

Interpretations of Teachers and Pupils on Issues of Child Abuse in Schools around Bindura: Zimbabwe

Spikelele Mtetwa

¹*Bindura University of Science Education, (BUSE), Bindura, Zimbabwe*
E-mail: spikelelem@gmail.com

KEYWORDS Community. Knowledge. Home. Girls. Responsiveness. Support

ABSTRACT The paper assessed interpretations of child abuse in Bindura schools, Zimbabwe, comparing teachers' and students' interpretations of child abuse in the school, home, community and analyzed the responsiveness of relevant authorities and inherent social support. A descriptive research design based on questionnaires was used. Schools were chosen based on the supposition that they are safer havens for children than the community and/or home. It was revealed that various forms of child abuse exist, and teachers' and pupils' interpretations of child abuse are similar, lengthy jail terms and overhaul of the penal system are a part of the solution to this scourge. Both girls and boys are abused though in varying levels. African cultural beliefs were found to sustain most of the child abuses. It was concluded that there is a general dearth of child abuse knowledge among primary school pupils with the community being the major culprit of child abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the various programs and innovations instituted on a local and international basis to address child abuse, this phenomenon continues to persist in many countries worldwide and Zimbabwe is not an exception to this (Gudyanga 2014). Since teachers are regarded not only as custodians of children at school but also to act in loco-parentis, they are generally regarded as repositories of child abuse knowledge. In this way, they are expected to educate students on this issue (Gudyanga 2014). In the fight against child abuse, it is also necessary that the children be active participants, and hence the need to ensure they are aware of its nature to help themselves when the need arises. It is in this light that this paper explored teachers' and children's interpretations of child abuse with an endeavor to suggest ways in which child abuse, which is on the rise in Bindura (Munongerwa 2014), can be reduced. Although there are a plethora of variegated researches on the topic as evinced by studies done by Shumba (2004) and Gudyanga (2014), among others, there is limited research on the interpretations of teachers and students on abuse, and hence a vacuum exists, which sustains this paper.

Literature Review

There is generally no consensus among scholars as to what a child is and what child

abuse means (Gudyanga 2014; Wilkinson 2014). In terms of Section 2 of the Children's Act, Chapter 5: 06, Zimbabwe, a child is any person who is under sixteen years of age. For the purposes of this paper, a child shall therefore be viewed as a person aged between 11 and 17 years. In Zimbabwe, child abuse is generally explained in terms of the Children's Act, which outlaws all forms of abuse. A pupil is generally a child at school but in this paper a pupil is used interchangeably with a student.

Matters of child abuse usually provoke debate in social circles because of the elusiveness of child abuse as a concept in African settings (Prah 2016 citing Harvey 2002). This is because of the lower position of the African child in African societal strata. However, tremendous inroads have been made in outlawing seemingly harmful cultural practices that trample on the rights of children for example, pledging of female persons. This has been criminalized by Section 94 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 9:23. Paradoxically, in Zimbabwe the institutions that are supposed to champion child safety marginalize and trivialize their cause. It is in this framework that this paper tries to reveal how deeply entrenched child victimization has become. To keep abreast with contemporary trends, Zimbabwe has ratified its constitution to embrace the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child. It is against this

backdrop that this paper examines the interpretations of teachers and children on child abuse.

There are basically four widely known forms of abuse, which are physical, neglect, emotional and sexual abuse (Crosson-Tower 2003; Ajema et al. 2016) and another one in the form of bullying. The various classifications of abuse are not well understood by parents and guardians as noted by Pur et al. (2016) where for instance emotional abuse also includes overprotection and denying the child normal social interaction in the school community. Shumba (2002) says emotional abuse is considered as the least known form of child abuse due to cultural perceptions that downplay this form of abuse.

Girl child sexual abuse is ubiquitous in Zimbabwe and most of sub-Saharan Africa (Ajema et al. 2016). Mantula and Saloojee (2016) note that in Zimbabwe and most of sub-Saharan Africa, this scourge is less documented. Musallam (2014) cited in Mantula and Saloojee (2016) categorically states that in most Zimbabwean communities like Bindura, sexual intercourse with a minor is believed to assist in superstitious wealth accumulation and curing HIV/AIDS (Lalor 2005). For the purpose of this paper, both contact and non-contact forms of sexual abuse are referred to as sexual abuse. Physical abuse includes burning, beating, and kicking, punching and child labor (Crosson-Tower 2003). Physical abuse may also result from extreme discipline or punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or condition. In African tradition, parents believe sparing the rod will spoil the child, and hence many cases of gross physical abuse go unreported (Chinyangara et al. 2000; Gudyanga 2014). The same can be asserted for child labor (Loewenson 1991; Gudyanga 2014). The author sought to ascertain how teachers and pupils understand the various forms of child abuse.

