

## SOCIAL INJUSTICE AGAINST CHILD'S RIGHTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN EKITI STATE

F. M. OSALUSI & Cecilia Oluremi ADANIKIN

Department of Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

---

### Abstract

*This study examined Social injustice against Child Right in Public Junior secondary school students in Ekiti State. Descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. While the population for the study consisted of all Secondary School students in 184 secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample for this study comprised of 711 students selected from the nine Secondary School students using multistage and simple random sampling techniques. The research instrument used for this study was a designed questionnaire tagged "Social injustice against Child Right Questionnaire (SIACR)". It consisted of 2 Parts. Part A was designed to collect information on demographic characteristics of the respondents. Likert type instrument designed to elicit information on awareness of child's rights to quality education, health, nutrition, fair hearing etc. Validity of the instrument was established through face, content and construct validity procedures. The face validity was ascertained by specialist in Tests and measurement which the content validity was ensured by education experts. Test-re-test method of testing reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The study revealed that the level of students' education of child's rights on their rights to quality education, healthcare, food/nutrition, fair, hearing, private and family life, protection from harm and care for wellbeing is low. It was recommended that Aggressive modern scientific awareness campaign on issues of Child's rights to quality education should be embarked upon by government at various levels and Non-Governmental Organisations.*

**Key Words:** Social injustice; child rights, fair hearing, street hawker, self-esteem

### Introduction

A child is any being below the age of eighteen. According to Ennew (2000), a child is a person, not a sub-person, and the parent has absolute interest and possession of the child but this is very much an American view. The term "child" does not necessarily mean minor but can include adult children as well as adult non-dependent children. In Africa, children are very important that couples that do not have them for one reason or the other are bothered by the inability to have children can do anything and also go to any length to have children and even protect them from anything and anyone that may want to do them harm. In the olden days, parents were very committed to the course of taking care of the children that they could do anything to provide for the children to make sure that they do not suffer.

Today, children seem to have been neglected and/or abused. There are some

parents especially mothers, who prefer to leave their children at the mercy of house boys and girls. There have been cases of girls left at home with house boys who eventually taught them bad habit – house boys impregnating the daughters of their mistresses, or even teaching their victims homosexuality. It is necessary to educate the parents on the risk to which these children are exposed may be they would think twice and do what they are supposed to do to take care of their children. The finding of Okolo, (1986), in the cities of Lagos, Oshogbo, Calabar, Kaduna and Bauchi indicated that the degree of hazard in child labour depends on the age and gender of the child, as well as the conditions of different types of work.

Among street hawkers, children who worked throughout the day or late in the evening, or who traded on major highways, were found to be more likely than other street hawkers to experience serious falls or assaults from adults.

Girl hawkers working after dark were more likely to be sexually harassed than those working during the day. Sexual harassment of working children is also more common in large cities than in smaller towns or the rural areas. Among young domestic servants, one half of those employed in Lagos said they knew of female house help being sexually molested, compared with a one quarter in Kaduna and one fifth in Calabar, Oshogbo and Bauchi.

According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (2007), more children suffer from neglect than physical and sexual abuse combined, yet victims are not often identified, primarily because neglect is a type of child abuse that is an act of omission – not doing something. Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs. A single act might not be considered child abuse but repeated neglect is definitely child abuse. There are three basic types of neglect; physical neglect, educational neglect and emotional neglect. Royal Canadian Police (2006) sees child abuse as any form of physical, social, emotional or sexual maltreatment of a child whereby the survival, safety, self-esteem, growth and development of the child are endangered. There are many children roaming the streets hawking and many children are used as house girls and boys. Some of them who are put in public schools find it hard to read because they would not be given good food, books are not provided for them hence they fail woefully in their respective classes. In fact, most of them go to school in complete rags.

It has been observed that the rights of children are infringed upon especially in Nigeria. Many people believe children have no rights at all and thus anything can be done to them because they cannot protect/defend themselves. Child abuse has lingered for a long time hence the research into this problem and a probable solution.

In other cases, children put in the care of guardians would go to farm or do odd things before they can eat once or twice a day. When a child finds himself/herself in this type of situation, he/she is forced to be introduced to bad habit or be impregnated in the case of a girl. Today, there are so many unwanted pregnancies which lead to unwanted babies. Many girls

dump their babies in septic tanks; some babies are picked up from gutters, refuse dumps by some good Samaritans who would take them to orphanage/motherless babies' homes. Some of these girls because of the fear of tomorrow result to abortion which has led in many cases to death. Many of them who are bold enough to keep the babies after having them ended up dropping out of school. Okolo (1992) equally opined that domestic work has also become more hazardous, partly because of the lower age at which some children get engaged in domestic service.

