

# Public Perception of Radio Programmes on Parental Sexual Abuse on Children: A Study of Residents of Owerri Metropolis

## Abstract

Recently, media reports of parental sexual abuse have been alarming. Hence, this study examined the public perception of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse of children in Imo State metropolis. The study was anchored on agenda-setting theory. The study adopted the survey research design. From the population of 983,000 residents in Owerri metropolis, 400 were derived using the Taro Yamani formula. The multistage sampling technique was used. A questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The percentage and mean analysis methods were used for the analysis. The findings revealed that an average of 41.4% of the respondents have the perception that radio programmes on parental sexual abuse are not properly packaged, that programmes on parental sexual abuse are not aired at the right time so as to get many listeners, and that radio programmes on parental sexual abuse do not influence parents positively. Further findings revealed that, at a mean of 2.4, it was confirmed that radio programmes on parental sexual abuse were not effective in influencing the behaviour of Owerri metropolis residents on issues of parental sexual abuse. The results suggest that producers of programmes that focus on child abuse should enrich their content and schedule the programme at the appropriate time to attract a good number of listeners in order to influence them positively. Efforts should be made by radio stations and programme producers to make their programmes effective in curtailing the issue of child abuse in Imo State and, by extension, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Children, public perception, programme, parents, radio, sexual abuse

## Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined child abuse and maltreatment as any act that results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development, or dignity. This includes sexual abuse, neglect, or careless treatment, as well as physical and/or emotional abuse (Karayel, 2018). According to statistics, throughout the past four years, there has been a 90% increase in the level of violence and/or abuse against children (Karayel, 2018). According to Owolabi (2012), child abuse remains a major problem in every country in the world, with many children being victims on a daily basis. Among other things, they become victims of child

prostitution, child abandonment, child trafficking, early marriage, child abuse, child labour, and communal violence. This study focuses on child sexual abuse by parents.

The issue of child sexual abuse is one that knows no bounds. This is among the most severe types of child abuse that can take the form of molestation, forced prostitution, rape, sexual assault, harassment, incest, and forced prostitution (Botswanan Family Welfare Association, 1996, as cited in Mathoma et al., 2006; Bolen & Lamb, 2007). The socio-religious society of Nigeria has witnessed a surge in sexual abuse. That effect has been linked to many variables. According to Ibrahim and Shehu (2009, p. 107), these include "low levels of education, skill training, and bargaining capacity." In the meantime, women and children suffer the brunt of sexual assault. The "nature of child exposure to adult contents and pornographies and parents attitudes towards sex have led to an increase in cases of parental sexual abuse of children" (Nkwegu, 2009, p. 123). According to Mathoma et al. (2006), citing SWAGAA (1999), child sexual abuse can cause disruptions in families, especially when the abusers are family members.

No child shall be subjected to torture or any other cruel, barbaric, or degrading treatment or punishment, according to Article 37(a) of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC). For acts committed by individuals under the age of eighteen, neither the death penalty nor life in prison without the prospect of release may be applied. A worldwide framework for guaranteeing the protection of children's rights is established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many individuals are unaware that these rights even exist, according to the United Nations. Because of this, child abuse is rife in many nations, including Nigeria, at the moment. Young (2001) notes in Nwokedi (2016) that "child abuse and neglect are pervasive in today's world, affecting African societies, Nigeria in particular. Any child who disobeys is frequently disciplined with corporal punishment. These consist of caning and the application of unpleasant

punishments like pepper to the genital area in some Nigerian communities. Child abuse is defined as "any act of misuse of a child in any form; it is a situation where a child is not provided with the much-needed necessities of life, where a child is maltreated physically, sexually, or emotionally, and this is detrimental to such a child's future growth and development" (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2016).

However, in most countries of the world, there are children who continue to fear and experience abuse, even from their parents, as the case may be. Regrettably, the scar of that abuse can continue to influence their development throughout their lives, behaviour, and health (Al-Odhayani et al., 2013). In view of this, Nkwam-Owaoma and Ndukwu (2020) note that in Nigeria, laws that protect children from violence have been properly codified in the constitution, but most citizens seem to be either uninformed or unwilling to abide by these laws. The social responsibility theory of the press saddles media practitioners with the responsibility of reporting issues that are of importance to society and presenting them in such a manner that their audience will derive the appropriate lesson.

