

**Research Article**

## **The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Girls in Sierra Leone**

**\*<sup>a</sup>Peter Sahr Braima, <sup>b</sup>Idris Ortameson Kamara, <sup>c</sup>James Alphonso Marsh and <sup>d</sup>Nathan Mbalu Jaba**

<sup>a</sup>Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Sierra Leone

<sup>b</sup>Lecturer, Department of Clinical and Allied Health Sciences, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Sierra Leone

<sup>c</sup>Lecturer, Department of Christian Religious Studies, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Sierra Leone

<sup>d</sup>Lecturer, Department of Teacher Education, Njala University, Sierra Leone

\*Corresponding Author Email: braimapeter73@gmail.com

**Received:** May 28, 2024

**Accepted:** June 16, 2024

**Published:** June 25, 2024

### **Abstract**

Sexual abuse is a widespread and devastating social problem that occurs in a variety of contexts and affects people of all ages and genders. Sexual abuse is generally defined as unwanted sexual acts forced upon a person without their consent or knowledge. The term includes both physical acts (e.g., touching, penetration) and non-physical acts (e.g., verbal harassment, exposure to pornography). According to a study show that the violence women face daily in Sierra Leone is one of the greatest obstacles to women's economic advancement and the success of broader development efforts. Rape and sexual penetration are criminal offenses under the laws of Sierra Leone. This study aims to examine the impact of sexual abuse on girls in Sierra Leonean. This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design using both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. The study was carried out in Luawa Chiefdom in Kailahun District, the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. The target population for this study is girls aged between 10 and 20 years old who live in Kailahun city. Respondents were selected using simple random sampling. A population sample of 100 participants will be selected, of which 90 are female and 10 are male. Ten male participants were selected to share their views on the phenomenon under study. The data for this study was obtained from two sources: primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires and personal interviews were used to collect primary data. Secondary data consists of existing knowledge on the topic being studied. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze the collected data. The data obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and literature review were analyzed into two different categories: empirical arguments and theoretical results. Statistical representations such as graphs and figures in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (version 25.0) were used to explain the results. The study concludes that sexual abuse of girls is widespread in Kailahun district with early marriage, rape, sexual harassment, sexual penetration, and sexual abuse of girls are also examples of sexual abuse.

**Keywords:** Sexual Abuse, Rape, Sexual Penetration, Girl, Impact.

### **1. Introduction**

Sexual abuse is a widespread and devastating social problem that occurs in a variety of contexts and affects people of all ages and genders (Finkelhor, 2011). Sexual abuse is generally defined as unwanted sexual acts forced upon a person without their consent or knowledge (Mathews and Collin-Vézina, 2019). The term includes both physical acts (e.g., touching, penetration) and non-physical acts (e.g., verbal harassment, exposure to pornography). Serbin *et al.*, (2015) emphasize that sexual abuse occurs in family, institutional, or community settings, and that the perpetrator is often known to the victim. Estimating the prevalence of sexual abuse is difficult due to underreporting and different research methodologies. However, studies consistently show high rates of sexual abuse.

A meta-analysis by Pan *et al.*, (2021), for example, found that approximately 12-17% of adult women and 3-5% of adult men worldwide experienced sexual abuse during childhood. These figures are likely underestimates because many cases go unreported. Sexual abuse has far-reaching effects on survivors,

affecting their physical, mental, and social well-being (Manukrishnan and Bhagabati, 2023). Extensive research has demonstrated a strong association between sexual abuse and a range of negative outcomes, including increased risk of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and suicidal behavior (Fergusson *et al.*, 2013). Meeting the needs of victims of sexual abuse requires effective interventions that focus on promoting support, healing, and resilience (DeGraw, 2018).

Evidence-based interventions emphasize the importance of trauma-informed care, individual and group therapy, cognitive-behavioral approaches, and psychoeducation for survivors (Brenner and Ben-Amity, 2015). Additionally, prevention efforts should emphasize education and awareness to challenge social norms and enable individuals to recognize and report abuse. Sexual abuse is a widespread problem that negatively impacts an individual's mental and physical health (Afifi *et al.*, 2016). Further research is needed to understand the complex factors that contribute to sexual abuse and to develop effective prevention strategies and interventions.

Yahaya (2014) argues that definitions of child sexual abuse (CSA) vary widely across studies. Some researchers use different age criteria, and the nature of sexual acts considered abusive also vary across studies. This has become important since Wyatt *et al.*, (1986) raised the issue of defining CSA in prevalence studies, as Wyatt *et al.*, pointed out in their excellent discussion of the subject. "Despite efforts to promote reliable standards for defining child sexual abuse, there remains variation in the definitions adopted by individual researchers." From Yahya's perspective, sexual abuse can also be classified by the type of sexual activity. This includes non-contact, and penetrative abuse. Non-contact abuse is the less restrictive form of abuse and includes any form of sexual activity, including inappropriate sexual advances and lewd conduct. Contact abuse may include sexual contact between the perpetrator and the child. Such contact may also include contact with the genitals. The most restrictive form of abuse is penetrative contact, including oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

According to Mahtani (2013) the violence women face daily in Sierra Leone is one of the greatest obstacles to women's economic advancement and the success of broader development efforts. This violence not only prevents women from leading full and productive lives but also prevents them from contributing to family, social, and economic development. Sexual violence prevents women from working, participating in their communities, and taking advantage of educational opportunities to provide a better life for themselves and their children. The impact of sexual violence can be devastating to women's reproductive health as well as other aspects of their physical and mental health.

