

Knowledge, Prevalence and Pattern of Sexual Violence among Students in Lagos State Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study is a report of the understanding of primary school pupils of the prevalence and forms of sexual violence in Lagos state, Nigeria. The sample for the study consisted of 400 pupils, 188 males and 212 females, aged 6 -12 years, randomly selected from 16 rural/urban primary schools in Lagos State. Knowledge Prevalence and Pattern of Sexual Violence Questionnaire (KPSVQ) was used for data collection. Four research questions guided the study to examine the differences, knowledge, prevalence, pattern, and experience of pupils on sexual violence across age, sex, school type and setting. Results show that pupils in primary schools are well informed of sexual violence and its form; verbal, physical, non-verbal and quid pro quo. Majority of the respondents (79.5%) affirmed that girls are major victims and their major source of information is the media. Strangers (60.1%), were identified as major perpetrators and willingness to report had a significantly high percentage (59.3%). Significant difference exists in sex and setting on knowledge of child abuse ($t(398) = 2.21, p = .03$ & $4.68, p = .00 < 0.05$) but no age difference ($t(398) = .55, p = .59 > 0.05$) and no difference was found across sex, age and setting on the experience of child abuse ($t(398) = .63, p = .53 > 0.05$). No significant difference was also found between setting and reporting ($t(398) = 1.63, p = .10 > 0.05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that the community must rise up to the zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual violence, government should ensure the enforcement of all laws on sexual violence particularly that of treating sexual violence as a criminal offence. Since the media is the major source of information, the media should be used for the education and public enlightenment programmes on sexuality education, preventive/defensive strategies, the government must ensure improved power supply to facilitate coverage and every individual must be willing to provide a safe and caring environment for every child.

Keywords: knowledge, prevalence, pattern, child sexual violence, primary school

Sexual violence is a broad term used to describe a wide range of sexual assaults such as rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse among others. It is described as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or any other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting (WHO, 2021). This study focused on child sexual abuse (CSA) which is perpetuated when an older or stronger person uses a child for his/her sexual pleasure, it may be, *verbal*: sexual comment(s) about a child's clothing, anatomy or looks, *non-verbal*: actions intended for an effect or as a demonstration, such as showing younger children pornographic pictures or movies, taking photographs of children for pornography, exhibitionism, *quid pro quo*: exchange of gifts or favour for sex and *physical*: touching breasts, buttocks, and genitals, fellatio, anilingus, cunnilingus and penetration of the vagina or anus with sexual organs or with objects (Akin-Odanye, 2018; Ogunfowoka & Fajemilebin 2012; Sulaiman, 2015; 2020).

Although, sexual violence is a global phenomenon gnawing several communities but child sexual violence unlike other forms of child violence is relatively alien in Nigeria. Traditionally, children below the age of 13 in Nigeria would not have had any sexual knowledge and experience not to talk of being sexually abused. Although, as noted by many writers, this may be as a result of disclosure, many cases are either unreported or underreported (Ekine, 2020). However contemporary literature (Agbo, 2019; Akin-Odanye, 2018; Aruna, 2018; Chinawa et al., 2013; David et al. 2018; Ekine, 2020; Idoko et al., 2020; Selengia et al., 2020) suggest that children below the age of 13 are sexually active and would have experienced sexual violence in addition to other forms of violence before age 13. According to Akin-Odanye (2018) 1,164 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in Nigerian health institutions between 2011 and 2016. Idoko et al. (2020) in their study of the records of Tamar Sexual Assault Centre on rape trends for the period 2014 – 2016, added that between 2014 and 2015, the percentage of children under age 5 that were raped changed by 133% points and that by the end of 2016, based on the first quarter of 2016 records, there would be 281% rape rate for children below 5 years. David et al., (2018) assert that over 16% of children in Nigeria have experienced their first incidence of CSA between the ages of 5 and 8 years and about 45% between 9 and 12 years of age. Olusanya et al. (1986) earlier reported that victims of sexual molestation in Benin City, Nigeria comprised children aged 6-12 years and adolescents aged 13-19 years. Agbo (2019) reported numerous cases of child sexual violence from the media and Chinawa et al. (2013) reported a 60% of child sexual violence for girls below the age of 12 years in Enugu, Nigeria. Aruna (2018) also asserts that contemporary Nigerians have lost their priceless values of decency and responsibility with several cases of adult males defiling under-aged girls.