It is widely believed that the mass media has consistently served as the primary avenue for popularising programmes among the populace of a nation. Without a doubt, the mass media have great power in promoting ideas and inspiring people to take certain actions that will benefit the country. It implies that the media may be a powerful tool for educating and organising the public about the importance of taking part in the struggle to actually end child abuse (Anorue et al., 2011; Babatsikos, 2010).

In the words of Nworgu (2011), society relies greatly on the mass media for its survival and positive growth. The radio is one of the most commonly sought-after media because of its unique features; it plays a significant role in educating, informing, and influencing people's

attitudes and behaviors. It draws attention by increasing society's awareness of and response to the Child Rights Act and the dangers of child abuse, particularly sexual child abuse by parents. It is the responsibility of the media to bring these child rights acts to the public through its programmes. For instance, Darling FM Owerri, as a radio station, produces and airs some programmes like "The Consequence" every Friday, which is a human rights programme organised by human rights sts. The objective of this programme is to make people knowledgeable about their rights as established by law. "Play School," which is organised by children every Saturday, is where everything that concerns children both at home and in school is deliberated on. The purpose is to enlighten parents and guardians about their children's feelings towards their actions or treatments at home. It is imperative to stress that if the media, through the radio programmes, play their role very well by projecting child rights issues to the public through their various means, it will likely reduce the instances of parental sexual child abuse in the state. It is against this backdrop that this study wants to investigate the public perception of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse of children in Owerri metropolis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sexual abuse of children is a terrible issue that puts the emotional and mental health of the victims in grave danger. As a result, it has been connected to the emergence of numerous issues that have an impact on the victims' physical and mental health. The rising number of child abuse cases demonstrates a lack of awareness regarding prevention. With the increase of sexual abuse against children in Nigeria in recent years, one then questions what the mass media (radio) have done to **address the issue** through their programmes, as one of the functions of the media is to point out the ills happening in society with the intention of correcting them.

**It is very disturbing to see the high level of parental sexual abuse of their children in our contemporary society.** Could it be that these parents who seem to engage in this act of incest are

ignorant of the consequences of their act on their children, or that the programmes on child abuse are not effective in sensitising the public to the dangers attached to parental sexual abuse?

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to investigate public perception of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse on children. The specific objectives tend to:

1. Find out the level of awareness of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse by Owerri metropolis residents.
2. Ascertain the extent do exposure to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse enhance the knowledge of Owerri metropolis residents on issues concerning child abuse.
3. Examine the perception of Owerri metropolis residents of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse.
4. Ascertain the effectiveness of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse in influencing the behaviour of Owerri metropolis residents on issues of parental sexual abuse.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Sexual Abuse: An Overview**

When someone engages in unwanted sexual activity without the victim's consent, they are abusing them sexually and may use force, threaten them, or take advantage of them. The following are examples of unwelcome sexual behaviours that can be committed against a child: using them for sexual gratification and stimulation; using them in pornographic performances and related media; forcing them into prostitution; touching their privates; exhibitionism; rape, etc. Children can be sexually abused by their parents, siblings, stepmother, stepfather, half-siblings, teachers, neighbours, or total strangers (Finkelhor & Korbin, 2018; Karayel, 2018).

Sexual abuse encompasses both non-touching offences (exposing a kid to pornographic materials) and touching offences (fondling or sexual intercourse). It can also involve varied

degrees of mental stress and violence (Slavin et al., 2020; Alaggia et al., 2019). Among family members, including those in biological families, adoptive families, and stepfamilies, incestuous sexual abuse is the most often reported case type. Although mother-son, father-son, and sibling-sibling incest also happen, father-daughter relationships are the most common setting for incest to occur (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019). According to Davis and Knight (2019), there are instances where sexual abuse is perpetrated by other family members or carers, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and a parent's boyfriend or girlfriend.