Rape and sexual penetration are criminal offenses under the laws of Sierra Leone. The legal document known as the Sierra Leone Sexual Offences Act of 2012 is an act that amends and consolidates the Sexual Offences Act. This act protects women and girls from sexual abuse. The Sexual Offences Act generally provides that "Any person who knowingly engages in sexual penetration with another person without that other person's consent is guilty of rape and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for not less than five years but not more than fifteen years." According to the Sierra Leone Sexual Offences Act, sexual penetration is the raping of a child under the age of 18. Jina and Thomas (2013) further highlighted that the problem of sexual violence is a serious public health and human rights issue with severe short-term and long-term impacts on physical and mental health. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from this type of violence and it can affect women of all ages. It can be perpetrated by parents, caregivers, acquaintances, employees, life partners, and even strangers. Sexual violence is not a crime of passion. Rather, it is an aggressive act that often aims to express power and control over the victim. Domestic and societal perpetrators also include community elders, bicyclists, NGO workers, and older elites commonly referred to as "sugar daddies" (UNESCO, 2010). These groups of perpetrators sexually exploit girls to gain money and access to expensive entertainment options. According to the Gender-Based Violence in Schools Study, sugar daddies account for approximately 15 percent of all cases of sexual violence and exploitation, making them the second most common perpetrators of such abuse in Sierra Leone after teachers (Ekine, 2020).

### **1.1. Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of sexual abuse on girls in Sierra Leonean with particular focus on the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the nature of sexual abuse of girls in Kailahun.
- 2) To examine the impact of sexual abuse of girls in Kailahun.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design using both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. This design was chosen because the results of such a survey method can be easily generalized to the entire population and is time-saving and cost-effective. To utilize the best aspects of qualitative and quantitative approaches, a mixed-methods design helps the study to be both qualitative and quantitative.

### **2.2. Study Area**

The study was carried out in Luawa Chiefdom in Kailahun District. Kailahun district is a district in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. Its capital and largest city is Kailahun town. Other major towns in the district include Segwema, Koindu, Pendembu, and Daru. Kailahun district is divided into 14 chiefdoms. A portion of the Moa River forms the district's border with Guinea. The district's population is primarily Muslim. Kailahun district has a mixed economy based on small-scale mining and agriculture, as well as the cultivation of coffee, cocoa, and rice. The region receives between 2,001 and 3,000 mm of rainfall annually, and the vegetation is a mixture of savanna, forest, and secondary vegetation. After the 1991-2002 civil war, the district was gradually rebuilt but remains one of the poorest in the country. Primary education is compulsory by law for all children under the age of six in Sierra Leone. They must attend three years of primary and secondary school. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, the number of primary school students has increased significantly, but a shortage of schools and teachers makes implementation impossible. Currently, Kailahun has 410 schools (19 kindergartens, 346 primary schools, 35 secondary schools and 10 high schools).

### **2.3. Study Population**

The target population for this study are girls aged between 10 and 20 years old who live in Kailahun city. They are girls of different ethnicities and may or may not be attending school, but they provide first-hand information about the impact of sexual abuse on girls in Kailahun district.

### **2.4. Sample Size and Sampling**

As Dhivyadeepa (2015) indicates, sampling method is a technique for selecting a sample population. Respondents were selected using simple random sampling.

### **2.5. Sample Size**

According to Omona (2013) cited by Kamanda (2017), sampling is everything. Research is not just about observing or interviewing people. Sampling can also refer to environments, social processes, and events. In a case study, a clear decision must be made and individual cases must be included in the study. To make the study relevant, a population sample of 100 participants will be selected, of which 90 are female and 10 are male. The ten male participants were selected to share their views on the phenomenon under study.

### **2.6. Data Collection Methods**

This is the method and process by which the data was collected. The data for this study was obtained from two sources: primary and secondary sources.

#### **2.6.1. Primary Data Sources**

Primary data was collected using questionnaires and personal interviews. The data was obtained from all the wards in Kailahun Township. During the interviews, the researcher was careful and alert to better analyze the information collected during the interviews and from the questionnaires.

#### **2.6.2. Secondary Data Sources**

Secondary data consists of existing knowledge on the topic being studied. Secondary data provides important material to guide and assist the researcher in determining the research objectives. The secondary data sources for this study were obtained from published and unpublished sources. These include computerized data, project documents, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and annual reports of rape and other sexual abuse cases published by the Rainbow Centre in Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone Police.

### **2.7. Data Presentation and Analysis**

#### **2.7.1. Presentation of Data**

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze the collected data. Percentages and graphs were used for data collected through questionnaires. Explanation of results was used for data collected through interviews and observations. The collected data were classified into two

different categories: empirical arguments and theoretical results. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (version 25.0) was used for data entry and analysis.

