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TEACHERS AWARENESS OF CHILD RIGHTS IN FUNTUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the awareness of child rights among teachers in the Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 81 respondents selected from both private and public primary schools through simple random sampling techniques. An instrument with 15 items was developed and validated for the study, revealing a reliability coefficient of 0.73. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings indicated a generally low awareness level among teachers regarding child rights in the area (WA = 2.20). Furthermore, the study did not find a significant difference in awareness between male and female teachers ($t = 0.423$; $df = 78$; $p>0.05$) and identified a significant difference in awareness based on teachers' years of experience ($F(3,76) = 3.236$; $P>0.05$). Consequently, the study concludes that teachers generally lack awareness of child rights and recommends that the government organize seminars and conferences to enlighten teachers and parents about the significance of nurturing children and protecting their rights, including access to education, health, and protection from exploitation and inhumane treatment.

Keywords: Teachers, Awareness, Child Rights, Funtua Local Government, Katsina State

Introduction

The initial years of life, also known as early childhood, are the most impressionable and crucial years of every human life. These years play a significant role in laying the foundation for the development during later years and shaping the personality of an individual. Also, there is a greater risk of survival, health, growth and development during this period and child's dependency on adults during early childhood makes them even more vulnerable to difficult circumstances. These difficult circumstances vary from working in exploitative situations, forcefully living away from biological parents, sexual abuse/exploitation, trafficking, and child labour.

The future of any society rests in part on how well the society succeeds in preparing children to be useful and responsible citizens to the society. Although education security and social health is an enabling right of every human, which open doors to other right, unfortunately, Nigerian children especially the orphaned, vulnerable and disable children are the hardest hit in terms of deprivation of their right to quality universal basic education (Abebe, 2013). This exposes them to greater risk of poverty and ill-health. The girl-child and the disabled in most cases are more likely to be out of school (Anan, 2000). This leads to problems such as genital mutilation, child marriage (child-mother and other problems related to early childbirth) sexual abuse, exploitation (exposing them to reproductive and sexual infections including HIV/AIDS), and retarded developmental progress in the community (Akor, 2009). A child is any human being underage of 18 years, provided any state law applicable fall in the category of child. Legally a child is considered as minor being younger than the age of majority (Bamgbose, 2017).

'Child' as every human being up to the age of 18 years. This also considers the law applicable to the child (UNCRC 1989). Nevertheless, Child and Adolescent Labour (P&R) Act, 1986 articulates that a child is a person of age less than 14 years, and employment of a child for any work is a cognizable criminal offense under this act. While the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 has a different viewpoint. According to this Act, any male less than the age of 21 years and any female below the age of 18 years is considered as a child. This act came with the intention to eliminate child marriage. Like all human beings' children as the nation's prime asset are also born with certain fundamental and inalienable rights. These rights are bestowed upon children as early as the prenatal/fetal stage and this conclusion has existed in various forms in various societies (Veiga, 2011).

Child rights and adult rights seems different terms, but these are human rights and sides of one coin. Being vulnerable part of society, children have specific rights which help children to maximize their full potential. In society, children must not be considered as helpless, deserve for charity or property family. A child is part of family and community having specific rights and responsibilities at developmental stage. Children should enjoy the minimum standard of life (basic human rights principles) rather than privileges (CRC, 2006). Every child irrespective of gender and age is unique in character and has equal importance in terms of human dignity and respect. Moreover, children must be given opportunity to share in all matters and decisions. Children must be listened to their opinion respected in a serious manner (CRIN, 2007).

The child rights are the human rights (UNCRC). The school is another place where children rights are required to be provided and protected after home, therefore after parents, teachers must focus on child rights, and they should try to ensure all the requirement related with child rights at school. To defend and taking care of the children rights, there is dire need to explore an understanding of teachers' knowledge, attitude, and practice about child rights at secondary schools (Babalola, 2011). Basically, child rights are focused on the special protection and care' accorded to a child. Child rights may also be comprehended as minimum freedoms and entitlements bestowed on all children without any bias for the class, caste, colour, creed, gender, language, religion, origin, or ability. These child rights hence are applicable to all children irrespective of their location. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 is one of the most significant documents proclaiming the protection of children and their rights.

