

Teachers' Awareness of Child Rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State

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Abstract

This study investigated the level of awareness that teachers in the Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State have regarding child rights. The research utilized a descriptive survey design, with the primary objective being to assess the extent to which primary school teachers understand child rights, which are vital for the holistic development of children and societal progress. A random sample of 80 teachers from public primary schools participated in the study. Data were collected using a specially designed questionnaire titled "Teachers' Awareness of Child Rights" (TACR). The questionnaire was validated by experts in education, and its reliability was confirmed with an index of 0.73. The results indicated that teachers had a relatively low level of knowledge about child rights, with no significant difference in awareness between male and female teachers. However, a significant difference was observed based on the number of years of teaching experience. The study recommends that targeted training programs and seminars are necessary to enhance teachers' understanding of child rights. It underscores the importance of implementing gender-inclusive strategies and regularly reviewing policies to foster an environment conducive to child rights education. The recommendations also emphasize the need for collaborative efforts among educational stakeholders to ensure the effective promotion and protection of child rights within the school system.

Keywords: Teachers' Awareness, Child Rights, Primary Education

Introduction

The early stages of life are crucial for a child's growth and formation of their character, yet they also make them vulnerable to hazards such as exploitation, sexual abuse, and child labour. Children in Nigeria, especially those who are orphaned, fragile, or disabled, have substantial obstacles in obtaining high-quality education, resulting in poverty and poor health. Consequently, the outcome of this situation frequently involves the exclusion of girls and disabled children from educational institutions, which in turn gives rise to problems such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, sexual abuse, and exploitation. A child is defined

as an individual who is below the age of 18, and their entitlements are granted to them starting from the prenatal or foetal phase. The future of a civilization hinges on equipping children with the skills and values necessary to become productive and accountable members of the community. Although child rights and adult rights may appear to be distinct concepts, they are in fact both fundamental human rights that are interconnected. As a susceptible segment of society, children possess distinct entitlements that enable them to optimise their complete capabilities. Children should not be regarded as helpless in society.

A child is an integral member of both the family and the community, and possesses distinct entitlements and obligations that correspond to their stage of development. Children should have access to the essential elements of a decent existence, based on fundamental principles of human rights, rather than being granted special advantages or benefits. Each child, regardless of their gender and age, have distinct qualities and holds equal significance in terms of human dignity and respect. Furthermore, it is imperative to provide children with the chance to participate in all aspects and determinations. After the family, the school is another institution where it is necessary to provide and safeguard children's rights (Levine et al., 2020).

Consequently, teachers, following parents, must prioritise child rights and make diligent efforts to guarantee the fulfilment of all the necessary provisions pertaining to child rights within the school environment (Clark *et al.*, 2020). To effectively protect and uphold children's rights, it is crucial to examine teachers' level of understanding and knowledge on child rights (Robinson et al., 2018). Child rights mostly revolve around the specific safeguarding and nurturing provided to a child (Adonteng-Kissi, 2020). Hence, child rights can be defined as fundamental freedoms and privileges granted to every child, regardless of their social class, caste, race, faith, gender, language, religion, nationality, or aptitude. These child rights are universally applicable to all children, regardless of their geographical location. Oyeyemi (2022) submitted that, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a highly important agreement that declares the safeguarding of children and their entitlements.

The UNCRC of 1989 presents a comprehensive categorization of child rights, which includes the domains of survival, protection, development, and participation for every child (Adonteng-Kissi, 2020b). The 'Right to Survival' is an inherent right that begins even before the child's birth, encompassing the child's entitlement to be born, receive nourishment, clothing, and shelter, and live with dignity in this world (Giang, 2024). The second stage of the right to protection includes the entitlement to be safeguarded against child abuse, neglect, cruelty, and exploitation both within the home and in other locations (Giang, 2024). Additionally, the 'Right to Participation' grants the child an equitable entitlement to articulate their viewpoints, to be listened to, to obtain knowledge, and to join a collective (Ippolito, 2022).

The concept of 'Right to Development' embraces all aspects of development, including physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains. Emotional growth is nurtured via affection and good care from the family and community, while physical development is sustained through recreational activities, games, and nourishment. Education and learning, on the other hand, contribute to the acquisition of mental development.

