

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Child Protection Network in Child Abuse Reporting and Intervention in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The Child Protection Network (CPN) in Oyo State is an important mechanism for reporting, rescuing, and referral of cases of child abuse. Its efficacy is however hampered by systemic and contextual constraints. This study investigates the critical gap between awareness of abuse and actual reporting behavior among key stakeholders. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, in which 282 participants were surveyed, including CPN members, child protection officers, and security operatives, which was complemented by 19 purposive key informant interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, regression analysis, and thematic analysis. The results indicate that the CPN significantly facilitates reporting (mean = 4.26, $p < .001$), with collaborative engagement with security agencies serving as a primary driver of successful interventions ($\beta = .397$, $p < .001$). Despite high confidence in reporting mechanisms (78%), a notable "responsiveness gap" exists, as only 57% of respondents expressed confidence in the actual responsiveness of Children's Services. While qualitative data highlighted socio-cultural influences, ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference in reporting attitudes across cultural belief categories ($p = .567$), suggesting that institutional factors may play a more decisive role than cultural ones. Grounded in Ecological Systems Theory, the study demonstrates that awareness alone is insufficient to ensure reporting due to institutional bottlenecks and behavioral patterns. The study recommends strengthening institutional frameworks, improving transparency and accountability in service delivery, and intensifying public awareness to bridge the trust gap between reporting mechanisms and intervention outcomes.

Keywords: Child Protection Network (CPN), Child abuse reporting, Intervention strategies, Child Abuse, Child

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INTRODUCTION

Child abuse remains a prevalent global issue which affects the physical wellbeing and social development of children globally. It has been reported that 3 in 4 children aged 2-4 years regularly suffer from some form of physical or psychological abuse and violence, while 1 in 2 children aged between 2 -17 years are reportedly suffering from some form of violence (Tang, 2024).

The overall effect of this globally is that abused children tend to face higher risk of mental disorders, difficulty in school, interpersonal relations, as well as substance abuse according to reports by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2022).

In 2022, the World Health Organization report estimated that about 1 billion children aged 2-17 years to have experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect between 2021 and 2022 (WHO, 2022). However, this problem is more profound in developing countries in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East where socio-cultural norms/restrictions and weak institutional frameworks serve as barriers to reporting and proper handling of such cases. In Nigeria for example, UNICEF reported that 6 out of 10 children

experience one form of violence or the other, with socio-cultural norms, weak institutional frameworks and lack of enforcement of Child Protection Laws further exacerbating the problem (UNICEF Nigerian Report, 2020).

Recent studies have however shown that despite increasing public awareness campaigns and advocacy across Nigeria and the world, cases of child abuse remains largely under-reported or neglected, which raises questions about the feasibility of existing intervention strategies in addressing this problem. Furthermore, through review of extant literature on child abuse, there seems to be a gap or disconnect between awareness and actual reporting of abusive behavior or of such cases in many Global South/Developing countries like Nigeria.

In Oyo State, child abuse remains an issue of serious concern. In 2013 alone, the total recorded cases of rape amounted to 365, with the total average cases in Ibadan estimated to be 20 cases per month. However, more recent studies have shown that 26.8% of children experience all forms of maltreatment, with emotional and physical abuse at 85.3% and 81.8%, respectively (Olarinloye & Uchendu, 2024). Therefore, the prevalence of street children, child labor, and gender-based violence highlights the urgent need for effective child protection mechanisms.

The study will equally examine how awareness does not actually translate to reporting of cases and behavior within Ibadan as the area focus. By examining cases of child abuse within the socio-cultural context of Ibadan, the study addresses a significant gap which has not been covered by existing literature.

The next section will examine the existing literature on this topic, as well as a review of the relevant theories underpinning this study

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Child abuse manifests in different forms, and available evidence suggests that it remains under-reported in Oyo State. According to Olarinloye and Uchendu (2024), 26.8% of children in Ibadan Metropolis have experienced at least one form of maltreatment. The study further identified emotional abuse (85.3%) and physical abuse (81.8%) as the most common forms of child abuse.

