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## Accounts, Excuses and Apologies of Juvenile Sexual Offenders in Selected Prisons in Lagos, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Indeed, appreciable number of researches has been conducted to facilitate relevant insights about the aetiology of child sexual offending in Nigeria; however, the understanding of the origins and causes of sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated against minors in the country remains rudimentary. This present study examined the psychosocial and psychosexual histories of offenders and presented the accounts, excuses and apologies of child sexual offenders. Drawing on the Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending (ITSO), explanations of adults' sexual attraction towards the underage, mode of operation and events leading to sexual abuse of the children were investigated. Qualitative analysis of official demographic and offence history data, and in-depth interviews of 29 purposively selected offenders in Ikoyi, Kirikiri Medium and Kirikiri Maximum Prisons, Lagos revealed that a combination of developmental experiences, biological processes, cultural norms, emotional arrest, psychological vulnerability, and sociological inadequacies are responsible for onset of abusive behaviour towards children. The excuses of the offenders for their abusive behaviour hinged on unfulfilled sexual needs, drug influence, ignorance of the law, impulse disorder, alcohol, senility, the urge to feel in control and powerful or the identification with young children as a result of arrested emotional development. The study concludes that the factors that accounts for child sexual abuse in Nigeria are multidimensional, hence, singular factorial theories may fail to effectively expose the aetiology of sexual abuse of the underage in the country. There is need for concerted efforts to be directed towards addressing the problem of objectification and sexual violence against children in the country.

**Key Words:** Accounts, Apologies, Excuses, Child Sexual Abuse, Juvenile Sex Offenders.

### Introduction

The aetiology of adult sexual offenses against the underage refers to the origins and causes of sexually abusive behaviour towards minors, which include the pathways that are connected

with behavioural development from the onset as well as maintenance. Though, for several years, questions have been asked about the causes of sexual offending (Aderinto, 2010; Banwari, 2011; Chinawa, Aronu, Chukwu, & Obu, 2013; Freund & Kuban, 2014; Garland & Dougher, 2014), they remain relevant today, primarily due to fact that definitive answers have been exceptionally hard to come by and new dimensions of sexual offending which involves the underage in recent times is equally begging for answers (Howitt, 2015; Graham, 2016; Aborisade & Shontan, 2017). While research has facilitated relevant insights about the aetiology of child sexual offending in Nigeria (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015; Manyike, Chinawa, Aniwada, Odutola, & Chinawa, 2015), our understanding of the origins and causes of sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated against minors remains rudimentary.

There appears to be a general agreement by researchers and practitioners that child sexual abuse leads to a wide range of symptomatology, psychological and behavioural problems which include but certainly not limited to: anxiety, depression (Eisenman, 2014), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Graham, 2016), fear, nightmares, avoidance, sexualised behaviours, somatic complaints, aggression, eating disorders, personality disorders, dissociation, and suicidal behaviours (see reviews by Ladd, 2012; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finekelhor, 2013; Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). Finkelhor (2012) an American psychologist, examined the traumatic effects of sexual abuse upon children. A major effect of child sexual abuse is what he referred to as traumatic sexualisation “the process in which a child’s sexuality (including both feelings and sexual attitudes) is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion.

Sexual victimisation of children is not a recent phenomenon; however, it was not until the 2000s that child sexual abuse assumed significant consideration as a social concern in Nigeria (Omorodion, 2004). Even as at this period, the increasing awareness of the prevalence and deleterious impact of child sexual abuse was in large part due to efforts of nongovernmental agencies who responded to constant reports on the news about the emerging social menace. Child sexual abuse in Nigeria is an offence under several sections of chapter 21 of the criminal code of the country with the age of consent being 18. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported in 2016 that one in four girls and one in ten boys in Nigeria had experienced sexual violence before they attain age 19 (Vanguard, 2017). Studies conducted in Nigeria reveal that young girls are victims in majority of sexual assault cases reported in hospitals. In a four year review of sexual assault cases conducted at Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) that covered 2008 to December, 2012, results indicated that out of a total 287 reported cases of sexual assault, 83% of the victims were below the age of 18 (Akinlusi, Rabi, Olawepo, Adewunmi, Ottun and Akinola, 2014). In a related study conducted at Enugu State University Teaching Hospital between 2012 and 2013, Ohayi (2015) reported that 70% of sexual assault victims were under the age of 18. In the Enugu survey, the perpetrators were known to majority of the victims and the assault mainly occurred inside uncompleted buildings and the residences of the victims and perpetrators.

