

Sexual Abuse Against Females in Internally Displaced Persons' Camp in Daudu, Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There is a growing trend of sexual abuse against females in Internally Displaced Persons' camps in Nigeria which is not adequately addressed. This study evaluated the rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp in Daudu, Benue State, examined the perpetrators of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State and explored measures that can control sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State. The study adopted social control theory. Descriptive design was employed by the study. A sample size of 400 respondents was drawn from a population of 100,000 registered IDPs in Daudu camp, Benue State using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was structured interview. Data collected was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu was high. Findings revealed that camp officials and security personnel were the actual perpetrators of sexual abuse against female IDPs. The study recommended that Benue state government should make necessary arrangements so that IDPs can resettle in their ancestral homes in order to reduce the rate female IDPs' are sexually abused in the IDPs camp and those caught in the act of sexual abuse against females should be severely dealt with.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, Internal displaced persons, and Camp

Introduction

Sexual abuse is not condoned by the society. There are diverse advocacy groups against sexual abuse championed by the government, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations. There exists quite a good number of sexual assault helplines in Nigeria to facilitate the reportage of the menace such as Stand to End Rape Support, Federal Government of Nigeria Toll Free Number for Violation of Girls and Women, Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team hotline, Lagos, Cece Yara Foundation Child Advocacy Centre, Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) 24 hour Helpline, to mention these few, for the purpose of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse especially among young girls and women. The provisions of section 357 of the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Nigeria CAP 77, LFN, 1999, criminalized sexual abuse. It appears most victims of sexual assault are not aware of the provisions of this law, even if they are; it is unlikely they have sought redress because they have no money to hire the services of a counsel. Despite widespread outcry over rising cases of sexual abuse especially in IDPs camps in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to the menace.

In 2018, the average prevalence rate of sexual abuses in Nigeria was nine (9) per cent with Gombe State recording the highest incidence of the phenomenon in the country (Statistical Research Department, 2022). According to the survey, 45 per cent of people living in the State had experienced sexual abuse in their life. NAPTIP gathered that over 30 per cent of girls and

women between the ages of 15 and 49 experience sexual abuse in Nigeria (Duru, 2021). Ugwu (2021) observed that during the COVID-19 lockdown, more than 3,600 rape cases were recorded across Nigeria and that could still be a gross undercount, given the lack of data on sexual abuse in Nigeria.

According to Abdulkareem (2020), rape and related sexual violence happen every day in many parts of Nigeria. But it is more prevalent in environments where structures needed for the protection of the victims are missing. Internal Displaced persons Camps leave the females particularly more vulnerable to sexual abuse. The UN Refugee Agency in 2019 reported 1,666 incidence of sexual and gender-based abuse in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic as well as the lockdown rule rather increased incidence rates of sexual abuse among internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Ejikeme, Ifeanyi and Ukaogo (2021) reported cases of sexual abuse as follows: Abuja 58.8%, Kaduna 47.2%, Lagos 46.5%, Kwara 27.9% and Kano 28.4%.

Certain factors propel this act of sexual abuse or assault against female. Ugwa (2021) observes that women make up more than 50 per cent of the IDP population in Nigeria. And as they are forced to survive on less than N780 (US \$1.90), their livelihoods are largely reliant on goodwill donations from charitable and government organizations. Consequently, due to overlapping vulnerabilities related to economic security and protection, many find themselves at risk of sexual abuse in the camps. Inwalomhe (2021) noted that women and girls in the Boko Haram infested North-east are randomly abused sexually in exchange for food and water. The incidences prevailed mostly in the host communities and the internally displaced persons' camps located in Borno, Adamawa, Yobe States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Similarly, Abdulkareem (2021) blamed key factors like drastic reduction of food ratio, sell sex syndrome, denial of resources and intimate partner violence as some of the main motivations for sexual abuse in IDP camps. Other reasons include lack of food, medical care; means of empowerment and access to farmlands.

