

Girl Children’s Vulnerability And Economic Recession In Nigeria: A Case Study of Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.

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I. Introduction

Girls are discriminated against in Nigeria in access to educational opportunity, food and nutrition. Girls carry the burden of housework, Anyanwu, (1995) The girl child is vulnerable in that she is susceptible to attack from many angles, in the home, school, church, among groups, anywhere at all.

With negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth recorded for the fifth consecutive quarters, Nigeria’s economy is mired in recession, according to newly published data by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). May 23, 2017. Due to the economic recession, inflation and unemployment have been on the increase, and as a result, some parents send their girl children as domestic servants either to relatives or non-relatives. Calabar, due to its metropolitan stand, attracts a lot of people from rural areas to come and seek “better lives”, and parents give out their girls as domestic servants due to hardship. The population of the study was adolescents between the ages of 10years to 20years.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to determine the age of the vulnerable girl children, who they lived with, if they were sent as domestic servants because of financial hardship by their parents. It also determined whether they were physically, verbally and sexually abused, and if their schooling was affected.

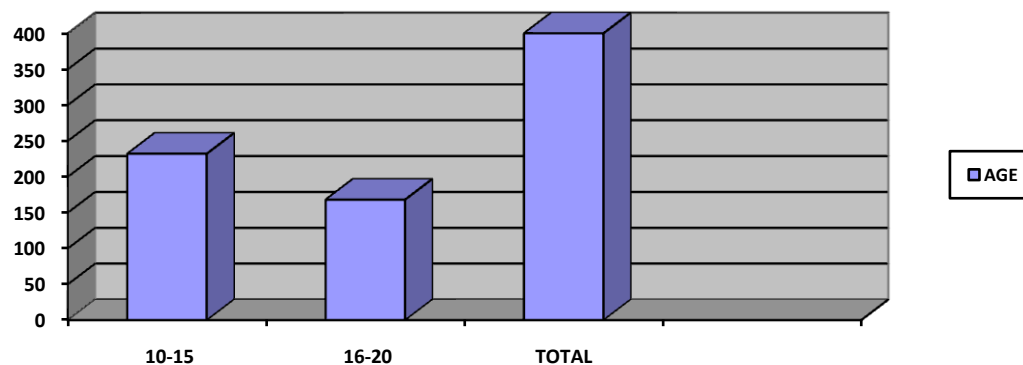
II. Methodology

A survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of vulnerable girl children not living with their parents. They were selected from four public secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. A total number of 400 of the girls were selected using purposive sampling technique.

A self made questionnaire titled “vulnerable girl child questionnaire” was designed for the study. The instrument was tested for reliability using split half method. A coefficient of 0.69 was found using the Pearson Product Moment analysis.

III. Results

Fig 1: The Age of the Girl Child



From the above chart, it is observed that 232 students within age range of 10 – 15 represented 58% of the sample used while 168 students of age range of 16 – 20 represents 42%.

Fig 2: Who the Girl Child Lives With

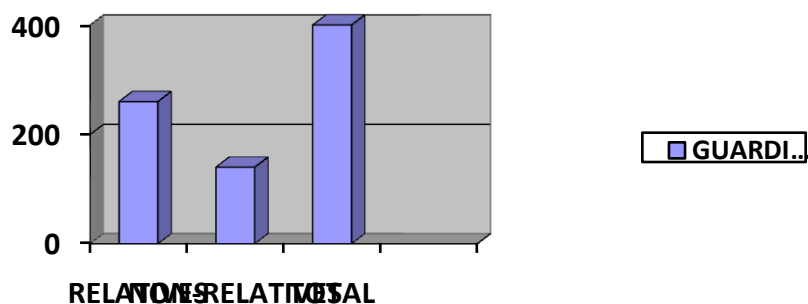


Figure 2 shows that 260 of the vulnerable girl children which represent 60% of the sample live with their relatives, while the remaining 140 which represent 40% live with non-relatives.