The broad classification of child rights as presented by UNCRC (1989) encompasses the survival, protection, development, and participation of each child. The 'Right to Survival' is the basic right which is initiated even before the birth of the child during the prenatal period and includes the right of the child to be given birth, to be provided food, clothing, and shelter and to live in this world with dignity. Right to Protection in the second stage which envelops his right to be protected from child abuse, neglect, cruelty as well as exploitation at home and elsewhere. Further, 'Right to Participation' gives the child an equal right to express his opinions, to be heard, to access information and freedom to associate with a group. The degree of participation varies with age and maturity. Right to Development' encompasses the different domains of development i.e., physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. Emotional development is taken care of through love and

proper care from the family cum community, but the physical aspect of development is maintained by recreation, games, and nutrition whereas education and learning help to attain the right of mental development (Clavria, 2014).

Children's rights focus on the domestic laws and policies that affect child health and social welfare, education and special needs, child labour and exploitation, sale and trafficking of children and juvenile justice. As indicated in these documents, the rights of children are categorized into survival rights, developmental rights, participation rights and protection rights. Survival rights are right of a child to a home, privacy, special care and assistance, identity and food and good nutrition. Developmental rights consist of the right of a child to adequate healthcare and quality education and access to special education while participation rights include the right of a child to express their opinions, play, to participate in family discussion, to belong to association, a life free from discrimination and share views with others. The last category is right to protection which highlights the rights of a child to protection from abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation (Adedigba, 2015).

Kamau (2013) stated that awareness about children's rights should be developed through the country's policies, awareness on this issue should be increased, children's rights should have a more qualified place in social life and in accordance with these objectives, scientific, real and feasible policies should be developed in Nigeria, the 2003 Child Rights Act signed into law by the federal government was to ensure the protection of the rights of the Nigerian child irrespective of physical or mental function, yet, child's right abuse has prevailed in the country. The international labor organization ILO (2005) indicated that 15 million Nigeria children were working in Nigeria, 6 million were not in school and 2 million were exposed to very long working hours. The Executive Director of Child Help in Legal Defence of Right of Education (CHILDREN) also reported that most under aged children were employed as house girls and boys and most of them were not well fed let alone attending school. According to the United Nations (UN, 1990) and Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1990) charter on rights and welfare of the child, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, maturity was attained earlier.

Protection of human rights means to ensure that people are enjoying the entitlements of decent human living. Provision of human rights facilitative environment is the core function of any state and protect human rights as basic civic principle. States should make laws to ensure equal opportunities of human rights, which will not only provide the

structural and legal platform for the citizens but also will pave a path of human rights supportive culture. It is the state function to maintain, preserve and protect the life of people through human rights violators. However, it is observed that many GOs and NGOs are taking part in the protection of people's human rights. In any society, every human being has an obligation to respect the others' rights, which calls for protection and sanctions for violations (Bakker, 2018).

After family, the school is the basic institution for child development. It is the major responsibility of schools to provide a safe and child-friendly environment for children outside their home. In schools, the teachers who contribute immensely in shaping of a child's personality are major influencing factor in a child's life. Hence, teachers play a major role in providing required inputs for the protection of children and their rights. Knowledge of teachers about child rights will make a positive impact on the lives of children through the contact of teachers with them and with their parents. Therefore, the teachers need to keep themselves updated regarding the latest updates about the child's problems, rights of children and the mechanism to protect their rights. The teacher as a guide, as a torchbearer and as a leader must also take on the role of a caretaker in the protection of child rights. They should ensure that all children are protected from all forms of exploitation, abuse, inhuman neglect, and degrading treatment. It is difficult for a child to be a productive and a responsible member of the society unless a safe and secure environment which is stimulating and conducive to his/her physical and social health and protection is assured to him/her. Children consider their parents/teachers as their role models. Being their custodians and primary caregivers, the parents as well as teachers ought to be aware and updated about the programs, policies and rights guaranteed to children by the state. This will lead to a better life of their children through better access to early childhood care, education, nutrition, health and juvenile justice for their positive development (Sathiyaraj & Jayaraman, 2013).

Handlers of little children at the various establishments are presumed to be trained in handling little children and knowledgeable in the normal development of children as well as the application of rights of children. Early childhood Education teachers and caregivers are therefore recognized by the National Policy on Education (2013) as surrogate parents of these little children. Iroegbu (2015) asserted that in some cases, the ECE children were found to be closer to their teachers than to their biological parents. Consequently, some children refuse to accept corrections by their biological parents, for ECE teachers' mistakes. Claveria (2014) had found that the influence which ECE

teachers have on their pupils is very great to the extent that the children believed that their teachers are infaliable and will therefore not accept corrections of their teachers by their parents. Every ECE teacher is expected to be dutiful and caring (Nakpodia, 2009). Both Griffiths (2012) and Ireland (2012) agreed that ECE teachers and caregivers must care for children under them and protect them in the same manner that careful mothers due to their children. Ireland (2012) further emphasized that professional ECE teachers and caregivers must always display, professional skills and care in handling little children under them. CRC demands that ECE teachers and caregivers must know and apply the requirements of Child Rights Act (CRA) in school setting.

Teachers role cannot be ignored as teacher is the second important stakeholder after parents who inspire the child in promoting value system and sense of Child rights in students. The frequency of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence has increased a lot as compared in Nigeria (Memon, 2007). A teacher is not a mere person who stands up in front of a group in order to teach lessons, he/she should treat the boys and girls with patience, affection, and care, preparing them to work for a decent standard of living, as well as reinforcing social role models that promote gender quality by upholding their right. The teacher is the yardstick that measures the achievements and aspirations of the nation, the worth and potentialities of a country can be evaluated in and through the work of the teachers.

Teachers who will shape the future of the countries and who will teach the children should be given courses about the rights of the child in the preservice period during their years at university; especially when they start working as teachers, this knowledge should be reinforced through in-service training. However, before these trainings are provided, the awareness levels of the teachers should be determined, and trainings should be planned accordingly (Baginsky, 2000).

Teachers are the other group of people that also influence a child most and contribute to the shaping of his or her personality. Adedigba (2016) submitted that a teacher's roles include more than helping students acquire content and information. It involves supporting, protecting, and helping develop the social, emotional, and ethical qualities that enable them to have in school and in later life. They are to provide an enabling, conducive, friendly, and stimulating environment to children (Akinbote. 2007). They are also entrusted to help children realize their right to basic education of good quality, socializing boys, and girls in safe environment, safe from drugs and harassment, enhance their health and wellbeing, guarantee them safe and protective space for learning, free

from violence and abuse.

The awareness of child rights is important for the teachers to avoid violations of human rights. Conscious attitudes and awareness about children's right should be seen in the political approaches of rulers, in the content of educational process elements and within their practice processes, in the works of non-governmental organizations and in the attitudes of families. Dьndar and Hareket (2017) stated that awareness about children's rights should be developed through the country's policies, awareness on this issue should be increased, children's rights should have a more qualified place in social life and in accordance with these objectives, scientific, real and feasible policies should be developed.

Ajithkumar (2009) assessed the awareness of child rights and their practices among the secondary school teachers of Greater Mumbai, India. The findings revealed that the awareness and practices of child rights among teachers were abysmally poor. It was revealed that 25 per cent respondents have not heard of UNCRC, 93 per cent respondents could not state any one of the four basic rights covered by UNCRC and 80 per cent respondents were not aware of the age prescribed for child by UNCRC. Study suggested that participation of teachers and parents in child's development should be recognized and facilitated, and they should be empowered with knowledge of their child's rights.

Series of studies have been done on child rights part of which include a study conducted by Victoria (2015) on the awareness of male and female teachers, the study show that there is a high positive significant relationship in the awareness of male and female teachers. This implies that male and female teachers in Nigerian ECE facilities largely have similar notions on the rights of children. The analysis reveals that 38% of the awareness of female teachers can be predicted correctly from the awareness of the male teachers. This is an indication of high similarity in awareness by the two groups. This circumstance implies that both male and female teachers require similar treatment to overcome their shortcomings in the management of children's rights. If the male and female ECE teachers should be given appropriate corrective treatment, a higher level of positive correlation will result in the improvement of their awareness to a level that will approach perfect correlation.

Education must be provided in an environment that is free of violence, and children must have the opportunity to freely express their views, participate in school life and gain new skills that develop the democracy and tolerance and help them to pursue their lives as

responsible citizens (Hannikainen & Puttonen, 2010). From this perspective, teachers in educational institutions can provide children with maximum developmental support, and it is possible through facilitating their right to participate in their activities and offering appropriate services for their participation (Bae, 2009; Feinberg & Toress, 2001). Investigating teachers' awareness of children's right to participate is of great importance in terms of providing children with the highest possible level of development opportunities and qualified educational environments.

Above all every child is entitled to be loved, cared for, maintained, and protected by their parents. A child should be surrounded by family members who should provide affection, a proper upbringing and provide the necessities of life (adequate food education, shelter etc.) for the physical, moral and mental growth of the child. They also need to create an atmosphere conducive for children to freely associate and relate with others while at the same time monitor the company of friends their children keep preventing negative influences.