### 2.7.2. Data analysis

Data analysis was described qualitatively and quantitative data was analyzed using graphics. The quantitative data collected was coded and categorized according to the elements of the semi-structured questionnaire using frequency distribution. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and results are presented in frequency tables, graphs and percentages. Data was generated from open-ended items and analyzed by comparing the responses of the respondents. In this study, simple graphs (frequency and percentage) were used to analyze the biological profile of the respondents. The data obtained through questionnaires, interviews and literature review were analyzed into two different categories: empirical arguments and theoretical results. Statistical representations such as graphs and figures in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (version 25.0) was used to explain the results.

## 3. Result and Analysis

This includes presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The researcher will obtain this information to determine the age group of the participants, the education level of the participants, and the gender of the respondents as this information has a significant effect on the impact of sexual abuse of the respondents.

### 3.1. Age of the Respondents

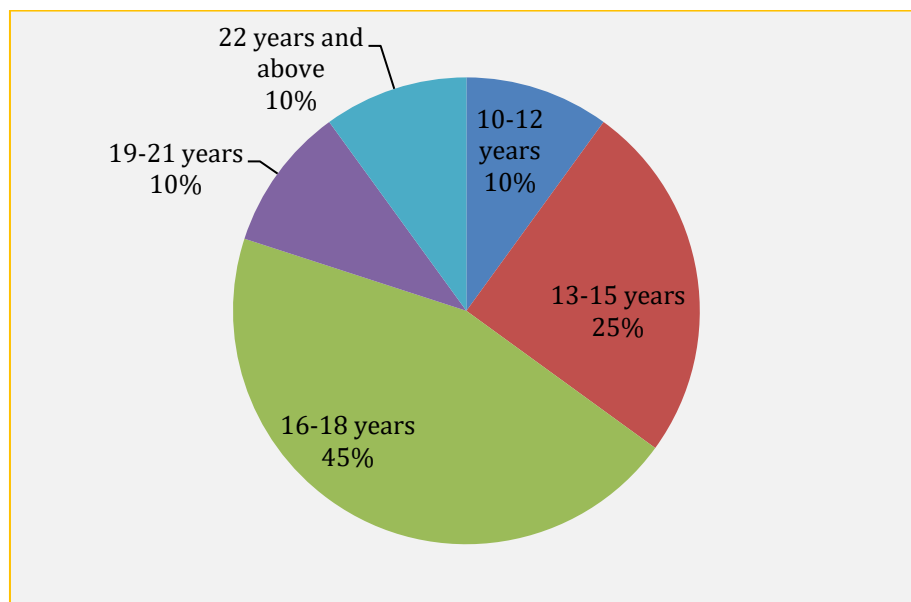
The results for the ages of the respondents are illustrated in Figure 1.

### 3.2. Respondents' Gender

The results regarding the respondents' gender are shown in Figure 2.

The results in Figure 1 show that there is a relationship between the age of the respondents and their participation in the study. There seems to be a high proportion of respondents between 13 and 18 years old in this study, which is not surprising as girls in this age group mature early and are attractive. The results showed that 10 of the respondents were between 10 and 12 years old. According to the results, there were 25 respondents between 13-15 years old, 45 respondents between 16-18 years old, 10 respondents between 19-21 years old, and 10 respondents aged 22 years old or older.

Figure 2 Gender categories show that 90% of the respondents were female and 10% were male. This suggests that a higher percentage of female participants were included in the study as the phenomenon studied focuses on the barriers preventing access to justice for sexually abused women in rural areas of Kailahun region. To get the male participants' perspective on the topic under study, the researcher included 10% of male participants in the questionnaire.



**Figure 1.** Age of the respondents (Source: Field research, 2024).

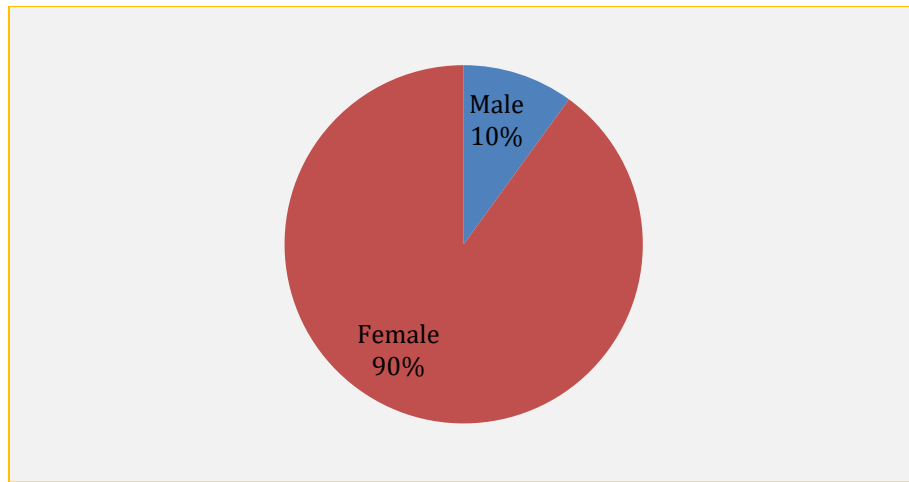


Figure 2. Gender of respondents (Source: Field research, 2024).

