

CHILD’S RIGHTS IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY: THE NEED FOR FULLER RECOGNITION AND ENFORCEMENT

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Abstract

It is interesting to know that children have rights. The rights are that which protect them as humans. These include fundamental rights guaranteed to all human beings such as the right to life, non-discrimination principle, right to dignity through the protection of physical and mental integrity, including protection against slavery, torture and bad treatments. They have rights to identity, nationality, education, decent standard of living, health, and right to live with their parents and develop spiritually, physically and intellectually. They have rights to benefit from all-round protection. However, it is sad that ignorance, negligence, lack of recognition and enforcement have caused these rights to be disregarded, violated and trampled upon in the Nigerian society. Rash punishment of innocent children has otherwise become the order of the day, which yields very little or no positive outcome from the children; some of the children experiencing suffering have died or become more radical than expected. They become useful instruments in the fermentation of trouble and promotion of conflicts in society. This study identifies and examines the extent through which children’s rights are violated in Nigeria and calls for due regard, respect and proper enforcement of children’s rights in the country.

Keywords: child’s rights, education, protection, conflict, Nigeria.

Child’s Rights Violation in Nigeria

From the theological and ethical perspective, this study identifies and examines certain issues pertaining to the rights of children in Nigeria. Surprisingly, children’s rights are violated and trampled upon in recent years not minding their ages and vulnerability. This is indeed alarming and disturbing. The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 defines more precisely the term “child”: “A child is any human being below the age of *eighteen years*, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”¹ The age limit of below eighteen years for childhood is

¹ United Nations. 1989. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

accepted and considered in this study. The overwhelming idea is that the child is a human being with rights and dignity. What characterizes a child is his youth and vulnerability. Indeed, the child is a growing and future adult, who has no means to protect himself. Therefore, the child has to be the object of a particular interest with a specific protection and care in the family and the larger society.

Children's rights were recognised after the 1st World war, with the adoption of the Declaration of Geneva, in 1924.² The process of recognition of children's rights continued, but the UN actually adopted the Declaration of children's rights in 1959. The recognition of the child's interest and his rights became real on 20 November 1989 with the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child which is the first international legally binding text recognizing all the fundamental rights of the child. Actually, children's rights unreservedly consider the vulnerable character of the child. They imply the necessity to protect them. It means to grant a particular assistance to them and to give a protection adapted to their age and to their degree of maturity. Children have to be helped and supported and must be protected against labour exploitation, kidnapping, and all forms of ill-treatment in the family and the society at large.

Children's rights are rights they have and supposedly enjoy as children who are under the guardianship of their parents. Human Rights are therefore rights inherent to all human beings, irrespective of nationality, place of residence, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. All human beings are equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. The United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights attests that the principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of International Human Rights law.³ Human Rights could also be seen as rights every human is born with, rights that inhere in every human, "and are attached to all human beings everywhere and in all societies by virtue of being human, and since it is natural and God-given, it cannot be taken

UNHCHR, s.a. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. ([http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/94bdb9f59b43a424c12563ed0052b664?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/94bdb9f59b43a424c12563ed0052b664?OpenDocument))

² Geneva Declaration. 1924. <https://www.humanium.org/n/geneva-declaration/> Accessed date: 4 July 2020.

³ OHCHR. United Nations Human Rights: office of the High Commissioner for human rights. www.ohchr.org/EN/issues/Pages/WhatAreHumanRights.aspx Date of access: 13 Oct. 2019

away.⁴ Children are therefore scripturally and ethically bound to enjoy their rights irrespective of their culture, religion and race. Careful study and perusals of related literature with regard to children's rights reveal that many parents, teachers, caregivers and social institutions do not have fuller understanding of these rights. This therefore, leads to people unconsciously taking the laws into their hands by meting all sorts of punishments and sufferings on the children. Adults also misuse children in conflicts situations, in the family and beyond which directly or indirectly introduce them to all forms of social vices in the society.

