

**Critical reflection on child protection policies
dealing with clerical sexual abuse of children
within the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria:
Pastoral and missiological implications**

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church worldwide is struggling with a scandal of clerical sexual abuse of children. As result the Catholic Church globally has lost millions of members in the last decades. Just in the US, about 33.3% of Catholics, hold an unfavourable view of the Church because of the clerical sexual abuse of children in the church. Also, the recent defrocking of an American cardinal and the conviction of an Australian Cardinal has put the church on the spotlight in very negative way. (YouGov America 2019). Although fewer reports have been published about the situation in Nigeria, the same trend is threatening the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria.

According to the testimonies of many people given to the *Network of people abused by priests* the decline of the Catholic Church is caused to a large extent by distrust in the clergy because of sexual abuse scandals that have been exposed. In 2019, 16 000 people have launched complaints of having been sexually abused by Catholic priests as reported by the SNAP organization.

Pope Francis promulgated new norms in his *Proprio Vos estis lux mundi* with guidelines for bishops and other senior church officials on how to deal with clerical child sex abuse claims. In this declaration he called for the procedures to be laid out step-by-step in policies in each diocese of the Roman Catholic Church around the world. These guidelines are now slowly being implemented in parts of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, but this research will argue that a deeper theological motivation, contextualization and practical policies on implementing the guidelines in all the dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria is urgently needed. This desk-based research concluded that the issue of clerical sexual abuse in Nigeria could be addressed using a proactive approach where the church will safeguard the rights of children through children's ministry, provide healing to victims and abusers through psychotherapy, and collaborate with other government and non-governmental agencies in managing the problem.

KEY WORDS

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Clerical sex abuse of children that has occurred worldwide in the Roman Catholic Church has been discussed widely in numerous studies, public reports, and declarations issued by the Vatican globally. However, the number of sexual abuses continues to rise despite the immense focus. A review of the documents revealed that between 1946 and 2014, a total of 38, 156 cases of sexual abuse by catholic priests were recorded. Further, from the records, 4.4% of the cases were associated with sexual abuse of minors, 62.8% of the victims were male, and 66.7% were below the age of 14 years (Drebing *et al.* 2019). Further, from 2000 until 2010, about 3000 cases of alleged abuse by catholic priests, which span for more than fifty years, have been reported by the catholic congregations across the world. From the reported cases, 60% of them were cases deal of ephebophilia (attraction of same-sex adolescents, 30% homosexuality, and 10% were acts of paedophilia (Zollner&Cucci2013:27).

In Dallas, at their Annual Meeting in 2002, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) reported that they received allegations of abuse committed by **6,721** priests. They then drafted a landmark document in response to the crisis of sexual abuse of children in the Church. This document, setting forth their agreed upon responsibilities in combating the problem, was entitled the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. It is a comprehensive set of procedures originally established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018 (USCCB 2018).

Some commentators – including Tom Doyle, an American priest who served for five years as a canon lawyer at the Vatican Embassy in Washington, DC – have argued that

child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy is one of the greatest crises in the history of the Catholic Church (Keenan 2012:12).

There lacks formal policies in most of the countries like Nigeria, on the reporting structure for any cases of sexual abuse among the victims. For instance, in the consideration of case of L'Arche International, despite the organization conducting its investigations through a canonical commission of inquiry on sexual offenses by Fr. Thomas Philippe, there were no subsequent legal actions taken against the perpetrator (L'Arche International. 2020: 20). Fr. Thomas alleged that the relationship with the other partners was reciprocal but upon investigation, it was evident that he was using his spiritual position to take advantage of the victims. In this case, it was evident that L'Arche International had a reporting structure but its hands were tied when dealing with predatory clerics such as Fr. Thomas. This is an indication of the inadequacies of the policies when resolving the problem of sexual offenses that are perpetrated by the catholic clergy.

Scholars and commentators have attributed part of the problem to the poor leadership in the Catholic Church led by the Pope. Regarding this, in 2010, Pope Benedict accepted the resignation of the Irish-born archbishop of Benin City in Nigeria following allegations of sexual abuse against him (Olulaw 2010). Pope Benedict XVI himself, shocked the world in February 2013 when he became the first pope to resign in almost 600 years. In a book of Pope Benedict (2020), he, spoke of a *lasting crisis* in the Roman Catholic Church:

“Given the lasting crisis that the priesthood has been going through for many years, it seemed to me necessary to get to the deep roots of the problem.”
(58).

In an article of Mark Dowd (2013) published in BBC News Magazine of 2 November 2013' on “*Why did Pope Benedict XVI resign?*” he referred to an interview with the Nigerian Cardinal, Francis Arinze who did not deny that the scandals of sexual abuse of minors in

many places in the world that had preceded the Pope's bombshell decision, may have contributed to the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI.

One of the most senior church officials of the Roman Catholic Church in modern times, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, has become the first cardinal who has ever been laicized for sexual abuse. He has been accused of engaging in sexual misconduct with young male seminarians over the course of decades. According to testimonies of Archbishop Vigano, the sexual misconduct of cardinal McCarrick was alleged to be an open secret in some church circles and even known to Pope Francis. Multiple reports about McCarrick's alleged conduct with adult seminarians were made to American bishops and the Vatican between 1993 and 2016. In June 2018, the Vatican removed McCarrick from public ministry because of sexual abuse allegations investigated and proved.

In his published testimony archbishop Vigano claims that he informed Pope Francis in 2013 about the behaviour of cardinal McCarrick and now calls on Pope Francis to admit that he covered up the scandals around cardinal McCarrick. In the testimony as published by Tosatti (2019) Vigano wrote:

This very grave crisis cannot be properly addressed and resolved until we call things by their true names. This is a crisis caused by the scourge of homosexuality: in those who practice it, in its politics, and in its resistance to being corrected. It is not an exaggeration to say that homosexuality has become a plague in the clergy that can be eradicated only with spiritual weapons. It is an enormous hypocrisy to condemn abuse, to speak of tears for the victims, and yet refuse to denounce the principal cause of so much sexual abuse: homosexuality. It is hypocrisy to refuse to admit that this plague is caused by a grave crisis in the spiritual life of the clergy and fail to take the steps necessary to remedy it. (45)

He concludes:

I pray every day for Pope Francis more than I ever have for any other pope. I ask — indeed, I implore — that the Holy Father will face the commitments he has made. By agreeing to become a Successor of Peter, he has taken on himself the mission of confirming his brethren and the responsibility of guiding all souls to follow Christ in the spiritual battle along the Way of the Cross. May he admit his errors, repent, and show that he wants to follow the mandate. (46)

At the end of the meeting of the Council of Cardinals on September 12, 2018, it was announced that Pope Francis had decided to call a global meeting of all bishop leaders in every country in the Vatican for February 21-24, 2019, to discuss the widespread and growing discomfort following new reports and revelations of very serious cases of sexual abuse involving members of the clergy and formulate guidelines for new policies. The meeting was announced to be a broad approach to the theme “The Protection of Minors in the Church.” On November 23, 2018, the meeting was effectively convoked, and the press office of the Holy See gave the first details about the committee appointed by the pope to organize it, and about the people invited to participate.

On May 9, 2019 Pope Francis promulgated new norms in his *Proprio Vos estis lux mundi* (“You are the light of the world”). These norms add to layers of response already in place in the United States including the Essential Norms and the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This has led to the Vatican releasing guidelines for bishops and other senior church officials on how to deal with clerical child sex abuse claims after Pope Francis called for the procedures to be laid out step-by-step.

The new 20-page “vade mecum”, or manual, aims to clarify the existing rules on tackling the scandal which has plagued the church for decades. It contains some of the clearest language on reporting sexual abuse ever in a Vatican document. In its preamble, Pope Francis (2019) affirms that:

The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical, psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful. In

order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church. Therefore, it is good that procedures be universally adopted to prevent and combat these crimes that betray the trust of the faithful (1).

The principles in this document now need to be contextualised to be applied in various regions and dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church around the world.

1.1.1 Challenges for the Roman Catholic Church Nigeria

Child sex abuse is pervasive in the Nigerian culture and children as young as 14 are targeted on a regular basis by clerics, teachers and people whom these children hold in high regard. (Abdulkadir *et al.* 2011b:79; Rossetti. 1995:1471). In 2001, the media was awash with the report of the sexual abuses of nuns and young African women by priests and some bishops in Nigeria (Adeyemo, 2009:4). The Dallas Morning News (July 20th 2006), reported the allegation of sexual harassment made against Bishop Anthony Ilonu of Okigwe, by a Nigerian nun. There are also allegations of sexual misconduct against Cardinal John Onaiyekan now retired who was the Archbishop of Abuja. Many religious sisters have complained of suffering sexual abuse from him but no proper investigation has ever been carried out (Adeyemo, 2009:6)

In 2009, a woman called Dolores Atwood accused a serving Archbishop in Nigeria of sexual abuse when she was 14 years old in Warri South Eastern Nigeria. As a consequence, Archbishop Burke of Benin, pleaded guilty of the accusation and resigned (Olulaw, 2010:1).

A research study by a team of Nigerian medical doctors, led by Dr Abdulkadir, found that sexual abuse of children by adults is indeed wide-spread in Nigeria. Prior studies like Abdulkadir *et al* (2011b: 79) and Rossetti (1995: 1471) indicated that children as young as 14 are targeted on a regular basis by clerics, teachers, and people whom these children hold in high esteem. Furthermore, Abdulkadir and his team argued that child sex

abuse is a human rights issue that has been largely neglected in Nigeria (Abdulkadir *et al.*, 2011a:15)

How does child sex abuse impact on ministry and mission of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in Nigeria? A detailed comprehensive study of the current policies and regulations of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria concerning the safeguarding of children against sexual abuse has not been conducted. In the light of the recent 20-page "vade mecum" released by the Vatican in July 2020 the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria will now have to consider what are its implications for the church in Nigeria.

Among the 56 catholic dioceses in Nigeria, none of them has a safeguarding policy posted on their website. Even the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, has no visible safeguarding policy on their website. And among 20 requests I made to religious orders and dioceses in Nigeria for a copy of their safeguarding policy, only 3 of them returned a positive answer.

In a Communiqué issued at the end of the Second Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) at the Divine Mercy Pastoral Centre, Agbamaya, Obada-Okò, Abeokuta, Ogun State, 11-20 September 2019 the issue of safe guarding of children was addressed in one sentence but not elaborated on:

All forms of abuse of minors and vulnerable adults are to be abhorred, since they are a betrayal not only of the confidence our people repose in us but also of our vocations and ministry as priests and religious.

In the same issue the church in Nigeria is reminded of its ongoing obedience to the missionary mandate of Christ:

This year marks the centenary celebration of the Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, on the Church's missionary role, issued on 30 November 1919. To mark the celebration, Pope Francis has drawn the attention of the entire Church to the Extraordinary Mission Month of October

2019. This month serves as a momentous opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the missionary mandate of Christ, to assess the effectiveness of our response to this mandate, to reignite our zeal for the mission, and provide prayerful support for missionary efforts all over the Catholic world.

It seems that congregants and the Nigerian population at large are losing faith in the work of clerics because of the published reports of abuse of children, which has implications for the mission and pastoral ministry of the church in Nigeria as an agent of justice and God's compassion.

This research will identify and explore the problem area in Nigeria. Based on the Catholic Church's social teachings and policies and practice of children's ministry, the researcher will construct a framework for the Church's self-assessment and propose the facilitation of a strategic response to the problem. The aim is to provide theologically and biblically sound guidelines that will help address and ultimately eradicate this widespread social ill in Nigeria referred to in the first effort of the formulated policy of the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri (Obinna 2020)

1.1.2 Lack of clarity, contextualization, and implementation of policies in Nigeria

There is extensive research focusing on the problem of clerical sex abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States (USA) and Europe (Jenkins 2001; Doyle, *et al.* 2006; Keenan 2012). In the US, Doyle (2003) found 1800 reported cases between 1989 and 2003 while similar trends were reported by Flam (2015). However, it would be an oversimplification to assume this issue applies only to a Western context. Child sexual abuse is found to be also a widespread form of malpractice in Nigeria as it is now starting to be acknowledged in some official documents of the Roman Catholic church in Nigeria (Obinna 2020; Olikenyi, 2018).

Due to lack of clear guidelines and policies, the sexual abuse of children and minors in Nigeria, has remained the most underreported and understudied topic since there is a

dearth of current studies on the issue (Abdulkadir *et al.* 2011a:15). Incidents of abuse are often not reported by the media in Nigeria due to the taboo and secrecy that surrounds such issues so that an actual assessment of clerical sexual abuse victims remains evasive.

It is therefore clear that the reasons for unreported incidents of sexual abuse and the implementation of policies as it is now requested by Pope Francis are highly complex and multifaceted. Such reasons may include the age of the child at the time of the abuse, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, developmental and cognitive variables related to the victim, and the likely negative consequences of disclosure for the church at large (Abdulkadir *et al.* 2011a:16).

Even if the victims do speak out, others may neither believe them, nor take them seriously. In Nigerian communities, there is wide-spread ignorance about sexual abuse of children, which often leaves victims severely traumatised (Abdulkadir *et al.* 2011b:79). This is further evidenced by the fact that the Nigerian catholic church has recently engaged in a formation programme in an attempt to address this issue (Ahiokhai 2018:105). Because of the recent imposition from the Vatican, a few dioceses in Nigeria have made the effort to have a safeguarding policy, this happened just a few months ago which means that before now, there was nothing on the ground and that shows the lack of seriousness of church authorities with matters of safeguarding of children.

The lack of clear policies on the safeguarding of children in the church resulted in abusers walking about freely and continue to perpetrate their evil acts on unsuspecting victims who see the clergy as representatives of God on earth, (Rossetti. 1995: 1471), who must be obeyed and cannot be challenged or refused. This deficiency poses an important missiological implication to consider. For example, does the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria consider children as agents of mission and hence do they equip them to become ambassadors of Christ, free to express their given talents and gifts without fear? How may improved policies contribute to the Roman Catholic Church's training of

children to be part of its mission especially empowering them to be vocal in issues of abuse and injustices?

Terry (2008) and Ackerman and Khan (2012) found that religious communities around the world, including the Catholic Church, are well aware of the widespread prevalence of sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy. Such incidences of abuse suggest a loophole in these systems where leaders are held in high esteem by their community members. In the Catholic Church, priests represent the bishops in the local community and holds a position of sacred trust (Rossetti 1995:1471) since they generally are considered as God's representatives on earth (Flannery 1975:385). Plante (2004:73) rightly states that sexual abuse, when committed by a person in authority is extremely detrimental since it violates both personal trust and that of the position being held by members of the church and even by society at large and damages the missional impact and growth of the church.

In 1994, the researcher of this study was ordained as a priest in the Roman Catholic Missionary Organisation (Spiritans), in Nigeria. During that period in history, several African countries were ruled by military leaders or undemocratic civilian governments. However, currently (2021), most African countries are under democratically elected governments. As is the case with the political sphere, the African ecclesial landscape has also undergone multiple changes. These changes, whether positive or negative, hold numerous challenges. At present, Nigerians are more enlightened and better informed through the common use of the social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, emails, WhatsApp, Skype, or smart phones). As a result, citizens in contemporary Africa and globally, hold their governments and the Church accountable for their actions. Critique against churches resulting from the exposure of scandals of clerics in the Roman Catholic Church poses challenges of secularism and a lack of missional impact of churches (Ackerman & Khan, 2012).

People are no longer afraid to challenge and criticise the Church as confirmed by Adeyemo, who argues that the Catholic Church in its institutional and hierarchical forms

is accused of being a citadel concealing human rights violations, such as the sexual abuse of children (Adeyemo 2009:3). People demand transparency both in the civil government and the Church. The time is past when church members were taught and expected to pray, pay their dues, give their tithes and unconditionally obey the clergy.

As measures for properly handling and preventing the sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria are considered, the research has also explored the dynamics of the Catholic Church system in the USA, Ireland, and the UK. This has been done for two main reasons:

1. The cases of sexual abuse, (reported and unreported) combined, in these countries both in circumstance and detail, correspond with cases reported and observed within the Nigerian Catholic Church system.
2. The Roman Catholic Church in these countries are among the only few who currently have taken comprehensive and robust steps towards significantly reducing instances of clerical sex abuse, in the case of children and otherwise. To a large extent these countries have succeeded in achieving their goals.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that this research is focussing on is the urgent need to improve and implement policies to prevent the revealed widespread sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, resulting in the massive loss of church members and hampering of the missional impact of the church. The weakness of policies and the training of priests as root causes of the problem will be analysed critically.

Although under-researched, there is growing agreement that clerical sexual abuse of children in Nigeria poses a threat to the ministry of the church (Olikenyi 2018). Therefore, interventions are needed to make the Church a safe place for children and protect them from further abuse.

As stated in the ***VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI***” declaration of Pope Francis (2019:1), the *Guidelines for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults* document of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit :South East Province of Nigeria (Olikenyi, 2018), and the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri (Obinna 2020), recurring incidences of child sexual abuse by clerics is an extremely worrying revelation and also points to an urgent need to improve policies on the safeguarding of children and implementation of it in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria. The main question that arises is: How may policies and procedures be improved and implemented to prevent the sexual abuse of children but also pastorally help victims to process the trauma of sexual exploitation they experienced and discipline clericals in a biblical way.

In Nigeria, the issue of clerics’ sexual abuse in general has been well publicised and also acknowledged in official Roman Catholic documents as indicated above. The study aims to evaluate current policies about clerical sexual abuse and the protection of children from pastoral, missiological, and contextual perspectives. The fact that Nigerian culture to a large extent still disapproves of open discussions of sexual issues or reporting of accusations against the esteemed position of clerics in society also hampers the prevention of sexual abuse. The reported examples and official acknowledgement of such abuse is a warning signal that the problem persists in the Nigerian Church, and these malpractices constitute acts of social injustice, abuse of power and a lack of biblical church discipline.

The research will explore the problem of a vagueness and lack of implementation of policies and regulations to implement policies to prevent clerical sexual abuse of children in Nigeria. This entails examining the dangers associated with the Church’s apparent indifference to the plight of the victims, and to offer normative and strategic markers directed at restoring trust in the Church as a safe place for children and a haven for growth holistically and especially in terms of mission.

1.3 RESEARCH SCOPE

This research will be conducted in the field of Missiology although it overlaps with Pastoral Theology. The centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, that was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the 21st century also focussed on addressing questions of child and children in relation to mission, theology of mission, and pastoral theology more generally. This resulted in a clear view conceived as a triangle with three corners named theology, mission and child (Willmer, 2014:10).

For this particular research, the focus will be on Nigeria, and it will raise awareness regarding the existence of clerical sex abuse in the Nigerian Church, the aim is to propose strategic guidelines for leadership according to the guiding theological principles of the Catholic Church, structures, policies, procedures, and theology of mission.

The research problem focussed on in this research indeed entails a critical activity wherein the day-to-day life of the Church, in its various dimensions, is scrutinised in the light of the Gospel and related to the demands and challenges of the present day (Ballard & Pritchard 1996:12). This research will seek to interpret Scripture, tradition and praxis with a view to making propositions that could transform the contemporary practices of the Church in Nigeria (Anderson 2001:33), which may also revitalize and strengthen pastoral ministry, children's ministry, and the missional impact of the church.

Regardless the fact that there exists limited information on the topic, there exists various published works in the field of clerical sexual abuse of minors focusing on regions outside Nigeria (Ainscough & Toon 2000; Jenkins 2001; Cozzens 2002; Plante 2004; Reynolds 2004; Doyle *et al.* 2006; Fleming *et al.* 2007; Tougher 2007; Flannery 2009; Chinnici 2010; Yallop 2010; Mooney 2011; Keenan 2012; Miles 2012). Therefore, the researcher has drawn from the perspectives of best practices elsewhere and the above-mentioned key authors in order to construct a rich conceptual framework to improve the prevention of sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian Roman Catholic Church.

1.4 STUDY RATIONALE

In an article with the title “Welcoming Africa’s children: The nature and implications of being a missional church”, Knoetze (2016) rightly states:

When one views the missional church as a 'becoming' community, it can be stated that it is the safest place for African children to rediscover their identity through and within the grace of God (7).

This is a very important point considering the role of the children in mission both to the Church community where they need to be and to feel safe and to the world community where they represent Christ as bright gems of His Word. This makes it necessary to have research conducted that focuses on African child.

To date, no in-depth research has been conducted on clerical sex abuse in the Nigerian context. There is also a paucity of information available and a lack of proper documentation that records child sexual abuse in this context (Abdulkadir *et al.* 2011b:79). The few recently official published documents and policies of Roman Catholic dioceses in Nigeria, call for a cursory literature review as part of the current research.

Existing studies do not offer theological reflection and strategic proposals to deal with the issues of clerical sexual abuse and help prevent incidences of sexual abuse of children by clerics, and its implications for mission in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria. The theological foundations and missiological implications of child protection policies have also not been outlined. They may not be outlined because one might argue that child protection policies are ethical and not theological or missiological? Yet, the missional implications of scandals of clerical sexual abuse of children cannot be ignored.

This study proposes to conduct a comprehensive and detailed study of the current policies and regulations of the church in Nigeria concerning the safeguarding of children against sexual abuse and reflect on the pastoral and missional implications of such policies. The study will demonstrate from literature that there is a gap of undertaking

mission or the failure of the Roman Catholic Church to effectively fulfil its missional mandate due to the revealed scandals of abuse. The problems arising from the abuse of children that create stumbling blocks for the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria will be debated.

The obvious need for transparency and justice in the Catholic Church in Africa, and globally, is a huge motivation for this research. The research will attempt the following: a critical examination of the theological implications of justice and peace as promoted by the Church in its theological and ethical teachings and contemporary vision for mission. This will be done to measure the attitude and ministry of the Church in Nigeria towards victims of clerical sex abuse.

To achieve this goal, the proposed research will explore the few existing policies and guidelines of the Catholic Church in Nigeria on the safeguarding of minors and compare it with global guidelines published by the Vatican and how it is applied in the USA. The aim is to identify measures, presented in the form of a practical theological framework, to guide the Church not only to be positively reactive towards this problem of abuse, but also function proactive from the outset and may restore trust in clericals' ministry to children and strengthen the missional impact of the church.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key question on which this study has focused on reads as follows:

How can sexual abuse of children in Nigerian Catholic churches be addressed and prevented through changes in and implementation of child protection policies to improve the ministry and mission of the Church in Nigeria?

The primary question above is complex and may be answered by breaking it down into secondary questions:

1. What constitutes clerical sexual abuse of children?

2. What are the contours of children's ministry in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria?
3. Which evidence suggests the need to monitor and eradicate sexual abuse of children in Nigerian Catholic Churches?
4. Based on the theological ethics of justice, fairness, and respect, how may child protection policies be improved to reduce incidences of acts of sexual abuse of children significantly, if not to eradicate the problem completely?
5. What influence may priestly formation in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria have to address sexual abuse of children
6. What are the implications and what suggestions may be considered to improve child protection policies to strengthen and revitalize the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria?

1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study has a main aim, which is explicated in terms of specific objectives.

1.6.1 Research Aim

The primary aim of the study is to explore the improvement and implementation of policies of clerical sex abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria and proposing of a strategic framework to provide a proactive response to this problem. While considering the improvement and implementation of policies this study also extracts central elements from Scripture and the Catholic social teaching to develop and strengthen a culture that values and respects children in Nigeria. Respect for children, affirmation of human dignity as key pastoral implications as base theory in the Catholic Church in Nigeria has been formulated.

1.6.2 Research Objectives

This study will strive to achieve the following objectives:

1. Reflect on the definition of clerical sexual abuse in existing policies of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria in comparison with Roman Catholic churches in the Western World.
2. Outline a basic-theory of holistic Theology of children and youth ministry of the Roman Catholic Church at large and compare it with policies and practice of children's ministry in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria.
3. Explore evidence from literature that indicates the need to improve policies monitoring and eradicating sexual abuse of children in Nigerian Catholic Churches?
4. Investigate existing guidelines (or the lack of it) and policies in the light of clearly formulated biblical and theological principles of the praxis of protecting children in the Catholic Church in Nigeria.
5. To consider how policies and practice of priestly formation in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria may address the prevention of sexual abuse of children?
6. Establish target areas of concern to rectify the problem and find solutions, as well as propose guidelines for safeguarding of children from further clerical sexual abuse in Nigeria.

1.7 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the challenge of sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church may be addressed by improving and implementing relevant policies to strengthen the ministry and mission of the church in Nigeria.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The current research is purely secondary study also referred to as desk-based research. According to Martins *et al.*, (2018), desk-based research is not only highly replicable but it offers the researcher the opportunity to find a suitable match between their needs and existing databases at convenient cost. In support of desk-based research usage, Dunn *Et al.* (2015) adds that these research approach takes lesser time and involves lesser risks when compared to primary research. The authors further add that desk-based research allows the researcher gain more access to large data sets as well as longitudinal data which offers great insights in research. The researcher considered above reasons as enough justification in the light of the topic at hand to pursue desk-based approach in achieving the set objectives.

The research has relied on existing publications, like books, articles, declarations of church officials, and websites. Information gathered from these publications has been critically analysed and reflected on from a pastoral theological and missiological perspective and the findings discussed in the several chapters that follow. In consistent with the specific objectives of the study, the literature reviewed has been organised in to the following themes:

1. Theological Analysis of Priestly Formation in The Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria and its Implications for Sexual Abuse of Children.
2. Theology and practice of children's ministry in response to the clerical sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian catholic church
3. Child Protection Policies of the Roman Catholic Church Globally in comparison with Nigeria.
4. *Child Protection in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria in the Light of Biblical Ethical Principles*

5. *Possible Policy Improvements to curb sexual abuse by the clergy on children in the Roman Catholic church.*

Above themes further forms the basis and structure of this thesis. The themes are covered in detail as individual chapters in the subsequent sections.

A Gantt chart on the research duration has been appended as appendix 2.

1.8.1 Ethical considerations

This study has met the ethical conditions formulated by the South African government and the North-West University (NWU). As the study will be done only through literature and approved by the Faculty of Theology of the NWU. The approval letter is appended as appendix 1.

The ethical provisions outlined in the policies of North-West University has been adhered to while conducting research for the present study. The sources for these ethical considerations are the general acceptable guidelines for research, which applies to all sections of the current study as well.

1.9 RESEARCH ORGANISATION:

This thesis is organised into 7 chapters in order to efficiently achieve the set aim and objectives. Chapter one above provides the background on the topic, the thesis statement and aims set out to be achieved in the project. Further, the chapter briefly discusses how data for the project has been collected and offers its justification. Chapter two explores the Priestly Formation of the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria. This chapter offers insight into ways in which the formation has contributed to the existence of child abuse by the clergy. Chapter three, based on the themes identified on methodology, is an analysis of the Children ministry (theology and practice) in response to the clerical sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian catholic church. Chapter four of the thesis offers a critical analysis of the Child Protection Policies in place in the Roman Catholic church worldwide. The chapter goes ahead and carries out a comparison between these policies and what

exists in the Nigerian Catholic church to determine the deficiencies in the Nigerian Church. Chapter five offers a critical discussion of how the Nigerian Catholic Church protects the Children in the light of *Biblical Ethical Principles*. Chapter 6 of the thesis offers possible improvements on the existing policies as well as a strategic framework to provide a proactive response to sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian Catholic church. A final chapter ,7, offers a summary of key elements discussed in the paper, a summary of the objectives and how they've been achieved as well as recommendation to the Catholic Church on the protection of children against sexual abuse by the clergy. The chapter ends with the limitations encountered in this research.

CHAPTER 2

CRITICAL THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the theological principles surrounding priestly formation of the Catholic Church in Nigeria and its implication for sexual abuse of children. It starts by exploring what is Child Sexual abuse from different views as well as the Cultural views of the Importance of Children in Nigerian community. Further the chapter discusses the theological principles about protection against child sexual molestation in the Catholic Church in general and in Nigeria in particular. Communication and language are vital in mission, and culture plays a pivotal role in founding and sustaining the Churches. The research is based on priestly formation, which involves four stages: human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation. This helps in promoting the Church's goal: to listen, protect, and care for children and all vulnerable adults.

The chapter assesses the current theological practices and contents that promote clerical sex abuse, including the preparation for celibacy, patriarchal nature of the church, lack of moral support, inadequate screening process, lack of theology of human sexuality, and lack of bishops as mentors. This chapter identifies the issues that affects priests and makes it exceedingly difficult and challenging for them to follow their celibate calling. For example, inadequate screening process of candidates for the priesthood, makes it difficult for the Catholic Churches in Nigeria to identify any negative personality in the intending candidates. This chapter recommends strongly the introduction of thorough screening for all candidates to the priesthood

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL PORTRAYAL?

2.2.1 A profound sociological and anthropological training on cultural understanding of sex education in different Nigerian cultures, will enable seminarians and future priests to discuss freely and intelligently matters concerning sex education and child protection strategies. Sex education according to AHI (2003), is a planned process of education that helps in acquiring skills to cope with all aspects of human sexuality. In most cultures in Nigeria, sex education is taught to teenage boys and girls, during different rites of initiation and passage as the local custom may be. During this induction period, teenagers are taught about manhood and womanhood and the consequences of coming of age. They also learn about the anatomy and physiology of the human body. Sex education is also taught in schools in Nigeria though it is not obvious because some teachers are not even aware of the existence of any sex education policies for schools. There is a connection between sex as taboo in Nigeria cultures and the lack of implementation of sex education policies in most schools in Nigeria. Sex education in schools and seminaries, will create knowledge and awareness for the promotion of safeguarding in schools and churches enhancing our Christian mission to humanity. Knowledge, they say is power and it is generally acknowledged, as a great weapon against ignorance. A sound foundation of sexual knowledge helps the individual to dispel sexual myths, superstitions and misinformation that hinder proper understanding of sex and human sexuality thereby creating confusion and phobia. Accurate information enables the individual to think critically and make sound decisions and also take responsibility for their sexual health (Caron and Bertran, 1988). Knowing and feeling that we are normal persons can go a long way to increase our sense of personal worth and boost our self-esteem.