### 3.3. Education Level

The education level of the respondents is shown in Figure 3.

### 3.4. Nature of Sexual Abuse

The purpose is to identify the nature of the sexual abuse experienced by the respondents.

The educational level of the respondents is shown in Figure 3. The results show that the majority of the respondents in Kailahun city have an educational level between primary and secondary education, with 65 respondents falling in both primary and secondary education categories. Only 5 respondents had secondary education or above. The results showed that 15 respondents only had vocational training and 15 had no formal training. This shows how gullible this group of people are when it comes to sexual issues, especially when they lack the education needed to understand that sexual abuse is illegal and punishable.

According to the results in Figure 4, 20% of the respondents reported having experienced sexual penetration, 25% reported having experienced rape, 15% reported having experienced sexual harassment, and 30% reported having been sexually abused as a result of early marriage. 10% of the total respondents reported having experienced abuse through sexual exploitation. Statistics show that the majority of the respondents experienced abuse early in their marriage. This suggests that the rate of early marriage is higher in rural areas. These results support Kamanda (2017) study argues that child marriage is a fundamental human rights violation due to the serious consequences it poses, including health risks and sexual abuse, and the fact that early and underage marriages are widespread in developing countries. Although there is conflicting evidence in the literature, early marriage is common among both wealthy and poor parents. The study also supports the idea that barriers related to geography, race, social status, religion, and culture do not apply to violence against children.

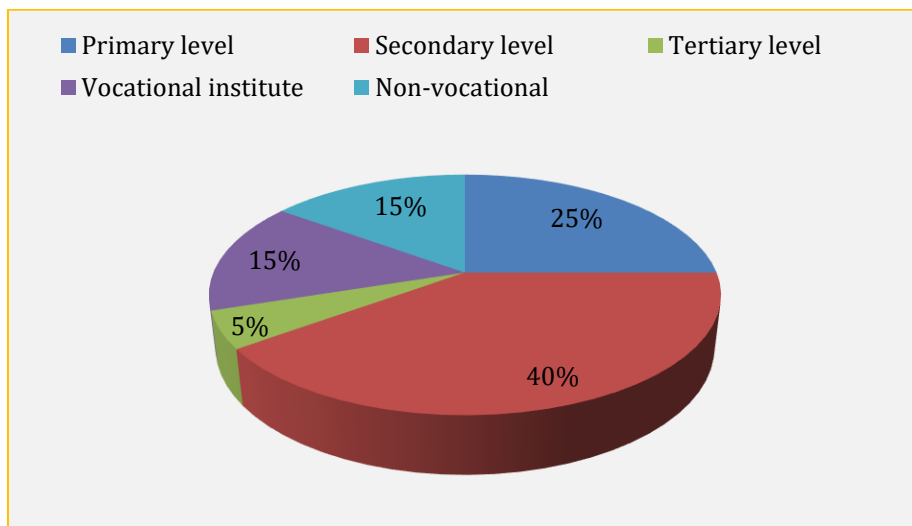
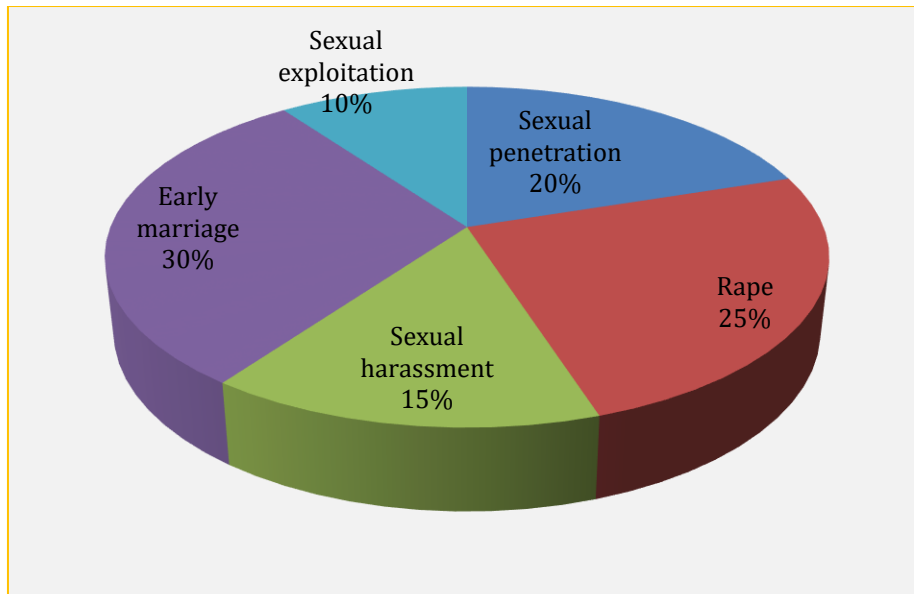


