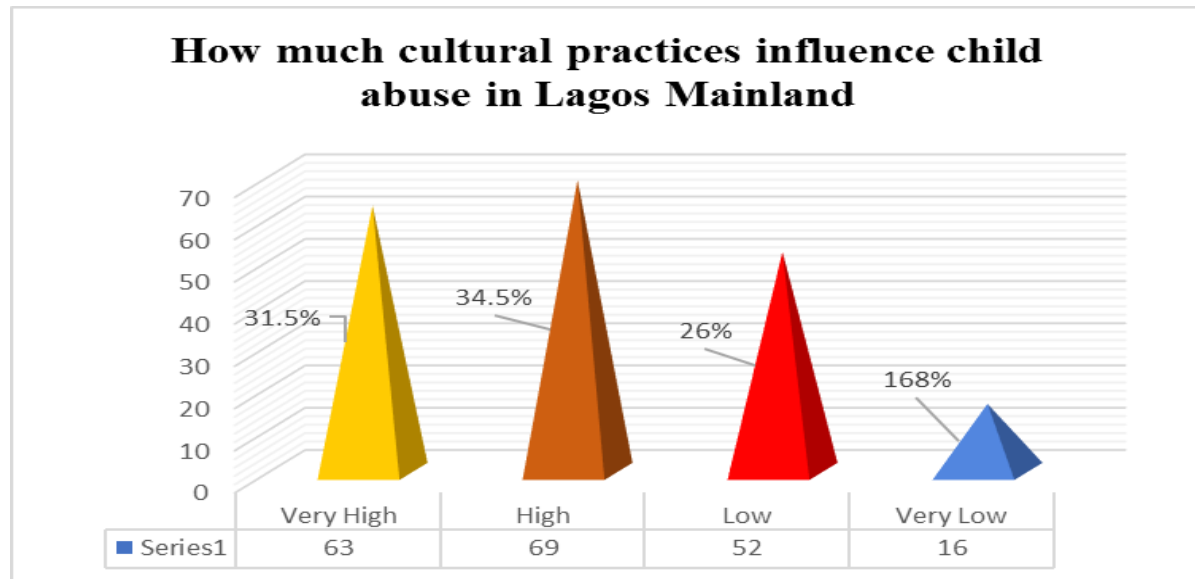
Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 5 revealed that most (32.5%) of the respondents have very high believe that lack of education contribute to child abuse in Lagos Mainland while the least 65(32.5%) have very low believe that lack of education contribute to child abuse in Lagos Mainland. These results indicated that lack of education contribute to child abuse in Lagos Mainland. More so, the in-depth interview data confirmed this position:

From what I have observed, lack of education significantly contributes to child abuse. Many parents, without proper education, may not fully understand the impact of their actions or the importance of nurturing children. This ignorance often leads to neglect, harsh discipline, or exploitation, perpetuating cycles of abuse within families and communities **(32years old woman in Akoka Road)**.

The response indicates that lack of education contributes to child abuse in Lagos Mainland. However, the respondents were further asked to how much cultural practices influence child abuse in Lagos Mainland. The responses are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Respondents’ views on how much cultural practices influence child abuse in



Lagos Mainland.

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 8 revealed that most (34.5%) of the respondents have high believe that cultural practices influence child abuse in Lagos Mainland while the least (8%) of the respondents have very low believe that cultural practices influence child abuse in Lagos Mainland. Besides, the in-depth interview data affirmed this position:

In my community, I have seen how certain cultural practices can influence child abuse. Traditions that promote harsh discipline or view children as property often normalize abusive behaviors. These practices, passed down through generations, sometimes create environments where children’s rights are overlooked, making them more vulnerable to neglect and harm **(30years old woman in Herbert Macaulay)**.

These results indicated that cultural practices influence child abuse in Lagos Mainland.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of child support policies in mitigating against child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Questionnaire items 16, 17 and 18 were designed to provide answers to research question 3 and the findings are shown in tables 6, 7 and 8 respectively. First, the respondents were asked to state how child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. The responses are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Respondents' views on how child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	65	32.5
High	84	42
Low	32	16
Very Low	19	9.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 6 revealed that most (32.5%) of the respondents have high believe that child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse while the least (9.5%) have very low believe that child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. The results imply that most of the respondents are of high opinions that child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. Besides, the in-depth interview data affirmed this position:

In my experience, child support policies have been effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. By ensuring financial stability, these policies help alleviate the stress and frustration often linked to economic hardship, which can lead to violence. When parents are able to meet children's needs, the risk of abuse decreases **(27years old man in Amaechi Street)**.

This response implies that child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. However, the respondents were further asked whether how much these policies reduced neglect cases. The responses are shown in table 7.

