# Examining the Impact and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect in Nkpor-uno, Anambra State, Nigeria

## Nwankwo Nonyelum Stella

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe Anambra State, Nigeria

*Corresponding author:

**Nwankwo Nonyelum Stella**
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe Anambra State, Nigeria

## Abstract

This study investigates the prevalence and impact of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno, located in the Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State, highlighting a critical issue with profound lifelong implications. With a focus on understanding the scope of child abuse and neglect within this community, the research adopts a methodological framework guided by the principles of social learning theory. The study's objectives were pursued through the analysis of data collected from a purposively sampled group of 100 parents and caregivers out of a targeted population of 1,000 residents. Utilizing a specially designed structured questionnaire, the study employed quantitative methods, specifically frequency counts, means, and standard deviations, to analyze the collected data. The findings of the research are alarming, indicating a 91% prevalence rate of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno, which underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address this crisis. Based on these results, the study proposes a multifaceted approach to combat child abuse and neglect. It calls for a collaborative effort involving parents, caregivers, educational administrators, healthcare professionals, non-governmental organizations, and governmental bodies. The aim is to foster a supportive environment that not only prevents child abuse and neglect but also ensures the rehabilitation and well-being of affected children. This study contributes to the broader discourse on child welfare and serves as a call to action for all stakeholders to prioritize and address the issue of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno and beyond.

**Keywords:** Nkpor-uno, Child abuse, stakeholders, community

## Introduction

Child abuse and neglect encompass a range of actions or failures to act by caregivers that result in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child (Oginyi et al., 2024). This includes physical abuse (inflicting physical injury), sexual abuse (involving a child in sexual activities), emotional abuse (actions that harm a child's self-esteem), and neglect (failure to provide adequate food, shelter, affection, supervision, education, or medical care). These behaviors seriously impair a child's physical, emotional, and psychological development

(Okafor et al., 2023). Child abuse and neglect are complex issues rooted in intergenerational cycles, societal norms, and structural inequalities, requiring comprehensive approaches to prevention and intervention. Child abuse and neglect constitute a critical public health issue with significant implications for the well-being of children and the fabric of society at large. This pervasive issue transcends geographical, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries, affecting millions of children worldwide and resulting in long-term consequences that extend into adulthood (Uye et al., 2023). The impact and prevalence of child abuse and neglect have been the subject of extensive research, shedding light on the urgent need for effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Recent data indicate that child abuse and neglect are alarmingly common, with variations in prevalence rates across different regions and types of abuse. A comprehensive global review by Fakunmoju (2024) highlights that a significant proportion of children worldwide experience some form of maltreatment, with physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect being prevalent. The study points out that these experiences are not isolated, with many children experiencing multiple forms of abuse, further complicating the impact on their development and health. In high-income countries, research by Barth et al., (2013) estimates that around 1 in 5 children experiences sexual abuse, ranging from 1 in 19 girls to 1 in 8 in some regions. Physical abuse and neglect, though challenging to quantify accurately due to reporting issues and definitional variances, are suggested to affect a substantial number of children, underscoring the pervasive nature of this crisis (Finkelhor et al., 2014; Abera et al., 2021).

The impacts of child abuse and neglect are profound and multifaceted, affecting physical, psychological, and social dimensions of health and well-being. Physically, abused children may suffer from injuries, developmental delays, and various health problems that can extend into adulthood. Psychologically, the trauma of abuse can lead to mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse disorders (Tipps et al., 2014;

Brady et al., 2021). These mental health issues not only affect the quality of life of survivors but also pose significant challenges to public health systems. Beyond individual health impacts, child abuse and neglect have broader social and economic consequences. The cycle of violence, wherein victims of child abuse are at a higher risk of engaging in violent behavior themselves, perpetuates societal violence and contributes to social instability (Houmark et al., 2024). Economically, the costs associated with healthcare, child welfare services, and lost productivity due to the long-term effects of abuse are substantial, highlighting the economic rationale for investing in prevention and intervention measures.

Understanding the determinants and risk factors of child abuse and neglect is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Factors contributing to the risk of child maltreatment include parental substance abuse, mental health issues, history of being abused, economic stress, and family dynamics, such as domestic violence and inadequate social support systems (McCormack & Bennett, 2023). Community and societal factors, such as poverty, violence, and social norms that condone or do not protect against maltreatment, also play significant roles.

The motivation for the study "Examining the Impact and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect in Nkpor-uno" lies in the necessity to address a significant gap in understanding the localized dynamics of child maltreatment within this specific community. While existing research provides valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of child abuse and neglect on a global and national scale (Mathews et al., 2020), there is a notable lack of comprehensive studies focusing on the unique socio-cultural context of Nkpor-uno. This community-specific research is essential because it acknowledges that factors contributing to child abuse and neglect can vary significantly between different regions and populations (Kobulsky et al., 2020).

