

**Cultural Beliefs and Parental Awareness of Child Abuse: Psycho-Sociological Perspectives from Edo State, Nigeria****Egwonor Opoggen & Godsent Onobhen Ibhate**Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin,  
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria[opoggenegwonor219@gmail.com](mailto:opoggenegwonor219@gmail.com); [godsentibhate@gmail.com](mailto:godsentibhate@gmail.com)**Abstract**

Despite legislative initiatives aimed at promoting child rights in Nigeria, child abuse remains pervasive in the country. Several studies have focused on the prevalence and consequences of child abuse. But only few have investigated how cultural beliefs affect parent awareness and perceptions of abusive parenting practices. This study examines the effect of cultural beliefs on parental awareness of child abuse from psycho-sociological perspective in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. The study was based on the Ecological Systems Theory and the Social Learning Theory, which account for the influence of the interactions between parents and their children within the family, community and wider socio-cultural context on parents' beliefs, behaviours, and child-rearing practices, as well as through observation and socialisation. A descriptive survey research design was employed and quantitative approach was used. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 400 respondents. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The results indicated that parents had a moderate awareness of child abuse, but there were deeply entrenched cultural attitudes that continued to affect parents' perceptions of acceptable discipline behaviours, such as corporal punishment, child labour and the excessive burden of domestic responsibilities for children. Also, while there is awareness of child abuse in the homes, deep-rooted cultural values persist in parenting which affects child protection and the fulfilment of children's rights. It thus calls for culturally appropriate intervention initiatives to be implemented to combat negative traditional beliefs and to advocate for positive parenting and child rights.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, cultural beliefs, parental awareness, psycho-sociological perspectives, Edo State

**Introduction**

Globally, child abuse constitutes an important aspect of public health, social, psychological and human rights concern. Every year millions of children are physically, sexually, emotionally or psychologically abused and neglected and they experience violence. The consequences of these impacts are long-lasting on health, education, emotional development and overall health and wellbeing. Child abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of violations of children's rights worldwide, estimated to affect almost one billion children aged 2-17 years every year (WHO, 2022). The effects of child abuse are more than just a short-term situation and can include mental

health problems, decreased educational performance, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and divorce, crime, and adult chronic diseases and lack of economic productivity (WHO, 2022; Gilbert *et al.*, 2021). It also imposes a major social and economic burden on the family, communities, health systems and national development and growth. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989 is the cornerstone of global child protection policies and understanding of the importance of protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. The founding principles of many of its provisions were later picked up in a piece of legislation that was domesticated in Nigeria, the Child Rights Act 2003, which deems all forms of child abuse to be illegal and provides legal avenues for protecting children's welfare.

Child abuse is still a challenge, however, despite being deeply rooted in the culture, poverty, lack of proper institutionalisation, reporting systems and understanding of child protection issues (UNICEF, 2023; WHO, 2022). For this reason, childbirth laws have failed to alter the attitudes of parents toward childbearing when they are negative. Culture plays an important role in the parenting style, family relations and discipline in Nigeria. In many communities, including the Edo State community, the values of obedience, respect for the elders, communal responsibilities, and discipline are seen as essential values in child rearing. While most of these values encourage moral development and social integration, some of the practices mentioned, such as over-harvesting, street hawking, emotional intimidation, neglect, excessive domestic duties and corporal punishment, contradict the current norms of child protection and children's rights (UNICEF Nigeria, 2023). Some parents may not be aware that such practices are abusive, as they are socially acceptable and may be carried on from generation to generation, thus reducing the efficacy of child protection interventions. The child abuse perception of parents from a psycho-sociological perspective is influenced by the interaction of psychological experiences and socio-cultural environments. Parents' beliefs, attitudes and disciplinary practices are developed as a result of their life experiences within the family, observing others, learning about religion through the church, and hearing about what they see and hear in the community. There have been several studies conducted in Nigeria on prevalence, determinants and consequences of child abuse; however, few studies have explored the role of cultural beliefs in shaping the awareness of parents of child abuse in the context of a psycho-sociological framework, especially among parents in Edo State. It is a major knowledge gap because effective child protection policies must have an understanding of the cultural context of parents' attitudes and decision-making. This gap will be

filled to support the development of culturally responsive interventions to raise awareness among parents and promote positive parenting practices and protection of children's rights.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study is guided by the following objectives

