



Assessment of Factors Responsible for Child Abuse Among Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis concerning factors responsible, for students with intellectual disabilities and child abuse. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population for this study comprised all teachers and parents of students with intellectual disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents across the Ilorin metropolis. One research question and two hypotheses were generated for the study. The instrument used for Data collection was titled Assessment of Factors Responsible for Child Abuse among Students with Intellectual Disabilities Questionnaire (AFRCBIDQ). Data gathered were analyzed using mean, percentage, frequency count, and independent sample t-test. The results of the study revealed that lack of proper parental care, low educational attainment, parental stress, carelessness, lack of good relationships, and vulnerability are the major factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities. There was no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on teachers' gender; there was no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender. It was recommended, the parents of students with intellectual disabilities should ensure that students with intellectual disabilities are given good proper parental care and monitoring.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 23 Mar 2022

First revised 13 Jun 2022

Accepted 12 Aug 2022

First available online 18 Aug 2022

Publication date 01 Sep 2022

Keyword:

Child abuse and gender,
Factors responsible,
Students with intellectual
disabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability is a term used when a person has certain limitations in mental functioning and in skills such as communicating, taking care of him or herself, and social skills, these limitations cause a child to learn and develop more slowly than a typical child, students with intellectual disabilities (sometimes called cognitive disabilities or, previously, mental retardation) may take longer to learn to speak, walk, and take care of their personal needs such as dressing or eating. They have trouble learning in school. Students with intellectual disabilities have a hard time letting others know their wants and needs, and taking care of themselves, have problems learning to speak, walk, dress, or eat without help, have trouble learning in school, and some are being molested or abused physically. Students with intellectual disabilities suffer abuse because of their disabilities; thereby child abuse (also called child endangerment or child maltreatment) is physical, sexual, or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or a caregiver.

Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child and can occur in a child's home, or the organizations, schools, or communities the child interacts with. It is a term used for maltreatment and neglect of children; it is described as all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (see <http://www.annarbor.com/news/u-m-medial-resident-charged-with-possessing-child-pornography>). Students with intellectual disabilities are at least three times more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012). and they are more likely to be seriously injured or harmed by maltreatment. Even among children with disabilities, the risk of abuse varies by disability type. They seemed more vulnerable to sexual abuse, despite this vulnerability, not much is known about the extent and nature of sexual abuse in children, because it was deemed crucial that students with intellectual disabilities receive care, also include abuse committed by children residing in the same youth-serving facility, group home or (foster) family, because children should be shielded from these kinds of sexual abuse as well.

The term child abuse refers to the harm experienced by children or young people under the age of 18 years as a result of the actions, inactions, or inability of people with parental responsibility for them, parental responsibility concerning a child means all the duties, power, responsibilities and authority which, by law, parents have concerning children (Greenfield, 2010). The harm experienced by the child or young person may arise from a significant event or may arise from the cumulative effect of abuse and neglect. Most parents love their children, but when stress, tiredness lack of skills, information, and support combine it can be overwhelming (Drotar, 2012). Child abuse takes different forms like physical, emotional, and sexual mistreatment or lack of care that causes injury or emotional damage to a child or youth. Child abuse is any action, behavior, or gesture by another person adult, or child that causes considerable damage to a child. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional, but can just as often be about a lack of affection, care, and attention. World Health Organization (WHO) (2010) defines child abuse and neglect, or child maltreatment, as all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or neglectful action, or commercial or other mistreatment ensuing in definite or possible harm to the child's health, continued existence, growth or self-esteem in the circumstance of a relationship of accountability, trust or authority. Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. Abuse can happen to a child at any age. Abusers can be

adults but not just parents or carers. Abuse often occurs within a relationship of trust such as a teacher, carer, family friend, or youth leader. Child abuse refers to any act or failure to act that causes harm or potential harm to a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or any other person in a position of trust or authority over the child.