Karayel (2018) observes that long-term behaviours and emotions in children can be impacted by sexual abuse. He lists the following effects of sexual abuse on children: low academic success; low self-esteem; loss of social competence; anxiety; depression; aggression; inappropriate sexual behaviour; crying uncontrollably; becoming introverted; and sexual and psychological disorders in later life.

### **The Consequence and Play School Programmes**

This is a weekly programme hosted by presenters and specialists, airing every Friday from 9 to 10am. The primary objective of this programme is to educate listeners about their legal rights and provide them with the opportunity to engage in discussions with legal professionals. This show examines women's rights, child rights, viewers' rights, and adults' rights. The programme also utilises x-rays to scrutinise individuals' daily activities in order to determine if they are violating the law, as well as to assess if the outcomes of their acts are in violation or compliance with the law. The primary organisers of this initiative are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Alliances for Africa and Lawyers.

This is a weekly programme hosted by presenters and children, airing every Saturday from 1 to 2 pm. The primary goal of this programme is to raise awareness among parents and

guardians who may be unaware of the detrimental effects that certain practices have on the mental, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. It aims to help them understand the emotional impact on children when they are denied opportunities or subjected to physical abuse, which is a violation of their rights as children. This programme provides children with the ability to express their perspectives, emotions, concepts, and daily life experiences. The discussion is around matters concerning children and their parents and caregivers. Parents gain insight into the emotional well-being of their children through this programme.

### **Media Role in Protection and Promotion of Child Rights**

Because the media is so effective at disseminating information, it actively participates in the protection and advancement of children's rights. According to Melkote and Steeves (2001), cited in Okoli and Orji (2020), the mass media can act as a catalyst for social change. They have a great deal of power, both positively and negatively. They can fight poverty and crime, advance democracy, good governance, peace, and human rights, educate the public about issues, and provide opportunities for participation in public discourse. According to Onyebuchi et al. (2023), the media is utilised to support the rights of marginalised groups and provide voice to them, including women and racial and religious minorities. For instance, the Child Protection Network in Imo State hosts a weekly radio program to inform the public about the importance of child protection and the need for them to report any instances of child abuse. According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (1996), cited by Okolie (2018), audio and audio-visual materials are crucial in bringing the convention's standards and principles to life. When it comes to keeping an eye on how children's rights are actually being implemented, the media can be quite helpful. They are potent because they effectively affect people's perceptions of themselves, their neighbours, their communities, and the wider globe, permeating every aspect of

contemporary society. Public opinion, professional solutions, and political reactions to the situations that children and young people find themselves in can all be positively impacted by media attention to child rights issues. According to Anyanwu et al. (2022), journalists are crucial in shaping our society's perception of what is "normal" and "deviant."

### **Empirical Review**

In their study, Mathoma et al. (2006) noted that the participants accepted that child sexual abuse was common in Botswana and Swaziland and further indicated that they were aware of the problem's causative factors, offenders, and consequences for the victims. In order to effectively stop the problem, they placed a strong emphasis on community involvement in the battle against child sexual abuse, adequate education of children, parents, families, and community members about the issue, and improvements to the laws that protect children from sexual abuse.

In spite of the spread of religion, sexual assault is on the rise in Nigeria, according to Ituma et al. (2013) study on the issue in the country's socioreligious community. Parents, the government, and religious organisations were urged to take more action to stop the abuse. For example, religious non-governmental organisations (NGOs) might stop the abuse by educating their members and the public about the risks of engaging in sexual assault. According to Ojiakor et al. (2020), an investigation revealed that a moderate amount of Imo State residents were aware of child abuse through Darling 107.3 FM, and that exposure to the station's "The consequence" program enhanced those residents' knowledge of the campaign against child abuse. Additionally, the program was effective in influencing Imo State residents' behaviour regarding child abuse. In their research, Uzochukwu et al. (2015) discovered that just six issues—three of which dealt with children's rights and protections—were covered by ABS radio, Purity FM, Silver Bird TV, and NTA out of all the stations under investigation. They pointed out that, despite the significant role

that children play in any country, the conclusion is that child rights and protections as well as child-related issues are not prominent in Nigerian broadcast media.

