

## **Assessment of Role of School Managers in Executing Mechanisms for Enforcement of Child Rights of Primary School Pupils in Kebbi State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the role of school managers in executing mechanisms for enforcement of child rights of primary school pupils in Kebbi State. This study is a descriptive survey conducted in Kebbi State of North Western Nigeria. The target population was Primary school Headmasters and Teachers. Pupils in Primary schools were also involved in the study because they were victims of child abuse and are capable of describing their painful experiences. The study sampled 500 participants purposefully drawn from all the five education zones in Kebbi State. This comprised of the 50 Head Masters out of 230 and 200 Teachers out of 1670 and 250 pupils out of 6800 primary school pupils selected through deliberate and simple random sampling techniques respectively. Fifty schools were purposely selected in each zone of the existing five Education Zones such that 25 primary schools were selected from urban centers while 25 pupils from primary schools were selected from rural areas. Stratified sampling was applied to ensure that 50% of the sample was drawn proportionately from both public and private primary schools in the state. Structured questionnaire titled: "Mechanisms for Enforcement of Child Right Questionnaire" (MECRO) was used to collect data. The questionnaire had three sections covering forms of child right violation, categories of children violated and child rights enforcement mechanisms that can be used to prevent abuses. Each section had eight items weighed on a four point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by experts and pilot tested in three schools not include in the sample. The complete questionnaire was made to go through item analysis for internal consistency which was verified using Crombach alpha co-efficient that yielded  $r=0.813$ . A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were administered to participants in 50 sampled schools. All copies (100%) of the instrument were correctly filled and returned. The data from the participants was computed using weighed means. The decision of acceptance or rejected of a research questions was dependent upon the acceptance scale of 2.5 above. Any mean below 2.5 was not accepted. A grand means was also calculated to summarize each sub-section. Information from pupils was generated from interview scheduled as well as guidance and counseling anecdotal records. Trained research assistants with the help of guidance counselors in selected schools interviewed the pupils based on issues reflected in the questionnaire in selected schools. Findings of the study indicated that various forms of child abuse include child neglect, abandonment, discrimination and denial of basic rights. All categories of children both legitimate and illegitimate suffer from child right violation in one way or the other. School managers must explore and execute various mechanisms to prevent and avoid violation rights in their schools.*

**Key Words:** *School Managers, Child Right, Enforcement Mechanisms, Violation, Pupils.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The period of childhood is a crucial period in the life of every individual. While some individuals have beautiful memories of their childhood, others remember it with regrets and pains. The extent of joyful or sorrowful memories retained of childhood depends on the extent to which an individual enjoyed the preservation of his human rights, protection of his welfare and fundamental freedom. Unfortunately for some individuals, the memories of their childhood are quite unpleasant. This is because as Abdulmumuni (2015) noted that children all over the world are said to be vulnerable to arbitrary deprivation of their human rights and fundamental freedom as a result of their developmental characteristics, natural weaknesses and immaturity for which they are not responsible and which they are not in a position to change overnight.

The abuse of child rights has been ongoing for a long time in different parts of the world because children tend to be generally regarded as non-legal entities. However Weibery (1987) stated that the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the attribution of legal personality to children, which makes children to be regarded as persons under the law, possessing rights as well as privileges. Cohen (1983) pointed out that the bringing of

Child Rights Movement can be traced to Jeanvalles who attempted to establish a league for the protection of Child rights in the aftermath of the Paris Committee. At the United Nations Level, the international protection of child's rights received further impetus in 1919 with the setting up of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (Cohen, 1983). This was reinforced by the Geneva Declaration on the rights of the child, which was adapted in September, 1924.