Table 7: Respondents' views on much have these policies reduced neglect cases

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very High	74	37
High	81	40.5
Low	33	16.5
Very Low	12	6
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 7 showed that most (40.5%) of the respondents have high opinions these policies could reduce neglect cases while the least (6%) of the respondents have very low opinions these policies could reduce neglect cases. The results indicate that child support policies can reduce neglect cases. Besides, the in-depth interview data supported this position:

In my experience, child support policies have been effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. By ensuring financial stability, these policies help alleviate the stress and frustration often linked to economic hardship, which can lead to violence. When parents are able to meet children's needs, the risk of abuse decreases **(26years old man in Akoka street)**.

This response implies that child support policies can reduce neglect cases. However, the respondents were further asked whether how effective are the policies in preventing emotional abuse. The responses are shown in figure 3.

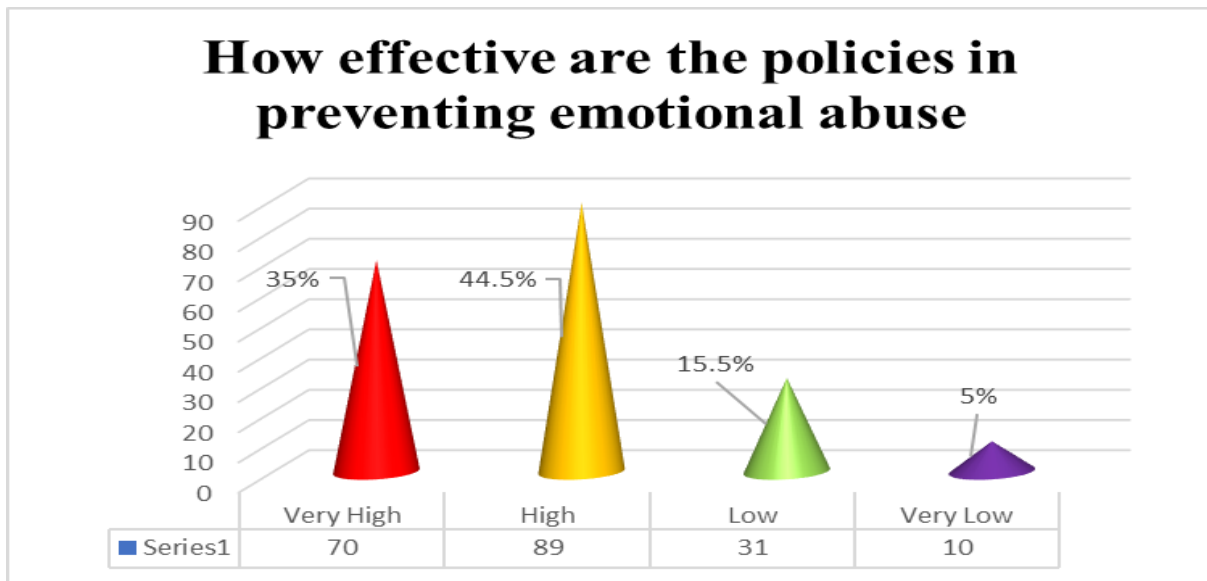


Figure 3: Respondents’ views on how effective are the policies in preventing emotional abuse

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The results in table 11 revealed that most (44.5%) of the respondents have high opinions that these policies are effective in preventing emotional abuse while the least (5%) have very opinions that policies are effective in preventing emotional abuse. These opinions imply that these policies are effective in preventing emotional abuse. Besides, the in-depth interview data supported this position:

In my observation, child support policies are effective in preventing emotional abuse by providing parents with the resources they need to nurture their children. When financial burdens are alleviated, parents can focus on creating a supportive environment. This stability fosters healthier relationships, reducing the likelihood of emotional neglect or harm **(25years old woman in Sabo Street)**.

This response implies that child support policies are effective in preventing emotional abuse.

Test of Hypotheses

The researcher tested the two hypotheses postulated for this study. Hypothesis one was tested with questionnaire items 4 and 13 respectively and presented in table 12. While hypothesis two was tested with questionnaire items 12 and 22 respectively and presented in table 13. The hypotheses are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Socioeconomic status is a significant major cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Table 12: Socioeconomic status is a significant major cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

		How significant is poverty as a cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland?				Total
		Very High	High	Low	Very Low	
What is your educational qualification?	Primary School Education	15	0	0	0	15
		5.2	4.6	3.8	1.3	15.0
	Secondary School Education	54	37	0	0	91
		31.4	28.2	23.2	8.2	91.0
	Tertiary School Education	0	25	42	0	67
	23.1	20.8	17.1	6.0	67.0	
	Postgraduate Education	0	0	9	18	27
		9.3	8.4	6.9	2.4	27.0
Total		69	62	51	18	200
		69.0	62.0	51.0	18.0	200.0

X² (12, N = 200) = 263.326^a, P = .001

The chi-square test analysis showed that $X^2 (9, N = 200) = 263.326$, and the P-value = $0.001 < 0.05$ significant level. The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted and thus, socioeconomic status is a significant major cause of child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Hypothesis 2: Provision of child support policy can significantly mitigate against child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Table 13: Provision of child support policy can significantly mitigate against child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