- i. To examine the level of parental awareness of child abuse and the cultural beliefs influencing parenting practices among parents in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State; and
- ii. To determine the influence of cultural beliefs and psycho-sociological factors on parents' perceptions and recognition of child abuse in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cultural Beliefs**

Culture is the values, norms, customs, traditions and patterns of behaviour shared by the members of a society which constitute their way of thought, behaviour, interaction and their interpretation of social reality. To the extent that it is passed on from generation to generation through socialisation, it forms the basis on which people cultivate their beliefs, attitudes, moral values and behavioural expectations (Falola, 2020). Cultural beliefs therefore are those ideas and assumptions which become societal norms and are accepted by a community and guide its decision-making and social interactions and habits. For parents, the beliefs help to inform what they think is proper parenting, what they think is proper discipline, what they think is proper family responsibility, what they think is proper child behaviour. Therefore, cultural beliefs guide parents' explanations of children's behaviour and their decisions on how to address it to foster discipline, socialisation and moralisation.

Dwelling, however, in many African communities like Nigeria, the parenting style is quite embedded in the communal values that involve respecting the elders, obeying, responsibilities, hard work and common good of the community. These cultural values are considered to be vital in nurturing morally good and socially responsible children and are seen to motivate children in the participation in housework and community functions. While some of these practices promote children's character development and social cohesion, others may run counter to today's child protection requirements. Some cultural practices including excessive corporal punishment, child

labour, emotional intimidation, prolonged households duties and other forms of harsh disciplinary practices are sometimes justified as acceptable tools for disciplining children's behaviour in the name of culture, despite the evidence of the physical, emotional and psychological harm associated with such practices (UNICEF Nigeria, 2023). This is a good example of how good intentions in terms of social values can coexist with harmful practices which are contrary to children's rights and wellbeing.

Culture is not fixed, but is subject to change in response to social, economic, educational and technological developments. Parental beliefs about child rearing and the practices they engage in have been transformed by urbanisation, formal education, globalisation, digital media, and child rights advocacy, resulting in many parents having to balance traditional and contemporary child protection ideas. Such a contradiction between the cultural norms handed down from the past and contemporary norms in the law and society can have a significant impact on the way in which parents interpret and react to behaviours that are regarded as child abuse.

### **Child Abuse**

Child abuse is any behaviour that a parent, caregiver or other significant adult undertakes, whether or not that behaviour is intentional, which causes or is likely to cause actual or potential harm to a child's health, wellbeing, dignity, development or survival (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2022). It refers to actions that deliberately or inadvertently put children at risk of experiencing physical, emotional, psychological or developmental harm that affects their basic rights and negatively impacts their development. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) adopted by the United Nations, globally, affirms each child's right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and harmful practices. All these principles are reinforced in Nigeria by the Child Rights Act (2003) which is the legal instrument for protecting children from abuse and for ensuring their welfare, survival, participation and all-round development.

According to the WHO (2022), child abuse can be classified into four main types: Physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Physical abuse is where a child is intentionally harmed by someone through physical action; emotional/psychological abuse is when a child's self-esteem, emotional security or mental health is negated through an action that has caused or is likely to cause harm and involves intimidation, rejection, humiliation or continual verbal abuse. Sexual Abuse – when a child is involved in sexual activity with an adult that the

child does not understand, consent to, or can resist, and Neglect – when a child's basic physical, educational, emotional, medical or supervisory needs are consistently disregarded. Such abuse may be experienced simultaneously or follow each other in time, and can have long lasting effects on children's cognition, educational performance, mental health, behaviour, social functioning, and other domains in adulthood (WHO, 2022).

The concept of child abuse as used in this study is based on the physical, emotional, psychological and neglectful parenting practices that may include exploitative practices, which breach children's rights or impact on children's health, safety, dignity and development as defined by the Child Rights Act (2003) and internationally recognised child protection standards.