Reporting Cases of Child Abuse

Children rarely disclose matters of sexual abuse due to various reasons. Firstly, it might be due to what Mantula and Saloojee (2016) view as intermittent reporting of child abuse cases due to limited knowledge of the topic by the children themselves and other stakeholders. Secondly, most cases of abuse occur in private spheres, and hence the reported cases are undoubtedly not representative of the incidences of child abuse (Nyamanhindi 2015 cited in Man-

tula and Saloojee 2016). Hence, the home and the community are regarded as the greatest breeding grounds of child maltreatment, but Gudyanga (2014) also brought an interesting dimension to this by stating that schools are also sites of gross child abuse cases, which usually go unreported. Bryant and Milsom (2005) found that the main reason for underreporting of child abuse cases was linked to societal ties and authorities' inefficiency. As such, the majority of the children who desperately need help are masquerading as normal so convincingly that their abuse goes completely undetected (Rush 1980; Gudyanga 2014). Teachers are in a unique position to recognize and report abuse due to their position, training, experience and expertise (Tower 2003; Gudyanga 2014). Conversely, Prah's (2016) findings in Ghana and Gudyanga's (2014) findings in Zimbabwe reveal that teachers are the worst perpetrators of sexual abuse of children. In cases that teachers expose cases of child abuse more often than not, they are not informed on the outcomes of the cases they report and this demotivates them from reporting any other cases in future (Walsh et al. 2005).

So much has been said about perpetrators of child abuse with findings from many researches advocating stiffer penalties for child abusers depending on the case. This is evinced in one such study where children suggested imprisonment for sexual abuse, physical abuse, counseling neglect and abandonment, respectively (Shumba 2002a; Gudyanga 2014). As a rule of thumb, there is a general trend of under reporting of child abuse cases in African communities.

Purpose of Research

The major thrust of this research was to compare the different interpretations of child abuse between teachers and students in the school, home and community based on the supposition that the school is a safer haven for the child compared to the community.

Significance of the Study

The paper serves as an eye opener for the largely ignored area of child abuse interpretations in Zimbabwe and hopefully arouses interest from the relevant authorities on the need to reconsider the topic in its entirety.

Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of the paper were to:

1. Document and assess teachers' and students' knowledge of abuse in general and the different forms of child abuse in Bindura.
2. Compare the teachers' and students' interpretations of child abuse in the school and community in Bindura.
3. Assess the degree of social support and responsiveness to issues of child abuse in Bindura.
4. Suggest ways in which child abuse can be reduced in Bindura, Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was used to determine and compare the teachers' and pupils' interpretations and perceptions of child abuse in primary and secondary schools within peri-urban Bindura. Oche (2007) in Pur et al. (2016) says that a survey design entails collecting data from a sample population using a questionnaire and/or interview. The adoption of the descriptive survey design enabled the collection of data using two questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for pupils thus triangulation was achieved through capturing different dimensions of the same phenomenon from both teachers and pupils.

Target Population and Sample Size

Two primary and two secondary schools, which are among the eight schools with generally high rates of child abuse from information obtained from Bindura district authorities, were the target population. The four schools were selected due to their proximity to the researcher's workplace.

The schools selected had pupil populations of between two hundred and eighty and five hundred pupils. In order to determine a befitting sample, this paper employed the Carvalho Hypothesis (1994) cited in Tulu (2010), which among other issues, states that in a homogeneous population, small samples can be used. According to this hypothesis, the minimum sample size applicable here was thirty pupils per school. One

hundred and twenty students consisting of sixty primary and sixty secondary students equally distributed between males and females was selected for this paper based on random sampling.

Measuring Instruments

Two separate questionnaires were used in this paper for the teachers and the pupils. The questionnaires elicited information in line with the paper's objectives. The questionnaires were divided into sections. The first section of both questionnaires gathered demographic information whilst the other sections looked at issues answering the research questions. The questionnaires required both quantitative and qualitative responses.