In spite of the legal frameworks established to enforce child rights, the violations have persisted and the preponderance of child right abuse may even be on the increase. Most of the children whose rights are violated are mostly found at the primary school level of education. Primary school children are violated both inside and outside of school environment. The concern of the school manager should be rigorously focused on those children, who are, particularly enrolled in his school. But in the case of Nigeria it appears that Headmasters who are the appointed managers of primary schools in Kebbi State, have not been satisfactorily performing their legal role of executing policy mechanisms for the enforcement of child rights in the management of their schools. This may probably stem from the assumption that school managers probably lack clear understanding of the forms and extent of violation of children's rights, categories of children violated and types of child rights that are violated on daily basis, especially as it affects their pupils in their schools.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical considerations for this paper are drawn from the Natural Law theory and the positivism theory of human rights. The Natural Law theory as propounded by philosophers such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, John Jacque Resseau and Cicero view human rights as emanating from Natural Laws, which man as an intelligent and rational being considers as inviolable universal moral rights, which man everywhere at all times uphold in order to preserve and protect the sacredness of the human person, and to make man equal to his fellow man without discrimination on grounds of race, sex, religion and other differences (Neill, 1995) Cicero Ezejiofor (1999) added that human right are Natural rights which are unchangeable, everlasting and valid for all nations for all times.

The positivism theory emphasized the authority of the state emanates from the constitutional structure of a given society. Philosophers like Karl Max argue human rights are historically conditioned such that they vary in accordance with the changes in the social, economic, political and other aspects of societal development. (Mike, 1995). They insist that human rights are not inherent in the nature of man and do not constitute same sort of natural attributes but rather individual right are egoistic and bourgeois concept designed to maintain and reinforce the pre-eminent position of the ruling class (Vladimir, (1982).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. What are the forms of violation of child right affecting primary schools pupils in Kebbi State?
2. What are the categories of childrens who suffer from child rights violation among primary schools in Kebbi State?
3. What are the mechanisms that school managers can execute for the enforcement of child rights of primary school pupils in Kebbi State?

### **Objective of the study**

The objectives of this study were to:

1. find out the forms of violation of child rights affecting pupils in primary school in Kebbi State;
2. ascertain the categories of childrens who suffer from child rights violation in primary school in Kebbi State and
3. determine the policy mechanisms that school managers can execute for the enforcement of child's rights in primary schools in Kebbi State.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Human rights in this study are as viewed liberties, immunities and benefits which by accepted contemporary values, all human being should be able to claim as of right of society in which they live (Henekin 1985:26). Children in many cases have been deprived of their rights without painful reparations inflicted on the perpetrators. According to Abdulmumuni (2015), many children have been exploited, neglected, abandoned, mistreated, sexually abused, beaten, sold into slavery, mutilated, forgotten, ignored or sometimes even killed with impunity, especially when they are exposed to circumstances of hunger, war terrorism and other difficulties. Cranston (1973) posited that child abuse, molestation and blatant violation of child rights is wide spread phenomenon around the world. This implies that Nigeria generally and Kebbi State in particular is not exempted from this undesirable and criminal violation of child right

Going by the diverse forms and manifestation of child rights violation, any child can be victim at any point in time. Niall in Agbakoba (1995) note that the category of children who suffer more greatly from child rights violation include orphaned children who have lost one or both parents, disabled children who are deaf, dumb, blind, crippled, hard of hearing, orthopedically, handicapped, mentally retarded, emotionally unstable,

female children, and those who are discriminated on the basis of their birth, tribe, religion, state of origin, socio-economic status, among others. Surprisingly, Darlick (2009) noted that even children from well to do families and those whom society considers to be of excellent pedigree can fall victims of child rights abuse in one way or the other. This means that all categories of children cutting across diverse demographic characteristic in primary schools in Kebbi call fall victims of child right abuse at any point in time, whether at home, in the school or anywhere.