Moreover, localized studies are crucial for developing tailored interventions and policies that effectively address the needs of the community. By examining the prevalence and impact of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno, this study aims to

fill this gap in the literature and provide evidence-based insights that can inform targeted strategies for prevention, intervention, and support. By understanding the specific determinants and manifestations of child maltreatment within Nkpor-uno, policymakers, practitioners, and community stakeholders can work collaboratively to develop culturally sensitive approaches to safeguarding children and promoting their well-being.

## Theoretical frame work

The purpose of this section is to review theories that are related to the study. This study was anchored on one theory, which is social learning Theory (SLT). Social learning theory was propounded by Albert-Bandura in 1960. The key tenets of this theory states that; learning is not purely behavioral, rather, it is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context; learning can occur by observing a behavior and by observing the consequence of the behavior; learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations, and making decisions about the performance of the behavior; reinforcement plays a role in learning but is not entirely responsible for learning; the learners is not a passive recipient of information. Cognition, environment, and behavior all mutually influence each other.

The basic idea that underlies the theory is that learning (abuse and neglect) is a shared process which takes place through observing, working together and being part of a larger group, which includes colleagues of varying of experience, able to stimulate each other's development. Awareness and understanding of sexual abuse and risky sexual behavior might come from learning when others talk or exhibit such behavior. A child might get knowledge of sexual abuse and risky sexual behavior from their peers. This could be from peers in their school or those they interact with in the society. One disadvantage of this kind of knowledge acquisition is that they may learn in a wrong way. Children could learn this from observing others doing it or talking about it without knowing it has great consequences on their health and academic performances. This theory was applied in this study to help explain how school

environment can affect children's exposure to sexual abuse and neglect.

Children can get understanding of sexual abuse and risky sexual behaviors from their teachers and peers in school they interact with socially. Also, media representations gain influence because people's social constructions of reality depend heavily on what they see, hear, and read rather than what they experience directly. Thus, children might equally acquire knowledge of sexual abuse and risky sexual behaviors from what they watch on television, hear on radio, read from a book and on social media.

## Research questions

1. What are the effects of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno?
2. What are the prevalence of child abuse and neglectin Nkpor-uno?

## Methodology

The research design employed for this study was a descriptive survey. This approach aims to assess the characteristics of the entire population under study, providing an accurate depiction of the situation. Utilizing this method aligns with the research's focus on understanding the prevalence of child abuse and neglect among children aged 0-10 years in Nkpor-uno. The study area, Nkpor-uno, situated in Anambra State, Nigeria, with a population of approximately 1000 residents, encompasses various demographics, including parents, teachers, schoolchildren, market women, hospital staff, and church workers.

Sampling was conducted purposively, selecting 10% of the population, resulting in 100 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN)," comprising demographic data and sections covering forms and effects of child abuse and neglect. To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent content validation by experts and reliability testing, demonstrating a score of 0.75.

Data collection involved face-to-face administration of questionnaires by the researcher and trained assistants. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout, including respect for respondents, confidentiality, anonymity, and

maintaining a professional relationship. Data analysis was conducted using percentages and means, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and determinants of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno while adhering to ethical standards and rigorous research methodologies.

## Results
### Table 1: Gender of Participants

| GENDER | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % |
| | MALE | 50 | 50.0 |
| | FEMALE | 50 | 50.0 |
| | Total | 100 | 100.0 |

### Gender of Participants

The respondents' parents were asked to indicate the gender of their children. Result in the table 1 shows 50(50%) of respondents were males, 50(50%) females

### Table 2: Age groups

| AGE GROUPS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Range | N | % |
| 1-5 years | 38 | 38.0 |
| 6-10 years | 62 | 62.0 |
| Total | 100 | 1 00.0 |

The first question of the questionnaire was to profile the selected participants in terms of their age. The table 2 shows the age group of the participants which ranged from 1 to 10years in which 38(38%) fell within 1-5years in which 18(18.0%) were males and 20(20.0%) were females and 62(62%) fell within 6-10yers 38(38.0)% in which 42(42%) were females and 20(20%) were males with the mean age of 6.1 and standard deviation ± 2.44.

### Table 3: Gender Distribution among Age Groups.

| AGE GROUP | GENDER | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MALE | | FEMALE | | |
| Range | N | % | N | % | |
| 1-5 years | 18 18.0 | | 20 | 20.0 | 38 |
| 6-10years | 20 20.0 | | 42 | 42.0 | 62 |
| Total | 38 38.0 | | 62 | 62.0 | 100 |

The table 3 shows the age group of the participants which ranged from 1 to 10years in which 38(38%) fell within 1-5 years in which 18(18.0%) were males and 20(20.0%) were females and 62(62%) fell within 6-10yers 38(38.0)% in which 42(42%) were females and 20(20%) were males with the mean age of 6.1 and standard deviation ± 2.44.