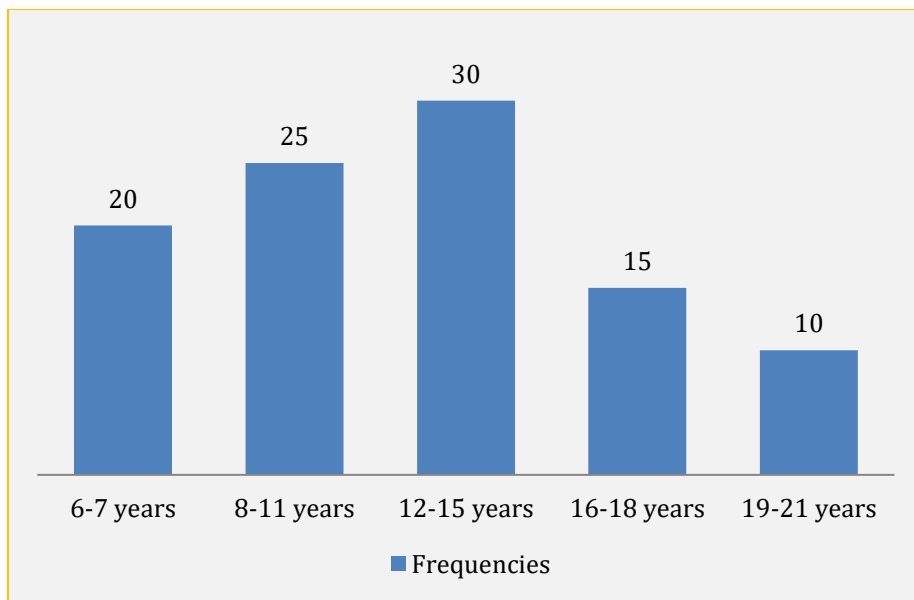
Figure 3. Level of education (Source: Field research, 2024).



**Figure 4.** Nature of sexual abuse experienced (Source: Field research, 2024).

### 3.5. How Old Were You When You Were Abused?

Responses of respondents to the question the “How old were you when you were abused are presented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** How old were you when you were abused? (Source: Field research, 2024).

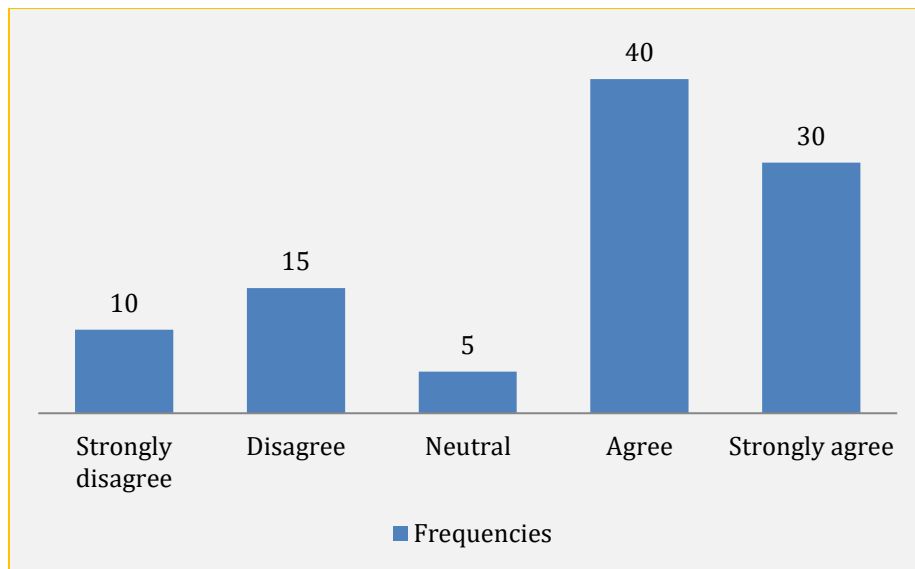
Twenty respondents were abused when they were approximately 6-7 years old. According to Figure 5, 25 respondents were abused when they were approximately 8-11 years old. Thirty respondents reported being abused between the ages of 12 and 15. Fifteen respondents reported being abused between the ages of 16 and 18. Ten respondents reported being abused between the ages of 19 and 21. The statistics show that the majority of the respondents, 70, were abused between the ages of 8 and 18. These results support the assumption of Jakubec *et al.*, (2013) who found that at least half of all Canadian women have experienced sexual assault by the age of 16.

### 3.6. The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Victims

This investigates the impact of sexual abuse on girls in Kailahun district.

#### 3.6.1. Whether Stigmatization and Discrimination is a Challenge

Figure 6 indicates responses of respondents on whether stigmatization and discrimination is an effect on sexually abused girls in Kailahun district.