A pilot study was done to assess the validity and reliability of the instruments used on a population with similar characteristics at one primary school and one secondary school, which were not selected from the sample. Reliability for school children showed reliability co-efficient of eighty-eight percent with that of teachers recording six percent higher thus the instrument's reliability was very high.

Data Analysis

Content and thematic analyses were used to make sense of qualitative data, with a heavy reliance on deductive reasoning to make sense of the interpretations and experiences of teachers and pupils without imposing any pre-existing expectations and assumptions. SPSS version 20.0 was used to analyze quantitative data.

RESULTS

Each of the research questions of this paper was presented and analyzed independently as explained below and where applicable, buttressed by tables at the end of the text.

Students and Teachers' Responses on Overall Knowledge of Child Abuse

As shown in Table 1, the majority of primary school students (78%) were generally unaware of child abuse unlike their seniors who reported a general high understanding of child abuse (90%). All teachers (100%) demonstrated full understanding of child abuse. This indicates a lack of awareness campaigns for primary school children. Perhaps the teachers and parents feel

Table 1: Students and teachers' overall knowledge of child abuse

Category	Know		Do not know		Not sure	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Primary	13	22	47	78	•	-
Secondary	54	90	6	10	•	-
Teachers	60	100	•	-	•	-
Total	127	71	53	29	•	-

Source: Field Survey

the primary going school pupils are still too young to learn about abuse issues.

Assessing Teachers' and Students' Knowledge of Different Forms of Child Abuse

All teachers demonstrated full understanding of all forms of child abuse and are accordingly not included in the analysis below.

Physical abuse is known very well by a good number of primary school children (70%) and all secondary school students as shown in Table 2. Pupils generally viewed physical abuse in the sense of being beaten up allegedly for some misdemeanors. One female pupil even stated that,

"My parents always force me to do some menial tasks in the fields which I find too difficult for a thirteen-year-old girl like me. Whenever I fail to perform to the expected standard, my parents always beat me up claiming that I am lazy even though I would have done my best"

A sizeable number of primary students (30%) did not understand the difference between disciplinary action recognized by the law and physical abuse. This is illustrated in Table 2. The general impression by students was that physical abuse was more common for boys than girls.

This could be attributed to the very nature of this abuse, for example the law in Zimbabwe prohibits the administration of corporal punishment on girls at the school.

Psychological/emotional abuse was the least known form of abuse among students (known by 20% of primary and 37% of secondary students). Overprotection like denial to sporting activities participation under dubious pretexts from parents for example was generally not viewed as emotional abuse as students were not aware that it was abuse.

While all secondary students demonstrated full knowledge of sexual abuse both as contact and non-contact sexual abuse unlike the majority of primary school children (53%) as shown in Table 2. Primary school children were ignorant of non-contact sexual abuse. Children mentioned that the most common form of sexual abuse was rape and breast fondling (*kubatwa mazamu*). Anal sexual intercourse (especially on boys), as noted by the following phrases revealed in the qualitative responses from the pupils' questionnaire, *"kubatwa chibharo nekumashure"*, *"akarepwa nekumashure akarara manheru, ainyara saka akaudza shamwari yake, ndiyo yakazotiudza."* (He was sodomized whilst sleep-

Table 2: Students' knowledge of different forms of child abuse

	Frequency and percentage of respondents									
	Yes				No				Not sure	
	Pry		Sec		Pry		Sec		Pry	Sec
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Physical	42	70	60	100	-	-	-	-	18	30
Psycho	12	20	22	37	8	13	16	27	30	50
Sexual	28	47	60	100	-	-	-	-	32	53
Neglect	26	43	60	100	-	-	-	-	34	57
Bullying	60	100	60	100	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Field Survey

ing at night, he felt shy but told his friend who then told us). It seemed that the reporting mechanisms were not properly installed and hence students feared to report because of social stigmatization attached to sodomy. Students generally believe that sexual abuse was more common for girls than boys though the sexual abuse of boys was generally impressed as having increased compared to yesteryears.