The problem therefore is that in Nigeria, majority of children do not enjoy their full rights; rather, they are subjected to unnecessary punishments and are wrongly used in unprofitable and unworthy ventures like creation of trouble, instigation of conflicts, hawking and trading. The overarching research question is: why do adults enjoy their rights to a greater extent, while most children are deprived of their fundamental rights especially with regard to education and fair treatment? It is a common fact that despite the wide acceptance and ratification of the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child - a human rights treaty that outlines the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children, that the children in Nigeria are still being abused, neglected, and exploited. In most Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) like Nigeria, the rights of children are violated daily and almost with impunity. Children are abducted, raped, maimed, starved, deprived of education, neglected, and engaged in child labour with inadequate judicial systems or institutions to seek redress.⁵

According to Onome, in Nigeria, about 10.5 million children are currently out of school. This figure constitutes half of the population of out-of-school-children (OOSC) in the world, which was pegged at 20.5 million in 2017. About 50 percent of the 10.5 million out-of-school-children in Nigeria are girls and 50 percent of these populations are in Northern Nigeria - a region which has been plagued by the Boko Haram Insurgency since 2009.⁶ In addition to the huge number of OOSC, Nigeria's educational system is

⁴ J. N. Ezeilo. *Women, law & human rights: global and national perspectives*. (Enugu: Acena Publishers, 2011), 5.

⁵ O. Onome. "Child's rights violations in Nigeria," (2018), <https://theowp.org/reports/violations-of-the-rights-of-the-child-the-nigeria-example/> Date of access: 21 Feb. 2021.

⁶ Tribune Online. 'FG laments over 10.5 million out-of-school children,' July 27, 2017, <https://www.tribuneonlineng.com/fg-laments-10.5-million-school-children/> Accessed Date: 4th Feb. 2021.

deficient in more ways than one. Indeed, the poor educational system in Nigeria has been a literary staple. In 2017, Nigeria's quality of education ranked 125th out of 137 countries on the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Competitiveness Index. Nigerian public schools are characterized by dilapidated structures, inadequate educational materials, overcrowding, poor funding, and poorly trained teachers.⁷ It is very clear that children are targeted in the Boko Haram insurgency. Children are increasingly being kidnapped and used as child soldiers, suicide bombers, and sex slaves by the insurgents. It has been almost seven years since the well-publicized abduction of 276 schoolgirls from their dormitories in the town of Chibok, northeastern Nigeria. The insurgents have kidnapped hundreds of girls from school's dormitories, as well as communities, the most recent being the abduction of 110 girls from their dormitory in Dapchi, Yobe State. Although 104 of the Dapchi girls have been returned, 1 - Leah Sharibu, remains in captivity for her refusal to convert to Islam.

Sadly, girls abducted by the insurgents are subject to systemic rape, which results in childhood pregnancies. Many of the young girls who get pregnant by their abductors are unfortunately ostracized by community members on their release for carrying "children of Boko Haram." The plights of children in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps are equally deplorable. With little or no government-led interventions, children (especially those who are orphaned by the insurgency) are vulnerable to sexual harassment and child labour in order to make ends meet.

A 2006 UNICEF report revealed that 15 million children under the age of 14 are working in Nigeria. Most recently, a 2016/2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS5) by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA), and the National Agency for the Control of Aids (NACA) revealed that about 50.8 percent of Nigerian children between the ages of 5 and 17 are involved in child labour.⁸ Poverty is a major reason for child labour in Nigeria. Extremely poor households are usually left with no option but to employ children as hawkers, messengers, house helps, and cleaners in order to improve chances for survival. Regardless of the preceding circumstances, however, child labour is a contravention on the rights of the child to protection. Very recently, a

⁷ O. Onome. "Child's rights violations in Nigeria"

⁸ Vanguard. Nigerian children engagement in labour. *Magazine*, 1 February 2018. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/com/2018/02/50-nigeria-children-engage-child-labour-nbs>
Accessed Date: 6th Feb. 2021.

documentary by a foremost media channel in Nigeria exposed violations of child rights in Cross River State of Nigeria. According to the narrative, the Becheve tribe of the state practiced a dehumanizing culture of giving out underage girls in marriage in exchange for a loan.⁹ In Nigeria, 43% of girls are married before they are 18 years and 17% of girls are married before they turn 15 years. In 2003, the Child Rights Act set the age of married at 18. But, 15 years later, only 23 of the country's 36 States have passed the Act. Worse still, there is yet to be a consensus on the definition of the child among the States in Nigeria. While Akwa Ibom State sets the age at 16 years, Jigawa State defines a child not by age but by puberty, allegedly for the purpose of early marriage.¹⁰

