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**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN BRINGING UP
THE CRISIS-RIDDEN CHILDREN**

**AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
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THE AWARD OF THE MASTERS OF DIVINITY
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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with the aim of identifying what child sexual abuse was and if it was a problem in the Nigerian Society. It also pinpoints those responsible for this atrocity, and the behaviour that indicates that a child could be, or is suffering from child sexual abuse. The effect of child sexual abuse both temporary and permanent were also discussed.

This research also highlighted the role of the church in counseling the sexually abused child and their families.

The study revealed that child sexual abuse is a problem in the society today. It exposes the fact that, although parents are aware of the behavioural changes in their children, they do not check to find out the cause.

Despite the fact that child sexual abuse is an obvious evil in the society, this study reveals that not many people desire to speak up about it freely. It has also been revealed that the church is not educating the members enough on child sexual abuse and its evils, and that more should be done by the church in this area.

The study recommends that all the necessary preventive measures should be taken to combat this social vice and the church should counsel children who have been sexually abused.

CONCLUSION

This essay looked at one of the crises that can affect a child in his/her life time which the sexual abuse of children between the ages of 6-13 years. It extensively discussed the sexual offender and behavioural changes in a child, which can indicate sexual abuse. The effects of child sexual abuse both temporary and permanent were highlighted. The counseling role of the church towards the crisis ridden child and their family was also enunciated.

Two questionnaires were sent out and interviews were conducted to gain data for this research. From the analysis of the questionnaires it was discovered out that child sexual abuse is a problem in our society. Parents do notice behavioural changes in their children but do not do a thorough investigation to find out the reasons for the changes in their behaviour. Another discovery of this research is that the churches are not doing enough in the educating of both the congregation and the children on the evils of child sexual abuse and on the matter of how to protect the child against it.

It can be seen that child sexual abuse is a big problem in the society and is something that is not easily discussed or talked about. Prevention is better than cure so the saying goes, so the preventive measures should be taken as very important and put into practice so that children would be aware of what child sexual abuse is and be on their guard. Cure, is also important and when children who have been sexually abused come to the church, the church has the duty to help them find this cure for what has happened to them. The church must take this issue of child sexual abuse

serious because it is threaten the existence of the children, who are the church of both today and tomorrow.

As a result of the above findings the writer is suggesting the following recommendations:

To parents.

- 1. Parents should show their children love and keep the lines of communication open with them all the time, let the children know that they are approachable at all times with any kind of problem.
- 2. When parents notice any behavioural changes in their children they should make it a point of duty to find out why.
- 3. Children should be taught from the early age of 3 years on how to take care of their bodies and as from 6-13 years parents should discuss matters concerning sex abuse and its evils with the child. This is because it has been discovered that the children will not come with such matters to the parents.

To the Church:

- 1. That the pastor preaches about child sexual abuse and its evils from the pulpit. Like it was done in Daystar Church in Oregun area of Lagos state for a month (Martins 2004).
- 2. That the church should organizes family get together between parents and their children once every quarter in which questions are asked and answers given just like a school's Parent Teacher Association Meeting.
- 3. That the church send its pastor and children teachers for special training on how to handle child sexual abuse issues and how to teach sex education to both the younger and older children.
- 4. That the senior Pastor as well as the associate Pastor should endeavor to go to the children's section at least once in a quarter to teach sensitive topics to the children. Topics like Sex Education, Purity

unto the Lord, Child Sexual Abused and how to say No could be treated.

- 5. That the church should have a specially equipped room for counseling children in crisis, although it is quite expensive to equip, when thinking about the results and what it is to be used for, it is a worthwhile venture.
- 6. Every church should have a children's pastor and all workers in children's section be checked for any past offence in child abuse.

Suggestions for further Research

Child sexual abuse is a topic that is not so common in Nigeria and due to the fact that the act is on the increase, it therefore becomes important for more research to be undertaken in this area. Some suggested areas are.

1. A counseling programme for children who have been sexually abused.
2. A protection programme for children against being sexually abused.
3. Children sexually abused: who is at greater risk, the male or the female child?