This is not to say boys were not victims as well, studies (Akinade et al., 2010; Barth et al., 2013; Ekine, 2020; Gracia-Moreno & Stockl, 2017; Martin & Silverstone, 2013; WHO, 2013) affirmed that boys and men were also victims. Actually, the study of Ekine (2020) reported higher percentage of sexual abuse

for boys than girls 49.7% and 45.6% respectively. Barth et al. (2013) found child sexual abuse to be between 8% and 31% for females and 3% to 17% for males in a review of 55 studies from 24 countries and nine girls and 3 boys out of 100 have experienced forced penetration. Martin and Silverstone (2013) reported that approximately 4% of girls and 2% of boys experience some forms of sexual assault each year. Nevertheless, literature suggests more females than male victims. According to WHO (2013), one in every five women is a victim of sexual assault and globally, 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. In addition, Kann et al. (2016) found that 6.7% of students in their study were forced to have sexual relations against their will, with a greater percentage among girls 10.3% and 3.1% boys. The study of Chinawa, et al. (2013) earlier confirmed that females are often victims of sexual violence with 93.9% of victims being females and 6.1% males. Also, the percentage of children aged 10-13 who were victims of sexual abuse were higher than that of adolescents aged 15-18 with a percentage score of 15.2 and 12.2 respectively. The report of Oladepo, et al. (2011) was nothing different, females who had experienced sexual violence in their study were 7.4% while males were 4.8%.

Perpetrators according to Akinade et al. (2010) cut across cultures, class, creed, country and affiliations. They are usually individuals that are well known to victims, either parents, neighbours, teachers, coaches, clergy, babysitters, relatives, friends or acquaintances, persons in positions of authority and sometimes strangers. Several studies (Akinade et al. 2010; Community Advocate for Family & Youth [CAFY], 2021; Daral et al., 2016; National Children's Advocacy Center [NCAC], 2018) assert that CSA is mostly perpetrated by the victims' relatives and acquaintances with strangers accounting for less than 10% of cases. Daral et al. (2016) found 75% of individuals responsible for unwanted fondling and forced sexual intercourse with children to be their relatives while friends and neighbours were 24% and 5% respectively. Reports of CAFY (2021) and NCAC (2018) presented 10% and between 3.1% - 4.7% respectively for strangers while the percentage of relatives and acquaintances were 30% and 60%. However, Nlewem and Amodu (2016) reported that majority of the students 72.3% in their study believed that CSA perpetrators do not belong to their family but this does not rule out the fact that they could be acquaintances. CAFY (2021) concluded that men are found to be perpetrators in most cases, regardless of whether the victim is a boy or a girl.

In addition, NCAC (2018) reported that many victims of CSA do not understand that what was happening to them is sexual abuse and that it is a wrongful act. Denga and Denga (2004), Fernando and Karunasekera (2009), Nlewem and Amodu, (2016), and Eke et al. (2011) reported that children particularly girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse due to ignorance of behaviours construed to be abusive. They therefore experience sexual abuse in silence without realising they are being sexually abused. Denga and Denga (2004) found that Nigerian students when compared to British students viewed only conducts

of physical sexual abuse as sexual abuse while other forms: verbal, non-verbal and quid pro quo were not regarded as sexual abuse. In the study of Eke et al. (2011) only 4% of the respondents knew that forced intercourse and intercourse between an adult male or female and a male or female below 16 years of age are considered rape. Okoro and Osawemen (2005) found that up to 71% of the out-of-school teenagers in their study perceived sexual harassment as a normal occurrence in Nigeria.

In contrary, Sulaiman (2015; 2020), Nlewem and Amodu, (2016), Ekine (2020) found that the perception of and attitude to sexual behaviours are changing. Children are becoming more aware of behaviour conducts that are abusive as a result of exposure through the media and sexuality education. Harrison (2013) reported about the radio and online campaign for parents of 5 - 11years on the acronym PANTS, P - Privates are private, A - Always remember your body belongs to you, N - No means no, T- Talk about secrets that upset you and S - Speak up, someone can help you. Lagos State, has zero tolerance for sexual abuse and in collaboration with non-governmental organisations millions of Lagosians were sexually informed through the media, school counsellors were trained on sexual violence (Cece Yara foundation, 2020) and the acronym PANTS exist in public primary schools as song. However, this is yet to be emphasized and made compulsory in public schools where majority of pupils in Lagos State attend. In addition, the lack of constant power supply has rendered the effort of educating through the media erratic and inaccessible to the target population. Sulaiman (2015) reported that students in higher institutions in Lagos State understand all acts of sexual violence and are willing to report perpetrators. Nlewem and Amodu (2016) also found that 77.9% of the respondents in their study had a very good knowledge of child sexual abuse and 81.7% recognised verbal and non-verbal sexual behaviours as sexual abuse.