Turner *et al.*, (2011) opined that child abuse can take many different forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect; it can have long-lasting effects on a child's physical and emotional health and can lead to problems such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The misuse of power and/or a breach of trust are part of all types of child abuse. Achema *et al.* (2014) opined that child abuse is an act which individuals, institutions, or processes engage in which directly or indirectly harms the children or damages their prospects of a safe and healthy development into adulthood. It is viewed as anything done to a child that poses significant harm or damages to the physical, sexual, emotional, and mental development of the child. In the light of the aforementioned facts therefore, the researcher averred that child abuse and neglect is the harm experienced by children or young people under the age of 18 years as a result of the actions, inactions, or inability of people with parental responsibility for them. Parental responsibility concerning a child means all the duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority that, by law, parents have concerning children.

A lot of factors have been identified by researchers responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities, in a study conducted by Berger *et al.* (2010) on the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities; it was found that low educational attainment of caregivers has been identified as a risk factor for child maltreatment and neglect and is also associated with poverty. Similarly, Twardosz and Lutzker (2010) found that low educational attainment is responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities. They also reported that low income, lack of understanding of issues associated with parenting, lack of proper parental care, low educational attainment, parental stress, carelessness, lack of good relationships, and vulnerability are the major factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities, the reason for this could be that the Parent of the students with intellectual disabilities lack knowledge on factors responsible for child abuse or has limited ability to learn themselves are contributed to child abuse. In a study conducted by Alessandri (1991) on factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities; it was found that factors responsible for child abuse can be grouped into two, community factor and environmental factors. Community factors are Neighborhood, Poverty, poor housing or homelessness, and Economic condition, while environmental factors are poverty, unemployment, social isolation, and low socio-economic status.

Apart from the factors mentioned above, other risk factors that are associated with child abuse including single parenthood, young mother of less than 18 years, lower social classes, lack of mothering, social isolation, poor family support, post-natal depression, and psychiatric illness. Others include unemployment, poor housing, financial problems, unwanted pregnancy or baby of the wrong sex, unrealistic expectation of the baby, recent bereavement, and a history of child abuse in one of the parents. No child is ever to be blamed for the abuse inflicted on him or her by an adult.

Gender difference in factors responsible for child abuse has become a matter of considerable detail among teachers, parents, and researchers in the field of education and psychology. Gender is a part of social constructionism that we use to place people in categories based on specific traits and characteristics. Gender as a trait and behavior that a particular culture judges to be appropriate for men and women. Behl found that girls are

significantly more likely to be victims of child abuse than boys and this pattern has also been confirmed in other literature (Sanchez-Rodriguez, 2021). For example, in a study conducted in Sweden, 65% of girls experienced Child sexual abuse compared to 23% of boys.

Recent meta-analytic data estimate that about seven to eight percent of boys, and eighteen to twenty percent of girls, experience globally (Russell et al., 2020). In a prevalence study by Mileva and colleagues based on 10,139 forensic medical examinations performed in Sofia, Bulgaria, 261 examinations indicated sexual violence (Mileva et al., 2020), and 36% of the 261 examinations showed Child sexual abuse. In 87% of the examinations where there was evidence of child abuse, the victims were girls, while in only 13% of the examinations, the victims were boys. Researchers in the US have reported that approximately one in twenty boys are sexually abused, while one in five girls are sexually abused (Finkelhor and Baron, 2010). However, it appears that males are more likely to sexually abuse girls than they are to sexually abuse boys (Mileva et al., 2020), while female perpetration appears to be uncommon, female perpetrators may tend to be more likely sexually abuse boys than girls (Mileva et al., 2020). Mileva and colleagues questioned 2516 individuals about the prevalence of child abuse and their experiences with child abuse in Bulgaria. Of the 2516 individuals surveyed, 10.5% reported experiences of Child abuse. Victims of male perpetrators were primarily girls, but victims of female perpetrators were split almost in half: 53.8% girls and 46.2% boys (Mileva et al., 2020). In sum, the Child sexual abuse literature indicates that girls are overwhelmingly more likely to be victims of child abuse than boys.

It has been concluded there is no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on the Teacher's Gender. It was also concluded that female children are more exposed to various types of abuse be it physical, sexual, or emotional abuse than male children. On this note, the study examines the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State Nigeria.

Students with intellectual disabilities are infants, toddlers, children, and youth who have learning difficulties, social problems, and motor skill impairment, and adversely affect their ability to perform successfully in daily life. Child abuse refers to any emotional, sexual, or physical mistreatment or neglect by an adult in a role of responsibility toward someone who is under 18 years of age. It has been observed that child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities can have a range of negative consequences, including Physical injuries. Students with intellectual disabilities may be at greater risk of physical abuse due to their vulnerabilities and their limited ability to defend themselves.

Students with intellectual disabilities experience abuse that causes them to exhibit behavioral issues such as aggression, withdrawal, or difficulty with emotional regulation, which negatively impact cognitive functioning, including memory and attention, which may further impair learning for students with intellectual disabilities. They may struggle to form positive relationships with others, including teachers, peers, and family members, child abuse can also lead to low self-esteem and negative self-perception, which may further hinder the development of students with intellectual disabilities.

The literature reviewed by researchers shows that numerous researchers have researched the factors responsible for child abuse among children. None of these researchers have considered students with intellectual disabilities in Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria. This is the gap this study wants to fill. The research question is the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities in Ilorin, Kwara State. Hypotheses are the following:

- (i) H1: There is no significant difference in the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on the teacher's gender.

- (ii) H2: There is no significant difference in the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender.

2. METHODS

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study; the reason for this is to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon. The respondents for this study were 120 parents and teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the Ilorin metropolis. A convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents in special schools in the Ilorin metropolis. The assessment of factors responsible for child abuse among Students with intellectual disabilities questionnaire was the instrument used for the study which was constructed by the researchers, and it contains 10 items with a response choice of 4 - on a point scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Agree (SA). A reliability coefficient is 0.81 was obtained using the test-re-test method, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. The researcher administered the questionnaires and collected them back on the spot. The data collected were analyzed using percentage, frequency count, mean, and t-test.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Question 1: What are The Factors Responsible for Child Abuse among Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Ilorin Kwara State Nigeria?

Table 1 shows factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities in Ilorin Kwara State Nigeria. The following shows factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities in Ilorin Kwara State as follows: Lack of improper parental care is one of the causes of child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities (3.7), they agreed that students with intellectual disabilities are being abuse because of their vulnerability (3.3), they disagreed that family size is the causes of child abuse (2.2), Age is also significant factor responsible for child's abuse (3.0), Lack of good relationship between the students with intellectual disabilities and parents also causes child's abuse (3.3), Carelessness in the part of the caregivers is also one of the cause of child's abuse among students with intellectual disabilities (3.3), Lack of pre-service training and in-service training of teachers teaching students with intellectual disabilities causes child's abuse (3.1), Parental stress is another factor responsible for child's abuse among students with intellectual disabilities (3.3), and Low educational attainment of parents also causes child's abuse (3.4). Based on the ranking, it was shown that lack of proper parental care, low educational attainment, parental stress, carelessness, lack of good relationships, and vulnerability are the major factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities.

3.2. Ho1: There is No Significant Difference Between the Factors Responsible for Child Abuse Among Students with Intellectual Disabilities Based on Teachers' Gender

Table 2 shows the summary of the t-test result showing the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on teachers' gender. It was revealed that male teachers had a mean score of 31.17 and a standard deviation of 1.32, while female teachers had a mean score of 33.00 and a standard deviation of 2.58, the t was -1.56, the degree of freedom 11, F was 1.03 and significant level of 0.15 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there was no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on teachers' gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there was no significant difference between e the factors

responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on teachers' gender was not rejected.

Table 1. The Percentage and Mean Distribution of Factors Responsible for Child Abuse among Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Ilorin Kwara State Nigeria.

SN	Item	SA	A	D	Sd	Mean	Rank
1	Lack of proper parental care is one of the causes of child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities	85 (70.8)	32 (26.7)	-	3 (2.5)	3.7	1 st
2	Students with intellectual disabilities are being abused because of their vulnerability	56 (46.7)	51 (42.5)	7 (5.8)	6 (5.0)	3.3	3 rd
3	Poverty is one of the causes of child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities	56 (46.7)	42 (35.0)	15 (12.5)	7 (5.8)	3.2	7 th
4	They are being abused because most of them are from large family size	38 (31.7)	53 (44.2)	19 (15.8)	10 (8.3)	2.2	10 th
5	Age is also a significant factor responsible for child abuse	41 (34.2)	48 (4.0)	22 (18.3)	9 (7.5)	3.0	9 th
6	Lack of good relationships between the students with intellectual disabilities and their parents also causes child abuse	59 (49.2)	45 (37.5)	12 (10.0)	4 (3.3)	3.3	3 rd
7	Carelessness on the part of the caregivers is also one of the causes of child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities	53 (44.2)	53 (44.2)	11 (9.2)	3 (2.5)	3.3	3 rd
8	Lack of pre-service training and in-service training of teachers teaching students with intellectual disabilities causes child abuse	48 (40.0)	44 (36.7)	19 (15.8)	9 (7.5)	3.1	8 th
9	Parental stress is another factor responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities	58 (48.3)	44 (36.7)	16 (13.3)	2 (1.7)	3.3	3 rd
10	Low educational attainment of parents also causes child abuse	68 (56.7)	39 (32.5)	10 (8.5)	3 (2.8)	3.4	2 nd

Table 2. Summary of t-test results showing the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on teachers' gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	T	F	Df	Sig	Decision
Factors	Male	6	31.17	1.32	-1.56	1.03	11	0.15	Not Sig
	Female	7	33.00	2.58					

3.3. Ho2: There is No Significant Difference Between the Factors Responsible for Child Abuse among Students with Intellectual Disabilities Based on Parents' Gender

Table 3 shows the summary of the t-test result showing the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender. It was revealed that male parents had a mean score of 31.38 and a standard deviation 4.1 while female parents had a mean score of 33.39 and a standard deviation of 3.41, the t was -2.69, degree of freedom 105, F was 2.26 and a significant level of 0.01 ($P < 0.05$). This implies that there was a significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states

that there was no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender was rejected.

Table 3. Summary of t-test result showing the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on parents' gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	T	F	Df	Sig	Decision
Factors	Male	37	31.38	4.13	-2.69	2.26	105	0.01	Sig
	Female	70	33.39	3.41					

3.4. Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that lack of proper parental care, low educational attainment, parental stress, carelessness, lack of good relationships, and vulnerability are the major factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities, the reason for this could be that the Parent of the students with intellectual disabilities lack knowledge on factors responsible for child abuse. This study is in line with [Mulder et al. \(2018\)](#) who revealed that child abuse is determined by multiple risk domains and that especially parent- related are factors responsible for child abuse.

The second finding revealed that there is no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on the Teacher's Gender. This study is not in line with reported that teacher gender (either male or female) significantly affects the performance of children in school which is caused by sexual abuse from the teacher. Lastly, the finding revealed that there was a significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities based on Parent's gender. This finding is in line with [Akpotor \(2018\)](#) who reported that parents' socioeconomic status was significantly related to the prevalence of Child Abuse.

4. CONCLUSION

It was concluded students with intellectual disabilities are being abused as a result of many factors such as lack of proper parental care, low educational attainment, parental stress, carelessness, lack of good relationships, and vulnerability. It is also stated there is no significant difference between the factors responsible for child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, it was recommended that parents and teachers should find a way of reducing child abuse among students with intellectual disabilities by monitoring them closely and give them proper care.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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