The consequences of sexual abuse on the female IDPs are devastating especially on the individual victim. According to Apa (2022), immediate reactions and long-term consequences of sexual abuse include shock, fear or disbelief, anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress disorder. Owoaje, Uchendu, Ajayi and Cadmus (2016) observed that women and children in IDPs Camps experienced a wide range of health risk. They are extremely vulnerable to physical and mental health problems, and they also have unique health needs. In cases that involved contact, a victim of sexual violence might be left with physical injuries. These could include cuts, tears, bruises, soreness, swelling among others. Those that involved contact with genitalia, a victim can be infested with sexually transmitted infection (STIs). A study by Lugova, Samad and Haque (2020) revealed that sexual assault survivors face physical and psychological sufferings, excruciating emotions and profound disruption of their social wellbeing since they are often stigmatized and ostracized by society. The health effects of sexual abuse include injuries, unwanted pregnancies, sexual transmitted infections (STIs) including, HIV, pelvic pain, urinary tract infections, fistula, genitally injuries to mention a few. Sexual abuse threatens women's health worldwide adding to the global burden of disease (Nebe & Owolabi, 2021).

Previously, there were gray areas hampering the identification of the perpetrators of sexual abuse in IDP Camps hence they were only imagined. However, recently, glaring facts on the actual culprits of sexual abuse against women and young girls have emerged. Ihua (2022) carried out a situational assessment of internally displaced persons in North-East Nigeria and identified infringement on human rights, discrimination and sexual abuse as some of the crimes perpetrated against women in IDP camps. The study revealed that the sexual abuse was mainly perpetrated by camp officials, soldiers or members of the civilian joint task force (CJTF) tasked with the responsibility of looking after the IDPs. Similarly, Abdulkareem (2021) noted that though uncontrolled sexual abuses were common amongst the IDPs, more than 60 per cent of sexual abuses were carried out by paramilitary security operatives deployed to the camps.

Sexual abuse particularly those against women and young girls has long been fought without much to be desired. Ugwu (2021) noted that the absence of Rights Activists and support

structures from the government and law enforcement agencies for victims of sexual abuse impedes their access to justice. Sexual and Assault Referral Centers (SARCs), which provide services to survivors of sexualized and gender-based violence, are not available in most States in Nigeria including Benue State. Ugwu added that even with State Emergency Management Agency officials stationed in some camps, assistance for victims is insufficient when there are no other State structures to handle reports of abuse. The agency is mostly concerned with providing emergency intervention packages like food and shelter to displaced persons. However, gender-specific care is more or less considered an afterthought. This constitutes the problematic of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Sexual abuse especially against females has long been fought without much to be desired. Ugwu (2021) noted in tune of Rights Activists that the absence of support structures from the government and law enforcement agencies for victims of sexual abuse impedes justice. Sexual and Assault Referral Centers (SARCs), which provide services to survivors of sexualized and gender-based violence, are not available in most States in Nigeria including Benue State. Ugwu added that even with State Emergency Management Agency officials stationed in some camps, assistance for victims is insufficient when there are no other State structures to handle reports of abuse. The agency is mostly concerned with providing emergency intervention packages like food and shelter to displaced persons. However, gender-specific care is more or less considered an afterthought. This constitutes the problem of the study.

There are studies on the sexual abuse against females in internally displaced persons' camps. However, there is no study on sexual abuse against females in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps in Dauda camp in Benue State. For instance, Bawa, Kaur and Rao (2022) studied gender and sexual violence in Maiduguri internally displaced persons camp, Northeast Nigeria. The study found that the consequences of displacement for women and girls differ from those of men and boys. The women suffer varying degrees of violence and exploitation from camp officials and humanitarian workers which further worsens their situations. Adekeye, Ajayi and Fawole (2019) researched on terrorism and the plight of women in internally displaced persons camps in Nigeria. The findings shows that the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camp include hunger, sexual exploitation, rape, molestation, restricted movement, poor sanitation, and corrupt practices of officials. Obviously from the above studies, knowledge gaps are found to exist.