		How significant is the need for stricter enforcement of child support policies?				Total
		Very High	High	Low	Very Low	
To what extent do you think child support policies are enforced in your community?	Very High	12	0	0	0	12
		5.3	4.1	1.9	.8	12.0
	High	21	0	0	0	21
		9.2	7.1	3.3	1.4	21.0
	Low	9	0	0	0	9
		4.0	3.1	1.4	.6	9.0
	Very Low	46	68	31	13	158
		69.5	53.7	24.5	10.3	158.0
Total		88	68	31	13	200
		88.0	68.0	31.0	13.0	200.0

X² (12, N = 200) = 67.664^a, P = .001

The chi-square test analysis showed that $X^2 (9, N = 200) = 67.664$, and the P-value = $0.001 < 0.05$ significant level. The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted and thus, provision of child support policy can significantly mitigate against child abuse in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Discussion

Table 1 shows the personal data of the respondents which revealed that females participated more in the exercise. In addition, most of the respondents were between the ages of 36 – 45 years old. Most married people participated in the study. Furthermore, majority of the respondents were SSCE certificate holders. Besides, most of the respondents were self-employed. Majority of the respondents have 3 – 4 children and majority of the respondents earn between N61, 000 and N90, 000 in a month.

Majority of the respondents are highly familiar with child support policies. They have high believe that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse and however, most of the respondents have very low believe that child support policies are enforced in their community. In addition, most of the respondents are of the opinions that there are major causes of child abuse in their community. Some of the causes of child abuse is poverty, lack of education and cultural practices contribute child abuse in Lagos Mainland. These findings are in line with Okafor (2020) findings that Child support policies play a crucial role in reducing child abuse by ensuring that children's financial and emotional needs are met, which can alleviate the stress that often contributes to abusive situations. By providing parents or caregivers with necessary financial assistance, these policies help create a more stable and supportive environment for children, reducing the likelihood of neglect or abuse. Studies have shown that when families receive adequate support, both emotional well-being and parental capacity to care for children improve, thereby lowering the risk of abuse. Thus, effective child support policies are essential in promoting child safety and welfare.

Additionally, most of the respondents are of high opinions that child support policies are effective in reducing cases of physical abuse. These policies can reduce cases of physical abuse, reduce neglect cases and prevent emotional abuse. In agreement with these findings, Okafor and Chukwuemeka (2020) found that The findings that most respondents hold high opinions on the effectiveness of child support policies in reducing physical abuse are supported by evidence showing that such policies provide critical resources and services for vulnerable families. Child support policies can improve parental access to financial aid, counseling, and welfare services, which directly reduce the stressors that lead to physical abuse. Additionally, these policies help reduce cases of neglect by ensuring that children's basic needs are met, thus preventing situations of neglect and emotional abuse (Ibrahim & Nwosu, 2021). By offering holistic support, these policies promote a healthier family environment, ultimately decreasing abuse cases and safeguarding children's well-being in Nigeria.

Based on the findings, the respondents agreed that it is necessary to increase public awareness about child support policies, it is important government improve these policies, there should be collaboration between NGOs and the government could improve the policies and it is important there is regular policy reviews and updates. The respondents' agreement on increasing public awareness of child support policies aligns with the view that awareness campaigns empower individuals to access available services, thereby reducing child abuse cases (Nnamdi & Okeke, 2021). Improving these policies is crucial as outdated frameworks often fail to address evolving challenges faced by vulnerable families. Collaboration between NGOs and the government can enhance policy implementation by combining resources and expertise, which strengthens the impact of child welfare programs (Adeyemi, 2020). Furthermore, regular policy reviews and updates ensure that child support policies remain responsive to changing societal conditions, making them more effective in safeguarding children's rights and well-being in Nigeria (Eze& Obinna, 2021).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the respondents are highly familiar with child support policies and they have high believed that these policies are effective in curbing child abuse. Child support policies are lowly enforced in their community. There are major causes of child abuse in their community which include lack of education contribute to child abuse and cultural practices influence child abuse. The consequences is that child support policies when not implemented are not effective in reducing cases of physical abuse, policies reduced neglect cases, leads to ineffective in preventing emotional abuse. The child abuse can be minimized by increasing public awareness about child support policies, it is important government in improving these policies, there should be a collaboration between NGOs and the government could improve the policies, there should be stricter enforcement of child support policies and regular policy reviews and updates is important.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Government should launch extensive campaigns to raise public awareness about child support policies, ensuring that more families are informed about available services.
2. Government should strengthen the enforcement of child support policies in local communities to ensure that their benefits reach vulnerable families effectively.
3. Government should implement targeted poverty alleviation programs, as financial strain is a significant contributor to child abuse in Lagos Mainland.
4. Government should expand educational opportunities for parents, focusing on childcare and family support, to mitigate the influence of lack of education on child abuse.
5. Government should work on cultural reorientation programs to address harmful traditional practices that contribute to child abuse.

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