The different Nigerian cultures has a great value for children and what you value, you will protect. Hence a constant reminder of the great value placed on children by the society will help pastors to develop and implement child protection policies in line with the Nigerian cultural values. But the different societal and cultural expectations based on gender according to different cultures in Nigeria is a big challenge. In the Muslim North,

the education of girls is not taken seriously by very conservative parents, while in the Christian south, most girls go to school as standard.

As far as I know, there is not at the moment any sex education policy by the catholic church in Nigeria for the education of minors. But individual states in Nigeria have their sex education policies which by law should be implemented even in catholic schools. However, there is still a strong resistance of teaching sex education in catholic schools because most religious people will interpret it as “corruption of the young”. Need then for attitudinal change on the part of both parents, teachers and policy makers. The world has changed and whatever sex education policies in existence at the moment in Nigeria schools seems moribund. There is need for a re-conceptualisation of sex education, and all stakeholders: such as religious, political and traditional leaders, parents, teachers, and educational administrators, must be involved in the process of developing a new sex education policy for Nigerian schools both circular and religious. If we don't teach our children the correct concept of sex education, they will learn it wrongly from the internet and from predators.

The relationship between the Nigerian state and the Catholic church has not always been great, After the Nigeria civil war (1967-1970), the government took over all Mission schools. Most of those schools have now been returned back to the church an indication of an improved church /state relations. The Catholic church still enjoys some respect from civil authorities. However, neither the federal government nor the catholic church have come forward with a strong plan to promote the safeguarding of children in our schools and churches. The Catholic church is just waking up, (a bit late), to this great responsibility which is a welcome development. For the church to have the moral authority to challenge the State on matters of safeguarding of children, it must first of all clean up her own house of filth. If and when the church develops, implements and monitors its safeguarding policies, it would be a prophetic voice for change in the Nigerian civil society.

2.2 Sexual abuse encompasses forcing or wrongfully enticing a child or a vulnerable person to take part in any sexual activities such as rape, sexual penetration, touching,

kissing, and exposing the child to sexual contents (images and videos) (Olikenyi, 2018). It also encompasses exposing the child to sexual electronic messages or grooming them to establish emotional connection, but with the intention of sexually abusing them (Olikenyi, 2018). David *et al.* (2018 :199-208) described sexual abuse forms as: to have an inappropriate touch of a child's private parts, sexual exploitation, sodomy, and forced sex (Rape). Sexual abuse has devastating effects on the victims. Most of the victims do not disclose the traumatic events because of the fear of being ostracized or rejected by society but in most cases sexual predators have already instilled fear in the children. In Nigeria, many children do not know where to seek help in the event of sexual abuse. The concept of asymmetrical power dynamic is dominant in cases of sexual assault especially in children since the perpetrator is often, a person in authority in relation to the victim. Effects of sexual abuse are exacerbated since the abuser is a figure of authority in the church and this is a breach of trust to the extent the child is intimidated and fails to report.

To effectively analyse the effects of sexual abuse on adults who were victimized by catholic priests at a young age, various aspects are taken into consideration; signs of helplessness, levels of depression, indicators of post-traumatic stress disorder and presence or absence of religious faith (Shea, 2008: 10-15). Most of the research that examines the impact of sexual abuse of victims (Shrivastava, Karia, Sonavane & De Sousa, 2017), provides different variations of perpetual effects. According to the authors, sexual abuse in children is accompanied by significant psychological problems and evaluation protocols based on both cognitive and clinical measure should be employed. The results of the empirical study that involved 49 children (half of them as the control group), indicated that sexual abuse victims presented higher levels of cognitive impairment and correlation between trauma and behavioural, emotions and cognitive dysfunctions. Calderón-Delgado *et al.* (2017) highlighted that the effects such as depression, fear, anger, anxiety, and feelings of isolation were often case-specific with expressions of propensity towards re-victimization but overall, the reactions were long-lasting. According to Ede, the two most significant psychological effects linked to sexual abuse are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (2018).

Some sources (Feeny, Kamiya & Robertson, 2013) suggested that there were, gender-based differences in the development of PTSD from trauma caused by sexual abuse, this study suggested that PTSD was more prevalent in females (Plante and Daniel, 2004). Contradicting these results was a study by (Walker, *et al.* 2004) indicating that expressions of sexual abuse were not based on gender, but depression was the more present in most of the cases for both males and females. In addition, neurobiological evidence suggests that most sexual traumatic events on children can affect the structure of their brain and the family dynamic and environment played a key role in how a victim of sexual abuse is able to cope and the magnitude of the long-term effects. Cahill and Wilkinson (2017) postulated that when perpetrators of sexual abuse were members of the clergy, there was distinguishing theological, existential, and existential characteristics. Walsh *et al.* (2013:22), suggest that victimization in places that are perceived as sanctuaries of hope and the use of God to hide these evils changes the perception of God and he is viewed as an oppressing force.

Smith and Sullivan (2004), contended that the secrecy surrounding abuse by catholic priests makes cases of sexual abuse of children unlike any other abuse. They reiterate the words of an anonymous victim who explains that their separation from God almost killed them emotionally and spirituality and these anecdotal reports indicated that abuse by a priest was the equivalent of murdering a person's soul (10). Therefore, future priests in training in seminaries must understand clearly the grave implications of sexual abuse of children.

2.1.1 Predominant Nigerian Cultural views of the Importance of Children

African societies revolve around the lives of children. In Nigeria, children represent the continuity of the family and community through certain rituals and rites of passage in different stages to ensure that they prosper (Ogwumike & Ozughalu, 2018:13-22). Children are seen in the Nigerian society as vital to the country's survival, and they help maintain the household's pride by taking part in education, rites of passage and marriage.

In the Nigerian society, the newborn child is welcomed and regarded with pride and the birth of any child is culturally seen as a blessing from the gods. Children are a representation of the family's and community's future and often are the main reason why most Nigerians marry. A married woman in Nigeria without a child is like someone in Europe who has no life insurance cover; and the bond between a child and their mother is highly regarded in the society (Ushie *et al.* 2016:352-361). During a child's infancy period, the mother is always near to provide care and support. Most women in the Nigeria recognise that breastfeeding is very important since it creates a bond between the child and the mother. This is because the children are made to feed exclusively on their mother's milk until they are old enough to eat.

Additionally, children who are too young to walk are carried on their mother's backs fastened with a cloth that is held around the mother's breasts. Women often do this while going about their daily chores (Ombiji *et al.* 2016 :213). With regards to education and child rearing, children who have attained 4 to 5 years are expected to start helping in some household chores. As they get older, their responsibilities are increased. For the young boys, they are expected to help their fathers in the farms or tend the livestock, while young girls fetch water, cook, and do the laundry. These tasks are taught to the children in order to teach them how to be more productive when they become adults and as members of the community (Ojelabi *et al.*, 2015 :75). As children, they are taught that laziness is not acceptable and thus they have to apply serious effort in everything they do.

While children in Nigeria are given responsibilities, they are also given enough time to play and engage in other childlike activities. Traditionally, the education of children is a community responsibility (Ushie *et al.* 2016:352-361). For instance, in the Igbo culture, children are trained by both their parents as well as the community, neighbours look after the children while their parents are absent or busy doing other things. In the traditional Igbo society, it is not strange to see neighbours disciplining another person's child when they do something wrong. An Igbo proverb says: "one person does not train a child". Hence the child is a treasure not just for the parents but also for the entire community.

In most African communities, sexual relationships are attached to some extent to traditional sacredness and in most cases when rules guiding the concept of sex are violated, this is considered a taboo. In Nigeria there is an unwritten understanding between members of a particular community on the phenomenon surrounding moral sexual behaviour (Ikenna & Anizoba 2011: 3). In some cases, there are severe punishment for those who committed acts of sexual violence. Despite modernization and the emergence of the current global culture, the role of culture in the perception of sex has remained a guiding principle in the lives of many Nigerians (Okechi, 2018 :5). Cases of sexual abuse in most communities have been increasing over the years, this is because there is little to no policy that protects the victims (Ozaya & Egharevba 2016 :33-37). In most cases they are blamed, humiliated, and ostracized if the issue is discovered by the public.

From the little cultural analysis above, it can be argued that Nigerians treasure their children, and any abuse of a child will upset both the parents and the community. It is clear that most Nigerians are well grounded on morals surrounding sexual behaviour with the awareness of consequences that come from defying these beliefs. It is very difficult then to understand why a member of the clergy who himself is a product of this system will abuse children under his care. For a clergy or an adult to abuse a child sexually is called “aru” which means Taboo.

2.2 BACKGROUND ON NIGERIAN CHURCH

Nigeria is a country that has diverse Church denominations where people, especially the youth, often leave the Catholic Church. Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa, also has the largest number of Christians at 80 million, with 20 million as Catholics. However, the current rise in Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations is threatening this number tremendously. One of the reasons why people leave the Catholic Church, is due to the gross misunderstanding of some catholic devotions. Many critics of the Catholic church, accuse her of engaging in Mariolatry and idolatry (this is in reference to the catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus). Another cultural factor

influencing the youths is the belief that one should marry only from their Church. Thus, youths, especially in colleges, move to other Churches for fear that they will not have spouses from their Catholic Church. Unah (2017) argues that youths brought up in the Catholic Church change to other Churches while in school, but many of the students attend Holy Masses while at home, a sort of religious syncretism.

Sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church in Nigeria exists even though there are few or no statistics to prove its existence. Penal legislation and public opinion fail to give it full attention especially due to the aspect of secrecy and stigmatization surrounding the issue. (La Civiltà Cattolica, 2019). Finding statistics of clerical sexual abuse is a challenge that lies underneath the silence and cover-up that is evident in most Catholic Churches globally, including Nigeria. Sister Mumbi Kigutha at the Pan-African Congress in Nigeria in 2019, explained the pain experienced by nuns and children sexually abused by saying that Christ's body is ailing because of sexual abuse in the Church and needs healing (White, 2019: 33). Even though it is difficult to determine the extent of clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Nigeria, UNICEF (2015) points out that 6 out of 10 children in Nigeria experience abuse, which includes sexual abuse.

Furthermore, Pope Francis, who is head of all the Catholic Churches globally, acknowledged the severity of clerical sexual abuse of children as a plague rooted in all cultures and societies worldwide (McGarry, 2019: 90-91). Given that dealing and eradicating clerical sexual abuse has become a big challenge, it requires another approach to understanding the root causes of the problem. One of the possible root causes of clerical sex abuse of children is the inadequate and dysfunctional and inadequate process of selection of candidates for the priesthood and the priestly formation existent in Catholic Seminaries in Nigeria: these two factors will be analysed in order to understand its implications for clerical sexual abuse of children.

Theology could be defined as the study of God's nature concerning human beings and in the case of child sexual abuse, Christian ethics will be applied. (University of Santo Tomas, 2012). Clerical sexual abuse of children exposes the gross immorality existent in

the Catholic Church as the clergy involved in sexually molesting children, though knowing that what they are doing is wrong still continue defiling the innocent children, thus violating themselves, their victims, the Church and God. As priests representing God for the people, the clergy are expected to imitate God's goodness and show love, care, and friendship to the Christians to bring them closer to God but not vice-versa. It is wrong for the shepherd to become a predator.

All Catholics worldwide have a common ecclesiology and look up to Rome and the pope as a central authority leading the Church towards the kingdom of God. Every individual in the Catholic Church has an obligation to safeguard children from harm and to protect children's rights (Catholic Diocese of Pretoria, 2019). The Catholic Church in Nigeria believes that Christian unity is an important goal in Christian living and should be achieved through prayer; hence, the church's organisation promotes Christian unity at all its levels trying to be the light to the nations (Vatican - Roman Curia, 2020).

The significance of Christian unity in the ecclesiology of the Church implies that the problem of one becomes the problem of all. Hence the Church in Nigeria cannot be immune from problems of Child sexual abuse ravaging the worldwide Catholic Church. The Church further believes in the formation of the Christian unity according to categories of the people to be formed, the people responsible for the formations, the aim of the formation, as well as the methods used to achieve the formation of unity in the church (Vatican – Roman Curia 2020).

The Catholic Church in Nigeria, similar to the entire Church, also believes and practices communion through the Sacrament of baptism, sharing in prayer, sacramental sharing, among other spiritual activities (Thiessen, 2009:51-62). The Catholic Church practices ecumenical cooperation by using different forms of principles, values, dialogues, or norms that promote collaboration among all the Christians in the Church (Vatican, Roman Curia, 2020). Drawing from the Catholic Churches' aim of bridge-building, which is to foster unity, love, and care to the parents and children in Church, clerical sexual abuse of children is a threat to creating that unity (Allen *et al.*: 2018). Clerical sexual abuse of children drives

the victims away from the Church, making them live in pain, spiritual and physical difficulties, and holding on to the gravity of the evil done to them and questioning God's goodness and power in times of sin and infliction of pain (Kilby, 2020 :27-34).

Communication and language are essential in all forms of preaching and to ensure that the congregants understand the scriptures well, the formation process must be up to date and fit for purpose. Formation should always take into consideration, the context and contextualization, is the process of putting a language into the context of the cultural beliefs and norms that impact the learning process (Hassan, 2014 :12-17). Therefore, as the priests preach or teach in the formation process, they are to put the Nigerian congregants' cultural activities and beliefs in context to help in a clear understanding of concepts and the message passed across. For instance, a priest in rural areas can use the mother tongue to ensure that the congregants understand the message of the gospel.

Using cultural languages in upcountry churches can be because most people in the villages are old and did not get a formal education; hence, they have a limited understanding of English or other pidgin languages. For that reason, the Catholic Church in Nigeria needs to understand the importance of contextualization during the formation process of either the church or the priests to ensure they understand the biblical teachings and adhere to them. In short, contextualization helps priests and Catholic Church leaders to present the gospel in a culturally relevant manner in order to promote unity in the Church, building bridges which was God's purpose for human beings to love one another to bring joy to all (Stetzer, 2014).

Nigerian culture has unique features and beliefs that shape the way people live and interact with each other. As a country with the largest population in Africa, it has hundreds of diverse cultures, as most people still hold on to their ethnic beliefs, practices, and distinct dialects. Ethical beliefs play a critical role in the lives of most Nigerians and is considered to shape healthy sexual behaviour especially among the youth. High prevalence of risky sexual behaviour is seen in ethnic groups where sexual behaviour is liberal and polygamy is accepted (Uchudi *et al.* 2012 :289).

Nigeria's uniting factor is the English language taught in schools and is the recognised official language (Catholic and Culture 2020). With this in mind, the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria and the world should consider the diversity in cultures, traditions, and ethnic languages to be relevant in Nigeria as they shape the country's religious practices differently (Catholic and Culture 2020). Even though cultural worldviews are continually changing due to changes in the technological, political, social, and cultural environment, the Catholic Church, in Nigeria, should be aware of the changes in cultural beliefs and contextualize them during the formation of priests for mission in the Church. Therefore, the formation process of priests must take into consideration the diversity and the particular context of the Church in Nigeria especially among the Igbo people who make up almost 70% of the Catholic congregation.

The Igbo ethnic group, like any other ethnic community in Nigeria is founded on a moral code (*Omenala*) which are the guiding principles of respective communities (Ikenna & Anizoba 2011:11). Priests and other Church leaders have to consider the diversity in cultural beliefs and traditions in Nigeria, in their ministry to the people which will aid in contextualisation and building unity in the Church.

2.2.1 The Process of Priestly Formation in The Catholic Church in Nigeria

A critical analysis of the Catholic Church's priestly formation is essential to curb clerical sexual abuse in the Church. As the Church looks for ways to solve or end sexual abuse of children permanently, evaluation of the formation process is essential to finding and eliminating the root causes of the problem. The priestly formation, which is for training Seminarians into priests, is the process of converting the mind, heart, and soul of future priests to carry on in serving God and people, centred around four aspects of developing the human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral capacities of the candidate. (Senton Hall University, 2020).

As 2 Cor 3:17-18 explains, the Holy Spirit is made available to believers to help them become Christ-like and transforming them into God's image. According to Paul in the

chapters preceding this one, there is freedom in Christ through the Spirit for those who believe. The freedom that is referenced in this context is the lack of the barrier of sin that separates man from the glory of God. In the previous chapter, Paul examined the church and our membership in the body of Christ and everyone has a unique role to play in the ministry. Seminarians make themselves available for the work of God, and the formation process, takes about ten years in most Nigerian dioceses. Catholic Church formation of priests is in line with Jer. 3:15, in which God promised to provide shepherds after his own heart to tend to his sheep. "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (Jer. 3:15). According to Luke 15: 4-7, a good shepherd gathers and guides his sheep together to the extent that when one out of 100 gets lost, he goes after that one to make sure his flock is full and okay. In the parable of the lost sheep Jesus told of the need to rescue that one lost sheep indicating the active role of God in seeking out those who are lost to sin. All priests in the Catholic Church, go through the seminary training before they are ordained to serve and minister in the Church. They are the shepherds that guide and gather the sheep: the congregants and are charged with the spiritual responsibility to care, love, and unite them, never to prey on them.

The formation process encourages priests in their celibacy and chaste living by training them to understand what celibacy entails and forming their spirit to accept celibacy as their new truth and love as God loves the church (Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), 2012). The priestly formation should be done considering the changing times and trends like the emergence and use of social media platforms (Ahiokhai, 2019). Technology brings up new forms of ecclesial structures by facilitating theology online and offline, and it is a global phenomenon. The formation of priests is vital in the quest to find a solution to the problem of clerical sexual abuse globally and in Nigeria even though the cases of children abused sexually by priests are not reported as much as it is in other regions like Europe, America, and other parts of the western world since there are elements of denial among most Nigerians, who erroneously term it as a western problem (Ahiokhai, 2019).

Priestly formation starts with the admission process and ensures that the accepted Seminarians undergo a critical assessment of character, discipline, psychological condition, and morals in order to eliminate people with questionable behaviours that can abuse children. In Iperu-Remo a small town in Nigeria, the first two years of priestly probational formation occurs here for the members of Missionary Society of St Paul. The vocation director identifies potential priests and interviews them before they are selected for priestly formation which is hoped will transform their character, spiritual and holistic growth for the service of God and the Church (Enenme, 2019). Those with the responsibility of priests' formation process must know how best to train and prepare the Seminarians for the priesthood after their years of learning. At the time of their ordination as priests, they should possess the priestly qualities that define catholic priesthood and be in a position to minister, teach, and preach effectively to lead people to Christ and help them share in God's divine love and life for eternity.

The Catholic priesthood is also entrusted with the responsibility of modelling the child's character and morality for their Christian lifestyle. Priests are entrusted with divine mandate to promote education and formation in all its forms and insist that all humans in spite of their race, condition or age have the inalienable right to education (Vat II 1975: 726). Priest creates time to be with the children and teach them on matters of doctrine and morals grounded biblical principles. According to the *John Paul II Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (1992: Nos. 13 and 15), the clergy and Church leaders are the shepherds entrusted with the duty of caring for the flock to follow the example of Jesus Christ who was the good shepherd sent by God the Father to serve, preach, teach, and save the people. During the ordination rite in the church, the deacon is reminded "teach what you believe" (Rites Vol.2 1979: 58), and the priest is urged to apply his energy to the duty of teaching; teaching what he believes and putting into practice what he teaches (Rites Vol. 2 1979: 62). By virtue of their vocation and ordination, the catholic priests are called to be teachers and formators.

According to 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the clergy must exercise: self-control, and be respectable and hospitable, able to teach and must not give in to drunkenness and be of good

reputation with others so that he cannot fall into the devil's trap. The scripture elaborates some of the qualities expected of a priest. In this case, the Bible notes that they occupy a noble task and as an overseer in the church, he is expected to have one wife, be temperate, self-controlled, be respectable, not drunk, non-violent, and not a lover of money among other attributes. Further, Scripture notes that the priest must be able to manage his or her family and have a good reputation with outsiders so as not to fall into the trap. In the context of the Catholic clergy, they ascribe to the celibacy and chastity, which means they perceive the church as their first family (Clyne, 2020). As such, they need to manage this family and not to show any violence to the followers, who are the spiritual children. Further, they need to have an external good reputation with the other people, a virtue that cannot be attained by a clergy who engages in sexual molestation divided (Clyne, 2020). Well-trained priests should create unity in the church, which is the body of Christ that works better united than divided (Clyne, 2020).

Most seminaries in Nigeria, including the extremely popular Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu (2020), require that the candidates for training to the priesthood be recommended by their Bishops or Congregation Superiors and have proof of education by providing the first school leaving certificate and O' level GCSE certificates. Other seminaries like Saints Peter and Paul, Bodija, Ibadan, has a more extensive admission process as it requires the future priests to qualify for a degree in philosophy before admission, be recommended by their Bishops or Religious Superiors, have genuine results and education certificates, evidence of the reception of the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation (SSPP Seminary, 2020). Only students enrolling for theology provide additional transcripts, psychological reports, medical reports, pastoral reports, and reports from their previous academic institutions.

Before joining the seminary for training to become priests, academic qualifications seem to be more valued for the would-be priests than other fundamental aspects such as character and morality. To end clerical sexual abuse of children, psychological, moral, medical, and pastoral reports are vital in the assessment process for admission, which is done by a minimal number of seminaries in Nigeria. McGlone, Ortiz, and Karney (2010)

point out that psychological assessment or reports are essential, especially in dealing with the escalating clerical sexual abuse. Plante (2006) explains the need for the psychological evaluation of the applicants into the priesthood to make sure that men with psychiatric problems, sexual predilection towards children, and those with morality issues are denied the chance to work as future priests in charge of vulnerable children that need spiritual, psychological, mental, and physical protection. Mental disorders or psychological issues manifest in the form of stress, depression, anxiety, grief, trauma, and psychopathy, which must be assessed before admission to ensure that the candidates for formation to the priesthood are psychologically fit to be trained as servants of the Church and God (Olawumi, 2020 :60-75). The transformation of the Seminarians into priests requires moral support from their colleagues, bishops, vocation directors, spiritual directors, rectors, and formation directors. Their work is to make sure the future priest becomes holy, has an internal forum for support, and has a holistic formation (Plante, 2006). The concept of holiness is a constantly recurring theme in both the Old and the New Testament that encapsulates being like God or emulating the actions of Jesus. In Leviticus 11:45, God persuades and encourages His people to be holy because He Himself is holy. There is a direct correlation between priesthood and holiness. Vocation directors are the ones that search, identify, and find men who have an interest in the priesthood through a process known as vocation drive (Enenme, 2019). Vocational drives take different forms including parish visitations; school visitations, come and see weekends. In all these visitations, it is considered as an advantageous method where a vocational director speaks to masses on the importance of priesthood and consecrated life (Enenme, 2019). During such visitations, the priest shares the opportunities to the young people (Enenme, 2019).

2.3 PILLARS OR AREAS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

2.3.1 Human Formation

Human formation involves the formation of personal qualities, characters, behaviours, and skills of the seminarians training to be priests. It is considered as the basis or

necessary foundation of the entire formation process of priests (Wong, 2020). The main aim of training priests is to make them Christ-like human beings, living images of God. Just as Christ was a good shepherd, the priests are trained to be good shepherds that have human qualities and can be role models in the Church in terms of their characteristics and behaviour. Their behaviour should shine and reflect Christ's love and life to others. As Heb. 5:1-7 points out that "Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men concerning God". This verse continues to elaborate on the role of Jesus as the son of God and how he offered prayers and petitions to the one who could save him from death. Jesus became the designated high priest because he was always submissive and became the source of salvation for those who obey Him. It is in the same direction that Jesus Christ sought to anoint earthly priests, as stipulated in the Bible in Matthew 16:18, when he chose Peter as a chief priest to further enhance the growth of the gospel.

The Gospel according to John presents Jesus as a "good shepherd" whose mission as a priest is established when he consecrates himself so that his disciples may also be consecrated for his work. This is a clear indication that ordained priesthood is meant to support and minister to the other kinds of priesthood with the goal of witnessing God's love for the world. John 10:13, portrays the image of Jesus as a good shepherd who lays his life down for his followers. The model that is presented forth by the ministry of Jesus as a good shepherd is pure and sacrificial love and incorporating a community that also models the love of the Father (Mulreany, 2010: 56-70). The image that portrays the leader of a church as that of a shepherd is derived from the Latin word *pastor* or herdsman. In the Catholic Church a priest (also pastor) oversees a parish and is considered a leader, protector and role model for the community.

For that reason, the priest should mould his humanity or personality in a way that creates a bridge for people to pass through as they come to Christ. Through his humanity, the priest will understand the human heart, make communications with him easy, create trust with the congregation, identify problems among his sheep, and make decisions objectively (Keenan, 2013). The human formation of priests must cultivate the human

qualities that make them strong, balanced, flexible, understanding, caring, free, and to handle their pastoral responsibilities well and in a mature manner. The formation should teach them to be loyal to their calling, pure of heart, respectful to all, gracious, compassionate, fair, and with integrity and love just as Christ loved the Church. In this context, it calls for Seminarians in formation to do away with arrogance and embrace humility, hospitality, prudence, generosity, forgiveness, and promote transparent brotherly relationships, which are vital for building their relationships with others in the Church and outside (Scheper-Hughes, & Devine, 2003).

Therefore, the education of seminarians is imperative as it should produce priests that are mature and able to show true and responsible love to their followers, possessing the love of Christ, the Church, and the people, enabling them to be genuine, denouncing evil and any threat to a holy and sanctified lifestyle and their celibacy, and can have a true human friendship. Human formation leads to principled priests, human maturity, self-mastery, adherence to their moral obligations, and the respect of the conscience. The human formation of Seminarians, in summary, involves education that deals with the candidate's behaviours, activities, social skills, manners, among other useful traits for them to be good shepherds like Jesus. According to Adomako (2014) the competencies that encompass priestly leadership are based on; 1. The ability to communicate ideas effectively 2. Being able to motivate others by inspiring commitment 3. Delegating roles among the church staff and organising and managing projects 4. The gift of being able to bring out the best in people through acceptance and tolerance.

2.3.2 Christian Spiritual Formation

Christian spiritual formation is the process that relates to the conformation to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the God for the sake of other people (II Corinthians 3:17-18). This term is related to godliness formation, an approach in priesthood that exemplifies to emulating Christ. Christian spiritual formation of the candidates to the priesthood is especially important. Pope St. John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), described spiritual formation as the communion with God

and the search for Christ. In the Catholic Church, baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the access to life in the Spirit and the key to all the other sacraments. (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 1213). According to John 3:3, Jesus answered that unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The concept of birth implies that children inherit the attributes of their parents, this is relevant because rebirth in Christ means that we become children of God and therefore be like God. In 1 Peter 1:23, "Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God". This means that being born physically does not make us alive spiritually. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:1 - 9, that we are all born spiritually dead in sin, but God makes us alive when we go to him through faith in Christ. Christianity is based on the belief that Christ redeemed every human being from sin through his blood. For that reason, priestly spiritual formation involves educating the priests to develop an intimate relationship with God in order to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through them, bringing forth a complete transformation of the human person.

Spiritual formation is founded on various aspects. The most significant one is recognizing that Christ is the Word of God. This means that a candidate for the priesthood must have the ability to listen and understand the Word of God. They must receive and interiorize the Word that manifests itself in their ability to communicate the Word to others. The cultivation of silence and the development of mental prayer are not superficial but refers to the ability to foster an intimacy and dialogue with God. This will be the fruit of living faithfully and seeking everything from God with your entire soul. This is accomplished by training seminarians on impactful spiritual matters that encompass prayer (Miller, 2012 :92-105). In the context of learning how to pray, there is need to accept that at first this will be extremely hard. There is need to have times for private prayer and it is the role of the seminary formators to ensure that these prayer sessions are taken seriously by the seminarians. There is no specific preparation for prayer, but the conviction that the goal is searching for Christ. A deeper and clear participation in the prayer of the church is important and Mass and liturgy make up the most essential part of the Church's prayer. The thrust of biblical teaching emphasizes the long-term, patient, disciplined building of

Christian character through hard work and exercise. Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. It is growth in degree, size, strength, energy, and power of the graces which the Holy Spirit gives in a believer's heart. The person who is growing in grace is someone whose understanding of his own state of sin is becoming deeper, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, his love deeper and wider, his feelings for spiritual things sharper.

It is a leading mark of true Christians that they grow spiritually.

- Without spiritual growth you will have no spiritual health.
- Without spiritual growth you will never become rich in your spirit.
- Without spiritual growth, you will never become spiritually happy.
- Without spiritual growth you will remain a very weak Christian.

