

Experiences of Sexual Abuse by Adolescent Girls in Ife/Ijesa Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Sexual abuse of adolescent girls is a menace that has been reported globally, and it is increasing at an alarming rate.

Objectives: The study assessed experiences of sexual harassment (SH), sexual exploitation (SE), and rape among school adolescent girls in Ife/Ijesa Zone of Osun State, Nigeria. It also assessed the perpetrators, settings of the abuse, and reactions of survivors to sexual abuse. Latent variables underlying revictimization during adolescent years were also explored.

Methods: Cross sectional design was employed with qualitative and quantitative components. Two hundred twenty four adolescent girls from two public high schools were selected using cluster sampling technique. Quantitative data were collected using a semi structure questionnaire while qualitative data were collected using Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG). Institutional Review Board approval was received for the study.

Results: Quantitative findings showed that 55.5% experienced SH and 23.7% experienced SE while 20.8% experienced rape. Three factors that were extracted using factor analysis were labeled as “forceful sexual interaction,” “romance,” and “actual sexual intercourse.” Perpetrators of rape and SH were mostly male friends (69% and 50% respectively) while perpetrators of SE were mostly sexual partners (91%) which some of girls referred to as “aristos” in FGD. The mostly reported setting for various acts of sexual abuse was the perpetrators’ house (rape 3%; SH 7%; SE 6%) and many of the survivors reported they did nothing about the abuse (rape 1%; SH 1%; SE 1%). However, all those who were sexually abused as children experienced high level of sexual abuse in adolescent stage. The FGD revealed that perpetrators of sexual abuse were mostly teachers, sexual partners, and peers while the bush path was mentioned as setting for rape contrary to data from the questionnaire.

Conclusion: Sexual abuse educational intervention should focus more on male friends and sexual partners as perpetrators; the perpetrator’s house as the settings for abuse; the necessity to report; and romance and force as elements of sexual abuse.

Key words: Childhood sexual abuse, factor analysis, perpetrators, rape, reaction, re-victimization, settings, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse and violence have been a global health and social problems which have been recorded both in the developed and developing countries.^{1,2} The report of the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF)³ indicated that around 120 million girls under the age of 20 worldwide (about 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts. UNICEF further reported that 1 in 3 ever-married adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (84 million) have been victims of emotional, physical, or sexual violence committed by their husbands or partners.³

Sexual abuse transcends racial, economic, social, and religious circles⁴ and studies have shown that adolescents and young

women have the highest frequencies of experiences of sexual abuse.⁵ Over the years, it has been documented that sexual abuse against girls and women is a direct consequence of the unequal power relation and resources between male and female gender, and also the cultural norms that support domination of women by men.⁶ Finkelhor⁷ has reported that the large age gap between girls and their partners often puts these girls at a disadvantage in avoiding violence and in negotiating healthy sexual behavior. The younger a girl is when she first experiences sexual intercourse, the higher the chances that the sexual activity is coercive.⁷

Globally, the 21st century has witnessed increased incidence of sexual abuse of adolescent girls^{4,8,9} and it is no longer a

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strange occurrence in many parts of the world. The cultural milieu and norms that differ from society to society in terms of gender relations have been responsible for the differences in the occurrences of this menace. Hill and Silva¹⁰ documented that sexual harassment (SH) is common at every stage of a child's education and that verbal and physical harassment begins in elementary school, where 4 of 5 children experience some form of SH or bullying. Since the late 1980s, research on peer SH in schools has increased¹¹⁻¹³ and literature has shown that it is a problem that requires focused attention. In rural Uganda, sexual coercion is not limited to forced or threat-induced sexual intercourse but involves a broader array of behaviors including unwanted verbal advances; unsolicited sexual touching; transactional sex in exchange for money, gifts, food, or other benefits; unsuccessful attempts at rape; and sex resulting from threats, intimidation, deception, or emotional manipulation.¹⁴ Also, among Brazilian high school students, SH has been reported to be a regular occurrence. A sizeable number (24%) of these students in a study conducted by DeSouza and Ribeiro,¹⁵ reported having harassed other students at least once or twice during the preceding 12 months of the study. Gådin¹⁶ also documented that within the school environment, girls in elementary school experience SH by boys and this experience was perceived as part of a heterosexual romantic discourse.