It is extremely important that boys and girls have access to education no matter what their background is. It is eminent that any child that does not have the basic education today will not be able to rub shoulders with their mates in any part of the world, according to the International Centre for Research on Women, the education that a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry and is a critical factor in reducing the prevalence of child marriage. The World Bank estimates that an additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps to prevent maternal deaths. The link between education and public health is strong. Access to education affects HIV/AIDS infection rate. According to the Global Campaign for Education, (2003), if all children received a complete primary education, as many as 700,000 cases of HIV could be prevented each year. An inextricable link exists between education and well-being.

However, Abubakar (2000) opined that, as human beings children have certain moral status and should not be maltreated for the simple reason that they are human. At the same time children are different from adult human beings and it seems reasonable to think that there are things children may not do that adults are permitted to do. In the majority of jurisdiction, for instance, children are not allowed to vote, to marry, to buy alcohol, to have sex or to engage in paid employment. What makes children a special case for philosophical consideration is this combination of their humanity and their youth, or, more exactly, what is thought to be associated with their youth.

Every child has a right to their childhood – a hopeful existence free of exploitation, violence, neglect, and extreme poverty. The

Education for All (EFA 1990) commitment was launched to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality. International leaders also recognize the importance of achieving education for all, making the achievement of universal access to primary education Millennium Development Goal.

Children need education, health service, consistency support system as well as love, hope and encouragement all these things and morals are required in order to experience childhood to the fullest, and to eventually develop into healthy, capable adults. Morka (1997) remarked that education is a human right guaranteed to all individuals without regard to race, sex, ethnicity, or religion. This right has been recognized by a wide range of international and regional human right treaties ratified by Nigeria. Morka further stressed that every individual has a right to education, while the government has a corresponding duty to implement that right.

Indeed the idea of children as rights holder has been subject to different kinds of philosophical criticism. At the same time there has been philosophical consideration of what kind of rights children have if they do have rights at all. This research work will shed light on the awareness of child's rights. Similarly, the International Labour Organization ILO, (1992) observed that the impact of work on child's development is the key to determining when such work becomes a problem because work that is harmless to adults may be harmful to children. Physical and exploitative child labours are two common forms of child abuse in Nigeria.

In Nigeria however, children because of their tenderness, are not accorded their rights hence a research into what is the level of their awareness and probable solution as much as possible to some of the problems encountered along the line in the bid to make known the rights of children in our society. Children are forced into marriage because of their parents' poverty, ignorance or illiteracy. They believe if

their female children get married, they would be financially relieved therefore, denying them of their basic rights.

Nigerian leader generally believe in safe guarding the best interest of the child that Government ratified both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRWC). The act recognizes the rights of children, restore their confidence and self-esteem and improves their status. It will also enable children with disabilities, to enjoy their rights fully, as it provides special means, government and the people, will benefit from the production of well-grounded and self-confident future leaders. There was a debate on Child's Rights on Radio Nigeria on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2010, where it was observed that child abuse is common in Akwa Ibom and many States in the Eastern part of Nigeria. In these states particularly in the rural areas, children are brutalized, beaten and maltreated in one way or the other under the claim that these children are possessed by the spirit of witchcraft. Their parents or guardians are said to take them to some churches for deliverance where the Pastors will threaten them. These children sustain injuries, bruises and they are forced to accept to be witches.

There have been public outcries including: media campaign against the prevalent of child abuse globally. Child abuse/child labour is all over the place. We see on a daily basis, children that often engage in petty trading and street begging while some hawk for their parents and Guardians when they should be in school or learning a trade. There are cases of rape and abuse of these children; there are cases when these young ones are introduced to prostitution, cultism and even robbery. Parents are not taking good care of their children/ wards by leaving them at the mercy of neighbours and run after money. Cases of child battering by some parents are also responsibilities to manage; this researcher is interested in this study because most parents have failed to take up part of their responsibilities to their children nowadays as many of them are not ready to take care of their children/wards. Laraqui, Caubet, Larque,

