

# Psycho-Social Variables as Indicators of Sexual Abuse among In-School Adolescents in Lagos Metropolis

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## Abstract

*This study examined psycho-social variables as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state. The objectives of this study are to assess the influence of poverty, male dominance, rapid social change, collective and interpersonal violence and child labour as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A simple random technique was used to select a sample size of 700 students from ten secondary schools in the research site. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive analyses were done with frequencies and percentages. Inferential analyses were done with the use of Chi-square tests. The results revealed among others that poverty has a significant influence as a predictor of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state ( $\chi^2 = 221.83$   $p < 0.05$ ). Also, the results show that male dominance has a significant influence as an indicator of sexual abuse among the sample ( $\chi^2 = 127.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Conclusively, there are significant influences of poverty, male dominance, rapid social change, collective and interpersonal violence and child labour as indicators of sexual abuse. It was recommended that government should ensure provision of adequate policy in protecting children and adolescents who have gone through sexual abuse and violence and also ensure implementation of policies that prevent child labor in society while also providing alternatives such as enrolment in school and vocational activities for adolescents with no other source of livelihood.*

**Keywords:** *adolescents; child labour; collective violence; poverty; rapid social change*

## 1. Introduction

Sexual abuse of adolescents occurs throughout the world and happens in different circumstances and settings. An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 years have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact (Pinheiro, 2016). In a recent global meta-analysis, the estimated prevalence of childhood sexual abuse in self-reported studies was 18% among female and 7.6% among male participants. It is a problem of considerable proportion in Africa, where up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced (Jewkes *et al.*, 2011). There have been several studies relating to sexual and other abuses in Lagos Metropolitan city. However, there is a lack of such studies among the category of the population investigated in the city of Lagos State, Nigeria. Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and perpetrators know each other. Immediate reactions to sexual abuse include shock, fear or disbelief. Long-term symptoms include anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress disorder (Aylott, 2019).

Embarrassment, shame or fear of being blamed and a desire to keep the abuse secret makes disclosure of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) uncommon. Nondisclosure or delayed disclosure of abuse can prevent appropriate intervention (Bruck, Ceci & Principe, 2016). This may increase vulnerability to further attacks and risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Lewis, 2012). CSA cuts across all socio-economic, educational,

racial and ethnic groups (Senn, Carey & Venable, 2018). The impact of childhood sexual abuse resonates in all areas of health: physical and psychological, including negative sexual outcomes (Brown *et al.*, 2009; Senn *et al.*, 2018).

According to Crosson-Tower (2012), although sexual abuse and trauma can bring about negative impacts, the victims have the capacity to handle the situation later in life. Nevertheless, there are victims who showed affective symptoms such as depression and anxiety, behaviour problems and interpersonal difficulties. Traumatic events suffered by the victims may result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). The symptoms shown include insomnia, nightmare, substance abuse, anxiety, anger, depression and fear. PTSD is commonly suffered by victims right after the sexual assault but the trauma and might still be present over time (Crosson-Tower, 2012).

CSA among adolescents has been found to be influenced by a decline in socioeconomic status, and the disruption of intimate relationships. Adolescent CSA was more common in those from disturbed and disrupted families and in those who also reported physical and emotional abuse. Sexual abuse among adolescents may take many forms and vary in terms of frequency, duration, invasiveness of the acts involved, and the use of force or coercion (Moore *et al.*, 2017). This study was aimed at investigating the psycho-social variables as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

## **2. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Kosofe local government district of Lagos State using a random sampling technique. The simple random technique was used to select 700 respondents (adolescents) from ten secondary schools in the population. The instrument used for data collection was a standardized questionnaire. The informed consent form was developed to protect the information provided by the respondents as it relates to the administration of the research instrument. The research instrument was self-developed and validated by the experts from the departments of Educational Psychology and Community Health of the University of Lagos.

At the initial stage, thirty-five question items were generated and attended to by the respondents who were in-school adolescents in Lagos State. After the research instrument was pilot studied on the respondents, all the ambiguities and redundancy in the variables were deleted. In order to reduce the items to a meaningful and manageable structure, a principal component factor analysis with varimax correlation, extraction and rotation were conducted for predictive and convergent validation of the instrument. The items were further subjected to exploratory factor analysis, setting the retention criterion at 0.6. At the second stage of validation of the instrument, the final version of the variables comprised twenty question items representing Poverty, Dominance, Rapid social change, Collective and interpersonal violence and Child labour, using a 4-point Likert type scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for demographic attributes for the respondents while inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test all stated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis of the respondents' demographic profile shows that 40.3% of the total respondents were male while 59.7% were female. 11.8% of the respondents were of the age group 10-11 years, 32.4% were age group 12-13 years, 49.3% were age group 14-16 years and 6.9% of the respondents were of the age group 17-19 years. 11.5% of the respondents were in junior secondary school (Jss) 1, 13.4% were in Jss2, 14.3% were in Jss3, 18.7% were in Ss1, 25.2% were in Ss2 while 16.9% were in Ss3. 10.6% of the respondents were from Muslim Junior College, 10.6% were from Muslim Senior College, 10.6% were from Ojota Junior Secondary School, 8.5% were from Ojota Senior Secondary School, 9.5% were from Marigold College, 10.6% were from Estaport Secondary School, 9.2% were from Alapere Junior High School, 10.3% were

from Gulf Flower Junior Secondary school, 10.6% were from Gulf Flower Senior Secondary school while 9.5% were from Ayedere Anibaba Junior High School.

Figure 1: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Gender; source: original research

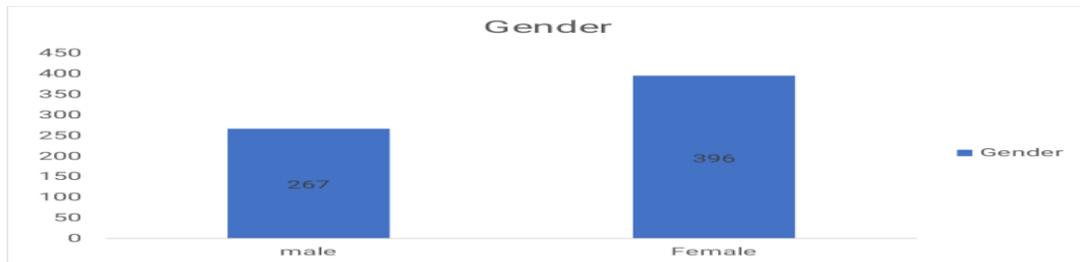


Figure 2: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Age; source: original research

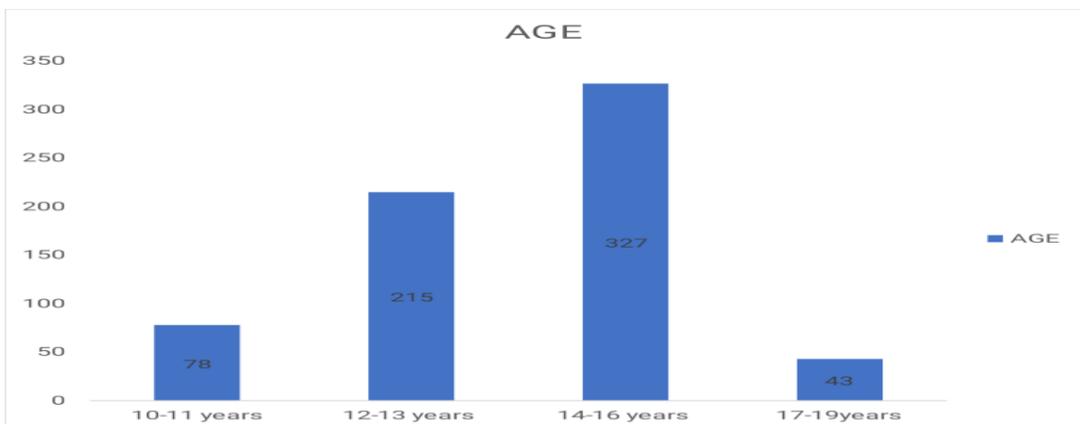
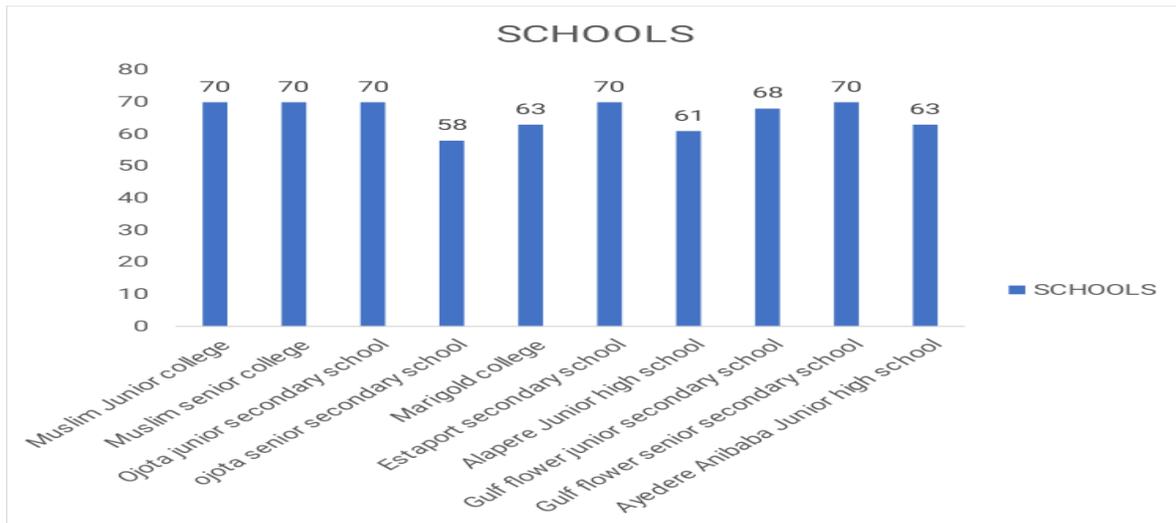


Figure 3: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Class; source: original research



Figure 4: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on School; source: original research



### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Hypothesis Testing

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) testing was used to evaluate all stated hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis 1:** This states that poverty will have no significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 1: Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis on Poverty Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc $X^2$	Tab $X^2$	Remark
Poverty	3.64	0.71	663	12	221.83	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated  $X^2$ -value (221.83) was greater than the critical  $X^2$  value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that poverty has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

**Hypothesis 2:** This states that male dominance will have no significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Table 2: Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis on Male Dominance Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc $X^2$	Tab $X^2$	Remark
Male Dominance	3.28	1.15	663	12	127.41	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated  $X^2$ -value (127.41) was greater than the critical  $X^2$  value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that male dominance has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

**Hypothesis 3:** This states that rapid social change will have no significant influence as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 3: Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis on Rapid Social Change Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	Calc $X^2$	Tab $X^2$	Remark
Rapid Social Change	2.80	0.82	663	12	83.91	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated  $X^2$ -value (83.91) was greater than the critical  $X^2$  value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that rapid social change has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

**Hypothesis 4:** This states that collective and interpersonal violence will have no significant influence as predictor of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 4: Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis on Collective and Interpersonal Violence Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc $X^2$	Tab $X^2$	Remark
Collective & Interpersonal Violence	3.21	1.17	663	12	166.04	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated  $X^2$  value (166.04) was greater than the critical  $X^2$  value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that collective and interpersonal violence has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

**Hypothesis 5:** This states that child labour will have no significant influence as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Table 5: Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Analysis on Child Labour Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse Among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc $X^2$	Tab $X^2$	Remark
Child Labour	3.53	1.17	663	12	242.38	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated  $X^2$  value (242.38) was greater than the critical  $X^2$  value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that child labour has a

significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

#### **4. Discussion of Findings**

The results of this analysis correlate with UNDP (2009), which noted that more than 51% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa live below the international poverty threshold of US\$1.25 per day. High levels of poverty have contributed to the high prevalence of child labour, with parents also encouraging children to work in order to improve the living standard of the household. In a study involving 24 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, sexual exploitation was noted to be on the rise and was linked to labour, child prostitution, sex tourism, and the production of pornography. Sexual exploitation is the most commonly identified form of human trafficking globally (79%) (UNODC, 2009). Prevailing poverty renders children vulnerable to trafficking and is associated with exploitative, often hazardous and frequently violent child labour, including domestic work and prostitution.

The result of this finding correlates with Lalor (2008), who observed that childhood and adolescent sexual abuse is linked to the idea of the male dominated nature of society. Nature has given men a physical advantage over women and some use it to force women to do what they want. This also involves the role of physical force in sexual relations. The patriarchal structure and ideas of the society have continued to restrict women's opportunities and favoured men to maintain the position of power in society (Crittenden & Wright, 2013). The direction of much of this violence towards women and girls might be explained by sex inequalities, a culture of male sexual entitlement, and the climate of relative impunity for rape (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2012). Women and girls in Africa are vulnerable to and experience gender-based violence on a large scale (Borwankar, Diallo & Sommerfelt, 2018). The level of acceptance of this practice is high in Nigeria (Callands *et al.*, 2013; Uthman *et al.*, 2011). Socio-economic hardships limit women's power within relationships and in some instances lead to reduced ability to engage in safe sexual practices (Kennedy *et al.*, 2012) and to an increased acceptance of violence. It is also within this context that CSA leads to situations where it is effectively normalised and seen as what can be expected by some. Although there are laws which aim to protect women's rights, they have little effect on the practical lives of most women as it remains true that the social construction of masculinity and femininity in Nigeria generally prescribes low status for women and high status for men. Different factors influence the status of men and women in a society and thus influence these processes. Among other potential factors is the widespread belief and cultural acceptance of the urgency of male sexual relief and a certain tolerance or expectancy of the use of physical coercion in sexual relations (Lalor, 2014). This may suggest that CSA could be more common in these societies.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the increase in child abuse has been attributed to rapid and radical social change (Jinadu, 2009; Loening, 2011). Such changes have been linked with an increase in child maltreatment and as such been attributed to a breakdown of traditional values and practices (Korbin, 2011). Apparently, higher occurrence of CSA has also focused on social fragmentation (Lalor, 2014). Such views have attributed CSA to the increasing isolation of individuals and families from a sense of community; the result of increased mobility and the disintegration of neighbourhoods, communities, and kin networks (Lalor, 2014). With isolation, people are deprived of socially sanctioned forms of support and intimacy, and consequently they turn instead to incestuous behaviours, therefore facilitating CSA.

The result of this research correlates with Van Niekerk (2014), who observed that Nigeria has been subject to conflict and extreme violence over the past few decades. Such violence can take place within families, in the communities in which children live, or in areas of armed conflict. Available research suggests that women's susceptibility to sexual violence is greatest in homes where domestic violence is perpetrated (Van Niekerk, 2014). Living in a context of violence increases children's vulnerability to the full range of abuse, including sexual abuse. Being displaced from home as a consequence of violence further increases

vulnerability. This vulnerability arises from the disruption and dismantling of the formal and informal protection mechanisms of families, communities and the state that subject women and children to risks that contribute to violence against women, especially sexual violence. Girls in particular are often the primary targets of abductions, often resulting in them being forced to participate directly in hostilities as fighters, or in “support” roles as spies, messengers, servants and sexual and domestic slaves (African Development Forum, 2018).

The result of this research correlate with Silberschmidt (2011) who observed that child labour exposes children and adolescents to sexual abuse across the world. He noted that the scale of the problem is difficult to ascertain, with children working on the streets being vulnerable to sexual abuse from many individuals, including from passers-by and in some cases from those who offer them shelter (Mandalazi, Banda & Umar, 2013). Some of the sexual behaviours evident in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are not the results of traditional “permissiveness” but from the breakdown of traditional norms and regulations surrounding sexual behaviour, aggravated by widespread of poverty (Silberschmidt, 2011).

## **5. Conclusion**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. Poverty has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
2. Male dominance has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
3. Rapid social change has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
4. Collective and interpersonal violence has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
5. Child labour has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

### **5.1. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The following limitations were encountered in the course of this study: the school authorities were reluctant at the beginning of the administration of the research instrument. Efforts were made by the researcher and his assistants to encourage them to participate; teachers in some of the schools refused to permit their students to participate at the initial stage of the exercise. The researcher enlightened them on the important of the research and that the information given by the respondents would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Subsequent research building on the work reported on in this paper include psychosocial indices of early sexual debut among primary school pupils and effects of single parenting as correlates of behavioural issues among young adults.

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