The issue of Female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision (FGM/C) is still prevalent in Nigeria. The Violence against Persons Prohibition Act was signed May 2015 in order to curtail and criminalize FGM/C in Nigeria. But the practice still thrives, particularly in the South-Western region of Nigeria. Culturally, they believe that circumcision of girls reduces promiscuity and sexual urges, as such, they feel they have good reason to continue. Parents who therefore refuse to subject their female children for circumcision are ostracized and threatened with death through diabolical means.¹¹

There is also prevalence in malnutrition among children under five years despite efforts by the government, the United Nations, and the private sector to curb this menace.¹² Additionally, the National Dailies in Nigeria is replete with heart-wrenching stories of domestic violence against children. Children who are sent to live with relatives as maids in order to gain an education suffer an even worse fate.¹³ Child's Right Act is the law that guarantees the rights of all children in Nigeria. So far 24 out of 36 States of

⁹ Media Africa. Magazine, 21 November, 2022.

<https://media.africaportal.org/document/chapter-9-2-2015-1.pdf> Accessed Date: 4th Feb. 2023.

¹⁰ O. Onome. "Child's rights violations in Nigeria"

¹¹ O. Akingboye. 'Female genital mutilation still a big threat to Nigerian girl-child survival, development,' *The Guardian*, 14 January 2018, <https://guardian.ng/features/female-genital-mutilation-still-a-big-threat-to-nigerian-girl-child-survival-development/> Accessed Date: 24th Feb. 2021.

¹² N. Adebowale-Tambe. 'Malnutrition worsens in Nigeria despite govt, private sector efforts — Report,'

Premium Times, 2 February 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-news/257431-malnutrition-worsens-nigeria-despite-govt-private-sector-efforts-reports.html> Accessed Date: 4th Jan. 2021.

¹³ O. Onome. "Child's rights violations in Nigeria"

Nigeria have adopted the CRA as a State law. There are therefore twelve (12) States in Nigeria that are yet to adopt the CRA in their States' laws.¹⁴ This calls for urgent move by the Federal Government of Nigeria. A child as defined by Child's Right Act (2003) is any person under the age of 18. National Human Rights Commission as parts of its mandates to promote, protect and enforce the rights of all citizens as well as foreign nationals in Nigeria undertakes several procedures of promoting and protecting the rights of children under this age because they are vulnerable.

The Commission takes up the rights of children from fetus when appropriate responsibility of the unborn child is neglected. The Commission admits and investigates matters around inhuman and degrading treatment of a mother upon whose ripple effect hamper the survival and development rights of the child. At the National Human Rights Commission, it is recognized that children, boys and girls can be victims of abuse and exploitation in all of its forms. One can however, report to the Commission on any matter of right violations against any child. The Commission can work well through collective advocacy - anyone can send complaint to the Commission for its intervention. The National Human Rights Commission is most strategically positioned to promote and protect every child across the States in Nigeria. But, this Commission has not gone deeper into the rural areas for their work and awareness campaign. Children still suffer diverse ills in the rural areas. There is need for everyone everywhere to contribute by making a stand, and saying that no Child — male or female, deserves maltreatment in any form.

Nigeria adopted the Child's Rights Act in 2003, giving legal consent to both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This was done in line with the Nigerian's constitution which states that for an international law to take effect, Nigeria's legislature must create a national version (Nigeria). However, as Nigeria operates a federal system of government, the law does not automatically become applicable in all its 36 States. In terms of the Constitution, children's issues are the preserve of the constituent States. Each State's legislature must make the national law applicable within its territory. And only 25 of the 36 states in Nigeria have localized the Child's Rights Act. Currently, 11 States, all in Northern Nigeria, have yet to domesticate the

¹⁴ NHRC, 2003. National Human Rights Commission
<https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/focus-areas/child-rights.html> Date of access: 21 Feb. 2021.