Belamallam, Harairate, Curtes and Verger (2000) carried out a retrospective cohort study of working children and children in school with a wide prevalence of pathologies in a small neighbourhood of Casablanca, Morocco. They found out that the state of health, painful condition of working children is higher than the children attending school. This has adversely affected the children's behaviour and their output in their various classes. It is against this background that this study examined the level of students' awareness of child's rights among the junior secondary school students in Nigeria and particularly in Ekiti State. It equally examined the level of awareness of child's rights to quality nutrition/food, protection from harm and their rights to be heard.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been raised in the study in order to determine the level of child's rights:

1. What is the level of child's awareness of child's rights to quality education, health care, food/nutrition?
2. What is the level of child's awareness of child's rights to be protected from harm and have care necessary for their well-being?
3. What is the level of awareness of child's rights to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life?

### **Methodology**

Descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The target population for the study consisted of all Secondary School students in 184 secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample for this study comprised of 711 students selected from the nine Secondary School students using multistage and simple random sampling techniques. The research

instrument used for this study was a designed questionnaire tagged "Social Injustice against Child's Rights Questionnaire (SIACR)". It consisted of 2 Parts Namely, parts A and B. Part A was designed to collect information on demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, location of school, class and ages section B. contained the list of 25 item 4-point Likert type instrument designed to elicit information on awareness of child's rights to quality education, health, nutrition, fair hearing etc.

Validity of the instrument was established through face, content and construct validity procedures. The face validity was ascertained by specialist in Tests and measurement while the content validity was ensured by experts in social studies and Guidance and Counselling. Test-re-test method of testing reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Data generated were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

### **Results**

**Question 1:** What is the level of the students' awareness of child's rights to quality education, health care, food nutrition?

In order to answer the question, mean score and standard deviation on the level of children's awareness child's of rights to quality education, health care and food/nutrition were used to categorise the subjects into "low" "moderate" and "high" level. The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive analysis showing the level of awareness of child’s on rights to quality education, health care and food/nutrition.**

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0.00 – 20.25)	431	68.4
Moderate (20.25-24.54)	79	12.5
High (24.55 – 40.00)	120	19.1

Table 1 shows that 68.4% of the sample had low level of awareness of the children on their rights to quality education, health care, food/nutrition, 12.5% moderate and 19.1% had high level of awareness on their rights to quality education, health care, food/nutrition, hence, the level of awareness of the children on their rights to quality education, health care, food/nutrition is low.

**Question 2:** What is the level of students’ awareness of child’s rights to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life?

In answering the question, mean score and standard deviation of subjects on perceived rights to fair treatment, fair hearing private and family life were used to categorise the respondents into three levels of awareness “low” “moderate” and “high” as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive analysis showing the level of students’ awareness of rights to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life**

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0.00 – 17.53)	140	22.2
Moderate (17.54-2080)	117	18.5
High (20.81-28.00)	373	59.3

Table 2 shows that 22.2% of the subjects had low awareness level of children’s rights to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life, 18.5% experienced moderate level of awareness while 59.3% are highly aware of child’s right’s to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life. It implies that the level of children’s perception of rights to fair hearing fair treatment, private and family life is high

**Question 3:** What is the level of awareness of the students’ awareness of their rights to

protection from harm and have care necessary for their wellbeing?

Score on children’s awareness of rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for their wellbeing was computed for each respondent, mean score and standard deviation were obtained. These were used to group the respondents into three levels of awareness – Low, moderate and high. The result is presented I Table 3.

**Table 3: Description analysis showing children's awareness of rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for their wellbeing**

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0.00 – 21.03)	38	6.00
Moderate (21.04-28.44)	456	72.4
High (28.45-32.00)	136	21.6

Table 3 reveals that 6% of the sample had low level of awareness children's right to protection from harm and have care necessary for wellbeing, 72.4% moderately aware while 21.6% had high level of awareness of child's rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for wellbeing. Therefore, the level of children's awareness of rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for wellbeing is moderate.

### **Discussion**

The result of the finding showed that the level of awareness of the children on their rights to quality education, health care, food/nutrition was high. In the Education For All, EFA (1990) which stressed its commitment to ensure that by 2012 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. In agreement with Marka (1997) which remarked that education is a human right guaranteed to all individuals without regard to race, sex, ethnicity or religion. He stressed that every child has a right to education while government has a corresponding duty to implement that right.