Children's rights primarily pertain to the laws and policies within a country that impact various aspects of child well-being, including health, social welfare, education, special needs, child labour, exploitation, the sale and trafficking of children, and the administration of justice for young offenders (Brassard et al., 2020). These documents categorise the rights of children into survival rights, developmental rights, participation rights, and protection rights. Survival rights encompass the entitlements of a child to a dwelling, personal space, specialised support and aid, individuality, sustenance, and enough nourishment. Achmad (2023) averred that, developmental rights encompass a child's entitlement to sufficient healthcare, high-quality education, and the opportunity to receive special education. Participation rights encompass a child's entitlement to express their opinions, engage in play, participate in family discussions, join associations, live a life free from discrimination, and exchange views with others. The final category pertains to the right to protection, emphasising a child's entitlement to be safeguarded against abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and exploitation (Simon et al., 2020).

Nwozor and Okhillu (2022) argued that Nigeria should prioritise the development of policies aimed at increasing awareness about children's rights. This would involve raising awareness on the issue and ensuring that children's rights are given a more prominent position in social life. To achieve these goals, Nigeria should focus on implementing scientifically sound, practical, and achievable policies. The 2003 Child Rights Act, enacted by the federal government, aimed to guarantee the safeguarding of the rights of Nigerian children, regardless of their physical or mental abilities. However, child rights violations have persisted in the country. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2005, there were 15 million children in Nigeria who were engaged in labour, 6 million of whom were not attending school, and 2 million of whom were subjected to excessively long working hours. Nasution and Nasution (2021) additionally stated that a significant number of underage children were hired as domestic servants, and the most of them were not adequately nourished, let alone receiving an education.

As per the charters on rights and welfare of the child by the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990, a child is defined as any individual who is under the age of 18, unless they have reached maturity earlier according to the relevant laws (Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2020). Protection of human rights entails guaranteeing that individuals are able to fully enjoy the privileges associated with a dignified human existence. Ensuring a conducive environment for human rights is the primary responsibility of any government, as it upholds human rights as a fundamental civic ideal. Powell *et al.* (2020) submitted that, states should enact legislation to provide equitable access to human rights, so establishing a

robust legal framework that not only empowers citizens but also fosters a culture that upholds human rights. The state has the responsibility to uphold, safeguard, and defend the lives of individuals against human rights offenders. Nevertheless, it has been noted that numerous government organisations (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are actively involved in safeguarding individuals' human rights. Within any given society, it is the responsibility of every individual to uphold the rights of others. This necessitates the implementation of measures to safeguard these rights and impose penalties for any breaches (Trihastuti & Putri, 2020).

According to Crawford *et al.* (2021), it is anticipated that every ECE instructor demonstrates a sense of duty and shows care for their children. Forde (2022) concurred that early childhood education (ECE) instructors and carers should provide care and protection for children under their supervision, similar to the attentive care provided by mothers for their own children. Ireland (2012) reiterated the need of professional ECE teachers and carers consistently demonstrating professional skills and care while interacting with young children in their care. The CRC mandates that early childhood education (ECE) teachers and carers possess and implement the stipulations outlined in the Child Rights Act (CRA) within a school environment.

Teachers are another influential group of individuals that significantly contribute to the development and formation of a child's personality. Their purpose is to provide a supportive, favourable, welcoming, and engaging atmosphere for children. They are also responsible for ensuring that children have access to a high-quality education, promoting socialisation in a secure environment free from drugs and harassment, improving their health and well-being, and providing a safe and protective space for learning that is free from violence and abuse. Teachers must possess a profound understanding of child rights in order to prevent any infringements upon human rights. The political approaches of rulers, the substance of educational process elements, the practice processes, the works of non-governmental organisations, and the attitudes of families should all reflect conscious attitudes and awareness of children's rights (Cumming *et al.*, 2020). In their study, Heberle *et al.* (2020) argued that it is crucial to enhance awareness of children's rights through national policies. They emphasised the need to increase awareness on this issue and to give children's rights a more prominent role in society. To achieve these goals, they recommended the development of evidence-based and feasible policies.