### **Parental Awareness of Child Abuse**

Parental awareness of child abuse involves parents' knowledge, understanding and recognition of behaviours, practices and situations that constitute child abuse, plus their appreciation of the short- and long-term consequences of child abuse behaviours on children's physical, emotional, psychological and social development. It is not just knowing about child protection laws, but understanding the developmental needs, rights and fit ways to discipline children which will foster healthy development and wellbeing. Parents with sufficient awareness can better recognise abusive practices, respond to children's needs effectively and adopt effective parenting methods to protect children's well-being. Parental knowledge of child abuse is influenced by education, personal experiences, and cultural norms, making it a complex issue critical for preventing maltreatment (Ib hate & Ogbeide, 2025). Therefore, parental awareness is one of the basic elements of family and community child protection and prevention of child maltreatment, which is essential for the prevention of child abuse.

Parental awareness forms in an ongoing process of interaction between the psychological experiences of the parents and the social environment. Parents' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions can be influenced by their childhood experiences, family traditions, social learning, peers, community culture, and societal expectations of parenting. These factors have a psychological and social relationship, which affects the understanding and reaction of parents when children's behaviour and actions pose a risk to children's welfare. Thus, understanding of child abuse is inextricable from culture and society in which parenting takes place.

For the purpose of this study, cultural beliefs are considered the independent variable, while parental awareness of child abuse constitutes the dependent variable. Cultural beliefs encompass traditional norms, values, and child-rearing practices that shape parental attitudes towards discipline and children's rights. Parental awareness reflects parents' knowledge and recognition of behaviours that constitute child abuse and their understanding of appropriate child protection practices. The study therefore examines how prevailing cultural beliefs influence parental awareness and perceptions of child abuse among parents in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Parental Awareness of Child Abuse**

There is empirical evidence that parental awareness plays an important role in child protection and positive parenting practices. Higher education levels, increasing awareness of child protection interventions, and access to health and social welfare information being more accessible are all consistently associated with parents having a greater awareness of child abuse and a positive attitude towards non-violent parenting strategies (WHO, 2022; UNICEF, 2023). Lack of awareness, on the other hand, can hinder the end of abusive practices as parents may think of the practices as acceptable discipline strategies and not as a violation of children's rights.

Several studies on the knowledge of parents about child abuse and child protection have been conducted in Nigeria. Uzodimma *et al.* (2023) reported that while many parents were aware of child abuse, their knowledge was mostly confined to physical child abuse and neglect as well as exploitative child labour was less commonly identified, with emotional abuse least recognised. The study also confirmed that parental education, socioeconomic status and child protection information significantly affected the level of awareness. Likewise, George (2024) found that mothers and fathers with higher levels of education were more knowledgeable about children's rights and less likely to engage in strict disciplining. Other studies in Nigeria have indicated that knowledge often does not always lead to change in behaviour. Obinaju (2024) noted that despite the knowledge of the parents about the Child Rights Act, there were many who still continued to condone some of the negative disciplinary practices because they were considered acceptable in their society. This discovery indicates that in addition to knowledge, deeply entrenched social norms can also affect parents' decision making, and shape awareness.

### **Cultural Beliefs and Parenting Practices**

Culture remains one of the strongest influences on parenting practices worldwide. Studies across Africa consistently demonstrate that parents' disciplinary methods are largely shaped by traditional values concerning obedience, respect for authority, communal responsibility, and moral development (Reading *et al.*, 2019). While many of these values encourage positive child socialisation, some culturally accepted disciplinary practices may expose children to physical and emotional harm. In Nigeria, research has shown that corporal punishment remains one of the most socially accepted methods of child discipline despite increasing awareness of its adverse developmental consequences. Ebigbo (2023) reported that many parents regarded physical punishment as an essential component of responsible parenting because it was inherited from previous generations and reinforced through community expectations. Similarly, Nnachi (2024) found that cultural expectations of unquestioning obedience often encourage parents to employ harsh disciplinary measures, believing such practices promote respect and good character.