The present study is an assessment of sexual abuse against females in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps in Nigeria with specific reference to Dauda camp in Benue State. The following questions are formed to guide the study. They are: what is the rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State and who are the perpetrators of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State? The broad objective of this study is to assess sexual abuse against females in Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camp Dauda in Benue State. Specifically, the study aimed to: evaluate the rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State, investigate the perpetrators of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State and explore swift measures that if adopted can control or minimise sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu in Benue State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design. The reason for the adoption of the design was to seek opinions of the participants on the objectives of study. The setting for this study was Daudu IDPs Camp in Benue State. There were four (4) camp extractions that comprised Daudu IDPs camp. These include Ortese, John Mark, Ikpam and Ayoadoor. There were over 100,000 internally displaced persons residing in these camps (Camp Tutor, 2022). The population of this study comprised young girls and women who were displaced. Others who took part in the study were camp officials, officials of faith-based organisations, NGOs and the host community. The study adopted simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The study employed

semi-structured interview to gather useful information from the respondents. Data collected from the field were analysed quantitatively.

Theoretical Framework

Social control theory is adopted to explain sexual abuse against females in internally displaced persons' camps in Daudu, Benue State. It derived from functionalist theories of crime and was developed by Ivan Nye (1958), who proposed that there are three types of control: direct-by which punishment is threatened or applied for wrongful behaviour, and compliance is rewarded by parents, family, and authority figures; indirect – by identification with those who influence behaviour.

Social control theory proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. Thus, if moral codes are internalized and individuals are tied into and have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts. The theory seeks to understand the ways in which it is possible to reduce the likelihood of criminality developing in individuals. It does not consider motivational issues, simply stating that human beings may choose to engage in a wide range of activities, unless the range is limited by the processes of socialization and social learning. The theory derives from a Hobbesian view of human nature as represented in *Leviathan*, i.e. that all choices are constrained by implicit social contracts, agreements and arrangements among people. Thus, morality is created in the construction of social order, assigning costs and consequences to certain choices and defining some as evil, immoral and/or illegal (Ngo-Mitchell, 2009).

Social control plays a crucial role in providing a more productive and harmonious community. It contributes to the growth of an individual, and the progression of the community. For instance, places with higher crime rates are more likely to be the place where poverty, mobility and racial/ethnic heterogeneity are most susceptible. The presence of these factors determine the level of social control within a community, particularly when it comes to the placement of infrastructure. A higher level of social control in a community can result to an organized community that can lead to better opportunity in the community (Triplett, 2003).

The theory is criticized on the following grounds. Much of the early research on social control theory is based on self-reporting studies. Critics of self-report data note that there may have been various motives for disclosing information, and that questions may be interpreted differently by individual participants. Despite the weaknesses of the social control theory, it is still relevant in explaining sexual abuse against females in internally displaced persons' camps in Nigeria with particular focus on camps in Daudu, Benue State. Hence, all social systems are held in place to some degree by force or the threat of force. The more resources (social, personal, economic) one has, the more effectively he/she can apply force or threat of force on others. The fewer resources one has, the more likely one is to be subjected to force, particularly if they appear to be vying for the dominant group's resources. Sexual violence is used to perpetuate male supremacy and is used as a tool to keep women fearful and subjugated. This act is a replica of what transpired in IDPs camps all over Nigeria inclusive of those situated Daudu Camp in Benue State. In most cases, officials of IDPs camps in the country are males in-charge of daily affairs of the camp; they distribute all sorts of relief materials from donor agencies to IDPs. This make them a dominant in the camp with privileges that enable them to perpetrate sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse against Females in IDPs Camp

