



## Adult and community education: A veritable tool for combating child abuse

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### Abstract

Cases of child abuse, maltreatment, misuse and neglect have become a recurring decimal in cover pages of our newspapers and other news media, yet it is a crime that is said to be under-reported. Despite legislations that protect children, the larger society seem to be docilely watching, and minding their business while sick and perverted people satisfy their lust and vent their frustration on hapless innocent children. They seem not to know that what affects one person in the society ultimately affects all. This paper posits that solution to child abuse resides with adults. The researchers proffered the use of adult education many programmes to sensitize adults to rise up to their God-given roles as gate keepers, conscience of the society, fathers and mothers of the nation and fight this crime against humanity and posterity. This paper sought to create awareness that can initiate action against child abuse by discussing the topic under the following headings - child abuse - its prevalence, forms, signs, perpetrators, causes and effects; ways of combating child abuse through the use of adult and community education among others. Implications of adult and community education in the fight against child abuse was discussed. It was concluded that if adults are conscientized to rise to perform their God-given roles through adult and community education, incidents of child abuse will be greatly reduced. It was recommended that adults should be sensitized to secure their homes and their various communities against perpetrators, give birth to the number of children they can take care of; report, shame and isolate offenders while social welfare departments should mandate communities to build and run safe homes and rehabilitation centers for victims through the use of adult and community education platforms and resources.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, adults, adult and community education, social welfare

### Introduction

The importance of raising balanced and healthy children for the well-being and posterity of any nation can never be over-emphasized. According to the Holy Bible (Psalm 127: 3-5 NKJV), children are the heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate. This scripture is fulfilled when a child is properly brought up in a secure and godly atmosphere devoid of abuses. It does not come by merely copulating and giving birth to many children. God has committed the all-important duty of rearing godly seed fit for God's use to parents, howbeit, adults in the community. The well-being of children and the quality of care they receive greatly affect the kind of adult they will become (Gesinde, as cited in Adebumiti, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup>. Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is grown, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22: 6 NKJV). The first place for the training envisaged by this scripture is the home by the adults.

Sadly, the home front that should be a secure haven of rest for the child is also increasingly becoming the worst nightmare spot for the child due to child abuse. Reports of fathers, step fathers, mothers, step mothers, and other adults including religious leaders and teachers perpetrating abuse on children abound. Adults defile and violate children under their influence and subject them to inhuman and degrading treatments, teachers violate innocent pupils and the society watches on without seeming to really care. Indeed, there can

be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children (Mandela, as cited in Olusegun & Idowu, 2016) <sup>[20]</sup>. While developed countries seem to have working policies for child protection in place, same cannot be said for most developing African countries including Nigeria. Although there exists a statute (The Child Right Acts [CRA], 2003) for the protection of children which most states in Nigeria have passed into law, not much is being done to enforce the law due to the shroud of secrecy that covers cases of abuse. It is possible that stigmatization of victim, cultural factors, under-reporting, corruption and lack of political willpower might be directly and remotely responsible for this. Children, the victims of violence because they are weaker in size, stature and mental capabilities, should be protected and allowed to grow up and thrive in atmosphere devoid of violence. Unfortunately, this is not the reality on ground. Instead of providing conducive atmosphere for balanced development, what obtains is incessant and more brazen devastation of innocent children through child abuse and neglect.

Globally, approximately one in four children experience child abuse or neglect in their life time (Brown, Yilanli & Rabbitt, 2023) <sup>[4]</sup>. Violence against children is prevalent across the 36 states of Nigeria. According to 2014 Nigeria Violence against Children Survey conducted by National Population Commission with the support of the United States Center for Disease Control and UNICEF, approximately 6 out of 10 children experienced some form of violence and 50% of all children in Nigeria experienced physical violence. One in four girls and one in 10 boys

experienced emotional violence by a parent, caregiver or adult relative (Edeh, 2017)<sup>[10]</sup>.