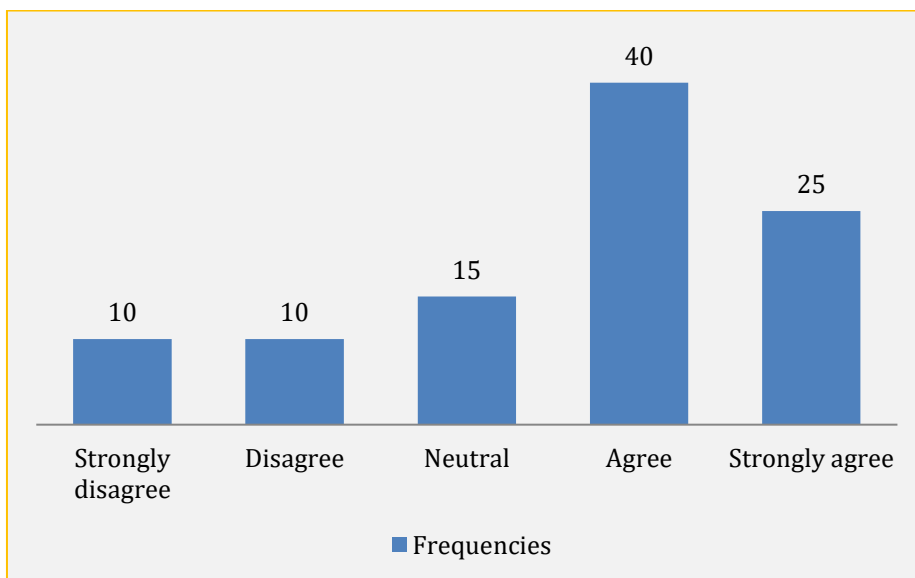


**Figure 6.** Whether stigmatization and discrimination is a challenge (Source: Field research, 2024).

Figure 6 shows that 70 out of the total respondents agreed with the statement, 5 had a neutral opinion, and 25 disagreed. The data shows that the majority of the respondents believe that the two biggest impacts on girls who have experienced sexual abuse are prejudice and stigma. These findings support the findings of the Kennedy and Prock (2018) which stated that the majority of girls and women who have experienced sexual assault are afraid to participate in social activities because their name is associated with prejudice from other members of the community. As a result, victims withdraw and lose trust in others. Survivors may face prejudice and social exclusion in certain communities while trying to access services such as health care and education.

### 3.7. Medical Complications

Figure 7 illustrates results on “Medical Complications” as an effect on sexually abused girls in Kailahun district.



**Figure 7.** Medical complications (Source: Field research, 2024).

The results are shown in Figure 7, 20 of the respondents disagreed with the statement that one of the effects on girls who experience sexual abuse is that they suffer from medical complications, 15 expressed no opinion, and 65 agreed with the statement. The results revealed that girls who have been sexually abused suffer from health problems. These findings support Pegram and Abbey (2019) who revealed that victims of sexual assault experience many negative effects on their physical health. The majority of patients experience bleeding and have problems with future pregnancies. In addition, there is a significant risk of sexual violence associated with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

### 3.8. Teenage and Unwanted Pregnancy

Responses of respondent to the statement “Teenage and unwanted pregnancy” is the effect of sexual abused are displayed in Figure 8.

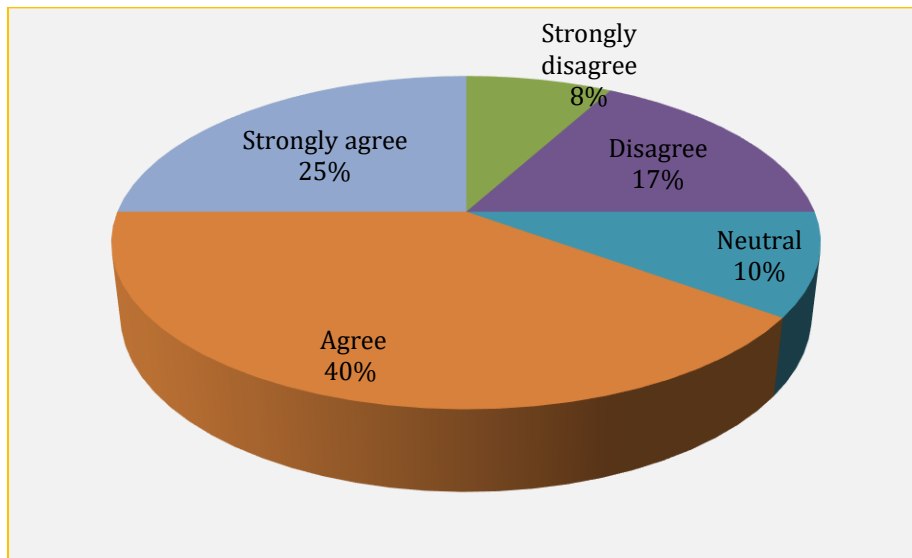


Figure 8. Teenage and unwanted pregnancy (Source: Field research, 2024).

Figure 8 shows that 25% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that teenage pregnancy and unwanted pregnancy affect sexually abused girls in Kailahun district, 10% expressed no opinion and 65% of the respondents agreed with the statement. The study suggests that teenage unwanted pregnancy is one of the most powerful forms of sexual abuse. These findings support the previous opinion of the report Hounmenou (2016) that sexual crime leads to teenage pregnancy and in certain circumstances, prostitution. The majority of the girls lose their virginity during rape and sometimes end up pregnant against their will.

### 3.9. School Dropout

Respondents in this study are asked to indicate whether school dropout is an effect of sexual abuse. Figure 9 shows their responses to this statement.