Child's Rights Act.¹⁵ There are no records of discussions or debates about the Act in these State's legislatures. It has been argued that other laws, including the Constitution, are able to protect children. But children in those States are still subject to practices like early marriage, female genital mutilation, and begging.¹⁶ Child marriage is a prevalent practice in parts of the north. Children about the age of 10 or 12 years get betrothed or married off.¹⁷ While the Child's Rights Act prohibits child betrothal and child marriage, there are other operational laws that make exceptions.¹⁸ The basis for this is that in Islam, puberty is a determining factor in a (girl) child's readiness for marriage. Fixing 18 years as the minimum age does not fit their doctrine.¹⁹ The need for child's rights enforcement therefore becomes pertinent in some States in Nigeria. Other religious concerns against the acceptance of the Child's Rights Act in some States include children's right to freedom of religion, differences in the inheritance rights of male and female children, and the Sharia's prohibition of adoption, in favor of kafalah, which distinguishes between biological and non-biological children.²⁰

Recognition of Children's Rights

The rights of children are fundamental issues which deserve special recognition. As discussed earlier, emphases are laid on the extent of Nigerians' recognition of children's rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the rights of a child, the Nigerian Constitution and other legal documents.

¹⁵ N. Adebowale-Tambe. 'UPDATED: 11 states in northern Nigeria yet to pass child rights law — UNICEF Official,' *Premiuntimes*, May 11, 2019, <https://www.premiuntimesng.com/news/more-news/329511-12-states-in-northern-nigeria-yet-to-pass-child-rights-law-unicef-official.html> Accessed Date: 2th Dec. 2020

¹⁶ Media Africa. Magazine, 21 November, 2022. <https://media.africaportal.org/document/chapter-9-2-2015-1.pdf> Accessed Date: 4th Feb. 2023

¹⁷ Nigeria. Save the Children. https://Nigeria.savethechildren.net/files/library/changing_the_story_of_the_Nigerian_Girl_Child.pdf. Accessed Date: 12th Feb. 2021.

¹⁸ Saflii. Law movement: Committed to publishing judgments provided by the court online, - JOURNALS. <http://www.saflii.org/za/journals/AHRLJ/2014/24.pdf>. Accessed Date: 5th Dec. 2021.

¹⁹ Al-islam, Muslim marriage. <https://www.al-islam.org/religion-al-islam-and-marriage/age-marriage> Date of Access: 23 Nov. 2020.

²⁰ Kafalah. Migrant labourers. <http://www.ahrj.up.ac.za/assim-u-sloth-nielsen-j> Accessed Date: 28th Feb. 2021.

Children's rights are human rights. They protect the child as a human being. As human rights, children's rights are constituted by fundamental guarantees and essential human rights, which are associated with the following:

- Children's rights recognize fundamental guarantees to all human beings: the right to life, the non-discrimination principle, the right to dignity through the protection of physical and mental integrity (protection against slavery, torture and bad treatments).
- Children's rights are *civil and political rights*, such as the right to identity, the right to a nationality.
- Children's rights are *economic, social and cultural rights*, such as the rights to good food, education, decent standard of living and health.
- Children's rights include individual rights: the right to live with his/her parents, and the right to benefit from a protection.
- Children's rights also include *collective rights*: rights of refugee and disabled children, of minority children or from autochthonous (i.e. parental or related) groups.²¹

Children's rights are human rights specifically adapted to the child because they take into account his fragility, specificities and age-appropriate needs. Children's rights take into account the necessity of development of the child. The children thus have the rights to live and to develop suitably, physically and intellectually. Children's rights plan to satisfy the essential needs for a good development of the child, such as the access to an appropriate alimentation (acts of supplying food and nourishment), to necessary care and to education. They imply the necessity to protect them. It means to grant a particular assistance to them and to give a protection adapted to their age and to their degree of maturity. Therefore, the children have to be helped, supported and be protected against labour exploitation, kidnapping, and all forms of ill-treatment in the family and the society at large. Defence is however needed for children whose rights are violated; protection is also needed for the most vulnerable children, especially while in the school environment.²² The rights of children must be made accessible to all without

²¹ H. Brighouse. 'How Should Children Be Heard?' *Arizona Law Review*, (Fall). 2003: 691–711.

²² J. Griffin. 'Do Children Have Rights?' in *The Moral and Political Status of Children: New Essays*, D. Archard and C. Macleod (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002:19–30.

discrimination. With these in mind, it is necessary to work for a world where children's rights are recognized, enforced, protected and respected.