Prevalence of all forms of child abuse has reached worrisome height worldwide. One in two children experience physical violence while majority don't tell what has happened to them and continue to suffer in silence (Ekeanyanwu, 2016)<sup>[11]</sup>. In Nigeria, Gesinde (as cited in Adebumiti, 2018)<sup>[1]</sup> noted that despite lack of accurate statistics, report had it that all forms of abuse abound, but sexual abuse is overriding with trafficking of female children for prostitution and disregard for child rights. This menace must not be allowed to continue. Children are children and therefore cannot combat child abuse alone by themselves. Adults must of necessity play their roles of caring for and protecting children under them for posterity sake. According to Trainer John (as cited in C.S. Lewis Foundation (2018)<sup>[5]</sup>, Children are not distractions from more important work. They are the most important work. There is therefore need for adults to be conscientized on the subject of child abuse and the need for them to know what their role should be in combating it.

### Discussion of Key Concepts

Concepts related to this paper such as child, child abuse, religion and child abuse, adult, adult and community education are discussed below.

#### A child

English Dictionary Offline (2016) defines a child as a person who has not yet reached adulthood, whether natural (puberty), cultural (initiation), or legal (majority); one's son or daughter, regardless of age; one's descendants regardless of age; and a figurative offspring. Section 277 of The Child Right Act [CRA] 2003 defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of 18 years. From the foregoing, it is clear that various societies have their own definition of a child. The definition also varies statutorily and culturally for different purposes. For instance, S. 18 of the Marriage Act provides that a child below 21 can marry with consent of family. This implies that the Marriage Act sees a child as a person below 21 years of age. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this paper, a child is one who is neither an adult by maturity and/ nor possesses the mental capacity of the adult. The concern of this paper is to curtail abuses directed against persons that are not mentally and sometimes not physically matured.

#### Child Abuse

The word abuse has been variously defined to cover improper treatment or usage; perversion; application to a wrong or bad purpose; an unjust, corrupt or wrongful practice or custom; physical maltreatment; injury, cruel treatment; and violation, defilement, rape, forcing of undesired sexual activity by one person on another, often on a repeated basis. It can be deduced from the above definitions that abuse as it pertains to improper treatment or use of a child is child abuse.

The definition of child abuse, also called child endangerment and child maltreatment, varies among professionals and between social and cultural groups as well as across time (Wise, 2011)<sup>[28]</sup>. Different communities and cultures define what child abuse is in their own place. America uses the phrase 'child abuse and neglect' but child abuse for the purpose of this paper includes neglect,

exploitation and trafficking. Experts tried to distinguish between abuse and neglect. They explained abuse as acts of commission while neglect refers to acts of omission on the part of caregivers (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015; McCoy & Keen, 2013). However, some experts argue that neglect should not be included as it may have been unintentional (Friedman & Billick, 2015)<sup>[13]</sup>. In these researchers' opinion, this argument cannot stand as parents and caregivers owe duty to care for their children and wards. It is also a divine mandate. There should not be a blanket pardon for every claim of unintentional negligence by parents and care givers. Every case should be examined based on its circumstance to establish that reasonable care was exercised before exculpating parents and caregivers. Other definitions of child abuse are as follows:

Child abuse or child maltreatment refers to physical, sexual or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children especially by a parent or other caregivers. It may include any act or failure to act by a parent or other caregivers that result in actual or potential harm to a child. World Health Organization [WHO] (2016) defines child abuse and maltreatment as all forms of physical and/ or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Centre for Disease Control and Protection (2023) included the failure to provide for a child's physical, emotional or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm. An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm are among the terms that have been employed to explain child abuse. The question that comes to mind is, who should act? Who failed to act? Adults should be the people responsible for ensuring that children are not harmed.

