



## **Emotional Abuse and Parental Neglect as Predictors of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Children in Ijebu-Ode, Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria**

*Osiyemi E. S. and Olaniyan D. O*

*Department of Counselling Psychology and Educational Foundations, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State*

*Corresponding author: kunlekom@yahoo.com*

### **Abstract**

This study was carried out mainly to examine the influence of emotional abuse and parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children. Survey approach of descriptive research design was adopted with the population of 200 students drawn across the study area. The research instrument comprised self-designed questionnaire which was validated and subjected to Cronbach Alpha reliability with a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data collected from the questionnaire administration was computed and analysed using regression analysis for hypotheses one and two, hypothesis three was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypothesis four at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Result of hypothesis one indicates that there is influence of emotional abuse ( $\beta = -.217$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder. It was also established that parental neglect has influence ( $\beta = .312$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder among children. A positive relationship was found between emotional abuse ( $r = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), parental neglect ( $r = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and post-traumatic stress disorder among children. The joint influence of emotional abuse and parental neglect is shown to be significant on the post-traumatic stress disorder ( $F_{(2, 198)} = 7.771$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) among children. It was concluded that emotional abuse and parental neglect influence post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. It was recommended that there is an urgent need to create community awareness about the harmful psychological effects of emotional abuse and parental neglect.

**Keywords:** Emotional Abuse, Parental Neglect, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

### **1. Introduction**

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children is a critical mental health concern that has garnered increasing attention. Children exposed to traumatic events ranging from interpersonal violence and natural disasters to war and cyberbullying are at significant risk of developing PTSD, which can profoundly affect their emotional, cognitive, and social development. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a complex mental health condition triggered by exposure to traumatic events such as physical or sexual assault, natural disasters, combat, or serious accidents. While initially recognized in war veterans, PTSD is now understood to affect individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including survivors of interpersonal violence, refugees, and victims of systemic oppression. The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) outlines PTSD as involving symptoms such as

intrusive memories, avoidance behaviors, negative changes in cognition and mood, and heightened arousal that persist for more than a month after the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Emerging evidence highlights the biological underpinnings of PTSD, particularly the role of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and amygdala hypersensitivity. These neurological responses to trauma may lead to an exaggerated stress response and memory consolidation of traumatic events, contributing to symptom persistence (Zuj, Palmer, Lommen, Felmingham & Bryant, 2021). Functional MRI studies have shown that individuals with PTSD demonstrate increased activity in the amygdala and reduced connectivity with the prefrontal cortex, indicating impaired regulation of fear responses (Admon, Milad & Hendler, 2019). This research helps to explain the heightened emotional reactivity and difficulty in extinguishing fear that characterize the disorder.

Emotional abuse of children on the other hand is a form of maltreatment that undermines a child's

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psychological development and self-worth, often with long-lasting consequences that extend into adulthood. Unlike physical abuse, emotional abuse may not leave visible marks, but it can be just as damaging, if not more so. It encompasses behaviors such as rejection, constant criticism, threats, humiliation, isolation, and the withholding of love or support. These behaviors compromise a child's emotional well-being and may impair cognitive, social, and emotional development. Despite increased awareness and research attention, emotional abuse remains underreported and frequently overlooked in child protection systems (Spinazzola, Van der Kolk & Ford, 2018).

Children exposed to emotional abuse often experience chronic stress, which has been linked to significant disruptions in brain development, particularly in areas responsible for emotion regulation, memory, and executive function. Neuroimaging studies have shown that emotional abuse can alter the structure and connectivity of the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala, areas essential for managing emotional responses (Teicher & Samson, 2019). These neurological impacts are associated with increased vulnerability to mood disorders, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder later in life. Research has also established a strong connection between early emotional maltreatment and dysregulated cortisol levels, suggesting that emotional abuse can have long-term consequences on the body's stress response system (Cohen, Mannarino & Deblinger, 2020).