It is true that Nigerians recognise children's rights in a way, but, actual implementation of most of them are inadequate. In Nigeria, we still have children roaming the street and/or hawking without going to school. Insecurity is the order of the day; children are abducted, kidnapped and even threatened while in school. Many children suffer malnutrition which affects their social, psychological and intellectual well-being. The standard of living is low and as such most children live in thatched houses which, also affect their health, coupled with inadequate health facilities. In Nigeria, especially in the rural areas, there are a lot of malnourished children. Even the parents are malnourished too due to high cost of living – lack of food and other essential needs. The children's rights to live and to develop suitably - physically and intellectually are directly or indirectly thwarted. Children's access to appropriate alimentation (food supply and nourishment), necessary care and education are unsatisfactory. They do not enjoy the protection corresponding with their age and degree of maturity. These call for rethinking and reconsideration of the country's policies in order to accommodate and cater for children who are the potential leaders of tomorrow. Really, mere recognition of these rights is not enough; there is need for serious enforcement and implementation. This will make the essence of child's rights realisable, meaningful and enjoyable.

Enforcement of Children's Rights

The enforcement of children's right is of high necessity; the main reason is that, children are young human beings and some of them are too young to fight for themselves. As human beings they inevitably and evidently agents deserving moral obligations. There are things that should not be done to them for the simple reason that they are humans.²³ There are things that arguably should not be done to children because they are children, such as forced labor and conscription into military service.²⁴ The children need care, and their rights must be enforced for them and on the adults who may want to violate

²³ S. Hannan. 'Why Childhood is Bad for Children?' *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 35. 2018:11–14.

²⁴ D. W. Archard. "Children's Rights", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/rights-children/>. Accessed date: 3 June 2021.

them. What makes children a special case for philosophical consideration is their humanity and youthfulness. One very obvious way to begin the process of enforcing children's rights is by understanding what they are entitled to do, to be and to have as children. Adults and the government should always ask themselves: do children have rights and are they enforced? What are the rights they have alongside the adults and what are the rights they have as children?²⁵ If adults do not know children's rights, how can they treat the children in the morally right way? This is the challenge. Adults should be made to know the rights of children, enforce and fully implement them. By so doing, the country would boast of good and patriotic citizens in the future.

Most jurisdictions accord children legal rights and many countries including Nigeria have wholly ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child which was first adopted in 1989. The Convention accords to children a wide range of rights including, most centrally, the right to have their '*best interests*' being 'a primary consideration' in all actions concerning them (Article 3), the '*inherent right to life*' (Article 6), and the right of a child "who is capable of forming his or her own views - to express these views freely in all matters affecting the child" (Article 12).²⁶ Actually, parents, care-givers and the government have the responsibilities of nurturing, training, providing and protecting the children and their rights for their balanced development as the future leaders of the country.

Children's Rights and the Biblical Message

Theologically, the Bible message has some affirmations on the rights of a child. Some key theological themes are vigorously considered with emphases on Church, Mosque, family and the society where children are deeply involved.

Children in the Church and Mosque Today

It is on Biblical records that both in the Old and New Testament times, children were not really recognized or counted during population census. When the Israelites left Egypt, they were about six hundred thousand men, the children alongside women were not counted (Exo. 3:8-12:31-37), and when Jesus fed

²⁵ L. M. Kopelman. 1997a. 'Children and Bioethics: Uses and Abuses of the Best-Interests Standard', *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 22: 213–15.

²⁶ United Nations (UDHR). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ Date of access: 14 May 2019.

the five thousand, children alongside women were not included in the figure (John 6:1-14). But today, we have many children in Churches and Mosques participating actively. This necessitates the need for their protection and security amongst other rights.

Children in the Family and Society Today

In the family and society at large the disrespect for the human dignity of children and violation of their human rights are still matters of serious concern. Children are still more prone to infected diseases and have lesser access to education in many developing countries. Every Christian and Muslim should therefore be a champion for the total restoration of the human dignity of children. Christ introduced a life-style of equality and respect, and Christians, portraying the attitude of Christ, must translate and develop this life-style in a modern context.²⁷

Recommendations

From the foregoing, it can be argued that Nigeria is not a very safe place for children and that the country still has a long way to go in ensuring the rights of the child. To this end, the following should be considered:

First, the Federal Government, as well as the 36 States and the FCT governments, must come to a consensus on the definition of the child in accordance with the UNCRC. The Child's Rights Act and the African Children's Charter define a child as a person below 18 years. But various laws in Nigeria define children differently and for various purposes. The government needs to take the lead in harmonizing the various definitions in conformity with these international and regional laws.