Children mostly spend a significant part of their day time in school. In Nigeria primary school day starts from about seven o'clock in the morning to about two o'clock in the afternoon. Children come to school on daily basis with various traumas and frustration inflicted on them by their being subjected to various forms of child right abuses either at home or outside the home. The situation is worsened when teachers and sometimes school managers in primary schools, complicate matters by contributing to child right abuses in their schools. To this extent, school managers are legally duty bound to explore and execute mechanisms for enforcement of child rights at least for pupils in their schools. The mechanism which the school managers can execute to enforce child right in their school were identified by Abdulmumi (2015) to include institutional mechanisms such as writing to the courts for enforcement of child rights, appealing for the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission and assisting the child to secure legal aid. School managers can also implement policies targeted at enforcing child rights such as National Policy on Health(NPH), National Policy on Education (NPE) Social Development Policy (SPD) among others.

### III. Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey conducted in Kebbi State of North Western Nigeria. The target population was Primary School Head Masters/Mistresses, Teachers and Pupils in primary schools were also involved in the study because there were the victims of child abuse and are capable of expressing their painful experience expected five hundred participants were purposely drawn from all the five Education Zones in Kebbi State. This comprised of the 50 Head Masters out of 230 and 200 teachers out of 1,670 and 250 Pupils out of 6800 primary school pupils selected through deliberate and simple random sampling techniques respectively. Fifty schools were purposely selected in each zone of the existing five Education Zones such that 25 primary schools were selected from urban centers while 25 public primary schools were selected from the rural areas. Stratified sampling was applied to ensure that 50% of the sample was drawn proportionately from both public and private primary schools in the state. Structured questionnaire titled: "Mechanisms for Enforcement of Child Right Questionnaire" (MECRQ) was used to collect data. The questionnaire had three section covering forms of child right violation, categories of children violated and child rights enforcement mechanisms that can be used to prevent abuses. Each section had eight items weighed on a four point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by experts and pilot tested in three schools not include in the sample. The completed questionnaire was made to go through item analysis for internal consistency which was verified using Crombach alpha coefficient that yielded  $r = 0.813$ . A total of 250copies of the questionnaire were administered to participants in the 50 sampled schools. All the copies (100%) of the instrument were correctly filled and returned. The data from the participants was computed using weighed means. The decision of acceptance or rejection of a research questions was dependent upon the acceptance scale of 2.5 above. Any mean below 2.5 was not accepted. A grand mean was also calculated to summarize each sub-section. Information from pupils was generated from interview scheduled as well as guidance and counseling anecdotal records. Trained research assistants with the help of guidance counselors in selected schools interviewed the pupils based on issues reflected in the questionnaire in selected schools.

### IV. Results

#### Research Question 1

RQ1: What are the forms of violation of child rights affecting primary school pupils in Kebbi State, Nigeria?

This research question was answered and presented in table 1.

**Table1: Forms of violation of child rights affecting primary school pupils of Kebbi State**

S/N	Forms of violation of child right	x	Decision
1	Child neglected and abandonment	2.93	Accepted
2	Child slavery, labour and exploitation	2.93	Accepted
3	Child trafficking, kidnapping and imprisonment	2.60	Accepted
4	Denial of child's basic needs food, clothes and shelter	4.42	Accepted
5	Child discrimination, maltreatment and torture	3.71	Accepted
6	Denial of child right to education	2.80	Accepted
7	Denial of child's right to play, exercise and sleep well	2.72	Accepted
8	Denial of child's right to peaceful assembly and association	2.88	Accepted
9	Denial of child's right to freedom religion, self-expression	3.13	Accept

<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
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Table 1: Show that the mean responds of Headmasters and teachers on all items were above 2.50 decision mark. This implies that all the forms of violation of child rights affect school pupils in primary schools in Kebbi State. The grand mean of 3.12 also indicates that pupils in primary school suffer violation of their rights in one way or the other. This means that the participants to the study accepted that the forms of violation of child rights include child neglect and abandonment (2.93); child slavery, child labour and exploitation (2.93); child trafficking, kidnapping and imprisonment (2.60); denial of child’s basic needs for food, clothes and shelter (3.42); child discrimination, maltreatment and torture (3.71); denial of child’s rights to education (2.80); denial of child’s right to play, exercise, rest and sleep (2.72); denial of child’s right to peaceful assembly (2.88); and denial of child’s rights to freedom of religion and self-expression (3.13).

