

The Domestication of Child Protection Policy and Laws and its Implication in Teaching of Primary School Children

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the domestication of child protection policy and laws, and its implication on teaching primary school children. The study was carried out at Plateau State Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. The population for the study was 306, 716 respondents while the sample size for the study was 240 primary school teachers. The teachers were randomly selected from the target population. The simple random sampling technique was used for the choice of the sample. A structured questionnaire titled Investigating the Domestication of Child Protection Policy and Laws in Primary School Questionnaire (IDCPPLSQ) and focus group discussion was used for collecting data. The questionnaires were collected on the spot by the trained research assistants. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the use of mean, standard deviation, and simple percentage. The study revealed among others that teachers are aware of the child protection policy and the implication of the domestication of the policy in the study area. The study further revealed the challenges faced in the protecting children from harmful practices among others. Some recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords; domestication, child, protection, policy, laws, teaching, primary school and children.

INTRODUCTION

Domestication means any administrative decision that is directly related to all issues and activities within a nation's border. The domestication of the Child Right Act (CRA) which seeks to address a wide range of violations of children's rights particularly in critical aspects of their development in education, health, welfare, general well-being and the right of life. This has been a cause of concern for Nigeria. Whenever any country ratifies the convention, it means they have agreed to review the laws relating to children. Government has a responsibility to take all available measures to ensure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. They are also expected to take all necessary steps to ensure that the minimum standards set by the convention in the areas of social services, legal, health and educational systems are being met. It is the responsibility of governments to help families protect children's rights and create an environment where they can grow and reach their potential (UNICEF, 2014)

Policies and programs initiated by the government to appropriately address the plight of children are making little or no significant impact on the child. Children in Nigeria are living in extreme conditions. A lot of these children are subjected to the forms of harmful practices resulting from traditional, cultural, religious and superstitions beliefs as well as other socio-economic variables affecting modern societies. In Nigeria, most incidents of child abuse and other harmful practices are poorly reported. As such, the task of protecting children from such practices becomes difficult. This poses a great challenge to the realization of the rights of a child as stipulated in the global and continental instrument that culminated in the enactment of the child rights act considering their vulnerability.

A child biologically, is a human being between the periods of birth and puberty, with an age range of zero to eighteen (0-18). The legal definition of a child generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority. Children can be raised by parents, fosterers, guardians or partially raised in a care Centre. Children display characteristics such as unusual alertness, good memory, playful, highly sensitive, preoccupied with their own thoughts, learn basic skills quickly asks probing questions, wide range of interests, highly, developed curiosity, interest in experimenting difficult ideas, are emotionally sensitive and thus vulnerable (Webb, Gore, Amend, Devries, 2007). These characteristics are seen at home and in school as expressed during play or learning.

The primary school is a school in which children receive primary or elementary education from age ix to twelve, coming after pre-school and before secondary school. Pupils spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school leaving certificate. Subjects taught at the primary level include Mathematics, English Language, Home Economics, Christian and Islamic Knowledge among others. Schools are places where children gain knowledge and learn attitudes and behavior that can shape their relationship with society. Children's experiences in educational settings have lasting impact on their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Safe and protected learning environments are essential for ensuring a healthy future for children (Aderinoye, 2007).

Protecting children is a collective responsibility. It is the responsibility of every individual in the society to protect children and provide them with an environment that caters for their healthy development. Children need to be protected from all sorts of physical, mental, sexual abuse or violence, neglect, and exploitation while in the care of a caregiver, including parents or legal guardians. The protection of children from harmful practices is a pre requisite for children's rights. Children are protected not because they are instrument, but because it is inherent to their quality as human beings.

Over the past few decades, efforts have been made by different stakeholders like United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), save the children, Plan International, SOS Children's Villages, keeping children safe, Empowering children foundation and international rescue committee to protect children around the world. the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) was passed in 1989 whereby rights pertaining to survival, protection, development, participation of the child was established and agreed upon. The UNCRC consists of 54 Articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children. One hundred and ninety-four (194) countries have signed up to the UNCRC on the rights of a child in which Nigeria is a signatory. All countries that signed up the UNCRC are bound to ensure it is implemented, the committee on the rights of the child monitors this (Save the Children, 2017).

Nigeria ratified the UNCRC instrument in 1991 and the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child (ACRWC) in 2000, subsequently, Nigeria domesticated the conventions through the enactment of the child rights act (CRA) in July 2003. The supreme court of Nigeria held that a fundamental right is a right guaranteed in the constitution which every person is entitled to enjoy by virtue of being a human being. In this legal right of the Nigerian child are contained in various municipal law and international instruments. These laws are based on certain fundamental principles relating to the promotion of human survival, prevention of harm, promotion and sustenance of human dignity and the enhancement of human development these principles recognize the basic concept that the child is the foundation of the society and he she assures its continuity. Accordingly, the survival and continuity of the human society depends upon the protection preservation, nurture and development of the child. The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria guarantees certain fundamental rights to every person in Nigeria, including children (Ahmed, 2015). These include; right to life and development, rights to dignity of human person, right to personal liberty, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and right to private and family life. In addition to all these fundamental rights of the child, the constitution in its chapter two makes provisions for what it calls fundamental

objective and directive principles of state policy which are geared towards the promotion and protection of the rights of Nigerian citizens particularly children.

Despite Nigeria being a signatory to both instruments, yet all forms of harmful practices against children may have remained unabated. This is because Nigeria, being a developing country is faced with numerous challenges including insecurity, which has displaced so many children, thereby making it difficult for their rights to protection, to survive, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care and to grow up in a protective environment, therefore, some circumstance in the society. A lot of reports have explained how evident that children are subjected to several types of violence, abuse, and exploitation ranging from child labour, sexual exploitation, child prostitution, infanticide, corporal punishment and even death because of the lingering Boko Haram insurgency which has killed thousands of people (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Sequel to the domestication of child rights act 2003, some states passed their child rights law. Plateau State being the focus of this study, passed the child right law in 2005. Some of the laws include, right to survival and development, right to an identity, freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, right to privacy, access to information and mass media and protection from all forms of violence. Furthermore, Plateau State launched the year of action to end violence against children campaign in 2015. The year of action to end violence against children was launched in 2014.

Despite the passing of the child right law which seeks to protect the child from all forms of abuses and increase an enabling environment for the proper growth of a child and launch of the year of action to end violence against children in Plateau State to more effectively prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, but the state is alarming. This could be attributed to the fact that Plateau State has been through a lot in terms of insecurity which has led to various crisis witnessed in various parts of the state since 2001, farmers-herders clashed which has affected many villages thereby, making many people to flee their ancestral homes and become refugees in their own land. This situation has left many families homeless and with no choice other than to live as internally displaced people (IDP) in camps scattered all over the state. Most of these camps are in deplorable conditions and most children who find themselves in such places may not be able to enjoy their rights as stipulated in the law. Most of these children may go through all sorts of abuses, violence and exploitations while in such camps there by infringing on their rights to protection. There are other cases as well which make it evident that children on the Plateau are going through various forms of abuse. The Nigerian police Plateau State command in 2017 decried the increasing slate of child rape and molestation in the state, for instance, he said, a 55year old man raped a one-year old child, also a 65 year old man raped a 3 year old child and many other cases. This shows that there are fundamental defects in either the law or the lack of commitment from those having the responsibility of implementing the law. The impact of violence against children extends beyond the individual children and economic development.

The right to protection cannot be suppressed in order to promote other rights, including the right to education. Thus, the survival and continuity of the human society depends upon the protection preservation, nurture and development of the child. Providing the child with a good start in life and ensuring that their material and emotional needs are adequately met is very important. Thus, the study seeks to examine the domestication of child protection policy and laws and its implications in teaching of primary school children in Jos south Local Government Area of Plateau State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to investigate the domestication of the child protection policy and laws and its implementation on teaching primary school children in Jos South Local Government area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify child protection policy
2. Identify child right laws
3. Determine the implication of the domestication of child protection policy and laws on teaching school children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

The following research Questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are teachers aware of child protection policy?
2. To what extent is the child right law implemented?
3. To what extent are the teachers aware of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy on teaching of primary school children?

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive survey research design was applied. Descriptive research design has been described by Eguzoikpe (2008) as the research type which a population maybe studied by collecting and analyzing data collected from a sample of a population considered their representative. This design is appropriate because it allows accurate unbiased information to be collected about a large population from a small sample.

POPULATION

The population for the study is 840 made up of two sets of respondents. primary school teachers who responded to the structured questionnaire and another set of primary school teacher who participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). the primary possessing academic qualification of National Certificate in Education (NCE) and above. Both male and female primary school teachers were involved. Information on the population of the teachers was obtained from the Plateau State primary school board. The other group of respondents was made up of 40 primary school teachers with teaching experience of five years and above who participated in the focus group discussion. Therefore, the entire population size for the study is 840.

SAMPLE

The sample is 240 primary school teachers and 40 primary school teachers who responded to the structured questionnaire and participated in the FGD respectively which gave a total of 280 respondents.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A simple random sampling technique was used. The choice of the simple sampling technique was informed by the nature of the population that has the same probability of being selected as part of the sample as any other member. In the collection of primary data, two hundred and forty (240) was sampled. A sample of sixty (60) teachers' teachers each was taken in Du district, Gyel, district, Kuru district and Vwang district. Therefore, two hundred and forty (240) questionnaires were administered to the respondents randomly in school within these districts in the study area. Forty teachers were also selected for FGD. Ten (10) from each of the four districts in the study area.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to determine the internal consistency and stability of the instruments, the instruments were trial

tested on 20 primary school teachers from 10 selected public primary schools in Nasarawa State. The choice of Nasarawa State was because it shared common factors and characteristic with the schools in Plateau State. Moreover, both States fall within the same geographical zone and such share a common boundary. For the purpose of obtaining the internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used in which a coefficient of 0.73 was obtained for first, 0.85 was obtained for second purpose while a coefficient of 0.77 was obtain for third purpose while an overall coefficient of 0.80 was obtained for the entire instrument.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study were collected with two sets of instruments which include: a structured questionnaire and focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire titled, “Investigating the Domestication of Child Protection Policy and Laws in Primary Schools Questionnaire” (IDCPPLPSQ) which has 49 items organized based on the research questions. The Questionnaire has three clusters organized based on the research questions. Cluster A has Ten items addressing the teacher’s awareness of child protection policy, Cluster B has eleven items addressing the extent of the implementation of the child’s right laws in Plateau State. While Cluster C has eight items addressing the implementation of the domestication of child protecting policy. The response items of the questionnaire was on set of 4 points response scale meant to collect quantitative data (SA= Strongly Agree with 4 point, A= Agree with 3 points, D= Disagree with 2 points, SD= Strongly Disagree with 1 point) measuring the extent the respondents agree or disagree with the questions asked.

PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The instrument, “Investigating of the Domestication of Child Protection Policy and Laws in Primary Schools Questionnaire” (IDCPPLPSQ) was administered with the help of two trained research assistants. Each of them was assigned to two districts. The copies of the administered questionnaire were completed and collected on the spot by the research assistants who were responsible for the distribution and retrieval of the instrument in their respective districts. The activities of the research assistants were coordinated by the researcher for collation of the retrieved questionnaires for analysis. All the questionnaires were filled and returned representing 100% rate of return.

A total of three sessions were organized one in each of the four districts of the study area. Ten discussants each comprising of five male participants in each of the districts. Thus, out of the forty participants for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), only were male while the rest of the twenty were female representing fifty percent. Thus, the total number of participants for the FGD was forty. The FGD was moderated by the researcher with the assistance of a minute recorder. The discussion was guided by some set of questions on issues relating to the domestication of child protection policy and laws and its implication in teaching of primary school children. Notes were taken by the researcher who was the moderator in each of the discussion which lasted for forty (40) minutes each. Light refreshment was given to the discussants and the assistants.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study reduced the quantitative data obtained by presenting it in a tabular form and has a content analysis using the descriptive statistics with the use of mean, standard deviation and simple percentage to answer the three (3) research questions. Content analysis according to Bemard is a method that represents quantitative approach to data analysis by creating codes, applying the codes to text, creating a matrix or table of units of analysis by variables and conducting statistical analysis of the matrix.

A total of three sessions were organized one in each of the four districts of the study area/ ten discussants

each comprising of five male participants each of the district. Thus, out of the forty participants for the focus group discussion (FGD), only twenty were males while the rest of the twenty were females, responding fifty percent. Thus, the total number of participants for the FGD was forty. The FGD was moderated by the research with the assistance of a minute recording. The discussion was guided by some set of questions on issues relating to the domestication of child protection policy and laws and its implication in teaching of primary school children. Notes were taken by the researcher who was the moderator in each of the discussions which lasted for forty (40) minutes each. Light refreshment was given to the discussants and the assistants.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis were represented in tabular form. Each table contains data for each research question.

Research Question One

What Extent are Teachers Aware of the Child Protection Policy?

Table one: What Extent are teachers Aware of the Child Protection Policy?

S/N	Statement	Mean	STD
1	A primary school child is a Person within the age of 6-12	3.74	0.78
2	Children need to be protected against all sort of abuse	3.65	0.48
3	Hitting a child is acceptable because it will shape the child	2.67	1.13
4	Sexual comments and inappropriate touching is a part of sexual abuse	3.47	0.71
5	Children are not likely to be sexually abused by someone that they already know or their family	2.3	1.09
6	Calling your pupils names and telling them they are worthless is acceptable	1.73	0.83
7	Some parents are too busy earning for their families. If a maid or a relative is looking after their children, there is nothing wrong with it	2.52	1.13
8	Ensuring that children are save and protected is everyone’s responsibility	3.29	0.99
9	The academic performance of a child is affected by the type of abuse he/she faces	3.44	0.8
10	Child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence are the core issues that underlie child protection	3.38	0.93

Source: field survey data (2023) Note: Percentages are in parenthesis (%) Mean of 0-1.4=low Extent, 1.5-2.8=moderate, 2.9-4.0=High Extent

Table one reveals the extent of teachers’ awareness of the child protection policy, majority of the teachers are aware to a high extent with mean of 3.29 to 3.74 while low extent awareness of the teachers is observed in: “Hitting a child is acceptable because it will shape the child (2.67±1.13)”, “some parents are too busy earning for the families. If a maid or relative is looking after their children, there is nothing wrong with it (2.52±1.13)” and “children are not likely to be sexually abused by someone that they already know or their family (2.30±1.09)” and “calling your pupils names and telling them they are worthless is acceptable (1.73±0.83)”

From the focus group discussion (FGD) it was also found that majority of the teachers are aware of the child protection policy. Few of the teachers admitted that hitting a child is acceptable because it will shape the child, calling children with negative labels as a teacher does not matter because it’s a form of discipline that

can yield positive result. More than half of the discussant’s belief that close relatives and significant care givers are not likely to abuse the children sexually among others.

Research Question Two

To What Extent are the Child’s Rights Law in Plateau State Implemented?

Table two: Extent of the Child’s Rights Law in Plateau State Implemented

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Children have the right to primary Education which should be free	3.84	0.4
2	A child has the right to protection from all forms of violence	3.68	0.5
3	Children must be looked after properly by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language	3.29	1.1
4	Any care given to children should always be based on the best interest of the teacher	2.41	1.1
5	Children have the right to a name, a nationality and family ties	3.55	0.7
6	Children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinion taken into account	3.43	0.7
7	Children have the right to get and share information as long as the information is not damaging to others	3.2	0.6
8	Children have the right to life, survival and development	3.27	1.1
9	Children do not have the right to freedom of movement, rest, leisure and enjoyment of attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health	1.94	1
10	Children have the right to dignity and be free from discrimination	3.21	1
11	The passing into law of the Child’s Right Act has protected children from all forms of harmful practices	3.01	1

Source: field survey (2023) Note: Percentages are in parenthesis (%) Mean of 0-1.4=Low Extent, 1.5-2.8=Moderate, 2.9-4.0=High Extent

Table two reveals the extent to which the Child’s Right Law in Plateau State are implemented, majority of the teachers with mean of 3.01 ± 0.99 to 3.84 ± 0.39 indicate to a high extent the child right law in Plateau State. While a low extent was obtained on that “Children do not have the right to freedom of movement, rest, leisure and enjoyment of attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health 1.94 ± 0.98 ” and “Any care given to children should always be based on the best interest of the teacher, $2.41 = 1.09$ ” to a moderate extent.

The result of the FGD revealed that most of the teachers confidently said that the child’s right law in Plateau State has been implemented. Few of the FGD members indicated that a lot of children do not have the right to freedom of movement, rest, enjoyment and survival and delopment.

Research Question Three

To What Extent are the teachers aware of the Implication of the Domestication of Child Protection Policy?

Table three: The Implication of the Domestication of Child Protection Policy

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Children would be able to learn in School as they are not terrified of the threat of bullying or corporal punishment	3.62	0.6
2	The State would be able to reinvest some of the resources it currently spends on supporting victims of abuse	3.58	0.6
3	Human capital potential will not be diminish by children who have experienced so much neglect or abuse mental development and employment prospect	3.41	0.6
4	Societies will become more equitable as children chances are not seriously damaged by their lack of care and protection	3.34	0.7
5	Children’s right to be free from inadequate care and protection will be achieved	3.23	0.5
6	Children will grow up in resilient communities that can withstand the shocks of disasters and conflict and protect them from violence, exploitation abuse and neglect even in emergency situation	3.41	0.6
7	Children will be happier, safer, and more able to develop to their full potential because they will grow up in caring and protective families and get the love and attention that is human nature to crave	3.47	0.5
8	Children will not have to work long Hours or in hazardous conditions Risking their well-being, health and Depriving them of education	3.42	0.7

Source: field survey (2023) **Note:** Percentages are in parenthesis (%) Mean of 0-1.4=low Extent, 1.5-2.8=Moderate, 2.9-4.0=High Extent

Table three reveals the extent to which the teachers are aware of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State. “children would be able to learn in school as they are not terrified of the threat of bullying or corporal punishment” is rated to the highest extent with 3.62±0.55, and the least rated among the highest extent with mean of 3.23±0.54 is on “Children’s right to be free inadequate care and protection will be achieved”. This implies that majority of the teachers are aware to a high extent of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State.

As for the extent to which the teachers are aware of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State, the out come of the discussion of the FGD revealed that children would be able to learn in school as they are not terrified of the threat of bullying or corporal punishment, children will not have to walk long hours or in hazardous conditions and risking their well-being, health and depriving them of education.

DISCUSSION

The study is to investigate the domestication of child protection policy and law and its implication on teaching in primary schools in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The results obtained from investigating the Domestication of Child Protection Policy and Laws in primary School Questionnaire (IDCPPLPSQ) with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.749, which I a reliable questionnaire. The findings are presented as they reflect in the research questions outlined for the study.

Research Question One Table 1 reveals the extent of teachers’ awareness of the child protection policy,

majority of the teachers are aware to a high extent with mean of 3.29 to 3.74 while low extent awareness of the teachers is observed in: “Hitting a child is acceptable because it will shape the child (2.67-1.13)”, some parents are too busy earning for their families. If a maid or a relative is looking after their children, there is nothing wrong with it (2.52-1.13)” and “Children are not likely to be sexually abused by someone that they already know or their family (2.30-1.09)” and “Calling your pupils names and telling the worthless is acceptable (1.73-0.83)”. This implies that policies and laws for the protection of children exist in Jos South. However, the implementation in the educational setting seems distant or not locally enforced. This is evident in the low awareness of the teachers that was observed in: “Hitting a child is acceptable because it will shape the child”. Hitting of children is corporal punishment and a form of physical abuse and calling pupils names is emotional abuse that the child Rights Law forbids. This should be properly enforced in schools across the state and the nation at large.

Research Question Two Table 2 reveals the extent of the Child’s Rights Law in Plateau State implemented, majority of the teachers with mean of 3.01-0.99 to 3.84-0.39 indicate to a high extent the child right law in Plateau State. While a low extent was observed on that “Children do not have the right to freedom of movement, rest, leisure and enjoyment of attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health 1.94-0.98”, and “any care given to children should always be based on the best interest of the teacher, 2.41-1.09” to a moderate extent.

Research Question Three Table 3 reveals the extent to which the teachers are aware of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State. “Children would be able to learn in school as they are not terrified of the threat of bullying or corporal punishment” is rated to the highest extent with 3.62-0.55, and the least rate among the highest extent with mean of 3.23-0.54 is on “Children’s right to be free from inadequate care and protection will be achieved”. This implies that majority of the teachers are aware to a high extent of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following are the findings:

1. The extent of teachers’ awareness of the child protection policy is to a high extent.
2. The child’s rights Law in Plateau State is implemented to a low extent
3. Majority of the teachers are aware to a high extent of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy in Plateau State.
4. Majority of the teachers agreed to understand about child protection policy to a high extent.
5. The challenges teachers faced in protecting children from harmful practices based on degree of response, Religious believe, lack of cooperation of parents and other members of the community, inability to identify vulnerable children in the school, inability of children to trust the teachers and socio-cultural factors.
6. The least challenge of teachers is “adequate training for teachers on child protection issues”.
7. Majority of the teachers’ highly rated frequent training to create more awareness on child protection issues to teachers and pupils.

CONCLUSION

It can be thereby concluded based on the analysis, interpretation and the subsequent findings that from the research questions, it was observed that majority of the teachers have knowledge to a high extent about child protection policy and law. This implies that policies and laws for the protection of children exist in Jos South, however, the implementation in the educational setting seem distant or not locally enforced. This is evident in the low awareness of the teachers that was observed in: “Hitting a child is acceptable because it

will shape the child.” Hitting of children is corporal punishment and a form of physical abuse that the child Right Law forbids. This should be properly enforced in schools across the states of the nation at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher therefore suggests based on the findings of this study the following recommendations:

1. Teachers should be given adequate training and a printed copy of the child protection policy and laws in Jos South Local Government Area. This should serve as a guide for them as they work and take decisions based on the best interest of the child.
2. Welfare services should be empowered more to be able to help keep families together and ensure that children grow in their biological families as much as possible.
3. Adequate training of pupils to inform them about their rights and responsibilities, with practical skills on how to handle issues of violence against them.
4. School administrator should ensure a safe and child friendly environment, which will be conducive for them to learn and reach their full potentials in life.

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE (FGDG)

1. Are you aware of the child protection policy as a teacher teaching in the primary school?
2. Do you think children need to be protected?
3. What areas do you think are necessary for children to be protected?
4. To what extent are the child's Rights Law implemented in Plateau State?
5. To what extent are the teachers aware of the implication of the domestication of child protection policy?