#### Who is an Adult?

It is usually not a straight forward task to define or explain adult because of the polymorphous nature of the term. According to Chukwuemerie (2018), the term 'adult' is a subjective term because it means different things to different people. Complicating the issue further is the fact that words used to define or describe adult such as mature, grown-up, independent, responsible, and so on mean different things to different people. Moreover, various people of different cultural backgrounds have differing opinions concerning who an adult is. This is because they see the issue from different perspectives. Obidiegwu (2023)<sup>[19]</sup> observed that the word adult is used in many senses such as legal, social, chronological, economic, spiritual and psychological among others by different people for different purposes and in different situations.

Adulthood is not just about chronological age. The word adult means maturity as in growing up and not chronological age of growing old (Obidiegwu, 2023)<sup>[19]</sup>. Scholars such as Knowles, 1990 as cited in Obidiegwu have also tried to define adult from different forms/aspects (e.g. biological - those with reproductive ability; social - those deemed adult by their culture; situational - those whom playing the role of adults are thrust upon by the situation they find themselves in, such as untimely deaths of parents). Such other parameters that include age, marriage, sense of economy, stock of energy, intelligence have also been used

to define who an adult is (Ugwoegbu, 2003). Nevertheless, authors have not been able to find a well delineated and generally acceptable stage in the life of a man that defines adulthood. The definition by UNESCO (as cited in Nzeneri, 2010), that an adult is a person regarded as an adult by the society he belongs, is widely accepted. The definition given by Okonkwo (2021) that an adult is one who is fully matured, developed, balanced in thinking and is responsible for his own actions and that of others appeals to the thesis of this paper. Adults are best situated to take up the responsibility of redressing child abuse. Adults are in charge of the society and therefore should be made dynamic through adult education to be able to effectively contend with every aspect of ever-changing societal problems including issues that concern children and their well-being. The adult must necessarily embrace adult and lifelong education in order to be relevant in the scheme of things and contribute effectively in bringing about such changes in the orientation of their society that can reduce the spate of incidents of child abuse. This is in line with scriptures – study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). Adult education is the umbrella name for all endeavours aimed at educating adults.

### Adult Education

Want of space would not permit discussion of wide array of definitions of adult education by experts. Onyenemezu (2012 as cited in Oghenekohwo, 2017) perceived adult education as the formal, informal and non-formal education given to any person regarded as an adult by society in order to socially, economically and culturally improve and empower him or her so that the person will be able to contribute meaningfully as useful and acceptable member of society. Adult education is provided by trained adult educators and other groups of people that may not even be aware that they are adult educators. Adult education can be provided by NGOs such as Community based organizations [CBOs], trade unions, faith-based organizations, universities and others. It is also provided by International Organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and Action Aid. The scope of adult education is as wide as life itself. According to Obidiegwu, the field of adult education cuts across all disciplines and the purpose is to facilitate the learning of adults in all its contexts. In effect, adult education has no specific theoretical boundaries and should meet the particular situation created by the specific needs of development, of participation in community life and all fields of knowledge and are addressed to all people whatever their level of achievement.

The scope of adult education includes but is not limited to remedial education, continuing education, literacy education, labour education, functional literacy, women education, retirement education, civic education, environmental education, community development, distance education and extension education. These areas are very wide in scope too. For instance, the scope of Community Development, also known as community education, is as wide as community life itself. The scope covers agriculture, health, domestic science, rural industries, housing, cooperatives, public amenities and recreation. The scope expands to accommodate new challenges that may arise as a result of break-through in science and technology, natural occurrences and all other needs that affect the lives of adults in the community.

Application of some Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes through its various approaches by its agencies whether in formal school settings or non-formal school settings via their work places, rural and urban community social gatherings, cooperative societies, door to door campaigns or as the case may be, can contribute substantially in combating the spate of incidences of child abuse. Non-Formal Education [NFE] programmes are activities organized for people outside the formal school system to meet them at the point of their needs and situations. Adult and NFE programmes necessarily encompasses a list of educational and learning programmes for those regarded as adults. They are potentially strategic education tools of action to combat diseases and social ills such as child abuse. These researchers believe that adult education can be used to reduce the number of people affected by child abuse.