According to a study by Nwosu and Onyekwere (2017), a failing child development system may be the cause of some parents' chilly relationships with their kids, children's disobedience, and the rise in "Lumpen" kids (Almajiris, Area boys, and Militants) in Africa. According to the research, the degree of elasticity in the dynamic Nigerian family and child rights movement can either ensure or obstruct the African child's acceptable, healthy, and stable developmental process.

According to a research by Nkwam-Uwaoma and Ndukwu (2020), there is little coverage of violence against children in Nigerian publications. Once more, it was discovered that reports on child abuse were either too short or too large, that the few reports that did exist were biased towards the fight against child abuse, and that these publications did not prioritise reporting on child abuse. Egbo (2014) also discovered that tales about sexual violence are rarely given much attention in Nigerian press. This has been achieved by not featuring them on the front pages, the fact that sexual assault is not a common story in newspapers, and the fact that the chosen newspaper does not make extensive use of features to highlight tales about sexual violence. To do that, it might be necessary to examine the narratives' facts and add an emotional undertone in an effort to stir up public indignation against the issue.

According to a research by Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2021), participants acknowledged a moderate level of exposure to radio programs discussing child violence. Additionally, on average, 53% of participants believe that the programs have improved their understanding of child abuse issues to a moderate degree. Additional research revealed that, on average, 53% of

respondents agreed that the Mega Kid hour on Megaband 97.3 FM and Because I am Happy on Groove 98.1 FM are beneficial in the fight against child abuse in Imo State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Agenda Setting Theory put forth by Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs in 1972 served as the foundation for this investigation. According to the argument, because of their gatekeeping function, the mass media do not dictate what people think; rather, they tell them what they should think. From the emphasis and prominence of the topics in the media, it is clear that they determine and concentrate or divert public attention to subjects deemed more relevant. The theory on agenda setting by the media suggests that the public agenda, or the kinds of topics people discuss, think about, and worry about, is strongly shaped and directed by what the media decide what to publicise through their medium (Asemah et al., 2017a), citing Wimmer and Dominick (Etumnu et al., 2024). This implies that the subject of parental sexual abuse or child abuse will become the top concern for audiences if the media chooses to devote the most amount of time and attention to covering it. Coleman (2009) bases his theory on the idea that a topic or message that frequently appears in the media—like parental sexual abuse of children—becomes the public agenda for discussion, hence the term agenda setting.

The relevance of this theory to this study is based on the fact that the issue of parental sexual abuse in recent years has continued to re-occur in our society despite the extant laws prohibiting such. As this abuse occurs children are left traumatized throughout their lives which in the long run it will affect the society. Be that as it may, the media set this issue as a public agenda by constant reportage or coverage in order to create awareness of the danger associated to issues as this, to necessitate discourse on the way forward. This theory is relevant because it explains how the media will help reduce the issues of child abuse, as people will now know that

there are rights attached to children that need not to be violated no matter what through programmes on child abuse.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted survey method, which according to Asemah et al. (2017b), is a process of documenting current information for future use. The rationale for adopting the survey research design is based on the fact that survey enables a researcher to sample respondents' opinion or perception concerning any phenomenon that can later be generalized. This is supported by Etumnu et al. (2024b) where it was noted that survey describes the population been studied, and uses the questionnaire strategy to gather information regarding their opinions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the respondents.

### **Population of the Study**

According to (2023) Macrotrends.com report, Owerri metropolis projected population is 983,000. Therefore, the population of this study is 983,000.

### **Sample Size**

A sample was selected to represent the entire population of the areas studied. In achieving this, the Taro Yamane was used to obtain sample size of 400.

### **Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique used in this study is the multi stage sampling technique. The reason for this procedure was because multistage sampling technique enables the research to get to least person within the sample. Firstly, the researcher divided Owerri metropolis into 3 zones. These zones were selected because of their urban placement in catchment areas with abundant infrastructure that facilitated easy accessibility of population. The selected areas chosen are:

**Owerri North:** Emekuku, Uratta, Akwakuma, Amakohia, Alaenyi, Works Layout and Federal housing Egbu.

**Owerri West:** Umuguma, Federal housing Egbeada, Irete, Nekede, Obinze, Ihiagwa and Avu.

**Owerri Municipal:** Ikenegbu, New Owerri, World Bank, Aladinma and Owerri Nchi Ise.

Secondly, the communities were selected for the study. From each of the local governments, three communities were selected. They are Emekuku, Amakohia, Uratta (Owerri North), Umuguma, Ihiagwa, Nekede (Owerri West), Umuororonjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche (Owerri Municipal).