Second, it is quite appalling that there is no *Ministry for Children in Nigeria* - the closest that comes to that is the Ministry of Education. A Ministry or, in the least, an agency, for children should be established with a responsibility for the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural well-being of children.

²⁷ J. M. Vorster. Christian attitude in the South African liberal democracy. 1st ed. (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Theological Publications, 2007), 271.

Third, *punitive measures and systems for violators of child rights should be taken seriously*, as this would deter intending offenders. This can be achieved by strong recognition and enforcement of children's rights and the penalties awaiting the offenders.

Fourth, upholding the rights of children is not just a duty for the government alone; it requires concerted efforts between all strata and spheres of the society. The 3 P's of the Child Rights Act: **Provision, Protection and Participation** must be upheld in order to build a sustainable future for children.

Fifth, a constitutional amendment would ensure unification of practice across the nation. It should leave no loopholes for contradictory laws, particularly at the State and Local levels or based on religion or customs. The Constitutional amendment should consider the multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of Nigerian society and should also focus on the best interest of all children.

Sixth, while the constitution does not expressly declare Nigeria to be a secular State, a harmonious approach to law making that does not vilify (spread negative information about) religion is in the best interests of the child. *Religious and traditional leaders* are "gatekeepers" who cannot be jettisoned. Negotiations with them should not devalue their religion, but get them to become drivers of change for the benefit of children.

Seventh, the importance of public education campaigns about the issues cannot be overemphasized. The voices of children must also be amplified.

Eighth, States that have domesticated the Child's Rights Act also have a role to play in challenging the remaining 11 States to do the same. They can do this by showing concrete evidence of the change in the lives of children in those States. For example, female genital mutilation, a prohibited harmful traditional practice, abduction, forced marriage and child maltreatment which are still common in some States in Nigeria.

Ultimately, where children are concerned, all actions must be in their best interests. The first step in that regard is applying the Child's Rights Act across the country.

Conclusion

It is very clear and undisputable fact that child's rights violation is more or less a recurrent factor in our today's society. Children suffer all kinds of things like corporal punishment, hunger, health challenges, abduction, illiteracy and depression as a result of hopelessness and darkened future. These experiences force most of them into stealing, banditry, conflicts insinuations, rioting and all other social vices. Fuller recognition of children's rights in all States in Nigeria in the 21st century is both pertinent and imperative. There is an increase in child abuse, child trafficking, maltreatment and corporal punishment; well meted on children on daily basis. The enforcement of children's rights in the family and the society at large remain the responsibility of all especially the parents, traditional rulers, clergymen and the government at all levels. The study has discovered inadequacy in the recognition of children's rights in Nigeria especially in the Northern part with strict Sharia law and culture that permit children (especially males) to go out begging instead of being in the school studying. The enforcement of children's rights is seemingly weak and needs to be strengthened.

The children must be given their proper welfare, protection and participation rights for the actualization of their future. The Biblical message therefore calls for high respect on children and their rights as humans. Spiritually, children possess some spiritual gifts, virtues and qualities as adults do; they are the image of God with common grace, redeemed by Christ and they are also the ambassadors of Christ on earth. More so, irrespective of their status, they will alongside the adults stand before the judgement seat of Christ. The UN Convention on the rights of a child as selectively incorporated in this article empowers children for their rights. The existence of children's rights enables both the adults and the children to know how to uphold, respect and protect their rights for the betterment of all. This is a solemn call on individuals, the government and non-governmental organizations. Recognition and enforcement of children's rights in Nigeria will definitely lead to the following:

- ❖ *Peace and harmony* in the family and in the society as they will be busy doing the right thing.
- ❖ *Good employment* for the children in the long run as they will be equipped earlier for that.
- ❖ *High educational rate* in the country when they are well educated in their early years.

- ❖ *High level of development* as the children will be good leaders in the future.
- ❖ *Long-term security and stability* in the country as the children will grow onto maturity as good and responsible citizens.

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