### Victims and Signs of Child Abuse

Every child is a potential target of perpetrators. Children and adults can be victims. Child victim grows up to be adult and the effects and consequences often last through lifetime. Even family members of victims often suffer silently. Surprisingly, even some offenders suffer increasingly, bound in shame and secrecy of their addictive behaviours. Child abuse has ripple effects on the child, family, community, nation and the large world.

Adults need to be alert, depend on and follow the leading of the Spirit their intuitions. Children of all ages should be observed closely as children are abused at every stage. Recently the video of a nanny captured by hidden camera was all over the internet. She threw the baby down, flung her head repeatedly on the wall and even stepped and jumped on her belly. There is need to be mindful of who enters the home and the care givers children are left with. Every lead that suggests something is wrong should be followed up. It was reported that the baby in the case mentioned above wailed uncontrollably each time the nanny came near her but the parents did not pay heed.

Some of the following are signs to look out for but it should be noted that they might also indicate other things/situations. Physical marks of injury, pain in the private part during bathing, being given to silence, uncontrollable sobbing, bedwetting, endless string of lies, use of improper language by older children, lack of friends, acting in unexpected ways and other signs that show that a child is so traumatized that she is afraid of her own shadows are some of the signs that may call for deeper probing. It can also manifest in aggression and nasty behavior towards other kids and animals. Sometimes abused children and children undergoing abuse are not close to their parents. Overly affection to strangers, lack of confidence, always being wary or anxious are indications that something is wrong (NSPCC, 2023; ChildSafe, 2023). Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (2023) highlighted detailed warning signs of various types of child abuse and neglect such as signs of physical abuse, signs of possible neglect to be observed from child or youth, signs from parents or caregivers, signs of sexual abuse and signs of possible sexual exploitation or human trafficking. Difficulty in walking or sitting; pain or itching in the genital area; torn, stained or bloody underclothing and bruises; and pregnancy are some of the signs of sexual child abuse. These writers also observed that sexual child abuse by people in the

family also spiritually cripples precious young lives. These children may struggle to accept God as their loving heavenly father. They often blame God for allowing them to be in the environment where the abuse goes on.

### Perpetrators of Child Abuse

A perpetrator is a person who has been determined to have caused or knowingly allowed the maltreatment of a child. Unfortunately, parents, step-parents and family members such as siblings, live-ins, relatives and babysitters who are meant to be the first line of protection for children are among the perpetrators of this heinous crime against humanity. Harm caused to a child by others such as acquaintances or strangers may not be considered child abuse but rather may be considered a criminal matter (Child Welfare, 2016). Unfortunately, even some teachers and people that should point children to God such as pastors are also offenders. Perpetrators have been classified under various categories based on the class of child abuse they are involved in. For instance, there exist perpetrators of neglect, perpetrators of physical abuse, perpetrators of sexual abuse, perpetrators of Munchausen syndrome by proxy (Child Welfare, n.d.). Munchausen syndrome is a psychiatric disorder in which a person feigns illness or psychological trauma in order to garner attention or sympathy.

Available statistics reveal this trend among perpetrators of child abuse - 75% are parents, 11% are relatives, 2% are caretakers and 10% are non-caretakers (The Christian Broadcasting Network, 2018).

### Where does child abuse occur?

Violence against children occurs in homes, families, schools, communities and other places where children should feel safe (UNICEF Nigeria, 2022). Child abuse occurs in all sorts of families whether religious/secular, educated/under-educated, rich/poor, rural/urban and in communities the child operate in. The home is supposed to be a safe haven of love, protection and care but it has become the worst nightmares of victims of child abuse. In Ikorodu Lagos State, the private part of an 11 years old girl was burnt by the mother with hot iron in her home because she came back late from school (Information.Com, 2015 December 6). Child abuse is no respecter of race, tribe and status but effect of education can mitigate the extent. It also occurs in the school and in the hallowed places of worship. It can occur in the market places and wherever predators find their prey. Many cases of pedophile catholic priests that were in the habit of defiling altar boys were recently reported (The Guardian 2019, November 16). It is difficult to imagine that such level of atrocities went on in hallowed sanctuary. The implication of this is that parents must be prayerfully and carefully select where they send their children to. They should always be alert and carefully probe abnormal behaviours of their wards.