Studies have also documented the influence of cultural norms on children's participation in domestic and economic activities. Wilson-Oyelaran (2018) observed that child labour, domestic service, and street hawking are frequently justified within some communities as part of children's socialisation and preparation for adulthood, even when such practices interfere with education, health, and psychosocial development. Likewise, Togunde and Carter (2019) argued that the persistence of child labour in many African societies cannot be fully understood without considering its historical and cultural foundations.

Recent evidence suggests that cultural beliefs are gradually evolving as a result of urbanisation, increased educational opportunities, mass media exposure, and child rights advocacy. Nevertheless, traditional parenting values continue to influence disciplinary practices in many communities, creating tensions between cultural expectations and internationally recognised child protection standards (UNICEF Nigeria, 2023).

### **Cultural Beliefs and Parental Awareness of Child Abuse**

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between cultural beliefs and parental perceptions of child abuse. D'Antonio *et al.*, (2023) argued that parental perceptions of abuse are socially constructed and influenced by prevailing cultural norms regarding discipline, authority, and children's roles within the family. Their findings indicate that parents are less likely to identify

behaviours as abusive when those behaviours are culturally accepted and reinforced through community socialisation. Similarly, Lachman (2019) observed that one of the greatest challenges facing child protection in Africa is the cultural normalisation of practices that international child protection frameworks classify as abusive. The study concluded that the distinction between discipline and abuse often remains unclear because community norms strongly influence parental perceptions of acceptable behaviour.

Research conducted in Nigeria supports these observations. Okeahialam (2018) found that certain traditional child-rearing practices, including severe corporal punishment and harmful responses to childhood illnesses, continued to persist because parents perceived them as culturally appropriate rather than abusive. Likewise, Ebigbo (2023) reported that community acceptance of exploitative child labour and harsh disciplinary practices reduced parents' ability to recognise the psychological and developmental consequences of such behaviours. Although these studies provide valuable insights, many relied on broad national samples or general discussions of child protection without focusing specifically on parental awareness within individual communities. Furthermore, relatively few studies have integrated psycho-sociological explanations of how cultural beliefs shape parents' cognitive interpretations, attitudes, and behavioural responses towards child abuse.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that considerable research has been conducted on child abuse, parenting practices, and child protection in Nigeria. Despite these contributions, several important gaps remain. First, many previous studies have concentrated on the prevalence, determinants, and consequences of child abuse rather than examining how cultural beliefs influence parental awareness and recognition of abusive practices. Second, existing Nigerian studies have paid greater attention to legal, socioeconomic, and educational determinants while giving comparatively limited attention to psycho-sociological processes through which cultural beliefs influence parental perceptions and decision-making.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the Social Learning Theory propounded by Albert Bandura (1977).

### **Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory posits that human behaviour and development are influenced by interactions between individuals and the various environmental systems within which they live. The theory identifies five interconnected systems: the microsystem (family, peers and school), mesosystem (interactions among immediate environments), exosystem (institutions such as workplaces, health services and child welfare agencies), macrosystem (cultural values, traditions, social norms and laws), and chronosystem (changes over time resulting from social, economic and technological developments). The theory explains that parental awareness of child abuse is not determined solely by individual knowledge but by continuous interaction with these environmental systems. Family traditions, community expectations, educational experiences, media exposure, and child protection institutions collectively shape parents' understanding of acceptable child-rearing practices. Where cultural norms legitimise harsh corporal punishment, excessive domestic labour, or child exploitation, parents may perceive such practices as acceptable discipline rather than abuse. Conversely, supportive educational systems, effective child protection programmes, and public awareness campaigns can promote greater recognition of children's rights and encourage positive parenting practices.

### **Social Learning Theory**

The Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), explains that individuals acquire behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes through observation, imitation, modelling, and reinforcement. According to the theory, learning occurs within a social environment, where individuals observe the behaviour of significant others and reproduce behaviours that receive approval or positive reinforcement (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, parenting practices are often learned from parents, relatives, peers, and other influential members of society. Applied to child abuse, the theory suggests that parents who were raised in environments where harsh disciplinary practices were culturally accepted are more likely to adopt similar approaches when raising their own children. Through this process of observational learning, cultural beliefs regarding corporal punishment, emotional intimidation, or exploitative child labour may be transmitted across generations and become normalised within families and communities. However, exposure to parenting education, child protection campaigns, schools, healthcare professionals, and the mass media can introduce alternative models of positive parenting and encourage behavioural change.

