



## Social Welfare Policy and Juvenile Homes in Lagos State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Social welfare policies are designed to enhance the welfare of citizens and help them cope with the social problems of changing conditions. Establishment of custodian homes serve as one of the welfare strategies for reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of delinquent juveniles in Nigeria. Lagos State government formulated the Child Right Law of 2007 in pursuit of the welfare of delinquent juveniles in custodian homes, the implementation of which appears to be challenged by several factors. The study therefore, examined the Social Welfare Policy provisions and the welfare of wards in Juvenile custodian homes in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted exploratory and case study designs. Study population was 1,115 comprising civil servants in the Department of Youth Development (19), Juvenile homes staff (76) and juveniles in the custodial homes in Lagos state (1,020). Multi stage and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in the selection of respondents. Taro Yamane formula was determine/set the sample size of 658. The data collection instruments were structured interview guide and validated questionnaires. The reliability test of the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach Alpha value ranging from 0.65 to 0.85. The response rate of the questionnaires was 96%, while 16 interviews were conducted with key informants. Qualitative data were content analyzed while descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used in analyzing quantitative data. The study found that social welfare policy with these indicators (feeding, accommodation, beddings, health, education, vocation and recreation) is the major method/instrument of government to reform, rehabilitate and reintegrate delinquent juveniles in custodian homes in Lagos State ( $x=4.60$ ,  $SD=.510$ ). The implementation of the Child Right Law with regards to the welfare of custodian juveniles was rated moderate with these ratings on the indicators; feeding ( $x=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ), accommodation ( $x=3.35$ ,

$SD=1.34$ ), beddings ( $x=3.30$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ), health ( $x=3.27$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ), education ( $x=3.18$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ) and vocation and recreational facilities ( $x=3.21$ ,  $SD=1.42$ ). Findings from interview revealed that the more priority given to social welfare policy, the more achievement of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of delinquent juveniles in custodian homes. The study concluded that the nature of implementation and operations of social welfare policy serves as a major impetus to achieving the purpose for which the custodian homes were established. The study recommended that implementation of social welfare policy must be prioritized at the custodian homes. The welfare of juveniles in the homes must be constantly reviewed and monitored and there should be wholesome reintegration process for released juveniles in order to avoid relapse.

**Keywords:** Child welfare, Custodian Homes, Social Welfare Policy, Social Welfare Services

### 1. Introduction

Much is required in the establishment, operation and maintenance of a comprehensive child welfare system of any country especially children in care homes. Care of juvenile particularly those in contact with the law and retained in custodian homes generally suffer from inadequacies. (Borstal Institution and Remand Centres Act 2004; Bella, Atilola & Onigbodu 2010; Adam 2013; Bamgbose 2014 & Shajobi-Ibikunle 2014). Unfortunately, issues concerning children's welfare, rights and opportunities and care of custodian children fall outside the purview for which the Nigeria National Assembly can make exclusive laws binding across states of the federation. (Huntley 2013; Adeboye 2015; Ahmed, Alhassan & Alshammari 2017 & Akintayo 2021).

It is therefore imperative to look beyond much that is required in establishing and maintaining valid and legitimate welfare packages, functional policy for the children in care homes who were picked for reasons like: beyond parental control, lack of family and parental care, need for shelter, abused and child offenders. This is even of greater concern, given the critical importance of shaping the personality, behaviour and values of future citizens in care homes, because while in custody, children still have to be treated in conformity with domestic laws and policies.

This study is embarked upon with a view to examining social welfare policy implementation on the welfare situation of children in the custodian homes in Lagos state.

This paper contains eight sections and the following are the breakdown of the expected sections for this study: introduction, methodology, literature review, theoretical framework, data presentation, discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Child/Juvenile

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1959 stated that “the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards and care including appropriate legal protection before as well as after birth”. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as ‘any person under the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier’ (Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke & Akinrimisi 2012). In Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children’s Charter), a child is defined more concisely as ‘every human being below the age of eighteen years’. The Nigerian Constitution does not define a child, but in other legislation, individuals are classified into four categories: infants, children, young persons and adults. However, with regards to *Section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Law* of Lagos State (1973), which provides for the welfare of the young and treatment of young offenders, “a child is a person under the age of fourteen (14) years while a young person is one who has attained the age of fourteen years but is under the age of seventeen years. The Nigerian Labor Act (1974) considers “a child as a person below fifteen (15) years of age”, while the National Child Welfare Policy (1989) defines “a child as anybody who is twelve years of age and below”.

Also, *Section 274 of the Childs Rights Act* (2003) defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years. Children are the most vulnerable members of any community; they are fragile, frail, innocent, naïve, defenseless and often oblivious of danger. They are naturally incapable of enforcing their rights and usually oblivious of them. Thus, the child is viewed as a vulnerable and dependent being, deserving of special care.

The Child Right Act establish that a child under the age of seven years does not have criminal responsibility, from 7 to 12 years, a child can only be found responsible if it can be proved that he/she had the capacity to know that the act or omission should not have been carried out. Above the age of 12, the person is deemed as fully responsible for the act or omission.

This perception of child justice gave rise to the creation of a different track within the criminal justice system to handle cases of children and other young persons who violate the law. But the law is usually more specific in its definition of a child. (Akwara, Soyibo & Agba 2010; Children in Conflict with the Law 2006; UNICEF 2006; Alemika & Chukwuma 2001).

Hence, it is safe to conclude that a child across Nigeria is anyone who is less than 18 years of age, since all age brackets according to the different laws and practices are below 18 years. Age is a prominent attribute in efforts by social scientists to bring order and predictability to our understanding of human behavior (Hutchison 2011 and UNICEF 2003).

### 2.2 Child Welfare Policy

Child Welfare is a specialized field of practice with a focus on the protection and welfare services of a nation on behalf of its children, including its educational system, medical services, parks and recreational facilities, even its road, highways and families (Atilola, 2012 and Charles, Ikoh, Iyamba & Charles, 2005). Family is inclusive in this list because every child grows best within his/her own family, it is therefore the reason why any policy, program or services that supports the family ought to also to support child welfare. Children have needs in common with adults, but their dependency on adults particularly in the first few years brings additional specific needs. “Being born human is not a sufficient condition for becoming human”, the latter requires a long process of socialization and education (Ugwuoke, & Onyekachi, 2015, Merto-Metibobo, 2009 and Muhammed, Salawu, Adekeye, Ayinla, & Adeoye, 2009).

Helping the vulnerable population develop to their full potential is an attractive idea with expansive common-sense. Vulnerable and socially silenced children, have very few options for protecting themselves. Hence, available reports (Shinkman 2018&UNESCO 2008) indicate that Nigerian children are highly vulnerable due to many factors like: politics, economic, religion, traditional practices and social factors which often result mostly in delinquent behaviours (Shireman, 2015, Mallon & Hess, 2014; Child Welfare Information Gateway 2012; Blau & Abramovitz 2004; Kohl, Barth, Hazen, & Landsverk, 2005).

Therefore, the welfare of any child connotes activities, services and program that are focused on ensuring that all children live in safe, permanent and stable environments that support their well-being. Child welfare simply connotes response specifically to the needs of children. Its focus is to protect children from every form of ill treatment and ensure that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and ability to take action (s) that enables all children to have the best outcomes. (Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke, N., & Akinrimisi, 2012)

Child Welfare is a critical government responsibility which includes protecting children from abuse and neglect, and ensuring that children have safe, stable, and permanent living situations. It also involves providing social services to children and youth whose parents and/or communities cannot adequately provide or care (Yemi, 2009 and Blau & Abramovitz 2004).

### **2.3 Social Welfare Policy and Social Services**

The socialist argument of social welfare policy as described by Shiffman & Smith (2007) is that its benefits are a gift from the state, 'a genuine act of governmental benevolence, and true manifestation of socialist humanism'. Social welfare policy and program is concerned with human welfare which is "a state or condition of well-being" of every citizen of a state. Scholars say that the opposite of a condition of social well-being is "social ill fare". This study adheres to the definition of the concept "as a state or condition of human well-being that exists when social problems are managed, when human needs are met, and when social opportunities are maximized" (Ahmed, Alhassan & Alshammari, 2017; Blau & Abramovitz 2004, Ireje 2017, Inter social welfare and welfare concept. 2017).

United Nations in (1967) defines social welfare as a body of activities designed to enable individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with the social problems of changing conditions. It also stated that social welfare is a proactive means of addressing fundamental problems of social life such as health conditions, environmental hazards, poverty, homelessness, urban slums, urban risks etc. United Nations believed that every nation must be committed to the obligation of delivering efficient social welfare and social service programs (UNICEF, 2018)

Instrumental to the implementation of social welfare programs of the government is social service which includes: care of the elderly, juvenile delinquents, indigent children, prisoners, ex-convicts, health care services usually rendered by government officials to the general public, infant, children, the older adults, people with disabilities, visual or auditory and other vulnerable members of the society and others. While modern society added more to the duties and responsibilities of the state in terms of welfare services and social policies contained in the welfare program of government, social services rendered by government are expected to touch every segment of society, particularly the needy. Social services are not usually restricted to the public sector; it can as well be undertaken by voluntary organizations. When undertaken by voluntary organizations, they are expected to conform to the policies and program of the government where they operate (Blau & Abramovitz 2004, Bammeké & Durowade 2006). Social welfare programs exist at different levels; it can apply to individuals, families, associations, organizations, communities and even the society as a whole, because social ill fare can exist at all levels, only that experiences and circumstances differ and mode of management differs as well. And any society that can manage their social challenges better than others is said to have a higher degree of social welfare policy.

Hence, societies that fail or are still struggling with providing required education, job opportunities and other means by which people can realize their potential often have high rates of crime and violence as people seek alternative and mostly illegitimate means of improving their social status, all mentioned are peculiar to the developing countries of the world including Nigeria.

**3. Theoretical Framework**

**3.1 The Rehabilitation Theory**

This theory stresses on the best interest of the child that promotes treatment based on the individual with attention on elements such as behavioral modification, education and integration with society (Campbell 2012). This theory is said to have breathed life to the juvenile criminal justice system and courts for children across the world, due to focuses on personal change in the child offender for discontinuity of all forms of criminal activities, in as much as the child offender’s actions can be interpreted as an effect of his or her failure to adhere to societal rules, then rehabilitation process must convince him or her of accepting and living with societal norms and values like every other member of the society (Barron, 1954).

This theory proposed therapies and session of behavioral control which includes: psychiatric therapy, counseling, vocational training, better education, drug-rehabilitation programs and any other techniques based on scientific methods that can reduce or totally exterminate recidivism (Cragg, 1992). Therefore, for child offenders, the rehabilitation theory concentrates more on the individual child and less on society in that it enables them to have a more constructive role once and for all upon their return to society (Elrod & Ryder, 2005 and Sherman, 2002; Nolan, 2002).

**3.2 Application of the Rehabilitation Theory**

This theory therefore, highlights the relevance of the establishment of custodial institution as a means to fulfilling the desired requirements that protect the best interest of juvenile in behavioral change and societal acceptance. The rehabilitation theory is fitting for child offenders being kept in a separate detention institution different from that of adult because children are a category entirely different from adult offenders. Child offenders in general have

better prospects for rehabilitation compared to adults for a variety of reasons (Horowitz, 2000). One of the main reasons is because children have a lower ‘guilt-factor’ than adult offenders, also Huss (2008) stated that the various laws, conventions and treaties views children as free from blameworthiness or the consequences of the crime committed as determined by many of the laws and conventions that any child under a specific age group (7 years to 12, 14 and 17) cannot be considered responsible and incapable of forming criminal intent. It is thus obvious that a child who has breached the law should not be treated as an adult offender. Child offenders cannot also be presumed to be public enemies; it is actually the public that should try to understand, guide and protect them (Waber, Calson, Mann, Merola & Moylan 1984). This therefore, raises the realization of the need for a proper functioning of the existing custodial institutions saddled with the responsibility of juvenile delinquent wellness.

**4. Methodology**

The nature of this research work led to the adoption of a mixed method which is the use of both quantitative and qualitative approach, exploratory and case study designs were adopted. Study population was 1,115 comprising civil servants in the Department of Youth Development (19), Juvenile homes staff (76) and juveniles in the custodial homes in Lagos state (1,020). Multi stage and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in the selection of respondents. Taro Yamane formula was determine/set the sample size of 658. The data collection instruments were structured interview guide and validated questionnaires. The reliability test of the questionnaire yielded a Cronbach Alpha value ranging from 0.65 to 0.85. The response rate of the questionnaires was 96%, while 16 interviews were conducted with key informants. Qualitative data were content analyzed while descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used in analyzing quantitative data.

**Table 1:** List of Custodial Homes operated by Lagos State

S/N	Names Of Juvenile Custodial Institution/ Centres
1	Rehabilitation and Training centre, Majidun
2	Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Person, Owutu
3	Rehabilitation and vocational Centre, Isheri
4	Special Correctional Centre for Boys, Oregun
5	Special Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi-Araba
6	Correctional Centre, Idi-Araba
7	Children Centre, Idi-Araba
8	Correctional Centre for Junior Boys, Birrel, Yaba
9	Correctional Centre for Senior Boys Isheri
10	Ketu Special Children Centre
11	Destitute Camp, Oko-Baba, Abeokuta Strt, Ebute Meta.

*Source: Ministry of Youth and Social Development (2021).*

**Table 1:** List of Registered Rehabilitation Homes Operating in Lagos State

S/N	NAMES AND ADDRESS
1	Destiny Trust Home, TDT Centre, Brilla FM str, off Tinubu Road, Ibogu-Lekki
2	Child Upliftment Association, 36, Amity str, Fdiso Estate, Ibeju-Lekki
3	Street Child Care & Welfare Initiative, 16 Akinwunmi str, Alagomeji, Yaba
4	Almighty God Compassion Care Home, I Aminu Jimoh off Governors Road, Ikotun Lagos
5	Bosco Boys Street Home, 55/56 Adeyemo Omole Phase II Lagos
6	Grace Springs Rehabilitation Home, Oppo Radio Nigeria, Ibeshe, Ikorodu
7	Child Life Line. Ajose Bus Stop, Ibese Road, Ikorodu Lagos
8	So-Sad Charity Homes for Vulnerable Persons. 55 Ibro Way, Hossana Estate, Ago Palace Way, Okota.
9	Echoes of Mercy and Hope Foundation. 7, Ogidi Street Mende, Maryland Lagos.
10	Centre for Destitute Empowerment International. 8, Makanjuola Close, Paiko Idimu, Alimosho LGA.

**Source:** Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Research and Development Unit Lagos State (2021).

**Data Presentation**

**Question One:** examine the credibility Social Welfare Policy as an instrument that help citizens cope with the social problems of changing conditions, juvenile inclusive.

**Table 3:** the credibility Social Welfare Policy as an instrument that help citizens cope with the social problems of changing conditions, juvenile inclusive

Social Welfare Policy as changing agent	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	U Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Social welfare policy are life support for every state	48 (52.2)	44 (47.8)	-	-	-	4.52	.502
Social welfare policy is designed to enhance the welfare of citizens including juveniles.	69 (75)	20 (21.7)	3 (3.3)	-	-	4.71	.520
The Lagos state child's rights law of 2007 consolidates all legislations relating to the protection and welfare of the child	56 (60.9)	36 (39.1)	-	-	-	4.60	.490
The child's rights law of 2007 as well considers the welfare of juvenile in custodian homes..	61 (66.3)	31 (33.7)	-	-	-	4.66	.475
The Lagos state child's rights law stated that every individual, institution and body responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards particularly in the areas of safety, health, welfare, and suitability of their staff and competent supervision	50 (54.3)	39 (42.4)	3 (3.3)	-	-	4.51	.564
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>4.60</b>	<b>.510</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

**Decision rule:** if mean is  $\leq 1.49$  =very low, 1.5 to 2.49 = low, 2.5 to 3.49 = moderate, 3.5 to 3.9 = high, 4.0 to 5.0 = very high

Table 3, the result on the credibility Social Welfare Policy as an instrument that help citizens cope with the social problems of changing conditions, juvenile inclusive indicated that most of the respondents agreed that social welfare policies are the life support for every state (52.2%). They recognize that Social welfare policy is designed to enhance the welfare of citizens including juveniles (75%). The respondents also confirmed that Lagos state child's rights law consolidates all legislations relating to the protection and welfare of the child (60.9%). Furthermore, they agreed that the child's rights law of 2007 as well considers the welfare of juvenile in custodian homes. (66.3 %). Lastly, they also concurred that the Lagos state child's rights law stipulates that every individual, institution and body responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards particularly in the areas of safety, health, welfare, and suitability of their staff and competent supervision (54.3%). From the results, the responses recognize the credibility Social Welfare Policy as an instrument that help citizens cope with the social problems of changing conditions, juvenile inclusive was very high (Mean=4.60).

**Question Two:** Examining the implementation of the Child Right Law with regards to the welfare of custodian juveniles with indicators

**Table 4:** Examining the implementation of Lagos State Child Right Law with regards to the welfare of custodian juveniles with indicators.

<b>Feeding, physical and health care</b>	<b>SA</b> Freq. (%)	<b>A</b> Freq. (%)	<b>U</b> Freq. (%)	<b>D</b> Freq. (%)	<b>SD</b> Freq. (%)	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Good food is available in the juvenile institutions	128 (27.3)	113 (24.1)	85 (18.1)	82 (17.5)	61 (13)	3.35	1.38
Eating regularly keeps children away from bad behavior	102 (21.7)	113 (24.1)	101 (21.5)	75 (16)	78 (16.6)	3.18	1.38
Children in the home are physically fit compared to when brought in	107 (22.8)	121 (25.8)	78 (16.6)	78 (16.6)	85 (18.1)	3.21	1.42
Delinquent behavior is not good for the society	99 (21.2)	135 (28.8)	98 (20.9)	64 (13.6)	73 (15.6)	3.26	1.35
The health care team are prompt and friendly	97 (20.7)	132 (28.1)	107 (22.8)	68 (14.5)	65 (13.9)	3.27	1.31
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>3.25</b>	<b>1.36</b>
<b>Physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial Institutions</b>							
The environment is tidy and conducive for all children	113 (24.1)	143 (30.5)	82 (17.5)	79 (16.8)	52 (11.1)	3.39	1.31
Hostels and beddings are sufficient for all	110 (23.5)	140 (29.9)	88 (18.8)	67 (14.3)	64 (13.6)	3.35	1.34
Sleeping items available and satisfactory	115 (24.5)	138 (29.4)	72 (15.4)	65 (13.9)	79 (16.8)	3.30	1.41
Repairs are done regularly on all spoilt items	94 (20)	126 (26.9)	101 (21.5)	75 (16)	73 (15.6)	3.19	3.24
Toilet and bathing facility are enough for all children	106(22.6)	12 (27.1)	89(19)	69(14.7)	78(16.6)	3.24	1.39
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>3.29</b>	<b>1.73</b>
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>						<b>3.27</b>	<b>1.54</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

**Decision rule:** if mean is ≤ 1.49 = very low, 1.5 to 2.49 = low, 2.5 to 3.49 = moderate, 3.5 to 3.9 = high, 4.0 to 5.0 = very high

Table 4, the result showed the totality of performance of the Lagos State Child Right Law in terms of care of juvenile in custody with the use of key indicators was high. The parameters used to measure the performance of the Lagos state Child right law was feeding, physical and health care, and the physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial Institutions. From the table, Physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial Institutions (Mean = 3.29) and feeding, physical and health care had a higher mean score (Mean=3.25) which suggests that most of the wards agreed that the performance of the Lagos State Child Right Law was better in terms of Physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial Institutions. The results of the feeding, physical and health care revealed that majority of the participants agreed that the health care team are prompt and friendly (28.1%), delinquent behaviour is not good for the society (28.8%), eating regularly keeps children away from bad behaviour (24.1%), children in the home are physically fit compared to when brought in (25.8%). With respect to the physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial Institutions the wards agreed that hostels and beddings are sufficient for all (29.9%), toilet and bathing facility are enough for all children

(27.1%), and repairs are done regularly on all spoilt items (26.9%).

The average weighted mean of (Mean = 3.27) falls within the criteria of moderate which indicates that the wards agreed that the totality of the performance of the Lagos State Child Right Law in terms of juvenile welfare in Lagos State custodial institutions, with the use of key indicators (feeding, physical and health care, the physical conditions and sanitation of the custodial institutions / facilities in this State) of juvenile in custody was generally moderate.

### 5. Conclusion / Recommendations

The study concluded that the nature of implementation and operations of social welfare policy serves as a major impetus to achieving the purpose for which the custodian homes were established. The study recommended that implementation of social welfare policy must be prioritized at the custodian homes. The welfare of juveniles in the homes must be constantly reviewed and monitored and there should be wholesome

reintegration process for released juveniles in order to avoid relapse.

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