2.3.3 Intellectual Formation

The intellectual dimension of the formation for Seminarians, helps them towards a complete and unified vision of God's truth revealed through His son Jesus Christ (Wong, 2020). The study of Philosophy, Theology, Psychology, Logic, and all other allied subjects, helps the Seminarian sharpen his critical thinking in order to grapple with the mystery of the Triune God, Instrument of salvation (acting as a vessel of spreading the gospel), the Mystery of the Church as the Sacrament, and the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word and the redemption Jesus won for the salvation of the world. The priest as a shepherd is expected to be Christlike and a servant of God and of the people. During the formation of priests, the intellectual aspect is imperative, and it goes beyond acquiring theology and philosophy degrees but must integrate also training in sociology and anthropology; tools that will help the priests to understand the history and the culture of the people they are expected to serve. In the case of Nigeria, the priests should be conversant with the English language, and as many national languages as they can learn, and his ethnic language. A multilingual priest in a multi-cultural Nigeria will be better

positioned to engage with persons on the hierarchy and those under his leadership effectively and constructively.

While forming the Seminarians, it is imperative to consider the candidates' aptitude and IQ. Digitalization has transformed the world, which exposes the congregants to both positive and negative influences, which constitute emerging challenges to faith in God and comes with controversies in morality and ethics. In matters of clerical sexual abuse, IQ and aptitude tests for Seminarians are imperative so that the Seminarians will be assessed on their capacity to conduct themselves well and guide and counsel the young ones towards Christ's way (McGlone *et al.*, 2010). Any immoral and unethical behaviours like sexual abuse from the clergy, should be matched with the appropriate legal procedure. In this digital age, the Seminarians must be digitally aware, in order to help the faithful, navigate the troublesome and complicated waters of the digital space. In spite of all the multiple sources of information available, the faithful will always seek guidance from the priests regarding moral and faith crises (Sullins, 2015). To tackle such challenges, a priest requires a high level of intelligence to help him articulate contemporary and controversial issues that challenge faith today.

2.3.4 Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation is one of the key elements of the training for seminarians, whereby the future priests are trained to be good shepherds like Jesus Christ the true Shepherd. Some of the issues that the Seminarians tackle during their pastoral formation includes pastoral counselling, management, marriage preparations, marriage counselling, and domestic issues (Kappler *et al.*: 2013). The pastoral formation of Seminarians includes a thorough training in public speaking and homiletics which helps to increase their understanding of God's Word and practically apply the Word in their lives, sermons, teachings, and administrative skills.

The reason Christ came to the earth is to serve others as illustrated in Mark 10:45, Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Priests

who imitate and live Christ's teaching should strive to help others and, as the Son of God was, be shepherds to guide the Christians to greener pastures and still waters. The importance of pastoral formation is that it enables the Seminarians to understand and live out the Church's mission in-depth. Such training increases pastoral capability and sensitivity, which in turn increases empathy to others and zeal to win souls for God's kingdom. It also helps all priests to become true men of communion and communication. As part of the pastoral formation, seminarians spend some time in parishes under the guidance of mentor priests. The Seminarians look up to their mentoring priests as role models and brothers on the same journey to help them understand their roles and responsibilities in the Church mission.

In summary, the Nigerian Catholic Seminaries places a lot of emphasis on the formal education of the future priests. Because there is a lack of sex education in the primary and secondary schools; many Seminarians, suffer from sexual identity crisis and lack self confidence in relating with the opposite sex. The failure of exposure of many Seminarians in matters to do with sex, results in sexual identity crisis. This issue could be addressed by appropriate training in sex education and psychology.

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT THEOLOGICAL CONTENT AND PRACTICES THAT MIGHT PROMOTE CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

For centuries, the Church has viewed itself as a living mystery of God founded by Jesus Christ, who is the Saviour of all.

- i. The Rome-approved curriculum in 2016 for the formation of Seminarians, trains professional theologians rather than pastoral priests

The Rome approved curriculum in 2016, where priests apply scholastic tradition of expounding from a text or giving notes is grossly inadequate for the training of future priests today. This curriculum follows a moral theology covering ecclesiastical censures, the sacraments, the obligations of vocation (especially Marriage), contracts, the Decalogue, the virtues, sins, laws, conscience, and human acts. Previously, Seminaries

have developed in very rustic settings as the process occurred in an exclusively celibate, clerical, regimented, and segregated settings where all that was needed to be promoted to the priesthood was to observe the rules and conform to the superiors. This curriculum resulted in the promotion of incompetent, narrow-minded and non-pastoral minded priests, who managed to pass through the seminaries without the seminaries passing through them.

ii. Autonomy, mental reservations, and miscommunication

The diocesan autonomy has been damaged over the years due to a lack of open communication and transparency among senior priests in the Catholic Church. In Nigeria, many bishops in the dioceses have paramount autonomy with a high miscommunication level, exemplified in veiled speeches and mental reservations. This results in the abuse of power among the priestly class. Besides, in the cases of sexual offences many perpetrators would be guilty of corruption. Conesa (2016) rightly argues that there has been reduced internalization of submissiveness while dealing with moral judgment, autonomy, and personal authority. Mental reservation is a big issue in Nigeria, where topics like sex are forbidden to be discussed openly among many cultures. This negative impact of the local culture has led the communities to stall in recognising and dealing with the issue of clerical sex abuse.

iii. Isolation, lack of emotional intimacy, secrecy, and loneliness.

Many studies identify emotional loneliness and isolation as a significant issue among priest's brotherhood (Cook, 2005). The primary cause of such loneliness and instability could be due to the periodical transfer from one parish to another. In Nigeria, most of the churches are remotely located in areas that are less developed. Changing from one parish, where the individual priest has developed bonds of friendship to another, may provoke feelings of loneliness and isolation. Another issue is that most priests go through the seminary formation without the chance to discuss their sexuality and their emotional health. These could easily be wrongly interpreted as signs of weakness and could lead

to disqualification of the Seminarian. There is a vacuum in the seminary training which could be filled by the development of appropriate emotional and sexual health education.

iv. God is all-seeing and all forgiving no matter the type of sin.

There are patriarchal beliefs and imagery that God is all-seeing Lord, non-judgmental, forgiving, loving, and lord and watches over all human actions (Burnett, 2018). God's patriarchal imagery is based on Catholic moral theology, where it expounds on humans' actions rather than ethical relationships (Cahill & Wilkinson, 2017). Based on this belief, sexual offenders are viewed from a forgiving, non-judgmental, and protective standpoint. This belief of all forgiving God can encourage indiscriminate and persistent sins knowing that after all God will forgive. Cahill and Wilkinson (2017) argue that the patriarchal system with dominating priests in power and control influences and encourages sexual abuse and the lack of punitive measures against abusers.

v. Sacrament of Confession or Penance

Sin is an offence against God and a rupture of communion with the Church and God. (CCC 1995 324). The sacrament of confession has as objective, the restoration of the broken relationship between the sinner, God, and the Church. The existence of this sacrament could indirectly lure predators into a false sense of security believing that they could sexually abuse children and just go to confession and receive absolution. The Sacrament of confession is of great significance where a sinner after confession is deemed forgiven (Burnett, 2018). The sacrament of confession is in line with the different verses as enshrined in the bible. Prov. 28:13, 1 John 1:9, deliberates that whoever conceals their sins does not prosper and the one who confesses finds mercy. This is further proven in Ps 32, regarding the benefit of being forgiven. More importantly, the prayer of righteous man is considered effective (James 5:16). Therefore, despite one being an offender, there is a need to seek mercy according to the loving devotion and compassion of Christ (Ps. 51).

For example, a sex offender may deliberately abuse the confessional seal by confessing to a bishop or a priest their sin of child abuses to “buy” their silence. Jesus asked his followers to forgive even their enemies “not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18, 22). Based on this, forgiveness is a core element in Christianity, which can easily lead to abuse of the sacrament of confession, seeing it erroneously as cheap grace and cheap forgiveness. For example, when a priest has a sex scandal, a fellow priest could likely hear his confession and forgive him as an aspect of solidarity. Rather than reporting the priest sex offenders to the police, priests acting in solidarity could accept offenders back with no legal action taken against them.

vi. Inadequate preparation for celibacy makes priests struggle with their sexuality.

The concept of celibacy is a big challenge in the psychological and spiritual formation of priests. Priestly celibacy is founded on the clerical principle that values consecrated virginity and bodily chastity. Although all Catholic priests are expected to practice celibacy, they receive minimal or no special training to prepare them for this challenging lifestyle. The priests are encouraged to practice a celibate life like Jesus (Mayblin, 2019). Though they desire to live like Christ, the bad management of the celibate life of priests and inadequate training for celibacy can encourage child sexual abuse among priests. Celibacy is based on biblical teachings Matthew 19:10-12, for the men who can accept to live without wife, they may opt not to marry. Indeed, the bible allows people to become eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of God. This means that if a priest feels not prepared to life in celibacy, he better marry one wife as enshrined in Corinthians 7:2. Indeed, the bible in 1 Timothy 3:2 argues that an overseer must be above reproach, a husband of one wife and be self-controlled. This depicts that one can still serve in the Kingdom as long as he allows himself to be above reproach. The extent of reproach is even higher for priests in the Roman Catholic, who have to depict celibacy.

vii. Lack of moral support from the bishops/Major Superiors through the formation process.

Many priests and seminarians lack moral support and mentorship from their bishops and Major Superiors. Over the years, the Catholic Church has experienced varying degrees of sexual misconducts and resignations by priests who abandon the priesthood to enter the marriage institution (Olikenyi, 2018). Another issue is soliciting sex in the confessionals. Wojtkun (2018) argue that at the time, the formation process of seminarians is dictated by shortages of priests. And for many decades, the high authorities have discussed priestly celibacy, which Cardinal Marsella introduced and argued (Plante, 2020), but to no avail. In the case of Nigeria, the high numbers of Seminarians make it impracticable for any reasonable support or mentorship from the bishops or Major Superiors. Often meetings between bishops/major superiors and the seminarians are often for assessments where the personal feelings or wellbeing of the seminarian is never discussed.

viii. Inadequate screening process of candidates for the seminaries.

The screening process for admission of candidates into the seminaries is inadequate and superficial. The current celibate capacity tests are inadequate as they cannot effectively provide serious and less severe personality defects. According to Cahill and Wilkinson (2017), in some countries including Nigeria, after conducting suitability tests, the bishops overrule and ignore the advice from senior advisors like the seminary rectors resulting in the ordination of unsuitable individuals. Another issue is expelled and desperate Seminarians recycling themselves from one religious house of formation to another or through different formation places in desperate efforts to become priests at all costs and by all means.

ix. Theology of human sexuality might provoke sexual feelings, yet they are celibate.

In some seminaries, the Seminarians undertake the study of theology of human sexuality, where they learn the natural law surrounding the issue. They learn sharp differentiation between males and females in their personality levels, social roles, and genital sense. Cahill and Wilkinson (2017) explain that the Catholic theology of human sexuality exalts

consecrated virginity over marriage and views the significant role of marriage in human society as procreation. The rules and curriculum of the Catholic theology on human sexuality were created during a period where men were seen as superior to women, when heterosexual marriage was the order of the day, and any inclination towards the LGBTQ+ community was a biological disease requiring medical, spiritual, and psychological healing. The Catholic theology on human sexuality, views some sexual sins as more serious, like anal and oral sex, masturbation, and artificial contraception because they are against nature; and some as less severe like rape, adultery, incest which are closer to nature (Mayblin, 2019). Within such a curriculum, all sexual acts, including the desires and thoughts outside marriage, are mortally sinful and highly prohibited. Indeed, Matt 5:27-30 stipulates that even looking at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery, but the bible further asks the people, including priests, it is better to lose one part of the body for the sake of God.

- x. The many Catholic boarding schools where Seminarians and priests are in-charge of the students.

The majority of Catholic boarding schools are led and managed by seminarians and priests. Being in charge, and having unrestricted access to children, increases the possibility of clerical sex abuse. In Nigeria people often say, “the boss is always right” and those in positions of power and authority command respect and obedience (Omolade, 2009). It would be difficult for a child to resist and reject the sexual advances of the principal, rector, or seminarian in charge of the school. Besides, students trust their priests which may increase their risk of sexual assault (Omolade, 2009). Unfortunately, in cases of sex abuse, the reports are made to the school's Head, who most likely would be a priest and maintaining the priest's solidarity could cover up the case. (White, Terry: 2008). This erroneous and evil attitude will follow the pathway of cheap grace and cheap confession, where the perpetrators are left unpunished. For example, when a seminarian or a priest in a school in Nigeria sexually molests a child, reporting such a case may be argued from the forgiveness parameter rather than legal action. And often the seminarian

is dismissed and in the case of the priest, he is transferred to another location where he can continue to sexually abuse children without any further preventive measures.

2.4.1 Implications

Clerical sexual abuses could be attributed in part to the deficiencies in the psychological and human formation of the gruelling celibate way of life. Following the traditional models, the Seminarians' training follows a clericalist hierarchy where religious and priestly holiness is viewed as the greatest sacrifice in Christianity. Cozzens (2006) is convinced that the celibacy lifestyle makes the priests struggle with their sexual desires, thus turning to children and threatening them to be silent. The inefficiency on the part of some bishops is a major factor in contributing to clerical sex abuse of children. Taglia (1996) claim that most seminarians lack fatherly guidance, and moral support from their bishops and major Superiors and this gives room for possible sexual abuse; the abuser seeking solace and comfort in the child to make up for the lack of fatherly care on the part of the bishops and Major Superiors. For example, some bishops, rather than applying strict measures against priest sexual predators, they end up transferring them to other locations in the diocese thereby giving them new opportunities to continue to prey on vulnerable children.

There has been discussion on allowing priests to marry and have children thereby enjoying sexual relationship without sinning (Taglia, 1995). Taglia (1995) argues that the Church most likely will not be changing its rule on celibacy for priests any time soon since the Pauline teachings offer ground for justification of celibacy in the church. But the case study of former Anglican vicars in England, who converted to Catholicism and decided to continue serving as priests in the Catholic Church and were granted special permission to keep their wives could offer some insight in this debate. I have met and worked with a few of them in the archdiocese of Southwark, United Kingdom.

During a symposium held at the Pontifical Gregorian University (PUG) on February 6-9, 2012, the primary issue was to discuss the issue of sexual abuse by Pope Benedict XVI titled Toward Healing and Renewal. The symposium was conducted by persons with

communication, organizational, and psychological skills. The aim of the meeting was to put sexually abused persons first who had a chance to explain the strategy to healing. The authority's role was to actively listen to the victims and develop the most effective strategies to fight the scourge. According to Hans Zollner (2019), effective sexual abuse measures require media involvement and cooperation through whom the strategies for effective protection of vulnerable people and communities can be spread and communicated.

Following the biblical teaching of Jesus, children are innocent and deserve protection, and thus, any sexual abuse aimed at them are against Jesus' will. According to Phipps (2004), the issue of child sexual abuse dates back centuries ago from the very beginnings of the Catholic Church. Understanding its presence is vital, as it must not be overlooked. In Nigeria, young children, especially boys, are at greater risk and danger in the presence of deeply frustrated, sexually deprived, psychosexually maldeveloped, and psychosexually immature priests. The most vulnerable group will be the altar boys who are remarkably close to the priests and whose close association with the priests almost raises no suspicion. It is a possibility that, the issue of sexual molestation of children may go back to the unresolved sexual identity of the priests.

The Catholic Church has experienced challenges in the contemporary world due to LGBTQ+ issues, which are accepted now by most civilised societies. However, Africa, including Nigeria, has not accepted this fast-developing aspect of modern life, especially in the Churches. Varying theories have led to emotional and cognitive distortions in the thought formation process. The young generation today live and think differently and so must the Church if it wants to remain relevant in the twenty first century. The patriarchal system in the Church, the theology of homosexuality, the sacrificial theology of priesthood, and other psychological realities (Wong, 2020) would have to undergo a paradigm shift to accommodate modern realities. However, this is contrary to the biblical teachings such as 1 Corinthians 7:2; Matt 19:10, 1 Timothy 3:2 relating to sexual immorality.

Besides, bishops have silenced people to maintain an apostolic and holy picture of the Church against different Christian denominations. The abusive clergy must remember that though God is all-forgiving, it does not make it right to sexually assault children and repent afterward (Phipps,2003). According to Taglia (1996) child abuse scandals by religious and clergy have been kept secret by the Catholic Church for a long time. Inadequate and weak screening process for candidates to the priesthood makes it easier for those with dodgy, psychological, and sexual harassment backgrounds to gain admission to the seminaries. Such individuals end up molesting children and youngsters when possible.

The reality of clerical sexual abuse of children in Nigeria has led the hierarchy: The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) to form a Centre for Child Protection (2019) The CBCN has selected three persons to undertake a five-month training course to study sexual abuse and the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults at Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. The body selected one person in every province in Nigeria. In Lagos they selected Rev. Fr. Olufemi Michael Akintolu, in Onitsha it was Rev. Sr. Maureen Lina Mariet Akabogu IHM, and in Kaduna they selected Rev. Fr. Daniel Kyom.

2.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING PRIESTLY FORMATION PRACTICES TO CURB CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

The challenges facing priestly formation in Nigeria, calls for a new formative approach that considers contemporary social-cultural factors. And as Pope Francis (2018) insisted, it is time for change and that change calls for both personal and communal conversion which will lead to a shift in the way we deal with sex abuse scandals. The contemporary Catholic regime in Nigeria requires deep and radical transformation to deal with the clerical sexual misconducts based on the increased number of sexual molestations. Despite the current interventions, the number of victims is increasing annually. The framework should adopt an ecclesial leadership model, the Vatican has set the standard and all dioceses all over the world including Nigeria must follow. According to the Ecclesial leadership, there are four seasons: calling, formation, identification of the role,

and praxis (Pope Francis, 2018). Besides, Pope Francis as leader of the Catholic Church has countless times illustrated his resolve in cleaning up the church of the mess of clerical sex abuse of children. He stated in his letter to the people of God: With shame, regret and repentance, we acknowledge that the Church was not where it should have been and failed woefully to act in a timely manner to protect vulnerable children. (Pope Francis, 2018). "The severity of the plague of sexual abuse against minors is a historically widespread phenomenon unfortunately in all cultures and societies" (McGarry, 2019). Public awareness is needed to communicate the issue and the procedures for reporting sexual abuse. Prevention is the best strategy for paedophilia management where educators and parents should educate children in levels and ways that are easily understood by them on how best to prevent abuse happening. This includes the dangers they are likely to face including invitations to the homes of adults, gestures of affection, and accepting presents (La Civiltà Cattolica, 2019)

The CBCN has a vital role to play in ensuring a national response to the sexual abuse scandal in the country by creating an educative, preventive, and punitive framework. The culture of silence and cover up must stop (Pope Francis 2018). Clerical superiors and bishops should be well informed regarding the impact and nature of sexual offences by researching the experiences of sexual abuse victims and the field of social, psychological, and human sciences on sexual offences. The formation process should be founded on in-depth research and professional expertise, courses, seminars, peer-reviewed resources, and other sources that will help equip future priests for ministry in a world coming to terms with the scandal of clerical sex abuse of children in the catholic Church.

Following the example of the episcopal conferences in Canada, the CBCN should widen the scrutiny process which should understand the dynamics, causes, and circumstances of sexual abuse with a future oriented perspective. This led the Canadian bishops to publish the Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse document. The document included the effects of sexual abuse in the country (Lombardi, 2019). One aspect Nigeria should borrow from the document is the need to have a clear understanding of the depth of the damage inflicted on abuse victims and a better understanding of the personalities of the

offenders. Such understanding will help vocation directors and rectors in their discernment for candidates to be admitted to the seminaries and to the priesthood.

Terry, K.J., and Ackerman (2008) recommend that churches formulate uniform rules at organizational level illustrating the most appropriate and acceptable behaviour between priests and children. For example, is it acceptable that priests should go to secret areas with children alone? At all times and in all circumstances, the life, safety, and rights of children should be at the heart of all the regulations concerning child protection. This is in accordance with Chapter 3 and 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that; *“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”* and *“1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child”* respectively (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2020).

Pope Francis has always pushed for the creation of safe environment within the Church for children. He acknowledged the suffering endured by victims who suffered from abuse in the hands of priests who in abusing the children, abused their power and their conscience (Pope Francis, 2018). The Catholic church in Nigeria must as a matter of urgency acknowledge publicly and apologise to all victims of clerical sex abuse as the Pope has done on numerous occasions. The Catholic church in Nigeria cannot live in isolation but must fall in line with the worldwide Catholic Church. The effectiveness of any child protection programme must be subjected to periodical auditing to ensure the churches and the priests comply with the program (Terry *et al.*, 2011). Diego Fares (2019) on a study on Chile provides three mechanisms given by Pope Francis which includes placing oneself in the bosom of the faithful People of God, paternal stance toward his brothers who are also fathers, and self-accusation. This calls for the Catholic Church in Nigeria to initiate active listening by promoting pastoral care where Christians are free to

speak out. Though we must apologise for the bad behaviour of abusive priests, but as Pope Francis (2018) rightly argues, no amount of sorry can repair the harm already done to victims.

Priestly formation contributes to the salvation of souls, and it is to help the future pastors in their work of preaching the kingdom. Nigeria is a multilingual and a culturally pluralistic society and Nigerian candidates for the priesthood come from these diverse environments. Hence any meaningful formation programme for candidates to the priesthood must take into consideration this important factor, as it will allow the victims to be more open. We live in a modern and digital world today where young seminarians have access to a lot of information via the internet. Some of us who went through the seminary formation in the years up till 1994 never had a laptop computer or a mobile phone while in the seminary. Things have changed and we can no longer maintain the status quo. Hence, any seminary formation today in the Catholic Church in Nigeria must adapt to the present realities of a technological era of readily available pornography that pose a threat to the celibacy of priests or remain obsolete because the Church in Nigeria cannot live in isolation from the changes happening in other churches all over the world

For an up to date and fit for purpose formation for Seminarians for modern day ministry in Nigeria, I recommend the four points agenda for formation of priests in the present-day Nigerian Seminaries as suggested by Simon Mary Asese Ahiokhai (2011).

1. An adequate priestly formation programme today, must take into consideration the correct interpretation of the signs of the times. This adaptation will help the Church to become a better and more effective agent of mission and evangelisation in a modern Nigeria. Reading correctly the sign of the times today will involve training Seminarians to have clear and deep understanding of their own personal sexuality and the sexuality of others at the margins especially the LGBTQ+ community. Afterall Jesus came to save all people, and no one is excluded from the kingdom of God. How would a young priest respond to a person who belongs to the LGBTQ+ community? How can we make them welcome assuring them of God's love?

Reading the signs of the times would also involve deeper knowledge about #METOO Movement, #BlackLivesMatter Movement, #ENDSARS Movement and I dare to add #AbuseVictimsLivesMatter Movement. The Catholic Church in Nigeria must get involved in changes that are part of all the global and national movements that are fighting against sexual abuse. in order to remain relevant in the twenty first century. The Church needs to make a shift in accepting sexuality as a gift and not as a problem. The Church must be seen and remain a fountain of God's inclusive love and mercy. What is the cultural praxis that can help the Church to understand better and reinterpret human freedom and sexuality for the young faithful today in Nigeria?

2. Banishment of the dualistic vision of the human person. We are all created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) Hence, our resemblance of God cannot be only in spirit but also in body too. The constant denigration of the human body as weak and prone to "sins of the flesh" has to change. In our sexual ethics today, we have to arrive at a reinterpretation of the human body as a gift and not as a burden. At the incarnation, Jesus took on human flesh (making sense of our nonsense) and we cannot and must not castigate and downgrade what Jesus has glorified and upgraded. We need to begin to see the human body from a divine perspective because it is packed with a lot of possibilities and a clear example is the mystery and beauty of conception, pregnancy, and birth of a new human person. Human sexuality should no longer be seen as a bad thing but a beautiful gift from God to be used well and not abused. This is evident in Genesis 2:24, where the husband and the wife become one flesh, but those who ascribe to the celibacy must make the decision to stay without marrying as articulated in Corinthians 7. In the seminaries, they must be provided with adequate information to determine whether they really can make it throughout in their life under celibacy or even marry as opposed to engaging in sexual immorality under the oath of Celibacy. We must make a paradigm shift in understanding and interpretation of human sexuality: from sinfulness, evil, and falseness to sacredness, especially the meaning of, giftedness

and beauty. Does the formation programme today in our seminaries equip Seminarians with all the necessary tools that they need to discuss human sexuality in a comfortable and mature manner?

3. There is need for an interdisciplinary approach in the formation programme for Seminarians. This approach will open up a dialogue between theology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, neurobiology and psychology and will enrich the Seminarian's knowledge of human sexuality and relationships. The Church's dialogue with human sexuality and other social sciences must be open and honest and receptivity of new insights from such dialogue is a necessity. Seminarians must be taught not to live their lives just to fulfil people's and the Church's expectations and they have to be helped to come to terms with what it means to be fully human, though called and consecrated for mission. The seminarians must be able to answer honestly the question: how do I honestly reconcile my sexuality with a strong pull towards active sex life and my vocation as a minister of the word and sacraments? No question concerning human sexuality should be a taboo. The courageous and open confrontation of human sexuality in the philosophical and theological discourses in the seminaries will help Seminarians to own up to their sexuality realising what it means to be fully human and yet chosen for mission.

4. How authentic is the formation given to candidates for the priesthood in the Catholic seminaries?

It is a common saying in the seminaries that some pass through the seminary without the seminary passing through them. There is always the fear factor of being expelled hanging on people's head. In contrast I was surprised when as a young seminarian in America, I was encouraged to call the rector of the seminary by name. This could never happen in a seminary in Nigeria. Formators and the formed have to begin to see each other as brothers on a journey, this change of attitude will encourage dialogue and openness in both parties. The seminarians must have the confidence and assurance that they are not one mistake away from expulsion. After

all, if they were perfect, why waste their time in the seminaries: they must be able to self-disclose, live their authentic lives, make mistakes learn from their mistakes and grow as human persons.

2.6 CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING THE VICE.

Sexual abuse of children in the catholic church of Nigeria cannot be clearly analysed without understanding that child abuse is a multifaceted crisis in Catholic churches globally and has been perpetuated by a dysfunctional system that has been reinforced by patriarchy, ecclesiastical secrecy, and clericalism. There are no specific policies that are developed specifically tailored for Nigeria. On the contrary, Nigeria relies on Vatican based policies that are general and not tailored to Nigeria. The subsequent failure to effectively address this scourge of sexual abuse has seemingly pointed to the interplay between aspects of abuse of power and trust that is endowed to religious figures and preying on the vulnerabilities of children. It has become apparent that most cases of sexual abuse in the catholic church, in African countries, especially in Nigeria receive underwhelming attention. According to a senior nun Veronica Openibo from Nigeria, Children have continuously been victims of systemic sexual abuse within religious institutions. Sister Openibo emphasizes the need to not trivialize the suffering both emotional and physical of children who are sexually abused by underplaying the magnitude of the situation. History indicates that the Catholic church has failed to act decisively towards undertaking rigorous discernment to prevent this phenomenon of child abuse (Cardinal Oswald Gracias, 2019).

According to report by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund, one in four girls and one in ten boys in Nigeria has have been sexually abused. The number of children who have been victims of sexual abuse by catholic clergy cannot be determined due to the already problematic issue of lack of transparency and cover-ups that are taking place. In January 2020, a weeklong conference held by Conferences of Major Superiors of Nigeria (CSMSN) was held in order to align policies that needed to be developed together with the "Guidelines for processing Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors" which were put in place

by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN). Father Kingsley Nonso explained that the theme of the conference was inspired by Pope Francis' acknowledgement of the turmoil endured by victims of sexual abuse and abuse of power and trust. Fr. Nonso was distraught by the rising number of abuse cases being perpetrated by clerics (Olikenyi, 2018). He continued by emphasizing that the church condemns the evils and there was need to come up with ways of ensuring that society is completely rid of this evil.

The most predominant recommendation that was voiced by the religious leaders in Nigeria during the conference was the need for prosecution of perpetrators of child abuse by eliminating any hidden conspiracies or attempts to silence victims of abuse. There are no studies on the evaluation of emotional and cognitive effects of abuse of children by priests in the Catholic church in Nigeria, indicating a need for evaluations on a judicial context. The Catholic church in Nigeria is built on communal relations and the epitome of the church is on the renewal of the soul through God's grace but within the walls of an institution that has been in establishment for over 2000 years is sinful nature of the leaders given authority to lead the people towards glory. The gruesome acts involving children in Nigeria and worldwide are often disregarded and refuted raising questions on what it essentially means to find hope and solace in the house of God.

2.7 ROLE OF CELIBACY IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The question of whether there are specific reasons that are inadvertently contributing to the rise of sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church in Nigeria is a debate that is yet to be had. Majority of literature argues that using celibacy as a reason for the rising cases of child abuse in the catholic church is an erroneous and enormous implication that overlooks underlying factors (Frawley & O'Dea, 2010:33-37). However, the attempts of this paper to tackle all the very deep-rooted issue of child abuse in Nigeria by priests might fail if aspects like celibacy are overlooked. Celibacy can only be explored as a causative factor and in some isolated cases it can be an aggravating factor (Adams 2003: 91–92.). To effectively understand the role of celibacy on sexual deviancy, there is a need to consider some of the factors that stem from troubled sexuality. Examples of

issues that are central to priests as outlined by Adams (2003) include. 1. Issues related to a troubled childhood that could be a result of abuse, trauma, and incest. 2. An identity developmental crisis caused by emotional and sexual immaturity and an over inflated role as a caregiver. 3. A compulsive sexuality that is enveloped by shame. In contention with the assertions by Adams (2003), in the context of this study, the three are key issues that are central to the priesthood. Since celibacy is mandatory for priests in the Catholic church, unresolved issues, and an attempt by individuals prone to sexual deviancy could essentially be attracted to the potential refuge offered by the priesthood and celibacy. Most priests may not be consciously aware of the underlying sexual vulnerabilities within them, these issues might resurface after the vow of celibacy or chastity has been taken.