Despite the establishment of the Child Protection Network (CPN) as a multi-agency mechanism designed to facilitate reporting, rescue, and referral, the actual effectiveness of this network has not been evaluated through empirical data or analysis. There also seem to be a disconnect between reporting of cases and its effects on intervention outcomes. This disconnect therefore questions the effectiveness of the CPN in strengthening reporting mechanism, as well as the facilitation of collaboration among diverse agencies and stakeholders in implementing child protection laws and the rights of children.

Furthermore, from the review of existing studies, it is shown that no previous research has quantitatively assessed the relationship between CPN awareness and actual child abuse reporting behavior in Oyo State, leaving claims of CPN effectiveness unsubstantiated. Secondly, the influence of collaboration between the CPN and security agencies on intervention outcomes remains under-explored.

Thirdly, existing literature presents conflicting claims about the role of cultural factors in child abuse reporting; while some studies emphasize cultural barriers such as the perception of children as parental property and fear of community backlash (Akinlabi, Alabi, & Odutola, 2021; Oyelakin & Badejo, 2023), others suggested that cultural beliefs does not influence reporting behavior.

Furthermore, preliminary evidence indicates a potential gap between reporting confidence and institutional response confidence, with only 57% of stakeholders expressing trust in Children's Services responsiveness, yet this gap has not been empirically quantified or explained.

Therefore, this study is justified by the urgent need for the evaluation of the CPN's effectiveness through empirical studies, and to also identify specific barriers and facilitators of reporting across institutional, cultural, and systemic dimensions, while it also generates recommendations which are based on empirical; evidence so as to strengthen child protection outcomes in Ibadan Metropolis.

In order to address the problems and gaps identified in this study, the following research questions are put forward in the next section.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in reporting and intervening in cases of child abuse within Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State. With the following objectives;

- I. To evaluate how effectively the Child Protection Network (CPN) facilitates reporting of child abuse in Ibadan Metropolis.
- II. To analyze the impact of collaboration between the Child Protection Network (CPN) and security agencies on reporting and intervention related to child abuse.
- III. To investigate how socio-cultural beliefs and community norms affect child abuse reporting and intervention in Ibadan Metropolis.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

- i. How effective is the Child Protection Network (CPN) in promoting the reporting of child abuse in Ibadan Metropolis?
- ii. To what degree does collaboration between the Child Protection Network (CPN) and security agencies affect child abuse reporting and intervention?
- iii. In what ways do socio-cultural beliefs and community norms influence child abuse reporting and intervention in Ibadan Metropolis?

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design prevents any causal inferences. Second, the sample was exclusively taken from Ibadan Metropolis, with no available data from the rural areas of Ibadan or other significant cities and towns in Oyo State.

Another notable limitation concerns the reliance on self-report data, which may have been influenced by social desirability bias, especially on sensitive issues such as reporting child abuse. Most critically, the non-significant Analysis of Variance for cultural factors might indicate measurement constraints rather than a lack of cultural effects; future research should utilize multidimensional cultural scales.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Concept of Child Abuse and Protection

Child abuse refers to all forms of physical, emotional, sexual maltreatment, or neglect that lead to actual or potential harm to a child's health, development, or dignity (World Health Organization, 2022). It is generally understood as any behavior that places a child at risk of serious harm or exploitation. Globally, the definition of child abuse has evolved, expanding to cover not just physical harm but emotional and psychological abuse. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) mandates the protection of children from abuse in all forms, reinforcing the global understanding of abuse as a violation of a child's rights (UNICEF, 2019).

Globally, child abuse remains a significant problem, with millions of children affected each year. The World Health Organization estimates that one billion children aged 2–17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year (Lister et al., 2023). The Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children estimates that 36.1% of Nigerian children aged 2–17 years have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. A further breakdown shows that 28.9% of children experience physical abuse, while emotional and sexual abuse account for 20.5% and 10.5%, respectively (World Health Organization, 2020).

Existing studies on child Abuse and Protection has revealed the prevalence of child abuse across the world, with countries adopting different laws and policies that govern child protection, interventions and reporting mechanisms. However, there seems to be significant gaps and unanswered questions in the aspect of the

intervention-based Networks such as that of CPN in enforcing reporting mechanisms, as well as protection of the rights of children from violence and all forms of abuse.