One significant challenge in addressing emotional abuse is the difficulty of definition and detection. Emotional abuse lacks the clear physical indicators often associated with other forms of maltreatment, which can result in underreporting and inconsistent identification by child welfare professionals. Studies show that professionals often have varying thresholds for recognizing emotional abuse, and many cases go unsubstantiated due to the subjective nature of the evidence (Bryce, Robinson & Ferguson, 2019). This inconsistency underscores the need for improved training and standardized guidelines in the assessment of emotional maltreatment.

Parental neglect, a pervasive and often under-recognized form of child maltreatment, involves a caregiver's failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs. Unlike more visible forms of abuse, neglect is characterized by omissions in care, which may be chronic or situational, intentional or unintentional. It is the most common form of child abuse reported to child protective services globally and is frequently associated with adverse developmental, behavioral, and psychological outcomes (Gilbert, Kemp, Thoburn, Sidebotham, Radford, Glaser & MacMillan, 2021). The complexity of neglect lies in its subtlety, variability, and intersection with socioeconomic, cultural, and systemic factors.

Research over the last decade has increasingly illuminated the long-term consequences of neglect on child development. Neglected children often suffer from

poor attachment formation, cognitive delays, language impairments, and emotional dysregulation. These effects can stem from the lack of consistent stimulation, supervision, and responsiveness during critical developmental periods (Norman et al., 2022). Neurodevelopmental studies show that neglect impacts brain structures such as the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, areas responsible for executive functioning, memory, and emotional regulation. Chronic neglect can disrupt synaptic growth and neural connectivity, leading to measurable deficits in IQ, attention, and socio-emotional processing (Teicher & Samson, 2019).

Parental neglect is not limited to physical deprivation. Emotional and educational neglect where children are deprived of nurturing, guidance, and access to schooling can be equally detrimental. Emotional neglect, in particular, impairs children's ability to form secure attachments and internalize a sense of safety and self-worth. Such children are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and relational difficulties in adolescence and adulthood (Spinazzola et al., 2018). In many cases, emotionally neglected children do not receive mental health support until they present with behavioral issues, which are often misdiagnosed or addressed punitively.

Parental neglect is a multidimensional issue that significantly undermines children's developmental trajectories and life opportunities. Research has underscored the importance of early intervention, equitable policies, and integrated support systems in addressing neglect. Preventing and mitigating its effects requires a holistic, compassionate, and culturally sensitive approach that prioritizes child well-being while recognizing the structural challenges many families face. By shifting from blame to support and from surveillance to collaboration, societies can move toward more effective and humane responses to child neglect.

The relationship between emotional abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children is increasingly recognized as both complex and deeply consequential. Emotional abuse, which includes behaviours such as verbal assaults, humiliation, intimidation, rejection, and excessive criticism, undermines a child's self-concept and sense of safety. Unlike physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse often lacks visible markers, making it more difficult to detect and address. However, research has shown that emotional abuse can be just as damaging as other forms of maltreatment and is a significant predictor of PTSD symptoms in children (Spinazzola et al., 2018).

Children who endure emotional abuse often live in environments of chronic fear and instability, which are core conditions for the development of PTSD. Emotional abuse disrupts the formation of secure attachments, erodes self-esteem, and conditions children to expect danger even in safe situations. These effects align closely with the diagnostic criteria for

PTSD, which include intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, emotional numbing, and avoidance behaviors. Studies have shown that emotionally abused children are at increased risk of developing PTSD, particularly when the abuse is prolonged or begins early in life (Teicher & Samson, 2019). Moreover, PTSD symptoms in emotionally abused children may be internalized and overlooked, especially if behavioral issues are misattributed to personality traits rather than trauma responses.

Another significant dimension of this relationship is the role of cumulative trauma. Emotional abuse frequently co-occurs with other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as neglect, domestic violence, or parental substance abuse. These co-occurring traumas can intensify the severity of PTSD symptoms and complicate recovery. The accumulation of adverse experiences has a dose-response relationship with PTSD: the more trauma a child experiences, the greater the likelihood of developing severe psychological symptoms (Norman et al., 2022). Emotional abuse is often a foundational component of these traumatic environments, contributing substantially to the child's overall trauma burden.