The words of Cardinal William Levada on Celibacy and Priesthood at the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte in 2011, properly sum up the very essence of what celibacy is.

“The Pauline teachings have grounded the Church’s understanding of the pastoral motivation for celibacy. This is beautifully embodied in the Church’s lex orandi at the point in the ordination for deacons when those destined also for priestly ordination make the promise of celibacy. The bishop says to them, “...celibacy is both a sign and a motive of pastoral charity, and a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. ... you will be more freely at the service of God and humankind, and you will be more untrammelled in the ministry of Christian conversion and rebirth.” This ordination prayer echoes the teaching of the Council’s Constitution on the Church Lumen gentium 42 that celibacy is a “sign and motive” of charity. If we may say that Christ’s virginal celibacy was an essential part of his salvific mission, may we not also say that priestly celibacy is “essential” to our priesthood? Perhaps the distinction used by the American Jesuit Donald Keefe could be helpful here. He would say that being a priest and being celibate belong together “essentially,” that is, their bond is not extrinsic, incidental, accidental, or artificial. They are not held together simply by an act of the arbitrary will of authority. Rather, they complement each other. They form an integral whole in

which the one reinforces and perfects the other. On the other hand, this would not imply that celibacy is “necessary” to the nature of priesthood. We have seen already that the Council and Pope Paul concur that celibacy is not of divine law. If that were the case, the Church could not have permitted a married clergy over so many centuries”

The cardinal in his words above reflects on the theological understanding of what the church has taught on priestly celibacy and the various dimensions of Christological and ecclesiological nature on the connection between priesthood and celibacy. Cardinal Levada acknowledges the factors that may cause hindrance to true celibacy such as the technological revolution that has resulted in an era of sexual revolution. Pope Paul VI drafted an encyclical letter (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*) spoken on the various objections on celibacy for priests that have been revealed including allegations on the unnatural nature of celibacy.

The law of celibacy for priests is therefore considered to be best suitable for those in God’s ministry and with the help of the Holy Spirit all that is unknown will come to the light. Pope Paul completely disagrees with the notion that abolishment of celibacy in the church will solve the issues of “priestly infidelity” and “defections from priestly ministry” noting that sexual abuse is also rampant outside the clergy and is a personality-based problem. Cases of child abuse in Nigeria stir up the never-ending debate on the role of celibacy in sexual abuse cases associated with the catholic clergy. Worldwide, the church hierarchy has continually affirmed that there is no link between celibacy and sexual abuse, but this can be challenged because the numbers of child molestation are increasing among the priests. The view of American bishops that there is no scientific evidence that could signify a connection between paedophilia and celibacy (Hughes & Devine, 2003). This has been criticized by Father Robert Charpentier, a psychotherapist and former priest saying that it is highly erroneous to disregard the role of celibacy on sexual abuse. He emphasized that the Roman Catholic church has failed to conduct research on the subject since the cases of sexually acting out in the church continue to increase (McLoon-Richards, 2012).

The problem of paedophilia in the Catholic church has been in existence since the 1950s with majority of cases going unreported. Widespread media coverage on the massive reports of sexual abuse in 2002, gave rise to the misconstrued idea that child abuse in the church was an American phenomenon (Shea, 2008). Despite the increased number of child abuse cases in the church, this is becoming an epidemic across the different cultural backgrounds and the society has now treated it as a criminal issue (Purvis & Joyce, 2005). According to Saroglou (2011), real religion incorporates factors like believing, bonding, and belonging and benefits that are significant to individuals and the community at large. In this post-secular world, an attempt to understand the correlation between religion, sexual deviance, spirituality is a very complex and sensitive issue. Father Anyanwu, who is the director of Social Communication of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria has continually emphasized that cases of sexual child abuse were not as high when compared to Western countries. Despite his claim, most of the cases in Nigeria go unreported to avoid stigmatization. Paedophilia brings into light several concepts that encompass it, according to psychologists, these elements are referred to as “paraphilia”, “perversions” and “deviancies”, these terms are used as indicators for the disturbance in sex arousal (Miller, 2006).

The features of paraphilia that point to the situation in the catholic church are recurrent and intense sexual urges involving nonconsenting individuals (APA, 2000 :566). For Kathryn Smith (2008), the average paedophile who is fixated (seeking attention and acceptance from his victims) tends to violate around seventy-six children on average, in the course of their life. A regressive paedophile is not always attracted to children but turns to children for sex as a response to stressful situations (Smith, 2008). According to psychologists, there is interplay of complex biological mechanisms, psycho dynamic social and conditional factors. Smith (2008) has become clear that the collective integrity of priests has been affected by the moral crisis triggered by the sex abuse scandal.

2.8 THE WAY FORWARD

Based on Hans Zollner's (2019) argument, supported by Sr Veronica Openibo (2019) the Catholic Church in Nigeria needs to be transparent in their handling of all cases of clerical sexual abuse. The church should reassess their relationship with the media by challenging them to be more truthful and fairer in their reporting process. Significant pastoral care, protection, compassion, and justice should be extended both to the priest offender, the non-offender and more especially to the victims who need it most. All clergy should share the shame of the priest offender. Hans Zollner was right to suggest that the pastoral care should extend to the Major Superiors, Bishops, and all clergy in houses of formation because they have all been wounded inadvertently by the sex abuse scandals. The safety and wellbeing of the children can be protected by strict applications of Canons 128 and 1389 on erring clergy. As rightly argued by La Civiltà Cattolica (2019) "there is no room in the priesthood or in religious life for those who would harm children." The seminarians should be trained to be mature and to accept responsibility for their mistakes and not to blame others. According to Terry, and Freilich (2012), poor leadership and inadequate formation capacities can be rectified by ensuring the selection process for candidates and training criteria are clear and void of fraudulent and ambiguous activities.

Sr Veronica Openibo (2019) spoke my mind in her suggestions on the way forward for a better child protection strategy for the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Her suggestions as summarised below, are very pertinent for the Catholic Church in Nigeria today.

- The Catholic Church in Nigeria must not continue to hide the cases of clerical sex abuse of children anymore because of the fear of making mistakes (Olikenyi, 2018). It is never an acceptable solution to keep quiet until the storm has passed. This storm of child sexual abuse has come to stay and will not pass by until we deal with it. The Church's credibility is at stake and as Jesus reminded us: It would be better for anyone who abuses little children to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck than to lead to the downfall and abuse of any little child (Lk. 17:1-3). There is no escape for the Church

and there is no hiding place. The Church must seek healing and justice for the victims of abuse. It is no longer acceptable to show solidarity by covering up the sins of your brother priest and protecting the image of the Church. All sex offenders within the Church if found guilty must face the full wrath of the law.

- There is need for sincere and courageous conversations on the issue of child sex abuse in the Church. Yes, mistakes have been made and we can make mistakes, but we are not created to be a mistake and future generations will not forgive us if we refuse to take action and correct our own mistakes. The first bold step towards true transparency, accountability, and healing, is to admit wrongdoing, apologise to all victims and take positive steps in correcting past mistakes and negligence.
- We must develop effective and robust child protection policies and guidelines in every diocese which should be placed visibly in various parish offices and published on the parish and diocesan websites. This will be a warning signal to all abusers that it is no longer business as usual in the Church. The Church must become proactive and not reactive with the issue of child sexual abuse.
- There can be no excuse for any abuser no matter how highly placed in the Church the individual may be or the age of the person. All abusers must be made to answer for their offences. No amount of punishment can make up for all the lives that they have destroyed.
- It is evident that the Church would need to train personnel in Psychology and psychotherapy to accompany the victims in their healing process and the perpetrators in their reformation process. Dioceses must be creative and innovative in developing culturally sensitive education programs to help curb the menace of clerical sex abuse of children. Such programmes, must respect the dignity of the human person and emphasize unacceptable behaviours and boundaries
- It is very urgent and essential that the CBCN must develop a clear and balanced sex education and training on sexuality and boundaries in the

seminaries and houses of formation, and in the ongoing formation of clergy and religious. This must be a compulsory module for all Seminarians and not just an elective subject.

- Each diocese must constitute as a matter of urgency a Child protection commission who will deal with the procedures and protocols, the legal and financial implications of allegations and the necessary channels of responsibility and accountability. This Child protection commission when constituted in every parish and diocese, will have as task how best to face the serious issues of sexual abuse in the local Church. Many people have suffered and are still suffering from the traumatic effects of the sexual abuse they suffered in the hands of the clergy. It is expected that some people out of malice or greed for financial compensation may make false allegations which will definitely cause pain for the falsely accused clergy. How to guard against this phenomenon would be a good topic for further research. The negative impact of the damaged faith and trust in the church by abuse victims, cannot be overemphasised. The Church must do all it can to rebuild trust and confidence eroded by clerical sex abuse of children.

Biblical Principles of Christian Sex Education

Sex education can be overwhelmingly intimidating for many parents, guardians and teachers. But this is one of the primary responsibilities of the parents. Therefore, future priests must be taught how to teach parents to provide biblical principles of sexuality to their children.

There are a lot of possibilities for children in this century to learn about sexuality. The sex education we have to teach our Christian children must have deep biblical roots and will go a long way to convince them to take it seriously. Though in schools, children may be taught about the physiology and anatomy of the human body and how to engage in a positive romantic relationship, there is no chance of them being taught the morality behind sex. Abstinence from premarital sex is becoming old fashioned and children are

encouraged to be more explorative about sex in contrast to the teachings of the Bible. It is then up to the church and parents to teach their children about sex within God's plan of creation; thereby giving them a positive and biblical insight into sex. If parents embrace their duties as the first teachers of faith and morals to their children, it will help build up the children's self-confidence and they will be comfortable to discuss sex and all its challenges. It will also help them to discern when someone is giving them a distorted view of sex, as is often done by paedophiles.

The Importance of Sex education by parents

Sex is one of the fundamental aspects of our human existence. Hence, parents have a great responsibility to educate their children with a holistic view of human sexuality as early as possible. As Christians, sex education should be taught within the context of the Bible, taking into account the whole human person: body, mind and spirit.

If our children are well educated in matters of sex, it will lead to greater respect and appreciation of their sexuality as a gift from God to be used responsibly. And the time to start the sex education is now and not tomorrow because tomorrow may be too late. (Jackson 2020).

Biblical foundations of Sex education:

The bible has multiple references to the immorality of fornication and adultery and the necessity of premarital chastity and fidelity in marriage. God abhors the sins of fornication and adultery (cf. Ex 20:14-17; Dt 22:13-30; Lev 19:20-22; Mt 15: 19; 1 Cor 5:1&9-11; 1Cor 6: 9,13,18; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5; Heb 12:16; 1 Cor 7:8-9). The Bible acknowledges the reality of the human sexual drive. God's word deals with real people and their real God created desires. 1 Corinthians 7:37 speaks of human "will" and indicates that mastery of our sexuality is a possibility. 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 is typical of verses setting forth the practical tone of God's design for the proper use of human sexuality. Ephesians 5:22-23 describes the exalted ideal of God's design for marital harmony, including sexual harmony. 1 Corinthians 6:18 gives probably the best advice on the harmful and wrong

use of human sexuality: “Keep away from sexual immorality.” Nowhere in Scripture do we find any teaching regarding “safe sex” as wrongly advocated by the secular world. As Fletcher (2017), rightly argued, the emphasis by the secular world on safe sex is a subtle way of promoting “careful promiscuity”, permitting fornication or adultery free of consequences and complications. This is something that our Christian children must be aware of in order not to fall into the secular world’s sexual pitfalls. From Genesis to Revelation, the bible has numerous lessons about the wrong use of human sexuality and the concomitant evil consequences. For example, the stories of Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:1-21), David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) and the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11) who Jesus saved from death clearly describes the sad consequences of adultery and fornication.

The Bible gives no room for our cultural descent into sexual immorality. Biblical teaching on sex implies: chastity and abstinence before marriage, insisting on marriage between man and woman. The biblical teaching on monogamy and heterosexual marriage has come under a lot of attack of late by the advocates of the LGBTQ communities who feel excluded. This present debate is outside the scope of this research and would be a topic for further research.

Sex education, taught with a biblically holistic approach argues that sex is best practiced in marriage and that, sex between husband and wife symbolizes the union between Christ and the Church. I agree with Fletcher (2017), who strongly argued that: “the Bible begins in Genesis with the marriage of a man and a woman and ends in Revelation with the marriage of Christ and the Church (Revelations 19:7).”

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The priestly formation process is supposed to equip future priests for ministry in the twenty-first century but a critical analysis of the training programmes in Nigerian seminaries show that undue emphasis is placed on intellectual and spiritual development to the detriment of human and psychological development. Little or

nothing is done in the curriculum to address the issue of human sexuality and LGBTQ+ issues. Future priests must be taught how to teach parents to provide biblical principles of sexuality to their children.

The management of child sexual abuse has been poor due to poor or non-existent structures for reporting of all sexual abuse cases. The CBCN though a little bit late has taken the right steps in the right direction by identifying resource persons undergoing training to help manage the child protection commission. The Church still has some dysfunctional and inadequate elements in positions of power, and they could do a lot of damage if nothing is done urgently to weed them out. The chapter recommends effective training programs for seminarians on clerical sexual abuse issues relevant for mission in the 21st century. To promote celibacy, seminarians should undertake in-service and pre-service training in seminaries and houses of formation.

CHAPTER 3:

THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN RESPONSE TO THE CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE NIGERIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of the theology and practice of Children Ministry in the Catholic church in Nigeria has become indispensable. It will help to equip the children with the much-needed tools to understand themselves as psychological, moral, religious, and sexual beings, able to know when relationships transits from normal to abusive; and to have the courage to speak out when need be.

A recent neuroscience study showed that the child's brain has basically the same structures as the adult brain (Goswami, 2015:3). However, the child's brain is in a state of development and at this early stage of childhood, children have the potential of learning several things that may either build or destroy them. It is because of the children's ability and willingness to learn that makes them a priority for faith and morals formation in the Church. Children learn majorly through social interactions and by imitation (Goswami, 2015:3). The church thus explores this as a means to bring up children in a godly manner. The aim of the Children's ministry in the church is to foster the holistic development of children as was the case with Jesus in Lk 2:5, that they may grow "in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and man." Moses also reminded the Israelites of the laws of God explaining that they should always impress them on children (Dt 6: 6-7) Solomon with his wisdom knew that training a child at a younger age is essential for their future character and values (Pr. 22: 6). Furthermore, holistic growth involves, not only the development of respect and obedience on the part of the children (Eph. 6:2), but also the instruction to parents never to drive their children to resentment in the process of formation (Eph. 6:4). It should be noted here, that the lack of adequate sexual education on the part of the parents can leave the children vulnerable and easy targets for predators. And the children

can turn around to blame their parents if they suffer abuse because of the inadequate training received from the parents. The Catholic Church in Nigeria operates in line with the worldwide Catholic Church faith system as far as the training of children in church doctrines and principles (Obi & Iwebuno, 2001:5).

This chapter looks at the place of children in the Roman Catholic Church, with an in-depth consideration of the biblical and theological principles on which the Catholic Children's ministry is founded. It also considers the role of the clergy, parents, church leaders and other church members in the training of children. The training of children to be effective in ministry and be active in the church is also discussed. The training of the clergy and church leaders to make them effective in Children's ministry is also considered carefully. This article ends by looking at the appropriate sexual education for children and the relevance of child sexual education in the fight against clerical sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church.

3.2 THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse occurs when a child is coerced into participation in anything sexual by an adult or a fellow child (Pilkington, 2017). The sexual abuse of a child has very severe consequences in the life of the child and the scar of the abuse is often carried all through life. The damaging effects of abuse on the person can be emotional or physical and Pilkington (2017) lists some of those long-term effects as: depression, anxiety, addictions, negative self-perception, feeling of worthlessness, low self-esteem, and difficulties with relationships. In addition to the list above, victims also suffered from: dysfunctional behaviour, self-accusation, anger, irritability, disassociation, and inability to trust others (Gilbert, 2009:74). What is clear from the above, is the negative impact of child sexual abuse on the victims. Colm O'Gorman in his book *Beyond Belief* while reflecting on his experience of sexual abuse by a clergy, argued that at a time, "I didn't know who I was anymore", he hated himself and saw himself as weak, pathetic, and depraved (2009:74). He became so angry that he turned from an altar server to an "enemy" of the Church who sued the Pope for the abuses he suffered from the hands of

a priest in his native Ireland (O’Gorman, 2009:164). During his time growing up, there was no sex education in the school (O’Gorman, 2009:56), which could have been a contributing factor to his inability at the time to speak out against his abuser. Developing a solid sex education programme for children in the Catholic Church in Nigeria, would help reduce the multiplication of other “Colm O’Gorman” who will grow up angry and disenchanted against, their parents and the Church for the lacuna in the formation received which left them exposed and defenceless against their predators.

Emphasising the great responsibility that parents and clergy have in terms children under their care, O’Gorman expressed his dismay at how he had been failed by those who loved him but were unable to protect him (O’Gorman, 2009: 165). Echoing the same frustration, another survivor wondered why the people she trusted the most ended up hurting her the most (Scott, 2010:341), making her feel rock bottom, unloved, abandoned and though only 24 years old, felt like a bone-tired 100-year-old person (Scott, 2010:224). And she rightfully insists that “nothing can ever justify what any of the abusers did or compensate for the great upset and injustice that took place (Scott, 2010:341). It is ridiculous to accuse abuse victims of speaking out because of the monetary compensation involved and as Gilbert strongly argues, considering the great damage done to these victims, their years of suffering in silence and the disruption to their entire lives, no amount of money can be truly considered a just compensation (Gilbert, 2009:76). It is better not to be abused than to be abused and a paid a compensation.

From our little exposé on the long-term effects of child sexual abuse, it can be argued that developing a robust and effective child protection policy in the Catholic church in Nigeria is concomitant with the articulation of a viable Children’s ministry, which will be of mutual benefit to both the Church and the “possible victims” who would be saved of the trauma of abuse. A big step toward achieving this objective is the development of a solid Children’s Ministry which will incorporate sex education in its curriculum, this is the principal objective of this research.

3.3 CHILDREN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church recognises that children are a priority, and both the Old and the New Testament point out the importance of teaching children the laws of God (Dt 6: 6-7, Eph 6:2 & Pr 22:6). This was also evident during Jesus's ministry when he asked his disciples to allow children to get access to him (Mt 19:14). Furthermore, Jesus warns people on leading the young ones to sin as whoever does that had better be killed instead of facing the wrath of God during judgement (Mk 9:42). Sexual abuse of child will fittingly be one of the ways of leading children astray and incurring the wrath of God. It appeared that children were of little or no value, or even naïve to the words concerning Jesus, but he challenged this erroneous mindset in people by insisting that children occupy a special place in the kingdom (Strange, 2004:9). The church has over the centuries, in recognition of Jesus' love for children, endeavoured to come up with programs aimed at preparing children for the kingdom of God (Coble, 1970:4). Pope Francis in his apostolic letter on the protection of minors and vulnerable adults (2019), insist that the church must protect children from all sorts of harm including sexual abuse and exploitation, ill treatment, and other forms of abuse by providing a safe environment for the children in church

Francis, Apostolic Letter. On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons. March. People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these (Mk 10: 13-14). The priest acts in the name of Jesus (Catechism No.1448), and when the priest abuses a child, the child could erroneously assume that Jesus was an accomplice in the abuse for allowing it to happen.

In the Catholic Church, ministry to children is tripartite, involving the homes, the church and learning institutions (Strange, 2004:9). Pope Francis in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of Love (2016: No. 45) condemned the sexual exploitation of children which is even more scandalous when it happens within their families, schools, and Christian institutions, where the children are supposed to be safe and happy and not

molested. They require food, shelter, protection and above all the necessary formation that will lead them to the knowledge of Christ at their tender age. The Church members, including the children, rely on God's fatherly love, protection, and care that He shows towards each church member. According to Pope John Paul II (1981), among the basic needs of children are: acceptance, love, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs, and these needs should be met by the Christian Community. This will help the children to grow in wisdom and in favour with God. The teachings of the Bible regarding children are best summarised as; help the children and be like children (Watson, 2016:52). In other words, if the children thrive, the Church thrives and if they do not, the Church dies.

Children are a special blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3) and parents are tasked with the primary role of nurturing and protecting them. For Pope John Paul II, the raising of children is a genuine apostolate (1994:71). Furthermore, the church is a medium of hope and life for children who seek to be nurtured and guided by its counsel (Aihiokhai, 2019). One of the main objectives of children's catechetical formation, is to ensure that they are brought up in the church's doctrine and shielded from false teachings that may erode their minds and willingness to learn (Watson, 2016:53). Koulomzin and Bezzerides (2004) assert that children occupy a special place in the church and should be part of the worship service. Children are an integral part of the Church and if they are left out, the church will not function successfully (Strange, 2004:5). It is most appropriate then to argue for educational programmes formulated to build a full liturgical life in the children, reach out to them in the homes and to instruct them.

3.4 PRINCIPLES OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

Children's ministry aims at ensuring that children grow holistically, that is, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially. To achieve this aim, the church should have a comprehensive Children's ministry program in place that is well endowed with teaching documents. The Catholic Church all over the world, including in Nigeria, uses the catechism of the Catholic Church to give guidance to Christians beginning from childhood. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (No. 1250) emphasises the need for children to

participate in baptism which is usually during infancy. The reception of baptism makes them children of God, members of the church and washes away original sin which they inherited through fallen human nature. At a more advanced age, children are given the sacrament of confirmation that impacts the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and finally the Eucharist which is the source and summit of the Christian life. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (No. 1307) Confirmation in the life of a Catholic child happens when the child is at the age of discretion. The age of discretion is described as the age when the child has the ability to distinguish good from evil and is responsible for their actions usually 7 years (Catholic Culture, 2020). The Catechism further teaches the believers including children the ways to live in Christ that are essential in the society (Graham, 1991:5). The Church's doctrinal principles that the Children's ministry should emphasise include the dignity of the human person, stewardship of God's creation, Christ's sacrifice for humans, and sin which are part of the Catechism (Catholic Church 1999:101). The children should understand that God created everyone, and that human life is sacred as exemplified in Gen 1:27: God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

The great sacrifice that Christ made for every human, forms a major part of the lessons that children are taught in the catechism classes which is an encouragement to be generous and selfless. Catechism No. 1999, states that the grace of Christ is a gift, offered to Christians through the infusion of the Holy Spirit into believers' souls, healing and sanctifying them through his salvific death on the cross. (Graham 1991:16), As Jn 3:16 places the emphasis on the generous sacrifice that Jesus made and the love of God for his people, children are made to understand its value and apply it in their own lives. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16), this is the height of self-giving and self-sacrifice, in contrast to greed and selfishness which fuels the sex abuse of children.

The Catechism recommends a solid moral formation for all Catholics, including children (1994: No 1755). The moral formation helps in living a virtuous life which includes the practice of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance (Catechism 1994: Nos 1804-

1805) Those who possess the virtues of prudence, justice and temperance will most likely not abuse children. Children are to be formed like all Christians to live chaste lives which implies the art of self-mastery and discipline, and the avoidance of acts of masturbation, pornography, and fornication (Catechism 1994: Nos 2395-2396) All these are summarised as immoral acts in the Decalogue “You Shall Not Commit Adultery’ ’etc (Ex 20: 1-17).

The Bible also insists on both the faith transfer and the faith formation of children; “you shall tell them to your children and keep on telling them....” (Dt 6:6-9). This passage talks about the importance of training children on biblical and moral doctrines everywhere and every time.

Pope John Paul II argued that the education of children must always consider two fundamental truths: that humans are called to live in truth and love and that self-fulfilment is only possible through the sincere gift of self (Pope John Paul II 1994: 71). The Catholic Church emphasises that “parents are the first and the most important educators of their own children” (John Paul II 1994:75). Hence, both parents and the people in charge of educating children are expected to give them instructions regarding the truth, the qualities of the heart, and the spiritual and moral dignity of the human person (Catechism 1994: No. 2526). According to Clark’s commentary of Dt 6: 4-7 (2001), Moses told the Israelites that pure love comes from the heart and children are to be taught repeatedly and diligently in the homes, churches, and other places of learning of the great testimonies of their faith ancestors and their practice of the ten commandments of God so that they understand and never to forget them. The task of training children is taken seriously by the Church.

3.5 THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY AND CHURCH LEADERS IN THE CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Apart from parents and teachers, Church leaders are also entrusted with the responsibility of modelling the child’s character and morality for their Christian lifestyle. The Church is conscious of the divine mandate it received to promote education and formation in all its

forms and insists that all humans despite their race, condition or age have the inalienable right to education. (Vat II 1975: 726). The Synod Fathers held that children have the right to the education of their conscience to be able to make sound moral judgements. They insisted that children must not be denied this right to education. (Vat II 1975: 727) It is based on the above principles as outlined by the Church Fathers that the Clergy and leaders in the Children's ministry must understand their task. The Church leaders create time to be with the children and teach them on matters of doctrine and morals grounded biblical principles. According to the *John Paul II Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (1992: Nos. 13 and 15), the clergy and Church leaders are the shepherds entrusted with the duty of caring for the flock to follow the example of Jesus Christ who was the good shepherd sent by God the Father to serve, preach, teach, and save the people. During the ordination rite in the church, the deacon is reminded "teach what you believe" (Rites Vol.2 1979: 58), and the priest is urged to apply his energy to the duty of teaching; teaching what he believes and putting into practice what he teaches (Rites Vol.2 1979: 62). By virtue of their vocation and ordination, the clergy are called to be teachers and formators.

Taking seriously their duty as teachers and formators, the clergy ensures that Church policies and doctrinal beliefs taught the children are not juxtaposed to their holistic formation. The clergy and leaders in the Children's ministry must be well prepared for their task by having the necessary qualifications and adequate training both religious and secular (Vat II 1979:733). The training they receive must be adaptable to the needs of the children according to the requirements of time and circumstances (Vat II 1979:732).

The formation of the clergy for ministry today should be built on the four pillars as enunciated by Ahiokhai.

1. What does it mean to be Church in Nigeria with a pluralistic culture and religion.
2. What and how does it mean to be church in Africa's largest economy?

3. How and in what ways can the church remain relevant in era of feminism and women right.
4. How can the Church in Nigeria dialogue with the LGBTQ+ community? (Ahiokhai 2019).

As Stonehouse and May correctly argued, teachers of children must learn to listen to them to understand their needs and be ready also to be taught by the children (2010: 11). Teaching children the doctrines of the church are helpful as they will make them to be firm in their faith, and they will not be easily swayed by any heinous teachings that they get from other skewed interpretations of the bible and doctrinal beliefs. Children learn best through observation; hence, attending Masses together with their parents would inculcate in them how they should conduct themselves in the house of God. (Christensen 2003:57).

The clergy and Church leaders also teach the children to grow in the knowledge of God and how to pray. Children have varying abilities to take in theoretical biblical knowledge and apply it to their life. The Children leaders also have the responsibility to instil individual confidence and improve cognitive abilities of the children (Christensen, 2003:72). While teaching the children, the clergy, priests, or deacons should be their role models in what they teach by speaking with absolute terms regarding their beliefs as well as intentions so that the children can trust them and be more confident in their teachings. The Church leaders are also to help inculcate in the children the Catholic principles of sexual morality which entails abstinence from sexual activities before marriage and consequently, any other sexual acts outside marriage such as masturbation, fornication, rape, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, which are sinful before God (Catechism 1994: No. 2396).

Since the Catholic Clergy take the vow of celibacy, and if they live up to their calling as celibates, they could serve as good role models for the children in the quest to promote sexual abstinence before marriage.

The church leaders and clergy should frequently audit the children's ministry. This, ensures efficiency, and involves periodic evaluation of the content of the Children's ministry curriculum to make sure that the children's needs are being met. For a fruitful audit, questionnaires are distributed to the children, to be answered with the help of the parents. Provision will always be made at the end, for any other comments or suggestion. The periodic audits also ensure that the lessons taught are age-appropriate and comprehensible for the children (Houser, 2008:180).

Teaching the children concepts, they cannot understand or apply is inappropriate and useless. The audits help in ensuring the appropriateness of the lessons taught. It also challenges the Church to see things from the eyes of the child, always seeking new and appropriate ways of being Church for and with the children (Asbridge, 2009:19). The audit also helps in raising the bar continuously on the quality of Children services to make sure they are grounded in the Catholic faith system, adaptable to the needs of the children and fit for purpose. The Children's ministry should be directed at the holistic development of the children and appropriate adjustments made over time to ensure that it is suitable and ideal (Christensen, 2003:48). The clergy, Church leaders and parents are in an ideal position to advise on areas of improvement in the Children's ministry, after having listened to the children. All the efforts and hard work are geared towards keeping children safe in the Catholic Church.

3.5.1 Training of Church Leaders in Children Ministry

Catholic Churches use Seminaries, Ongoing formation Centres, and Schools of Theology to train Catholic priests, deacons, and other leaders in philosophy and theology. According to the Saint Peters and Paul Major Seminary (SSPP) Ibadan in Nigeria (2017); the candidates for the priesthood, in their studies cover topics such as Christian Religious Education, Child Abuse, God, Sin, Immorality, Miracles, among other philosophical and theological topics. The training received on the above topics and more, help prepare future priests for an effective Children's ministry in the Church. Other topics that are relevant to the Children's ministry taught in Nigerian Seminaries as exemplified by SSPP,

are Moral Life, Common Good, Human Freedom, Christian Faith, Relationship between spirituality and morality, among other theological topics (SSPP, 2017). The priestly formation in Nigeria takes a period of about eight years in the seminaries (SSPP, 2017). The Church leaders, being the points of reference for most issues in the Church, should thus possess the necessary knowledge and skills to pilot efficiently the Children's ministry in the Catholic Church, which has a double objective of formation and child protection.