Further, studies (Aderinto, 2010; Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995; Chapko et al., 1999; Drake & Pandey, 1996; Eke et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2007) suggest differences in the knowledge, pattern and prevalence of sexual violence across settings. UNICEF (2007) reported that learners in urban areas 9.6 % and 9.3% students in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) knew about students who had been raped than 3.9% students in rural areas and 3.1% students in primary schools. Drake and Pandey (1996), Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995) associated poverty, lack of education and rural community to greater risk of CSA while to other reports, living in urban setting was the greatest risk. The major sources of information on child sexual violence according to Aderinto (2010), and Nlewem and Amodu (2016) were teachers and parents with teachers scoring higher 45.7% while parents scored 26.9%.

The Problem

In recent times in Nigeria, the abuse of children below the age of 12 is grossly reported in the media, yet the focus of most studies (Envuladu et al., 2013; Nlewem, & Amodu, 2016; Oyekola & Agunbiade, 2018; Sulaiman, 2015) in school setting are in secondary schools and higher institutions. Basically, there

are very few studies on rape in primary schools where we have children within this cohort. Hence, this study sought to fill this gap. Considering the psychological effects of sexual violence on witnesses not to talk of victims, especially minors, this study chose to unravel the knowledge, prevalence and pattern of sexual violence in rural/urban primary schools in Lagos State. How much do students know? Are they experiencing sexual violence? What forms and from who?

Questions

1. How much do primary school students know of sexual violence and from where?
2. Do primary school students have the knowledge of the perpetrators of sexual violence?
3. Which form of sexual violence has primary school students experienced/heard of?
4. Are there differences in the knowledge and experience of pupils of sexual violence across age, sex, school type and setting?

Methods

Research Design

This study employed the use of descriptive research design to describe the understanding, prevalence and pattern of sexual violence in primary schools.

Sample

The sample for the study comprised 400 pupils, 188 males and 212 females, aged 6 -12 years randomly selected from 16 public and private owned schools from rural and urban setting in Lagos State. Eight urban schools; four private, four public and eight rural schools; four private, four public were randomly selected. The choice of primary school was because children in primary schools in Nigeria falls within the age of interest for this study, that is children below the age of 13. In each school 25 pupils were randomly selected. Informed consent was granted by respondents' parents, teachers and head teachers.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection is a self-developed questionnaire named Knowledge Prevalence and Pattern of Sexual Violence Questionnaire (KPSVQ). KPSVQ is a 38 items questionnaire divided into four sections: section A was on demographic data seeking information on sex, age, and type of school; items in section B were used to elicit information on pupils' knowledge of sexual violence with questions such as 'are children sexually abused?' 'Which of the following sexual abuse have you experienced, witnessed or heard of? Section C was on prevalence with questions such as 'do you know someone who has been sexually abused?' 'Have you been sexually abused?' 'Who was the abuser?' 'Where did the abuse take place? Section D focused on pattern, requesting participants to indicate acts they had either experienced, witnessed or heard of. To ensure appropriate responses and commitment from respondents, researchers and their

assistants acted as guides to pupils in responding to the questions especially the six- to eight-year-olds. Incentives such as pencils, crayons, pens, and edibles were also provided to motivate pupils' participation and interest.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data collected was analysed using simple counts, percentage, ranking order and t-test to explain differences.

Results

Results displayed in Table1 revealed that pupils in primary schools were well informed of sexual violence, 89.5% of the respondents knew that children are sexually abused, and had heard of different forms of sexual violence especially rape, 79.5% of the respondents have heard of rape compared to 37% sexual harassment and 39.3% had heard of attempt rape. Majority of the respondents 79.5% affirmed that girls were usually victims while 33.3% indicated that both boys and girls were victims.

Table 1
Responses on Knowledge and Prevalence of Sexual Violence

No	Items	Yes	No
1.	Are children sexually abused	358(89.5)	42(10.5)
	Which of the following sexual abuse have you heard of?		
2.	Attempt rape	157(39.3)	243(60.8)
3.	Sexual harassment	148(37)	252(63)
4.	Rape	318(79.5)	82(20.5)
5.	Girls are usually the victims of abuse	318(79.5)	82(20.5)
6.	Both boys and girls are victims abuse	133(33.3)	267(66.8)
7.	Do you know any student that has been sexually abused	358(89.5)	42(10.5)
8.	Have you been sexually abused	72(18)	328(82)

*** Numbers in parentheses are percentage

Results displayed in Table 2 present the order of respondents' source of information, the media ranked first with 42.3% as the major source of information on sexual violence for the respondents followed by their friends 20.5%, parents 18.5% and teacher 15.8%.

Table 2
Responses on Source of Knowledge

No	Items	Frequency	%	Rank
1.	Friends	82	20.5	2
2.	News	169	42.3	1
3.	Parents	74	18.5	3
4.	Teacher	63	15.8	4
5.	Head teacher	12	3.0	5

In addition to having the knowledge of sexual violence, as displayed in Tables 3 and 4, respondents in this study identified strangers 60.1%, neighbours 35.8% and uncle 32.5% in that order as perpetrators of sexual violence while the way home and school ranked 1st to 3rd for the location of abuse. Reporting has a high percentage 59.3 while counselling had very few numbers, only 4.8% were willing to see the counsellor.

Table 3

Responses on Knowledge of Perpetrators

No	Items	Frequency	%	Rank
1.	Father	56	14	5
2.	Uncle	130	32.5	3
3.	Teacher	32	8	9
4.	Brother	39	9.8	6
5.	Neighbour	143	35.8	2
6.	Stepfather	85	21.3	4
7.	Stranger	241	60.3	1
8.	Aunt	41	10.3	7
9.	Mother	33	8.3	8

Table 4

Responses on Location of Sexual Abuse

No	Items	Frequency	%	Rank
1.	School	87	21.8	3
2.	Home	183	45.8	1
3.	Church/Mosque	19	4.8	4
4.	Way Home	111	27.8	2

The results presented in Table 5 revealed the pattern of sexual violence as either experienced, witnessed or heard of by respondents. Results show that all forms of sexual violence; verbal, physical, non-verbal and quid pro quo are prevalence with relatively higher percentage of acts such as touching or beating buttocks 30.8% and rubbing of one's body with hands 31.3%.

Table 5
Responses on Pattern of Sexual Violence

No	Items	Yes	No
1.	Kissing by force	94(23.5)	306(76.5)
2.	Touching of the breast	72(18)	328(82)
3.	Touching of penis/vulva	61 (15.3)	339 (84.8)
4.	Touching or beating of one's buttocks	123(30.8)	277(69.3)
5.	Rubbing of one's body with hands	125(31.3)	275(68.8)
6.	Putting penis in one's sexual part	70(17.5)	330(82.5)
7.	Rubbing of one's private part with hands	78(19.5)	322(80.5)
8.	Putting finger in one's private part	63(15.8)	337(84.3)
9.	Putting objects in one's private part	44(11.0)	356(89.0)
10.	Putting mouth in one's private part	61(15.3)	339(84.8)
11.	Putting object or hand in one's anus	58(14.5)	342(85.5)
12.	Asked to sit on the opposite sex's laps	53(13.3)	347(86.8)
13.	Asked to watch sexual movies	46(11.5)	354(88.5)
14.	Asked to view pornography picture	70(17.5)	330(82.5)
15.	Blocking one's path	64(16)	336(84)
16.	Has anybody talked to you about his/her nakedness	58(14.5)	342(85.5)
17.	Giving you gifts, to play husband and wife	56(14)	344(86)
18.	Asked to remove cloths to be played with	47(11.8)	353(88.3)
19.	Is any of the above acts a good experience	37(9.3)	363(90.8)
20.	Was any of these acts reported when it happened	237(59.3)	(163)40.8
21.	Will you like talking to a counsellor?	19(4.8)	381(95.3)

*** Numbers in parentheses are percentage

The results presented in Tables 6 and 7 are independent t-tests of difference in knowledge and experience of respondents on child abuse across age, sex and setting. Significant differences exist in sex and setting on knowledge of child abuse ($t(398) = 2.21, p = .03$ & $4.68, p = .00 < 0.05$) but not in age difference ($t(398) = .55, p = .59 > 0.05$). Also, no significant difference across sex, age and setting in the experience of pupils on child abuse ($t(398) = .63, p = .53 > 0.05$). No significant difference was also found between setting and reporting ($t(398) = 1.63, p = .10 > 0.05$), pupils from rural and urban areas claimed they would report cases of child abuse.

Table 6
t-test of Age, Sex and Setting on Knowledge of Abuse

Knowledge of Abuse	NO	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Sex	Yes	358	1.5112	.50057	2.211	398	.028
	No	42	1.6905	.46790			
Age	Yes	358	2.3939	.67668	.545	398	.586
	No	42	2.3333	.72134			
Setting	Yes	358	1.5391	.49917	4.679	398	.000
	No	42	1.1667	.37244			

*** Sig. (2-tailed)

Table 7
t-test of Age, Sex and Setting on Experience of Abuse

Experience of Abuse	NO	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Sex	Yes	318	1.5220	.50030	-.629	398	.530
	No	82	1.5610	-.03896			
Age	Yes	318	2.3931	.66897	.323	398	.747
	No	82	2.3659	.02723			
Setting	Yes	318	1.5189	.50043	1.487	398	.138
	No	82	1.4268	.09204			

*** Sig. (2-tailed)

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study show that primary school pupils have adequate knowledge of sexual abuse but girls are more knowledgeable than boys and urban pupils are more knowledgeable than rural pupils. Pupils in this study also have adequate knowledge of sexual abuse right from the age of six they could differentiate between the different forms of sexual abuse and they all have the same experience of sexual abuse, irrespective of age, sex or setting their experiences are the same. Thereby confirming the prevalence of CSA as reported by Agbo (2019) and Akin-Odanye (2018) who aver that 1,164 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in Nigerian health institutions between 2011 and 2016, David et al. (2018) who assert that over 16% of children in Nigeria have experienced their first incidence of CSA between the ages of 5 and 8 years and about 45% between 9 and 12 years of age and Olusanya et al. (1986) who also reported that victims of sexual molestation in Benin City, Nigeria comprised children aged 6-12 years and adolescents aged 13-19 years.

The findings also confirmed those of Sulaiman (2015; 2020), Nlewem and Amodu (2016), and Ekine (2020) who averred that the perception of and attitude to sexual behaviours are changing. Children are becoming more aware of behaviour conducts that are abusive as a result of exposure through the media and sexuality education. Nlewem and Amodu, (2016) also found that 77.9% of the

respondents in their study had a very good knowledge of child sexual abuse and 81.7% recognised verbal and non-verbal sexual behaviours as sexual abuse.

However, this finding contradicts that of Denga and Denga (2004), Fernando and Karunasekera (2009), Nlewem and Amodu (2016), Eke et al. (2011) who reported that girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse due to ignorance of behaviours construed to be abuse. Although, girls are more knowledgeable of sexual abuse than boys and those from urban areas are more knowledgeable than those from rural areas, notwithstanding, majority of the respondents in this study had adequate knowledge of all forms of sexual abuse and were of the opinion that all forms of sexual abuse are not good acts. Thus, explaining why there were no significant difference across sex, setting and age because their experiences of sexual abuse are the same. Majority of the respondents did not have personal experience of all the forms of sexual abuse, but they were aware a number of children who were sexually abused.

That girls were more knowledgeable than boys is not surprising, literature (Aruna, 2018; Chinawa et al., 2013; Oladepo, Yusuf & Arulogun, 2011; WHO, 2013) already suggests more female than male victims. According to WHO (2013), one in every five women is a victim of sexual assault and globally, 35% of women had experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. Chinawa et al. (2013) reported a 60% child sexual violence for girls below the age of 12 years in Enugu, Nigeria. Aruna (2018) reported several cases of adult males defiling under-aged girls. This probably explains the significant sex difference in the knowledge of sexual abuse, girls are more knowledgeable than boys because they are at the receiving end; they are in most cases the victims of sexual abuse.

On the issue of perpetrators of sexual abuse, in contrary to most studies (Akinade et al., 2010; CAFY, 2021; Daral et al., 2016; NCAC, 2018) who assert that perpetrators are mostly victims' relatives and acquaintances with strangers accounting for less than 10% of cases, in this study, strangers 60.1%, ranked 1st as perpetrators of CSA followed by neighbours 35.8% and uncles 32.5%. However, as reported by Nlewem and Amodu (2016), that CSA perpetrators are strangers, does not rule out the fact that they could be acquaintances, in this study, neighbours and uncles ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively. Adding it all up the percentage of relatives and acquaintances would be higher than that of stranger. Hence, affirming that perpetrators are in most cases relatives and acquaintances with strangers accounting for fewer percentage.

It is worth stressing that as averred by Sulaiman (2015), majority of the respondents were willing to report. 59.3% claimed that sexual abuse acts were reported when they occurred. In addition, no significant difference was also found between setting and reporting, this finding contradicts Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995) position that reporting is associated to urban area. Pupils from rural and urban areas in this study claimed they would report cases of child abuse.

Contrary to the findings of Aderinto (2010) and Nlewem and Amodu (2016) on the sources of information about sexual abuse, where major sources of

information were teachers followed by parents, in this study, the major source of information is the media followed by respondents' friends then parents and lastly teachers. This finding supports Sulaiman's (2015, 2020) assertion that children are becoming more aware of behaviour conducts that are abusive due to media influence and sexuality education.

Conclusion

The knowledge, prevalence and pattern of child abuse among pupils in rural and urban primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, has been explored. As anticipated, primary school pupils have clear understanding of what constitute CSA as a result of media exposure and prevalence. The pupils also understand that all sexual abuse behaviours are inappropriate acts that should be reported to authorities. It is obvious that the pattern of abuse in the community is changing, and there is need for appropriate judicial, preventive and rehabilitative interventions to eradicate the menace. It is hoped that the study would be of meaningful contribution to existing knowledge on sexual violence and be of great value to teachers, counsellors, parents, policy makers and the society at large.

Recommendations

The change in pattern of sexual violence calls for a more drastic approach to curb or prevent the spread. All concerned; the rapists, their victims, religious bodies, law makers, law enforcement agencies, various levels of government and non-governmental organisations and civil societies must rise up to the zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual violence.

Part of rising up to zero tolerance as noted in Sulaiman (2021) is being responsive and vigilant; parents, guardians and teachers should be more careful, prompt and vigilant, especially with the girl child. The girl child should not be left in the care of any male/suspicious adults and receiving of gifts from any adult should not be ignored or taken for granted.

As stated elsewhere, (Akinade et al., 2010; Sulaiman, 2015; 2020; 2021) government should ensure the enforcement of all laws on sexual violence particularly those on sexual abuse. Sexual abuse should be treated as a criminal offence and legal actions should be more proactive and responsive, prosecution of offenders should not be delayed. As emphasised in Sulaiman (2015) reporting rape cases will expose perpetrators and facilitate prosecution. The populace should therefore be educated on the need for victims to speak out. Victims need to have the assurance of getting justice without delay and not being stigmatised or victimised. Encouraging victims to speak out and report the crime to law enforcement agents without entertaining any fear of intimidation or stigmatisation could serve as deterrent to perpetrators, realising that there would be no escape from justice irrespective of position or status.

Counsellors need to be more responsive to providing appropriate preventive interventions; teaching sexuality education in primary school is now a must. Adequate knowledge about misconceptions, symptoms and long-term effects associated with sexual abuse is the first step of assistance; knowledge will

influence behavioural change. Counsellors should support the teachers to inculcate the teaching of sexuality education into all classroom subjects and parents must be motivated to constantly remind their kids about the acronym PANTS and other defensive/preventive skills. Pupils need to learn about different defensive and or resistance strategies and social skills for prevention and protection.

Since the major source of information on sexual abuse is the media, the media should be used for education and public enlightenment programmes on sexuality education, preventive/defensive strategies, the need for reporting and getting justice, the consequences of rape on victims and the need for victims and perpetrators to get assistance or treatment.

Government must ensure improved power supply especially during the period of sexuality education programmes to facilitate wider coverage and promote awareness and better understanding.

This study did not explore the reasons for the increase in CSA and the influence of COVID-19, this is therefore recommended for further studies.

More importantly, we all have the responsibility of providing a safe and caring environment for all children.

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