Similarly, sexual exploitation (SE) of young people has been reported worldwide most especially in low and middle-income countries. SE is a serious crime against the girl child worldwide, and the International Labor Organization¹⁷ put the figure of SE globally to be 1.8 million. "Believe in Children Barnardo's"¹⁸ explained that SE of children and young people takes different forms. It ranges from their being given accommodation in return for sexual activities to being exploited formally. According to "Believe in Children Barnardo's," it is often difficult for children who are exploited to accept that they are being exploited because they are always coerced in some way into such a lifestyle. For example, it is common for a girl to think that the man who controls every aspect of her life is her boyfriend, and she will remain loyal to him even when he coerces her into having sex with others, and in some cases resorts to violence to ensure compliance. In Africa, Leah¹⁹ reported that SE of school girls outside the school is perpetrated by "sugar daddies" who are usually men that are older than the girls and old enough to be their fathers. These men ("sugar daddies") meet the financial and material needs of the girls in exchange for sexual favors. Painfully, the true extent of SE of children and young people is unknown because most activity takes place behind closed doors.¹⁸ The hidden nature of this heinous crime makes it easier for abusive adults to continue to exploit children for their own gain and gratification which many times could result to act of rape.

Most experts believe that the primary cause of rape is an aggressive desire to dominate the victim rather than an attempt to achieve sexual fulfilment.^{19,20} They consider rape as an act of violence rather than principally a sexual encounter, and it is one of the most serious sex crimes which can be very difficult

to prosecute.²⁰ Coerced sex may result in sexual gratification on the part of the perpetrator though its underlying purpose is frequently the expression of power and dominance over the person assaulted. In intimate partner relationship, men who coerce a spouse into a sexual act believe their actions are legitimate because they are married to the woman.²¹

Furthermore, studies have proven that an individual who is sexually abused during childhood years has the tendency to be re-victimized later in life.^{22,23} Reports of child sexual abuse (CSA) in a clinical sample in Turkey revealed that 60% of the participants were sexually abused only once and the remaining 40%, multiple times, and many of the abusers were males and intrafamilial persons (relatives).²⁴ In another study conducted in a medical secondary school in China, over 1 in 5 young women (21.9%) reported at least one type of CSA, with victims of contact CSA experiencing higher rates of depression, overwhelming sadness, suicidal thinking and planning, alcohol drinking, smoking, fighting, and having sexual intercourse.²⁵ There is the likelihood that these children that are abused at a tender age experienced revictimization later in life with resultant physical and psychological consequences.

Sexual abuse researchers have documented that an adolescent girl can be sexually abused in any setting. Settings such as the offices, homes, roadside, the bush path, and motor parks^{26,27} have been documented in the literature. In Bangladesh, experience of SH of young girls on their way to school or social functions had been reported to likely contribute to not achieving the 2nd and 3rd millennium development goals by the year 2020.²⁸ Some of these Bangladesh young girls reported being harassed by young spoilt male bullies (64%), neighborhood youths (30%), students (22%), and hoodlums (6%).²⁸

Lately, reporting sexual abuse by survivors has been the point of discourse by many authors and program planners worldwide. Data suggest that in some countries, as many as 7 in 10 girls aged 15–19 who had been victims of physical and/or sexual abuse had never sought help, many said they did not think it was abuse or did not see it as a problem.³ Fear of not being believed; being asked questions about their well-being; feeling ashamed of what happened; blaming themselves for the abuse, for not telling, and for the consequences of disclosure have contributed to nondisclosure.²⁹ In a qualitative study among adolescents that experienced CSA, it was found that less than one-third of the participants immediately disclosed CSA to another person.³⁰ In most cases, recipients of both immediate and delayed disclosure were peers and more than one-third of participants had never disclosed the abuse to a parent.³⁰ The main reasons for nondisclosure to parents were lack of trust, or not wanting to burden the parents. The study of Schönbucher³⁰ further showed that the factors that correlated positively with disclosure include extrafamilial CSA, single CSA, age of victim at CSA, and having parents who were still living together. Many adolescent survivors in the study of Schönbucher *et al.*³⁰ had serious concerns about disclosure to their parents and considered friends as more reliable confidants. Similarly, the study of Pilgrim *et al.*,³¹

affirms that ever-married girls whose mothers alone were deceased were more likely to report sexual coercion than those with both parents alive.