Globally, more than 41 million people experienced internal displacement at the end of 2018, due to violence and conflict (Bawa, Kaur & Rao, 2022). Approximately 21 million or more were women and girls, and sub-Saharan Africa had the highest number of Internally Displaced Women (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - IDMC, 2020). The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) population in Nigeria is approximately one third of IDPs in Africa and about 10% of the world's IDP. Nigeria occupies the third position on the global index with about 3.3

million displaced persons (IDMC, 2020). Insecurity, arising from Boko Haram (BH) insurgency and counter military operations affect about 26 million people living in Northeast Nigeria, and about 14 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance (Bawa et al., 2022). Female IDPs are usually more vulnerable than other affected displaced populations, which contributes to the grave human right violations that IDPs experience. Furthermore, internal displaced women experience displacement in ways that differ from men and boys and face peculiar challenges that must be well understood to provide them with appropriate and specific support they need (IDMC, 2020). Unfortunately, this difference is hardly taken into cognizance when providing assistance and protection. Rather, the gendered activities in IDP camps have led to reinforcement of previously pre-existing discrimination faced by women.

To Oladeji, Oladeji, Chamla, Safiyanu, Mele, Mshelia and Agbor (2018) sexual violence is quite common in conflict situations and puts women at risk of unintended pregnancies. In the northeast region of Nigeria with ongoing insurgency, a substantial number of women are kidnapped and subjected to forced marriages and repeated sexual assaults. Further findings by Oladeji et al. (2018) shows that the mean age of the participants was 15.3 years (SD=3.4 years), and all the participants had spent 2 years or more in captivity. Most of the women first disclosed the pregnancy to their peers before disclosure to healthcare providers or family members. All the women initially requested to have the pregnancy terminated; however, abortion services are not offered in the clinic in line with the country's restrictive abortion laws. Following counselling and psychosocial support offered in the clinic, 19(40%) of the women continued with the pregnancy and were delivered in the camp clinic while the remaining 26 women left the camp shortly after disclosure and pregnancy outcomes are not known. SRRP is not uncommon in humanitarian settings with its associated stigma and unwillingness among the survivors to keep the pregnancy.

Inwalomhe (2021) notices that there are several reports of sexual abuses, including rape and exploitation, of women and girls living in many internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa States, Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroun. The victims had been displaced from several towns and villages. Since violent attacks of the insurgent group, Boko Haram started to spillover Nigeria's north-eastern frontier in 2014, Cameroun, Chad and Niger have been drawn into what has become a devastating regional conflict. Till date, the Lake Chad Basin region is grappling with a complex humanitarian emergency. Inwalomhe (2021) reported that over 3.2 million people are displaced, including over 2.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in north-eastern Nigeria, over 684,000 IDPs in Cameroun, Chad and Niger and 304, 000 refugees in the four countries.

The UN Refugee Agency in 2019 reported 1,666 incidents of sexual and gender-based abuse in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic as well as the lockdown rule has rather increased incidence rates of sexual abuse among internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Ejikeme, Ifeanyi and Ukaogo (2021) reported cases of sexual abuse during the pandemic as follows: Abuja 58.8%, Kaduna 47.2%, Lagos 46.5%, Kwara 27.9% and Kano 28.4%. Sexual abuse as challenge faced by IDPs in Nigeria and world over occurs everywhere especially among growing refugees and IDPs population. Perhaps, in most countries there has been little or no studies carried out on the scourge. Despites, there are statistics in some countries. Statistics in some countries shows that 1 in 4 women and girls may experience sexual violence either by intimate partner (IPV) or during armed conflict as the case may be. Hence, report shows 1 in every 3 adolescent girls is sexually abuse (Bawa, Kaur & Rao, 2022).