It also showed that children had proper level of awareness of their rights to fair treatment, fair hearing, private and family life as Okolo (1992) opined that domestic work has also become more hazardous, partly because of the lower age at which some children get engaged in domestic service. He asserted that, in the past, this was done mainly through direct contact between the child's arrangement, whereby children would receive education or vocational training in return for work in the household. Increasingly, however, this link

with the child's parents and sense of obligation have been eroded, as more children are procured from impoverished rural families by middlemen, driven only by commercial motive, and transported long distance to work in urban household. The degrading condition in which some of these children are displayed and given out to complete strangers by these traffickers are taking to a form of slave trade.

In addition, finding also showed that children had high level of awareness of their rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for their well-being. Okolo (1986) cited that in the cities of Lagos, Osogbo, Calabar, Kaduna and Bauchi the degree of hazard in child labour depends on the age and gender of the child, as well as the conditions of different types of work. Among young domestic servants, one half of those employed in Lagos said they knew of female house help being sexually molested, compared with one quarter in Kaduna and one fifth in Calabar, Osogbo and Bauchi. The line between hazardous and non-work cannot be rigidly drawn because of the dynamic nature of children's work in the informal sector. International Labour Organization ILO (1992) further observed that the impact of work on child's development is the key to determining when such work becomes a problem because work that is harmless to adults may be harmful to children. Exploitative child labour exists in both formal and informal sectors where children work under conditions characterized by long hours, hazardous environment and meagre remuneration. Laraqui, Caubet, Larque, Belamallam, Harairate, Curtes and Verger (2000) carried out a retrospective cohort study of working children in school widely prevalence of pathologies in a small neighbourhood of

Casablanca, Morocco. They found out that the state of health, painful condition of working children is higher than the children attending school.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the level of students' awareness in Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State on child's rights is generally low especially in the areas of quality education, good nutrition and health. However, their awareness on others like rights to protection from harm and have care necessary for wellbeing is fairly okay. It was also concluded that lack of proper orientation can result to unawareness of junior secondary school students' on child's right.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Aggressive modern scientific awareness campaign on issues of Child's rights to quality education should be embarked upon by government at various levels and Non-Governmental Organisations.
2. There is need for full implementation of existing child's rights law by bringing culprits of violation of such law to book. This will serve as retribution for the offenders and as deterrent to others.
3. Child rights awareness campaign should be taken to rural area to raise their awareness of the rural areas.

### References

Abubakar, A. A. (2000). "The Increasing Incidence of Trafficking in person Guardian January, 17, 2000 pg. 10  
 Child Welfare Information Gateway (2007) U.S Department of Health and Human Services www.Helpjuide.org

Child's Rights Act (CRA), (2003). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Approved Amendment to Article 43, paragraph 2, cited from www.ochchr.org"...."  
 Cornell University (2000), A Journal of the Cornell Curte and Verger (2000). *The Role and Responsibilities of Children Under the Law. Issues of Child's Rights' Protection in the 1999 Constitution Ekiti Now*, Friday, July 9, (2010.Pg. 25).  
 Education for All (1990). Launching of Education for All in the year 1990.  
 Ennew, J. (2000). *The History of Children's RightS*. Cornell University.  
 Gateway (2007). Children neglect in Nigeria. M.Ed Desertation submitted to Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, University of Lagos  
 Global Campaign for Education (2003). *Quality Education a Must for All*. www.campaignforeducation.org/en/....  
 International Labour Organisation (ILO) (1992). *Child Labour: What is to be done*, World labour Report, Geneva; ilopublicationp. 14  
 Laraqui, C. H.; Harairate, K.; Curtes, J. P.; & Verger, C.(2000). *Child Labour in the Artisan Sector of Morocco: Determinants and Health Effects; Sante Publique* 12 (1): 31 – 43.  
 Morka, H. P. (1997): *Education – A Human Right for All*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_rights)  
 Okolo, C. (1986): *Harzard of child labour in the cities of Nigeria*. A Ph.D Dissertaion submitted in University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Pg. 20.  
 Okolo, C. (1992): *Harzard of child labour in the cities of Nigeria*. A Ph.D Dissertaion submitted in University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Pg. 20.  
 Radio Nigeria on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, (2010) A Discussion on Child's Rights  
 Royal Canadian Police (2006) *Stopping child Abuse Canada Site Publications*, <http://www.remp.grc.gc.ca/ccaps/child->