Sexual abuse of adolescent girl could have serious physical and health consequences. This menace has been associated with the occurrence of HIV infection³² and Candida infection,³³ depression and guilt³⁴ among others. The study of Swahn *et al.*³⁵ among girls and young women living in the slums of Kampala revealed that those who were raped were more likely to expect not to have enough money, to die early, to be unhappy, and to have bad things happen to them. Similarly, the study of Ozbaran *et al.*²⁴ reported that abused children experienced posttraumatic syndrome within 1 year after the abuse.

In many Sub-Saharan African nations, cases of SH, SE, and rape have been documented to be rampant among adolescent girls. In Nigeria, especially, sexual abuse of adolescent girls has increased greatly and has therefore been termed an epidemic in the Nigerian society.^{36,37} The increased incidence of sexual abuse in Nigeria has been linked to the poor socioeconomic status of majority of the citizens which has allowed for SE of young girls.³⁷ Also documented are the peculiar circumstances that place Nigerian adolescent girls at risk of sexual abuse. For instance, the common practice of street hawking and selling at night markets exposes girls to exploitative sexual liaisons.³⁸ Cultural norms and expectations about the behavior of women and men also lead to myths that perpetuate violence and deny assistance to victims.³⁹ Also, the Nigerian culture socializes daughters to be submissive and sons to be the aggressive ones.⁶ Regrettably, these roles are entrenched in the culture and are enforced by the society through schools, parents, the media, and religious institutions. The roles which the society has given to both sexes often cause dominance in sexual relationships.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, data are scarce on the exact prevalence of sexual abuse among adolescent girls in Nigeria. This is not unconnected with the fact that majority of survivors don't seek for redress or report the acts²⁷ due to shame, stigma, prolonged court cases, and for the fact that people will blame them or not believe them.⁴¹ Many researches on sexual abuse in Nigeria have focused mainly on university students.^{34,42,43} However, studies that explored the experiences of SH, SE, and rape, vis-à-vis, the perpetrators, settings, reactions to abuse, and latent variables underlying revictimization are scarce among adolescent girls in high schools in Nigeria. We, therefore, designed this study to achieve the following stated objectives:

- To assess experiences of SH, SE, and rape among adolescent girls
- To identify the perpetrators of and settings for SH, SE, and rape of adolescent girls
- To assess the experiences of CSA of adolescent girls
- To identify the latent variables underlining CSA and sexual abuse revictimization in adolescent stage.

Conception of sexual abuse

For the purpose of this study, sexual abuse was conceptualized as SH, SE, and rape. Therefore, the following definitions were given to each of the terms:

- Sexual abuse is any form of unacceptable sexual contact expressed by a male to an adolescent girl which may be in form of SH, SE, and rape
- SH is any act of unacceptable comments (verbal or nonverbal) or contacts, of a sexual nature which may or may not be accompanied by threat or force expressed by a male toward an adolescent girl
- SE is the act of rendering assistance (physical or moral) to an adolescent girl including exposure to pornography by an older male with the purpose of taking sexual advantage of such a girl
- Rape is the unacceptable attempted or actual sexual intercourse received by an adolescent girl from a male
- CSA is acts of SH, SE, and rape that an adolescent girl experiences from the opposite sex during her elementary school days.