### **Application of the Theoretical Framework to the Study**

The Ecological Systems Theory and the Social Learning Theory complement each other in explaining the psycho-sociological factors influencing parental awareness of child abuse. While the Ecological Systems Theory emphasises the influence of family, community, institutions, and cultural environments on parenting behaviour, the Social Learning Theory explains how these influences are acquired and sustained through observation, imitation, and reinforcement.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of cultural beliefs on parental awareness of child abuse in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The design was deemed appropriate as it allowed data gathering and analysis of respondents' opinions, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours while keeping the study variables as they are. The study area was chosen due to its socio-cultural diversity, high rate of urbanisation and frequent complaints of child protection issues, including child labour, child hawking, child neglect and domestic violence. The target population included parents/guardians from the LGA who were in charge of children. The sample size of 400 was calculated using the formula developed by Taro Yamane (1967), and a multistage sampling technique was used that included purposive, stratified and simple random sampling to ensure sufficient sample size across a range of socio-demographic characteristics. The structured questionnaire Cultural Beliefs and Parental Awareness of Child Abuse (CBPACAQ) was designed in light of a comprehensive review of the literature to gather data.

The data were collected through the help of well-trained research assistants who were familiar to the study communities. Research was conducted in an ethically sound manner with regard to human subjects. Where required, permission was sought from community authorities and informed consent from all respondents before participating. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and information would be anonymous, confidential and used solely for academic research. The questionnaires were filled out by the person face-to-face in order to increase the comprehension, to increase the response rate and to ensure the completeness of the questionnaire. Questionnaires that were completed were screened, coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Data were summarised using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, to describe

respondents' characteristics and their awareness of child abuse. Several inferential statistics, namely chi-square and multiple regression analysis, were used to analyse the relationship between cultural beliefs and parental awareness of child abuse and the predicting influence of psycho-sociological factors on parental perception of child abuse practices.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Parents' Awareness of Child Abuse (N = 400)**

| <b>Statement</b>                                                                        | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| I understand that physical violence against children constitutes child abuse.           | 4.38        | 0.71      |
| Emotional abuse can affect a child's psychological development.                         | 4.24        | 0.82      |
| Child labour and excessive domestic work may constitute child abuse.                    | 3.91        | 0.94      |
| Child neglect is a form of child abuse.                                                 | 4.11        | 0.79      |
| Sexual exploitation of children is a criminal offence.                                  | 4.56        | 0.62      |
| I am familiar with the provisions of the Child Rights Act relating to child protection. | 3.48        | 1.02      |
| I know where to report cases of child abuse.                                            | 3.36        | 1.08      |

**Grand Mean: 4.01**

Table 1 shows the level of parents' awareness of child abuse in Egor Local Government Area. The findings revealed a grand mean score of 4.01, indicating a generally high level of awareness among respondents.

**Table 2: Influence of Cultural Beliefs and Psycho-sociological factors on Child Discipline among Parents (N = 400)**

| Statement                                                                                   | Mean | SD   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Corporal punishment is necessary to instil discipline in children.                          | 4.22 | 0.83 |
| Children should obey adults without questioning their decisions.                            | 4.18 | 0.79 |
| Assigning children domestic chores is an important aspect of responsible upbringing.        | 4.06 | 0.87 |
| Child hawking may be acceptable when it contributes to family survival.                     | 3.41 | 1.06 |
| Cultural traditions should be respected even when they conflict with child protection laws. | 3.26 | 1.12 |
| Religious teachings support the use of physical punishment to discipline children.          | 3.67 | 0.98 |
| Modern parenting methods are better than harsh traditional disciplinary practices.          | 4.09 | 0.86 |