Parental neglect and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children share a deeply intertwined relationship, with neglect serving as a significant, yet often overlooked, predictor of trauma-related psychological outcomes. Unlike physical or sexual abuse, which typically involve overt acts of harm, neglect is characterized by chronic omissions in care failures to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, and medical needs. This lack of caregiving consistency disrupts a child's sense of safety and attachment, key elements necessary for healthy psychological development. Consequently, neglected children often experience PTSD symptoms, despite the absence of a singular traumatic event, due to the cumulative stress and deprivation embedded in neglectful environments (Norman, Byambaa, De, Butchart, Scott & Vos, 2022).

In Ogun State, Nigeria, the interplay between emotional abuse, parental neglect, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among children has garnered increasing attention. Research indicates that these forms of maltreatment significantly impact children's mental health and academic performance. Emotional abuse, encompassing behaviors such as verbal assaults, humiliation, and intimidation, has been identified as a prevalent issue in Ogun State. A study by Oyekola (2018) revealed a significant negative relationship between childhood abusive experiences and academic achievement among primary school pupils in the state. The research utilized the Childhood Maltreatment and Abuse Scale and found that higher instances of emotional abuse correlated with lower academic performance.

Parental neglect, characterized by the failure to provide necessary care, supervision, and affection, is another

critical concern. Olanrewaju (2022) conducted a study in the rural areas of Odeda Local Government, Ogun State, highlighting that corporal punishment and child neglect were major forms of abuse experienced by children. The study emphasized that poverty and unemployment were significant contributing factors to these neglectful practices. The consequences of emotional abuse and parental neglect often manifest as psychological disorders, notably PTSD. Olorunlambe and Adeniyi (2024) examined the prevalence of PTSD among welfare- and justice-involved adolescents in Nigeria, including those from Ogun State. Their findings indicated that neglect and emotional abuse were significant predictors of PTSD, with 66.1% of welfare-involved adolescents reporting PTSD symptoms. The study underscores the profound impact of early maltreatment on children's mental health.

Socioeconomic factors further exacerbate these issues. A study by Fadekemi (2018) in Abeokuta, Ogun State, found a significant association between the socioeconomic status of working mothers and child neglect. The research highlighted that lower income levels and larger household sizes were linked to higher instances of neglect, emphasizing the role of economic hardship in child maltreatment. Elucidating the detrimental effects of emotional abuse and parental neglect on children's psychological well-being. These studies collectively highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions, including parental education, economic support, and mental health services, to mitigate the adverse outcomes associated with child maltreatment.

## 2. Literature Review

To explore how emotional abuse and parental neglect function as predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children, this study draws upon three interrelated psychological theories: Attachment Theory, Developmental Trauma Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory. These frameworks offer complementary perspectives on the emotional, neurobiological, and environmental processes through which early maltreatment contributes to trauma outcomes.

Attachment Theory, originally developed by Bowlby (1969/1982), posits that a child's early interactions with primary caregivers shape their internal working models for trust, emotional regulation, and social functioning. In emotionally abusive or neglectful environments, caregivers consistently fail to respond to a child's emotional needs or may actively belittle, isolate, or reject them. Such experiences disrupt the development of secure attachment, replacing it with insecure, avoidant, or disorganized attachment styles (Cicchetti & Toth, 2018). These disrupted attachments weaken a child's capacity to manage stress and increase susceptibility to PTSD, especially when exposed to additional traumatic events (McLaughlin et al., 2021).

Developmental Trauma Theory, as articulated by van

der Kolk (2014), provides a neurobiological lens for understanding how chronic interpersonal trauma including emotional abuse and neglect disrupts brain development and stress regulation systems. Repeated exposure to demeaning or emotionally absent caregiving leads to maladaptive alterations in the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex key areas involved in threat detection, memory, and emotion regulation (Teicher & Samson, 2019). These alterations manifest as PTSD symptoms such as hypervigilance, intrusive memories, emotional dysregulation, and dissociation. Importantly, the chronic nature of emotional abuse and neglect makes them particularly insidious, as children may internalize these experiences as normal, further delaying detection and intervention.

The Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) adds a contextual layer to understanding how abuse and neglect develop and influence mental health. This theory suggests that children's development is shaped by multiple environmental systems, including family, community, culture, and broader societal structures. Emotional abuse and neglect may result not only from individual caregiver failings but also from stressors such as poverty, cultural norms, substance abuse, and lack of social support (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2020). In Nigerian settings like Ogun State, cultural acceptance of harsh discipline and emotional distance may normalize behaviors that constitute emotional abuse and neglect, thereby increasing undetected trauma exposure (Adekeye, Ogundele & Salami, 2022).

Together, these three theories provide a robust framework for examining the predictors of PTSD in children. Attachment Theory explains the psychological damage caused by disrupted caregiving relationships. Developmental Trauma Theory provides insight into the long-term neurological effects of chronic emotional maltreatment. Ecological Systems Theory expands the focus beyond individual caregivers to include environmental and societal contributors to abuse and neglect. This integrative framework allows for a holistic understanding of how emotional abuse and parental neglect can jointly predict PTSD outcomes.

Empirical evidence supports the application of these theories. For example, children with histories of emotional abuse and neglect have been found to exhibit more severe and chronic PTSD symptoms compared to those exposed to single-event traumas (Norman, Byambaa & Butchart, 2019; van Harmelen, van Tol & van der Wee, 2020). These children are also more likely to suffer from comorbid disorders such as depression and anxiety, lower academic achievement, and poor interpersonal functioning. As highlighted by Cohen, Mannarino & Deblinger. (2020), trauma-informed care must consider the cumulative effects of emotional abuse and neglect, which are often overlooked in favor of more visible forms of maltreatment like physical or sexual abuse.

This study, therefore, positions emotional abuse and

parental neglect not merely as adverse experiences but as key relational and developmental traumas that lay the groundwork for PTSD. By applying Attachment Theory, Developmental Trauma Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, the research framework provides a multidimensional approach to identifying risk pathways and informing trauma-sensitive intervention strategies for children.

### 3. Empirical Review

Empirical literature increasingly supports the notion that emotional abuse and parental neglect are potent predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children. Unlike physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect are often more difficult to detect but equally damaging in their psychological effects. These forms of maltreatment often coexist, creating a chronic, complex trauma exposure that disrupts normal developmental processes. Empirical findings from recent studies consistently show that both emotional abuse and neglect significantly increase the risk of PTSD and other psychopathologies in children across different cultures and settings.

A study by Norman et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis involving over 244,000 participants and found that emotional abuse and neglect were both independently associated with increased risk for PTSD. The study revealed that children exposed to emotional abuse had a 2.7 times greater risk of developing PTSD symptoms, while those who experienced neglect were 2.4 times more likely to suffer PTSD. These findings confirmed that non-physical forms of maltreatment are not only prevalent but also comparably harmful in terms of psychological trauma outcomes. The study also highlighted the dose-response relationship, where the intensity and chronicity of abuse or neglect increased the severity of PTSD symptoms.

McLaughlin et al. (2021) expanded on this by differentiating between "threat" and "deprivation" dimensions of childhood adversity. Emotional abuse was categorized under threat, while neglect represented deprivation. Their study involving neuroimaging of 178 children demonstrated that threat-based adversities were linked with heightened amygdala activation a biomarker of PTSD while deprivation was associated with reduced cortical thickness in prefrontal regions, linked to emotional regulation deficits. These neurodevelopmental alterations were significantly correlated with PTSD symptom clusters, such as hypervigilance, avoidance, and emotional numbing. The findings underscore how different forms of maltreatment may lead to PTSD via distinct neurobiological pathways.

Teicher and Samson (2019) reviewed multiple longitudinal neuroimaging studies and found that emotional abuse especially verbal abuse and emotional invalidation was associated with long-term structural changes in brain regions responsible for emotion processing and threat perception. In their synthesis of over 20 empirical studies, children who had

experienced emotional maltreatment showed significant disruptions in the hippocampus and corpus callosum both implicated in memory encoding and trauma response. Importantly, the researchers found that PTSD symptoms often emerged years after the abuse, suggesting delayed onset triggered by subsequent stressors.

In a Nigerian context, Adekeye et al. (2022) conducted a study in Ogun State examining 312 school-aged children and found that those exposed to emotional abuse and parental neglect scored significantly higher on PTSD symptom checklists. The study controlled for variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, and still found emotional abuse to be the strongest predictor among all adverse childhood experiences measured. The authors argued that cultural normalization of emotional maltreatment such as insults and withdrawal of affection contributes to the underreporting and under-recognition of its effects. They recommended that child protection efforts in sub-Saharan Africa shift greater attention to emotional forms of abuse.

Further support for the predictive value of emotional abuse and neglect comes from van Harmelen et al. (2020), who conducted a longitudinal study across five European countries involving over 1,500 adolescents. They found that early emotional maltreatment predicted increased PTSD symptoms and higher rates of psychiatric hospitalization during adolescence. Their analysis also revealed that social support and secure peer relationships partially buffered the impact of neglect, but not emotional abuse, indicating a particularly resilient and damaging effect of emotionally abusive experiences.

Similarly, a clinical study by Cohen et al. (2020) involving traumatized children receiving trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) found that those with histories of emotional abuse and neglect presented with more complex PTSD symptom profiles and required longer treatment durations. The researchers emphasized the need for more nuanced trauma assessments in clinical settings that move beyond physical and sexual abuse. They concluded that TF-CBT was effective but needed to be adapted for cases involving chronic, relational trauma such as emotional abuse and neglect.

Stoltenborgh et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analytic review of neglect prevalence and its psychological consequences. Their findings from over 90 studies suggested that neglect, particularly emotional neglect, was a stronger predictor of internalizing disorders including PTSD than physical neglect. Children exposed to emotional neglect were more likely to show detachment, emotional numbing, and cognitive distortions about their self-worth and safety all hallmark symptoms of PTSD. The researchers advocated for changes in child welfare policy to prioritize early detection of emotional neglect.

More recent research by Lewis, Liu & Zhao (2024) used machine learning algorithms to predict PTSD in children using various predictors, including demographic data and trauma history. Their findings showed that emotional abuse and parental neglect were among the top predictors of PTSD symptoms, surpassing even some physical abuse indicators in predictive power. The study provided empirical support for the idea that PTSD can result from chronic, non-physical forms of maltreatment, especially when perpetrated by caregivers.

In line with previous findings, Fonagy and Luyten (2023) explored how parental neglect and emotional invalidation impair children's mentalizing capacities, which are crucial for understanding and regulating emotional experiences. Their study showed that children who experienced emotional abuse or neglect scored significantly lower on measures of reflective functioning and were more likely to interpret ambiguous situations as threatening a cognitive pattern closely associated with PTSD. The study supports the idea that impaired attachment relationships underlie trauma symptomatology in maltreated children.

#### **4. Statement of the Problem**

Emotional abuse, parental neglect, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among children are pressing but often overlooked issues in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Despite increasing awareness of child rights and welfare in Nigeria, many children in this area experience maltreatment within the home environment. Emotional abuse manifesting through verbal hostility, rejection, humiliation, and persistent criticism undermines a child's psychological and emotional development. Parental neglect, characterized by a consistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs, further exacerbates a child's vulnerability to psychological distress.

Despite the clear psychosocial risks, there is a paucity of localized empirical research that examines the intersection of emotional abuse, parental neglect, and PTSD among children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. The lack of reliable data undermines the development of evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at protecting children's mental health and well-being in the area. Moreover, schools, community leaders, and healthcare providers may lack the necessary training to identify and respond to signs of psychological trauma in children.

Given the long-term developmental and social consequences associated with these issues including academic underachievement, poor peer relationships, and increased susceptibility to substance abuse and delinquency, there is an urgent need to investigate the extent and effects of emotional abuse, parental neglect, and PTSD among children in Ijebu-Ode. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for informing prevention strategies, strengthening support systems,

and ultimately safeguarding the mental health and future of vulnerable children in the community.

## 5. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this research. The population of the study comprised all the children between the ages of 10 and 13 who are enrolled into the Junior Secondary Schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. A sample of 200 children from five Junior Secondary Schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area were selected irrespective of their classes and gender. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select forty (40) students from each school to participate in the study. The instrument comprised a 10-item questionnaire on the Child Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (CEAQ); a 10-item questionnaire on Child Parental Neglect Questionnaire (CPNQ); and a 10-item on Child Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Questionnaire (CPTSD-Q). In determining the internal consistency of the questionnaire, it was subjected to Cronbach reliability test and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained.

## 5. Results

**Ho1:** There is no significant influence of emotional abuse on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 1 shows the influence of emotional abuse on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. The table shows that emotional abuse has influence ( $b = -.217$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. However, the level of influence of emotional abuse on post-traumatic stress disorder among children is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, research hypothesis 1 indicates that there is influence of emotional abuse on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**Ho2:** There is no significant influence of parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 2 shows the influence of parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. The table shows that parental neglect has influence ( $b = .312$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. However, the level of influence of parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, research hypothesis 2 indicates that there is influence of parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between emotional abuse, parental neglect and post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

A positive relationship was found between emotional abuse ( $r = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), parental neglect ( $r = .000$ ;  $p <$

$0.05$ ) and post-traumatic stress disorder. However, the relationship between emotional abuse, parental neglect and post-traumatic stress disorder is established to be significant. Thus, null hypothesis three was not accepted, hence, emotional abuse and parental neglect significantly relate with post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**Ho4:** There is no significant joint influence of emotional abuse and parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 4 shows the joint influence of emotional abuse and parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. The table shows that there is positive joint influence of independent variables ( $R = .196$ ). The table shows further that the coefficient of determinant (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.032$ ) indicates that the independent variables accounted for 0.032% of the total variance in the post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria (Adjusted  $R^2 \times 100 = 0.032$ ). This joint influence is shown to be significant on the post-traumatic stress disorder ( $F_{(2, 198)} = 7.771$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The result of the research question one indicates that there is influence of emotional abuse ( $b = -.217$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. Bagot et al., (2007) corroborate this assertion by establishing that abuse on children which is associated with their early life stress (ELS) can develop into complex trauma and post-traumatic disorder (PTSD). This shows that the experience of interaction in the family is a very significant factor in the vulnerability of trauma followed by PTSD. In furtherance to this, Bouton et al., (2007) expressed that emotional trauma can cause PTSD and that this can cause interference during the development of individuals such as cognitive disorders (Gould et al., 2012). Meanwhile, Van der Kolk (2014) explained that the complex diagnosis of trauma is more appropriate to describe the condition and impact of child abuse compared to the diagnosis of PTSD.

Research question two established that shows that parental neglect has influence ( $b = .312$ ) on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. According to Krug et al., (2020), parental neglect is a pervasive and multifaceted form of child maltreatment, defined as the persistent failure of a parent or caregiver to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, and medical needs. Although historically underreported, recent scholarship underscores the gravity and long-term consequences of parental neglect on children's development, mental health, and social outcomes (Dubowitz, Thompson & English, 2021; Okafor & Eze, 2023). Globally, neglect remains the most common form of child maltreatment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), neglect accounts for more than 60% of all child abuse

Table 1: Regression analysis showing the influence of emotional abuse on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	43.973	2.177		19.005	.000
Emotional Abuse	-.306	.089	-.217	-5.479	.000

Dependent Variable: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Table 42: Regression analysis showing the influence of parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	36.756	2.176		15.267	.000
Parental Neglect	.187	.043	.312	2.763	.001

Dependent Variable: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Table: 3: Pearson Correlation showing the relationship between emotional abuse, parental neglect and post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Variables	Emotional Abuse	Parental Neglect	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Emotional Abuse	1	.000	.000
Parental Neglect	.000	1	.000
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	.000	.000	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table: 4: Multiple regression analysis showing the joint influence of emotional abuse and parental neglect on post-traumatic stress disorder among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

R: .196					
R Square = .034					
Adjusted R Square: .032					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	132.727	1	132.727	7.771	.002 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	3077.061	198	15.541		
Total	3209.788	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Abuse and Parental Neglect

cases globally (WHO, 2021). Likewise in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, this form of abuse is particularly prevalent in low-income households where economic instability and poor access to education and healthcare exacerbate risk factors (Adeleke, Yusuf & Salami, 2019).