Statement of the problem

This study investigates teachers' awareness about child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State. The Nigerian society has an obligation to satisfy the fundamental needs of her children and to help with the development of their personalities, talents and abilities. However, despite global efforts to promote and protect the rights of the child through international conferences, and summits, the rights of children in Nigeria are still far from being secured. Daily, child rights are being violated; children are going through serious hardship and deprivation of their fundamental needs. The implication being that not only the child, but the community and the nation at large suffers a setback in development and growth since the development and growth of any nation depends much on the child. Different researchers have tried to solve this problem using different variables such as awareness of teachers about child right, teachers and parents attitude towards child right and others but the problem persist. Although none has looked at the awareness of teachers about child right as awareness precedes reaction which is the research gap this study aims to fill. Where the rights of the child are enforced and protected the personalities, abilities and talents of the children will be developed to the fullest and will secure not only their future, but also the future of the nation.

Research Question

The following research question will be use to guide this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of teachers about child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsins State?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State based on gender.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State based on years of experience.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey method to assess the awareness of child rights among teachers in the Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State. The target population included all primary school teachers in Funtua, totaling 87 public and 256 private schools, as documented in the Katsina State Annual Census Report of 2018-2019. Using simple random sampling, 21 private and 6 public primary schools were selected, with two teachers chosen from each school, resulting in 81 respondents participating in the study. Data were collected through a questionnaire, the Teachers' Awareness on Child Rights Questionnaire (TACRQ), which consisted of two sections. Section A collected demographic information, while Section B comprised 15 items to evaluate teacher's awareness of child rights. The validity of the instrument was ensured by experts in the field, and its reliability was confirmed through the test and re-test method, yielding a reliability index of 0.73. The research question was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, and mean, while the hypotheses were tested using independent sample t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), with a significance level set at 0.05.

RESULTS

Table 1: Gender Distribution of teachers awareness

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	43	53.8
Female	37	46.3
Total	**80**	**100**

Table 1 shows that there are 43 male teachers which accounted for 53.8 % while there are 27 female teachers which accounted for 46.3% of the sampled population.

Table 2: Teachers years of working experience

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage
0-5years	19	23.8
6-10years	35	43.8
11-15years	13	16.3
16years above	13	16.3
Total	**80**	**100**

Table 2 shows that there are 19 teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience which accounted for 23.8 %, there are 35 teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience which accounted for 43.8%, there are 13 teachers with 11-15 years of teaching experience which accounted for 16.3%, there are 13 teachers with 16-above years of teaching experience which accounted for 16.3% of the sampled population.

Answering the Research Question

Table 3: Research Question: What is the level of awareness of teachers about child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsins State?

S/N	ITEMS	NA	A	HA	FA	MEAN
1	Pupils developmental right should be taken care of	25 (31.3)	32 (40.0)	4 (5.0)	19 (23.8)	2.21
2	Pupils should have access to adequate standard of living.	21 (26.3)	38 (41.5)	6 (7.5)	15 (18.8)	2.19
3	pupils should have the right to equality education.	34 (42.5)	23 (28.7)	5 (6.3)	18 (22.5)	2.09
4	Pupils should not be subjected to any form of abuse.	25 (31.3)	37 (46.3)	4 (5.0)	14 (17.5)	2.09
5	Pupil's interest should always be considered.	23 (28.7)	22 (27.5)	11 (13.8)	24 (30.0)	2.45
6	Pupils' survival right should not be violated.	23 (28.7)	39 (48.8)	3 (3.8)	24 (18.8)	2.13
7	Pupils have the right to life Pupils have the right to good health.	32 (40.0)	21 (26.3)	3 (3.8)	24 (30.0)	2.24

8	Pupils should not be subjected to any form of discrimination	21 (26.3)	38 (47.5)	5 (6.3)	16 (20.0)	2.20
9	Pupils should be cared for and protected by the parents and teachers	31 (38.8)	29 (36.3)	6 (7.5)	14 (17.5)	2.04
10	Pupils have right to ask questions	20 (25.0)	36 (45.0)	6 (7.5)	18 (22.5)	2.27
11	Pupils should not be subjected to any form of marginalization	23 (28.7)	28 (35.0)	10 (12.5)	19 (23.8)	2.31
12	Pupils have right to protection	27 (33.8)	33 (41.3)	3 (3.8)	17 (21.3)	2.13
13	Pupils should not be separated from the parents with force	20 (25.0)	30 (37.5)	7 (8.8)	23 (28.7)	2.41
14	Pupils should be protected from neglects and exploitation	25 (31.3)	35 (42.5)	9 (11.3)	12 (15.0)	2.10