Neglect was known by all secondary students with the majority of primary school children being not sure (57%) with some even labeling parents and guardians who give conditions like bathing prior to feeding as forms of neglect thereby demonstrating scant knowledge of abuse. Neglect among primary school children was therefore largely inferred from their qualitative data. The generality of the forms of abuse given was denial of food, health and accommodation facilities by guardians and parents who are able to do so.

Bullying was also well understood by all students, which entailed labeling, teasing and stigmatization.

This information shows that whilst teachers have knowledge of child abuse, they are keeping that repository of information mostly to themselves particularly primary school teachers, and hence a need to encourage them to teach children about abuse the various forms it exists in.

Comparison: Interpretations of Child Abuse by Teachers and Students in the School and Community

A comparison between the school and community among the teachers and pupils revealed

that the two groups of respondents had similar interpretations. Participants blamed the community for physical, sexual and neglect forms of abuse (63%, 74% and 96%, respectively) compared to the school, which shouldered the blame for psychological, physical and bullying forms of abuse (59% and 72%, respectively) as shown in Table 3. Bullying was said to emanate in the school in that it was said to be commonly associated with teasing and name-calling to those known to have been sexually abused in the community. At one particular secondary school, teachers bemoaned girl-child sexual abuse by older unemployed youths in the community who force pupils into sexual relations leading to premature marriages. A high number of teachers (89%) indicated that child abuse cases that happen in the home were not reported as some elders take advantage of the marginalized children by paying in cash or kind to the victim's family as a form of compensation thus non-reporting occurs. The majority of teachers (72%) were of the view that child abuse cases were reported by school authorities once detected. It can thus be said that the school is a safer haven than the community regardless of its noted shortcomings. These comparisons are summarized in Table 3.

Assessing the Degree of Social Support Mechanisms' Responsiveness to Issues of Child Abuse

An assessment of the responsiveness of the different state and private mechanisms to child abuse as shown in Table 4, shows that the state apparatus represented by the police and courts are generally ineffective unlike private players, particularly the church, in tackling child abuse.

Table 3: Comparison of teachers and students' interpretations of child abuse forms of child abuse between the school and the community

	Respondents											
	School				Community				Total			
	Teachers		Students		Teachers		Students		School		Community	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Physical	27	45	40	33	33	55	80	67	67	37	113	63
Psycho	35	58	72	60	25	42	48	40	107	59	73	41
Sexual	22	37	24	20	38	63	96	80	46	26	134	74
Neglect	8	13	0	0	52	87	120	100	8	4	172	96
Bullying	42	70	88	73	18	30	32	27	130	72	50	28

Source: Field Survey

Key: Psycho-psychological

Table 4: Assessing the degree of social support mechanisms responsiveness to issues of child abuse

View category of mechanism	Students		Teachers	
	Pry	Sec	Pry	Sec
Police	Poor	Average	Average	Poor
Courts	Average	Poor	Average	Poor
Church	Good	Good	Good	Good
Pressure groups	Average	Average	Poor	Poor
Donor Community	Average	Average	Good	Average

Source: Field Survey

The results show that abuse of school children appears to be frowned upon more by the stakeholders.

Dealing with Child Abusers

Both teachers and children mentioned mostly imprisonment (75% of teachers and 96% of pupils) opposed to a minority (25% and 4%, respectively), who were biased towards non-incarceration forms like community service, compensation, counseling, fines and the death penalty and castration in extreme cases like rape as ways of dealing with perpetrators of abuse. The results thus show that a high percentage of all respondents (89%) prefer incarceration more than non-incarceration means as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Ways of dealing with child abuse cases

Categories of respondents	Responses given			
	Incarceration		Non-incarceration	
	f	%	f	%
Teachers	45	75	15	25
Students	115	96	5	4
Total	160	89	20	11

DISCUSSION

The research found that child abuse in Bindura exists in different forms namely, sexual, physical, neglect, psychological and bullying. This corroborated with several studies namely, Shumba (2004a), Gudyanga (2016) and Ajema et al.'s (2016) findings on the diversity of the forms of abuse. There was a general dearth of child abuse knowledge among primary school children. A high percentage of primary school children (78%) reported scant knowledge on this topic. This may explain why Mantula and Sa-

loojee (2016) bemoan the under-documentation of this malaise in sub-Saharan Africa. Although different scholars (Abrahams et al. 1992, Briggs and Potter 2004, Feng et al 2010, among others) are of the view that such scant knowledge among primary school children is due to teachers having scant knowledge on the topic, this research is in flagrant contradiction with that finding, as all primary school teachers demonstrated full understanding of the topic. The problem may possibly be the school teachers' reluctance to disseminate knowledge to school children. Hence, children in primary schools between the age of 8 and 12 years are more likely to be abused due to their lack of awareness and knowledge (Henkleman and Michelle 2008). Gudyanga's (2014) study confirms this supposition where he discovered that teachers, in direct betrayal of the trust bestowed to them by the community, are the child abusers.