The Children's ministry leaders oversee educating the children and taking care of their spiritual, moral, and holistic development (Houser, 2008:181). Seminarians, deacons, and priests involved in the Children's ministry receive the normal training in the seminaries and by the help of the knowledge, and gained wisdom, during their training they are in a good position to adapt the topics from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to teach the children according to their age. For instance, the Holy Family Catholic Church (2020) shows their curriculum according to the children's ages as follows: Children between age 3 to 6 learn about creation, Jesus, and God's family. Age 7 learn about Jesus and the Church. Age 8 learn reconciliation, Eucharist, and Mass. Age 9 to 11 are taught about the Catholic Church, morality, Catholic principles, and sacraments. The programme of the Holy Family church above represents the typical Catholic Children's ministry oblivious of the urgent need for sex education for the children. The children's faith formation should be founded on an understanding of the nature of children, their diverse needs and the delicate minds that can be shaped early in their lives.

The example of Jesus' interaction with children should encourage every church leader who desires to be Christ-like to follow in His footsteps (Christensen, 2003:28). In Africa including Nigeria, seminarians, deacons, catechists or other leaders in the church that are good with Children's ministry can volunteer to take charge knowing they can manage and educate, and interact well with them according to their ages. Some of the leaders may not have received any formal training on the Children's ministry but are confident that they can interact with the children and teach them what they have learned in Church over the years (Devries & Safstrom 2018:61). It is a highly risky venture to allow people to be involved in Children's ministry out of mere goodwill. We live in a digital age, an era of

full self-expressions, an era of ME-TOO movement, an era of Black Lives Matter movement (Ahiokhai 2019) hence leaders in Children's ministry must be adequately trained to assist the children in tackling all these important questions of life. Given the fact that the clergy in charge of Children's ministry are equipped with the biblical knowledge of the special place of children in the kingdom of God (Mk 10: 13- 15), they should teach the children, how to live, in imitation of Jesus according to the church's doctrinal beliefs and biblical principles of obedience, love, respect, and humility. Seminars and workshops could offer an opportunity to learn from other leaders from other churches or dioceses and improve on the ministry in one's local church (Devries & Safstrom 2018:58). Appropriate training in Child psychology will be of immense help to the leaders in Children's ministry.

Leaders of the Children's ministry also require mentors to guide, assist, audit, assess, as well as advise them on how to educate, interact, inspire, and act as role models to the children. Nigerian seminaries always make room for spiritual direction which is a kind of mentorship while in training. It is very necessary for all those involved in Children's ministry both lay and ordained to have access to spiritual direction, which involves helping someone with their relationship with God. (Barry & Connolly 1982: 5). Spiritual direction gives the directed or the mentored the opportunity to discuss the joys and pains of the Children's ministry and to be guaranteed a willing listening ear. The Catholic Church also encourages all the baptised to have godparents who can later in life, act as their mentors or life coach. (Fem Catholic 2019).

The Master Mentor, of course, is Jesus and the Children's ministry leaders should strive to help and interact with children like Jesus did (Devries & Safstrom 2018:61). Furthermore, the children's leaders should be trained on sexual morality in order to be better equipped to educate the children, especially the teenagers. At Saint Peters and Paul Seminary Ibadan (2020), students also learn about reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, human sexuality, prevention, and control of sexually transmitted diseases in their course so as to teach their congregation in future to control the scourge of HIV/AIDS. The seminary also has an annual programme called sexual talk

with a health care professional who talks to the seminarians about sex, sexuality, and psychosexuality and how to manage their lives as celibate people. In the inter-semester programme held in Feb 2020, the seminarians were trained on clerical sexual abuse with focus on the needs and rights of the children, why children are at risk of abuse, forms of abuse, consequences of the abuse, Nigerian legal framework of child protection, how to deal with victims and perpetrators of the sexual abuse in Nigeria in culturally sensitive ways, the risk and protective aspects in Nigerian cultures, the spiritual dimension of sexual abuse; and creating of safe places for the sexually abused children (SSPP, 2020).

The clerical sexual abuse module is among the amendments made by Pope Francis to the theological curriculum in 2016 for all seminaries and ongoing formation for priests, to educate them on protecting children and other vulnerable members of the society from sexual abuse (Wooden, 2016). It is embarrassing by its lateness, though commendable and revolutionary, that the Vatican has only decided in 2016, to make the formation in child protection matters compulsory in all catholic seminaries. This would have been a taboo when I was in the seminary between 1984 to 1994.

3.5.2 Training Children

The Children's ministry seeks to encourage and empower the children to embrace the faith and the doctrinal principles of the church which includes embrace the vision and person of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, build communion with others and engage them in the mission of love to the community. The children's ministry in Nigeria is in the form of Sunday Schools, Children's liturgy or through organized vocational bible schools (VBS) that are organised in different levels according to the children's ages and levels in school (Jones, 2014:81). The Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos (2020) explain that their Sunday school is based on Jesus' invitation to children: "let the little children come to me; do not stop them" (Mk 10: 13-16). By this invitation, Jesus gave an incredibly significant place to Children in his ministry and in the church.

The Sunday Children's liturgy is the place where the children gather every Sunday for the liturgy of the word and other children's activities based on the readings of that Sunday. The Nigerian Catholic Churches do have Children ministry coordinators and Sunday school leaders who can be catechists, deacons, or seminarians depending on the agreed arrangements of the parish. There is a big gap in coordination and communication among parishes. Each parish does their "thing" in their own way. There is the urgent need to pull resources together and to harmonise the Children's ministry programme. The focus of the training is to make Christ known to the children and for the children to make Him known among their friends by sharing the love of Christ with them. Effective training of children should be REAL (Relational, Experiential, Applicable and Learner-based) (Jones, 2014:81). The REAL learning has influenced positively the formation and shaping of faith in both children and adults globally and highly recommended by this research. The Catholic leaders should follow the heart of God by teaching the children the values and principles that God holds dear through the Ten Commandments, and they include obedience, humility, chastity, devotion, faithfulness, respect, love, obedience among other good deeds. A good child protection theology can be developed based on the 6th commandments of the decalogue: "you shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). By expansion paedophilia will come under the above heading, hence the abuse of a child will be a breach of trust between the offender and God.

Relationships are very pivotal in the lives and training of children. Kids may appear bored, disengaged, or disconnected in the absence of a meaningful relationship. The training aims at the creation of a relationship which can help unlock the children's "understanding of faith by opening their hearts and minds to deeper discoveries and common experiences with their peers and leader in a safer environment" (Jones, 2014:82). To build the relationship, the teacher should be willing to do less of the talking while giving more time for the children to talk. The relationships can be built by giving the children discussion topics where they share their thoughts with their peers and with the trainers as well. The trainers should provide an environment in which the children's relationships can easily be formed and grown (Jones, 2014:83). Children relate to one another through noises. They

may giggle, talk loudly, or even chatter. The trainer should patiently accommodate these as they are essential in the training of the children.

The children are trained using practical examples. Experiences are a significant component of R.E.A.L that helps to unlock the child's heart (Jones, 2014:83). Children get motivated when a new lesson is presented to them and feel interested in discovering how it happened. They should get involved in what they are learning through certain practical activities such as showing love and compassion to their peers. A good example will be the exchange of gifts among the children especially during the celebration of birthdays.

A lively and transformative Children's ministry should involve the four acts of love by Thom and Juani Schultz: radical hospitality, fearless conversation, genuine humility, and divine anticipation (Schultz, 2013:65). These acts of love range from why no child wants to go to church no more to how these acts will make the Children's ministry sessions irresistible for the children. These four acts are in essence the mechanics of growing a relationship (Jones, 2014:84). The children should be taught on radical hospitality which is predicated to encourage them to welcome others. They are told to accept other people the way they are without expression of prejudice based on "gender, age, looks, dress or economic status" (Jones, 2014:85). Here, the devastating effects of sexism and racism are exposed. They are also taught about fearless communication which involves seeking to understand the views of others and listening more while speaking less while talking to another person. This will not only help the children to improve their relationships but will also help them in the church as well as in the Children's ministry sessions. The third act involves the demonstration of genuine humility to people who are different from their understanding. The children are taught to recognize and accept their individual limitations and weaknesses (Jones, 2014:85). The final act is divine anticipation whereby the children are taught to accept the things they cannot change and anticipate God to work everything out according to His will and divine plans. This final act is best described by the words of the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr

"God, give me the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, Courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other" (Shapiro, 2014).

The A in R.E.A.L stands for applicable. Pumping the children's brain full of facts and data will not bring a transformative effect in their lives. Christine Jones (2014:87), was right to assert that children are led to Jesus through transformation and not information. The children should be taught how to apply the knowledge learnt in their daily practical life. The children should be made to think about something, respond to God about something or actually do something (Jones, 2014:87). This helps the children to live the lesson learnt. The training should be learner-based. The Children's ministry leaders should not just teach what they think, or feel is right but should offer the children choices. Learner-based training is also influenced by the age or grades of the children. They can be divided into groups according to their ages to ensure that they learn what is applicable to them. The R.E.A.L approach in training helps the children to learn the church doctrines and biblical principles and live them in their daily practical life. It also teaches them the act of meaningful and effective socialisation with their peers.

3.5.3 Sex Education in the Children's Ministry

There cannot be a comprehensive understanding of boyhood and girlhood if sex education is left untouched in the Sunday schools and Children's ministry. The goal of sexual education for children in the Catholic Church is to help the children to develop confidence when talking, listening, and thinking about their feelings and relationships (St. Mary's Catholic Primary School 2016). I agree with Ahiokhai (2019) that the church is in dire need of reform in its approach to human sexuality. There is also need for a de-emphasis of the fallenness, sinfulness and evil of sex to an emphasis on the beauty, sacredness and fulfilling nature of sex (Ahiokhai, 2019). Sexual education aims at helping the children to be able to name their body parts, (private and public), explain how the different body parts function, appreciate the difference between males and females and

seek support in any sexual-related issue. According to UNICEF (2015) one in four girls and one in ten boys experience sexual abuse or violence in Nigeria.

It can be argued that sex education for children will build their confidence and help them to evade predators. Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* (2016) explains that sexual abuse in children is more scandalous when it occurs in places that are supposed to be the safest, that is, in families, schools, and even in Christian institutions. Given the above fact, Nigerian Catholic seminarians are now educated on sexuality and child abuse, which implies that they have been trained on how to handle matters concerning child sexual abuse (SSPP, 2017). This is surely a step in the right direction but still a long way from the ideal. The Nigerian Sunday school leaders should make the children to understand what sexual abuse is (bad touch of any private parts: penis, vagina, scrotum, breast, anus, buttocks, lips) and the steps they should take when they become victims of abuse (Briggs & McVeity, 2003:9). Sex education for children should teach them that sexual abuse can take place anywhere even in homes and the perpetrators can be either strangers or family members. On many occasions, the children who have suffered abuse, will appear disengaged and aloof, and not talk about whatever happens. The sexual education aims at building confidence in them so that they can speak about and against such evil in the society in order to name and shame the perpetrators and prevent them from preying on other vulnerable children.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria are wrongly and disappointingly opposed to sex education for the upper primary students as they argue that it is against the church's teaching on sexual morality of total abstinence from sex before marriage. (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria ,2005). Yes, sex education at such a young age, can arouse the curiosity and the quest to explore what sex is all about by the children. However, the advantages far more outweigh the disadvantages, because; if we put the safety and wellbeing of the child first, then our bishops should reconsider their stand. And as Ahiokhai (2019) argued, "there is too much shame in the current theological discourse on human sexuality" in the Church in Nigeria and it is now time for a paradigm shift. Sex education will help the children understand when boundaries are crossed. To better

safeguard the children from predators, they should be taught about the dignity and worth of the human person. They should realize that humans were created in the perfect image of God and that sexuality is God's gift to man and essential in personal identity (St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, 2016). This approach guards against the view that the Catholic Church has a series of random and arbitrary prohibitions as far as sex education is concerned.

Children should be trained to appreciate and respect the opposite sex as early as possible recognizing that the whole human person (male and female) is the image of God (St. Mary's Catholic Primary School 2016). The basic lessons in sexual education aim at helping the children to understand their body. Children are taught about the reproductive organs and the roles of the reproductive organ to understand better their sexuality (Twomey, 2010:138). From this, they should be able to embrace their differences as boys and girls and accept that God created them differently for a purpose.

The sex education should also take a developmental approach which seeks to provide a gradual and positive education in sex and relationships. This approach aims at enabling children to have the right information, help them to develop a proper conscience to make an informative and right judgment and to act in whatever situation they may find themselves in (Twomey, 2010:138). They are taught about the various stages of growth, and especially the puberty stage where they transition to adulthood. They are informed of the various developmental changes that take place at this stage and the need to embrace the change as it is a transitioning period in everyone's life (Twomey, 2010:138). This is also the stage where many children become prone to sexual abuse as their bio-physiological changes attract preys who may take advantage of them (Gerdes, 2003:18). For that reason, sexual education must teach children about the age of consent to sex implying anyone that incites them to sex before they attain that age have sexually violated them (Miller, 2018:35).

The children are formed on the need to establish interpersonal relationships and to always be in the company of others. This might protect them from the human preys and the risk

of contracting diseases like HIV/AIDS which in Nigeria, has infected over 3 million people (Adesina, 2014:231). Therefore, Children's ministry should educate the children on sexually transmitted diseases and their repercussions, which will help in making informed decisions to protect themselves from the pandemic. Sex education will also help the children to understand and respect the sources of life. The regard that a boy shows towards a girl cannot proceed from the absence of knowledge, although this is commonly termed as innocence (Newland, 2006:130). Though sexual education is essential for children as they grow, the Catholic Church in Africa including Nigeria prefer to emphasise sexual immorality instead of human sexuality in her teachings. Mukoro (2017: 69-75), summarised succinctly the tension inherent in the teaching of sex education in Nigeria. He argued that sex education is a source of conflict between knowledge and cultural values. Often the parents' opinions are divided on whether to teach sex education to the children, and if yes, they argue on: how, where, when and by whom? He rightly concluded that the continued practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Nigeria is clear evidence of this tension/conflict.

Parents should therefore be actively involved in training their children in human sexuality (Newland, 2006:130). However, African including Nigeria parents find it hard to talk about sexuality with their children because culturally it is regarded a secret and there was no open, free, or relaxed communication on the topic (Adepoju, 2005:8). Nigerian parents find it difficult to engage their children in sexual education because words such as sex are culturally, regarded as dirty and wrong. Furthermore, body parts that show sexuality are never mentioned and whoever was found mentioning them was seen as an immoral person. For that reason, some parents and church leaders may still find it hard to open up to their children about sexuality. Though culture changes with time, parents go as far as giving the responsibility to other people like the Church or village leaders to teach their children only during initiation or when the girl is about to get married (Adepoju, 2005:12). This cultural conflict in sex education, calls for a paradigm shift in the ways Nigerian parents think and communicate with their children on the issues of sex. Hence, parents need to be well trained in sex education so that they can in turn train their children. There

is an urgent need for an inter disciplinary dialogue between the Church, culture, and modernity. If the cultural barrier towards sex education is not broken with the parents, the Church and culture, it will be difficult to press forward with the sex education of children as argued in this research. The continued stigmatisation of sex education in the Catholic Church in Nigeria, will be counterproductive to the development of a robust and efficient child protection policy.

3.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's ministry practices are not uniform across the globe. The practices vary even within dioceses and may be influenced by the practices of the diocese or the Children's ministry leaders. It is important that a general policy document is published for the Catholic Church in Nigeria highlighting the specific lessons to be taught to the children. The Children's ministry leaders should also work closely with the clergy to ensure that the Children's ministry is operating in accordance with the church guidelines and teachings. The Churches should organise annual summer training camps as is practiced in the archdiocese of Conakry in Guinea, where the holistic formation of faith and morals is assured for the children. Having participated many times in these sessions while a missionary in Guinea, all the young people always look forward to these sessions because of its great benefit to their lives. There is a need to develop a sex education kit which the parents can use in their sessions with their children and the kit must be child friendly. During the sessions, children should be kept occupied with issues that will help in their holistic development, which includes both physical, spiritual, and sexual development.

The church should organise workshops and seminars to train the Children's ministry leaders and parents on how to reach out to the children and accompany them in this journey of life. Parents should be encouraged to be part and parcel of the training of their children in order to boost the confidence of the children. Sex education for children should be the primary responsibility of the parents, assisted by the Church through the Children's ministry leaders. Parents as key players in the formation of their children, should also be

reminded of their mandate to bring up godly children that actively apply God's word in their lives and pray always (Gaillardetz, 2013). The bible places a lot of responsibility on the parents regarding the education of their children. Whoever does not train a child, hates the child (Pr. 13;24). Parents are mandated to discipline/train their children (Pr. 19:18; Dt. 6:6-7; Ps.78:5; Jl. 1:3). The best way for parents to prove their love to their children is to ensure that they are well formed in a holistic manner in order to be well equipped for their journey of life.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Children's ministry is a very crucial arm of the church that determines the role that the children will play in the church and wider community, their faith formation, and the impact they will make in the world. There is a need for an organised Children's ministry in every Church to ensure the holistic development of the children. The training of children should be based on the Church's doctrine, and biblical principles, with a foundational knowledge of child psychology. The Sunday liturgy for children is an important context for training the children in church doctrines, biblical principles, sex education and should be child friendly. Parents should purge themselves of their cultural bias on sex education and be proactive in the faith and human formation of their children. Sex education is an important part of the Children's ministry, which will enable the children to appreciate their human dignity and sexuality as a beautiful gift from God. Sex education for children should be an integral part of the curriculum for the Children's ministry in order to help eradicate the issue of clerical sex abuse. Leaving children to grow up without sex education is making them very easy targets for sexual predators. The more knowledge the children have about themselves and their self -development the better equipped and confident they will be to defend themselves against sexual predators.

CHAPTER 4:

REVIEW OF EXISTING CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NIGERIA IN COMPARISON WITH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN THE WESTERN WORLD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) pastoral and moral teaching is grounded on the respect for human life and the fundamental right to life. In addition to this, the moral and theological foundations are geared toward protecting the rights of the minority and of children. However, despite these strong foundations, the RCC has, for many years, been under a lot of scrutiny especially in relation to sexual abuse and other sexual related violations of human rights. For instance, between 1950 and 2012 approximately 17,000 people in U.S. reported that they had been abused by priests when they were children as reported by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2013). A similar report by the same Conference showed that 657 allegations were reported for the first time by 620 different survivors of child sexual abuse by the clergy. These cases have also been reported all over the world. Extensive research has been done on the problem of clerical sex abuse of children in the United States (USA), Australia and Europe (Jenkins, 2001:29,34; Doyle, Sipe & Wall, 2006:6; Keenan, 2013: 8,295; Parkinson, 2003:3).

However, it would be an oversimplification to assume that this issue surfaces only in Western countries. In an article in the New York Times, Horowitz and Goodstein (2018) states: When the scandal first surfaced in the United States in the mid-1980s, Vatican officials called it an American phenomenon, church historians say. When it spread to Canada, Ireland, England, and Australia, they framed it as a problem of the church in the English-speaking countries. Then, when the scandal erupted in Germany, Belgium, France, and Austria around 2010 during the papacy of Benedict XVI, the Vatican termed it a problem of the developed world, born of sexual libertinism. Now, with cases of priests

sexually abusing children emerging in Chile and the Philippines, the Vatican may finally be adopting an international approach.

In fact, it is only recently that Pope Francis summoned bishops from around the world to Rome for an unprecedented meeting focused on protecting minors (Horowitz & Goodstein, 2018). The order came as the Pope wrestles with a global clerical sexual abuse crisis and explosive accusations of a cover-up that have shaken his papacy and the entire Roman Catholic Church.

Child abuse is indeed found to be a widespread malpractice throughout the world, of which Nigeria is no exception. According to Abdulkadir *et al.* (2011:79), this mentioned clerical malpractice is among the most underreported and understudied topics in Nigeria. A negative consequence of the social taboo attached to child sexual abuse is that policymaking on such sensitive topics is a major challenge in Nigeria. This is mainly since people often are unable to understand how frequent these malpractices occur and how grave this issue actually is. The reason is that most victims prefer to stay silent. Ignorance about child sexual abuse hinders prevention and identification and leads to failure to respond adequately. Often the lack of knowledge enabled the sex abuse to continue undetected and unchallenged (Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Abuse, 2017). Furthermore, policy precedes discussion and debate, which is difficult to conduct on culturally sensitive topics such as child sexual abuse. This becomes more complex as believers fail to reveal the sexual abuse advanced on them or their kids. Various reports have shown that child related abuse is less likely to be reported if involving a close relative or if involving a religious leader (Bottoms, Nielsen, Murray & Filipas, 2004:16, 17).

This chapter highlights the inadequacy of existing child protection policies in the Nigerian Catholic Church. This is done by summarising existing policies and discussing the inadequate protection they offer to children who suffer due to clerical sex abuse.

4.2 THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION

In his encyclical *Human Vitae*, Pope Paul VI (1968) reaffirmed the Church teachings on the sanctity of human life, the right to life and responsible parenthood as a call and duty. It also pointed out the God given responsibility of the whole human society to safeguard and protect life. In this regard, any social crimes against human life, be it abortion, euthanasia, torture, death penalty or child abuse should be condemned. In addition, the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* of Pope John Paul II (1980) emphasize on the dignity of human life and the children rights to protection by the parents and the society. These two encyclicals open up the debate on any theological foundations on child protection.

On the possible causes that lead to sexual violence and abuse on children and women, different scholars have concerted themselves along the societal aspects as well as the natural orientations of perpetrators. The societal aspects are related to the family and relation settings, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. In the process, certain scholars focused on the theological foundation of abusive behaviour (Nason-Clark 1997, 2000). The question under consideration was whether certain forms of theological arguments may support abusive behaviour towards children and females, portraying them as weak and dependent. The Catechism of the Catholic Church number 2356 mention child abuse as being graver if the perpetrator is a parent or those responsible for the child education. It seems silent not to mention the clergy explicitly, yet this problem has damaged the image of the church for decades. Those scholars who seek an answer to whether a relationship does exist on the nature of the relationship focus on the possible lacuna in law and in the moral and pastoral teaching of the Church. The answer, thus far, is unclear.

Regarding the Catholic Church, certain studies point to the issues rooted in the theological beliefs of Catholicism and Christianity (McLoone-Richards, 2012:395), while others find no such relationship at all (Ellison, Bartowski& Anderson, 1999:111). There is a third and middle school of thought as well, namely, that blaming religion for supporting abuse and violence does not address the core issue. This is the result of neglecting the

contextual elements in the relationship between church, family, and abuse (Nason-Clark, 2000; 2004).

4.2.1 Abuse linked to religious beliefs

According to Bottoms *et al.* (2004:87) religious beliefs can foster, encourage, and even offer justifications for child abuse. Therefore, scholars adhering to the first school of thought mentioned above, argue that abuse and neglect of children by parents are strongly associated with their religious beliefs about family privacy, child discipline, blind commitment to authority, and worldly punishments for sins (Bottoms *et al.* 1995:100; Schweitzer, 2004:67). Bottoms *et al.* (1995:98) examined several forms where religious beliefs can result in child abuse, ranging from a ritualistic type to abuse by a religious authority. In their sample representing the US population with its diversity of religious beliefs, they found that more than 50% cases of child sexual abuse by clerical authorities involved Catholic perpetrators. In addition, they found that common among Catholic victims of child abuse end up in self-blame, where they believe the violation to be a punishment for their own sins. Bottoms *et al.* (2004:93,104) found that most of the victims were abused when they were between 5 and 11 years old. The age factor was found to contribute highly to religious reasoning for action and for not reporting the cases. The issue of solidarity and loyalty among priests could have led to the multiple issues of cover up because “out of loyalty priests did not betray other priests” (Demasure, 2016:160). Though some have argued that clericalism and celibacy could have contributed to the phenomenon of CCA, “men in positions of power have been known to sexually exploit their status despite having wives” (Hidalgo, 2007:48). It can then be argued that not celibacy but the position of power which can be held by both married and celibate men, is a contributing factor in CCA (Demasure, 2016:161).

However, a few studies have focused specifically on the issue of child sexual abuse by clergy considered from a theological point of view. For instance, Farrell and Taylor (2000:23) note that when perpetrators of child abuse are part of the clergy, they exploit theological arguments to justify the act. Arguments like: “wives(women) should be subject

to their husbands(male) as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22-24 NJB 1985) Here, the man can easily be imposed as the Lord and master of the woman because the woman is required to submit to the husband as to the lord Jesus, thereby putting the man at the same level with Jesus. This argument is also reinforced in Colossians 3:18-19: “wives be subject to your husbands, as you should in the Lord” (NJB 1985). Proverbs 6:20 and Ephesians 6:1 encourages children to be obedient to their parents and do what they are asked to do (NJB 1985). Colossians 3:20 says: “children it your duty to obey your parents always because that is what pleases God” (NJB 1985). Paedophile clerics can easily misinterpret these texts to make the child believe that by succumbing to their inordinate sexual desire they are obeying God. Given too, that priests assume the role of spiritual parents and are addressed as Father makes these texts quite easy to be exploited to perpetrate sexual abuse.

Paedophiles also force their victims to silence while threatening God’s wrath on them if they disclose the act as narrated by evidence in Farrell and Taylor (2000:23-24). Parkinson (2003: 168-172) in his case study of child sexual abuse and the churches, highlights the inappropriate attitude of the church administration towards this act. Such official responses may lead to re-traumatisation of these victims and distorted images of God. Thus, instead of providing support and care to such victims, they are treated as enemies of the Church and Christianity. McLoone-Richards (2012: 394-404) gave a more comprehensive view of this issue. While studying the possible causes of CCA in the Catholic Church of Ireland, he found evidence of Church authorities exploiting quotations from Scriptures to justify their control over the family and personal life. For instance, paedophile priests cited Matthew 16:19 “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (NJB). This scholar also examined the power struggle of the Catholic Church in the 20th century in Ireland and explained how the shift in power from church to state led to institutional abuse towards children.

Due to their positions and acting as Christ representatives, Catholic priests are viewed by followers as their religious leaders and spiritual mentors. Therefore, any act that clearly

violates this image is expected to influence followers' perception of not only the church but also of God whom the church leaders proclaim (Rossetti, 1995:1471; Flynn 2008). The clergy have also resulted to quoting their powers as priests and power to give absolution to sex abuse they perpetrate to their victims (Farrell & Taylor 2000:23-24).

Research has provided empirical evidence that occurrences of sexual abuse by priests and other authorities in the church influence people's attitude not only towards the church but also towards God. In his study on victims of child sexual abuse, Rossetti (1995:1469) focused on trust towards the priesthood, the Catholic Church and ultimately, towards God. The scholar reported a significant difference in trust between adults who reported no child abuse and those who were abused by a priest. CCA has led to victims suffering from spiritual trauma which leads to a disturbed relationship with God (Demasure, 2016:163). For those not receiving psychotherapy and pastoral counselling after the abuse, the decline was found to be higher. Similar results were reported in qualitative studies by Fater and Mullaney (2000:283) as well as Flynn (2008) on adult victims of CCA. Fater and Mullaney (2000:281-295) conducted phenomenological research on adult male survivors of child sexual abuse, whereas Flynn (2008) examined the lived experiences of women who were sexually abused by clergy members. These scholars found that the incident has the potential to influence views of the victims towards religion and Church. The abuse also impacts their level of religiosity, although the researchers found the actual extent of influence depends on several individual and social factors. The respondents in the study of Fater and Mullaney (2000:291) specifically reported the spiritual stress they face throughout their life because of the earlier abuse. Priests are called Father and sacramentally represent Christ. Hence, the image of God as Father can become problematic for victims abused by priests (MC Laughlin, 1994:146-147).

4.3 THEOLOGY PROVIDING A FOUNDATION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Recent studies on the theological foundation of child abuse by the church, however, have adopted a middle ground. This third school of thought focuses more on the right use of theology to build a foundation for child protection. Based on examples from Scriptures,

these studies emphasise using Christian theology to focus on protecting children instead of rationalising the act of abuse (DeVries 2001:163). DeVries (2001:161-173) gives an in-depth discussion of Jesus' directive to safeguard the innocence of childhood and indicates how the act of child abuse by a church is a direct violation of this order. Despite a notable emphasis on human weakness that makes sins unavoidable, the biblical tradition clearly condemns any act that involves "little ones" in such sins. In this regard, Luke 17:1-2, presents Jesus' directive:

He said to his disciples, "Causes of falling are sure to come, but alas for the one through whom they occur! It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones. Keep watch on yourselves" (NJB 1985).