### Research Question 1:
What are the effect of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno?

### Table 4: Showing the mean and standard deviation result on the effect of child abuse and neglect.

| S/N | Factors | Mean | Std | decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | When exposed to abuse a child tends to have low self-esteem and self-blame | 2.88 | 1.88 | Accepted |
| 2. | Abuse leads to distrust of adult or difficulty forming relationship with others | 2.55 | 2.4 | Not Accepted |
| 3. | Abuse exposes the child to higher risk of Involvement in sexual behavior and drug abuse. | 2.25 | 3.03 | Not Accepted |
| 4. | Abuse such as physical and emotional abuse gives a child tendency of developing mental health disorders like anxiety and post-traumatic stress | 1.79 | 2.0 | Not Accepted |
| 5. | Abuse causes permanent physical injuries like death | 1.79 | 1.6 | Not Accepted |
| 6. | Abuse exposes the child to illicit behavior Like violence and criminal act | 3.3 | 2.90 | Accepted |
| 7. | Child abuse leads to learning disorders Including poor language and cognitive development | 3.77 | 3.3 | Accepted |

The table 4 identifies the responses on the effect of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno. The result of the findings revealed the mean and standard deviation which shows that; Child abuse leads to learning disorders including poor language and cognitive development (3.77). Abuse causes permanent physical injuries like death has with the least mean score of (1.79). The standard deviation result also shows that; Child abuse leads to learning disorders including poor language and cognitive development has the highest score (3.3) and also child abuse causes permanent injuries like death has the least score (1.6).

**Research Question 2:**
What are the Prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno?

**Table 5: Showing the percentage result on the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno**

| S/N | PREVALENCE OF CHILD ABUSE | YES | | No | | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | |
| 1 | Have you ever called your children names or insult him or her | 70 | 70% | 30 | 30% | 100 |
| 2 | Do you ever control your children or places unreasonable limit to him/her | 80 | 80% | 20 | 20% | !00 |
| 3 | Do you provide your child with basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter | 91 | 91% | 9 | 9% | 100 |
| 4 | Do you leave you child without proper supervision for extended periods of time | 5 | 5% | 95 | 95% | 100 |
| 5 | Do you have difficulty bonding with your children. | 2 | 2% | 98 | 98% | 100 |
| 6 | Do you educate your child on sex education | 8 | 8% | 92 | 92% | 100 |

Looking at the table 5 the percentage value of prevalence of child abuse and neglect shows the highest percentage 91% of participant choosing Yes to providing for their child basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter while 5% the least percentage agreed to leave their child without supervision for extended periods of time. 99% which is the highest percentage of participant don't educate their child on sex education.

## Discussion of results

Research question one showed that the child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno have profound effects on children's well-being and development. Experiencing abuse often correlates with low self-esteem and self-blame among children, hindering their emotional and psychological growth. Furthermore, the study showed that exposure to abuse increases the likelihood of engaging in illicit behaviors, such as violence and criminal acts, as a coping mechanism or learned behavior. This finding is in contrast with the positive outcomes associated with nurturing environments (Houmark et al., 2024). Moreover, child abuse can result in learning disorders, including poor language skills and cognitive development, impacting educational attainment and future prospects. In a related study, similar patterns of adverse effects were observed, highlighting the pervasive nature of child abuse's consequences (McCormack & Bennett, 2023; Nemeroff & Seligman, 2013).

In research question 2, the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno was assessed through a survey involving various indicators. Findings reveal concerning rates across different dimensions. For instance, 70% of respondents admitted to calling their children names or insulting them, while 80% acknowledged controlling their children excessively. This finding is in contrast with the ideal nurturing environment advocated by experts (Lea et al., 2022). Furthermore, while 91% reported providing basic

necessities for their children, only 5% admitted to leaving them unsupervised for extended periods. In a related study, similar prevalence rates were found, emphasizing the persistence of these issues (Amemiya et al., 2023). Additionally, difficulty in bonding with children was reported by 2% of respondents, indicating potential emotional neglect. This underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems for families in Nkpor-Uno to address these alarming trends.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on "Examining the Impact and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect in Nkpor-uno" provides crucial insights into the alarming reality of child maltreatment within the community. Through meticulous examination of prevalence rates and the multifaceted impacts of abuse and neglect on children, this study underscores the urgent need for intervention and prevention efforts. The findings reveal distressing prevalence rates across various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. These experiences have profound and lasting effects on children's physical health, emotional well-being, and overall development. From low self-esteem and behavioral problems to learning disorders and psychological trauma, the consequences of abuse and neglect are far-reaching and pervasive.

Moreover, the study highlights several contributing factors to child maltreatment, including poverty, parental substance abuse, family dynamics, and lack of education on sex education. Addressing these underlying factors is essential to effectively combatting child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-uno. Recommendations for addressing child abuse and neglect in Nkpor-Uno include community-based education programs, strengthened support services, parenting education initiatives, enforcement of legal protections, investment in research, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. These measures aim to raise awareness, provide support to victims, educate parents, enforce laws, gather data, and coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to abuse. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can create a safer environment for children, ensuring their protection and well-being in Nkpor-Uno.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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