Child Protection Systems

Child Protection system aims to protect children from all forms abuses, neglect, exploitation and violence (Forbes, Luu, Oswald & Turijevic, 2011). Similarly, Berrick, Gilbert & Skivenes (2023) in their study on Child Protection Systems across 50 countries in the world argued that the differences in socio-cultural norms, standards of living, children's rights and their level of well-being, types and levels of state intervention, and degree of confidence in government have a bearing on the alternative developmental stages of child protection systems.

Recent studies have equally identified child protection and the systems that govern it as a persistent and urgent problem in sub-Saharan Africa which is heavily influenced by colonial legacies which has shaped the adoption of social policies and structure to govern child protection systems (Orock, Navratil, Rasnayake, Koh & Gakuba, 2025)

Existing literature have examined Child Protection Systems across the world in Africa and Nigeria, but there is a significant gap which has not addressed Child Protection Systems and the activities of the Child Protection Network in the socio-cultural context of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Reporting Mechanisms

Global Reporting mechanisms for issues of child abuse are fragmented and not even across the world. For instance, review of diverse studies have shown that in Developed countries, there exist laws and policies which enforces mandatory reporting laws, while in Developing countries like Nigeria, reporting mechanisms are based on Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs) which is widely used by NGOs and communities in addressing and protecting children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect (UN, 2016) Although many studies have identified different reporting mechanisms that has been adopted by different countries, most especially in Developed countries where mandatory reporting mechanisms are effective. However, limited amount of data/ information exist on the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms in Developing countries (UN, 2016). However, counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms are seen as vital solution to address cases of child abuse. Similarly, the United Nations study on Violence against children identified the needs for safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children to report cases of violence and abuse (UN, 2016)

In Nigeria, a recent report by ActionAid noted that cases of child abuse and under-reporting of cases is a pattern that is widespread in the country, with many cases reportedly hidden due to weak reporting systems/mechanisms, fear of retaliation, stigma and the absence of trusted protection mechanisms for children who are vulnerable to such. Furthermore, the report noted that the normalization of silence around this issue continues to lead to constant perpetuation (ActionAid, Press Statement, 2026).

Therefore, from review of diverse literature, available data on reporting mechanisms across Nigeria have reported widespread awareness of child abuse and violence against children, but poor/ineffective reporting mechanisms and network-based interventions.

Child Protection Networks: Structure and Evidence

Child Protection Networks (CPNs) function as multi-institutional interventions collaborations which is designed to facilitate abuse reporting, case management, and referral. Ellermeijer et al. (2023) in their research and study demonstrated that there is an increase in CPNs community awareness campaigns and reporting rates when adequately funded. However, studies from sub-Saharan Africa highlight persistent challenges such as; under-funding, inadequate workforce, and reliance on volunteers (Shadare, 2022). The integrated child protection systems approach recommended by Save the Children (2020) emphasizes localized, context-aware actors working with formal institutions. This model has shown to be directly relevant to the functionality of CPN in Oyo State.

Cultural Barriers

Studies from across the world has revealed that certain socio-cultural norms affect the effectiveness of child protection laws and reporting mechanisms in many Asian and African countries in which extreme poverty and socio-cultural realities prevents implementation of Child Labour Prevention laws, while in prosperous societies in transition, the barrier is mostly sociological and cultural. Therefore, from these studies, it is deduced that attempts to implement international best practices to improve child protection in all societies without taking into account the socio-cultural realities in all the different countries of the world is viewed as implementing a view of human nature developed for one cultural grouping over another (Al-Saadoon, Al-Adawi, & Al-Adawi, 2020)

Empirical Literature Review

Studies on Child Abuse Reporting

Studies conducted by the World Health Organization on Child Abuse reporting across the world have shown that 6 in 10 children or 400 million children under the age of 5 suffer regularly from physical punishment and/or psychological violence at the hands of parents and caregivers. The report also suggested that child abuse is often hidden, while only a fraction of child abuse victims ever get to share their stories or report cases so as to get the necessary support needed for them from official support services and channels. Therefore, it is recommended by the WHO report that prevention of child abuse/maltreatment before it starts is possible through effective prevention approaches which include supporting parents, teaching positive parenting skills and enhancing laws to prohibit violent punishment (WHO, 2026)