The image of the pastor in several places in Scriptures (Ps 23; Jer. 23:1-4; 25:34-35; Ez. 34:2-8; Is. 56:9-12; Zc. 11:17; Jn. 10:11-12; Lk. 15:4-7; Ac 20:28 NJB 1985) stress the fact that church leaders have the calling of God to lead and protect God's people and "feed the lambs" (Jn 21:15 NJB). In Psalm 23:1-3, the Christian image of God is presented as that of a protective Caregiver, symbolised as a 'Shepherd' leading human herd through the good and bad of life towards the green pastures of everlasting life (NJB 1985). The Catholic Church is known for spreading this caregiving and protecting image of the Lord to its faithful followers. The Church teaches that the ideal behaviour for a Christian, especially leaders who are called to be Shepherds of the flock is to reflect this image of Jesus in his or her life. The leaders as Shepherds are implored to be more sensitive towards fellow humans, caring for their needs and protecting them from harm. Church leaders are obliged to give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted to them. They are to watch over it not just as a duty but with joy as demanded by God nor monetary gains, but because of their eagerness and commitment to duty. Leaders are asked not to lord it over any group under their charge but be an example that the flock can follow. (1 Pet. 5:1-4 NJB 1985) These teachings can be used to build a solid theological foundation for child protection (O'Neill, *et al.* 2010).

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church numbers 2360-2363, sexuality is ordained to be practiced and enjoyed within a marriage setting between man and woman. But, because of the strong temptation to sexual immorality in humans, the Bible advises that, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. In marriage couples should not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt them because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor 7:1-5 NJB 1985) Church leaders who struggle with strong sexual desires should be urged not to commit to leadership positions that requires celibacy, but rather fill other positions in the church and get married.

The main purpose of sexuality is the transmission of human life. This imply that sexual actions outside of marriage are sinful and should be abhorred. This is also mentioned in the *Humane Vitae* (Smith 1993:232-236). Therefore, the Catholic theology ought to safeguard the rights and life of children especially against sexual abuse.

In his encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (on the celibacy of the priest), Pope Paul VI confirmed the long Church practice of ordaining male and having them take the vow of celibacy. The encyclical not only reaffirms male ordination and sacred celibacy, but also emphasises on the call for chastity among the clergy. At the same time the pastoral teaching holds that celibacy is voluntary and hence the clergy should remain faithful and steadfast. The Pope calls for the clergy to be shepherds of the flock entrusted to them rather than devouring them (Paul VI. 1967:12). "Among you, there must be not even a mention of sexual vice or impurity in any of its forms" (Eph.5:3 NJB 1985)

These theological and pastoral teachings provide a solid foundation for child protection and the need for strengthening policies towards the same. However, there seems to be a laxity in the Catholic theology in dealing with child abuse, particularly in cases where the perpetrator is a clergyman. There seems to be no sustained pastoral and theological reflections in relation to children's rights. Much of the emphasis is on the parents' obligation to educate their children. Hence, there is absence of discussions around other

issues affecting the children such as child abuse. (Swart *et al.* 2010:232). With an improved policy for child protection, the church can play a vital role in turning this into a positive relationship by connecting Christian theological beliefs with more practical guidelines to ensure child protection instead of rationalising clerical sex abuse.

4.4 EXISTING CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

This section examines the current status of child protection policies adopted by the Catholic Church. Firstly, the focus is on the general protection policy framework issued by Roman curia (Vatican) for local churches. This is followed by examining similar policies adopted by different local churches in the USA, UK, and Ireland. These policies are then compared with the protection policy formulated and adopted in Nigeria, to highlight the latter's limited progress.

4.4.1 Child protection policy in the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church operates as one entity with the Vatican in Rome as the overall governing body under the leadership and guidance of the Pope. The Catholic Church, unlike other religious institutions, is a male-dominated organisation with the entire clergy composed of adult men. All clergy are educated similarly undergoing teaching on philosophy and catholic theology. The entire clergy is subject to the singular authority of the Pope under the vow of obedience. However, the leadership of the church is hierarchical with the powers flowing from the papacy to the cardinals and to the bishops and lastly to the priest in that order. In this order, the clergy take the vow of obedience to their superior(s). The authority of the Pope is unique since he has the authority to forgive individuals their sins whether they are clergy or laymen. This authority does not only apply to this world but also to the world hereafter (White and Terry 2008:665).

In this regard, it is important to understand that the Vatican provides guidance to local churches, which are independent bodies, indicating how they can develop their own policies for child protection. Scholars have distinguished the act of child sexual abuse

within the RCC from those occurring outside of it, within the wider context of the church's overall organisational structure (Keenan 2013:46, 257; White and Terry 2008:662-665).

The authority that the Vatican clergy enjoys is rooted in the doctrine of papal infallibility based on the understanding of Matthew 16:18 where Jesus entrusted the Church to the leadership of Peter. (NJB 1985). This has been interpreted to mean that Peter and his successors (popes) have the moral authority to teach in matters of faith and morals without erring. Thus, transgressions and especially criminal acts from the clergy, endangers this power structure and the accompanied trust from members within the RCC as it "contradicts everything that the institution publicly stands for" (Keenan, 2013: xxv). In addition, the bureaucratic structure of the Vatican curia has a secretive method to handle cases of human sins such as child sexual abuse. This may create the impression of a conspiracy, which impacts the trust of the public towards the clergy (Keenan, 2013:30, 221). It must be noted however, that child sexual abuse is not a problem peculiar to the Catholic Church or that it is a consequence of the Church' tradition of celibacy (Parkinson, 2003:3). However, Demasure (2016:161) argues that celibate priests often find themselves isolated and lonely which could push priests to transgress boundaries. But the author questions why such celibate priests who chose to be celibates voluntarily would turn to a child and not an adult partner.

In May 2001, the Catholic Church issued a policy titled *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* (SST), under which all cases of CCA should be reported to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome (Ryan 2009). However, the policy was later modified since a large number of such cases emerged. In terms of the current policy, Bishops and Major Superiors are responsible for dealing with the majority of cases and only those will be referred to CDF where the accusation has been proved credible. This occurs after an investigation by the Bishop or the Major Superior.

As stated by Terry and Ackerman (2008:651), the attitude of the RCC to early reports of CCA was ostrich-like. In such cases, the Church authorities treated examples as isolated, individual acts and preferred to remain silent, waiting for the furore to die down. However,

with the continuous reporting of CCA cases in the mass media, the Church finally took steps to address the issue and formulate policies for the protection of children. In response to growing reports of CCA, the curia in the Vatican began paying attention to the issue of child abuse during the 1980s. However, the actual policy formulation began only as late as the beginning of the 21st century.

The Catholic Church has recently also established a Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The specific task of the Commission is not to intervene in local cases of child abuse but assist local churches to develop their own child protection policies and procedures. In addition, the Commission advises the Pope on policy issues related to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The Commission developed a policy guideline template, requesting local churches to develop their policy in accordance with article 3 and 19 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors 2016). The guidance document recommends that local church bodies should consider procedures for recruiting clergy and volunteers. This should include programmes to train and develop future clergy, standards for ministerial behaviour, and a clear statement of commitment to educate the community.

The Commission also recommends that the church should have a transparent procedure for responding to complaints of child sexual abuse. However, no detail is provided of penalties in case a person is found guilty (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2016). The document holds that the procedure must be in accordance with SST, which is a policy that focuses specifically on child sexual abuse. The document does not assist local churches by providing guidance in case of physical and psychological abuse and in other important areas of child protection as highlighted in article 19 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

According to Keenan (2009:183), the Church policy is also guided by zero tolerance policy against child abuse. This was also reemphasised by Pope Francis in the recent synod with bishops from all over the world (Horowitz & Goodstein 2018). In this policy, the clergy found or is substantially alleged of sexual abuse with a minor should be permanently

removed from priesthood. In her study on the challenges faced by preventive policies in the Catholic church, Terry (2008) points out that though preventive policies could be more effective, they are more challenging to implement. The author argues that this could be the reason why such preventive policies are hard to come by. In subsequent articles, the issue of guideline on how to prevent clerical abuse will be treated.

4.4.2 Child protection policies in Catholic Churches of the USA, UK, and Ireland

Child protection would not have become a concern for the Catholic Church if the case of Father Gilbert Gauthe did not surface in October 1984. In this case, a pre-teen boy accused the father of an enforced sexual act (Burkett & Bruni, 1993:12). Further investigation of the case revealed numerous other instances of child sexual abuse by Father Gilbert. The investigation found him guilty of fondling young boys physically, and even engaging them in oral and anal sex. He was also found to be fond of pornography and enticed young boys to perform mutual sexual acts, while recording the action for his personal use (Berry, 1992). This resulted in the first effort from the Catholic Church in the USA to implement a policy against child sexual abuse, in 1985 (White & Terry, 2008:661).

A further shock came in 2002 with the case of Fr John Geoghan, who was accused of abusing close to 130 children. The investigation revealed that the Church authorities were aware of his abusive behaviour and had received complaints but did not take particular action against the perpetrator (White & Terry, 2008:661). Furthermore, public pressure led to the resignation of Cardinal Bernard from his position as Archbishop of Boston. He was accused of grossly covering up sexual abuse by priests while having clear knowledge of paedophilic practices of several priests, all in his diocese. The above cases indicated the beginning of the clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, (Demasure, 2016:153). Gradually it was obvious that CCA was not only a North American affair, but Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, were deeply affected too. Victims also began to speak out in Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Poland, and Italy. (Demasure, 2016:154).

The Canon Law Society of America was established to monitor cases of CCA and formulate procedures to deal with them. Despite this development there was extremely limited action from the Church authorities. The Canon Law of 1983 authorises Bishops, after appropriate investigation, to defrock a priest involved in sexual abuse as well as initiate legal proceedings against the perpetrating cleric. Coughlin (2002:986), however, notes that there are no official records of applying the 1983 Canon Law. Even in the case of John Geoghan where all the conditions were present to start legal proceedings, the church authorities did not apply the law.

Finally, the Catholic Church in the USA came under increased pressure from public opinion. Cardinals from the USA, who decided to take strict action against such issues, were invited to the Vatican to discuss a strategy. The media had been active in unearthing new cases of sexual abuse regularly and pressure was mounting on the Church to address the issue. The Vatican meetings convened with the American Cardinals resulted in the decision to apply the Canon Law to the situation with a 'zero-tolerance policy' and immediately remove from office any priest who are accused of sexual abuse.

The public disclosures of clerical sexual abuse in the US during the first decade of the 21st century have also prompted similar events outside the US, namely in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, or New Zealand. In the case of the UK, there is no formal legislation for the reporting of suspected child abuse. However, there are statutory guidelines for steps that can be taken in case of suspected CCA by a cleric.

Even with widespread public disclosures of CCA in the US, similar reporting remains comparatively low in the UK. Additionally, no effort has yet been made to compile statistics for sexually abused children in any institution, let alone the Catholic Church. Davies, Mathews and Read (2014:12) consider this lack of information as a substantial issue for CCA in any type of institution, whether it is the church or the school. This issue is highly relevant since policy formulation depends on authorities' knowledge of the magnitude and prevalence of a problem (Davies *et al.* 2014:27).

The Irish Roman Catholic Church formed an independent, official committee to investigate cases of CCA. The Bishop's Committee on Child Abuse (also Child Protection) in 2001, commissioned the establishment of the Health Services Research Centre at the Department of Psychology at the Royal College of Surgeons.

Owing to the belief in and the sacred trust placed on priests, Irish culture is not that forthcoming in case of clerical sexual abuse. However, as the case was in the US, the magnitude of abuse incidents has prompted widespread disclosure through Irish media sources. The pattern follows that of the situation in the US when victims, after failing to get a hearing by the Church, resort to legal means to be heard and understood.

In their qualitative research on the issue of clerical sexual abuse in Ireland, Goode, McGee and O'Boyle (2003:200) identified several relevant issues within the main domain of CCA. They found that the general clergy is not aware of the sexual abuse perpetrated by their members. These clergy, gain their awareness through the media as is the case with the general population. The clergy also were not that much exposed to dealing with abuse victims. As a result, the knowledge of clerical sexual abuse, especially its physical and psychological effects on victims, is severely limited, to the point of being non-existent.

The family members of clerical sexual-abuse perpetrators were found to be in a difficult situation. On the one hand, they were faced with the knowledge that a family member violated a sacred trust by committing a sexual offence while in an influential position. On the other hand, they sought to offer support in the hope that the perpetrator would realise his mistake and repent. However, Goode *et al.* (2003:243) also found that certain family members of these perpetrators denounced them outright. Other priests were obviously aghast and disgusted with the actions of colleagues involved in CCA. However, these colleagues also believe that the management of church policies and regulations was as much to blame as the perpetrators themselves, especially those concerning support for non-abusive clergy. They considered that one sexually abusive priest had the capacity to generate distrust and loss of credibility for the Church, which also tainted the remaining clergy members who were not guilty of such misconduct.

As with the general clergy, Goode *et al.* (2003:120-220) found that the general population also had limited awareness of the existence and prevalence of CCA and became aware of the issue only through media reports. However, there was consensus on the belief that clergymen, being human, were as likely as non-clergy to abuse others sexually. Therefore, this issue should be raised as a matter of public concern. It was also found that the victims did show a range of psychological and psycho-social effects. In addition to loss of trust in the Church as an institution, there also are instances where they lose their faith.

Furthermore, victims were found to suffer from different social ailments, ranging from distrust in anyone outside their own family circle, to difficulties with bonding and intimacy. This resulted in deteriorating existing relationships and forfeiting potential ones (Goode *et al.* 2003:285). Depression and anxiety were prevalent throughout the victims' disclosures. Significant from this study is that, in retrospect, the families of the abused realised that they erred by reporting the incidents to the Church. In reality, they found it would have been more appropriate to report the transgressions to legal civil authorities for prompt action (Goode *et al.*, 2003).

The clergy members convicted of CCA and undergoing psychological treatment were also approached by Goode *et al.* (2003). These perpetrators stated that the Church made no attempt to understand their problems and provided negligible support. It is shocking to realise that in countries such as the USA, UK, and Ireland with policies and structures to support both victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse, victims still complain. If victims are properly taken care of psychologically, spiritually, and theologically, their stories of abuse can become sources of strength (Demasure, 2016:166)

A cursory look at the official websites of the Catholic Bishop Conferences of U.S.A, Ireland and England and Wales will reveal that the Churches in these countries take the issues of safeguarding very seriously. There are links on all the websites to the structures and policies set up to monitor and enforce safeguarding policies and procedures. In England and Wales, Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Services (CSAS) is the national

agency under the Bishops Conference driving and supporting improvements in safeguarding practice within the Church. (<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/safeguarding/catholic-safeguarding-advisory-service>) Individual dioceses also have their designated safeguarding commissions and these are also visible on diocesan websites as exemplified by the Southwark Archdiocese safeguarding commission (<http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/safeguarding-policies-resources.html>) In the United States of America, the link to their Safeguarding structure and policies can be found on: <http://www.usccb.org/about/child-and-youth-protection>) In Ireland, the link to their safeguarding structure and policies are found on : (<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/safeguarding> .)

An in-depth analysis of the above policies shows the great efforts already made by catholic Churches in the west in response to the menace of child sexual abuse in the Church. This has been discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.4.3 Child protection policy in the Catholic Church of Nigeria

The Catholic Church in Nigeria is a member of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) worldwide, which resorts under the leadership of the Vatican curia in Rome Italy. Therefore, the child protection policy issued from the Vatican also applies to the Church in Nigeria. As was mentioned previously, in several Western countries the issue of child sexual abuse has been considered seriously by the local church. In contrast, the authorities in the Catholic Churches of Nigeria seem not yet willing to accept responsibility for preventing CCA and providing justice to the victims. In a case where a pastor of a Nigerian church was accused of child sexual abuse, the chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) responded that the Catholic Church “is concerned” about the issue (Taiwo, 2016, para 1). However, he had no idea of the role the church must play to safeguard children who are part of this institution. He took a victim approach and transferred the full responsibility for tackling such cases to the civil authorities: “The Church of God is so big that we are not able to know everybody ... CAN cannot do the work of police” (Taiwo, 2016, para 2). Similar concerns are raised in Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) which also has concerns itself on child protection.

A similar blame in terms of attitude was noted in a case of alleged witchcraft. The damning of witchcraft has its roots in Christianity, and most of the families who abandon their children after accusing them of witchcraft, are followers of Catholic Christianity (Sahara Reporters, 2008; Effiong, 2016). In this regard, the chairman of CAN placed full blame for witchcraft on occultism and held that “when we go deeper into such an issue, we would discover that such perpetrators are into occultism” (Taiwo, 2016 para 6). A faction of Protestant churches has joined the movement against witchcraft, but the Catholic Church has not yet taken part in it (Effiong, 2016).

This neglected responsibility for child protection by CAN is the reason why this institution adopted no child protection policy. In fact, the search of all-important websites of Catholic Church institutions in Nigeria revealed only a single child protection policy. This policy was adopted by the Nigerian Chapter of Religious Sisters of Charity (2010) – a charity-based congregation under the auspices of the RCC. The purpose of the congregation was explained as simply spreading Christ’s love to the world by helping people in need.

Their child protection policy is more comprehensive than most policies developed by other churches. The reason is that their policy does not merely name the issue of child sexual abuse but defines it in terms of three forms:

- 1) A child is suffering serious physical injury, which was not inflicted upon him (her) by accident, but by a deliberate act or omission; 2) A child is suffering harm by reason of neglect, malnutrition, or sexual abuse; 3) A child is going without necessary and basic physical care (Religious Sisters of Charity, 2010).

The policy also places a responsibility on all members working in the congregation to ensure the protection of children and their rights.

The mentioned child protection policy of the Religious Sisters of Charity (2010) is also more extensive than other policies by providing details of the procedures to implement and monitor the policy. As was noted above, even in countries where churches have

documented strong policies for the protection of children, the implementation often suffers from neglect and possible policy deviation from child protection.

In contrast to the Catholic Bishop Conferences in Ireland, England and Wales and U.S.A, there is no sign whatsoever or a link to any structure or policies addressing the issues of child sexual abuse on the website of the Catholic Bishops Conference in Nigeria:(<http://www.cbcn-ng.org>). The absence of a link to any child protection structure or policies is a sign that the Catholic Church in Nigeria has not yet taken this issue seriously. A future article will address this issue of lack of child protection policy in the Nigeria Catholic Church which is a regrettable reality.

4.5 CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES LINKED TO CLERGY'S SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Sexual abuse is often committed by persons who are known to and trusted by the victims (Demasure, 2016:1550). It is arguably the most prolific form of violation that a child may suffer. During the first decade of the 21st century, clerical sexual child abuse (CCA) has elicited strong attention from the media. As a result, this form of malpractice was socially diagnosed as a crime that must be reported. Nevertheless, still, numerous victims of such abuse do not report the crime. Jones (2011:2-3) points out that, despite the governmental efforts to improve social awareness of child sexual abuse in Nigeria, the matter is still treated as a domestic or private affair. To understand the full magnitude of the problem, an appropriate authentic investigation is necessary to capture the correct figures and ensure either the alleged victims or perpetrators are not discredited. It has also been noted that those who chose to disclose sexual abuse by priests have done so after a considerable delay; some only as grown-up individuals (John Jay Report 2011). Therefore, the typical response to CCA is complete non-disclosure or at best, delayed disclosure (Davies, *et al.* 2014:10).

The Catholic Church treats the crime of CCA as among the most serious offenses under codes of both 1917 and 1983. The *Codex Iuris Canonici* identifies four categories of

sexual offences for which an individual will cease to remain in the clerical state, with sexual offence being a minor one. Examples of harsh penalties or permanent cessation from the clerical position indicates that the Church acknowledges the severity of the offence. In the canon 1389 of 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici*, the Church also laid down provisions for higher 'ecclesiastical' authorities who are found negligent to act on knowledge of clerics sexually abusing children. This includes Bishops, who have knowledge of such abuse by priests in their diocese and who, for any reason whatsoever, fail to apply Canon Law to protect the children, thus by implication safeguarding their own and the interests of the alleged paedophile priests (Huels, 1989).

The Canon Law codes thus clearly identify sexual assault of children as a grave crime for which priests can be defrocked. In addition, Bishops can be held accountable for negligence or failure to act in the best interest of the victim. Doyle (1990) points out that, normally, judicial proceedings are required to defrock priests (as a protective right for the accused and to avoid bias). However, in severe cases, internal administrative procedures by Bishops can achieve a similar purpose. In this regard, it is important to understand that the imposition of a priest's permanent dismissal as penalty is not possible without a judicial process by the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith (CDF). This body makes the final judgement on the guilt of the cleric and his unsuitability for ministry, as well as the consequent imposition of a penalty for the perpetration.

In 2001, a policy framework SST was promulgated by Pope John Paul II, under which child sexual abuse was included in *delicta graviora* ("grave sins"). The penal process under *motu proprio* ("on his own impulse") has been improved further whereby the punishment for more serious cases of child sexual abuse was increased to entail the dismissal of the cleric. These changes were initially added in 2003 at the request of Cardinal Ratzinger as a departure from the usual process, offered only to deal with cases of severe transgressions. However, in 2010, they were incorporated during the revision of *motu proprio*.

Following the Roman Catholic Church, the Catholic Bishops Conference in Nigeria has also realised the scope and magnitude of the problem and has vowed to take a more proactive approach to the sensitive yet worldwide issue of sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy. For instance, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria states in its presentation, *Called to love: Ethical standards for clergy and seminarians in Nigeria* (2006:13):

The scandals of sexual abuse by some priests and bishops in Europe and America have forced us to examine more critically the reality of our own situation within the Church in Nigeria ... We commit ourselves ... to a more responsible, more proactive leadership in all matters concerning cases of alleged sexual abuse by the Church ministers.

This is a positive initiative but unfortunately, the CBCN are yet to take practical steps by establishing structures and formulating policies that can help prevent CCA occurring in the Catholic churches in Nigeria. Nevertheless, ground-level realities in Nigeria regarding CCA are still relatively under-researched, and people are unaware of the prevalence of this issue. As Asika (2010) points out, the topic of sex and sexuality is not generally open for discussion in Nigeria due to cultural sensitivity. As a result, newly recruited seminarians have had little to no training on the subject of ethical conduct in sexual matters. However, the encouraging finding of exploratory study is that these seminarians are willing to be informed about sexuality and ethical sexual boundaries. This knowledge helps them execute their professional calling more responsibly and safely.

4.6 ASSESSING EXISTING LEGISLATIVE POLICIES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN IN NIGERIA

Child protection is a global concern since the effect of child abuse reaches beyond children and their families. Presently, there are no specific data available to clarify how prevalent child sexual abuse and neglect are among the Catholic Churches in Nigeria. However, FABMUMNG a parenting and lifestyle resource for mums in Nigeria, released some shocking statistics on child sexual abuse in Nigeria. According to FABMUMNG: In

2017, 4035 cases of child sexual abuse was recorded in Lagos State. At the same time, Kwara State had 1000 cases, Gombe State: 600, Rivers State: 1200 and Anambra State: 115 cases (FABMUMNG 2017). It can be argued that if child sexual abuse has been proven to exist in the circular society, the Catholic church in Nigeria being part of the society, may not be immune to this ugly phenomenon. I totally agree with FABMUMNG analysis of the issue of child sexual abuse in Nigeria as a “ticking time bomb” and that it has been so far: “all talk and no action” (FABMUMNG 2017). It could be estimated that the problem is more widespread than the few statistics above taking into consideration that Nigeria has 36 states, and we only have the data for only 5 states. Sadly, the Catholic Churches have not yet made an effort to collect quantitative data on the issue, to gauge its prevalence and understand the possible causes.

The Christian Reformed Church is conceivably the only ecclesiastical authority to have made an assessment of church members’ involvement in abuse or neglect. The study reported that 28% of the church members who were surveyed reported suffering from abuse or neglect within the church when they were children (Annis & Rice, 2002:7). However, a long time elapsed since conducting this study. Therefore, more recent data is necessary to understand whether legislative policies, formed since the first decade of the 21st century, has helped cause the decline in abuse or not. In addition, no formal study, to the knowledge of the researcher, has yet been published on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the Nigerian Catholic Church. This makes it difficult to determine whether incidences of CCA among members of Nigerian Catholic Churches are similar to those reported in other countries.

The overall comparison is sufficient to show that the question of an *adequate policy* may be the wrong one. The reason is that no such policy to protect children from sexual abuse was adopted by CAN or other responsible Catholic Church institutions in Nigeria. This is despite the clear indication from the Roman curia that local institutions must formulate and implement their own policies for the protection of children from CCA. Globally, the Catholic Church was initially ignorant toward the issue of child abuse. However, several

cases of CCA in the USA and other parts of the world led to increased public pressure on the church authorities to disclose cases and prosecute perpetrators.

In addition to the efforts made by the churches, their success and failure, the government of Nigeria has also made some effort though cosmetic, towards the protection of children against any abuse. For instance, the government established National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003 (Afolabi, 2019:15). This is a law enforcement agency that was created to protect the child against trafficking and any other social abuse including sexual abuse. The agency is guided by the Child Rights Act. However, the agency's efforts are hindered by the existence of such crimes even among the institutions like schools, churches, parents, whose primary objective is to care for the children. Another stumbling block on the part of NAPTIP towards achieving its objective of protecting children is the lack of goodwill on the part of the legislative arm of government in Nigeria. Asykobi argues that instead of passing laws to protect the girl-child in Nigeria, the legislators sponsor bills "to legalize girl-child marriage due to inconsistencies of the several laws operated in the country" (Asykobi, 2017). The article explains how different contradictory laws and clauses help paedophiles to evade prosecution and hence recommends a harmonisation in every law utilized in the administration of justice. "Let no law in Nigeria vindicate a criminal either by default or inconsistency" (Asykobi 2017). A true commitment to the rights of children through legally binding agreements can serve as a valuable instrument for the welfare of children (Yates & Swart, 228).

NAPTIP, the Police, the Social Services and all other relevant bodies should combine efforts to see that the protection policies formulated are fully implemented and enforced. There is need to also to borrow from other child protection policies that have worked in other regions of the world in order to articulate a profound and effective policy for child protection in Nigeria. Proposals for such a policy is discussed below.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NIGERIAN CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This chapter reviewed literature on the policy documentation and the current situation of child abuse in Nigeria. Based on the findings outlined above, the following recommendations can be made for developing a child protection policy in the Catholic Churches in Nigeria.

1. In the formulated policy for the protection of children in Nigeria, role-players should be able to promulgate it through education of the priests and those in training to priesthood. At the same time, the overseer should be able to implement the policy and penalise the offenders found guilty.
2. Organisations such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which represent the Christians in Nigeria, should become involved in the process. As an authorised institution, local church leadership in Nigeria should change their attitude towards child protection. This could be achieved if they recognise the role that Christian churches can play in creating awareness among its followers and by protecting children from various possible forms of abuse within the Christian churches as such.
3. Organisations such as CBCN and CAN should also follow the recommendation of the Roman Catholic Church to develop their own child protection policy.
4. The document of the child protection policy must contain the various elements identified in the guidance document issued by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Guidelines on preventative measures must then also be formulated clearly.
5. The policy document should follow a transparent process to prevent, sexual abuse of children and report, investigate, and prosecute clergy who are found guilty of child abuse.
6. The child protection policy in Nigeria should focus equally on the various forms of abuse and not be limited to sexual abuse of children per se. In particular, the issue

of child witchcraft should be given considerable attention in the policy documentation. Harsh punishment should be stipulated for clergy who promote this outrage.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The child provides a hope for the generation of tomorrow and must therefore experience tender love and care in the ministry of the church. It is worth noting that the child of today will reflect the background she went through in future. Hence the child upbringing background is very important for the future of the health of society. In this regard, one of the best things society can pass to a child is education coupled by holistic moral values and norms. Child upbringing and protection is a God driven responsibility first to the parents and secondly to the church and the society. It is therefore important for the church to protect the children entrusted to it. This calls for policy makers, both from religious and the political leadership, to design, formulate, promulgate, and enforce child protection policies.

The policies should cover different areas covering all possible social crimes that can be advanced to the vulnerable children. At the same time, the policies should be preventive as well as corrective. An effective policy should also be designed through empirical evidence as well as informed through pilot study and test. Studies examining the theological roots of abuse must keep in mind that their key respondents – the victims of abuse – are providing an important yet *isolated* perspective of the problem. Viewing this matter from a wider angle, these victims should feel free and are expected to blame the church for what happened to them. Thus, while researchers should not ignore this view, they ought to distinguish opinion and hearsay from facts and evidence.

It is important to understand that while other countries have more effective policy documents, there could be inefficient implementation. The local churches in Nigeria should, therefore, learn from other countries' mistakes and should take steps to ensure developing such a policy as well as implementing it effectively.

CHAPTER 5:

CHILD PROTECTION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NIGERIA IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLICAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church in Nigeria is also dealing with cases of clerical sexual abuse of children which is one of the escalating problems in the entire Roman Catholic Church. For most Nigerian Catholic clergy, clerical abuse of minors is seen as delicate and sensitive matter that should not be publicized (Nzwili, 2019). Just as it is the obligation of the governments to protect the children from any form of abuse through formulating child protection policies, the responsibility also falls on all Christians to protect the children from harm and sin as Christ recommended. Welcoming a child means welcoming Christ and abusing or hurting a child is worthy of a grave punishment. (Mt. 18: 6-7). The above text is a condemnation of scandals and temptations (Brown, 1997: 192) of which child abuse is a major scandal in the church today. The Roman Catholic Church globally as well as in Nigeria is facing diverse challenges in dealing with the problem of clerical sexual abuse due to diverse reasons including secrecy, power, autonomy, and ignorance, among others. Children need protection in order to grow into mature and independent adults able to handle psychological and physical matters in their future (Nwosu & Uche 2017: 91). However, based on biblical ethical principles child sexual abuse is condemned and clergy as the church custodians should focus on protecting children instead of rationalising the act of abuse (DeVries 2001:163). DeVries (2001:161-173) gives an in-depth discussion of Jesus' directive to safeguard the innocence of childhood and indicates how the act of child abuse by a church is a direct violation of this order.