Thirdly, the communities selected were nine (9). Therefore, 400 (sample size) divided by 9 communities resulted to 44. This means that 44 persons were selected from each of the communities and studied.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The questionnaire was used to extract specific information from respondents by filling in the answers in the space provided for the purpose. The questionnaire was designed to have closed ended items. The closed ended questions restricts respondent to questions provided in the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of two parts the first part section “A” which was design to elicit the biographical data from respondents. While section “B” was designed in line with the research objectives. The questionnaire items were in form of likert item and nominal pattern.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher and his assistant distributed the copies of the questionnaire on a face-to-face basis. This method was used for easy retrieval of the copies of questionnaire. However, the respondents were given one week open window after which the researcher returned to collect the instrument. Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the respondents used in this study. They were informed that the research exercise was specifically for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary and were notified that at any point they are willing to opt out. Meanwhile, they were also informed that their identity will be kept confidential as the study is on sensitive issue.

### **Reliability/Validity of Instrument**

Validity is the ability of the research instrument to evaluate the concept it is set out to measure. It is the degree at which the survey information is relevant to the conclusions been drawn and sufficiently accurate to support the conclusion to be arrived at in the study. Based on this, copies the survey instruments, objectives, research questions and questionnaire were given to the project supervisor for face validation and correction.

This is the degree of consistency between two measures of the same thing. To guarantee the reliability of the research instrument in producing identical results when tried outside the original population of study, the Pilot study will be used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. To achieve this, the researcher distributed 20 copies of the questionnaire to respondents. The retrieved, questionnaire responses was computed using Pearson Product moment of correlation to check for consistency it was observed that the clarity of responses and ease with which answers were given indicates that the respondents understood the questions contained in the questionnaire. Therefore, the instrument was said to be reliable at 0.7.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected was analyzed using the descriptive statistics method such as simple percentages and mean analysis.

## Results

This section focuses on data presentation and analysis. From the 400 copies of questionnaire administered to respondents 362(90.5%) was found usable in this study meanwhile 38 (9.5%) was not valid for the study. Therefore, analysis was done in based on the valid copies of questionnaire returned.

**Table 1: Respondents' response on do you listen to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	362	100%
No	-	-
Can't say	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of data from the above table 1 revealed that 100% of the respondents listen to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse. This implies that all the respondents listen to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse.

**Table 2: Respondents' response on how often do you listen to programmes talking about child abuse**

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	95	26.2%
Often	110	30.4%
Rarely	133	36.7%
Not at all	24	6.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of data from the above table 2 revealed that 36%.7% of the respondents confirmed that they rarely listen to programmes talking about child abuse. This means that respondents rarely listen to programmes talking about child abuse.

**Table 3: Respondents’ response on the level at which you listen to programmes on parental sexual abuse**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very high level	12	3.3%
High level	45	12.4%
Moderate	165	45.6%
Low level	140	38.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of data from the above table 3 showed that 45.6% of the respondents listen to programmes on parental sexual abuse on a moderate level. By implication many of the respondents listen to programmes on parental abuse on a moderate level.

**Table 4: Respondents’ response on your exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has it made you to know the trauma a child will pass through if abused**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	175	48.3%
No	141	38.9%
Can’t say	46	12.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2021*

Analysis of data from the above table 4 revealed that 48.3% of the respondents confirmed that their exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has it made them know the trauma a child will pass through if abused. This means that exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has made respondents know the trauma a child will pass through if abused.

**Table 5: Respondents’ response on your exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has made you to know how not to touch a child**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	167	46.1%
No	89	24.5%
Can’t say	106	29.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of data from the above table 5 showed that 46.1% respondents confirmed that their exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has made them to know how **not to touch a child**. By implication, many of the respondents indicated that their exposure to programmes on parental sexual abuse has made them to know how not to touch **a child**.