Fig 3: Vulnerable Girl Child and Schooling

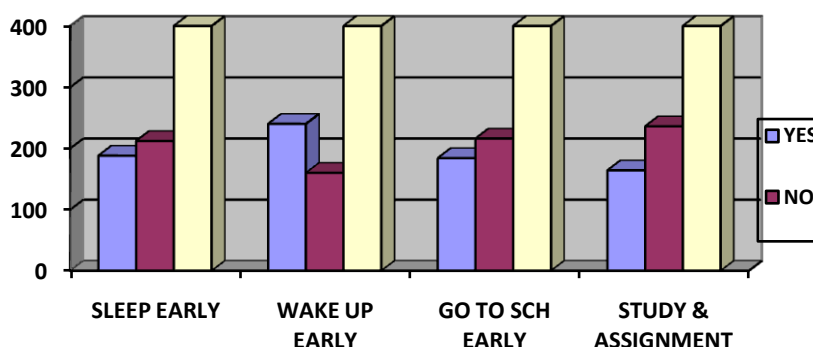
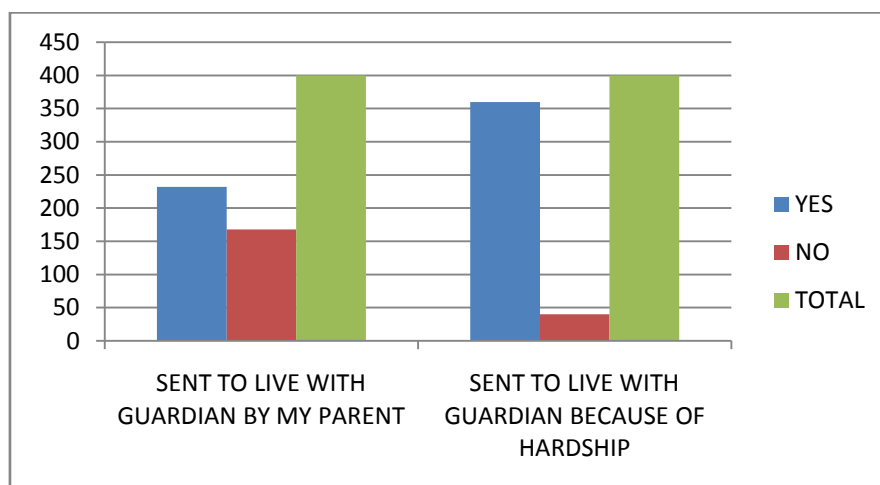
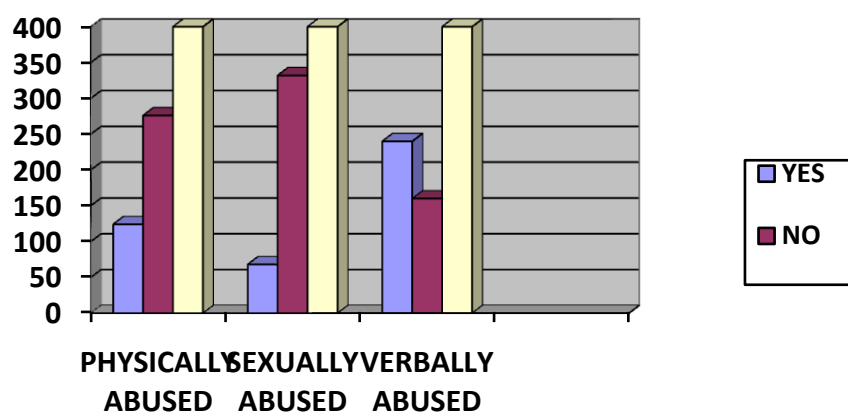


Figure 3 shows that 188 girls which are 47% of the respondents sleep early (before 9 pm), while the remaining 212 girls sleep late. Also, while 240 (60%) of the girls wake early (before 4 am), 160 girls wake up after 4 am. 184 girls (46%) go to school early, while 54% (216 girls) go late to school. Finally, while 164 girls are able to study and do their assignment easily at home, 59% of the girls (236 girls) do not have this opportunity.



From the above chart, it is observed that 232 of the girls which represent 58% were sent by their parents to live guardian while the remaining 168 girls which represent 42% were not sent by their parents. Also, the chart reveals that 360 girls which represent 90% were sent to live with guardian because of hardship while the remaining 40 girls were not sent because of hardship.

Fig 4: Types and Frequency of Abuse Faced By the Girl Child



The most common type of abuse faced by the respondents is verbal abuse (60%). Next is physical abuse which is faced by 124 girls (34%), and then sexual abuse which is faced by 68 girls (17%).

Major Findings

1. More of the vulnerable girl children fall within the 10 to 15 years age range.
2. The girl children live more with relatives
3. The vulnerable girl children go to bed late, wake up early, go to school late, and do not have time to do their assignments and sturdy.
4. They are sent to live with other people due to financial hardship on their parents
5. The vulnerable girl children are physically, sexually and verbally abused.

IV. Discussion

There are more vulnerable girl children from age 10 15 years being given out as domestic servants to both relatives and non relatives. They are sent out of their homes and they carry a heavy burden, (Anyanwu, 1995). They are sent to live with other people because of economy recession. The girl children's schooling is affected and they are abused physically, sexually and verbally.

V. Conclusion

Knowledge of the girl child's vulnerability in an economic recession is not enough. Action should be taken to reduce the vulnerability of the girl child. A National Children's Commission should be set up for defending the rights of the girl child in an educational, social, cultural, political and economic context.

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