Reimann (2002) cited in Adekeye, Ajayi and Fawole (2019) clearly observed that majority of reported cases of sexual violence is usually against the women and girl-child who experience variations of physical dangers compared to men. Women are considered most vulnerable and often exposed to a high degree of risk, which ranges from sexual exploitation to becoming victims of domestic violence or being impregnated by enemy soldiers. It has also been stated by the Brookings Institute that the degrees of violations that IDPs women often experienced deserves specific attention. Consequently, terms of violation vary from one victim to another, as some IDP women may be confronted with the discrimination including access to property, land, education and documentation. In other scenarios, there is the high tendency of violation among

the women who are in camps where the camp administrators often aggravate their conditions (Brookings Institute 2014 cited in Adekeye et al., 2019).

Ojengbede, Babawarun, Olayiwola, Ogun, Kongnguy and Adorin (2019) in their study on sexual and gender-based violence in camps for internally displaced people and host communities in northeast Nigeria: a mixed methods study found that the northeastern region of Nigeria has had a persistent increase in the number of internally displaced people due to insurgency. The disruption to the socioeconomic lives of the women in this region places them at a high risk of all forms of abuse from insurgents, security agents deployed to protect the people in the camps and host communities, and other members of the community. The study included data from 4868 internally displaced people and found that about a third had experienced a form of sexual violence (1616 [33.2%]). Also, experience of sexual and physical violence since displacement was reported by 123 (7.6%) and 36 women (3.7%), respectively.

Table 1: Respondents' rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu

Rate of sexual abuse	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	83	23.1
High	134	37.2
Low	112	31.1
Very low	31	8.6
Total	360	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 1 above presents respondents' data on the rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu. The data shows that sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu was high as represented by 37.2% (134) of the respondents, 31.1% (112) of the respondents reported low rate of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp, 23.1% (83) of the respondents said the rate of sexual abuse was very high, while 8.6% (31) of the respondents reported very low rate of sexual abuse female IDPs in Daudu camp. This indicates that the fight against sexual abuse of female IDPs has not been won yet hence the act is been reported to be prevalent in the IDPs camps.

Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse against Females in IDPs Camp

A report by Ihua (2022) titled, "situational assessment of internally displaced persons in North-East Nigeria" identified infringement on human rights, discrimination and sexual abuse as some of the crimes perpetrated against women in IDP camps. In particular the report was the first study to beam the searchlight on the issue of "sex for food" and "sex for gate-pass" for female IDPs who needed to leave the camps in search of food. The abuse was mainly perpetrated by camp officials, soldiers or members of the civilian joint task force (CJTF) saddled with the responsibility of looking after the IDPs. According to the Director of a local non-profit organization based in Maiduguri, "these camp officials are not helping matters. In Dalori, there was a case of a CJTF that kept two girls in two different camps, Dalori 1 and 2.... He was just exploiting them sexually... even the military and police are involved" (Ihua, 2022). Similarly, in 2016, Human Rights Watch accused Nigerian government officials and the security forces of sexual exploitation of women and girls in Internally Displaced Persons camps that have mushroomed as a result of the Boko Haram conflict (Yohanna, 2020).

In May 2018, a study by Amnesty International reported the exact findings, re-affirming the earlier findings from the report by NOI polls. The report by (AI, 2018) revealed how Nigerian Military and CJTF members claiming to rescue starving women have separated them from their husbands and confined them in remote satellite camps where they have been raped, sometimes in exchange for food. According to Osai Ojigbo, Director of Amnesty International Nigeria, "it is absolutely shocking that people who had already suffered so much under Boko Haram have been condemned to further horrendous abuse by the Nigerian military... Instead of receiving protection from the authorities, women and girls have been forced to succumb to rape in order to avoid starvation or hunger" (Ihua, 2022).

Abdulkareem (2021) gathered that though uncontrolled sexual abuses were common amongst the IDPs, more than 60 per cent of sexual abuses were carried out by paramilitary security operatives deployed to man the camps. Evidently, a woman leader in one of the IDP camps, whose two daughters have suffered abuse said there is no point shouting about it because we have seen causes where rapists or adult officials who used money or food to lure teenage girls were seen going about freely days after they were caught red-handed or reported to the authorities.