**Table 6: Respondents' response on to what extent exposure to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has enhance your knowledge on issues concerning child abuse**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Very large extent	47	12.9%
Large extent	59	16.2%
Moderate extent	151	41.7%
Low extent	105	29.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of data from table 6 revealed that 41.7% of the respondents confirmed that the extent exposure to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has enhanced their knowledge moderately on issues concerning child abuse. This is indicative that many of the respondents have moderate knowledge on issue concerning parental sexual abuse as a result of their exposure.

**Table 7: Respondents' responses on the perception of Owerri metropolis residents of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Item Statement</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	radio programmes on parental sexual abuse is properly packaged	2.3	362	Reject
2.	programmes on parental sexual is aired at the right time so as to get many listener	2.4	362	Reject
3.	radio programmes on parental sexual abuse can influence parents positively?	2.1	362	Reject
<b>Grand mean</b>		<b>2.2</b>		

The results as presented in Table 7 above show that, respondents disagreed to all the items on the table with a mean range of 2.1 to 2.4. The grand mean rating of Table 7 is 2.2, which implies that respondents have negative perception on radio programmes on parental sexual abuse.

**Table 8: Respondents' responses on how effective does radio programmes on parental sexual abuse in influence the behaviour of Owerri metropolis residents on issues of parental sexual abuse?**

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{X}$	N	Decision
1.	Radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has made people report causes of parental sexual abuse	2.4	362	Reject
2.	Radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has contributed in making people condemn the act	2.6	362	Accept
3.	Radio programmes on parental sexual abuse on a child has helped in reducing the act by parents	2.3	362	Reject
4.	Radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has been effective in influencing the behaviour of residents towards the issue of parental sexual abuse	2.3	362	Reject
<b>Grand mean</b>		<b>2.4</b>		

The results in Table 8 above indicated that respondents disagreed to items 1, 3 and 4, while they agreed on item 2 with a mean range of 2.3 to 2.6. The grand mean rating of Table 8 is 2.4, which implies that the respondents studied confirmed that radio programmes on parental sexual abuse is not effective in influence the behaviour of Owerri metropolis residents on issues of parental sexual abuse.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Analysis of the data revealed that, on average, 70.5% of the respondents are moderately aware of radio programmes on parental sexual abuse in Owerri metropolis. This finding aligns with the findings of Uzochukwu et al. (2015), who found that since the media informs the public and raises awareness of national development issues, children—who will eventually become the nation's future leaders—should always be informed about and reminded of their fundamental rights, and issues that directly affect them should take centre stage in media coverage. Unfortunately, people's degree of awareness has increased as a result of the poor media coverage

of issues relating to children. In a similar vein, the Nkwam-Uwaoma and Ndukwu (2020) study found that there was little news coverage of child abuse in Nigerian newspapers. Once more, it was discovered that reports on child abuse were either too short or too large, that the few reports that did exist were biased towards the fight against child abuse, and that these publications did not prioritise the stories about child abuse. By implication, this inadequacy of the media gives room for a poor level of awareness of issues related to child abuse. This finding is supported by the agenda-setting theory.

Analysis revealed that, at an average of 45.3% of respondents, exposure to radio programmes on parental sexual abuse has enhanced their knowledge of issues concerning child abuse at a moderate level. This is in line with Egbo (2014), whose finding revealed that Nigerian newspapers do not give prominence to sexual violence stories. This they have done by not placing them on the front pages. Newspapers do not frequently report sexual violence. The selected newspapers do not amplify or utilise features in presenting sexual violence stories. Doing that could entail analysing the facts of the stories and injecting an emotional slant to precipitate a public outcry against the problem. This invariably means that the knowledge level of such ills in society will be low when the media does not give them prominence. In their study, it was revealed that the extent to which Imo State residents were exposed to child abuse through Darling 107.3 FM "The Consequence" programme was moderate at 40%; the extent to which exposure to Darling 107.3 FM "The Consequence" programme improved the knowledge of Imo State residents in the campaign against child abuse was moderate, and Darling 107.3 FM "The Consequence" programme improved the knowledge of Imo State residents in the campaign against child abuse was moderate. From a theoretical standpoint, this study was anchored on how media exposure will influence what people think about as it concerns child abuse.

