

## **Investigation of administrative Strategies for safeguarding Students against Child-abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State**

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### **Abstract**

*Child abuse poses a serious threat to the safety, well-being, and academic development of students in secondary schools. This study investigates administrative strategies for safeguarding students against child abuse in secondary schools in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, targeting school principals, vice-principals, and teachers. A sample of 319 respondents was used as sample of the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentage. The study found that administrative strategies such as the enforcement of child-protection policies, regular supervision, staff training on child rights, guidance and counseling services, and collaboration with parents and relevant agencies are effective administrative strategies for safeguarding students against child abuse in Sokoto State. However, challenges including inadequate training, limited resources, and low awareness hinder effective implementation. The study concludes that strong administrative commitment and effective policy implementation are essential for ensuring a safe school environment. It recommends continuous capacity-building for school administrators and improved collaboration with stakeholders to enhance the protection of students against child abuse in secondary schools in Sokoto State.*

**Keywords:** Investigation, Administrative strategies, Child abuse, Safeguarding, Secondary schools

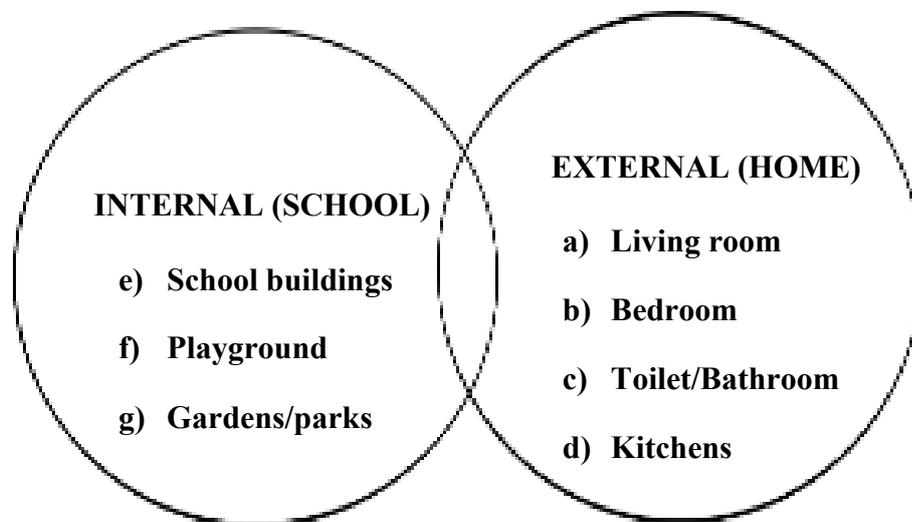
## **Introduction**

Child abuse has long been a source of concern for many countries around the world, as it is thought to have serious societal effects. Child abuse is widespread in advanced European, North American, and rich Asian countries, as well as in underdeveloped African countries such as Nigeria. As a result of this problem, a vast number of media outlets, researchers, and people from all walks of life have been striving to explain and investigate the subject of child abuse, with a focus on the causes and solutions. According to the an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. This is a widely accepted definition of a child, and it comes from an international legal organization that is recognized by the majority of countries globally. A "child" is defined in Section 277 of the Child Rights Act of 2003 as "any person under the age of eighteen (UNICEF 2014)

Children provide enlightenment and excitement to their families and people around them. Children will play an essential role in their community as future leaders when they grow older. Despite the joy of having a child, many are victims of abuse. Because of their diminutive stature, posture, and mental capacities, they are easy targets for abuse, and these abuses also commonly happen in schools. Interestingly, these claims are supported by statistics. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2014) in its report explained that one in four girls and one in ten boys in Nigeria had experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. In addition, six out of ten children in Nigeria experience emotional, physical, or sexual abuse before the age of 18, with many experiencing physical violence (UNICEF, 2017).

Adelowo, (2021). reported that families in Benue and Plateau states are offering their children to be trafficked for cheap labor in Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, Kwara, Ondo, and Edo states, among others. With over 10, 000 children taken out as child laborers from Benue State yearly. In addition, Solomon (2021) reported that a 12-year-old child was allegedly locked up in a room by her guardian for eight months in the Dadin Kowa Restaurant area in Sokoto, the state capital. Also Kanayo and Isah (2021) report the case of 12-year-old girl, who was gang-raped by seven men who lived together in her mother's neighborhood in Panama, a suburb of Sokoto town, she was forced to drop out of secondary school due to trauma and the fear of being stigmatized by her schoolmates.

In Nigeria, child abuse has become a common occurrence. Abuse can occur at any time and in any location where children are present. As cited in Charity, (2020). children at school can be abused in the classrooms, offices, playgrounds, hostels, staff quarters, inside toilets, bathrooms, laundry rooms, common rooms, storerooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries, car parks, lecture theaters, corridors, and even bus stops. They are abused in school by the people they trusted, which includes their teachers, support staff, classmates, senior students, and even sometimes, school administrators are involved in the act. This is not to say that children are only internally abused (at home or in the community). At home, children can be abused by unsuspecting family members, close relatives, foster parents, siblings, home maids, gardeners, drivers, and security men. This scenario is depicted in the figure 1.



**Figure1:** Places Where Child Abuse OccursSource: Adapted from Charity, (2020).

Children have specific rights that must be preserved and not infringed upon or denied to carry out these responsibilities. Human rights, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, UNICEF, and the African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) have all teamed up to advocate for the protection of children's rights and well-being.

### **Statement of the Problem**

School administrators are expected to be so vast in all aspects of knowledge and apply them to efficiently run their schools so as to be fair to the system, teachers and students and ensure credible delivery of knowledge, skills and behaviours to students. However, Chen, & Chen, D, (2017). observed different forms of student harassments in secondary schools in Sokoto State ranging from seniority, sexual harassment in both girls and boys schools, deprivation of students rights to learning, among others. The Sokoto state Ministry of Education, school administrators, Civil Society Organizations, have been making efforts to ensure safe and secured environment for students to learn without any form of abuse among themselves and between students and teachers (Musa, 2021).

Upon all these efforts the problem of students abuses by teachers and among students persisted in the schools, it seems like students abuse is always increasing in Sokoto State. If adequate and sustainable measures are not taken to end students harassment in these schools, this may results in increasing indiscipline in the society, students will not have rest of mind to learn, schools will have very poor image to the society and it may affect enrollment more specially girl child education. It is against the above background that, the researchers intended to investigate the Administrative Strategies used by School Administrators for Safeguarding Against Child Abuse in Secondary School in Sokoto State. Series of studies were conducted on school administration and child abuse, but no one was found exactly as the current study in Sokoto state or any of the Northern Nigerian States based on the searches made by the researcher so far. These are some of the reasons for carrying out this research to fill the gap and revitalize school administration to ensure safe educational delivery across Sokoto state.

### **Objective of the study**

The following objectives were developed to guide the Investigation of Administrative Strategies for Safeguarding Students Against Child-Abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.

- i. Verify Sokoto State secondary school administrators' knowledge of school administration on child abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.

- ii. Investigate the Sokoto State secondary school administrators' awareness of students' abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.
- iii. Explore the various administrative strategies for safeguarding students against child abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.

### **Research question**

Based on the problems under investigation, the following questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study:

- i. Did Sokoto State secondary school administrators' have knowledge of school administration on child abuse
- ii. What is the level of Awareness of the Causes of Child Abuse among school administrators in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.
- iii. What are the Administrative Strategies for Safeguarding children Against Child Abuse in Senior Secondary School in Sokoto State.

As there were many studies conducted by different researchers on the field, the following empirical studies are reviewed with a view to unfolding the gaps which the present study would seek to address. Child abuse or maltreatment is any kind of physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by parent or caregiver (Sunday, & Funmi, (2019) Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child, and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools or communities in which the child interacts.

Child abuse as "all types of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, regulatory offence, neglect or negligent treatment or industrial or different exploitation, resulting in actual or potential damage to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses the term child abuse to refer to both acts of commission (abuse), that embody "words or naked actions that cause harm, potential harm, or threat of harm to a child", and acts of omission (neglect), meaning "the failure to

provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from damage or potential damage (Afolabi, 2020).

The theoretical framework that guided the study is the self control theory is also used to guide this research. According to Obioha, (2017). low self-control is not indicated by socialization or a learned behavior but by the absence of nurturance, discipline, or training from a parent or care-taker. Child maltreatment that occurs because of poor parenting can hinder the development of self-control in a child and, as a result, can possibly cause delinquency in adolescence and adult-hood (Solomon, 2021). He also established three minimum conditions that are necessary for proper parenting, which can affect an individual's self-control:

- i. Nurturing a child (attachment),
- ii. Watching a child (governance)
- iii. Acknowledging and punishing delinquent behavior (discipline)

## Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 46 secondary school principals and 11432 students in Sokoto stat.. A sample of 319 respondents including principals and students were used as sample of the study. Questionnaire adopted from (Casteix, 2015) was used as instrument to collect the data. Purposive random sampling technique was used to collect the data. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the collected data technique as shown in the table below.

**Table 1:** Population of the study

S/N	Education Zone	Principal	Teachers	SS II Students	P.T.A. Members	Total
	Sokoto North Education Zone	19	484	5989	133	6625
	Bodinga Education Zone	16	255	3562	112	3945
	Yabo Education Zone	11	198	1881	77	2167
	Total	46	937	11432	322	12737

Source: Ministry for Basic and Secondary Education Sokoto, Ministry for Science and Technical Education Sokoto, Sokoto State Teachers Service Board (2019).

A multistage sampling technique would be used to obtain a representative sample for the study. First the study used research advisor (2006) to select 370 out of the total population of 12,737. Convenient Sampling technique would be used to determine the sample size of principals, while purposive sampling technique would be used to determine the sample size of teachers' students and P.T.A Members. Therefore, the total sample size for the study is 370, comprising 12 principals, 27 teachers, 9PTA members and 322 students.

**Table 2:** Sample for the study

S/N	Respondent	population	Sample
	Zone		
1.	Sokoto North	Principals	4
		Teachers	14
		P.T.A Member	4
		Students	171
2.	Bodinga	Principals	4
		Teachers	7
		P.T.A Members	3
		Students	100
3.	Yabo	Principals	4
		Teachers	6
		P.T.A Members	2
		Students	51
	Total	12737	319

Source: Ministry for Basic and Secondary Education Sokoto, Ministry for Science and Technical Education Sokoto, Sokoto state Teachers Service Board (2019)

## Results

**Table 3.** Frequency Distribution of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	219	68.7
Female	100	31.3
Total	319	100.0

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that 219 (68.7%) respondents were male while 100(31.3 %) were female. This indicates that the greater percentage of the respondents were males.

The analysis of the data was done based on the research questions that guided the study.

**Research Question One:** Did Sokoto State secondary school administrators’ have knowledge of school administration on child abuse.

To answer our research question one, was sorted according to gender, and analysed using simple frequency and percentage as presented in the table below.

**Table 4:** Responses on the Knowledge of School Administration on Child Abuse

Item	Statement	4	3	2	1	Remark
1	I understand the concept of child abuse and its forms.	191 (59.9)	90 (28.2)	14 (4.4)	24 (7.5)	Fully knowledgeable
2	I am aware of laws and policies protecting children in schools.	191 (59.9)	96 (30.1)	15 (4.7)	17 (5.3)	Fully knowledgeable
3	School administrators have a responsibility to prevent child abuse.	162 (50.8)	96 (30.1)	24 (7.5)	37 (11.6)	Fully knowledgeable
4	I can identify signs and symptoms of child abuse among students.	119 (37.3)	170 (53.3)	19 (6.0)	11 (3.4)	Knowledgeable
5	Knowledge of child protection improves school safety.	100 (31.3)	174 (54.5)	23 (7.2)	22 (6.9)	Knowledgeable

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

From Table 4, it is observed that 191 representing 60% of the respondent was fully aware of the knowledge of administration on child abuse and 162 representing 54.8% were also fully knowledgeable while 170 representing 53.2% are aware child abuse of use for teaching in tertiary institutions. 33 representing 10.3% of the respondent were not fully knowledgeable. In the same vein, 24 or 7.5% and 17 or 5.3% of the respondent were not knowledgeable in Sokoto state, Also 119 representing 37.3% were also fully knowledgeable of in the same vein 100 representing 31.3%, were also knowledgeable. 78 representing 24.5% and 111 representing 34.8% were all fully aware from the results, it was observed that the majority of the respondents agreed with the knowledge-ability. This is because a larger

percentage of the respondents in Table 3, chose fully knowledgeable options in the questionnaire.

### **Research Question Two:** What is the level of Awareness of the Causes of Child Abuse

To answer the above research question, the data collected was analyzed using simple percentage and frequency it was presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 5:** Responses on the Awareness of the Causes of Child Abuse

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	Remark
1	Poor home background contributes to child abuse.	202 (63.3)	38 (11.9)	62 (19.4)	17 (5.3)	Fully aware
2	Poverty is a major cause of child abuse among students.	168 (52.7)	38 (11.9)	96 (30.1)	17 (5.3)	Fully aware
3	Lack of parental care increases the risk of child abuse	175 (54.9)	28 (8.8)	100 (31.3)	16 (5.0)	Fully aware
4	Cultural practices can contribute to child abuse.	155 (48.6)	45 (14.1)	108 (33.9)	11 (3.4)	Fully aware
5	Poor school supervision can expose students to abuse.	120 (37.6)	60 (18.8)	126 (39.5)	13 (4.1)	Aware

From Table 5, From the results, it was observed that majority of the respondents were fully aware. This is because the larger percentage of the respondents in Table 3 selected fully aware in the questionnaire. In addition, the majority of the respondents 202 representing 63.3% choose fully aware and 168 or 52.7% were also fully aware about the causes of child abuse. On the other 17 representing 53% of the respondents are not aware, in the same vein 175 representing 54.9%, 155 representing 48.6%, 120 representing 37.6% were all fully aware to use podcast for teaching in tertiary institution in Sokoto state. From table 3, it was observed that majority of the respondent representing the higher percentage indicated their level of awareness about the causes of child abuse.

### **Research Question Three:** What are the Administrative Strategies for Safeguarding Against Child Abuse

To answer our research question three, Administrative Strategies for Safeguarding Against Child Abuse the data collected was analysed using simple percentage and frequency count as presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6:** Administrative Strategies for Safeguarding Against Child Abuse.

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Remark
1	The school has clear policies against child abuse.	232 (72.7)	80 (52.1)	4 (1.3)	3 (0.9)	Strongly agree
2	Teachers are trained on child protection and safeguarding.	223 (69.9)	83 (26.0)	9 (2.8)	4 (1.3)	Strongly agree
3	Students are encouraged to report abuse cases.	187 (58.6)	114 (35.7)	14 (4.4)	4 (1.3)	Strongly agree
4	Reported cases are handled promptly by school management.	176 (55.2)	131 (41.1)	10 (3.1)	2 (0.6)	Strongly agree
5	Guidance and counseling services help prevent child abuse.	129 (40.4)	170 (53.3)	18 (5.6)	2 (0.6)	Agree
6	Regular supervision of staff reduces child abuse incidents.	115 (36.1)	177 (55.5)	22 (6.9)	5 (1.6)	Agree
7	Parents are involved in child protection activities.	132 (41.4)	166 (52.0)	17 (5.3)	4 (1.3)	Agree

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

From Table 6 above, it was observed that 232 representing 72.7% of the respondent do strongly agree that The school should have a clear policies against child abuse. and 223 or 69.9% are also of the opinion that Teachers are trained on child protection and safeguarding. On the other hand, 80 or 52.1% do agree and 4 or 1.3% disagree and 2 or 0.6% of the respondent strongly disagree that the above items in question.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the administrative Strategies used by school principals for safeguarding Child-abuse in Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto State. The first research question (Did Sokoto State secondary school administrators' have knowledge of school administration on child abuse) found that majority of the school administrators in Sokoto state have administrative knowledge on child abuse. This could be associated with the professional foundation courses in the teacher education programmes in Nigeria. This finding was found in disagreement with the findings of (Solomon 2021) who found that some that some of the school administrators

in Plateau state don't have administrative knowledge for protecting students from child abuse in schools.

reported that families in Benue and Plateau states are offering their children to be trafficked for cheap labor in Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, Kwara, Ondo, and Edo states, among others. With over 10, 000 children taken out as child laborers from Benue State yearly. In addition, Solomon (2021) reported that a 12-year-old child was allegedly locked up in a room by her guardian for eight months in the Dadin Kowa Restaurant area in Sokoto, the state capital. Also Kanayo and Isah (2021) report the case of 12-year-old girl, who was gang-raped by seven men who lived together in her mother's neighborhood in Panama, a suburb of Sokoto town, she was forced to drop out of secondary school due to trauma and the fear of being stigmatized by her schoolmates.

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## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it is concluded that:

- i. Child abuse remains a significant concern in secondary schools within Sokoto State, manifesting in physical, emotional, and neglectful forms.
- ii. Administrative strategies exist but vary widely in quality, consistency and effectiveness.
- iii. Capacity gaps and contextual challenges significantly hinder child protection efforts.

- iv. Sustainable safeguarding demands comprehensive policy implementation, adequate resources, continuous training, and community involvement.

In essence, administrative strategies can only be effective if embedded within a wider supportive system that includes government oversight, community partnership, and stakeholder accountability.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Sokoto state ministry of education should be organizing annual workshop for all its teachers on how to safeguard students and how to report a case of molestation.
- ii. School administrators in Sokoto state should be trained by the state ministry of education on child protection laws and principles to ensure uniformity in the schools administration.
- iii. The child protection experts and NGOs should also collaborate with the ministry of education to fill in the capacity gap that exist in child protection among teachers and school administrators

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