There are quite a number of reasons why the aetiology of child sexual offending is of immense importance to criminological discourse. First, the development of effective prevention strategies is contingent on the possession of credible knowledge about the underlying causes of child sexual offending and victimisation (Aborisade & Shontan, 2017). In cases where sound aetiological knowledge is unavailable, prevention efforts are likely to be haphazard and inefficient. Second, understanding the causes can assist professionals manage sex offenders and also mitigate risks of child victims more effectively. In order words, knowledge about causes and pathways to offending is capable of providing relevant insights

into the characteristics of various sex offending behaviours and decreasing the chances of it persisting over time. Third, aetiological information is capable of facilitating quality discourse and informed decision making at the policy level, whether the discourse focus on sentencing, civil commitment, oversight in the community, or any criminal justice or societal response to juvenile sexual offending. In other words, knowledge about origins, causes, and pathways to juvenile sexual offending is capable of playing a critical role in the development and delivery of effective public safety strategies. Consequently, this present study examined the psychosocial and psychosexual histories of the offenders and presented the accounts, excuses and apologies of child sexual offenders.

### **Theoretical Orientation: Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory**

Marshall and Barbaree offered a model that is highly influential in explaining the development of sexually abusive behaviour. This powerful model was developed as a general theory of sexual offending and used to explain the onset of child sexual abuse in addition to other forms of sexual deviance. As their model put forward, an essential development task for adolescent males is to learn to discriminate between aggressive and sexual impulses. The key causal factors for child sexual offending as postulated by the theory has to do with a combination of factors which include development experiences, cultural norms, biological processes, and psychological vulnerability (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). Thereafter, there is a need to differentiate their responses to these impulses and control their aggressive tendencies during sexual experiences.

In their integrated theory, Marshall and Barbaree posited that the developmental experiences of psychopaths are very similar to those who sexually abuse children. They further argued that the key characteristic of psychopaths is their inability to respond to the emotions of others or empathise with them. As part of their propositions, they stated that early negative experiences in childhood (e.g., sexual abuse, neglect, physical abuse) cause children to view their caregivers as emotionally absent, and to see themselves as being unworthy to receive love or be protected. What results from this is the problem of low self-esteem, weak coping skills and poor interpersonal skills. The presence of misogynist and antisocial attitudes in the home can be aggravating factors leading to such behaviour. As the theory argue, if adolescent feel inadequate, they are more likely to be inclined to messages that elevate men to positions of power and dominance. As part of its main explanation, the theory put forward that sex meets a number of psychological needs that goes beyond sexual gratification. This may have to do with an increased sense of competence, personal connection and fulfilment, elevated self-esteem and a sense of achieving the ideal image of masculinity.

The suggestions put forward by Marshall and Barbaree point out that a main developmental task for adolescent boys is to understand the difference between aggression and sexual impulses. They further put forward the argument that this task is cumbersome as a result of the brain structure generating the two types of impulses. As a result, adult men may find it difficult to know when they are angry, sexually aroused, or both, and they must learn how to inhibit aggression in sexual situations. In providing empirical evidence to support Marshall and Barbaree's theory, Smallbone and Dadds (2000) found that insecure childhood attachment, in particular, parental attachment, can be connected to coercive sexual behaviour. Similarly, in his own study, Ward (2000) asserted that there are distinct and possibly competing offense pathways (e.g., early exposure to problematic relationship, unsuccessful relationships, negative consequences for masturbation, deviant sexual fantasies to boost self-esteem and a sense of power or worth) in the model.

These factors, in combination with the influx of hormones that the adolescence gets to experience, render the young male vulnerable to start-up some sex-offending behaviour. Situational factors that include social rejection, loneliness, or a loss of relationship may culminate into the adolescents or adults becoming involved in sexually abusive acts. As a person continued to be more vulnerable to committing a sexual offence, situational experiences that can trigger sexually aggressive behaviour becomes less intense (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990).

This theory was advanced to argue that vulnerabilities enumerated earlier usually interact with transitory environmental cues or circumstances to produce sexually abusive behaviour. As Marshall and Barbaree stated, men who happens to sexually abuse children might purposely create or encourage the development of these circumstances. These situational disinhibitors include substance and alcohol abuse, negative emotional states such as anxiety and anger, loneliness, and social rejection. Factors that appear to condone or encourage sexually abusive behaviour might also facilitate the overcoming of normal inhibitions. These factors include alienation from potential sexual partners, pornography, and anonymity.