There has been a notable emphasis on human weakness that makes sins unavoidable; the biblical tradition clearly condemns any act that involves "little ones" in such sins. In this regard, Luke17:1-2, presents Jesus' directive:

He said to his disciples, "Causes of falling are sure to come, but alas for the one through whom they occur! It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones. Keep watch on yourselves" (NJB 1985).

Further, the image of the pastor in several places in Scriptures (Ps 23; Jer. 23:1-4; 25:34-35; Ez. 34:2-8; Is. 56:9-12; Zc.11:17; Jn. 10:11-12; Lk.15:4-7; Ac 20:28 NJB 1985) stress the fact that church leaders have the calling of God to lead and protect God's people and "feed the lambs" (Jn 21:15 NJB). In Psalm 23:1-3, the Christian image of God is presented as that of a protective Caregiver, symbolised as a 'Shepherd' leading human herds through the good and bad of life towards the green pastures of everlasting life (NJB1985). This chapter analyses the child protection measures in the Catholic Church in Nigeria while considering the biblical ethical principles

5.2 ETHICAL BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO END THE CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE IN NIGERIA

The Bible takes matters concerning sexual abuse of children with seriousness. All cases of sexual misconduct of the clergy towards children, should be reported, especially as it is within the law and we should submit to the government that the Lord has placed over us for the execution of justice. Secondly, we should report promptly cases of sexual abuse to the appropriate authorities because God's people ought to stand up in defence of the oppressed as well as the vulnerable, and because doing so discourages offenders. Furthermore, reporting offenders is an act of charity towards both the victim and perpetrator because, it provides the offenders with the chance to see and perceive the kind of offence that they have committed and repent and for the victim, justice and protection from further abuse.

In the Bible, Deuteronomy 22: 25-27 demonstrates how sexual offense was seriously considered and the treatment that befell the offender:

25 “But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. **26** But you shall do nothing to the young woman; she has committed no offense punishable by death. For this case is like that of a man attacking and murdering his neighbour...”

This scripture passage should commonly be applied when dealing with sexual offenses within the church and it shows that God is always on the side of the victim and not the perpetrator. The scripture is applicable even to the current standards of preying on young vulnerable women. It is evident from this scripture that sexual assault, according to God's rule in the Old Testament, was a serious offense at par to a homicide-level offense. It wasn't the kind of thing one would have resolved with your neighbour, like restitution for a lost donkey or ox (Exodus 21:33-36). The correct approach was corporal punishment, which God prescribed for his people in order for them to be blessed while living in the Promised Land. While the Old Testament law no longer applies to most believers today, and no one should murder an alleged sex offender, the verse nonetheless highlights the seriousness of sexual abuse and establishes the precedent for reporting the crime and bringing the perpetrator before a court of law for prosecution and punishment.

5.3 SCRIPTURE ON REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Issues of sexual abuse are not mere trivial cases which can be resolved within the church circles only. Indeed, the bible depicts that such offences should be forwarded to the governing authorities. People are encouraged to submit to governing authorities in Romans 13:1-5. Paul presents three grounds for doing so: theologically (since God, in his sovereignty, has ordained this authority over you), logically (because God avenges people who suffer wrongdoing through that authority), and practically (because Christians escape God's wrath by honouring that authority). This is relevant for the current debate because failure to disclose sexual abuse is an offense in Nigeria that is liable to a two-year imprisonment. As a result, the church, reporting such an event is a way for us to submit to God's authority through submitting to the government He has placed in charge

of us. It is the approach by which we entrust the offender's punishment in God's hands rather than our own. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reporting cases of sexual abuse to civil authorities will build up people's confidence in the church and prevents us from being found guilty and penalized under the law for cover-up, remaining silent or indifferent.

Proverbs 31:8-9 exhorts believers to become advocates for those who are unable to speak for themselves. Because this section is less well-known, it is worth reciting in its entirety before moving on to the discussion: The scripture talks about opening the mouth for those who are mute, fighting for the rights of the destitute (vulnerable such as children and disabled), judging righteously, and defending the rights of those who are poor and needy. This is one among many passages in the Bible that expresses God's desire for his people to protect the oppressed and ensure that they are treated fairly. In the event of sexual abuse, the victim would most likely be forced to remain silent and submissive. They require an advocate to speak up for them. One way to do this is to report the abuse to the authorities. The scope of this paragraph, as well as its call to action on behalf of others, extends beyond the specific events of the known case of sexual abuse. Other victims may have been abused by the abuser in the past, concurrently, or in the future and by reporting their heinous behaviour, these other prospective victims would be protected and saved from experiencing the trauma of abuse.

1 Timothy 5:20 exhorts believers to openly rebuke unrepentant sinners for the sake of others. "It states, "As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear" (emphasis mine). This is a unique viewpoint that is not commonly quoted even when dealing with offenders. On the contrast, most of the quotations are based on the continuous and unending forgiveness of sin as outlined in Matthew 18:21, 22, which elucidates that we should forgive 7 times 70. However, for unrepentant sinners, the bible outlines that they should be rebuked. For those who should be forgiven as outlined in Matthew 18 are those who have repented and self-reported themselves. However, for most of the sexual offenders, they don't report themselves, due to the legal consequences and hence should be reported in line with 1 Timothy 5:20. By

showing the repercussions of their conduct, the public censure of sin deters other would-be offenders. When it comes to sexual assault, reporting the crime shows that it is taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. If news got out that a sex offender had been prosecuted at a day care centre, for example, it would deter other predators from following that bad example. In the case of a faith community, if it is found that the clergy or a leader has abused their power by sexually assaulting a member of the congregation, reporting the incident to law enforcement agencies, would send a strong message to all members of the congregation that such behaviour is abhorrent, unacceptable, intolerable, and would not be covered up.

For the sake of the sexual predators including catholic priests, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 instructs believers to remove the sexually immoral from among them. Paul depicts excommunication as an act of kindness rather than vengeance or judgment in this passage. By excommunicating them, Paul argues that this is to deliver them to Satan for the death of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. In other words, rather than protecting them within the religious community, it is imperative for them to face the consequences of their actions so that they may understand the severity of it, and wake up to their sins and repent.

5.4 GOING PRIVATE ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSES

Some believers have been coerced to go private and solve cases of sexual offenses among themselves. In most cases, those defending this position quote Matthew 5:25, which advise people to settle matters quickly with their adversaries before they are taken to court. However, this is not applicable to the case of child abuse by the clergy. What kind of issues was Jesus talking about? The previous verse, Matt 5:23 may offer an explanation of the kind of adversaries that Jesus was talking about, it's about civil issues (something against you). This is to mean that for issues that are civil, one can resolve that with his or her brother and not for the criminal cases. But abuse is not a matter of civil disagreement but rather an offense against one person towards the victim.

Those within the church circles, who may argue that sexual related matters should be settled among the victim and the offender may erroneously base their argument on *1 Corinthians 6:1-8*. In this scripture passage, Paul was advising the Corinthians against filing lawsuits, and encouraged them to resolve issues among themselves. But again here, Paul was not talking of criminal hard-core offenses that demeans the other party. Indeed, in verse two Paul specifies that these are the little things. The terms "trivial cases" (v.2) and "matters pertaining to this life" are used by Paul to characterize the types of offenses that the Corinthians were going to court about (v.3). To put it another way, they are civil, not criminal, problems. To claim, "You should not report sexual abuse to the authorities because Christians should settle this among themselves," is to misunderstand the context of the verse and dismiss Paul's stricter directions concerning sexual immorality in the prior chapter.

Matthew 18:15-17 mentions informing a fellow believer of their wrongdoing against you "between you and him alone," but does it include sexual abuse? There are at least three factors to examine in this situation. First, Jesus is portraying a circumstance in which both the offender and the offended are on an equitable basis. "Go tell your brother his fault if he sins against you..." When it comes to sexual assault, however, the scenario is invariably one of power imbalance. The individual who has been wronged is unable to approach their abuser and speak with them on an equitable basis in the hopes of being heard. Second, considering the nature of the offense and the possibility that the abuser may react aggressively (even brutally) and afterwards deny their conduct, approaching them alone would be exceedingly dangerous. At all costs, a one-on-one resolution for sexual abuse should be avoided. Third, this is not to mean that the subsequent stages of going with others and then going before the church should be avoided, particularly if the offender is a church leader. As previously argued, church discipline is essential for the health of the church and the repentance of the offender. It should not, however, be seen as a replacement for reporting the crime(s) committed to the appropriate authorities.

Is Romans 12:17-19 a reason not to disclose sexual abuse? It says not to seek vengeance or repay evil for evil, but to leave room for God's wrath. It is a common

phenomenon when cases of sexual abuse associated with priests was being handled incorrectly, when the victim's parents were convinced that reporting the incident would be a vindictive act and that they should instead forgive the attacker; and they may even fear that they would be causing a “man of God” problem and could incur the wrath of God. However, as explained earlier in the consideration of Romans 13:1-5, submitting to governing authority and entrusting someone to law enforcement agencies, means entrusting justice to God. To do differently is to cover up their crime, protect them from God's wrath and from a scenario that could lead to repentance; and this would be a great disservice to the offender.

5.5 RATIONALE FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

The Bible has numerous verses from the Old and New Testament that elucidates on the need for child protection from all forms of harm including sexual abuses. Despite the fact that the Old Testament and New Testament have varying forms of treatment for the sexual offenders, there is a concession that sexual abuse is evil and should be dealt

5.5.1 The Old Testament

The Old Testament gives some insights on how parents and the church should treat children to ensure that the society becomes better every day. Genesis (1:26-27), states that humans were made in the image and likeness of God and children are part of this humanity because “everything that the image of God is, every child is” (Fretheim 2008:4). Moreover, children have in them the potential to reflect the harmony between the Trinity (Shreeve, 2007:27), and hence children should be treated with respect and dignity. The statement: “let us make” is an expression of divine intention of making humans in the image of God (Clifford & Murphy, 1993:11). Because children are made in the image and likeness of God, sexual abuse of children is an abuse of God's creation. After the birth of Isaac, Sarah felt threatened and asked Abraham to send away Ishmael and her mother Hagar away so that Ishmael will not share Abraham's inheritance with Isaac. Abraham obliged Sarah but God did not abandon Ishmael and promised to make him into a great

nation and “God was with the boy” and God also heard the cry of the child (Gen. 21:1-21). Though Ishmael was not the chosen child, God was still with him and showed his concern which implies that God cares for all children and not just those from the chosen race (Fretheim 2008:13). It means that for God, every child matters. God hears the cry of distress of every abused child and it touches his heart as a Father.

The demand by God of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as sacrifice can easily be misinterpreted as a case of child abuse, but God showed his solicitude for the child Isaac when he provided a ram as a replacement for the sacrifice (Gen.22:1-14), which shows that God will go to every length to assure the safety of every child. Contrary to Alice Miller’s arguments that the above text can be used to justify child abuse (Miller, 1990), on the contrary it is a justification and proof of God’s care for every child and his wish that no harm should come to them. The Hebrew midwives were God-fearing and refused to obey the Egyptian King who ordered the death of all male Hebrew children (Ex. 1:15-22). By refusing to carry out the evil orders of the King, the Hebrew women emphasized the sacredness of all human life especially children.

In Deuteronomy (4:9-10), God insists that the people of Israel must transmit their tradition and experiences to their children, showing the importance of children in the history and survival of a nation. The idea of children above depicts children as sources of blessings to both their parents and society at large. The survival and wellbeing of the children are also intrinsically tied to the fate and future of the society in which they were born. Hence any society that neglects to look after her children does so at its own peril. However, in order for these children to survive and have a meaningful life, they need to learn the basic rules, guidelines that govern the society in which they live (Weinfeld, 1991:261-262). Proverbs (22:6) states that parents should train up their children in the ways they should go, and when they grow up, they will not forget these teachings. The discipline of the child will help the child to avoid moral faults and cultivate moral insights (Fox, 2000:34-35) And the purpose of discipline for the child is “to foster moral integrity” (Brown, 2008:69). A well-disciplined child will most likely not fall victim to sexual abuse and when grown up will not be a predator.

There are four biblical principles about raising children, which the society should seriously consider as keys that open the door to success and happiness. These four principles will ensure that the children grow up and become productive, committed and responsible citizens, these include:

1. Parents must set goals for their children- the Bible teaches that parents must set goals and work diligently towards these goals (Genesis 18:19). As such, they must recognize that their children are their responsibility, and thus it is their duty to raise them properly (Nlewem & Amodu, 2017 :453-564).
2. In today's society, many parents refuse to take responsibility for their children, and instead expect others, such as the government, schools, church and caregivers to raise their children as they pursue their personal and professional interests. Sadly, some fathers leave their children for the mothers to raise them, and for some other parents, divorce makes them leave the home or otherwise desert their children (Hecker *et al.*, 2016:1401-1412). While bringing the children into this world, the parents accepted the responsibility to care for them, the children did not ask to come into the world. As such, it is the responsibility of parents to take care of their children. Moreover, Titus (2:5), argues that, mothers should be taught how to take care of their children and love them as their mothers, and the women that refuse to take up their rightful place in a child's life will be punished (Iheanacho *et al.*, 2016 :1-13).
3. Parents are obliged to care for the children they bring into the world. These include: meeting their children's physical needs, providing good education, preparing them for life ahead so that they can be good husbands, wives and citizens and also providing them recreation, enjoyment and entertainment (Makinde *et al.*, 2017:98-105).
4. Parents should also be proactive and have a good plan to protect their children from negative influences (Hebrews 12:10), and when children go astray, parents should intervene directly by praying and offering them wise counsel to ensure that they

make the right choices in their young lives. In today's society, there are lots of negative influences in the world that seek to destroy the lives of young children. Such influences come from their friends, social media, the internet and their schools (Boyden, 2015:185-219). There is the urgency, for the state, parents and the church to work together to ensure that children lead decent lives and are not influenced by these negative trends.

The concern for the children as a God-given gift is also exhibited in the bible as in Genesis 33:5. When Esau looked up and saw women and children and asked whom they were, Jacob answered that these were the children of God a gift to him. Earlier verses (Genesis 27:41–45) elucidated on the twenty-year period of tension between the brothers who had been separated by betrayal and threats of vengeance. Jacob was so worried about the encounter that he split his caravan (Genesis 32:7–8), bribed Esau with gifts (Genesis 32:13–15), and even arranged his personal family to allow him to flee (Genesis 33:1–3). After all of this, Esau was overjoyed to see his brother, leaping into his arms and crying (Genesis 33:4). Esau now raised his eyes and saw Jacob's wives and children approaching in groups (Zuck, 2012). He inquired as to who they are. These are the children God has graciously given to "your servant," Jacob tells his brother. Jacob's constant usage of humility could be a form of apologizing for his previous actions (Genesis 27:19). It could also be a matter of politics and cultural tradition. When Jacob refers to the children and wives as gift from God is an acknowledgement that they are a creation of God (O'Neill *et al.*, 2020: 381-350). Further, he humbled himself when explaining this to Esau to avoid any form of altercation that would cause Esau to harm them.

In Psalm 127:3-5, David also exhibits concern and care for children when he considers them as a heritage from the Lord. Verse 3 says that behold children are a gift from God. The scripture declares that children are a gift from God, and that the product of the womb is a treasure. The Psalmist compares them to arrows in a warrior's quiver, declaring that the one who has a quiver full of them is joyful. Because children are truly and wonderfully made, every child is a miracle from above. Children are definitely a blessing and a gift

from God, and there is much in Scripture that instructs parents on how to raise their children in a good manner. All those entrusted with the legacy and gift of children should take their parental obligations seriously and raise their children in the way they should not deviate from the path of truth when they grow up while also protecting them from any harm (O'Neill *et al.*, 2020: 381-350). In context of this study, priests should also see children as God's treasure and not harm them through sexual abuse.

Similarly, the love of God for the children is immense as shown in Psalm 36:7–8. According to this scripture passage, the Psalmist is seen to acknowledge God's love and how the Lord protects just as a bird protects a young one under her wings. Time after time, God refers to Himself as a shepherd of His children. In this scripture passage, David also presents Him as the source of life-giving food and water. The youngsters in our care need to know that they too can take sanctuary in the shadow of God's wings. As such, it is the will of God to protect children just the same way a bird protects its young ones under her wings from any form of harm (Zuck, 2012). Therefore, anyone, including priests who sexually abuse children goes against the will of God. Indeed, priests should not be preying on children as the Lord expects them to seek shelter in the Lord's presence. Indeed, Proverbs 18:10 explains that the name of the Lord is a strong tower where the righteous run into and they are safe. According to this verse, when people are full of fear, they should run unto the Lord, who is a strong tower. The same way, Children should be made to understand that they can seek protection from Christ, but this may not happen when they are sexually abused by the representatives of Christ among them. Indeed, priests are considered as spiritual parents as they provide soul nourishment to the children. In this case, they are supposed to protect their spiritual children as outlined in Isaiah 49:15–16. The Lord asks if a woman can forget her baby, depicting that this is unexpected occurrence. As spiritual fathers, Priests are indeed, expected to protect children as they represent Christ on earth. It becomes more deleterious when priests abuse children (Zuck, 2012).

5.5.2 The New Testament

Children have a high regard in the teachings of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus was very welcoming to children, hence he declared “let the little children come to me” (Mk. 10:13-16). Jesus here transcends the traditional cultural and religious bias against children in his day and grants them full and equal access to the kingdom (Gundry, 2008:143). For him, children are the perfect example or paradigm of greatness, and welcome to children is a welcome to Jesus himself (Lk. 9:46-48). Jesus had a positive attitude towards children and pointed them to his disciples as models of God’s work in the world and that hospitality towards children, shows one’s disposition towards God. (Carroll, 2008:177). Jesus healed children (Lk. 8:41-42, 49-56; 9:37-43), showing his love and care to them which priests should imitate at all times.

The importance of children can also be deciphered from some Pauline writings. Paul insists that children should be obedient to their parents and be taught how to be well behaved and he argues that parents must not cause harm or upset their children. (Col.6:1-4; Eph.6:1-4; 1 Tim.3:4-52; Tim.3:3). Care must be taken not to cause harm or upset for the children in their formation process. According to Chinawa *et al.*’s analysis of the 2 Corinthians and 1st Timothy, children require spiritual development as well as their personal development of conviction, commitment and character (Chinawa *et al.*, 2014 :451-456). “Children are not expected to save up for their parents, but parents for their children” (2 Cor.12:14-15), here Paul stresses the great responsibility and duty of care that parents have for their children and primary among these responsibilities is the safety and wellbeing of the children, protecting them from harm and sexual abuse. If parents are able to provide for their children, it will help protect them from sexual predators.

Children should be taught on how to make the right decisions and how to find a balance between different aspects of their lives. To achieve this, parents cannot operate alone, thus the need for intervention from the church (Adeboye *et al.*, 2017). Basic care for children, entails providing for their basic needs which includes their clothes, food, health,

education, safety and shelter. Children also have psychological needs including the security that comes from being shown love and care by their parents, society and the church (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). However, without a strong bond of parental affection, children may feel insecure, inadequate and inferior. When a child's basic personal needs are not met, the child may learn to become manipulative, rebellious and anxious (Chinawa *et al.*, 2014 :451-456). A child's self-image is shaped more by their parents as compared to any other person or influence in their lives.

As such, parents and the church should take care of their children's psychological and physical needs as they grow. Nonetheless, parents and the church have the duty to always keep in mind that they are expected to move through the gradual process of weaning their children from complete dependency on them to full dependency on themselves and Christ i.e., maturity and letting go (Ojelabi *et al.*, 2015 :75). It is very important for the parents and the church to teach children by example. Children are such imitators that they learn about 80% of what they are taught through seeing what their parents are doing, or learning by an example. Ojelabi *et al.* (2015 :75) rightly stated that parents and the church leaders should focus more on their duty as role models because children observe and learn more than they hear.

Jesus had high regard for the children and He even protected them. In Matthew 18:2-5, Jesus called on the little children and used them to teach the congregation that unless they change, they will not enter the kingdom. As such, Jesus meant that despite our consideration of children with low regard, they are of great regard and their character is heavenly. It is therefore, inappropriate for priests to abuse the same children that Jesus holds in high regard. Indeed, any priest who abuses children does not belong to the Kingdom of God as he violates the teachings of the high priest, who is Jesus Christ (Lim, 2021: 425-445). The high regard for children is also elucidated in the in Matthew 18:10 when Jesus noted that we should not despise the little ones because, their angels in heaven always see the face of the Father. When Priests sexually abuse children, they do it because they despise them as powerless and perceive them as less knowledgeable

and undignified (Chinawa *et al.*, 2014 :451-456). This is in contrast to what the bible says because Christ himself warned against despising them.

The handling that befits children is also evidenced in the Bible by the teaching of Jesus. In Mark 9:36-37, Jesus took the little child whom was within a congregation and putting him in His arms said that whoever welcomes any of the little children in His name, welcomes Christ and whoever does not, also denies Him. In these teachings, Jesus emphasized on the care that should be given to children and those who are called by His name should protect the children and whoever does not is not welcome within his Kingdom. The priests who sexually abuse children, contravenes the teachings of Jesus Christ, and also denies Christ (Bunge *et al.*, 2008:145). As such, such people should be laicized and denied access to children and vulnerable adults. All actions of sexual abuse, go against the teachings of Jesus Christ and denies Christ by not protecting children. Similarly, Matthew 21:15-16, Jesus acknowledged the voices of the people in the Temple and regarded them as children. Indeed, he acknowledges that we are equal despite our ages because God sees us as his children. In this case, we need not to see children as people of low regard. In many other instances, Paul and the teachings of the church acknowledge that indeed we are all children. In Romans 8:14 for those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (Brewster, 2011: 24). Further, Romans 8:16, "the spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children". Romans 8:17, If we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if we share in his sufferings in order to share in his glory (Brewster, 2011: 24). In all these instances, the bible regards us as the children of God regardless of our age and other characteristics and hence we should not regard the young ones as inferior to us.

Christ contravened the protocols to show the high regard to children. In Mark 10:13–16, they were bringing youngsters to Him to be touched by Him, but the disciples scolded them. When Jesus observed this, he became enraged and told them, "Allow the children to come to me; do not impede them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." "Truly, I tell you, whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it." And He embraced them in His arms and began blessing them with His hands.

In reference to the study, there are many obstacles today that prevent children from making their way into Jesus' arms. Despite the fact that the disciples had no hatred in their hearts, they, like the Pharisees, stopped others from approaching Jesus. We must intervene if we notice somebody being impeded from getting closer to Christ including children (Illian, 2010:444-451). The high regard that Jesus had towards children should be exhibited by all priests. This is also exhibited in Luke 17:1–2, when He mentioned "little ones," He was most likely referring to children. In Matthew 10:40–42, Jesus also talks of those who give the little ones a cup of water because they will get a reward. This scripture passage can be used to demonstrate how helping someone in need is a direct way to helping Jesus (Illian, 2010:444-451). This verse reminds children's leaders and parents that when we serve children, we are directly presenting a gift to our Lord and it is in contrast to those who mishandle and sexually abuse them.

Jesus' love and care for the children is also exhibited in Mark 5:41–42 when he raised a child who was dead. From this miracle, it is evident that the high regard God has for children is unquestionable. He understands the anguish of losing a cherished daughter or son. The fact that Jesus in His highness can embark on resurrecting a small kid indicates that He really had great regard for them (Illian, 2010:444-451). As such, for Priests who sexually abuse children disregard teachings and practice of Christianity and hence should be excommunicated and handed over to the authorities for prosecution, punishment and reformation.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature regarding Christianity and human rights for children is quite ambiguous, but when it is based on the Scriptures it can be justified. The deep-rooted human rights for children ideals are based on biblical teachings these values have been ignored in the church for centuries. As a result of this neglect, child abuse was perpetrated by Catholic clergy for many years without any concrete effort from the Church to stop it. Christianity and human rights have not always been in agreement because right from the ancient times, God has been concerned so much about His children. The law is in agreement

with the scripture regarding reporting cases of sexual abuse. On this note, failure to report sexual abuses amounts to failure to respect those in authorities and failure to honour God whose beautiful creature has been defiled. This chapter has argued, based on biblical teachings as to the reason why cases of sexual abuse should never be settled in-house, between the victims and the perpetrator as they fall under criminal cases category. Our scriptural analysis has thus revealed that Jesus and his Apostles including Paul advocated for mediation, but on little matters where the two parties are on the same footing.

Our analysis has also revealed that Jesus highly regarded children and taught people to protect and care for them. Indeed, Jesus noted that those who do not care and protect children are also neglecting Him and hence, are not of God's kingdom. As such, based on these revelations, Catholic priests who sexually abuse children should be excommunicated and handed over to the authorities for prosecution. Numerous biblical teachings from the old and New Testament have revealed the rationale for Child protection, findings which could be used to form basis for the formulation of appropriate policies to protect children within the church. The struggle for the human rights of children began belatedly and painfully from the Christian church. However, the teaching of these rights stem from deep biblical roots and have been periodically retrieved throughout the history of the Catholic Church in order to make things right in the society, to pursue a more human society and to repudiate theological support for abuses (Makinde *et al.*, 2017:98-105).

To end the clerical sexual abuse of children, the children should be taught to speak out when they have been violated sexually to help in the fight against clerical sexual abuse. Breaking the silence is in line with Proverb 31:9 "speak up, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and oppressed." Given the fact that silence of the sexually abused children by Catholic clergy hinders the elimination of the problem, the Catholic Bishops in Nigeria should ensure they encourage or motivate the children to come out and speak of the sexual violation which is one way of defending the rights of the abused children (Together for Girls, 2017: 13; Eze 2013). The Church should research and find

out the reasons behind the silence of the victims in Nigeria in order to assure them of their safety in case they were bullied into silence (Together for Girls 2017: 13).

As Proverbs 31:9 implies that the leaders should speak out and judge righteously, the CBCN should ensure they prosecute all those who have sexually abused children in the Church and avoid covering up the crime as Ephesians 5: 12 explains that “it is shameful even to speak of the things they do in secret.” Therefore, the Bishops in Nigeria should look beyond the shame on the church and choose to protect the children that Jesus said should not be led to sin according to Matthew 18: 6 which warn clerics and other people from leading children to sin as the consequences or punishment will be severe. Apart from encouraging the children to speak out on the sexual violation against them, the Catholic bishops in Nigeria should provide professional help to the violated children to help them deal with their sexual ordeal and healing both physically and psychologically while also taking actions against the perpetrators. Such actions are in agreement with the Biblical teachings.

CHAPTER 6:

PROPOSED POLICY IMPROVEMENTS AND A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO PROVIDE A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO CHILDREN SEXUAL ABUSE BY THE NIGERIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There is an escalating number of clerical sexual abuses that are associated with the Nigerian catholic priests. Despite the numerous policy frameworks that are developed in Vatican, it is evident that the problem is still far from being solved. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the appropriateness of the policies in Nigerian Catholic church in resolving the problem of sexual abuse from clergy. This section examines the current status of child protection policies adopted by the Catholic Church. Firstly, the focus is on the general protection policy framework issued by Roman curia (Vatican) for local churches. This is followed by examining similar policies adopted by different local churches in the USA, UK, and Ireland. These policies are then compared with the protection policy formulated and adopted in Nigeria, to highlight the latter's limited progress

6.2 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church operates as one entity with the Vatican in Rome as the overall governing body under the leadership and guidance of the Pope. The Catholic Church, unlike other religious institutions, is a male-dominated organisation with the entire clergy composed of adult men. All clergy are educated similarly undergoing teaching on philosophy and catholic theology. The entire clergy is subject to the singular authority of the Pope under the vow of obedience. However, the leadership of the church is hierarchical with the powers flowing from the papacy to the cardinals and to the bishops and lastly to the priest in that order. In this order, the clergy take the vow of obedience to their superior(s). The authority of the Pope is unique since he has the authority to forgive

individuals their sins whether they are clergy or laymen. This authority does not only apply to this world but also to the world hereafter (White and Terry 2008:665).

In this regard, it is important to understand that the Vatican provides guidance to local churches, which are independent bodies, indicating how they can develop their own policies for child protection. Scholars have distinguished the act of child sexual abuse within the RCC from those occurring outside of it, within the wider context of the church's overall organisational structure (Keenan, 2013:46, 257; White & Terry 2008:662-665). The authority that the Vatican clergy enjoys is rooted in the doctrine of papal infallibility based on the understanding of Matthew 16:18 where Jesus entrusted the Church to the leadership of Peter (NJB 1985). This has been interpreted to mean that Peter and his successors (Popes) have the moral authority to teach in matters of faith and morals without erring. Thus, transgressions and especially criminal acts from the clergy, endangers this power structure and the accompanied trust from members within the RCC as it "contradicts everything that the institution publicly stands for" (Keenan, 2013: xxv).

In addition, the bureaucratic structure of the Vatican curia has a secretive method to handle cases of human sins such as child sexual abuse. This may create the impression of a conspiracy, which impacts the trust of the public towards the clergy (Keenan, 2013:30, 221). It must be noted however, that child sexual abuse is not a problem peculiar to the Catholic Church or that it is a consequence of the Church' tradition of celibacy (Parkinson 2003:3). However, Demasure (2016:161) argues that celibate priests often find themselves isolated and lonely which could push priests to transgress boundaries. But the author questions why such celibate priests who chose to be celibates voluntarily would turn to a child and not an adult partner.