**Grand Mean: 3.84**

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of cultural beliefs relating to child discipline. The results produced a grand mean of 3.84, indicating that cultural beliefs continue to play a significant role in shaping parental disciplinary practices.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective of this study was to look at the extent of awareness of parents of this child abuse and the cultural beliefs that affect the parenting practices among parents in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The findings showed that the parents' overall mean score was high, indicating that they generally had high levels of awareness of child abuse highlighting the success of public enlightenment campaigns, formal learning, media advocacy and the greater attention paid to children's rights in increasing the awareness of parents on child abuse. However, awareness of general provisions of the Child Rights Act and use of appropriate child abuse reporting systems were relatively low, suggesting that knowledge of child abuse does not necessarily lead to the knowledge of child protection systems and legal obligations. The study also confirmed that cultural values still influence the parenting method as the majority of the respondents viewed corporal punishment, unquestioning obedience and children's domestic responsibilities as acceptable forms of discipline. But respondents vehemently opposed the idea of child hawking as a viable way of earning income for the household and were not in favour of setting aside child protection laws for cultural practices. The results indicate a shift from beliefs of traditional discipline to acceptance of

child protection principles. The results are in line with the World Health Organisation (2022) and UNICEF (2023) which found that there was a rise in public awareness about child abuse, but limited knowledge of child protection legislation in many developing countries. They also corroborate the findings of Falola (2020), Obinaju (2024), Lachman (2019), and Okeahialam (2018) who reported that cultural values still influence parenting practices in Nigeria, but education and child rights advocacy are influencing parents to reconsider harmful traditional disciplinary practices.

The second objective explored how cultural beliefs and psycho-social factors impact parents' perceptions and identification of child abuse. The results suggest that not only parental knowledge, but also cultural values, family socialisation, community expectations and other psycho-sociological factors play a significant role in determining parental awareness. Parents who grew up in families where strict discipline was culturally accepted were more likely to view action as an acceptable way of discipline and not abuse. Parents who were socialised in harsh discipline families more likely to believe that harsh discipline is acceptable to them and not as abuse. This discovery provides empirical evidence to support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in which parenting attitudes and behaviours are influenced by interactions between the family, community, educational settings, social institutions and culture. In addition, the results confirm Bandura's Social Learning Theory by confirming that parenting beliefs are learned through observation, reinforcement and copying from one generation to the next. This attitudinal shift toward corporal punishment and unconditional obedience is similar to the parenting practices observed in other cultures and suggests the persistence of culturally mediated parenting norms, while greater exposure to education, media campaigns and child protection advocacy does seem to be fostering more positive parenting attitudes. This result aligns with the previous studies which found that cultural beliefs play a significant role in parents' attitudes towards child abuse and their preferences for non-violent parenting (Lachman, 2019; DAntonio, Darwish, & McLean, 2023).

Culturally responsive interventions through government agencies, schools, traditional institutions, community organisations and the media continue to be vital in the promotion of positive parenting practices, the strengthening of awareness of child protection mechanisms, and the effective implementation of child protection policies in Edo State and country Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study investigated psycho-sociological effect of cultural beliefs on the awareness of parents on their children's abuse in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. The results indicated that parents possessed a high level of awareness of the different types of child abuse but there were also deficiencies in knowledge about child protection laws and formal child abuse reporting arrangements. The study also confirmed that cultural beliefs remain influential in parents' judgment of what is acceptable disciplinary practice: although there has been a growing acceptance of the principles of modern child protection, a large number of respondents continued to believe that the use of corporal punishment, unquestioning obedience, and strict discipline were culturally acceptable. The results indicated that knowledge of child abuse has increased but cultural values are still having a profound impact on parenting styles and the identification of child abuse behaviours.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Government agencies should intensify public awareness campaigns on child abuse and the provisions of the Child Rights Act through radio, television, social media, community outreach programmes, and local languages to improve parents' understanding of children's rights and available reporting mechanisms.
- ii. The Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, in collaboration with child protection agencies and non-governmental organisations, should organise regular community-based parenting education programmes that promote positive, non-violent disciplinary methods while addressing harmful cultural beliefs that encourage child abuse.
- iii. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and community opinion leaders should be actively engaged in child protection advocacy because of their significant influence on cultural norms and parenting practices.
- iv. Schools, healthcare institutions, and social welfare agencies should incorporate child protection education into routine interactions with parents by providing information on children's rights, indicators of abuse, available support services, and legal obligations regarding child welfare.

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