Alliances for Africa (2021) gave an insight on activities of internally displaced persons, IDPs, staying as refugees in camp adding that they are also not exempted from the wiles of security operatives handed in their care to protect them, who in turn lure them with commodities as a ploy to abuse them sexually. In January 2016, three UN Special Rapporteurs visited Maiduguri in Borno State on behalf of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). There they found evidence of widespread sexual abuse and other major protection concerns affecting internally displaced women and girls. They concluded that a protection gap is evident, especially in service delivery and access to justice for women and girls victim of Boko Haram. This was not the first report of a protection deficit in the humanitarian response, nor the first report of sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced women and girls, but it was the first time that UN officials had pinpointed the coalescence of Boko Haram violence and sexual exploitation and abuse in displacement to create extreme vulnerability among displaced women and girls.

The prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls by civilian militias, members of the military and the national and state governments' emergency management cadres has also been highlighted, including in a report by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs following a visit to Maiduguri in August 2016, a Human Rights Watch report of sexual exploitation and abuse among IDP women and girls by camp officials led to the establishment of a committee to investigate allegations of trafficking and sexual abuse of IDPs. These reports and others have increased the profile of the unmet needs of vulnerable women and girls in north-east Nigeria, but the challenges experienced by the humanitarian response in providing prevention activities and support and services for survivors have continued (Alliances for Africa, 2021). Ojengbede et al. (2019) in their study found that perpetrators of sexual violence since displacement include Boko Haram insurgents (63 [51.5%]); 34 (27.3%) were unknown, 22 (17.8%) were members of the police and armed forces, 19 (15.4%) were intimate partners, and (5.8%) were relatives.

Table 2: Respondents' opinion on Perpetrators of sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu

Perpetrators of sexual abuse	Frequency	Percentage
IDPs who are camp officials	289	80.3
Security personnel	14	3.9
Members of host community	41	11.4
Others	16	4.4
Total	360	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The respondents were asked who the perpetrators of sexual abuse against them were. Table 2 above presents responses of the respondents in figures thus, majority, 80.3% (289) of the respondents out rightly said IDPs just as they who are camp officials were the perpetrators of sexual abuse against them. Secondly, 11.4% (41) of the respondents said that members of host community were also involved in the act of sexual abuse against female IDPs, 3.9% (14) of the respondents alleged that security personnel were partaker of the act. While 'other' categories of people as mentioned by 4.4% (16) of the respondents were members of the different non-governmental organisations that sometime give relief materials to the IDPs. This means that the major perpetrators of sexual abuse against females IDPs were camp officials who were also IDPs. The take this ill-advantage over their female counterpart in distributing relief materials

handed to them as heads of camp and in turn request for sex gratification to those whom they favour when distributing these items. The female IDPs too will be most obliged to gladly or forcefully submit to their request in order to survive on the camp.

Conclusion

There is a growing trend of sexual abuse against female internally displaced persons across Nigeria which is not effectively managed by the State. The negligence of internally displaced persons by the State and other stakeholders has paved the way for the incidence of sexual abuse to thrive and soar in internally displaced persons camps against the females. The study established the incidence of sexual abuse against female IDPs in Daudu Camp in Benue State. This study revealed that sexual abuse against females in IDPs camp Daudu was high. The perpetrators of sexual abuse against female IDPs in Daudu camp were camp officials, hence the need to recommend appropriate measures to curb the menace.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following as measures of curtailing sexual abuse against Female IDPs:

- i. Benue state government should make necessary arrangements so that IDPs can resettle in their ancestral homes in order to reduce the rate female IDPs' sexual abuse on IDPs camp.
- ii. State Emergency Management Agency and other non-governmental organisations should share directly to the IDPs relief materials.
- iii. Monthly stipends should be given to registered IDPs by the government to sustain their stay in the IDP camp.
- iv. Those caught in the act of sexual abuse against females should be severely dealt with.

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