The majority of secondary school pupils (90%) said they had heard about child abuse. Secondary school teachers are therefore probably making child abuse part of the learning curricula, however the level of knowledge on abuse of the pupils shows this teaching is not extensive, but focusing only on awareness. The school was noted by the majority (90%) of the pupils who were aware of child abuse, as the source of information with the remainder crediting workshops. The educator is therefore privileged to teach abuse issues as most pupils cited the school as their source of knowledge in light of the findings of Tower (2003). However, in consideration of the aforementioned point in the preceding paragraph, where the educators are the abusers, it is evident that they intentionally refrain from disseminating information on child abuse to pupils.

This paper establishes that there are negligible differences on the interpretations of pupils on abuse particularly between secondary school

pupils with teachers. There was a trend of understanding child abuse with maturity. It might also be that as children grow up with the increasing information circulation around the global community, they scout for information about their welfare on Internet mediated platforms. The community was generally accused of the majority of the child abuse cases as shown in Table 3 as compared to the school. This too confirms Tower's (2003) findings that the school is the best education place for child abuse as students responded similarly to the educators. However, this in contrast to Gudyanga's (2014) findings that the school is actually a site for greater commission of child abuse cases. The difference with the community lies in the forms of abuse committed in each case. For instance, non-violent forms of abuse noted by Shumba (2004a), which includes the giving of domestic tasks (such as cooking, sweeping, washing and making teachers' beds during school time) to children might not be treated as abuse.

The ways of dealing with child abusers suggested by participants showed the extent to which child abuse is loathed in society. The general trend was skewed in favor of lengthy incarceration (75% of teachers and 96% of students translating to 89% of all respondents). Some school teachers (25%) were even radically suggesting castration for child rapists. This is in concurrence with Gudyanga's (2014) finding that in Zimbabwe teachers advocated stiffer penalties such as incarceration, discharge from duties and heavy fines for child abusers. Children proposed jail terms with an emphasis on keeping society free of child abusers regardless of the degree of relationship. Some proposed life imprisonment and a few even proposed death penalties, as they perceived that this might reduce recidivism.

The non-existence of social support mechanisms from the state reveals the sorry state of child abuse in Bindura. Participants mentioned the absence of any place of safety for abused children in Bindura. In terms of the Children's Act, Chapter 5:06, places of safety for abused children should be established. Although the Act was enacted in 1971 and amended over the years, there is still no place of safety for children in need of care in Bindura. On the positive side however, teachers mentioned that the police now has a Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) that is trained specifically to deal with victims of sexual offend-

es, domestic violence and child abuse, among others. Teachers were generally of the view that the VFU unit is often understaffed resulting in untrained police officers investigating child abuse cases with disastrous consequences in most cases. It was the students' general contention that in the absence of effective state apparatus to address their plight, the church and the school could be entrusted to address their plight demonstrating the extent to which the state's social support role has been usurped by private players. It was reported that the church and well wishers were known to finance most cases of child abuse prosecution with the state through the police and courts failing to avail anything ostensibly due to limited fiscal space. Teachers and students agreed that there is a general trend of case ignorance especially in the remote areas such as farms.

Participants suggested various possible ways of protecting children from marauding child molesters like desisting from leaving children in the company of strangers or untrustworthy relatives. This was seen as a *conditio sine qua non* (prelude) for any preservation of child rights. Workshops and counseling lessons to encourage open discussion on the matter were identified by participants as key in the school and community. In the community in particular, participants said that certain traditional practices that promote child abuse should be criminalized. A suggestion for social workers to reach out to marginalized outskirts was also mentioned. This is however a sure-proof way to address child abuse as noted by Schiller (2017) who notes that in South Africa, social workers in South Africa face several challenges in handling child abuse cases. For instance, the high incidence rate of child abuse cases creates a work overload for the social workers thereby impeding efficiency in the discharge of duties.