### **Methodology**

#### **Settings for the Study**

The study was set to engage adult male offenders that were serving sentences in three purposively selected prisons in Lagos State. The key criterion for the selection of the prisons is based on their accommodation of awaiting trial and convicted inmates charged with sexually abusing children. These prisons are; Ikoyi Prison located on Akanbi Danmola Street, off Ribadu Road, Lagos Island; while Kirikiri Medium and Maximum Prisons, are both located in Apapa, Ajeromi/Ifelodun Lagos State. As at the time of the visit of the researcher (28<sup>th</sup> April-8<sup>th</sup> May, 2016), 2,270 inmates were at Ikoyi Prison, out of which 124 inmates (13 convicts and 111 ATMs) are for child sexual abuse, Kirikiri Medium Prison had 2,724 inmates out of which 46 (9 convicts and 37 ATMs) are for child sexual offenses, while there were 1,625 in Kirikiri Maximum Prison out of which only 7 (1 convict and 6 ATMs) are for child sexual abuse.

#### **Sampling Procedure**

With the assistance of prison officials, the inmates were approached individually and invited to participate in the study. Official demographic and offence history data were gathered and instrumental to the shortlisting of 132 prospective participants in the selected prisons. Of these, only 29 (22%) agreed to anonymously volunteer information for the study.

The study adopted purposive sampling technique to intentionally select inmates that are charged or convicted for sexually abusing children below the age of 15. Interviews were semi-structured and approximately one-hour long and were conducted within the months of April and May 2016. Interviewees were asked questions that bother on their sexual history, sexual offense, and accounts of events leading to sexual abuse towards girl-children. They were equally asked to volunteer information on the factors that led them to have sex with the children and if there is any excuse for their action.

#### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis of the interviews with the use of a qualitative software program (NVivo) was deployed. Content analysis has to do with the probing of content and themes of text to uncover both definitions contained in the text and those that emerge through the analysis (Krippendorff, 2012). Derivations of thematic categories are from both theoretical constructs

and the data they emerge from. In the first pass, we coded for theoretical themes, namely those global themes that we expected to find within the discourse of child sexual abuse. In the process of second pass of coding, we coded for themes that emanated from the content of the data. Table 1 provides examples of both predetermined codes and codes that emanated from the data.

**Table 1:** Themes and Codes

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>Predetermined codes</b>	Child Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts</li> <li>• Excuses</li> <li>• Apologies</li> </ul>
	Integrated Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situational factors</li> <li>• Development experience</li> <li>• Cultural norms</li> <li>• Psychological vulnerabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Emerging codes</b>	Male sexual offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offence history</li> <li>• Psychosocial</li> <li>• Psychosexual</li> </ul>
	Offender types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrafamiliar</li> <li>• Extrafamiliar</li> <li>• Mixed-types</li> </ul>

**Research Findings**

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Table 2 shows a fair diversity in the summarised socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Data on age, education, status in the prison and marital status were obtained from official report while the rest were obtained from offender self-report. The respondents are relatively young with majority of them (34.48%) between 26-30 years. Apart from six (20.69%) of the respondents that had no education, the rest of them have either primary or secondary education. The convicted respondents (62.07%) are more than awaiting trial respondents (37.93%) because more convicted inmates were willing to volunteer information and participate in the study as their case has been decided than those whose trial is still ongoing or yet to begin. Majority of the respondents (44.83%) and (37.93%) are resident in Kirikiri Medium and Ikoyi Prisons respectively as offenders of sexual abuse are seldom imprisoned in Kirikiri Maximum except it involves death of the victim. Meanwhile, most of the victims of sexual abuse which led to the arrest and subsequent imprisonment of the respondents are less than 12 years (68.97%). However, the marital status of the respondents shows that it may not be want of sexual partners that led the men to sexually abuse their victims as majority of them were married as at the time of committing the offense. The interviews were conducted primarily in English (and occasionally in Pidgin English and Yoruba).