Niu et al (2024) equally carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis to estimate the global prevalence of violence against children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study which compiled evidence from 25 studies which involved 66,637 participants from various regions across the world. The results showed that the overall global prevalence of violence against children and adolescents during the pandemic was 24%, therefore suggesting that more than one in five children experienced at least one type of violence such as; emotional violence (32%), and peer bullying (38%), which were reported as the most common forms of abuse, while physical violence (11%), neglect (13%) and cyberbullying (16%) were also prevalent. However, the research indicated that children from low and middle-income countries especially in Africa and South Asia faced significant and higher risk of violence and abuse as compared to those in high-income countries. The study suggested that enhancing child protection policies, improving reporting mechanisms, and fostering collaboration among governments, schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations are vital for preventing violence against children, while also improving intervention outcomes. Mathews (2022) explored the potential of mandatory reporting laws in developing countries as a means to enhance the identification and reporting of severe child abuse and neglect. Through a comparative legal and policy analysis, the study revealed that such legislation can lead to better detection child abuse when accompanied by effective child protection systems, trained professionals, and sufficient institutional capacity. However, the author contended that mandatory reporting laws alone are inadequate in developing countries due to weak institutional frameworks, limited resources, and socio-cultural barriers to reporting. The study suggested that strengthening child protection systems should go hand in hand with legal reforms to improve reporting and intervention outcomes. Nevertheless, it primarily concentrated on policy and legal frameworks instead of empirically assessing how child protection networks impact reporting behavior and intervention results. This gap is addressed by the current study, which evaluates the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in reporting and intervening in cases of child abuse within Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Studies on Child Protection Networks

Igwe & Ihunwo (2026) analyzed child protection and welfare systems in Nigeria, by focusing specifically on social work interventions through a document analysis approach. By reviewing policy documents, legislative frameworks, government reports, and academic literature, the study revealed that while Nigeria has established

legal and policy instruments like the Child Rights Act to safeguard children, their implementation is hindered by inadequate institutional capacity, insufficient funding, weak inter-agency coordination, and limited professionalization of social work practice. The research also highlighted the essential role of social workers in case management, counseling, family support, advocacy, and community-based interventions, suggesting a need for stronger institutional collaboration and improved professional development. However, the study relied solely on secondary data and did not empirically evaluate the effectiveness of child protection networks or reporting behaviors of stakeholders. This gap is addressed by the present study, which empirically assesses how effective the Child Protection Network (CPN) is in reporting and intervening in cases of child abuse in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Perez-Hernando & Fuentes-Pelaez (2020) conducted a systematic review in order to explore how formal and informal support networks contribute to enhancing interventions for families involved in child protection systems. They synthesized evidence from 14 studies chosen from an initial pool of 4,348 publications. The results indicated that social support networks which include professionals, extended family members, friends and community organizations help to bolster family resilience, enhance parental capacity, aid in family reunification, and strengthen interactions with child protection services. The authors concluded that effective collaboration between formal and informal support networks is crucial for achieving positive outcomes in child protection. However, the review mainly concentrated on family support and reunification without thoroughly evaluating the effectiveness of child protection networks in promoting reporting and intervention related to child abuse. This gap is addressed by the current study, which evaluates the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in facilitating reporting and intervention for child abuse in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Studies on Institutional Collaboration

Tsuchiya et al. (2021) conducted a review of the literature on interprofessional collaborative practices aimed at preventing child maltreatment in Japan. Their study revealed that effective collaboration among healthcare professionals, social workers, educators, law enforcement, and community organizations significantly improves the early identification, reporting, and management of child maltreatment cases. The authors concluded that coordinated multidisciplinary approaches enhance child protection outcomes but pointed out a lack of empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of such collaborations in practice. This gap is addressed by the current study, which empirically assesses the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in reporting and intervening in child abuse cases within Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Lalayants (2008) examined how professionals perceive interagency collaboration in the delivery of services for child abuse and neglect through a qualitative research design. Interviews conducted with professionals from child protection, law enforcement, and social service agencies indicated that effective collaboration among these agencies enhanced communication, information sharing, service coordination, and intervention outcomes for at-risk children. However, challenges such as differing organizational goals, ambiguous professional roles, and inadequate communication impeded successful collaboration. The study advocated for stronger multidisciplinary teamwork and better institutional coordination. However, it did not evaluate the effectiveness of child protection networks within the Nigerian context, a gap that this current study addresses.