Rose *et al.* (2021) evaluated the level of knowledge and implementation of child rights among secondary school teachers in Greater Mumbai, India. The results indicated that teachers had a remarkably low level of understanding and adherence to child rights. The findings indicated that 25 percent of the participants were unaware of the existence of UNCRC, 93 percent of the participants were unable to identify any of the four fundamental rights protected by UNCRC, and 80 percent of the participants were not familiar with the age specified for children according to UNCRC. A study proposed that acknowledging and

enabling the involvement of teachers and parents in a child's development is crucial, and they should be equipped with awareness of their child's entitlements. Several studies have been conducted on child rights, including a research carried out by Victoria in 2015. The study revealed a notable correlation between the awareness levels of male and female teachers. Consequently, male and female teachers in Nigerian early childhood education (ECE) facilities hold comparable beliefs regarding children's rights. The data indicates that 38% of the awareness level of female instructors may be accurately predicted based on the awareness level of male teachers. This demonstrates a strong correlation in awareness between the two groups.

Examining teachers' understanding of children's right to participate is crucial for ensuring that children have access to optimal developmental chances and high-quality educational settings. Primarily, it is imperative that every child is afforded the right to receive love, care, support, and safeguarding from their parents. It is essential for a child to have a supportive home environment that offers love, a suitable upbringing, and fulfils their fundamental needs such as food, education, and shelter. This is crucial for the child's physical, moral, and mental development. In addition, it is important for them to establish a supportive environment that encourages children to interact and connect with others. Simultaneously, they should also supervise the social circle their children have to safeguard against detrimental influences.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined the level of teachers' knowledge and understanding of child rights in the Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The Nigerian society is responsible for fulfilling the basic requirements of its children and supporting the growth of their personalities, talents, and capacities. Nevertheless, despite extensive global endeavours to advance and safeguard the rights of children through international conferences, summits, and similar initiatives, the rights of children in Nigeria remain significantly vulnerable and inadequately protected. Every day, child rights are being infringed upon; children are experiencing significant adversity and deprivation of their essential necessities. The inference is that both the child and the community, as well as the entire nation, experience a hindrance in their progress and advancement. This is because the progress and advancement of any nation heavily rely on the development of its children. Various academics have attempted to address this issue by examining numerous variables, including teachers' awareness of child rights, attitudes of instructors and parents towards child rights, and other factors. However, the problem continues to remain. This study intends to address the research gap by examining the level of awareness among teachers on child rights, as awareness is a prerequisite for taking appropriate action. When the rights of children are upheld and safeguarded, their individuality, capabilities, and aptitudes will be nurtured to their maximum potential, ensuring not just their own future but also the future of the nation.

Research Question

The research question is intended to guide this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of teachers about child rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on years of experience.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey method to examine teachers' level of awareness on child rights in the Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The target population consists of all elementary school educators in Asa. The researcher employed a methodology of simple random selection to choose a total of 80 teachers from public primary schools. Therefore, a total of eighty participants were selected for the research conducted in the Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. A single instrument, namely a questionnaire, was employed to gather data for this investigation. Questionnaire on Teachers' Awareness of Child Rights (TACRQ): The test was partitioned into two distinct sections: section A, which collected demographic information, and section B, consisting of 15 items designed to assess teachers' awareness of child rights. The instrument's validity was assessed by professionals in the field of education, while its reliability was evaluated by the test and re-test procedure, yielding a reliability index of 0.73. The study question was examined using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, and mean. The hypotheses were analysed using an independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). All hypotheses were assessed at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Answering the Research Question

Research Question: What is the level of awareness of teachers about child's rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 1: Frequency, Percentage and Mean Distribution of Responses on the Level of Awareness of Teachers about Child's Rights

S/N	ITEMS	NA	A	HA	FA	MEAN
1	The welfare of children' developmental rights should be prioritised.	25 (31.3)	32 (40.0)	4 (5.0)	19 (23.8)	2.21
2	Children should be provided with sufficient access to a satisfactory standard of living.	21 (26.3)	38 (41.5)	6 (7.5)	15 (18.8)	2.19
3	Children should be entitled to equitable access to education.	34 (42.5)	23 (28.7)	5 (6.3)	18 (22.5)	2.09
4	Children should not be exposed to any type of mistreatment.	25 (31.3)	37 (46.3)	4 (5.0)	14 (17.5)	2.09
5	The consideration of pupils' interests should always be prioritised.	23 (28.7)	22 (27.5)	11 (13.8)	24 (30.0)	2.45
6	The right to survival of pupils should not be compromised.	23 (28.7)	39 (48.8)	3 (3.8)	24 (18.8)	2.13
7	Children possess the fundamental entitlement to life.	32 (40.0)	21 (26.3)	3 (3.8)	24 (30.0)	2.24
8	Children should not be exposed to any type of discrimination.	21 (26.3)	38 (47.5)	5 (6.3)	16 (20.0)	2.20
9	It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to provide care and protection for pupils.	31 (38.8)	29 (36.3)	6 (7.5)	14 (17.5)	2.04
10	Children possess the entitlement to inquire.	20 (25.0)	36 (45.0)	6 (7.5)	18 (22.5)	2.27
11	Children should not experience any type of marginalisation	23 (28.7)	28 (35.0)	10 (12.5)	19 (23.8)	2.31
12	Children are entitled to receive protection	27 (33.8)	33 (41.3)	3 (3.8)	17 (21.3)	2.13
13	It is not appropriate to forcibly separate pupils from their parents	20 (25.0)	30 (37.5)	7 (8.8)	23 (28.7)	2.41
14	It is imperative to safeguard children from neglect and exploitation	25 (31.3)	35 (42.5)	9 (11.3)	12 (15.0)	2.10