**Table 2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<i>Variable</i>		<i>N=29</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<b>Age (in years)</b>	<25	5	17.24
	26-30	10	34.48
	31-35	6	20.69
	36-40	4	13.79
	41-45	2	6.90
	46-50	1	3.45
	>51	1	3.45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>	No education	6	20.69
	Primary education	12	41.38
	Secondary	10	34.48
	Post-Secondary	1	3.45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Status in the Prison</b>	Awaiting Trial Prisoners	11	37.93
	Convicted Prisoners	18	62.07
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Prison facilities</b>	Ikoyi Prison	11	37.93
	Kirikiri Medium Prison	13	44.83
	Kirikiri Maximum Prison	5	17.24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age of Victims (as at the time of the abuse)</b>	<5	3	10.35
	6-8	11	37.93
	9-11	6	20.69
	12-14	5	17.24
	15	4	13.79
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	16	59.26
	Divorced	4	3.70
	Separated	7	11.11
	Widower	2	25.93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

### **The Psychosocial and Psychosexual Histories of the Offenders**

In order to examine the factors relating to the onset of the abusive behaviour, the respondents were requested to provide details of their psychosocial and psychosexual experiences from childhood to adulthood. Table 3 shows a summary of selected official and self-reported data relating to sexual histories of the respondents.

**Table 3:** Sexual histories of the offenders

Variable		N=29	Percentage (%)
<b>Sexually Abused as a Child?</b>	Yes	4	13.79
	No	23	79.31
	I don't know	2	6.90
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation (to adult)</b>	Heterosexual (Straight)	24	82.75
	Bisexual	3	10.35
	Homosexual	1	3.45
	Asexual	1	3.45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Child Sexual Offender Type</b>	Intrafamilial offenders	19	65.52
	Extrafamilial offenders	4	13.79
	Mixed-type offenders	6	20.69
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
		<b>Mean</b>	
<b>Child Sexual Offence History (Mean Age-Years)</b>	First sexual contact with a child	22.1	
	Last sexual contact with a child	27.3	
	First sentenced for any offence	21.2	
	Sentenced for current offence	26.4	

The table shows that a substantial majority of the offenders were never victims of sexual abuse in their growing up years, as only four (13.79%) of them suffered sexual abuse as a child. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of the offenders reported an exclusively heterogeneous orientation. Based on the responses obtained from the participants, they were grouped into three mutually exclusive categories; 19 (65.52%) Intrafamilial offenders- (those who had their child sexual abuse committed within family setting); 4 (13.79%) Extrafamilial offenders - (those who had their child sexual abuse committed only outside family setting); and 6 (20.69%); Mixed-type offenders- (those who had committed acts of child sexual abuse both within and outside family settings). According to the self-reported data of the respondents, the mean age of the offenders when they had sexual contact with a child was 22.1 years (range: 19 to 53 years) while 21.2 years (range: 21 to 56 years) was their mean age at first sentence for the crime. This depicts that substantial majority of them (65.52%) were not arrested as at the first time they committed the offence. This is further supported by the mean age of offenders in their current infraction which stood at 26.4. Official record shows that only one of the participants of the study has been diagnosed with paedophilia.

In further probe, almost half of the respondents (44.83%) had knowledge of other child sexual offenders prior to their first sexual contact with a child and being charged with child sexual offence. However, only six (20.69%) of them had talked to other child sexual offenders about

the act before they went ahead to have their first sexual contact with a child. None of the offenders reported that their first sexual experience was with a child as an adult. Though, a substantial majority of them (65.52%) had their first sexual experience as underage with partners who were also below the age of consent.

#### **Accounts and Excuses of Perpetrators on Motives and Events Leading to Sexual Abuse of Children**

The study moved to extract information from the interviewees on events leading to their sexually abusive behaviour towards their victims. This is especially important since only one of the respondents has diagnosable paedophilia; therefore, the motives of the other offenders will be largely non-medical. On the account of what informed their sexual desires and impulses toward children, an overwhelming majority of 17 (58.62%) stated "I did not know what I was doing." In the words of one of them who sexually assaulted a 5 year old daughter of his girlfriend:

I did not know what came over me, the girl usually wait for her mother in my house, that very day my girlfriend went out and left the girl with me and I do not know how I just grabbed her and raped her. I don't know what came over me...

Respondent J/26 years old/Kirikiri Medium Prison

Meanwhile, four (13.79%) of them attributed it to state of drunkenness from high alcoholic consumption, three (10.35%) claimed ignorance of the law on age of consent and stated that they were actually 'dating' the girls. In one of such submissions, a 39 year old driver charged with having sexual intercourse with a 13 year old girl had this to say:

The girl sells gala around my area and I have been looking at her for some time. Eventually, we starting dating and she normally comes to my house to cook for me. That very day, she came and said she needs assistance for accommodation because her family members were making life miserable for her, she actually said she would like to stay with me but I told her "no" because I cannot just accommodate her without her families' knowledge but I allowed her spend the night and we had sex...