Ogbomor and Ilegar (2026) explored strategies to enhance collaboration between social workers and law enforcement in tackling child abuse in Nigeria by conducting a qualitative review of existing literature and policy documents. Their findings highlighted that weak interagency coordination, poor communication, insufficient training, and ambiguous professional roles obstruct effective child protection efforts. They suggested implementing joint training sessions, standardized referral protocols, multidisciplinary child protection units, and improved information sharing to bolster collaboration. However, their study was conceptual and lacked empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of collaborative child protection networks at the community level, a gap that this current study aims to address.

Studies on Socio-Cultural Barriers

Aborisade and Oladejo (2026) examined the sociocultural barriers affecting the reporting of child-to-parent abuse in Nigeria through a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews with 17 Nigerian mothers indicated that factors such as patriarchy, family honor, religious beliefs, gender norms, and fear of stigma significantly influenced how parents recognized the issue, their coping strategies, and their decisions to report. The study concluded that entrenched cultural values deter formal reporting of family violence, even when it is severe, and recommended culturally sensitive interventions to enhance reporting. However, it specifically focused on child-to-parent violence without assessing institutional child protection mechanisms, which is the gap this current study aims to address.

Kara and Acar (2021) explored the cultural factors influencing the participation of child abuse and neglect victims in research in Turkey through a qualitative analysis of ethical and cultural issues. They discovered that cultural norms, family privacy, fear of stigma, parental authority, and societal attitudes towards child abuse significantly restricted children's involvement in abuse-related research and their willingness to disclose information. The authors highlighted the importance of adopting culturally sensitive and child-centered research approaches to enhance participation and protect children's rights. However, their study concentrated on research participation rather than on the reporting and intervention of institutional child abuse, which is the focus of the current study.

Kaako et al. (2025) examined the sociocultural obstacles impacting the investigation of child sexual abuse in Kamuli District, Uganda, through a qualitative case study. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews with 14 police officers from the Criminal Investigation Department, Child and Family Protection Unit, and Sexual Gender-Based Violence Department. The findings revealed that factors such as delayed disclosure, community beliefs, lack of parental cooperation, ignorance, and cultural taboos regarding discussions about sex impeded effective investigations of child sexual abuse cases. The authors suggested enhancing community awareness and fostering stronger interagency collaboration. However, this study concentrated on police investigations rather than assessing child protection networks, which is the focus of the current study.

Empirical Gap

The studies reviewed have looked into the prevalence of child abuse, mandatory reporting laws, child protection systems, interagency collaboration, and socio-cultural barriers to reporting in various contexts. However, most of these studies relied on systematic reviews, document analyses, or qualitative methods and did not empirically assess the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in promoting child abuse reporting and intervention. Additionally, there is limited evidence on how institutional collaboration and socio-cultural factors collectively impact child abuse reporting in Nigeria. This study aims to fill this gap by using a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network regarding child abuse reporting and intervention in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Systems Theory

This study is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that a child's development is influenced by multiple interrelated systems: microsystem (family, school), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (community institutions), and macrosystem (cultural values, laws). The CPN's collaboration with security agencies reflects mesosystem interactions; cultural beliefs operate at the macrosystem level. This theory is relevant to this study because it posits that a child's development is influenced by interacting environmental systems.

Furthermore, for this study, the theory helps to explain how multiple levels of influence such as individual, institutional and cultural all interacts to influence/affect child abuse reporting and intervention outcomes within Ibadan, Nigeria. In addressing the gaps in this study, the next section will highlight the aim and objectives of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods concurrent triangulation research design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were gathered from Key Informant Interviews. The combination of these methods improved the validity and comprehensiveness of the results.