### Forms of Child Abuse

Child abuse manifests in different forms. Some of the forms of child abuse have been mentioned and explained in other sections of this work. Abuses on the child can be physical, emotional, sexual, and in form of neglect. Specifically, inflicting corporal punishment, some undue, harsh and unwarranted repeated verbal abuses, child marriages, defilement/ rape, molestation, other forms of coercion to sexual acts even if it did not lead to penetration, bullying,

child labour and exploitation, abduction and kidnapping, unduly locking in, locking out, denial of right to basic education, stigmatization, exposure to danger, female genital mutilation, tattooing and marking a child's skin, exposing a child to use and trafficking of narcotics, employing a child for facilitation of criminal acts, and domestic violence. Every violation of the provisions of the CRA (2003) is child abuse. Gesinde (as cited in Adebumiti, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup> noted that despite lack of accurate statistics, report had it that all forms of abuse abound in Nigeria but sexual abuse is overriding with trafficking of female children for prostitution in blatant disregard for child rights. Female children are now being lured and used in baby factories to make babies for sale. Cases of forceful child marriages in order to convert young girls to Islam abound. Ese Oruru's case is a case in point (Sahara Reporters, 2019 November 7)]. Nigeria is said to have 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 (UNICEF Nigeria, 2022).

Abuse of the unborn by not observing the dos and don'ts of pregnancy, leaving under-aged children alone at home (e.g. the fire incident in this writer's sister's house), forcing domestic servants to do work that is beyond their tender bodies which can in turn stunt their growth are all forms of child abuse. Inhuman treatment to disabled and children with mental disorder is also a form of child abuse. Olusegun and Idowu (2016) <sup>[20]</sup> gave a more detailed report on the dimensions, reasons for the persistence of child abuse in Nigeria. Any effort to reduce the incidents of child abuse must of necessity address the causes of child abuse.

### Causes of Child Abuse

This section attempts to discuss what drives the offence of child abuse and causes it to prevail / perpetuate. A study by Gesinde (as cited in Adebumiti, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup> in the three Senatorial Districts of Oyo State which examined psychosocial factors sustaining child abuse in Nigeria identified the following as leading causes of child maltreatment in Nigeria, to wit, lack of parenting skills, poverty, influence of alcohol and drug abuse, illiteracy (and its twin brother *ignorance, sic*), divorce and separation, and single parenting. Gesinde also highlighted the role of cultural beliefs as a cause of child abuse. He emphasized that vicious cycle of abuse entails that abusers are often victims of abuse themselves. Driven by years of repressed hatred, these perpetrators continue the cycle.

Enechi (as cited in The Nation, 2015 April 30) included marital strife in her list. According to Enechi, parents who physically abuse their spouses are more likely to physically abuse their children. Unwillingness of the family of the victim to even report to appropriate authority / follow case to the end contributes in setting free serial offenders who brazenly continue in the crime. Lack of maintenance of offenders' registry and surveillance on offenders promotes the crime. Victim blaming is another factor that helps the perpetuation of child abuse. UNICEF Nigeria (2022) observed that drivers of violence against children are rooted in social norms revolving around the use of violent discipline, violent against women and community beliefs about witchcraft.

These writers observed that child abuse thrives where parents are not close to their children. Some parents are so strict and harsh to their children that such kids would rather

die than open up to them. They find ready friends in perpetrators who often worsen the rift between parents and children by painting the parent's strictness as wickedness to their children. Furthermore, some people are naturally wicked and because their consciences have been seared, they continue to oppress weaker and helpless people. Unfortunately, some women are very wicked. This shows in their treatment of their house helps. These house helps sometimes visit the same wickedness on their madam's babies by starving, beating and bullying them in the absence of their madams, thus resulting in cycle of violence.

### **Effects of Child Abuse**

Child abuse has far reaching devastating effect on victims, family, the community and the nation. Some victims die. Others suffer physical harm and psychological harm. According to Adamu Usman (as cited in *The Nation*, 2015 April 30), child abuse can cause social stigma and depression. Victims naturally grow up to be antagonistic to the society. Abused children are likely to be deficient of vital moral values and this portends disaster to society social structure.

Enechi (as cited in *The Nation*, 2015 April 30) highlighted immediate physical and psychological effects which includes higher rates of chronic conditions, health behaviour, shortened lifespan and cases of maltreated children turning out to be abusive adults. Many research findings have proven that 75% of abusive adults were once maltreated as children.

Birth defects, weakened brain development, low birth weight, anaemia and withdrawal syndrome can result from abuse of unborn baby.

Joyful Heart Foundation (2018) <sup>[5]</sup> disclosed some physical, psychological/mental and behavioural effects of child abuse as discussed below. Physical effects are head trauma, sprains or broken bones, burn marks, bruises, pain or itching in the genital area, sexually transmitted diseases, etc. Some psychological effects are anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, withdrawn, dissociation, difficulty with making and maintaining relationships, experiences of flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, persistent fear. Some behavioural effects of child abuse and neglect are self-harm, eating disorders' alcohol and drug use' trouble sleeping, uncomfortable with physical contact with others, repeating school grades, absence from school and criminal activities. Children who witness domestic violence regardless of whether they were directly abused or not suffer anxiety, depression, academic problems and are often fearful.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, stigmatization of victims of sexual assault deprives the child of many things and sometimes the child faces hostile treatment from people in the know. The dangers and negative effects are too serious. Children often suffer malnutrition and have had to leave with emotional scars for life. There is need for concerted effort to tackle this menace. Adults in the community should take the lead.

### **Implications of Adult and Community Education as Tool for Combating Child Abuse**

It is incontrovertible that adult education is a major tool for reducing child abuse. Adult education operates to create awareness, sensitize, conscientize to redress injustice. As ignorance and superstitious beliefs contribute in perpetuating child abuse, adult and community education is the veritable tool for setting back the frontiers of human

ignorance and redressing harmful practices. The war against child abuse can be effective if every fabric of the society is sensitized to participate. One may wonder if these researchers are including perpetrators in the fight. Yes, if perpetrators submit to psychological treatment and get healed, it will contribute greatly in curbing this menace. Through proper sensitization and enlightenments which are components of Adult and Community Education, adults in the community can be conscientized to combat child abuse in its totality and even rehabilitate known offenders to avoid repetition of incidents by identifying them and/or initiating their turning in for treatment or incarceration.

Experts and stakeholders have recommended adult education practices as a way of fighting child abuse. Adamu (as cited in *The Nation Online*, 2015, April 30) highlighted the following as ways of tackling child abuse – Enhance educational standard, promote enlightenment programmes and collaborate with various bodies to protect the rights of the child. He particularly recommended that gender right groups should collaborate and speed up the rate of advocacy, explore the radio/ online platforms to amplify the sour consequences of child abuse. Enechi (as cited in *The Nation*, 2015 April 30) recommended that parents should take adequate care of their wards and monitor their socialization process closely. They should watch friends that their wards keep. According to Gesinde (as cited in Adebumiti, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup> schools and churches should review their counseling services and include ways of preventing child abuse; periodic training and retraining of parents on child care and welfare; and make child rearing practices the focus of premarital training of intending couples. Parents should be ready to carter for the number of children they gave birth to. This calls for responsible parenting. Adults should not keep giving birth without planning.

These researchers posit that anger should be avoided in disciplining children tin order to avoid inflicting damning physical injuries. Moreover, there is no place for unrighteous/ uncontrolled anger in a Christian's life. Proverbs 15:18 "do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools". If men and women control their anger, cases where hot water or iron is used to design children and similar madness meted out on children and maids will reduce. Christian parents and guardians should learn to withdraw to pray and seek the leading of the Holy Spirit before dealing with some cases. It is not a sign of weakness to differ lashing out in anger. It rather shows strength. No adult should discipline children in anger. It has often gendered regrettable but irreversible harm ranging from physical bodily injuries to death. Adults should first calm down, then try to get the child to understand why he/she is being punished before meting out safe punishment. The well-being of the child should be the uppermost consideration in the place of disciplining. Threatening and putting fear on children drives them far from parents and sometimes make them impervious to such corrections in the long run.

Any adult, who suspects that a child is being abused, especially sexually abused, has the obligation to report it to appropriate authorities. Child abuse is a crime. It is equally an offence against the state. The duties of adults in the community include sensitizing other members of the community to take the plight of children serious and expose anyone who infringes on the rights of the child. Men and women faith-based and community organizations can

organize workshops and seminars to educate members on the rights of the child. Cultural beliefs that engender the violation of child right can be exposed and condemned so that adults will be better oriented to protect children from harm. Enlightenment campaigns on the need to assist in rehabilitating and fostering child victims of abuse and establishing support groups can be championed by government agencies like Citizens Defenders, Social Welfare departments, Women Affairs departments and Non-Governmental Organizations like International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA).

Adults in various communities can build shelter/homes for the displaced children and as well contribute to the sustenance of existing homes in their home communities, villages and church neighbourhoods. The CRA (2003) provides for the establishment of community homes in every town. Adults in the community should ensure that this is done and also notify relevant authorities where it does not yet exist. Adults' organizations should be periodically visiting and giving gifts to such homes as this will go a long way in creating sense of belongingness among inmates. Such noble acts should be sustained. Adults can be sensitized to adopt and mentor street children as long as their influence would not jeopardize the well-being of children at home.

Ban Ki-moon while speaking at the launch of End-Violence-Against-Children Campaign in Lagos State (as cited in Ajumobi & Agbonkhee, 2016) advocated for - A child focused, multidisciplinary and time-bound national and state-level strategy against child abuse; explicit ban on all forms of violence against children, backed by effective enforcement; increased effort to make VAC socially unacceptable; and establishment of sound data and research system.

Government can set up functional social support system for rehabilitation and fostering of abused or neglected children in Nigeria. Above all education of the populace must be given priority attention as educated people produce fewer children, contribute more to the nation's economy by producing more goods and services, live healthier and longer life. Establishment and sustenance of adult literacy centres in every community is key to educating adults. This will ultimately equip adults to fight child abuses. Additionally, non-formal education platforms such as faith-based forums, community learning centres and gatherings are avenues for equipping adults with the right knowledge to fight child abuse.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The importance of raising balanced and healthy children for the well-being and posterity of any nation can never be over-emphasized. The paper started by discussing rising concerns about growing incidents of child abuse and thereafter discussed of key concepts in the topic under headings such as Child Abuse; Who is an Adult; and Adult Education. Thereafter aspects of child abuse were discussed under victims and signs of child abuse; perpetrators of child abuse; where does child abuse occur and forms, causes and effects of child abuse. Implications of adult and community education as tool for combating child abuse were discussed. It was highlighted that the Child's Rights Act [CRA] (2003), a culmination of laws and policies put in place with the purpose of protecting children from abuse, has not been visibly effective due to reasons that include poor

enforcement mechanisms, poverty, negative attitude of adults in the community and inefficient judicial process. When the law cannot protect our children, who do we go to? Children cannot fight for themselves. These researchers see adults in the community as possessing the capability and capacity to combat child abuse. There are no better police than adults in various communities for this purpose. Measures for combating child abuse through adult and community education and specific things adults in the various communities can do were proffered.

It is specifically recommended that social welfare departments and women development centres should arise to their duties and sensitize adults in the community through adult and community education towards accepting foster parenting; forming, supporting and sustaining supports groups that will help victims heal and move on; as well as fight against the stigmatization that often accompanies sexual abuse.

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