**Research Questions 2**

What are the categories of children’s who suffer from child rights violation among primary school pupils in Kebbi State?

This research question was answered and presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Categories of children whose rights are violated**

S/N	Categories of Children Violated	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Orphaned Children who lost one or both parents	4.26	Accepted
2	Discriminated Children based on sex, tribe, religion, origin	3.20	Accepted
3	Illegitimate Children (born out of wedlock)	4.48	Accepted
4	Disabled Children who cannot fend for themselves	3.07	Accepted
5	Overprotected Children who are spoilt by parents	3.16	Accepted
6	Diabolical Children who are considered witches and wizards	3.21	Accepted
7	Slave Children born by trafficked parents	2.70	Accepted
8	Employed Children who are exploited	2.81	Accepted
9	Convicted Children who are sentenced to prison term	2.52	Accepted
10	Neglected Children with no one to cater for them	2.62	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.11</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Responses from table 2 shows that mean responses of Headmasters and primary school teachers in Kebbi State on the 10 items on categories of children who are violated were above 2.50. The table also has a grand mean of 3.11 which indicated that the participants agree that all the categories of children indicated in the table are victims of child rights violation. This means that the participant to study accepted that the categories of children whose right rights are violated include orphans (4.36); discriminated children on the basis of religion, tribe, social class, or other distinctions (3.20); illegitimate children (burn out of wedlock) (4.48); disabled children (3.07); overprotected children (3.16); children considered to be diabolical or witches and wizards (3.21); slave children burn by trafficked parents already in slavery (2.81); convicted children sentenced to prison terms (2.52); neglected and abandoned children (2.62).

**Research Question 3**

What are the mechanisms that school managers can execute for the enforcement of child right of primary school pupils in Kebbi State?

This research question was answered and presented in table 3

**Table 3: Mechanisms for enforcement of child Right of primary school pupils in Kebbi State**

S/N	Mechanism for enforcement of child right	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Writing to courts for enforcement of child rights	3.21	Accepted
2	Appeal to National Human Right Commission	3.47	Accepted
3	Assisting poor children to secure free legal aid	3.10	Accepted
4	Proper implementation of National Policy on Education	2.70	Accepted
5	Proper implement National Health Policy	3.70	Accepted
6	Special care for handicapped children	2.64	Accepted
7	Reporting serious cases of violation to higher authorities	2.70	Accepted
8	Enlightening teachers, parents and pupils on child rights	3.23	Accepted
9	Punishing cases of violation of child rights in school	2.91	Accepted

<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
Observation of responses from items on table 3 show that all the mean responses on the mechanism that school managers can execute for enforcement of child rights of primary school pupils in Kebbi State were all above 2.50 the grand mean of 3.07 show a high local of agreement on enforcement mechanism for child rights. This means that the participants accepted mechanism for enforcement of child's rights which school managers can execute includes writing to the court for reinforcement of child rights (3.21); appealing to Human Rights Commissions for intervention on serious codes of violation of child's rights (3.47); assisting children from poor families to secure free legal aid (3.10); proper implementation of National Policy on Education (2.70); providing special care for handicapped children (2.64); reporting of cases of violation of child rights to higher authorities (2.70); enlightening teachers, parents and pupils in child rights (3.23); and severely punishing child rights violation in their schools.		

### **V. Summary of Major Findings**

1. Forms of violation of child rights affecting primary school pupils in Kebbi State include child neglect, abandonment, slavery, exploitation, kidnapping, trafficking, discrimination, maltreatment, torture and decline of basic needs, education among others.
2. Categories of children whose rights are violated include orphans, the illegitimate, the disable, the over protected, the spoilt, the neglected , the abandoned and the slaves among others.