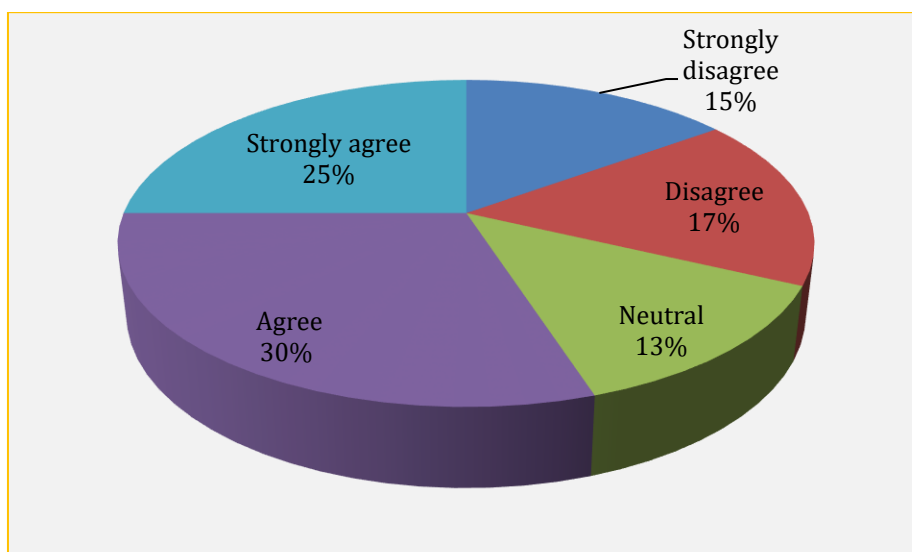


Figure 9. School dropout (Source: Field research, 2024).

As shown in the results in Figure 9, 32% of the respondents do not agree with the statement that sexual abuse of girls leads to school dropout, while 13% of the respondents have a neutral opinion and 55% of the respondents agree with the statement. This result suggests that school dropout is one of the consequences of sexual abuse of girls in Kailahun district. This finding supports the views of Ajayi and Ezegebe (2020) that girls who become pregnant after sexual assault either drop out of school to care for the pregnancy or continue to work as prostitutes, limiting their future opportunities.



#### **4. Discussions**

The first section examined the demographic characteristics of the respondents, namely, gender, age, and educational background. This was followed by the nature of sexual abuse the respondents had to endure. The impact of sexual abuse on girls has also been studied. The results show that rape, sexual penetration, harassment, exploitation, and early marriage are the nature of sexual abuse that occurs in Kailahun district. According to the findings, the most common sexual assault in Kailahun district is early marriage. As shown in the data, the majority of respondents believed that poverty and lack of parental supervision were the main reasons for sexual abuse in Kailahun district. The empirical findings also showed that the main consequences of sexual abuse against girls in Kailahun district are school dropout, unwanted adolescent pregnancy, stigma, and discrimination.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The study concludes that sexual abuse of girls is widespread in Kailahun district. Furthermore, underage marriage, rape, sexual harassment, sexual penetration, and sexual abuse of girls are also examples of sexual abuse. Early marriage is the most common sexual practice among girls in Kailahun and is associated with poverty. In other words, lack of resources forced parents in Kailahun district to marry off their underage daughters. The main reason why cases of sexual abuse of girls go unreported is because families want to protect the reputation and honor of the girl as there is a stigma attached to sexual crimes, especially in rural areas.

#### **6. Recommendations**

1. **Perpetrator Profile:** Examine the characteristics and motivations of sexual abuse perpetrators in Kailahun district to develop prevention strategies.
2. **Mental Health Impact:** Examine the impact of sexual abuse on the mental health of girls in rural areas and the availability and effectiveness of mental health support services.
3. **Educational Initiatives:** Promote education and awareness campaigns to encourage the reporting of sexual abuse cases and ensure the confidentiality and safety of victims.
4. **Capacity Building:** Train law enforcement officials, health professionals, and social workers to handle sexual abuse cases sensitively and professionally.
5. **Data Collection and Monitoring:** Establish a robust data collection and monitoring system to track sexual abuse cases, their outcomes, and the effectiveness of interventions.
6. **Collaboration:** Promote collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities to develop a holistic approach to address the issue of sexual abuse.
7. Research has revealed that poverty is the main cause of the sexual abuse of girls in the Kailahun district. Based on this, the government and other partners must minimize the poverty level in rural areas and pay attention to improving their living conditions through development and programs for the poor in rural areas so that their parents can live with peace of mind. Instead of marrying off their daughters early, send them to school to give them a better future.
8. Community-based campaigns or large-scale sensitization in communities on laws related to sexual crimes, as well as raising awareness of gender equality and sexual violence against girls. Soap operas and other programs that highlight sexual abuse through "entertainment education" in the mass media appear to have a promising impact in reducing the acceptance of violence against girls. Comprehensive system reforms to improve medical care for victims of sexual abuse (including training for providers, protocols, and linkages with referral services) promise to be an effective approach.
9. It is also recommended that technical and financial support be provided to local youth groups and other women's organizations to help them play their role in preventing sexual violence against girls and women in their communities by encouraging sexually abused girls to commit sexual crimes. Fear of reporting to appropriate authorities due to retaliation and lack of confidence in the justice system.