The analysis of the data revealed that, at a mean of 2.2, the respondents have the following perceptions: radio programmes on parental sexual abuse are not properly packaged; programmes on parental sexual abuse are not aired at the right time so as to get many listeners; and radio programmes on parental sexual abuse do not influence parents positively. These perceptions could translate to being negative. The finding of Mathoma et al. (2006) revealed that the respondents acknowledged the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Botswana and Swaziland and further demonstrated their knowledge of the predisposing factors, perpetrators of the problem, and effects of sexual abuse on children. They placed major emphasis on community involvement in fighting against the problem; appropriate education of children, parents, families, and community members about child sexual abuse; and improvement of the laws that protect children against sexual abuse to successfully curb the problem. Nwosu and Onyekwere (2017) discovered that participants observed a lack of warmth in the interaction between certain parents and their children, disobedience among children, and the rise of marginalised children (such as Almajiris, Area boys, and Militants) in Africa, which may be attributed to a dysfunctional child development system. The research demonstrated that the extent of adaptability within the evolving Nigerian family, along with child rights advocacy, can either ensure or hinder a satisfactory, favourable, and steady developmental trajectory for the African child.

Analysis of the data revealed that a mean of 2.4 respondents confirmed that radio programmes on parental sexual abuse were not effective in influencing the behaviour of Owerri metropolis residents on issues of parental sexual abuse. Ituma et al. (2013) revealed that the upsurge in cases of sexual abuse in Nigeria has been aggravated by the silence exhibited by those sexually abused and the lackadaisical attitude shown by parents and the government in response to cases of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is on the increase in Nigeria, in spite of religious

proliferation. What this means is that if radio programmes or other broadcast media were effective, the rate at which parental sexual abuse occurs would be reduced. However, Ojiakor et al. (2020) revealed in their study that the Darling 107.3 FM "The Consequence" programme is effective in influencing Imo State residents' behaviour on issues of child abuse. **Based on empirical evidence as seen in the study** regarding the level of prominence given to issue of parental child abuse, it will be difficult to have a positive influence.

### **Conclusion**

We conclude that the issue of parental sexual abuse is a concern that should bother everyone in society because the future of any country lies with children. When these children are constantly being exposed to parental sexual abuse, society will be at the receiving end of the consequences, because any **sexually abused** child will definitely display some unacceptable behaviour in society. Based on the findings, it is safe to conclude that the extent of exposure and level of knowledge of programmes on parental sexual abuse could be contributing factors to the negative perception of this programme and, as such, lead to the ineffectiveness of the programme in **addressing the issue of parental** sexual abuse. This could be adduced as one of the reasons **the issue** is still lingering.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

1. Producers of programmes on child abuse should endeavour to create adequate awareness in order to raise the awareness of people towards programmes designed to handle the issues of child abuse.
2. Radio stations should make efforts to make their programmes, especially on child abuse awareness, rich in order to attract more audiences and enhance their knowledge of issues concerning child abuse.

3. Producers of programmes that focus on child abuse should enrich their content and schedule the programme at the appropriate time so as to attract a good number of listener and influence them positively.
4. Efforts should be made by radio stations and programme producers to make their programmes effective in curtailing the issue of child abuse in Imo State and, by extension, Nigeria.

### **Study implications**

Professionally, the findings of this study It will help radio programme creators or producers in providing useful information on the best way effectively engage the public on the persistent issue of child abuse and their rights mainly as it concern programme packaging, audience selection and programme time.

This study will be of immense important to government and non government organizations in charge of child right abuse because the statistics that this study will reveal will enable them to take necessary actions for the interest of the children.

Findings of this study will enhance the knowledge of the public on the existence of certain rights and laws established to guide the relationship between the parents or caregivers and the child. Not only that, it will equally arouse the consciousness of the public to the avoidance and prevention of things that have the tendency of leading to the abuse of children and also take appropriate measure in any case of abuse.

This study will add to the body of literature to the existing ones on child abuse issues and it will be a reference material for policy makers, law interpreters, scholars and students who may desire to undertake a study in similar area.

## **Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

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