Respondent A/39 years old/Kirikiri Medium Prison

Two (6.90%) of them blamed their victims for sexually seducing them. A security man who was convicted for sexually abusing a 7 year old girl volunteered:

I got back from work that very day, It was on a Friday, then laid on the couch when the girl started playing with me and she started playing with my penis. I could not control myself, I did not know when I started fingering her and I just took my clothes and her clothes off and I did it. Though she was crying but I could not control myself...I was aroused and she was the one who even came to me and I couldn't control it. She's my girlfriend's daughter

Respondent A/30 years old/Ikoyi Prison

One (3.45%) attributed it spiritual machinations stating he was under a spell cast on him by his family members, another one was influenced by his friends who took advantage of a drunk 13 years old girl and gang raped her, while the final respondent resorted to having sex with a 9 years old daughter of his girlfriend since the mother, who he was in a relationship with has been denying him sex.

### **Apologies offered by Offenders and Resolutions Adopted to Deal with Future Temptations**

In a bid to examine offenders' level of realisation of the impact of the offense committed on their children victims, and assess the resolve of the offenders to resist future temptations to commit similar crime, the respondents were asked how apologetic they are in respect of their sexual crimes against the underage. Twenty-seven out of the 29 respondents rendered their apologies and expressed remorse for the actions leading to their incarceration. The apologies of the respondents were hinged on their realisation of the psychological trauma and social stigma that their victims have been exposed to by their actions. Two of them volunteered:

I am really sorry about it because I realized that I have spoilt the girl's life in a way and she can never be the same again (psychologically), besides, if she was my daughter, I will not listen to anyone's plea.

Respondent A/30 years old/Ikoyi Prison

I am very sorry for what I did, I was sorry the moment I penetrated and the girl screamed because her screams gave me a sense of reasoning and I am sorry because I know I did a very bad thing.

Respondent H/46 years old/Kirikiri Medium Prison

However, some apologies were premised more on their unfavourable prison conditions than the acts they committed that brought them into the total institution. The pains of prison punishment and the implications that it will have on the welfare of their children were part of the factors that informed the apologies of eight of the apologetic twenty-seven respondents.

Yes!! I am sorry for my actions because until the court said it was child assault I did not see it as that so now I feel I'm suffering for something I did not do and there is no one to pay my wife and children school fees, out there and no one to take care of them. I would not have dated her if I knew.

Respondent D/36 years old/Ikoyi Prison

Another respondent who as a driver (34year old) is in prison for sexually abusing the daughter (13 years old) of his employer stated: "the temptation to date anyone below 18 years cannot occur again because I won't want to come back here."

On the other hand, two of them were unapologetic, insisting that they see nothing wrong in their relationship with their victims. One of them affirmed:

She was my girlfriend so I did not rape her, it was mutual. It's the law that said I raped her. I'm not sorry for having sex with her because he was my girlfriend the only thing is that I regret not informing her family members about the relationship. Nevertheless, if I come out of this place, I can still marry her if she is willing and her family members are willing.

Respondent A/39 years old/Kirikiri Medium Prison

In respect of the strategies they hope to adopt to forestall a reoccurrence of perpetrating such abuse, the respondents provided their resolutions and plans to address future temptations if it comes. Their strategies include avoiding time-alone with girl-children, doing away with drugs and other stimulants, fortifying themselves against spiritual manipulations, making valid enquiries about age before getting into sexual relationship, avoiding bad companies among others. One of the respondents offered:

God forbid I get tempted to do so again. Normally, I will not do that if not for the effect of alcohol and Indian hemp mixed together. I will never take alcohol again so the temptation cannot arise again. I really seek God's forgiveness.

Respondent C/39 years old/Ikoyi Prison

A 34 year old electrician who assaulted a year six month old baby also volunteered: "It can't happen to me again because I will be very careful with playing with children or even going near them, even mine."

### Discussions

The outcome of this study critically engages theoretical postulations that offenders of child sexual abuse are usually victims of such abuse in their childhood (Bowlby, 1988; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Seidman, Hudson, & Robertson, 1994; Briggs & Hawkins, 1996). Findings of this present study in respect of the psychosocial and psychosexual experiences of the respondents from childhood to adulthood indicate that onset of abusive behaviour is not a factor of childhood sexual abusive experiences. This finding is also at variance with the position of personality theories on the etiological explanations for child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1984; Leguizamo, 2002; Travis, 2003), as evidence from the study does not support that sexual deviance is an expression of the unresolved problems experienced during the early stages of an individual's development. However, this is by no means an attempt to diminish the relevance of personality theories in accounting for parts of the reasons why adults sexually abuse children. Rather, it is to advance the explanations provided and pinpoint other germane factors that are responsible for the abusive behaviour.