Study Population

The study population included members of the Child Protection Network (CPN), social workers, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers, teachers, community leaders, parents/guardians, caregivers, and community members living in the selected Local Government Areas of Ibadan Metropolis. The qualitative participants consisted of CPN officials, healthcare workers, and law enforcement officers.

Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. In Stage One, eleven Local Government Areas within Ibadan Metropolis were selected. Stage Two involved choosing communities from these LGAs. In Stage Three, respondents were selected using simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was also used to identify 19 key informants (10 CPN officials, 5 social/health workers, and 4 law enforcement officers). A total of 282 respondents completed the questionnaire.

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire featuring sections on demographics and standardized scales was used for quantitative data collection. For qualitative information on reporting, collaboration, and intervention challenges, a semi-structured Key Informant Interview guide was utilized.

Validity and Reliability

Face and content validity were verified through expert review. A pilot study with 30 respondents outside the study area assessed the clarity, appropriateness, and reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha values were CNRSES=0.82, ATCARS=0.78, and CAIKS=0.79, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and percentages, were calculated. For inferential statistics, Pearson correlation, chi-square tests, and simple linear regression were utilized. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework from 2006, with NVivo 12 used for data management.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent. Their confidentiality was maintained anonymously, and they were equally made aware of their right to withdraw at any time.

Results and Presentation of Findings

Descriptive Statistics of Sample

Of the 282 respondents to the survey, 58.2% were female ($n = 164$) and 41.8% were male ($n = 118$). The age distribution was as follows: 32.6% were between 18 and 30 years old, 44.0% were between 31 and 45 years old, 18.4% were between 46 and 60 years old, and 5.0% were over 60 years old. The occupations represented included teachers (28.0%), social workers (18.4%), healthcare providers (15.2%), law enforcement personnel (12.1%), and community members (26.2%).

Research Question 1: The Effectiveness of CPN in Facilitating Reporting

Quantitative Findings.

The average score for perceived effectiveness of the CPN in facilitating reporting was 4.26 ($SD = 0.68$) on a 5-point scale, indicating a high level of effectiveness. A chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between awareness of the CPN and reporting behavior, $\chi^2(1, N = 282) = 12.43, p < .001$. In particular, respondents who

were aware of the CPN were 3.2 times more likely to report suspected abuse compared to those who were not aware.

Table 1

Correlation Between Reporting Confidence and Institutional Response Confidence

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Reporting confidence	23.27	1.73	—	.567**
2. Response confidence	11.41	1.39	.567**	—

Note: N = 282 (one incomplete case excluded). $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

A significant moderate positive correlation was observed, $r(281) = .567$, $p < .001$, indicating that greater confidence in institutional responsiveness is associated with higher reporting confidence.

Qualitative Findings.

Interviewees acknowledged the vital role of the CPN. One respondent noted, "The CPN has made it much easier for us to know where to report incidents. In the past, many cases went unreported, but now we have a proper structure in place." Another added, "We now have a network that links the Ministry, police, and NGOs. When a case is reported, it flows through the system instead of getting stuck." However, challenges persist. A child welfare officer pointed out, "Many people still don't know whom to approach or are too afraid to report. Concerns about stigma and the lack of confidentiality remain significant issues."

Research Question 2: Collaboration with Security Agencies

Quantitative Findings. A simple linear regression examined whether institutional support predicts reporting confidence.

Table 2

Institutional Support as a Predictor of Reporting Confidence

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P	R ²	F	p (model)
Institutional support	0.707	0.098	.397	7.22	< .001	.157	52.05	< .001
Constant	15.01	1.15		13.07	< .001			

Institutional support significantly predicted reporting confidence, explaining approximately 16% of the variance ($R^2 = .157$, $F(1, 279) = 52.05$, $p < .001$).

Qualitative Findings

A social worker remarked, "We can't operate in isolation. When we receive a report, particularly of sexual abuse or severe physical violence, we promptly inform the police or civil defense family unit. Their involvement adds legal significance to the case." A teacher and member of the Child Protection Network (CPN) added, "We now collaborate closely. If an incident occurs at a school, the teacher, social worker, and a police representative are all engaged from the outset." However, challenges persist. A social worker expressed concern: "Some police officers still lack sensitivity. They may shame the child or postpone action." A focal person from CPN stressed, "Regular training is essential, especially for security personnel. Some do not grasp child rights or how to conduct trauma-informed interviews."

Research Question 3: Role of Cultural Factors

Quantitative Findings. A one-way ANOVA compared reporting attitudes across cultural belief categories (traditional/communal vs. modern/individualistic orientations).

Table 3

ANOVA: Reporting Attitudes by Cultural Belief Category

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	0.182	1	0.182	0.33	.567
Within groups	155.293	280	0.555		
Total	155.475	282			

Note: one case was excluded from correlation/ANOVA due to missing data, reducing effective N to 281 for those analyses.

"No statistically significant difference was found, $F(1, 280) = 0.33$, $p = .567$, indicating that the cultural beliefs measured did not independently influence reporting attitudes. While these beliefs may not have a direct impact on reporting attitudes, they do shape the social environment in which reporting decisions are made—a nuance highlighted by the qualitative data but not captured by the binary measure of cultural beliefs used in the survey.

Qualitative Findings: Despite the lack of significant quantitative results, thematic analysis uncovered critical cultural themes. Participants often described children as being viewed as property of their parents. One

respondent shared: "Some families become upset when you report abuse because they feel you are interfering with their way of disciplining or training their child." Reporting incidents was sometimes seen as a sign of disrespect towards elders. A respondent remarked: "Even teachers occasionally refrain from reporting parents to keep peace with them." Concerns about social stigma and fear of community backlash also hindered reporting. The discrepancy between quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that although cultural beliefs may not directly dictate reporting attitudes, they do influence the social context surrounding these decisions—a distinction evident in the qualitative data but overlooked by the binary measure of cultural beliefs employed in the survey."

Research Hypothesis

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which asserts that child development and protection outcomes are influenced by the interplay of microsystem (individual), mesosystem (institutional interactions), exosystem (indirect institutional factors), and macrosystem (cultural) elements, this study tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (Microsystem): There is a notable positive correlation between awareness of the Child Protection Network and child abuse reporting behavior among residents of Ibadan Metropolis.

Hypothesis 2 (Mesosystem/Exosystem): Support from security agencies significantly influences confidence in reporting child abuse cases among CPN stakeholders.

Hypothesis 3 (Macrosystem): There is a statistically significant variation in attitudes toward child abuse reporting across different cultural belief categories (traditional/communal compared to modern/individualistic orientations).

Discussion of Findings

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Child Protection Network (CPN) in Oyo State, Nigeria, focusing on reporting facilitation, security agency collaboration, and cultural influences.

Effectiveness of CPN in Reporting: The discovery that awareness of CPN significantly predicts reporting behavior ($\chi^2 = 12.43$, $p < .001$) supports the work of Ellermeijer et al. (2023), who found that multi-agency networks enhance community-level awareness and reporting. However, it is concerning that only 57% of respondents felt confident in Children's Services' responsiveness, even though 78% were confident in the reporting mechanisms. This reflects what Adelani (2024) referred to as the "implementation gap" within Nigerian child protection systems. The disparity between confidence in reporting and confidence in responses ($r = .567$) indicates that fostering trust necessitates improvements in both reporting pathways and the subsequent institutional responses.

Collaboration with Security Agencies: Regression analysis has shown that institutional support is a strong predictor of reporting confidence ($\beta = .397$, $p < .001$). This finding supports the integrated child protection systems approach advocated by Save the Children (2020) and is in line with the work of Majebi, Adelodun, and Anyanwu (2024), which indicates that community-based interventions are most effective when they involve formal institutions. Nevertheless, respondents have reported instances of police insensitivity and a lack of trauma-informed training, which reflect Lalor and McElvaney's (2018) conclusion that the attitudes of first responders greatly affect whether children feel safe enough to disclose abuse. Additionally, the resource shortages identified—especially regarding transportation and child-friendly facilities—align with UNICEF's (2022) observation that logistical challenges are among the most prevalent barriers to case follow-up in sub-Saharan Africa.