### **VI. Discussion**

Results of research question one show that violations of child rights takes various forms. Prominent among them is child abandonment by one or both parents. The child becomes helpless and hopeless in such a situation as there is no certainty that those who decide to help the child may give the child its full rights. Engaging a child in child slavery, child labour and exploitation are manifestation of violation of child's rights. In some cases violation of child rights takes the forms of kidnapping, child trafficking and false imprisonment. There are instances when the child is denied his basic needs for survival, such as food, clothing and shelter. Child right violations may take the form of discrimination shown against the child by virtue of gender, tribe, religion, place of origin among others. The child may also be severely and frequently maltreated sometimes resulting in injuries. In some cases the child is denied the right to education, thereby damaging its future. Violation of child rights also take the form of denying a child's right to play, recreation, rest and sleep. A child may be denied the right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, religion and self-expression. These findings agree with Abdulmumuni (2015) who noted that in many cases children are exploited, neglected, abandoned, sexually abused, beaten, sold into slavery, ignored, starved and killed with impunity.

Findings of research question two show the categories of children who suffer from violation of child rights include orphans, illegitimate children and disabled children, who suffer from physical handicaps as well as mental and emotional instability. Children who are superstitiously considered diabolical and being in possession of evil powers are shunned, molested, intimidate and sometimes automatically attacked unjustly. Slave children automatically loose many rights as human beings. Employed children suffer from exploitation in diverse forms. Neglected and convicted children also suffer from child right violation suffer. The findings agree with Agbakoba (1995) who stated that categories of children who suffer of their rights include female children and those who are discriminate upon by circumstances of the birth, tribe, religion and socio-economic status. Even children who are well catered for but are over protected and spoilt are denial the night to develop their personality and mature as useful human beings. These findings agree with Darwick (1979) who stated that categories of children who suffer child rights violation cuts across demographic and socio-economic stratum

Findings of research question three indicates that school managers or Head Masters of primary schools in Kebbi State can apply various mechanisms for enforcement of child rights. These include writing to the courts for enforcement of child rights where the issue is criminal and beyond the school authority and appeal to the National Human right Commission for intervention. They can also assist children from poor families who cannot afford legal fees to get free legal aid from Non-governmental organization, ensure proper implementation of the national Policy on Education for quality education and implant National Head policy in the school to ensure healthy growing of children. Other mechanism of child right enforcement include providing special care for handicapped or disable children in their school, reporting cases of violation of children rights to school based committee and to higher authorities at the primary school Education Board. The findings agree with Weibery (1978) who stated that one of the mechanism, for enforcement of child's rights is for school managers to promptly are decisively punish cases of violation of child right and to lay emphasis on developing strategies to enlighten teachers and pupils on child rights

## **VII. Conclusion**

Children are globally considered by the intentional community to be entitled to the general provisions of human rights enjoyed by all members of the human family. They are legally entitled, protection of their welfare and fundamental freedoms. Children in primary schools in Kebbi State are affected by violation of child rights in are form or the other. All categories of children across the social status suffer from child rights violation. School managers have a legal and moral responsibility to explore and execute mechanisms that will ensure effective enforcement of child rights of primary pupil in Kebbi State.

## **VIII. Recommendations**

1. There is the need to enlighten parents, teachers and pupils to be aware of various forms and manifestation of child right violation. This will enable them to recognize the forms of child rights violation and be vigilant to forestall occurrences for effective prevention.
2. School managers must be alert to identify various categories of children in their schools might be suffering as victims of child abuse either at home or even in the school environment .This will enable them to take appropriate measure to promptly address each case of violation with the gravity it deserving.
3. School managers school explore and execute legal, administrative and policy mechanisms to enforce child rights in primary school in Kebbi State. They could write to the courts, appeal to Human Rights Commission, secure legal aids, punish violation and give special care to handicapped or disabled children in their schools.

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