In May 2001, the Catholic Church issued a policy titled *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* (SST), under which all cases of CCA should be reported to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome (Ryan 2009). However, the policy was later modified since a large number of such cases emerged. In terms of the current policy, Bishops and Major Superiors are responsible for dealing with the majority of cases and only those will

be referred to CDF where the accusation has been proved credible. This occurs after an investigation by the Bishop or the Major Superior.

As stated by Terry and Ackerman (2008:651), the attitude of the RCC to early reports of CCA was ostrich-like. In such cases, the Church authorities treated examples as isolated, individual acts and preferred to remain silent, waiting for the furore to die down. However, with the continuous reporting of CCA cases in the mass media, the Church finally took steps to address the issue and formulate policies for the protection of children. In response to growing reports of CCA, the curia in the Vatican began paying attention to the issue of child abuse during the 1980s. However, the actual policy formulation began only as late as the beginning of the 21st century.

The Catholic Church has recently also established a Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The specific task of the Commission is not to intervene in local cases of child abuse but assist local churches to develop their own child protection policies and procedures. In addition, the Commission advises the Pope on policy issues related to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The Commission developed a policy guideline template, requesting local churches to develop their policy in accordance with article 3 and 19 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors 2016). The guidance document recommends that local church bodies should consider procedures for recruiting clergy and volunteers. This should include programmes to train and develop future clergy, standards for ministerial behaviour, and a clear statement of commitment to educate the community.

The Commission also recommends that the church should have a transparent procedure for responding to complaints of child sexual abuse. However, no detail is provided of penalties in case a person is found guilty (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2016). The document holds that the procedure must be in accordance with SST, which is a policy that focuses specifically on child sexual abuse. The document does not assist local churches by providing guidance in case of physical and psychological abuse

and in other important areas of child protection as highlighted in article 19 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

According to Keenan (2009:183), the Church policy is also guided by zero tolerance policy against child abuse. This was also reemphasised by Pope Francis in the recent synod with bishops from all over the world (Horowitz & Goodstein 2018). In this policy, the clergy found or is substantially alleged of sexual abuse with a minor should be permanently removed from priesthood. In her study on the challenges faced by preventive policies in the Catholic Church, Terry (2008), points out that though preventive policies could be more effective, they are more challenging to implement. The author argues that this could be the reason why such preventive policies are hard to come by. In subsequent articles, the issue of guideline on how to prevent clerical abuse will be treated.

6.3 CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES IN CATHOLIC CHURCHES OF THE USA, UK, AND IRELAND

Child protection would not have become a concern for the Catholic Church if the case of Father Gilbert Gauthe had not surfaced in October 1984. In this case, a pre-teen boy accused the father of an enforced sexual act (Burkett & Bruni, 1993:12). Further investigation of the case revealed numerous other instances of child sexual abuse by Father Gilbert. The investigation found him guilty of fondling young boys physically, and even engaging them in oral and anal sex. He was also found to be fond of pornography and enticed young boys to perform mutual sexual acts, while recording the action for his personal use (Berry, 1992). This resulted in the first effort from the Catholic Church in the USA to implement a policy against child sexual abuse, in 1985 (White & Terry 2008:661).

A further shock came in 2002 with the case of Fr John Geoghan, who was accused of abusing close to 130 children. The investigation revealed that the Church authorities were aware of his abusive behaviour and had received complaints but did not take particular action against the perpetrator (White & Terry, 2008:661). Furthermore, public pressure led to the resignation of Cardinal Bernard from his position as Archbishop of Boston. He

was accused of grossly covering up sexual abuse by priests while having clear knowledge of paedophilic practices of several priests, all in his diocese. The above cases indicated the beginning of the clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church (Demasure, 2016:153). Gradually it was obvious that CCA was not only a North American affair, but Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, were deeply affected too. Victims also began to speak out in Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Poland and Italy (Demasure, 2016:154).

The Canon Law Society of America was established to monitor cases of CCA and formulate procedures to deal with them. Despite this development there was extremely limited action from the Church authorities. The Canon Law of 1983 authorises Bishops, after appropriate investigation, to defrock a priest involved in sexual abuse as well as initiate legal proceedings against the perpetrating cleric. Coughlin (2002:986), however, notes that there are no official records of applying the 1983 Canon Law. Even in the case of John Geoghan where all the conditions were present to start legal proceedings, the church authorities did not apply the law.

Finally, the Catholic Church in the USA came under increased pressure from public opinion. Cardinals from the USA, who decided to take strict action against such issues, were invited to the Vatican to discuss a strategy. The media had been active in unearthing new cases of sexual abuse regularly and pressure was mounting on the Church to address the issue. The Vatican meetings convened with the American Cardinals resulted in the decision to apply the Canon Law to the situation with a 'zero-tolerance policy' and immediately remove from office any priest who is accused of sexual abuse.

The public disclosures of clerical sexual abuse in the US during the first decade of the 21st century have also prompted similar events outside the US, namely in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, or New Zealand. In the case of the UK, there is no formal legislation for the reporting of suspected child abuse. However, there are statutory guidelines for steps that can be taken in case of suspected CCA by a cleric.

Even with widespread public disclosures of CCA in the US, similar reporting remains comparatively low in the UK. Additionally, no effort has yet been made to compile statistics for sexually abused children in any institution, let alone the Catholic Church. Davies, Mathews and Read (2014:12) consider this lack of information as a substantial issue for CCA in any type of institution, whether it is the church or the school. This issue is highly relevant since policy formulation depends on authorities' knowledge of the magnitude and prevalence of a problem (Davies *et al.* 2014:27).

The Irish Roman Catholic Church formed an independent, official committee to investigate cases of CCA. The Bishop's Committee on Child Abuse (also Child Protection) in 2001, commissioned the establishment of the Health Services Research Centre at the Department of Psychology at the Royal College of Surgeons.

Owing to the belief in and the sacred trust placed on priests, Irish culture is not that forthcoming in cases of clerical sexual abuse. However, as the case was in the US, the magnitude of abuse incidents has prompted widespread disclosure through Irish media sources. The pattern follows that of the situation in the US when victims, after failing to get a hearing by the Church, resort to legal means to be heard and understood.

In their qualitative research on the issue of clerical sexual abuse in Ireland, Goode, McGee and O'Boyle (2003:200) identified several relevant issues within the main domain of CCA. They found that the general clergy is not aware of the sexual abuse perpetrated by their members. These clergy gain their awareness through the media as is the case with the general population. The clergy also were not that much exposed to dealing with abuse victims. As a result, the knowledge of clerical sexual abuse, especially its physical and psychological effects on victims, is severely limited, to the point of being non-existent.

The family members of clerical sexual-abuse perpetrators were found to be in a difficult situation. On the one hand, they were faced with the knowledge that a family member violated a sacred trust by committing a sexual offence while in an influential position. On the other hand, they sought to offer support in the hope that the perpetrator would realise

his mistake and repent. However, Goode *et al.* (2003:243) also found that certain family members of these perpetrators denounced them outright. Other priests were obviously aghast and disgusted with the actions of colleagues involved in CCA. However, these colleagues also believe that the management of church policies and regulations was as much to blame as the perpetrators themselves, especially those concerning support for non-abusive clergy. They considered that one sexually abusive priest had the capacity to generate distrust and loss of credibility for the Church, which also tainted the remaining clergy members who were not guilty of such misconduct.

As with the general clergy, Goode *et al.* (2003:120-220) found that the general population also had limited awareness of the existence and prevalence of CCA and became aware of the issue only through media reports. However, there was consensus on the belief that clergymen, being human, were as likely as non-clergy to abuse others sexually. Therefore, this issue should be raised as a matter of public concern. It was also found that the victims did show a range of psychological and psycho-social effects. In addition to loss of trust in the Church as an institution, there also are instances where they lose their faith.

Furthermore, victims were found to suffer from different social ailments, ranging from distrust in anyone outside their own family circle, to difficulties with bonding and intimacy. This resulted in deteriorating existing relationships and forfeiting potential ones (Goode *et al.*, 2003:285). Depression and anxiety were prevalent throughout the victims' disclosures. Significant from this study is that, in retrospect, the families of the abused realised that they erred by reporting the incidents to the Church. In reality, they found it would have been more appropriate to report the transgressions to legal civil authorities for prompt action (Goode *et al.*, 2003).

The clergy members convicted of CCA and undergoing psychological treatment were also approached by Goode *et al.* (2003). These perpetrators stated that the Church made no attempt to understand their problems and provided negligible support. It is shocking to realise that in countries such as the USA, UK, and Ireland with policies and structures to

support both victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse, victims still complain. If victims are properly taken care of psychologically, spiritually and theologically, their stories of abuse can become sources of strength. (Demasure 2016:166)

A cursory look at the official websites of the Catholic Bishop Conferences of U.S.A, Ireland and England and Wales will reveal that the Churches in these countries take the issues of safeguarding very seriously. There are links on all the websites to the structures and policies set up to monitor and enforce safeguarding policies and procedures. In England and Wales, Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Services (CSAS) is the national agency under the Bishops Conference driving and supporting improvements in safeguarding practice within the Church. (<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/safeguarding/catholic-safeguarding-advisory-service>) Individual dioceses also have their designated safeguarding commissions and these are also visible on diocesan websites as exemplified by the Southwark Archdiocese safeguarding commission (<http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/safeguarding-policies-resources.html>) In the United States of America, the link to their Safeguarding structure and policies can be found on: <http://www.usccb.org/about/child-and-youth-protection>) In Ireland, the link to their safeguarding structure and policies are found on : (<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/safeguarding>.)

An in-depth analysis of the above policies shows the great efforts already made by catholic Churches in the west in response to the menace of child sexual abuse in the Church. These policies will be discussed in details in subsequent articles.

6.4 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF NIGERIA

The Catholic Church in Nigeria is a member of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) worldwide, which resorts under the leadership of the Vatican curia in Rome Italy. Therefore, the child protection policy issued from the Vatican also applies to the Church in Nigeria. As was mentioned previously, in several Western countries the issue of child sexual abuse has been considered seriously by the local church. In contrast, the

authorities in the Catholic Churches of Nigeria seem not yet willing to accept responsibility for preventing CSA and providing justice to the victims. In a case where a pastor of a Nigerian church was accused of child sexual abuse, the chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) responded that the Catholic Church “is concerned” about the issue (Taiwo, 2016, para 1). However, he had no idea of the role the church must play to safeguard children who are part of this institution as it has not developed a policy as guided by the general protection policy framework issued by Roman curia (Vatican) for local churches. He took a victim approach and transferred the full responsibility for tackling such cases to the civil authorities: “The Church of God is so big that we are not able to know everybody...CAN cannot do the work of police” (Taiwo 2016, para 2). Similar concerns are raised in Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) which also has concerns itself on child protection.

A similar blame apportioning attitude was noted in a case of alleged witchcraft. The damning of witchcraft has its roots in Christianity, and the majority of the families who abandon their children after accusing them of witchcraft, are followers of Catholic Christianity (Sahara Reporters 2008; Effiong, 2016). In this regard, the chairman of CAN placed full blame for witchcraft on occultism and held that “when we go deeper into such an issue, we would discover that such perpetrators are into occultism” (Taiwo, 2016 para 6). A faction of Protestant churches has joined the movement against witchcraft but the Catholic Church has not yet taken part in it (Effiong, 2016).

This neglected responsibility for child protection by CAN is the reason why this institution adopted no child protection policy. In fact, the search of all-important websites of Catholic Church institutions in Nigeria revealed only a single child protection policy. This policy was adopted by the Nigerian Chapter of Religious Sisters of Charity (2010) – a charity-based congregation under the auspices of the RCC. The purpose of the congregation was explained as simply spreading Christ’s love to the world by helping people in need.

Their child protection policy is more comprehensive than most policies developed by other churches. The reason is that their policy does not merely name the issue of child sexual abuse but defines it in terms of three forms:

1) A child is suffering serious physical injury, which was not inflicted upon him (her) by accident, but by a deliberate act or omission; 2) A child is suffering harm by reason of neglect, malnutrition or sexual abuse; 3) A child is going without necessary and basic physical care (Religious Sisters of Charity, 2010).

The policy also places a responsibility on all members working in the congregation to ensure the protection of children and their rights.

The mentioned child protection policy of the Religious Sisters of Charity (2010) is also more extensive than other policies by providing details of the procedures to implement and monitor the policy. As was noted above, even in countries where churches have documented strong policies for the protection of children, the implementation often suffers from neglect and possible policy deviation from child protection.

In contrast to the Catholic Bishop Conferences in Ireland, England and Wales and U.S.A, there is no sign whatsoever or a link to any structure or policies addressing the issues of child sexual abuse on the website of the Catholic Bishops Conference in Nigeria:(<http://www.cbcn-ng.org>). The absence of a link to any child protection structure or policies is evidence that the Catholic Church in Nigeria has not yet taken this issue seriously. A future article will address this issue of lack of child protection policy in the Nigeria Catholic Church which is a regrettable reality.

6.5 WEAKNESSES OF THE POLICIES IN THE RCC IN NIGERIA

Child protection is a global concern since the effect of child abuse reaches beyond children and their families. At present, there are no specific data available to clarify how prevalent child sexual abuse and neglect are among the Catholic Churches in Nigeria. However, FABMUMNG a parenting and lifestyle resource for mums in Nigeria, released

some shocking statistics on child sexual abuse in Nigeria. According to FABMUMNG: In 2017, 4035 cases of child sexual abuse was recorded in Lagos State. At the same time, Kwara State had 1000 cases, Gombe State: 600, Rivers State: 1200 and Anambra State: 115 cases (FABMUMNG 2017). It can be argued that if child sexual abuse has been proven to exist in the circular society, the Catholic church in Nigeria being part of the society, may not be immune to this ugly phenomenon. I totally agree with FABMUMNG analysis of the issue of child sexual abuse in Nigeria as a “ticking time bomb” and that it has been so far: “all talk and no action” (FABMUMNG 2017). It could be estimated that the problem is more wide-spread than the few statistics above taking into consideration that Nigeria has 36 states and we only have the data for only 5 states, which points to the weaknesses and lack of commitment to make the policies. Sadly, the Catholic Churches have not yet made an effort to collect quantitative data on the issue, to gauge its prevalence and understand the possible causes.

The Christian Reformed Church is conceivably the only ecclesiastical authority to have made an assessment of church members’ involvement in abuse or neglect, while the management of the Catholic Church in Nigeria showing no effort to make policies. The study reported that 28% of the church members who were surveyed reported suffering from abuse or neglect within the church when they were children (Annis & Rice, 2002:7). However, a long time has elapsed since conducting this study. Therefore, more recent data is necessary to understand whether legislative policies, formed since the first decade of the 21st century, has helped cause the decline in abuse or not. In addition, no formal study, to the knowledge of the researcher, has yet been published on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the Nigerian Catholic Church. This makes it difficult to determine whether or not incidences of CCA among members of Nigerian Catholic Churches are similar to those reported in other countries.

The overall comparison is sufficient to show that the question of an *adequate policy* may be the wrong one. The reason is that no such policy to protect children from sexual abuse was adopted by CAN or other responsible Catholic Church institutions in Nigeria. This is despite the clear indication from the Roman curia that local institutions must formulate

and implement their own policies for the protection of children from CCA. Globally, the Catholic Church was initially ignorant toward the issue of child abuse. However, several cases of CCA in the USA and other parts of the world led to increased public pressure on the church authorities to disclose cases and prosecute perpetrators.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING THE EXISTING POLICIES

It is evident that there are no outright and concrete efforts made by the Catholic Church in Nigeria to improve the child protection policies. Based on the findings outlined above, the following recommendations can be made for developing a child protection policy in the Catholic Churches in Nigeria.

1. In the formulated policy for the protection of children in Nigeria, role-players should be able to promulgate it through education of the priests and those in training to priesthood. At the same time, the overseer should be able to implement the policy and penalise the offenders found guilty.
2. Organisations such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which represent the Christians in Nigeria, should become involved in the process. As an authorised institution, local church leadership in Nigeria should change their attitude towards child protection. This could be achieved if they recognise the role that Christian churches can play in creating awareness among its followers and by protecting children from various possible forms of abuse within the Christian churches as such.
3. Organisations such as CBCN and CAN should also follow the recommendation of the Roman Catholic Church to develop their own child protection policy.
4. The document of the child protection policy must contain the various elements identified in the guidance document issued by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Guidelines on preventative measures must then also be formulated clearly.

5. The policy document should follow a transparent process to prevent sexual abuse of children and report, investigate, and prosecute clergy who are found guilty of child abuse.
6. The child protection policy in Nigeria should focus equally on the various forms of abuse and not be limited to sexual abuse of children per se. In particular, the issue of child witchcraft should be given considerable attention in the policy documentation. Harsh punishment should be stipulated for clergy who promote this outrage.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

The child provides a hope for the generation of tomorrow and must therefore experience tender love and care in the ministry of the church. It is worth noting that the child of today will reflect the background she went through in future. Hence the child's upbringing and background are very important for the future of the health of society. In this regard, one of the best the society can pass to a child is education coupled by holistic moral values and norms. Child upbringing and protection is a God-driven responsibility first to the parents and secondly to the church and the society. It is therefore important for the church to protect the children entrusted to her. This calls for policy makers, both from religious and the political leadership, to design, formulate, promulgate and enforce child protection policies.

This research identified gaps in Nigeria seminary programme where the formation process to the priesthood is geared more towards spiritual and intellectual development to the neglect of the human and psychological development of the future priests. The seminary curriculum in Nigeria, fails to address some of the significant issues for mission in the 21st century, like human sexuality and LGBTQ concepts. Besides, the country has inadequate or no structures for reporting and managing child sexual abuse thereby making it a daunting task to deal with the challenge of clergy sexual abuse of children. The CBCN is just waking up to the reality of clerical sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian church and must declare a state of emergency in this sector as a proof of their goodwill in correcting past mistakes and preventing future occurrences. The bishops and religious superiors should think out strategies for managing inadequate, delinquent and dysfunctional elements in the Church who pose a high risk to children and vulnerable adults. During the seminary formation, the CBCN should establish compulsory and effective training modules on safeguarding for seminarians on the causes and effects of clerical sexual abuse issues and provide periodical training and seminars to seminarians to remind them of the challenges involved in the celibate life.

Another area of significance in this research is the development of a children's ministry which will help to train and prepare children as one of the principal agents of mission. The Nigeria catholic church has no standardised, structured and organised fit for purpose children's ministry which if well organised will be a great boost for mission in the church. This research highly recommends the need for an organised Children's ministry in every Church to ensure the holistic development of the children as agents of evangelisation. The children's ministry programme should be scripture based with a great input from, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The teachings about sex education should at least be available to children from their final year of primary school. It was noted that culture influences sex education in Nigeria, as sex is a taboo topic that the parents, guardians, teachers and clergy do not address with their children. That veil of taboo and secrecy concerning sex should be lifted because most children have access to the internet and sexually related contents which raises a lot of questions in their young and innocent minds. If these questions and doubts are not addressed by the right people, the vacuum created can easily be filled by paedophiles who can easily win the confidence of the vulnerable children for playing a role that their parents, teachers, guardians and priests have refused to play. The Church should take the initiative on sex education at an early age and educate parents on the need to address the cultural bias towards sex education. The parents and the Church will help the children view sex as a beautiful gift from God and the need to remain pure until marriage, as Christianity teaches against fornication and premarital sex. Lack of sex education increases the risk of children to fall victims to paedophiles and sexual predators. The Church should help children understand their rights as children, boundaries never to be crossed by others, and help equip them and give them the confidence to defend themselves against sexual predators. It is imperative that parents are primarily involved in the sex education of their children. Culture is a significant barrier to inadequate sex education in Nigeria. Words like sex are culturally dirty and wrong to be pronounced in the public space and mentioning body parts that show sexuality is grossly immoral. Hence, parents and educators abandon children to their own instincts with regard to sex education. This closed culture and taboo around sex makes it difficult for a child in an abusive situation to speak out, and for those children

who are bold enough to speak, the initial reaction of people around the child would be that of evil possession or witchcraft.

In response to a children's ministry, the Church has a vital role to play in promoting tender love and care to the children, and the Church is vital in moulding the future of society by instilling morals in children at a young age. In this role, the research proposed a holistic approach to be used in the children's ministry in order to reinforce social norms and morals in the children through incorporating sex education in their formation. The CBCN has a duty to design, formulate, promulgate, manage and enforce safeguarding protection policies. There is a research gap on data based on the prevalence of child sexual abuse among the Catholic Church in Nigeria, creating a need for the Church to collect quantitative data to understand the prevalence, the potential causes, and possible solutions. The CBCN should be in the frontline to promote a pro-active approach on the issue of sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy. The protection of children's rights and welfare must be a top priority for all persons working in the church.

The study recommends that the CBCN have four significant roles in combating child sexual abuse by the clergy. The first responsibility is to understand the effects of sexual abuse on victims, thereby developing a listening culture in the Church where the Church responds and supports both the victims and the survivors of sexual abuse. The second role is to promote the 'One Church' approach that safeguards and ensures that all actions towards safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, are open and transparent. The third responsibility of the CBCN with regard to safeguarding will be to lobby members of state and federal legislatures, so that legislation supportive of safeguarding of children at all levels of the society in Nigeria would be inaugurated and enforced. The last responsibility of the CBCN from the study is to promote and model good governance and accountability within the church which will guarantee the respect and safeguarding of children within the Church. The Church should be an organisation where children feel safe, happy and are well protected instead of being a citadel of recklessness and abuse of innocent children who are very dear to the heart of Jesus.

The children's ministry has a big role to play in the protection of children from paedophiles. Based on Biblical ethical principles, safeguarding of children, is a means of inviting and honouring Christ, while abusing a child is a dishonour to Christ which demands a grave punishment (Mt. 18: 6-7). Children need protection to grow into mature and independent adults able to handle psychological and physical matters in their future endeavours. The Church should collaborate with mental health professionals, social/welfare services, and the police in making sure that children are safe from all kinds of abuse within the Church. The church should create structures and train personnel to provide clergy with training on safeguarding, mental health issues, and to promote support and counselling to both victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse within the church. Failure to declare a "state of emergency" on child sexual abuse in the church, will be counterproductive and detrimental to the pastoral and missiological integrity of the church. The continued negligence of child protection matters within the church will lead to a rapid decline of both the victims and their parents' faith in the church; which could also project the church as a hypocritical institution and a bad witness to the gospel.

The children's ministry should educate children and parents on the elements of child sexual abuse as most acts that constitute sexual abuse are not reported because of the closed-nature of the Nigerian culture. From the study, child sexual abuse is viewed as any act including unsolicited, and unwanted touching such as grabbing the sexual parts of the body, pressured sex through threats, harassment, or tricks, forced unconsented sex (Rape); or unwanted attempted sex with a child under eighteen years. Children should receive sex education in forms of rhymes on saying no to any unwanted touching of their genitals and saying yes to reporting when abuse occurs. ***(If you touch my genitals I will tell, if you touch my genitals I will tell, if you touch my genitals, I will tell my mum and dad, if you touch my genitals, I will tell)*** possible safeguarding rhyme.

The management of clerical sexual abuse is based on adopting a proactive approach to prevent the act. The first element recommended is the role of church staff in preventing child sexual abuse by learning and adopting good practice from the European and

American Churches. The clergy, church staff and volunteers must go through a vetting system before obtaining a licence to work within the church especially with children and vulnerable adults. Once employed, they should receive a biannual training on safeguarding which will enable them in: identifying children at risk of sexual abuse, educating the congregation on child sexual abuse, and dealing with the abusers with compassion rather than demonising their act. The second component in the pro-active approach is the continued professional and human development of the clergy and church staff and volunteers, by developing a code of professional conduct clarifying the roles and boundaries relationship to help the clergy, staff and volunteers maintain boundaries and reduce chances of sexual relations with children. The church leaders and bishops require professional training on ways to deal with mental health issues to help both the victims and the abusers heal. The third recommendation from the study is on managing complaints of clerical sexual abuse, which must follow a pro-victim approach; the bias must be always on the side of the victim and not the accused. The framework should follow a standardised approach that includes safe spaces that give voices to the victims to express themselves and feel listened to and understood. All efforts would be made in undertaking positive steps to restore the integrity of the Catholic Church as a safe place for all, by clearly and transparently spelling out how to deal with both the victims and the perpetrators of clerical sex abuse. It must become a church mantra that abusers have no place carry out their evil deeds in and around the church because it would no longer be business as usual.

7.1 RESEARCH LIMITATION

The current research is a literature review that relies on previously published work on clerical sexual abuse of children in the Catholic church. Reliance on previously published work provides a study that is influenced by the appropriateness of the studies, including the exclusion and inclusion criteria and the research methodology used. Another limitation of the study is the lack of primary data on clerical child sexual abuse in Nigeria. It was challenging to attain clerical sexual abuse information within the catholic church in Nigeria as this issue has seldomly been addressed by Nigeria theologians and the Church

hierarchy itself. A detailed and systematic information about the clerical child sexual abuse crises in the catholic church in Nigeria is essential and long overdue.

7.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should be conducted to identify the practical problems and the impact of clerical sexual abuse in the church in Nigeria on both the victims and perpetrator's families. This includes a need for primary studies that explore the impact of culture on reporting sexual abuse. Besides, future researches should explore some of the recent safeguarding policies and their effectiveness in preventing clerical sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults; and the treatment and management of victims and abusers of clerical sexual abuse. Research should also be conducted on ways to identify, manage and support victims of false child abuse accusations.

In conclusion, there is a need for the Catholic church in Nigeria to align herself to the global best practice in safeguarding in the Catholic church as practiced in other countries.

The church should be a safe place for the “construction” of the human person especially children, and not for its “destruction. The policies should cover different areas covering all possible social crimes that can be advanced to the vulnerable children. At the same time the policies should be preventive as well as corrective. An effective policy should also be designed through empirical evidence as well as informed through pilot study and test. Studies examining the theological roots of abuse must keep in mind that their key respondents – the victims of abuse – are providing an important yet *isolated* perspective of the problem. Viewing this matter from a wider angle, these victims should feel free and are expected to blame the church for what happened to them. Thus, while researchers should not ignore this view, they ought to distinguish opinion and hearsay from facts and evidence.

It is important to understand that while other countries have a more effective policy documents, there is inefficient implementation. The local churches in Nigeria should,

therefore, learn from other countries' mistakes and should take steps to ensure developing such a policy as well as implementing it effectively.

The management of clerical sexual abuse is based on adopting a proactive approach to prevent the act, which should develop a common ground in policy formulation. In the policies that are developed, the role of the church should be clear regarding the role of staffs in preventing child abuse. In addition, the church policies should have the necessary elements in averting clerical abuse. The first element recommended is the role of church staff in preventing child sexual abuse by learning and adopting good practice from the European and American Churches.

Part of the policy is to ensure that the clergy, church staff and volunteers must go through a vetting system before obtaining a licence to work within the church especially with children and vulnerable adults. Once employed, they should receive a biannual training on safeguarding which will enable them in: identifying children at risk of sexual abuse, educating the congregation on child sexual abuse, and dealing with the abusers with compassion rather than demonizing their act. The second component in the pro-active approach is the continued professional and human development of the clergy and church staff and volunteers, by developing a code of professional conduct clarifying the roles and boundaries relationship to help the clergy, staff and volunteers maintain boundaries and reduce chances of sexual relations with children. The church leaders and bishops require professional training on ways to deal with mental health issues to help both the victims and the abusers heal. The third recommendation from the study is on managing complaints of clerical sexual abuse, which must follow a pro-victim approach; the bias must be always on the side of the victim and not the accused. The framework should follow a standardized approach that includes safe spaces that give voices to the victims to express themselves and feel listened to and understood. All efforts would be made in undertaking positive steps to restore the integrity of the Catholic Church as a safe place for all, by clearly and transparently spelling out how to deal with both the victims and the perpetrators of clerical sex abuse. It must become a church mantra that abusers have no place in the church to carry out their evil deeds in and around the church.

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Schematic presentation

RESEARCH QUESTION	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD
What is the extent and circumference of the problem of clerical sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria?	To provide a picture of the extent and circumference of the problem of clerical sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria.	The extent and circumference of the problem of clerical sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria will be provided and evaluated from published documents.
How should sexual abuse of children in the Nigerian Catholic Church be dealt with according to the administrative policies of the Church globally?	To compare existing policies and declarations about the protection of children in the Roman Catholic Church globally and in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria.	Existing policies and declarations about the protection of children in the Roman Catholic Church globally and in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria will be summarised, compared, and critically discussed
How may the Roman Catholic theological principles and practice of children's ministry help the church to deal with the challenges of clerical sexual abuse of children?	Explore official Roman Catholic documents outlining children's ministry and the theological education of priests for children's ministry.	A literature analysis will be conducted to explore relevant official Roman Catholic theological principles of children's ministry
How does the theological education of Roman Catholic priests in Nigeria prepare	Discuss the strong and weak points of current theological education of Roman Catholic priests in Nigeria.	Current content and methods of theological education of Roman Catholic priests in Nigeria will be critically

RESEARCH QUESTION	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD
them for the safeguarding of children?		evaluated in order to consider possible improvements.
How can a safe environment for children be assured in the Catholic Church of Nigeria?	Study and evaluate good practices in safeguarding procedures prevalent globally in the Roman Catholic Church and make propositions for robust and improved safeguarding of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria.	The archives and offices of safeguarding bodies will be visited, and data that are gathered will be analysed, interpreted and synthesised and recommendations made to improve the safeguarding of children in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria