

Strategies to Reduce Child Sexual Abuse Among the Venda Community of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse is a global outcry. All countries across the globe have reported high cases of child sexual. In Africa, UNICEF has reported high rates of child sexual abuse, with South Africa having the highest and Zimbabwe. The research aims to find the forms of child sexual abuse, its possible causes among the Venda people of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe. This write-up aims at finding strategies to curb and design a model to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda people of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe. Data was collected using interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The participants were not aware that some cultural practices were forms of child sexual abuse. The research recommends that everyone be involved in fighting child abuse thus using a multi sectoral approach. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to monitor the teaching of guidance and counselling in schools as it will help teachers and learners gain knowledge and skills on sex education, thus leading to the reduction of child sexual abuse. The government to budget towards implementation of programmes that reduce child sexual abuse in the Venda community of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Child; Sexual abuse; Venda community

INTRODUCTION

The global prevalence of child sexual abuse has been on the rise as both girls and boys are found being victims of child sexual abuse. Approximately 150,000 confirmed cases of child sexual abuse were reported to child welfare authorities in the United States during 1993. According to Williams, (2019) most offenders are acquainted with their victims. Approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, uncles, fathers or cousins, 60% are other acquaintances, such as family friends, babysitters or neighbours. UNICEF has stated that child marriage, represents perhaps the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls. Forms of child sexual abuse include touching or fondling the child's genitals, masturbation, genital contact, child prostitution, paedophilia, child grooming and using the child to produce pornography.

In Asia, in India in the year 2007, according to UNICEF (2004), the Ministry of women and child welfare published the "the study on child abuse ". The study 's main findings included 21,9% children had faced child sexual abuse .50% of the abusers were known to the child and in a position of trust and responsibility and most abused children had not reported to anyone. According to UNICEF (2004) children, under the age of 18, contribute to 37% of India's population with large proportions experiencing great deprivations such as lack of access to basic education, nutrition or health care. In addition; they are susceptible to different forms of adverse childhood experiences including various forms of abuse, neglect, and maltreatment with child protection remaining largely un addressed. UNICEF(1999), asserts that a large-scale national study conducted in 2007 by Ministry of Women and Child Development, to assess the extent and nature of child abuse in India, uncovered some alarming statistics; that among the 12,447 children interviewed, more than half (53 percent) reported experience of sexual abuse, defined as "sexual assault, making the child fondle private parts, making the child exhibit private body parts and being photographed in the nude" and over 20 percent reported severe sexual abuse. While these statistics need to be interpreted with caution as it was conducted in a convenience rather than nationally representative sample, the numbers speak to the significance of the problem and highlight particularly high-risk groups. Smaller studies from India have also reported very high prevalence of

child sexual abuse.

India made a "protection order of children against sexual offences bill". It came into action to address child sexual abuse, In Pacific, according to UNICEF 1999; nearly half of reported victims of Papua Guinea are under 15years. In Austria Carol Kidu stated that 50% of rape victims are under the age of 16. This is a true reflection that children are not safe in this world considering the rate at which they are raped. Brown, (2000), says that in the UK a 2010 study estimated prevalence of 5% boys and 18% girls. Girls were six more times assaulted than boys. The study says that black and white children experienced near equal levels of sexual abuse.

Furthermore, in Africa, according to UNICEF a ten-country based study in Southern Africa in 2007 found that 29, 6% victims were girls whilst boys were 19,65. They were aged between 11-16 years. Botswana and South Africa had highest rates. Child rape is on the rise on the war ravaged eastern of DRC. Aid workers blame the combatants on all sides who operate with much impunity of sexual violence. South Africa has the highest rate of child sexual abuse in the world; this is according to UNICEF reports. In June 2008, there was a case in Zambia of a teacher who sexual assaulted a student. In court Judge Philip Musonda awarded \$13000 US dollar to the plaintiff who raped the thirteen years old. This was reported by Sally Chiwana, Zambia correspondent Women News Net (WNN).

In Zimbabwe there are cultural practices that promote or condone child sexual abuse, like "kutamba chiramhu, kuzvarirwa and incest". The Mirror of August 27, 2016, reported by Johanne Mhlanga, carried a story of a grade 7 pupil who narrated her rape through a school essay. Not much was done to do justice for the victims, a lot of cases are swept under carpet. The phenomenon of child sexual abuse remains topical in Zimbabwe; this is because it exploits and degrades children and can cause serious damage to cognitive, social and emotional development of a child. Child sexual abuse has gained public attention in the past few decades and has become one of the most high-profile crimes. According to Daro, (1994) America advocates that it is everyone 's responsibility to stop child sexual abuse. This research seeks to find strategies and design a model to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda Community of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Evaluate the different forms of child sexual abuses among the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe.
2. Explore the possible causes of child sexual abuse among the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe.
3. Explore possible strategies that can be used to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe.
4. Design a model to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda community Beitbridge Zimbabwe.

METHODS

The approach used in this study is qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), qualitative approach provides depth and detail, looks into deeper and analyzing ranks and counts by recording attitudes, feelings and behaviors. It also creates openness by encouraging people to expand on their responses and thus opening up new topic areas not initially considered. Unlike quantitative, qualitative generally draws a post positivist or constructivist belief that believes that environmental and individual differences influence reality. A case study design will be used to gain insights on the Venda cultural practices which facilitate child sexual abuse. Qualitative research is often used to conduct social and behavioral studies because human interactions are more complex than molecular reactions in a beaker. Subjectivity, non-random sampling and small sample size distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative research. According to Dowd (2018) a big advantage of qualitative research is the ability to deeply probe and obtain rich descriptive data about social phenomena through structured interviews, cultural immersion, case studies and observation.

Dowd (2018) goes on to say that, 'qualitative' methods are used to answer questions about experience,

meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring. Qualitative research techniques include 'small-group discussions' for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behaviour; 'semi-structured interviews', to seek views on a focused topic or, with key informants, for background information or an institutional perspective; 'in-depth interviews' to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective; and 'analysis of texts and documents'. To get the gist of the matter about the experiences of child sexual abuse and the strategies to curb it, qualitative approach is vital for it will use in-depth interviews, which will get rich information from the researched participants. According to background information, research on child sexual abuse was done in different countries and also in Zimbabwe. Cases of abuse reflect a sordid and gory picture of the state and safety of our children. Child sexual abuse is an internationally recognized crime against humanity and a gross violation of the child's fundamental rights. The research participants were chosen from the Venda community. Nothing much was done on strategies to curb it. Child sexual abuse is on the rise among the Venda community of Beitbridge, cases are reported daily at the police station and some cases go unreported. The research population of this study are the children in the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe. The researcher will seek approval letters from the Great Zimbabwe University and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to carry out the research. With the assistance of the Guidance and Counselling teachers, the researcher will identify the abused children for the study. The researcher will also seek consent forms from the parents or guardians of the abused research participants. The researcher will have face to face interviews with the research participants.

The sample size is ten (10) children purposively selected from the Chaluma cluster in Beitbridge. The participants would be children who have been sexually abused within the Venda community of Beitbridge.

This research seeks to come up with strategies and design a model to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe.

RESULTS

The data collected indicated that a number of children drop out of school due to various reasons that include lack of fees, death of parents, pregnancy and other various reasons. School dropout is a possible cause of child sexual abuse because children end up roaming around thus perpetrators take advantage of them and abuse them. Research participants also indicated that their security is not certain anywhere in the community because perpetrators of child sexual abuse are released from prison without serving long terms. Lack of security of the children is a possible cause of child sexual abuse according to the findings of the research.

Beitbridge is a border town and prostitution is on the rise, therefore because of influences around for example road shows, Vuzu parties; activities like cattle markets which gather people from different local communities promote child prostitution and sexual abuse. There are also discos which are organized by business people at Lutumba growth point which is the busiest in Beitbridge town where the research participants were randomly selected. Young girls and boys usually attend these at night. According to the findings; cases of child sexual abuse are reported after these because some will commit the cases under the influence of alcohol.

Elly said, *'ndo nwa halwa nda kangwa ndi na dzi khonaniri showani, nda kiwa muroho nga vhathu vhararu duvha helo'*

'I drank beer when we were at a function with friends, I was over drunk and I was raped by three men that same night'

DISCUSSIONS

Findings indicate that the different forms of child sexual abuses which are common in the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe are incest, child marriages, pornography and rape. There might be other forms of child sexual abuses, but the leading ones are mentioned above. This was reflected from the responses of the research participants of the Venda community of Beitbridge. This is supported by UNICEF as it stated that, child marriage, represents perhaps the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls. Forms of

child sexual abuse include touching or fondling the child's genitals, masturbation, genital contact, child prostitution, paedophilia, child grooming and using the child to produce pornography.

In addition to that, there are also possible causes of child sexual abuse among the Venda community of Beitbridge. Findings indicate that poverty, lack of parental guidance, school dropouts, media influence and peer pressure are possible causes of child sexual abuse. Chasan-Taber and Tabachnick (1999), assert that child sexual abuse may be caused by isolation and lack of support from family members, friends' community support to help with parenting styles of child sexual abuse. Experts noted a range of risk indicators for child sexual abuse, highlighting social isolation, poor supervision, and the presence of step fathers. It is also characterised by cultural and social challenges. According to Kelso Lawyers (2019), poor social skills contribute to the causes of child sexual abuse.

On strategies to curb child sexual abuse, findings indicated that, the community should work together to curb child sexual abuse. Perpetrators of child sexual; abuse is to be given a harsh jail sentence so that people will be afraid to commit the crime. In addition to that the government should budget and operate from a multi-sectoral approach to curb child sexual abuse. Schools also to equip teacher and students on skills on guidance and counselling so that they curb the abuse. Taber and Tabachnick (1999) state that many places were identified as central for information dissemination and prevention strategies, like schools, institutions, children 's homes, boarding schools and volunteer activities associated with the church and sports. Programs were done by experts and this helped to curb child sexual abuse.

Research participants suggested a lot of people, organisations the government to join hands and work together so as to reduce child sexual abuse. This made the researcher to design a model using the given suggestions to reduce child sexual abuse among the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe. There are some researchers who also designed models like, Finkelhor (1984) Precondition model, Hall and Hirschman's (1992) Quadripartite model and Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990). The models do not apply to the Venda community of Beitbridge due to differences in geographical setup, economic status and social status. Moore (1995) discusses public health model and criminal justice model which were used to curb child sexual abuse.

The research process had limitations like the issue of accessing electricity. Due to electricity load shedding the researcher could not make it possible to gather all resources and information needed for the study. The researcher resorted to working at night to make the research a success. The finances were a constraint considering the distance between Beitbridge and Gwanda were the participants and researcher are located. However, the researcher ended up riding on the provincial assessments' programmes so that the research becomes a success. The research participants were not open at first which made the researcher to miss some information. However, with time the participants opened up and this made the research a success.

In light with the forms and causes of child sexual abuse, the researcher recommends that to reduce, everyone should work together to safeguard the child. Awareness campaigns should be done by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with other Ministries so as to conscientize people on child sexual abuse. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should monitor the teaching of Guidance and counselling in schools so that both teachers and students gain knowledge and skills on sex education. Furthermore, the government should engage other sectors and non-governmental organizations to help curb child sexual abuse Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe should budget and monitor the implementation of programmes to curb child sexual abuse in the Venda community of Beitbridge. The Ministry of Justice (law enforcers) revises jail sentences of perpetrators. Child sexual abuse perpetrators should attract lengthy prison sentences. There were also limitations in the study and thus the researcher recommends that, more research to be done on the study so as to come up with more strategies to curb child sexual abuse in the Venda community of Beitbridge. The research participants also were sampled from a small area that findings cannot represent all the people in the Venda community of Beitbridge Zimbabwe

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