#### **Declarations**

**Acknowledgments:** I acknowledge my co-authors for their valuable inputs into this work.

**Author Contributions:** PSB: Concept, design, data analysis, manuscript preparation and manuscript revision; IOK, JAM, NMJ: Data collection, literature survey, statistical analysis, and interpretation, prepared first draft of manuscript.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Consent to Publish:** The authors agree to publish the paper in International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research.

**Data Availability Statement:** The datasets used or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** This study does not include any access to identifiable private information.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

**Research Content:** The research content of manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

## References

1. Afifi, T.O., MacMillan, H.L., Boyle, M., Cheung, K., Taillieu, T., Turner, S. and Sareen, J. 2016. Child abuse and physical health in adulthood. *Health Reports*, 27(3): 10-18.
2. Ajayi, A.I. and Ezegbe, H.C. 2020. Association between sexual violence and unintended pregnancy among adolescent girls and young women in South Africa. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1): 1370.
3. Brenner, I. and Ben-Amitay, G. 2015. Sexual revictimization: The impact of attachment anxiety, accumulated trauma, and response to childhood sexual abuse disclosure. *Violence and Victims*, 30(1): 49-65.
4. DeGraw, C. 2018. Promoting resilience and preventing sexual offenses in survivors of childhood sexual abuse: A systematic review. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: [https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw\\_papers/848](https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/848)
5. Dhivyadeepa, E. 2015. Sampling techniques in educational research. Lulu.com.
6. Ekine, A. 2020. Gender-based violence in primary schools: Nigeria, Brookings Institution. United States of America. Retrieved from <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/4135989/gender-based-violence-in-primary-schools/4944027/> on 03 Jul 2024. CID: 20.500.12592/1hp4nz.
7. Fergusson, D.M., McLeod, G.F. and Horwood, L.J. 2013. Childhood sexual abuse and adult developmental outcomes: Findings from a 30-year longitudinal study in New Zealand. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 37(9): 664-674.
8. Finkelhor, D. 2011. Prevalence of child victimization, abuse, crime, and violence exposure. In: White, J.W., Koss, M.P. and Kazdin, A.E., (Eds.), *Violence against women and children*, Vol. 1. Mapping the terrain (pp. 9-29). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12307-001>
9. Hounmenou, C. 2016. Exploring child prostitution in a major city in the West African region. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 59: 26-35.
10. Jakubec, S.L., Carter-Snell, C.J., Ofrim, J. and Skanderup, J. 2013. Identifying rural sexual assault service strengths, concerns and educational needs in rural and Aboriginal communities Alberta, Canada. *Enfermería Global*, 12(3): 409-442.
11. Jina, R. and Thomas, L.S. 2013. Health consequences of sexual violence against women. *Best Practice and Research Clinical obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 27(1): 15-26.
12. Kamanda, A.M.K. 2017. Mitigating the underage marriage of girls in Bo town, Sierra Leone. Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University.
13. Kennedy, A.C. and Prock, K.A. 2018. I still feel like i am not normal: A review of the role of stigma and stigmatization among female survivors of child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 19(5): 512-527.
14. Mahtani, S. 2013. Women and the criminalization of poverty: Perspectives from Sierra Leone. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 39(1): 243-264.
15. Manukrishnan and Bhagabati, K. 2023. Surviving childhood sexual abuse: A qualitative study of the long-term consequences of childhood sexual abuse on adult women's mental health. *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, 5(4): 253-262.
16. Mathews, B. and Collin-Vézina, D. 2019. Child sexual abuse: Toward a conceptual model and definition. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 20(2): 131-148.
17. Omona, J. 2013. Sampling in qualitative research: Improving the quality of research outcomes in higher education. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, 4: 169-185.
18. Pan, Y., Lin, X., Liu, J., Zhang, S., Zeng, X., Chen, F. and Wu, J. 2021. Prevalence of childhood sexual abuse among women using the childhood trauma questionnaire: A worldwide meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 22(5): 1181-1191.

19. Pegram, S.E. and Abbey, A. 2019. Associations between sexual assault severity and psychological and physical health outcomes: Similarities and differences among African American and Caucasian survivors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(19): 4020-4040.
20. Serbin, L.A., Kingdon, D., Ruttle, P.L. and Stack, D.M. 2015. The impact of children's internalizing and externalizing problems on parenting: Transactional processes and reciprocal change over time. *Development and Psychopathology*, 27(4pt1): 969-986.
21. UNESCO. 2010. Give us a chance: National study on school-related gender-based violence in Sierra Leone. Concern Worldwide Catholic Relief Services IBIS Plan Sierra Leone 2010, 94 p.
22. Wyatt, G.E. and Peters, S.D. 1986. Issues in the definition of child sexual abuse in prevalence research. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 10(2): 231-240.
23. Yahaya, I. 2014. Childhood sexual abuse against girls in sub-Saharan Africa: Individual and contextual risk factors. Doctoral Dissertation, Mid Sweden University.

**Citation:** Peter Sahr Braima, Idris Ortameson Kamara, James Alphonso Marsh and Nathan Mbalu Jaba. 2024. The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Girls in Sierra Leone. *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research*, 8(6): 33-43.

**Copyright:** ©2024 Peter Sahr Braima et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.