Cultural Factors: The non-significant ANOVA result ($p = .567$) seems to contradict the qualitative themes regarding cultural barriers. However, this discrepancy is more methodologically informative than problematic. The quantitative measure likely reflected overt attitudes toward reporting, whereas the qualitative interviews uncovered contextual cultural pressures—such as fear of community backlash and respect for elder authority—

that influence behavior in specific situations rather than representing stable individual attitudes. As Oyelakin and Badejo (2023) point out, the belief in "child ownership" within Yoruba culture does not necessarily lead to a resistance to reporting in abstract survey questions; instead, it generates social costs that become apparent only in certain reporting scenarios. This finding highlights the importance of mixed-methods designs for capturing the full complexity of socio-cultural influences.

Theoretical Implications: The results largely aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The collaboration between the CPN and security agencies illustrates mesosystem dynamics; cultural themes indicate macrosystem influences; and resource limitations serve as exosystem factors. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between quantitative and qualitative cultural findings indicates that ecological models should differentiate between proximal cultural attitudes (which can be measured through surveys) and distal cultural contexts (that influence behavior in specific situations).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the concerns highlighted regarding the gap between awareness and reporting of child abuse, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. There should be strengthening Institutional Reporting Mechanisms in which government agencies and child protection networks are able to create more accessible, confidential, and responsive reporting channels, so as to encourage individuals to report suspected cases of child abuse without fear of retaliation. These channels could include toll-free helplines, community reporting centers, and digital reporting platforms.
2. Intensifying Public Awareness Campaigns which should extend beyond basic sensitization to include practical education on reporting procedures, legal protections, and available support services. Campaigns should be culturally sensitive and target schools, religious institutions, and local communities.
3. Community-Based Child Protection Systems should be promoted, while Community leaders, religious organizations, schools, and non-governmental organizations should actively participate in child protection advocacy. Therefore, the strengthening of community-based monitoring and support systems can help reduce stigma and promote collective responsibility in addressing child abuse.
4. Provision of training for Professionals and Stakeholders, most especially for Teachers, healthcare workers, social workers, and law enforcement personnel, who should receive ongoing training on identifying child abuse, mandatory reporting procedures, confidentiality, and victim-sensitive approaches. This will enhance early detection and also enable appropriate intervention.
5. Avenues for Policy Enforcement and Legal Reforms should be created so as to complement current child protection laws, while policies need to be enforced more effectively so as to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and victims are protected. Where necessary, legal reforms should be implemented to increase penalties for abuse and to safeguard whistleblowers.
6. Socio-Cultural barriers should be addressed which enables Stakeholders to develop interventions aimed at reducing cultural stigma, victim-blaming, and the societal silence surrounding child abuse. Community dialogue programs and advocacy initiatives rooted in cultural understanding can equally help to challenge harmful social norms that deter reporting.
7. Further Research should be encouraged which ensures that future studies on this topic are able to investigate child abuse reporting behaviors in various socio-cultural and geographical contexts within Nigeria using longitudinal and comparative methods. Researchers should also examine the impact of technology, social media, and policy implementation on enhancing reporting systems.

Conclusion

This study examined the Child Protection Network (CPN) in Oyo State, Nigeria, emphasizing its role in reporting, rescuing, and referring abused children. The strengths of the CPN include its grassroots presence, community involvement, and partnerships with government and NGOs, which facilitate timely interventions. Quantitative results indicated that awareness of the CPN significantly enhances reporting ($\chi^2 = 12.43$, $p < .001$) and that institutional support is a predictor of confidence in reporting ($\beta = .397$, $p < .001$). However, only 57%

of respondents felt confident in the responsiveness of Children's Services, highlighting a significant gap. While collaboration with security agencies has improved case processing, it is still hindered by insufficient training and resources. Cultural factors influence the social context of reporting in ways that survey measures do not fully capture. To improve child protection outcomes in Oyo State and similar regions across Nigeria, it is crucial to address these institutional gaps and cultural sensitivities through policy reforms, increased funding, community awareness initiatives, and strengthened collaboration with security and judicial agencies.

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