

Caregivers Perception of Child Abuse and Neglect in Selected Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

We conducted a descriptive explorative study using population comprising of male and female staff members working as part time, full time, and volunteer caregivers to describe their perceptions about child abuse and neglect in selected special schools in Lagos Nigeria and to explore factors that may influence such perception. The study revealed that there was no main significant difference between male and female, age, educational levels and job experiences of caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disabilities in schools. Volunteers have the best perception with mean score of 54.19 while part time caregivers had the least means perception score of 47. Regarding the effect of educational levels of caregivers on abuse and neglect, High school / GCE has the highest perception with means of 54.67 while those with university degrees BSc/BA had the lowest perception with mean score of 51.59. Caregivers with 11-15 years of working experience have the highest perception with means of 53 and 6-10 years of working experience with lowest perception, with mean score 51.79. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Government should put in place an appropriate policy and procedure on child abuse and its prevention.

Key words: Care givers, Perceptions, Child abuse, Neglect, Special schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of teacher-pupil relationship has evolved in recent years to become a central issue both in promoting healthy school relationship and in the prevention of child abuse and neglect with focus on uniqueness of each pupil and holistic care [1]. The prevailing view that school child abuse was due to teacher psychopathology has shifted and expanded considerably since scientific attention was drawn to this issue over some years back. Child abuse is considered within its entire social context, both when

attempting to identify the causes and cures and when attempting to understand its seemingly pervasive impact on child development, and the caregivers' perception [2].

Child abuse signals the likelihood of other significant events, both chronic and acute, that impair children's psychological development [3]. Maltreatment of children rarely raised concern prior to the mid-20th century because harsh forms of discipline and corporal punishment were viewed as teachers' right and responsibility [4]. Laws and rules governing the treatment and care of children have always been up to the discretion of adults, particularly parents, because children cannot advocate on their own behalf. Moreover, the abuse of children has long existed because children, by their very nature and immaturity, require considerable control and guidance from adults, yet many adults are ill prepared for this vital and challenging role. Consequently, physical coercion, corporal punishment, and other power-assertive methods have dominated the choice of disciplinary methods for generation. It is stated in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that, 'every child should be protected from abuse' [5]. Competent care giving professionals are concerned about the health, safety, and happiness of young children and their families. Teachers, caregivers, and family childcare providers must be aware that they are models and examples for the children they serve, and that they may be the only readily available source of support, concern, and care for many children. Abuse could be described as an injury to a child that is not accidental. Most people do not intend to hurt the children, but abuse is defined by the effect on the child, not the motivation of the abusers.

Child abuse can be reflective in the following forms. Rejecting, abandoning or extensive ridiculing of a child; Terrorizing a child by threatening extreme punishment against him or his possessions; Ignoring a

child over time by refusing to talk to or show interest in her daily activities; This must be so extreme there is no traditional parent-child relationship between the two; Isolating a child by teaching him to avoid social contact beyond the parent-child relationship; Corrupting a child by teaching inappropriate behavior in areas such as aggression, sexuality or substance abuse; Exposing a child to violence.

Neglect occurs when primary caretakers choose not to fulfill their obligations to care for, provide for, or adequately supervise and monitor the activities of child. Care giving obligations include the physical, emotional, and educational well-being of the child. Thus, neglect can occur when the caretaker does not seek adequate medical or nutritional care for the child. Neglect could be when the caregiver does not provide sufficient food, clothing, or shelter. Caregivers are also expected to provide for the emotional needs of the child. Thus, neglect can occur when caregivers abandon the child, or simply have no time to spend with the child, in essence leaving the child to raise himself. If the child is actually left without supervision, this certainly constitutes neglect as well. Features of neglect include educational neglect, which often occurs when one child is responsible for other children in the family. Shifting the responsibility of caring for younger children to another child in the school prevents the care-giving child from participating in age-appropriate activities for themselves, such as attending school. Caregiver's responsibility includes providing adequate guidance and supervision for the children to regularly attend to school programs. Truancy is not only a problem for children, but may be part of the picture of neglect as well, as it may be the child reaction to neglect or maltreatment in school. Owolabi stated that the prevalence of child abuse in Nigeria Urban Centers has remained a very intractable problem. Child abuse is not limited to Nigeria but worldwide. Child abuse does not discriminate among the men and women, rich or poor, though child abuse may be perceived in so many ways [6]. He describes children as "the most vulnerable members of any community; they are fragile, frail, innocent, naïve, defenseless and often oblivious of danger." The African Chapter [7] quoted by Owolabi [6] recognized the fact that the rights of most African children are disregarded due to irreconcilable factors which include hunger, exploitation, armed conflicts, natural disasters, their socio – economic, cultural, traditional and development conditions. Olley [8] defines intellectual disabilities as a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This condition originates before age 18.

There are five assumptions essential to the application of the definition. Limitations in present functioning must be considered within the context of community environment typical of the individual's age, peer and culture; Valid assessment considers cultural and linguistic diversity as well as differences in behavioral factors; Within an individual; limitations often co-exists with strength; An important purpose of describing limitations is to develop a profile needed supports; With appropriate personalized supports over a period of time, the lives functioning of the person with intellectual disabilities will generally improve [9]. Barter [10] highlighted that those children in residential facilities are more vulnerable to abuse than those who live in families; and that under-reporting of institutional abuse incidents are common. His Studies also revealed that a number of factors associated with institutional multi-determined phenomenon could not be explained by any individual factor. It is significant in our society that majority of people are unkind and inhuman to individuals with intellectual disability. People take advantage of their disability to humiliate them. Many families unknowingly give their parental right to others in various special schools to cater for their children who have different opinion on how to deal with their loved ones. It is a problem that perception varies on what can be considered as child abuse or neglect in our schools for children with intellectual disability. However, the reality is knowingly or unknowingly, children with intellectual disability are vulnerable to physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey research. Population for this study was the teaching and non-teaching staff members in two special schools in Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria. The survey covered 60% of all the staff members in each of the selected schools.

A. Participants and sampling technique

The participants were randomly selected from all the caregivers from two institutions. The research sample was made up of male and female staff members of the selected schools, comprising of part time, full time, and volunteer caregivers. The two schools used for this study are Modupe Cole Memorial Child Care and Treatment Home/school, Akoka, Lagos, and Children Developmental Center, Surulere, Lagos.

B. Instrument

A self-prepared questionnaire containing 22 items was used for data collection. Average time spent on completing the questionnaire was 10minutes.

C. Validity of instrument

This was done by administering the instrument on similar population. The research experts reviewed the instrument and suggested corrections that were made. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the instrument that was found to be 0.86.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics; t-test and ANOVA to compare the subjects.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As shown in table 1, there is no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between male and female caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of the intellectually challenged in institutions.

Table 1: Effects of gender on the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig
Male	40	52.43	4.53	78	-0.35	0.73
Female	40	52.73	3.00			

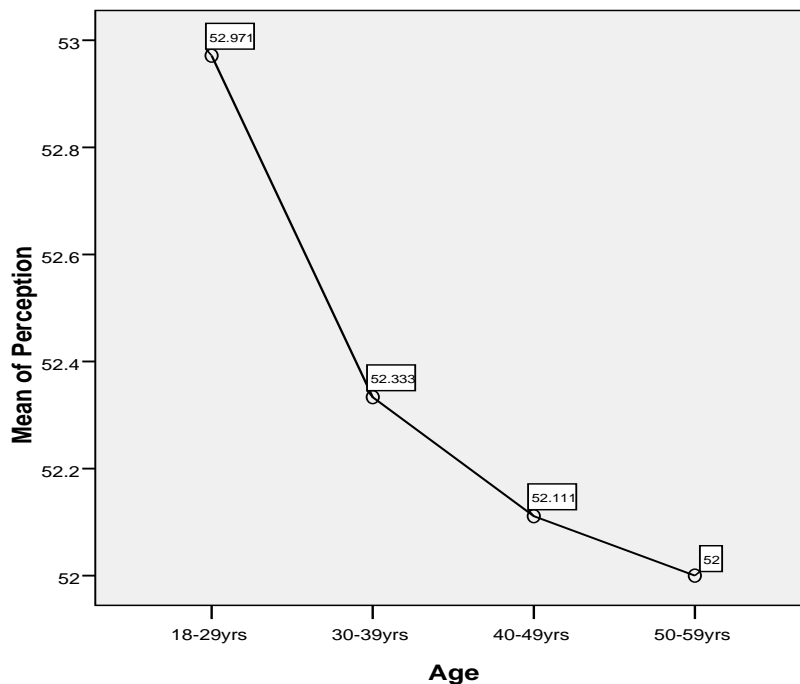
Effects of age on the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions are presented in Table 2. Like in gender, it follows that there is no significant difference in the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of the

intellectually challenged in institutions based on their ages. Despite the insignificant difference, the means plot below (figure 1) shows which of the ages has the best perception. The plot shows that the lesser the age the better the perception

Table 2: Effects of age on the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	10.36	3	3.45	0.23	0.88
Within Groups	1141.19	76	15.02		
Total	1151.55	79			

Figure 1: Plot of mean of perception versus age



There is a significant difference in the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of the intellectually challenged in institutions based on their

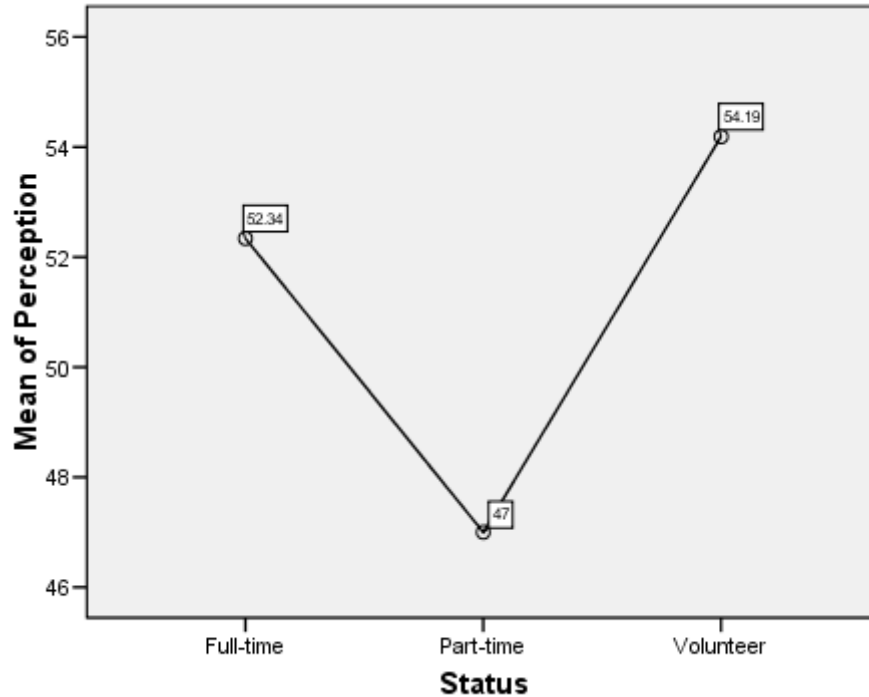
job status as shown in table 3. From the table, the F-value, 3.95, is significant at 0.05, ($P < 0.05$). The means

plot (figure 2) further shows which of the job status has the best perception.

Table 3: Effects of job status on the caregivers’ perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	107.23	2	53.61	3.95	0.02
Within Groups	1044.33	77	13.56		
Total	1151.55	79			

Figure 2: Mean plot of perceptions of caregiver by job status



From figure 2, Volunteers have the best perception with mean score of 54.19, followed by full-time with mean score of 52.34 and part-time the least with mean score of 47.

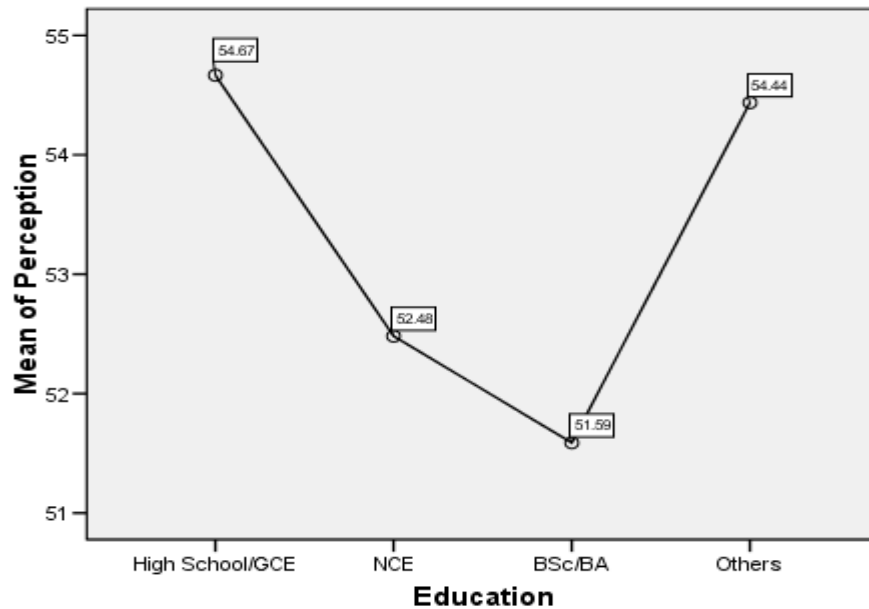
The effects of level of education on the caregiver’s perception of child abuse and neglect of children

with intellectual disability in institutions show no significant difference as can be seen in table 4. However, when plotted to find out which level of education of the caregiver shows best perception, the plot (figure 3) shows , High school / GCE has the best perception with mean score of 54.67, followed by others, 54.44, NCE, 52.48 and B.Sc./ BA the least with mean score 51.59.

Table 4: Effects of level of education on the caregiver’s perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	101.97	3	33.99	2.46	0.07
Within Groups	1049.58	76	13.81		
Total	1151.55	79			

Figure 3: Mean plot below shows which of the educational level has the best perception



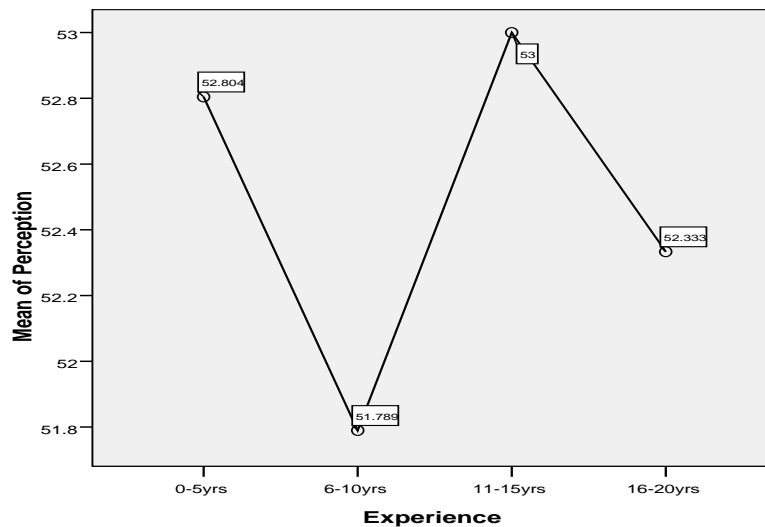
In addition, there is no significant difference in the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of the intellectually challenged in institutions based on their experiences as can be seen in table 5. Despite the insignificant difference, the means plot in figure 4

shows that participants with 11-15yrs of experience have the best perception with mean score 53, followed by 0-5yrs, 52.80, 16-20yrs 52.33 and 6-10yrs the least with mean score 51.79.

Table 5: Effects of working experience on the caregivers' perception on of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	16.49	3	5.50	0.37	0.78
Within Groups	1135.06	76	14.94		
Total	1151.55	79			

Figure 4: Plot showing experiences by perceptions of caregiver



Discussion

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in special schools. This is in accordance with the findings of Banerjee [11] in his study on perception of ethno-racial discrimination where he found that gender does not affect perception of ethno-racial discrimination. Our study equally revealed that age has no effect on the caregivers' perception of child abuse of children with intellectual disability in special schools. This is rather contrary to the finding of Maynard and Weidman [12], which revealed that there is difference in the way and manner, which male and female perceive generally.

According to our study, work status has no effect on the caregivers' perception of child abuse of children with intellectual disability in special schools. Skior [13], who found that job status did not affect the caregivers' perception, supported this. Both caregivers at upper and lower cadre have the same level of perception about child abuse and neglect among children with intellectual disability in special schools. In addition, in this study, educational level of caregivers does not have any effect on the way they perceived child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions. According to this study, work experience also has no effect on the caregivers' perception of child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions. Caregivers with long years of experience and those with short years of working experience perceive child abuse and neglect in the same manner. This is in contrary to the findings of Whall et al. [14]. In his study on factors influencing perception, he found that experience affects human perception greatly. Organisms can make finer perceptual distinctions and learn new kind of categorization. Our study also revealed that educational level of caregivers does not have any effect on the way they perceive child abuse and neglect of children with intellectual disability in institutions. Education increases the likelihood of perceiving discrimination. This is contrary to Banerjee finding that educated workers may have higher expectation and this may contribute to their perception of discrimination [11]. The five generated null hypotheses for this study were valid, and none was rejected based on the findings of the study. The findings of this study were in line with Skior [13], in a systemic review of public awareness, attitudes, and beliefs regarding intellectual disability, that attitude did not change based on factors intrinsic to person with intellectual disability such as age and gender.

IV. CONCLUSION

The outcome of the survey revealed that majority of the caregivers in respective of their educational background, years of experience, gender, age, and job status have common perception of child abuse and neglect in the selected schools.

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

All institutions for children with intellectual disability must have policies and procedures on child and prevention. Caregivers must attend annual mandatory classes on prevention and management of child abuse and neglect. Teaching and non-teaching staff must be screened for history of child abuse and neglect before the job is offered; There is need to develop child abuse awareness program among the students of higher learning; Prevention and management of child abuse and neglect must be a mandatory class to be attended by all undergraduate students in Faculty of Education.

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