Findings on the accounts of the offenders on their abusive behaviour towards the underage lend credence to the adoption of integrated theory as a number of psychosocial factors were discovered to be responsible for child sexual abuse. The study found that a combination of developmental experiences, biological processes, cultural norms, emotional arrest, psychological vulnerability, and sociological inadequacies are responsible for onset of abusive behaviour of subjects of this research in consonance with the position of integrated theorists (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). Though, majority of the participants claimed that they acted on impulse, however, further probe revealed that the abusive acts were largely premeditated. The accounts of majority of the offenders suggest that they were sexually aroused by their child-victims and were able to overcome personal inhibitions to take advantage of the children when the opportunity beckoned. The accounts of the offenders also support the postulations of Finkelhor (2012) that motivational factors that underlie sexual abuse of children include emotional congruence, sexual arousal, and the fact that some individuals are blocked from meeting their emotional and sexual needs in prosocial ways.

From the excuses provided by the respondents, it is evident that unfulfilled sexual needs, drug influence, ignorance of the law, impulse disorder, alcohol, senility, the urge to feel in control and powerful or the identification with young children as a result of arrested emotional development were responsible for the abusive behaviour of the offenders. Ward & Hudson (2001) asserted that men are generally socialised to prefer sexual experiences with partners that are smaller, weaker and younger and this may also increase the likelihood for potential abusers to be motivated to sexually offend children. In what they referred to as blockage, Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Hamby (2012) advanced Ward & Hudson's assertion by stating that individuals that are unable to meet their sexual and emotional needs in acceptable ways due to a number of reasons like fear of adult females, inadequate social skills, castration anxiety and mental problem may be highly vulnerable to sexually abuse children.

The positions of Marshall & Barbaree (1990), Ward & Hudson (2001), and Finkelhor *et al.* (2012) were substantiated with the apologies rendered by the offenders on the gravity of the sexual offense committed against the children. The first-time offenders largely submitted that they experienced emotional arrest at the time of the abusive acts while repeated offenders expressed that the docility of the child-victims accounts for their continuous abusive behaviour towards their victims. The findings of the study shows that majority of the abusers are opportunistic offenders who took advantage of being in position of trust that present them with the chance to abuse a child. However, all the offenders expressed fair knowledge on the consequences of their abusive behaviours on the immediate and future psychosocial wellbeing of their victims. Their apologetic expression and volunteering ways of avoiding reoccurrence of such behaviour has implications for punitive and corrective measures for the incarcerated offenders.

### Conclusion

It is evident that child sexual abuse has increased dramatically within Nigerian society in recent times in spite of government's seemingly lukewarm attitude towards addressing the scourge. It is indeed concluded that the factors that accounts for child sexual abuse within the Nigerian social environment are multidimensional, hence, singular factorial theories that explain the phenomenon of child sexual abuse may not be able to do effective justice in exposing the aetiology of sexual abuse of the underage in the country. As a result, this study reinforces the need for eclectic approaches in engaging theories that effectively explain the sexual abuse of children in Nigeria.

The findings of this study suggest a number of implications for policy and practice in preventing, investigating and treating cases of child sexual abuse in the country. Indeed, there is need for concerted efforts to be directed towards addressing the problem of objectification and sexual violence against children in the country. Given the perpetrators' feelings of emotional arrest, use of children as sex objects, externalisation of blame to position themselves as having no agency in the abuse, the idea that children can be given the status of women when it suits some men, and transfer of anger from women to children through child sexual abuse for revenge, it is pertinent to argue that although sexual gratification contributes to child sexual abuse, the need for power and control is the dominant excuse of this group of offenders. Consequently, public education campaigns should be promoted to expose the danger of providing opportunity for abusers to take advantage of young children to satisfy their sexual needs. From the modus operandi of the offenders, it is evident that *positive* parenting will go a long way to prevent children falling victim of abuse. Awareness should also be created amongst children of antics of potential offenders and be taught self-protective strategies to keep them safe.

This study submitted that there is a dire need for further research to be conducted in exploring and exposing the trends and patterns of sexual assault of the underage in Nigeria. A broader approach at reconceptualising child sexual offending would enable a considerable body of knowledge and expertise focus on developing literature on prevention and treatment of the offenders on this important social menace.

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