Although the community and the family shouldered most blame of the different forms of abuse, they were also spared in a few instances. In psychological abuse in particular, the school was considered the major culprit by participants (60% of students and 67% of teachers). A study by Shumba (2002) points to the widespread existence of physical abuse in the school, which this paper confirmed at considerably high levels (54% against the community and 55% for it). All other forms of abuse were also noted in the school at differing levels as already highlighted.

In this paper, it was inferred that the major reason for the preponderance of psychological abuse in the school compared to the community was because the schools provided the right forum for children to compare themselves with others of their age than the jumbled community.

The girl child ranks lowest in patriarchal societal structures and endangers them, as male children assume precedence over them and this explains girl child sexual victimization. Research participants narrated that offenders often fondle their breasts and force them to have sexual relationships as found by Gudyanga (2014). The majority of pupils (53%) highlighted that girls are more likely to be sexually abused whilst a higher percentage (77%) believed boys are more synonymous with physical abuse. This confirms UNICEF's (2014) statistics, which states that of all sexual abuse cases, girls accounted for over ninety percent of child survivors of child abuse. Superstitious beliefs, which have budded from the emergence of HIV/AIDS pandemic, are also causing an increase in child sexual abuse. This is because sexual union with minors is believed to have curative powers of the pandemic. This has seen an increase in the number of boys who have been sexually abused as evidenced by an arguably high percentage (47%) from the responses in the paper, as compared to a few decades before the advent of HIV/AIDS (Lalor 2005). A positive correlation is discernible between sexually transmitted diseases and child sexual abuse. Related to superstitions, a small number of school pupils raised concern over elders in the community who sexually abuse for ritual purposes such as to have good business fortunes.

The reporting of cases of child abuse was raised as a source of concern. All respondents sensationally believed that cases of child abuse were underreported especially in the home and community settings due to the fear of breaking family ties (33%) revered in the community. The fear of losing caregivers was second (32%), and fear of not being believed or just being turned away by the persons being advised of the abuse had a sizeable number (26%) with mere ignorance having a negligible impact (9%). Teachers were generally biased towards African cultural connotations related to a child accusing a father, relative or community elder (67%) and poverty, which instills fear in pupils that the incarceration of a caregiver or a community member

may cause some bad omen on them (30%) with a minority (3%) defending pupils who argue on lack of knowledge grounds. Teachers also thought that some poor or greedy parents prefer to be paid a stipend rather than enduring the lengthy court process. The general view of underreporting of child abuse cases supports the views of Gudyanga (2014), Wilkinson (2014), Mantula and Saloojee (2016) who bemoaned the rampant sweeping under the carpet of cases of child abuse.

CONCLUSION

With regard to the various interpretations of students' and teachers' perceptions on child abuse in Bindura, Zimbabwe, the following conclusions were made.

Knowledge of child abuse in its crude and purest forms is minimal among students in Bindura especially primary school children. African cultural beliefs devoid of any scientific backing remain the chief drivers of different forms of child abuse, which are also the major hindrance to the reporting of this malaise. This paper revealed that the interpretation of students and teachers on child abuse is similar except that students are not as knowledgeable as their teachers. It was also noted that state social support mechanisms remain a near white elephant ostensibly due to an inelastic government resource purse. Education for all stakeholders remains the nerve centre of an effective child abuse prevention policy, as both the school and the community at large shoulder the blame of child abuse although the latter is the bigger culprit. The school is generally a safer haven for the child compared to the community or family. The people closest to the child were generally found to be the leading abusers of children, which presents a big challenge for reporting. Although there are various ways of dealing with child abusers, this paper found that lengthy incarceration was the major solution though some dissenting voices among educators pointed to more serious measures like castration and the death penalty. The girl child remains the major centre of abuse in her different variants mostly due to cultural beliefs that require the girl child to play second fiddle to her boy counterpart. Victims of abuse suffer a three-legged victimization process that is at the hands of the abuser, community and the criminal justice system. This paper further revealed that there

is an increase in the number of boys who are being abused, going back to the notion of taboos to say that while watching over the girls more than boys, one is denying boys their own rightful claims to be victims. Teachers watch over the girls more. Culturally boys are raised in such a way that they are less victimized than girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Relevant authorities, pressure groups and other interested groups should spearhead child abuse education in schools, especially primary schools. This should ideally include awareness campaigns against certain African traditions that bolster child abuse.
- The state and private players should be continuously lobbied to bankroll social support mechanisms in order to arrest child abuse at the earliest possible opportune time.
- The criminal justice system must remain resolute in its interpretation of the law by ensuring that child molesters are punished accordingly regardless of their stations in life. There is also the need for the legislature to consider amending the child abuse penal system particularly the sentencing regimes, which are viewed generally as skewed in favour of child molesters.
- The ministries concerned should ensure that justice is served with certainty and celerity to deter or minimize child abuse.

REFERENCES

- Abrahams N, Casey K, Daro D 1992. Teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about child abuse and its prevention. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 16(2): 229-238.
- Ajema C, Muraya K, Karuga R, Kirula M 2016 *Childhood Experience of Abuse in Kajiado, Kenya. Findings from a Cross Sectional Survey*. Nairobi, Kenya: Sexual Violence Research Initiative.
- Briggs F, Potter G 2004. Singaporean early childhood teachers responses to myths about child abuse. *Early Child Development and Care*, 174(4): 339.
- Bryant J, Milsom A 2005. Child Abuse Reporting by School Counsellors. *Professional School Counselling* 9 (1): 63-71.
- Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) 2002. Harare, Zimbabwe: Government Printers.
- Chinyangara I, Chokuwenga I, Dete R, Dube, L. 2000. *Indicators for Children's Rights. Zimbabwe Country Case Study*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Child Watch International.
- Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 9:23* 2006. Harare, Zimbabwe: Government Printers.
- Crosson-Tower C 2003. *The Role of Educators in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect. Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series*. United States of America Department. Washington DC, USA: Children's Bureau.
- Feng JY, Hong TY, Wang CJ 2010. Kindergarten teachers experience with reporting child abuse in Taiwan. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(2): 124-128.
- Gudyanga E 2014. Emerging issues on child abuse: Voices from student teachers. *Education Journal*, 3(3): 146-152.
- Hinkelman L, Bruno M 2008. Identification and reporting of child sexual abuse: The role of elementary school professionals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 108(5): 376-391.
- Lalor K 2005 Child Sexual Abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa: Child Protection Implications for Development Policymakers and Practitioners. *Development Research Briefings*, Centre for Development Studies: University College, Dublin, 3: 1-26.
- Loewenson R 1991 Child labour in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 6(1): 19-31.
- Mantula F, Saloojee H 2016. Child abuse in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25(8): 866-880.
- Munongerwa Thompson 2014. Police Declare War on Juvenile Abusers. *Zimbabwe Republic Police Magazine, Outpost, Monthly*, August, 2014, P. 10.
- Prah KJ 2016. Students' sexual abuse in public senior high schools in Ghana. *Dama International Journal of Research*, 1: 71-82.
- Pur HJ, Liman MA, Ali DG 2016. Students' perception of causes and effects of teachers' psychological abuse in senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7: 111-119.
- Rush FC 1980. *The Best Kept Secret*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Schiller U 2017. Child sexual abuse allegations: Challenges faced by social workers in child protection organisations. *Practice*, 14(3): 39-55.
- Shumba A 2002. Teacher conceptualization of child abuse in schools in the new millennium. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17: 403-415.
- Shumba A 2004a. Emotional abuse in the classroom: A cultural dilemma? *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 4(3/4): 139-149.
- Tulu Alemayehu Shiferaw 2010. *Evaluating the Application of Human Rights in Crime Investigation in Ethiopia. A Magister Technologiae in the Subject of Policing (Investigation)*. Masters Thesis, Published. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- UNICEF 2014. *Report on Violence Against Children: UNICEF Report Reveals Worldwide Child Abuse Statistics*.
- Walsh K, Farrell A, Schweitzer R, Bridgstock R 2005. *Critical Factors in Teachers Detecting and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: Implications for Practice*. Albion, Australia: Abused Child Trust.
- Wilkinson K 2014. Is a Child Raped Every Three Minutes in South Africa? The Data is Flawed. From <<http://africacheck.org/>> (Retrieved on 04 May 2017).