15	Children should be shielded from tasks that hinder their education	24 (30.6)	36 (45.0)	4 (5.0)	16 (20.0)	2.15
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Grand Mean	2.20
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According to Table 1, teachers had a negative awareness of child rights, with a weighted average (WA) of 2.20. The analysis will be presented in a comprehensive manner: Pupils developmental right should be taken care of (mean = 2.21), Pupils should have access to adequate standard of living (mean = 2.19), Pupils should have the right to equality education (mean = 2.09), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of abuse (mean = 2.09), Pupil's interest should always be considered (mean = 2.45), Pupils' survival right should not be violated (mean = 2.13), Pupils have the right to life Pupils have the right to good health (mean = 2.24), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of discrimination (mean = 2.20), Pupils should be cared for and protected by the parents and teachers (mean = 2.04), Pupils have right to ask questions (mean = 2.27), Pupils should not be subjected to any form of marginalization (mean = 2.31), Pupils have right to protection (mean = 2.13), Pupils should not be separated from the parents with force (mean = 2.41), Pupils should be protected from neglects and exploitation (mean = 2.10), Pupils should be protected from task that impede their education (mean = 2.15). Therefore, the teacher's understanding of child rights is considered inadequate since the calculated weighted average mean of 2.20 falls below the threshold of 2.5.

Hypotheses Testing

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender

Table 2: t-test results showing the difference of male and female teachers' awareness of child rights

Gender	n	Mean	SD	df	Sig.	Remark
Male	43	33.30	5.60	78	0.67	Not Rejected
Female	37	32.70	6.11			

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference between male and the female teachers' awareness in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State ($t = 0.423$; $df = 78$; $p > 0.05$).

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on years of experience.

Table 3: ANOVA Result showing Difference of Teachers' Awareness of Child Rights based on Years of Teaching Experience

Experience	N	Sum of square	Mean of square	F	df	Sig.	Remark
0-5years	19	300.848	100.283		3		
6-10years	35						
11-15years	13			3.236	76	0.027	Not Accepted
16years above	13	2356.152	30.989				
Total	80	2656.000			79		

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference in teachers' awareness of child right based on years of experience ($F_{(3,76)} = 3.236$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected

Discussion of the Findings

The primary school teacher's awareness of child right in Asa Local Government, Kwara state is negative because the weighted average mean obtained which is 2.20 is less than 2.5. The finding that primary school teachers in Asa Local Government, Kwara state, exhibit a negative awareness of child rights, as indicated by a weighted average mean score of 2.20, suggests a concerning gap in their understanding of fundamental rights and protections for children. This finding aligns with broader concerns about the state of child rights education in Nigeria, where varying levels of awareness among educators have been documented. Empirical studies conducted in similar contexts provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to low awareness levels among teachers. For instance, research by Nwozor and Okhillu (2022) underscores the importance of targeted training programs aimed at enhancing teachers' knowledge of child rights. Such interventions could address specific gaps in understanding and equip educators with the tools to promote child rights within the classroom and beyond.

Moreover, comparative studies examining teacher awareness across different regions or countries offer useful points of comparison. Rose et al. (2021) conducted a comparative study on teacher awareness and attitudes towards child rights in urban and rural areas, highlighting the influence of socio-economic factors on awareness levels. By contextualizing the findings in Asa Local Government within broader national and international trends, policymakers can develop more nuanced strategies for improving awareness and promoting child rights education. An analysis of child rights policies at the local and national levels is also essential for understanding the institutional context in which teachers operate. Farinloye et al. (2024) conducted a policy analysis on child rights policies in Nigeria, shedding light on the gaps between policy intentions and implementation realities. Addressing these gaps requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations to ensure that child rights are effectively promoted and protected in practice.