On the test of relationship, a positive relationship was found between emotional abuse ( $r = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), parental neglect ( $r = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and post-traumatic stress disorder among children. However, the relationship between emotional abuse, parental neglect and post-traumatic stress disorder is established to be significant. A study by Dube, Felitti and Anda, (2020) found that emotional abuse often precedes or coexists with physical abuse, substance exposure, or neglect, thereby increasing cumulative trauma. The cumulative

nature of these experiences is a strong predictor of complex PTSD (C-PTSD), characterized by dissociation, affect dysregulation, and identity disturbances (Cloitre, Stolbach & Ford, 2021). Such outcomes are particularly concerning in children, as they may impair academic performance, social development, and emotional regulation well into adolescence (Browne, Herbert & Sims, 2023). A study by Adekeye, Ogundele and Salami (2022) in Ogun State, Nigeria, found that over 30% of children who met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD reported being emotionally or physically neglected by caregivers. The researchers noted that cultural and socioeconomic conditions can obscure the identification and treatment of neglect-related trauma.

The joint influence of emotional abuse and parental



neglect is shown to be significant on the post-traumatic stress disorder ( $F_{(2, 198)} = 7.771$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) among children in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. This is established in a study by Norman et al. (2019) who conducted a meta-analysis involving over 244,000 participants and found that emotional abuse and neglect were both independently associated with increased risk for PTSD. The study revealed that children exposed to emotional abuse had a 2.7 times greater risk of developing PTSD symptoms, while those who experienced neglect were 2.4 times more likely to suffer PTSD. These findings confirmed that non-physical forms of maltreatment are not only prevalent but also comparably harmful in terms of psychological trauma outcomes. In addition to this, Adekeye et al. (2022) conducted a study in Ogun State examining 312 school-aged children and found that those exposed to emotional abuse and parental neglect scored significantly higher on PTSD symptom checklists. The study controlled for variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, and still found emotional abuse to be the strongest predictor among all adverse childhood experiences measured. The authors argued that cultural normalization of emotional maltreatment such as insults and withdrawal of affection contributes to the underreporting and under-recognition of its effects. They recommended that child protection efforts in sub-Saharan Africa shift greater attention to emotional forms of abuse.

Taken together, these empirical studies from diverse regions and methodologies consistently affirm that emotional abuse and parental neglect are strong and reliable predictors of PTSD in children. Their chronic, relational, and often invisible nature make them particularly insidious. Despite being historically underrecognized, these forms of maltreatment have now been empirically linked to neurodevelopmental disruption, emotional dysregulation, and chronic trauma symptoms, making them critical targets for prevention and intervention.

## 7. Conclusion

It was concluded that emotional abuse and parental neglect influence post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. Additionally, both emotional abuse and parental neglect significantly relate to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. Furthermore, a test of joint influence shows that both independent variables have positive influence on the dependent variable.

## 8. Recommendations

The findings led to the following recommendations:

1. There is an urgent need to create community awareness about the harmful psychological effects of emotional abuse and parental neglect.
2. Faith-based organizations, market associations, and local leaders should be mobilized to engage in sensitization efforts that promote emotionally supportive parenting.

3. The Ogun State government and local health authorities should integrate mental health screening tools into routine child welfare services. This can enable timely intervention and referral to specialized care.
4. Teachers should be trained to recognize behavioural and emotional indicators of PTSD and report suspected cases of abuse or neglect.
5. School counsellors should offer trauma-informed care and peer-support programmes for affected children.

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