METHODS

The study employed cross-sectional design with qualitative and quantitative methods. The study was conducted in two mixed-sex coeducational public senior secondary schools (high schools) in Ilesa East and Ife Central Local Government Areas of Osun State, Nigeria. The sample size was calculated from the sample size formula for single proportion in which the prevalence of the estimated phenomenon of interest was taken to be 11%.⁴⁴ Clusters sampling technique was used to select 224 high school girls. Two local government areas were selected from two zones out of the 6 zones present in the study state. A school was selected from each local government area, using purposive sampling techniques. Criteria for selection were that schools: must be mixed gender (having both male and female students); have female senior secondary school students; must be owned by the government; and be a day school. By proportion, 103 girls were selected from the first school and another 121 from the second school using simple random sampling technique. Of this sample size (224), a total of 24 girls (12 from each school) participated in qualitative data collection while the remaining 200 (91, 109) participated in quantitative data collection. Quantitative data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire while qualitative data were collected using Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG). The questionnaire assessed the students' demographics, their experiences of CSA, and experiences of sexual abuse in adolescent stage. CSA experiences were assessed using four questions of yes or no options and it indicated experiences of sexual abuse acts in primary school (elementary school). Questions on experiences of sexual abuse in adolescent years were computed using 5-, 3-point Likert-scale questions of never, sometimes, and always on different acts of SH, SE, and rape. The same questions were also used to explore the perpetrators for the abuse, the settings of the abuse and the

reactions of the abused girls. Cronbach alpha of 0.7 was recorded for the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

The FGD sought information on incidence of sexual abuse of adolescent girls, the settings and the perpetrators of the abuse. The discussion was organized among two groups each consisting 12 participants. During the discussion, participants were arranged in a round table style, the researcher moderated the session and the research assistant assisted in recording voices using a voice recorder. At the end of the sessions, snacks were distributed to the participants.

Institutional Review Board approval was received for the study. Assent was obtained from the students while implied informed consent for the parents was obtained from the students. Anonymity was ensured during data collection and data obtained was kept confidential.

Data analysis

Of the 200 questionnaires that were administered, one was not properly filled hence, could not be analyzed. Therefore, 199 questionnaires were appropriate for analysis given a response rate of 99.5%. Data were coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 16.0. Chicago, SPSS Inc) for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. A significant level of $P \leq 0.05$ was taken for the study. The childhood experiences of sexual abuse were scored as yes = 2 and no = 1. The sexual abuse experience scale was scored as never = 1, sometimes = 2 and always = 3, thereby giving a total maximum score of 15 to adolescents with the highest scores. Therefore, those that scored 5 on a scale of 1–15 were grouped as having no experience, those that scored between 6 and 10 were grouped as having low level of experience while those that scored between 11 and 15 were grouped as having high level of experience. Association between CSA and sexual abuse in adolescent stage was determined using Chi-square test. Also, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the latent variables in CSA and sexual abuse in adolescent years that allows for re-victimization.

Content analysis was carried out for qualitative data in which a verbatim transcription of the raw data was carried out. Transcribed data were grouped according to the FGDG, which served as the themes for the groupings. Qualitative data were then presented in category tables and pros.

RESULTS

Findings from this study showed that the majority of the students were between 14 and 17 years (82%) with mean age of 15.8 ± 1.5 years. Thirteen percent had one sexual partner while only 4% had more than one sexual partner. About 53% and 40% of their fathers and mothers, respectively, had tertiary education certificate while 43% of their mothers had secondary education certificate. Higher percentages of fathers (58%) and mothers (73%) were traders, and 89% of the students reported they usually took less than one dollar to school as daily lunch break allowance.

Overall, 30 (15.1%) of the adolescents experienced CSA (mean = 1.2 ± 0.4) while 59 (29.6%) experienced sexual abuse in adolescent stage (mean = 1.3 ± 0.5). By multiple responses, 56 (55.5%) experienced SH, 24 (23.7%) experienced SE, while 21 (20.8%) experienced rape. The descriptive link of the CSA and sexual abuse in adolescent stage is found in Figure 1 as all those who were abused at childhood stage were also abused in adolescent stage. A significant association also existed between CSA and sexual abuse in adolescent stage ($\chi^2 = 26.680$; $df = 2$; $P = 0.0001$). Using factorial analysis to determine the latent variables that underline sexual abuse revictimization in adolescent stage, correlation matrix showed that 80.5% of the variables significantly correlated with each other [Table I] suggesting reasonably factorability of the items. An examination of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable (KMO = 0.712) and the Bartlett’s test of specificity was significant ($\chi^2 = 404.982$; $df = 36$; $P = 0.0001$) which means that the variables are not normally distributed. Also, the communalities were all above 0.3 further confirming that each item shared common variance with other items. Therefore, principal component analysis was used for extraction and three factors with eigenvalues of >1 were extracted when loadings ≤ 0.30 were excluded. These factors explained 61.4% of all the variable variances. Specifically, Factor 1 explained 23.1% of the total variance, Factor 2 explained 22.2% of the total variance while Factor 3 explained 16.0% of the total variance [Table II]. The eigenvalues also leveled off after three factors on the scree plot. Also, varimax with Kaiser normalization rotation method was carried out. Findings showed that 3 items loaded into Factor 1. These three items all relate to the actual sexual penetration. This factor was labeled “actual sexual intercourse. Four items loaded onto Factor 2 and they all relate to use of force in sexual interaction.” The factor was labeled as “forceful sexual interaction” while only two items that loaded onto Factor 3 related to prepenetration activities and was labeled “romance” [Table III].

Qualitative findings showed that sexual abuse is rampant among the adolescent girls as there was a unanimous agreement

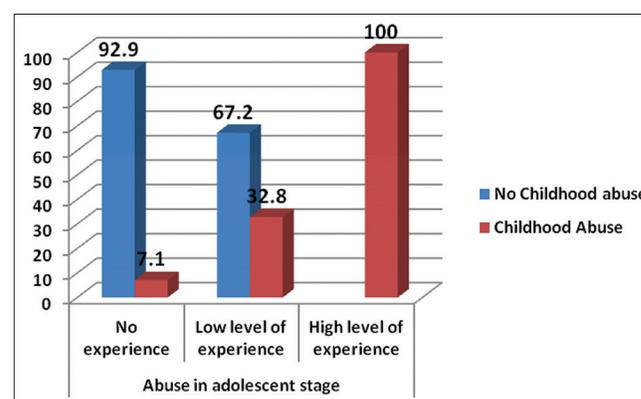


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of adolescent girls' experiences of childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse in adolescent stage.

Table I: Correlation matrix for acts of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescent stages

	Fondle breast	Had sex	Kissed you	Touched sexual parts	Male forcing pornography	Male regularly have sex	Male forcing sex	Male threatening	Male romancing
Fondle breast	1.000								
Had sex	-0.036	1.000							
Kissed you	0.326*	0.304*	1.000						
Touched sexual parts	-0.036	0.656*	0.120**	1.000					
Male forcing pornography	0.041	0.276*	0.079**	0.383*	1.000				
Male regularly have sex	-0.048	0.300*	0.159**	0.300*	0.224*	1.000			
Male forcing sex	0.087	0.298*	0.165**	0.387*	0.414*	0.276*	1.000		
Male threatening	0.127**	0.110	0.142**	0.172*	0.198*	0.063	0.434*	1.000	
Male romancing	0.225*	0.194**	0.330*	0.278*	0.438*	0.201*	0.413*	0.281*	1.000

*Significant at $P \leq 0.01$, **Significant at $P \leq 0.05$

Table II: Total variances explained by loaded factors

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage	Total	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
1	2.995	33.283	33.283	2.081	23.125	23.125
2	1.414	15.714	48.997	2.000	22.226	45.351
3	1.111	12.349	61.347	1.440	15.995	61.347
4	0.831	9.231	70.578			
5	0.789	8.768	79.346			
6	0.629	6.985	86.332			
7	0.473	5.255	91.587			
8	0.468	5.201	96.788			
9	0.289	3.212	100.000			

Extraction method: Principal component analysis

Table III: Rotated component matrix

	Component		
	Actual sexual intercourse (1)	Forced sexual interaction (2)	Romance (3)
Had sex with you	0.856	-0.061	0.125
Touched sexual parts	0.789	-0.276	-0.048
A male regularly have sex with me because he supports me financially	-0.590	0.122	-0.025
A male forces me to have sex with him	-0.295	0.752	-0.037
A male threatens me in so many ways to have sex with me	0.083	0.737	-0.091
A male romances me against my wish	-0.196	0.621	-0.382
A male forces me to watch blue (pornographic) films because he supports me financially	-0.349	0.624	0.056
Kissed you	0.291	-0.020	0.811
Fondle your breast	-0.197	-0.145	0.778

Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization, *Rotation converged in 5 iterations

of the seriousness and severity of the menace. Two of the students commented thus:

“When a girl is going home from school and her route is lonely, they can go and double cross her and rape her. I have heard of such but I have not witnessed it myself but, it happens”

“I have a friend who is in X state (name of state withheld). She used to verbally abuse boys. One night, she was sent on an errand beside the bush, she did not know that some people were watching her and they pulled her from the back, and that was how they raped her because she did not accept their proposal. However, I learnt that she verbally abused them.”

Perpetrators such as rich men and politicians, teachers and peers were mentioned in the two groups [Table IV]. However, a lot of debate occurred in the two groups regarding teachers as perpetrators of SH. The following comment was given by one of the participants:

“There are some teachers when they see a girl like this, they will like her and then instruct her to help them buy food or something else. They just want the girl to be roaming about their offices. They can also ask her to come and mark scripts or record scores. Through that, they will be touching her body and will be playing with her body. She too will not be able to talk”

Most importantly male peers as perpetrators of rape were debated extensively and examples of such cases were given.

Table IV: Perpetrators of sexual abuse of adolescent girls as mentioned by participants of focus group discussion

	Group 1	Group 2
Theme A: Perpetrators of sexual abuse of adolescent girls		
Drug abusers	+	+
Rich men and politicians	+	+
Schoolmates/peers	+	-
Teachers	+	+
Older married men	+	+
Ritualists	-	+
Theme B: Settings for sexual abuse of adolescent girls		
Anywhere	+	+
Night parties	+	+
Schools	+	+
In the house of the male	+	+
Bush path	+	-
Hotels	+	-

+: Mentioned in the group, -: Not mentioned in the group

“For example, a case happened recently where four SS3 boys went to the bush to rape an SS1 girl. The girl was deceived from the class by her female friend who had already collected money from the boys. She told her that they were going to collect something from the other side of the school and that they had to take the bush path. She was then raped by the boys. A student saw them who reported them to the principal. I heard that the girl is in the hospital now.”

Rape and SE were mentioned as occurring between adolescent girls and their peers and older men who are their sexual partners.

“Young men are usually the perpetrators most especially the boyfriends (sexual partners). If a girl promised him sex and she did not fulfill it at the right time, or verbally abused him when she is being proposed to, he could rape her either by himself alone or with his friends if he cannot handle her alone. Such cases are very rampant”

“Those girls who likes to befriend ‘aristos’ (sugar daddies) when they are still students or those that are usually making friends with boys. You see, when these girls are going home from schools, they walk with boys so they get raped.”

Quantitative data also supported the report of focus group discussion (FGD) as perpetrators of SE were reported to be mostly sexual partners (91%), while perpetrators of rape and SH were mostly male friends (69% and 50% respectively) [Figure 2]. Incidences of SH, rape, and SE were reported to mostly occurred in the perpetrators’ houses (rape - 93%; SH - 67%; SE - 86%) [Table V]. This was also supported in FGD as the male’s house, the school, and parties were mentioned [Table IV]. However, only one group mentioned the bush path as a setting for sexual abuse. However, the school environment was also unanimously

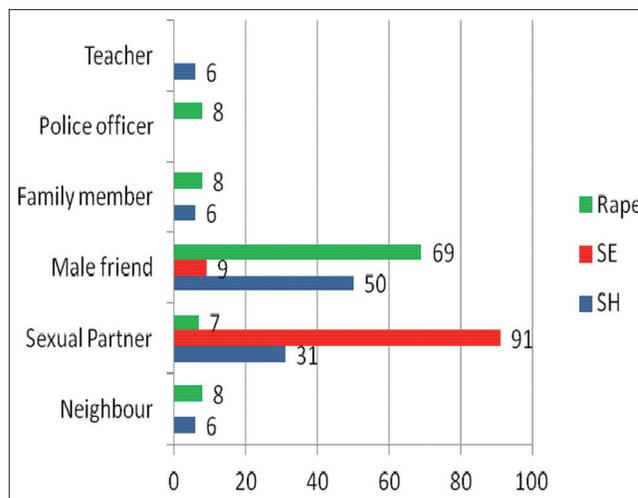


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of perpetrators of sexual abuse of adolescent girls.

mentioned during FGD. Findings further showed that a few of the abused girls reported the incidence (rape - 36%; SH - 22%; SE - 29%). However, 71% of sexually harassed girls reported they did nothing about the incidence [Table V].

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have again depicted the occurrence of sexual abuse among adolescent girls. Many studies have reported that incidence of sexual abuse is higher among adolescent girls^{26,27,32,33} compared to other age groups, and this has been attributed to their developmental stage. The findings also indicated that sexual abuse of adolescent girls is increasing among this population. The incidence of SH (55.5%) recorded in this study is higher than what was recorded in the Nigerian study of Ajuwon *et al.*,⁴⁴ in which 9% reported unwanted touch of breast and backside, and that of Mezie-Okoye and Alamina,³⁴ in which 33.7% reported fondling/grabbing of sensitive body parts. Similarly, reported incidence of rape in this study is also higher than the previous findings of Ajuwon *et al.*,⁴⁴ in which 9% reported rape. However, Achunike and Kitause³⁷ and Folayan *et al.*³⁶ have also expressed the epidemic nature of sexual abuse most especially rape among Nigerian young girls. In other countries, the trend of increasing rate of sexual abuse in adolescent girls has also been documented.^{14,15,35}

It is not surprising that findings from this study also showed that some of the girls were abused during their childhood stage (15%) and all those who experience CSA also experienced abuse in adolescent years [Figure 1]. The occurrence of CSA was also reported in Turkey and China among school girls. However, the percentage reported in the study of China (60%) and Turkey (21.9%) were higher than what was reported in this study.^{24,25} The association between CSA and sexual abuse in adolescents stage in this study ($\chi^2 = 26.680$; $df = 2$; $P = 0.0001$) corroborates the reports of Mezie-Okoye and Alamina³⁴ of prior victimization being associated with sexual violence ($P = 0.049$, odds ratio = 1.52, confidence interval = 1.00–2.30). However,

Table V: Reported settings for sexual abuse and reactions to the abuse

	Rape (%)	Sexual harassment (%)	Sexual exploitation (%)
Setting			
Perpetrator's house	93	67	86
Road side	7	15	-
School	-	15	-
Office	-	4	14
Reaction to sexual abuse			
Did nothing	21	41	71
Fought him	21	37	-
Reported the incident	36	22	29
Cried	21	-	-

*Multiple responses allowed

the three factors that are revealed in the factor analysis are significant in sexual abuse prevention education among adolescent girls. It is essential to create awareness among adolescent girls that acts of romance which is SH can be found in rape action as well as in SE. They also need to be aware that force could be expressed by the perpetrator to achieve their desire hence, when faced with acts of threat or force, it becomes paramount for the girl to assess the situation to be able to take appropriate decision, either in conceding to the abuse and seek redress later or move away and report. In addition, children are more vulnerable than adolescents and should be assisted in the ability to recognize potential perpetrators of sexual abuse and report the incidence. Abused children should also be identified by sexual abuse therapist, counseled and educated to prevent revictimization later in life.

Perpetrator of sexual abuse

The findings on perpetrators of sexual abuse as reported in this study supports the reports of Ozbaran *et al.*,²⁴ Daru *et al.*,³³ and Akinlusi *et al.*,⁴⁵ that sexual violence is more likely to be perpetrated by peers, boyfriends, acquaintances, neighbors, or relatives. In this study, male friends and sexual partners were mostly reported as perpetrators which is in agreement with the report from the FGD in this study and the findings from previous studies.⁴⁶⁻⁴⁹ Specifically the study of Ogunfowokan *et al.*⁴⁸ reports that male adolescents lone or gang rape their female sexual partners who are mostly adolescent girls. The "aristos" or "sugar daddies" as reported in the FGD are older adults who sexually exploit young girls by giving them money or materials in exchange for sex. This practice was also reported in a cross country survey on gender violence among school adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the survey, "sugar daddies" were identified as perpetrators in the vicinity of schools.¹⁹

Taking a closer look at the results from this study, it appears that the prevalence of teachers as perpetrators is reducing in the study setting as reported by the abused girls [Figure 2]. This might not be unconnected with the various checks for sexual abuse that have been put in place in many institutions of learning in the country. In June 03, 2015, the sexual offence

bill was passed by the legislatures and various punishments including life imprisonment, 10 and 14 years imprisonment, and cash fines among others were spelt out for perpetrators of various sexual abuse offences.⁵⁰ However, the bill is not without its shortcomings. For example, stating the age of sexual consent for girl to be 11 years has aroused debates among the Nigerian citizens, and the president is being implored not to sign such bill into law unless the anomaly is corrected.

Setting for sexual abuse

Previous reports on settings for sexual abuse in Nigeria have indicated the bush tract, nearby cemetery, and motor parks^{27,38} as common places of abuse of girls. These settings have also been reported in other countries.^{28,35} However, it appears that the settings for committing these heinous acts have shifted to the house of the perpetrators as reflected in Tables IV and V. As at 2012, Ige and Fawole's study⁵¹ indicated that sexual abuse mostly occurred at the perpetrator's residence (29.2%) and that a familiar person is the perpetrator (62.5%). The percentages of the report of abuse in the house of the perpetrator in this study are higher (rape = 93%, SH = 67%, SE = 86%) than what was reported in the study of Ige and Fawole.⁵¹ The reports of some Nigerian newspapers on reported cases of sexual abuse of young girls showed that the abuse occurred in the houses of the perpetrators.⁵²⁻⁵⁴ It is therefore inferred that perpetrators are now devising means of luring these girls into their homes to violate them. Most importantly, sexual partners as perpetrators can be attributed to the cultural belief that when a lady is in intimate partner relationship, she has automatically consented to sex.²¹ The perpetrator's house is an essential setting to be noted and emphasized when educating adolescent girls on sexual abuse prevention. They should be educated on the need not to visit the opposite sex alone or stay alone with the opposite sex whom they do not trust and should also be aware of familiar persons' deception into sexual abuse.

Reactions to sexual abuse

Researchers, program planners, and other stakeholders in sexual abuse prevention have always stressed the need to report experiences of sexual abuse which will consequently serves as deterrent for perpetrators from future perpetration.^{29,30} The most striking finding in this study is that many abused girls did not respond appropriately to the incidence. The majority of them reported they did nothing about the incidence most especially those who experienced SE (71%) while a few cried most especially those who were raped (21%). Since SE was reported to be perpetrated mostly by sexual partners in this study, it can be inferred that the girls accepted the violation as a result of the symbiotic relationship involved in the act hence, did not report. However, for the few girls that reported, the study did not explore the process of reporting and prosecution which also calls for further researches in this area. Nonetheless, it has been documented in previous researches that, victims of sexual abuse don't seek for redress or report the acts due to shame, stigma, prolonged court cases, and for the fact that people will blame them or not believe them.^{29,41} Having few adolescent girls reporting incidence of sexual abuse in this

study is an indication that reporting cases of sexual abuse is still very low in the study setting. It then becomes essential to encourage them to report any act of sexual abuse against them. Essentially, it is paramount to assess the steps taken by those whom cases of sexual abuse were reported to in order to determine if appropriate actions were taken to investigate and sanction the perpetrators. In addition, exposing adolescent girls to skills involved in handling cases of sexual abuse should be a priority at this time so that they can be equipped maximally in the process of prosecution and prevention of sexual abuse.

Limitations of the study

It is difficult to generalize the findings of this study among sexually abused adolescent girls in Nigeria, because of the few number of abused girls in the study. Also, the researchers could not include males in the study. The males could have given factual information on who perpetrators of sexual abuse of adolescent girls are. It is suggested that future research should focus on abused girls and their perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

Incidences of SH, SE, and rape are still prevalent among adolescent girls in the study setting. The abuse is perpetrated mostly by male friends and sexual partners. Most incidences occurred in the perpetrators houses and many abused girls did not report the incidence. The latent factors underlying CSA and revictimization in adolescent stage are romance, forced sexual interaction, and actual sexual intercourse. These factors have the likelihood to exist in every act of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse educational intervention for adolescent girls should focus more on; male friends and sexual partners as perpetrators; the perpetrator's house as the setting for abuse; the necessity to report; and romance and force as an element of sexual abuse.

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Conflicts of interest

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