Also, finding revealed that, there is no significant difference between male and the female primary school teachers' awareness in Asa Local Government, Kwara state ($t = 0.423$; $df = 78$; $p > 0.05$). The finding suggests that there is no significant difference in the awareness of child rights between male and female primary school teachers in Asa Local Government, Kwara state ($t = 0.423$; $df = 78$; $p > 0.05$). This finding is significant in understanding the dynamics of gender and awareness of child rights within the educational context. Research examining gender differences in awareness of child rights among educators provides valuable insights into the broader societal context. Studies such as that by Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) have explored gender disparities in educational attainment and professional opportunities for teachers in Nigeria. Understanding these disparities is crucial for addressing systemic barriers to gender equality within the teaching profession, which may impact awareness levels.

Moreover, comparative studies that analyze gender differences in awareness of child rights across different regions or countries offer important points of comparison. For example, a study by Amosun et al. (2021) examined gender disparities in teacher awareness of child rights in a neighboring state, providing insights into regional variations and potential factors influencing awareness levels. Policy analysis is also essential for contextualizing gender dynamics within the broader institutional framework. Studies such as that by Evans et al. (2021) have examined gender-sensitive approaches to teacher training and professional development, highlighting the importance of inclusive policies and practices in promoting gender equality within the education sector.

Finally, finding revealed that, there is a significant difference in primary school teachers' awareness of child right in Asa Local Government, Kwara state based on years of experience ($F_{(3,76)} = 3.236$; $P > 0.05$). That is, the study conducted in Asa Local Government, Kwara state, regarding primary school teachers' awareness of child rights presents a significant finding: there is no substantial difference in awareness levels based on years of experience. This outcome challenges common assumptions that teachers with more years in the profession would possess greater awareness of child rights. Instead, it suggests that factors beyond mere tenure influence teachers' understanding of this crucial aspect of education.

To contextualize this finding, let's consider relevant empirical studies examining similar phenomena. For instance, Meghani et al. (2021) conducted a study in a neighbouring state, finding comparable results that highlight the broader trend of consistent awareness levels across varying experience groups. One potential explanation for this finding could be the effectiveness of training programs or professional development initiatives in the region. Perhaps, regardless of experience, teachers receive similar levels of education and resources regarding child rights, leading to consistent awareness levels across all experience groups. This notion finds support in the findings of Bostic et al. (2023), who observed similar trends in a nationwide study on the impact of teacher training programs on child rights awareness. Alternatively, systemic factors within the educational system may overshadow the influence of experience on awareness. Understanding these potential explanations requires further

investigation through qualitative research methods or surveys to gather insights directly from teachers.

Conclusion

The findings from the study on primary school teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government, Kwara state reveal several significant conclusions. Firstly, the study indicates a concerning gap in teachers' understanding of child rights, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance their knowledge in this area. Empirical evidence supports the efficacy of tailored training programs in improving awareness levels. Additionally, the study finds no significant difference in awareness levels between male and female teachers, highlighting the importance of addressing gender dynamics within the educational context. Furthermore, the study challenges assumptions about the relationship between years of experience and awareness of child rights, suggesting that factors beyond tenure play a significant role. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of reevaluating educational strategies and policies to ensure effective promotion and protection of child rights within the school system in Asa Local Government, Kwara state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to address the gaps in primary school teachers' awareness of child rights in Asa Local Government, Kwara state:

1. Implement targeted training programs to enhance primary school teachers' understanding of child rights, providing comprehensive knowledge and resources to promote and protect children's rights in the classroom and beyond.
2. Promoting gender-inclusive approaches in training and awareness initiatives can help address disparities in awareness levels between male and female teachers, fostering an inclusive learning environment.
3. A thorough review of current child rights policies at local and national levels can identify areas for improvement, thereby fostering an environment conducive to child rights education.
4. Encourage collaboration among educational stakeholders, policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations to enhance awareness of child rights and implement effective strategies within the education sector.
5. Implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of awareness-raising initiatives and training programs, ensuring sustained progress in promoting child rights awareness among primary school teachers in Asa Local Government, Kwara state.

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