Decision rule: the teachers' awareness of child right is negative because the weighted average mean obtained which is 2.20 is less than 2.6

Table 3 shows that teachers' awareness of child right is negative (WA = 2.20). The detailed analysis is as follows: Pupils developmental right should be taken care of (mean = 2.21), Pupils should have access to adequate standard of living (mean = 2.19), pupils should have the right to equality education (mean = 2.09), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of abuse (mean = 2.09), Pupil's interest should always be considered (mean =2.45), Pupils' survival right should not be violated (mean = 2.13), Pupils have the right to life Pupils have the right to good health (mean = 2.24), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of discrimination (mean = 2.20), Pupils should be cared for and protected by the parents and teachers (mean = 2.04), Pupils have right to ask questions (mean = 2.27), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of marginalization (mean = 2.31 Pupils have right to protection (mean = 2.13), Pupils should not be separated from the parents with force (mean =2.41), Pupils should be protected from neglects and exploitation (mean = 2.10), Pupils should be protected from task that impede their education (mean = 2.15).

Testing the hypotheses

Ho1:There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State based on gender.

Table 4: t-test showing the difference of male and female teachers' awareness of child rights.

Gender	n	Mean	Std.d	t	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	43	33.2558	5.57671				
				0.423	78	0.673	Not Significant
Female	37	32.7027	6.10949				

Table 4: shows that there is no significant difference between male and the female teachers' awareness in Funtua Local Government Area of Katsina State (t = 0.423; df = 78; p>0.05)

Ho2: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State based on years of experience.

Table 5: ANOVA showing Difference of Teachers' Awareness of Child Rights based on Years of Teaching Experience

Experience	N	Sum of square	Mean of square	F	df	Sig.	Remark
0-5years	19	300.848	100.283		3		
6-10years	35						
11-15years	13			3.236	76	0.027	Significant
16years above	13	2356.152	30.989				
TOTAL	**80**	**2656.000**			**79**		

Table 5 shows that there is significant difference in teachers' awareness in child right based on years of experience ($F_{(3,76)}$ = 3.236; P>0.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

Teachers' awareness of child rights is negative while the review Abdul Hameed study revealed a low level of awareness of parents and teachers are yet aware of CRA 2003. It revealed that many of them are not yet aware that there is a legal framework safeguarding the rights and welfare of a Nigerian child for his/her optimum development. The finding

corroborates the study of Shoaga (2004), who confirmed that there is little or no awareness of child rights among those meant to protect them. The author also reported that there is little or no enlightenment campaign to intimate parents and guardians of the benefits of nurturing of the child and the rights of a child to education, to health, to freedom of association and right to protection against exploitation and inhuman treatment and others. It is also in consonance with the study of Soyibo (2005) which reported lack of awareness of Child Right Act 2003 among the custodians of children. Teachers' awareness of child right is negative which is in-line with the research. The finding and is in conformity with the report of the concluding observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Nigeria that there is a reflection of the general low awareness among parents of the importance of birth registration and its consequences on the full enjoyment by fundamental rights and freedom by children, in particular, access to education and health, the right to know and be cared for by parents. Okoye quoting Akinwumi (2009) in support of the above idea said that the failure to create awareness and implement the Child's Rights Act effectively and to curb the violation of child rights can be traced to the failure of Nigeria to educate her citizens on human rights generally and child rights specifically. Also, Society for Children and Youth of' British Columbia Canada (2011) acknowledged that knowledge of the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and children's rights generally is lacking at all levels in most society. This finding is also in line with Ajithkumar (2013) reported that there is low level of awareness among the teachers and student teachers about the existence of child related Laws and Acts like the Child Marriage Restraint Act in India.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study it was concluded that teachers' awareness of child right is negative, also that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers' awareness on child right, also there is significant difference in years of experience teacher' awareness of child right. The following recommendation with the view that if implemented, primary schools will be aware of child right. Government should organize seminars and conference for teachers and parents for the benefits of nurturing the child and the rights of a child to education, to health, to freedom of association and right to protection against exploitation and inhuman treatment and others.

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